

For Iris Lovers in the Cold Zones



Aurora

Newsletter of the Can-West Iris Society

Summer 2014

Volume 8, Issue 2

Update From the Organizing Committee

The 2014 bloom season is done. Now all that is left is the clean up, collecting pods and preparing to dig, divide, replant or move out the old to make way for the new. And that leads to the preview of the upcoming **summer rhizome sale** for which you will find the preview on page 2. The Committee has put together what we think is a great selection focusing on the very newest of Canadian hybridizing as well as the tried and true of the classic and historic. We have also changed up our ordering this year to better accommodate our increased membership. Hopefully, there will be fewer members disappointed with the increased number of each variety. A sellout is a good thing but it also means that a lot did not get a chance to participate or did not get their first selections. And that is not a good thing!

This issue also showcases the **7th annual show results**, both the iris and the people without whom we could not do what we do. Once more, our thanks to all who helped out in any way. Please see the **show report on page 3** and the **attached photo pages** for a glimpse of what went on throughout the day. And, you can mark your calendars for next year! To avoid the problem in getting the hall on the day we wanted, it has been booked a year in advance. The **8th annual show will be held on Sunday, June 14th**, same time, same place. And, it is not Father's Day and there is no peony show going on at the same time!

Finally, on pages 4 to 6 is an article from the AIS blog on iris species *anguifuga*. An interesting read for species lovers.

And while it is still fresh in your minds, please take a few minutes to think about your top performers for the year. The more members who tell us what their best iris varieties were, the more able we are to try to get iris that meet our members expectations for the sales.

We are also looking for a **volunteer** to write about their iris and their garden for the **Spring 2015 issue**. This is always a most popular feature as we lead into the growing season. If you are interested in telling us about yours, please contact one of us at your earliest convenience.

And now sit back, relax and enjoy the **Summer 2014 CWIS newsletter!** Comments, suggestions or constructive criticism is always welcome. You can contact us at:

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Rhizome Sale Preview 2014

It's almost here! All the arrangements have been made and we are just waiting now for the arrival of the iris for the CWIS annual summer rhizome sale. For 2014, the sale will run (subject to the iris arrival, of course) from Sunday, July 27th to Saturday, August 1st. If possible, the list will be posted in the morning to browse with your morning coffee. If something changes and the dates have to be altered, members will be notified through an email message to their inbox. This has only happened once before and we do not anticipate that it will happen but we mention it just in case Canada Post does not come through for us.

For 2014, we are pleased to offer the newest work from Canadian hybridizer John McMillen of Norwich ON. For a look at some of what he has created, please see the Canadian Introductions section of the Trails End Iris website at http://www.trailsendiris.com/irises/by_collection_4.htm. We may not get all of these but we are sure to get some of them as well as some others that he has just recently added. Most, if not all, will be either 2013 or 2014 introductions and all will be available exclusively through this sale at discounted prices for CWIS members. **We are that special!**

Also contributing to this year's sale is a Canadian collector of historic iris, well known to those who are also Canadian Iris Society members. Don McQueen has offered us several historic irises to make available to our members. And rounding out the list of suppliers this year is Chuck Chapman. Chuck says he will be including some classics from other Canadian hybridizers, too, in addition to many others. As usual, we don't know for sure what will be coming yet, but have you ever seen one you didn't like in our sales?

As well, we will have several member donations, too, in the listing. Thank you to all who are sharing their beauties with us! There will be something for everyone at various price points. And, as usual, timing in getting your orders in will be very important as quantities of each, although increased this year, still remain limited.

You asked for it and you got it! We look forward to your support and participation in this, our major fundraising event for the Can-West Iris Society. We couldn't do it without you.

The glory of gardening:
hands in the dirt, head in the sun,
heart with nature. To nurture a
garden is to feed not just on the
body, but the soul.

[Alfred Austin](#)

Show Report

Sunday, June 15th 2014

Bourkevale Community Centre

(Compiled by BJ Jackson)

In spite of torrential downpours, flooded streets and reluctant stems that refused to open, the 7th annual CWIS show was a rousing success. We unloaded the night before in the rain. We arrived in the morning in the rain. Do you sense a theme here? In addition to the weather which did not cooperate at all, 11 hearty souls arrived early to prepare 92 stems to be judged from all the bearded classes as well as the Siberian and Species classes.

In what quickly became apparent perusing the **Court of Honour** table following the judging, the 2014 show will henceforth be known as the **Brenda Newton show!** Brenda took home **5** Section certificates as well as Best Canadian Hybridized Stem in Show and the AIS Sweepstakes Silver Medal. Other award winners included **BJ Jackson** who received the Section certificate for Seedlings (the first time a first place ribbon has been given for the seedling class), as well as the People's Choice award. There were several exhibits in the running for this award this year and a record number of ballots were cast by visitors to the show! **David Hutchison** received the Best In Show award and the TB Section certificate. **El Hutchison** took home the AIS Sweepstakes Bronze Medal. Below is the awards breakdown and winning varieties.

CWIS Section certificates:

MDB - Brenda Newton for Brown Imp

SDB - Brenda Newton for Irish Harp

IB - Brenda Newton for Cat in the Hat

MTB - Brenda Newton for In My Veins

TB - David Hutchison for Eagles Flight

Other - Brenda Newton for I. lactea

Seedlings - BJ Jackson for MTB Bold Imp OP seedling 2012-03

Best Canadian Hybridized Stem in Show (sponsored by Chuck Chapman Iris)

- Brenda Newton for SDB Spirit Guide

People's Choice Award - BJ Jackson for MTB Tic Tac Toe

Best in Show - David Hutchison for TB Eagles Flight

(Co-sponsored by CWIS and Trails End Iris)

AIS Sweepstakes

- Bronze Medal and certificate - El Hutchison

- Silver medal and certificate - Brenda Newton

From
World of Irises
The Blog of The American Iris Society
Iris anguifuga - The missing link?

by Jim Murrain

Iris anguifuga is native to China and has been cultivated for centuries around summer gardens to repel snakes from entering the grounds and, when the rhizome is ground into a paste, applied topically as an herbal remedy against snakebites (or so these 'Old Wives' tales go). This clone was collected by Dr. James Waddick in 1989 and has been named 'Snake Bane'.



'Snake Bane' is a typical beardless *Iris* in many respects. It has that generic shape and color of many irises. It could easily be mistaken for a Spuria Iris at bloom time. However, it has a marked difference from all other irises, it is dormant and leafless during most of the growing season. *Iris anguifuga* begins growth in late fall as other irises are getting ready for winter and the snakes are going into hiding. It remains green in my z6a garden all winter although at only two to three inches in height. In early spring it puts forth a burst of growth and is in flower by mid-May.

Around June, as the snakes emerge and gain their strength back, the *Iris* goes dormant or 'disappears'.



These two older photos give a better idea of the true color. *I. anguifuga* is vigorous in full sun and makes a nice clump quickly. It will grow in partial shade but flowering will be reduced.



The missing link? *Iris anguifuga* spends summer as a compact bulb. When it breaks dormancy in the fall it grows a rhizome. After flowering the rhizome withers away except for the growth point which pulls together in the form of a bulb. It is thought that this may be how bulbous irises first developed.



This illustration from the book *Iris of China* shows *Iris anguifuga* on the right half, 1 through 5. You can see the bulb shape has formed just before the rhizome will disappear for the summer.

It is a modest plant in the garden with a simple display, but the story is a real conversation starter and who knows? Maybe it will keep the snakes away, too.