

Mountains & Plains Iris eNews

Iris news that's fit to print . . .

July 15, 2010

Epic Mountains and Plains Iris Sale at Tagawa Garden *By Stephen Blecher*

Don't miss the Mountains and Plains Iris Sale! Starting this year, the sale will be held at Tagawa Gardens, 7711 S. Parker Rd., Aurora. The dates and times are Saturday, July 24 from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and Sunday, July 25 from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. You have received a mailing giving detailed instructions for delivering rhizomes, a rhizome certificate, and a donation sheet. As always we need volunteers to help dig and label irises at Hudson Gardens and to set up the sale and assist customers at Tagawa's. Garden volunteers: contact Steve Blecher at 303-798-9103 or email sblecher@comcast.net. Volunteers to help at Tagawa's: contact Richard Nolde at 720-283-8752 or email windriver@cybox.com.

A Note from the Editor

This second edition of the new Mountains and Plains e-newsletter highlights the 2010 garden tour, the iris show, and the AIS national convention, reported by Lynda Love. Without a doubt, the most important news is that the 2010 annual Mountains and Plains Denver Metro iris sale will be hosted this year by Tagawa Garden Center. Be there on Saturday, July 24 and Sunday, July 25

to help sell irises to the dozens of regional gardeners that are sure to come. Remember, this is our one and only annual fund raising event and we need your help to make it a success! Read the information package you have received in the mail, then call Steve Blecher or Richard Nolde to volunteer to help!

Happy gardening ~ Glenn Guenterberg (editor)
and Patrice Van Vleet (publisher)

Dateline Madison Wisconsin: Convention News *By Lynda Love*

The American Iris Society 90th Anniversary National Convention was held in Madison, Wisconsin from June 1 through 5. My mom, Marty Artzberger and I made the trip. Having lived in Madison in the early 70's, we had an idea of what to expect, but our expectations were definitely surpassed by the beauty of the Madison area and by the gardens we visited.

We started our tour with a visit to the Olbrich Botanical Gardens. Although not affiliated with the convention, we had heard about this garden's beauty. The garden consisted of a gorgeous sunken garden, a shade garden, a rose garden, a large perennial garden and a 'sustainable' garden (what we call a xeriscape garden). The highlight was the Thai Pavilion, a gift from Thai students who attended the University of Wisconsin in Madison. The Thai Pavilion is the only one of its kind in the United States. Its construction and assembly was by Thai craftsmen.

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Convention News, continued from page 1 — There were six AIS tour gardens. Our first garden was the Earthspirit garden, owned by Jean Bawden. Jean is a self-described plant fanatic and it showed in her garden's massive variety of perennials. I spent a happy bit of time under the shade cloth area she had created, drooling at the many shade plants I haven't a chance of growing back home. The giant primulas were my favorites. Out in the perennial garden were blooming 'Diablo' ninebarks, specimen evergreens, and peonies, to name a few. Standout guests in this garden included the almost-hot pink Siberian iris 'Miss Apple,' by Schafer/Sacks and a Keith Keppel TB called 'Brazilian Art.'

Our next garden was the Breezeway garden, which was the master planting for all the guest irises at the convention. This garden, like all the convention gardens, was slightly past peak for tall bearded iris bloom, but the irises were well grown and there was plenty to see. The owner's home was at the top of a hill with a nice view of the surrounding hills. The irises were planted in rows below. In this garden, the planting of beardless irises stood out. One in particular, pictured left, a bright yellow Shafer/Sacks Siberian iris named 'Tree of Songs,' commanded the most attention — indeed, this plant was voted the Franklin Cook Cup as the best out of region guest iris. There were literally crowds around this outstanding clump and I had to be patient to photograph it. Other noteworthy Siberian irises were Hollingworth's 'Swans in Flight,' with large white flowers and 'Hooked Again,' a pastel blend by Jim Copeland.



There were excellent tall bearded irises in the Breezeway garden as well. The irises of Paul Black were well represented. My favorite was 'Guilt Free Sample,' an apricot-colored TB with a stunning 15 buds per stalk! Tom Johnson sent many guest TB's. A few favorites were 'Baltic Sea,' a medium blue, 'Attractive Lady,' a pretty peach and white, and 'Super Model,' a late-blooming lacy lavender. 'Silk Road,' a TB with pale yellow standards and lavender falls by Keith Keppel was another favorite. Finally, a very dark purple Schreiner TB named 'Raven Girl' stood out.

Our final stop that first day was at the Skyline garden. In this garden it was obvious that the miniature tall bearded irises had put on an incredible show about two weeks earlier. I was sorry to have missed it.



Our second day of tours began with a steady rain. We pulled on our jackets and grabbed the umbrellas to tour the garden of hybridizer Francis Rogers. While we were in the garden, the rain stopped and the sun peeked out. I found my favorite TB guest in this garden, a uniquely colored lavender iris hybridized by Don Spoon, pictured right, aptly named 'Orchid Dove.' Also, two lavender Keith Keppel irises were standouts: 'French Lilacs,' and, pictured left, 'Legerdemain.'



The garden of Karl and Erika Becker was our last stop for the day. The weather cooperated, allowing us to enjoy this incredibly beautiful garden. After wandering through the guest irises, Mom and I each found a chair to relax and enjoy the breeze and the birdsong.

Our final garden was the Rotary garden in Janesville, WI. In the visitor center, the Peony Society was preparing a show of peony blossoms. I'd never seen so many different peonies in one place. The room was filled with their lovely scent. The attendees were busy preparing for their show so, unfortunately, we weren't welcome. But I took a few quick pictures.



The Rotary garden was incredible. This was the one garden where I wish we'd had more time. In addition to the guest iris garden there was a rose garden, a Japanese garden, a Hosta garden, and several others. All the gardens were beautifully planned and maintained. In the guest iris area, we were pleasantly surprised to see a few spuria irises blooming!

All in all, we had a great trip. Yes, the irises were past peak (in terms of tall bearded bloom). Yes, it rained (every day!). Yes, it was humid. However, we saw many amazing plants in different settings, the scenery was great, and we ate some delicious food. It doesn't get much better than that!

(All article photos contributed by Lynda Love.)

Mountains and Plains Iris Show *By Steve Blecher*

The 2010 Iris Show took place at the Denver Botanic Gardens (DBG) on Saturday, May 29. It was good to be back at the newly refurbished DBG, and since it was Memorial Day weekend there were large crowds at the gardens and great attendance at the show. The DBG staff was very helpful in setting up Mitchell Hall for us, and we had a good group of volunteers, including several new members. As a result, the show went very smoothly.

This was an unusually late bloom season, so there were fewer tall bearded irises than we normally have, but we had more median and historic irises. In addition, we had a great display of seedlings. I'm sure that a number of these seedlings will be introduced in the coming years. We had a total of 108 entries, including seedlings, and 12 exhibitors. Lisa Story won the Best Specimen of Show award with 'Dynamite,' pictured right, a very attractive dark red iris by Schreiner. Bob Van Liere won Best Seedling with his entry, numbered '23EW25,' pictured left.



In a very close competition, the Silver Medal for most blue ribbons was won by Lois and Orvid Olson, and Lowell Baumunk won the Bronze Medal for second place. Actually there was a tie for the number of blue ribbons, but the Olsons had more red ribbons. In Section C, Other Bearded Irises, Lowell won the Section Sweepstakes. Within Section C, Marty Artzberger exhibited the best Miniature Tall Bearded specimen, 'Ace,' and Steve Blecher had the best Intermediate Bearded, 'Man's Best Friend.' In Section F, Historic Irises, the Section Sweepstakes certificate was won by Rebecca Schlottach. Lowell had the best Historic Specimen, 'Honorabile,' originally introduced in 1840.



This year's judges were Carol Eacker, Russ Eacker, Elsie Funk, pictured right, Sally Funk, Glenn Guenterberg, Lynda Love, and Ellen McIntosh.



There was no Artistic Division this year, and that's unfortunate. Years ago we had quite a few artistic arrangements, but interest has declined in recent years. Last year I attended a show in Scottsbluff Nebraska, and they had at least 15 artistic arrangements. The Loomis Iris Society in Rocky Ford always has about 20 artistic entries at their shows. The Artistic Division was always popular with the visitors to the show, and I hope we can revive interest among the Denver area members.

(Article photos contributed by Richard Nolde & Steve Blecher.)



Mountains & Plains Events Schedule:

Iris Sale at Tagawa Garden Center, 7719 S. Parker Rd., Aurora

Saturday July 24 — from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Also on . . .

Sunday July 25 — from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Fall Mountain & Plains Iris Society Meeting — Date & location to be announced.

Blooming Iris Gardens — Three on Tour *By Steve Blecher*

The Mountains and Plains Iris Garden Tour took place on Sunday May 30. We were blessed with perfect weather, sunny but cool. The first stop was Iris4U, the pride and joy of Bob Van Liere. Although it was a few days before peak, it was a solid mass of color, thanks to adequate moisture and no severe frost damage. Bob has been making great strides as a hybridizer, and his extensive seedling beds were much admired and closely inspected by the judges among us. In a single visit, there's no way to take in all there is to see at Iris4U. I visit four times during bloom season, and still don't see everything that's blooming.

The next stop was the iris display bed at Hudson Gardens, pictured at bottom. This bed has been in existence for about 15 years, and started out as guest garden for the 1998 AIS Convention. Since the convention it has been maintained as a display bed by volunteers from AIS Region 20, and now Mountains and Plains volunteers. Every year we dig about a quarter of the plants for the annual iris sale and replace them with new varieties. The bed contains clumps in various stages of development, from first year plants to large clumps that need to be divided. We always need volunteers to cultivate, weed, and dig for the **iris sale**.*

After a lunch break, we proceeded to Iris Colorado, owned by Lowell Baumunk and located in a rural setting south of Chatfield Reservoir. In addition to the irises there are other attractions at Iris Colorado. There are lots of wild birds at bird feeders, and you can always see hummingbirds. Lowell's partner, Barb Lewis has put together a world class xeriscape garden that has an extensive collection of rock garden and desert plants, including an impressive display of cactuses, many in full bloom. Because of the late spring the tall bearded irises were mostly in bud. That being said, we were treated to an excellent assortment of intermediate, miniature tall, and arilbred irises in full bloom, something we don't usually see this late in the spring. Lowell has established a reputation as a hybridizer of arilbred and median irises and has won several awards. At the end of the tour Lowell presented a Garden Judges' training session.

We would like to thank Bob Van Liere, Lowell Baumunk, both pictured right, and Hudson Gardens for hosting this the 2010 Iris Garden Tour.

***Yes, be sure to come to the annual Mountains and Plains iris sale!** This year it's at Tagawa Garden Center, 7711 South Parker Road. The 2010 sale on July 24 and 25 is sure to be a hit with gardeners throughout the metro area. Get there early for the best selection that will include newer introductions and older favorites, all priced to sell fast. Check the summer calendar on page 3 and the mailing you have received for the details.



(Photos contributed by Steve Blecher.)

