

# Bayou and Marsh

No. 44

News from the Greater New Orleans Iris Society

June 20, 2023

## Spring Blooms on the Island



From top, 'Fourchon', 'Chef Menteur Pass', 'Ann Weeks', and 'Holden's Hit'.

*Get Ready!*

## We're Meeting Again

Saturday, June 24 at the East Bank Regional Library in Metairie

9:30 AM - 4747 West Napoleon

\*\*\* AIR CONDITIONED \*\*\*

We have an excellent program planned, some irises to give out, and everyone will have a chance to catch up with other iris growers. If you have iris questions, this will be the place to get answers.

## Program

### "Reforesting New Orleans"

**Susannah  
Burley**

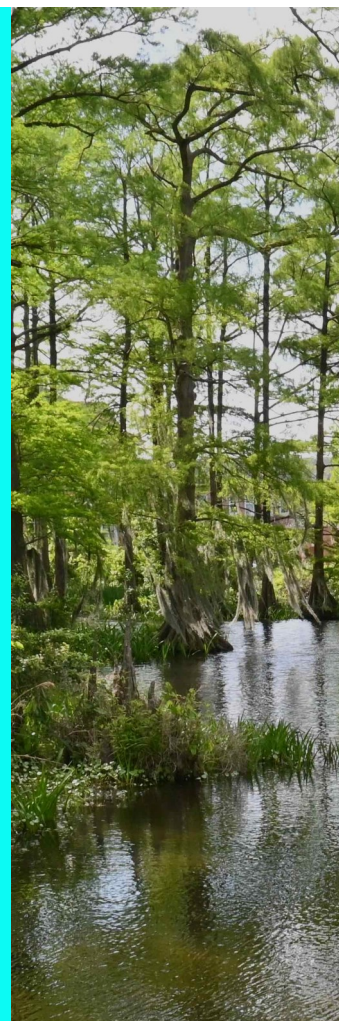
Executive Director  
and Founder



**Saving Our Urban  
Landscape  
(SOUL)**

The City of New Orleans faces many complex environmental challenges, some of which are due to the loss of tree canopy, mainly as a result of Katrina. Under Susannah Burley's direction, Save Our Urban Landscape (SOUL) has been involved in developing a **Reforestation Plan** for the City.

The complex relationship between the health of the tree canopy and the community environment is relevant to the larger region, which has also experienced deforestation.



# GNOIS Calendar

Sat, Sep 16

## General Membership Meeting

Our next meeting will be at the East Bank Regional Library. The program will be announced later.

Sat, Aug 26

## Tulane Day of Service Volunteers

GNOIS has been selected to participate in the Outreach Tulane Day of Service, an event that will bring around 30 student volunteers to the Island Nursery for a morning of work. GNOIS will need to plan specific tasks and have supervisors present to supplement Tulane staff supervisors.

Sat, Sep 2

## Iris Culture Demonstration Day

We will present organized demonstrations and brief talks on how to perform the major iris maintenance tasks, especially those involving fall clean-up and reworking of beds. At the Island Iris Nursery. Details to follow.

Sat, Oct 7

## Work Day To Dig Irises for Sale

A morning workday to dig and prepare irises for the Annual Rhizome Sale on Oct. 14. Additional sessions may be needed.

Sat, Oct 14

## Annual Bare Root Rhizome Sale at Longue Vue

10 AM till 1 PM (or until sell out). This is your best chance to get a wide variety of Louisiana irises at very good prices. #7 Bamboo Road, New Orleans

Sat, Dec 9

## Annual Holiday Party

East Bank Regional Library. 10:30 AM till 1:00 PM (subject to change). Food, door prizes, more! Save the date!

Every Thurs  
Morning

## Volunteer Work on the Island Iris Nursery, City Park

9 -11 AM or so. We open the nursery every Thursday morning for anyone to come out and help (assuming good weather). In the summer heat, we will not go too long, so feel free to stay for an hour or whatever you feel like. We have a lot of tasks in the shade and are expanding our shady work space.

Saturdays  
Now And  
Then

## Special Volunteer Days

We will occasionally announce special weekend volunteer days for those not available during the and when we have some particular project we

## Meeting Agenda

9:00 AM	Library Opens, Meeting Setup
9:30 - 10 AM	Refreshments, Visiting, Demonstrations, Question Table
10:00 - 10:45AM	Program: "Susannah Burley, "Reforesting New Orleans"
10:45 - 11:15 AM	Business Meeting, Announcements, Discussion
11:15 - 11:45 AM	Door Prizes, Iris Distribution
11:45 AM	Adjourn

## Our New Irises



'Kerry Lynette Douglas'



'Peace Beckons'

Two years ago, GNOIS members asked that we purchase new Louisiana iris introductions to update our collection in the island nursery. We did that, and last spring was the payoff with the first bloom on around 40 new plants. There were some beauties, but also disappointments.

An article in the new issue of *Fleur de Lis*, the magazine of the Society for Louisiana Irises, will explore the good and the bad from the perspective of the qualities of the bloom stalks, which after all, do the work of displaying the flowers. Look for an email in a few weeks with the link to the new issue of the *Fleur*, which is available to all GNOIS members.

In the meantime, at right are illustrations of good and bad bloom stalks. The shape of the stalk on the left provides space for all flowers to open cleanly. The one on the right will cause some flowers to be jammed-up and never open. It will be an ugly mess.

There's more to a good iris than the flower.





## Summer Iris Duties

### A Few Tips

- **Remove old bloom stalks to keep your clumps attractive.** Cut stalks off a couple of inches from the ground, removing all the lower leaves attached to the stalk. Also remove any yellow or brown leaves in the clump, as well as the stalks, disposing of them in your garbage, not the compost pile. Iris foliage can harbor the fungus disease Rust, and removing old iris material from your garden will help prevent Rust from spreading in the next season.
- **Water and fertilize to maintain summer growth.** Consistent moisture is the key to keeping the irises growing and NOT going dormant in the summer. A little fertilizer after bloom can help, but the irises are not growing rapidly and can't use a lot (about half the usual amount). Allowing the irises to get too dry will trigger dormancy, and while they may not go totally dormant, they will stop growing and probably not start up again until the fall.
- **What if the irises don't look good?** If the irises do start looking scruffy, you can cut off unsightly foliage. Any yellowed foliage should be removed. Don't cut back foliage that's growing well, but removing declining or yellowing leaves can stimulate new growth. Try to leave the center leaf in a fan alone since that is the latest to emerge and any new growth will appear there. If you have to cut out leaves, cut them to near the ground; don't just cut them in half.
- **Mulch.** Several inches of mulch will help conserve moisture and keep down weeds. Ground pine bark and needles are excellent, but other finely ground organic materials (such as leaves) are also suitable..
- **Seeds.** If you saved any seed pods, now is the time to plant them. Score the pod with a sharp knife or box cutter with the blade extended just a quarter inch. Pry open the pod to remove the seeds. It's best to plant them immediately in pots filled with garden soil, potting mix, or a combination. Cover the seeds with 3/4 inch of the medium, water well, and put them in a shady place. Keep the pots damp but not soggy. Germination will not occur until cool nights begin in late October or November. Make sure the seeds stay covered, so replenish the soil cover if necessary.

### Handling Bare Root Louisiana Irises in Hot Weather

If you are looking for the best time of the year to transplant Louisiana irises, wait till fall. It isn't now when the heat is upon us.

But occasionally, you have to move irises in the summer, or perhaps you are gifted some bare root rhizomes and want to make sure they live. Here's our best advice:

- Hold the rhizomes in a shallow pan of water until you are ready to deal with them. The rhizomes and roots should be underwater, but the foliage should not, so a couple of inches of water is advised.
- Pot the rhizomes instead of planting them out into the garden immediately.
- Keep the pot in a shady place and well-watered. Setting the pot in a few inches of water is a good approach, so the plant can draw up constant moisture. Don't place the whole pot under water and submerge the rhizome itself.\* An 8 or 10-inch pot sitting in 2 inches of water is fine.
- Keep water in the container so the rhizome does not dry out.
- Keep the irises in pots until you see that leaf growth has resumed. That may not be until late summer or early fall.
- Plant the irises in the garden in the fall (late August, September or October).
- You could fertilize the potted irises with a liquid fertilizer or with a time-release granular fertilizer, but it may not take off and grow much until the fall.

*\*\*Even though Louisiana irises are wetland plants and will grow in standing water, the rhizomes can rot if the plant is not established with its roots growing in soil. You can plant a potted iris into water, but bare root rhizomes are difficult to establish by directly planting into a pond or similar situation. The mucky edges of a pond do work well.*

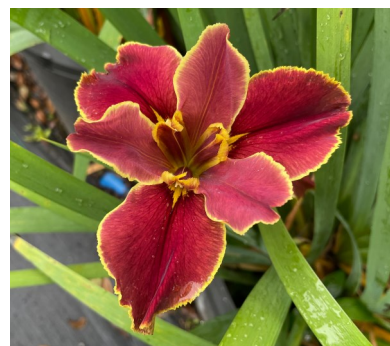


# ON THE ISLAND

About fifteen members came out for the special Saturday workday on the island June 10. We made great progress on removing bloom stalks and yellowed foliage, and combined with the work of the regular Thursday volunteer group and the previous work by the not-for-profit Limitless Vistas workers, we are on schedule with our island maintenance. There is steady work to do from now through the fall, but if we tackle it in small bits, we should be prepared for a great bloom season next spring.



Work now will pay off in the spring, as it did with this year's beautiful bloom.



Images of beautiful flowers could go on for pages. The only way to appreciate the variety is to come out in the spring. These few shots include two species, an *I. nelsonii* in upper left and *I. brevicaulis* at the lower right. Center top is the cultivar 'Nadine Sarah'. To the upper right is 'Norah Jane' and lower left is 'Wow Factor'.

If you have not seen the island video, it is not too late. <https://tinyurl.com/bdmxre7p>







## Greater New Orleans Iris Society

### OFFICERS

President

**Patrick O'Connor**  
pfoconnor@cox.net

Vice-President

**Susan Anthony**

Corresponding Secretary

**Lorrie Brown**

Recording Secretary

**Donna Donahoe**

Treasurer

**Calvin Lopes**

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Cathy Mason, Abita Springs

Bill Moynan, Metairie, LA

Paul Pastorek, Harahan

Mark Schexnayder, New Orleans



## Organization

**Take me to the GNOIS  
website**



## From the President

### What Next?

Back in 2018, which seems like ancient times, GNOIS undertook its most ambitious and certainly most stressful activity. We hosted the joint convention of the American Iris Society and the Society for Louisiana Irises. It was a major effort and a big success, but it consumed us for well over a year.

After the dust settled, we had to ask ourselves, what next? I'm not sure we ever developed a definitive answer, and the question is as valid after COVID as it was then. GNOIS needs to touch base with its membership and think about what we want to do, where we want to go, and what we want to be.

There are several ongoing projects and activities that pull us along. They demand



periodic if not constant attention, and to some extent the organization is like a self-driving car. Sometimes it feels like we are just along for the ride.

But there is no reason we cannot choose our destinations, and there are many options. I am committed to the things we do on a regular basis—the island nursery, our plant sales, the donations to various groups and projects, our membership meetings. But there are many options and refinements we might want to make. I would like us to think through what we

want to do and what we want our organization to accomplish.

The fall and winter are a good time for reflection. I'm asking that members give our future some thought. The summer heat's not a bad time either. Please be thinking along these lines, and we'll implement a more formal planning process soon to pull our ideas together.

When we went through a planning process in 2018, we began with a PowerPoint presentation laying out options. That presentation may be dated in some ways, but it still is a good, quick place to start. The presentation is online as a PDF file. Please take a look and give our organization some thought. <https://tinyurl.com/bdfd6aee>



## Projects

GNOIS raises irises to donate for public displays. We grow both the native species and many hybrid varieties that we are happy to share with projects where the growing conditions are appropriate and the irises will thrive. Irises have been provided to parks, rain gardens, arboreta and natural areas. If you have a project where Louisiana irises can be used for a public purpose, contact one of our officers or board members.