

For Iris Lovers in the Cold Zones



Aurora

Newsletter of the Can-West Iris Society

Winter/Spring, 2012

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Update From the Organizing Committee

What a strange winter it has been! No snow, too warm, too cold, too much snow. It just couldn't decide what it was going to do at all! The only good thing is that it will soon be over. It's March and our thoughts are slowly turning to the upcoming growing season and all the wonders it will bring.

The Organizing Committee has been hard at work over the winter planning for 2012 and we all hope you will be pleased with what we have come up with. We will be at Gardening Saturday March 31st again this year (see page 2 for more details). And, this year marks our 5th annual show on June 10th. It will be one you won't soon forget (see page 3 for further details).

The Region 21 spring meeting and tours is being held in Lincoln, Nebraska this year and they have issued us an invitation to participate. AIS members will be receiving details and a registration form in the mail soon (hopefully), but it is open to all CWIS members. Being held the weekend of May 25, 26 and 27, I hope to see you there! Check out page 6 for all the information you will need. There's also an update from Librarian Len Giesbrecht (page 5), an interesting piece on dirt and its antidepressant qualities (page 4), a preview of one of Chuck Chapman's futures (page 7) as well as a list of gardens to visit and garden etiquette (page 8). Also included for your information as a separate document along with this newsletter is the just approved 2012 Show Schedule. If you'd like entry tags in advance, please contact us and we'll arrange to get them to you.

Change is in the air, too. The CWIS website will be moving servers this spring. Our thanks to Jennifer Bishop for providing space on her company server these last few years. As far as we know now, the domain name will stay the same. We continue to look for a logo for CWIS and hope 2012 will be the year we find one. We really need something that will identify us out there. Any ideas, send them on.

So, with the snow falling around us and a cold weekend ahead, sit back, relax and enjoy this edition of your CWIS newsletter. And, above all, remember to Think Spring!!!

You can reach us at with any comments, concerns, and ideas at:

B. J. Jackson, jacksonb@mts.net;
Deborah Petrie, petrie@mts.net; (or)

Jennifer Bishop, Jennifer@dataways.com;
Eleanor Hutchison, eleanore@mts.net



Gardening Saturday

Sponsored by the Friends of Gardens Manitoba

March 31st, Canadian Mennonite University

Once again this year, Can-West Iris Society has been invited to participate at Gardening Saturday in 2012. Last year, more than 4,000 people went through the vendor area and we were totally wiped out of pamphlets and membership application forms.

New members were recruited and we even sold some potted iris that had been stored dry over winter. It was so much fun and such a good time was had by all that we're doing it again this year! But we need your help. If you can spare an hour or two to talk iris to the gardening public, we need you.

This year we are sharing our table with the Manitoba Regional Lily Society and we will be once again located right beside the Prairie Garden Magazine.

Please consider coming out to give us a hand. Gardening Saturday runs from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday, March 31st this year and we'd love to have you with us. Please contact B. J. Jackson with the times you are available. All volunteer names must be submitted to the Friends in advance of the event so sooner is better. Further details regarding parking and access to the event will be provided via e-mail to volunteers.

They don't look like much now, but these little ones will be ready for sale at the event! Left over from last year's summer sale, they were stored dry over winter and potted at the beginning of February. A few are being stubborn but of the 17 potted, 13 have new growth already. As with those last year, we anticipate they will sell out in minutes.



2012 Can-West Iris Society 5th Annual Show

Sunday, June 10th, 2012 - Bourkevale Community Centre

2012 marks the 5th anniversary for our annual show and we are very much looking forward to it. To make the event even more memorable, our accomplishment will be marked with special prizes, a silent auction for some amazing iris and much, much more. Make sure to mark the date on your calendar. We look forward to seeing you and to receiving your entries. Bring a friend along to introduce them to the wonderful world of iris and what we CAN grow, pass the word to other gardening friends. You will be amazed and inspired to see the show tables decked out with iris of all sizes and colors! And, if you have an hour or two to help us out, that would be amazing. The Show Committee cannot do it all! See below for details.

We Need Your Help!!!

If you can help out, even for an hour or two, please contact: B. J. Jackson at jacksonb@mts.net (or) Deborah Petrie at petrie@mts.net.

Some of the areas with which we will need help include: Exhibitor Registration, Classification, Court of Honor Set-Up, Clerking, Information/Membership Table, Sale Table, and Show Take-Down.

It's a great learning experience plus a great opportunity to talk iris with like-minded individuals. We look forward to your support!!!

Mood-boosting Bacteria Found in Dirt

Editor's Note: The following article appeared on an online news service and I thought it would be of interest. It was written by Yahoo! Shine Senior Editor Lylah M. Alphonse and is Copyright © 2012 Yahoo Inc.

A bacteria found in dirt may act like a natural antidepressant. Even if you don't love gardening, digging in the dirt may be good for your health -- and it has nothing to do with a love of nature or the wonder of watching things grow. The secret may be in the dirt itself: A bacteria called *Mycobacterium vaccae* that acts like an antidepressant once it gets into your system.

That's right. A living organism that acts like a mood-booster on the human brain, increasing serotonin and norepinephrine levels and making people feel happier. It was accidentally discovered about 10 years ago, when Dr. Mary O'Brien, an oncologist at the Royal Marsden Hospital in London, tried an experimental treatment for lung cancer. She inoculated patients with killed *M. vaccae*, expecting the bacteria -- which is related to ones that cause tuberculosis and leprosy -- to boost their immune system. It did that, *The Economist* reported in 2007, but it also improved her patients' "emotional health, vitality, and general cognitive function." Later experiments with mice confirmed the bacteria's effects; the study was published in a 2007 edition of the journal "Neuroscience."

"These studies help us understand how the body communicates with the brain and why a healthy immune system is important for maintaining mental health," the mouse study's lead author, neuroscientist Dr. Christopher Lowry, said. "They also leave us wondering if we shouldn't all be spending more time playing in the dirt." "We believe that prolonged exposure to [*M.vaccae*] from childhood could have a beneficial effect," he added.

It raises the intriguing idea of a future where doctors could treat clinical depression or Seasonal Affective Disorder with a simple vaccine (and possibly a future in which kids don't need quite so many baths). In the meantime, people seeking a bit of a boost may be able to find it in their own backyards.

In an article in *The Atlantic* this week, author Pagan Kennedy tests out the ultimate in eco-friendly antidepressants herself. "As I huff the soil, I have no way of knowing exactly how much *M. vaccae* is floating into my lungs -- or whether it's enough to change my mind," she writes. "But I sure can smell this compost." We wouldn't recommend inhaling dirt, of course. But, come spring, we're looking forward to spending more time getting dirty.



Library News

(from Len Giesbrecht)

Our Iris Library is growing. We have most of the AIS Bulletins going back to 2000 and they are filled with interesting articles.

Articles on the newest introductions from hybridizers all over the world, items pertaining to all the different irises we grow, from TBs to the medians of which we grow so many in our climate, as well as articles on hybridizing, seed starting, showing iris in competitions and yes, design as well.

We also have what is, at this time, a somewhat limited selection of Iris books, and we are always looking for additions to the **Library** so if you have extras to donate please contact me.

I will be bringing the Library to the Iris Show this spring. If we don't see you there, contact me at lengiesb@hotmail.com for information on how to access the books we do have.

Editor's Note: Displayed below are just a few of the colorful and informative bulletins from the American Iris Society available on loan to members.



Region 21 Spring Meeting and Tours

By: Gary White, Registrar, Lincoln Iris Society

Lincoln Iris Society will be hosting the spring Region 21 meeting and tour in 2012. The convention will be held Friday evening, May 25th and a full day on Saturday May 26th. The registration fee will be \$40, and the hotel, the AmericInn Lodge and Suites, Lincoln South. Its a new hotel (just 3 yrs old) and the rate is just \$70 per night. AIS President Judy Keisling will be our guest and she will give Judge's Training in the garden and probably will also do a program for us.

There are 6 or 7 gardens lined up for the tour, including the Sass Memorial Garden at Mahoney State Park between Lincoln and Omaha. There will be 2 or 3 large gardens in addition to the Sass Garden and another 3 smaller, but very nice gardens. Transportation will be in 15 passenger vans for the tours.

We hope to have a couple of surprises on the tour, and we think it will be well worth people's attendance. We have lined up a really good caterer for the lunches on the tour day and the evening banquet will be at one of the Country Clubs in Lincoln, with probably the best buffet in town (a very good selection, and it will be up for about 3 hours). But, of course, the best part is the people. People are always great to see again and visit with. We are excited about having you and as many others as you can persuade to come along, to join us here in Lincoln. The Lincoln Iris Society is probably the largest in the region, but there are several that are older. We will do our best to make this an enjoyable and memorable iris convention.



Sass Memorial Iris Garden

Built and maintained to show historic iris in a beautiful garden setting. This garden is devoted to the pioneering iris hybridizing work done by Hans, Jacob, and Henry Sass. The garden also includes modern irises, as well as varieties which have won the American Iris Society Dykes Medal or the Sass Medal.

Editor's Note: I attended a median convention hosted by the Lincoln Iris Society in 2006 and I am quite excited to be going back again! If anyone is interested in joining me, Delta Airlines flies directly to Lincoln without having to go through Omaha and the cost is reasonable (considering). I thought about driving, but 15 hours is just too much for me. It is always more fun with other people you know along so let me know if this is something you would be interested in attending and I will pass on more information as I receive it. It is an amazing iris experience!!

What's New?

Coming soon from Chuck Chapman.!!!

Editor's Note: It isn't registered or introduced yet but Chuck wanted us to know about it first!

He writes: Here is one photo and write up so far, seedling 03-664-D BB 24" Medium Late bloom season, 24" tall. No fragrance. Standards are blue-violet, lighter at edges. Falls are very light violet with yellow shoulders. Beards are white tipped yellow. Beautiful flower stalks with excellent branching and an incredible 10 flowers in sequential bloom. Parentage: Crowned Heads X Fogbound. Won Best seedling in Canadian Iris Society shows 2010 and 2011.



Gardens to Visit

Winnipeg Area - Rural

El Hutchison
iris_lady2001@hotmail.com

Sandy Eggertson
Visit www.merlebleu.net and use
contact form.

Winnipeg City

Wilma and Gerry Maurice
trusty@mymts.net

Len Giesbrecht
lengiesb@hotmail.com

Sandy Venton, felix1@mts.net

Brandon City

Deborah Petrie, petrie@mts.net

B. J. Jackson, jacksonb@mts.net

Brandon Area Rural

Brenda Newton
valleyrimgirl@inetlinkwireless.ca

HOW TO BE A COURTEOUS VISITOR

Garden Etiquette101

All gardens listed are seen by appointment only. Unless otherwise indicated, send an e-mail message in advance for directions and to set a mutually acceptable time.

Arrive promptly and remember Mother Nature does not always agree with our plans, or our anticipated bloom times!

While your host may offer food and drink, you should not expect it.

Wear sensible shoes, and expect to get dirty. A hat or sun screen is also a good idea.

Bring a notepad and pen to jot down thoughts, notes or add to your wish list.

Do not touch or pick the flowers! Do not move any plant markers.

Be careful with your umbrella, handbag, and camera. Watch your feet! Always stay on walking paths.

Pets or children are not encouraged!

Do not ask for (or take!) plants and/or seeds

And, lastly and most important, please remember that you are a guest! Have fun! Ask questions!
But please...leave the garden as you found it!

Member Speaking Engagements

McNally Robinson talks gardening the last Wednesday of the month at 7:30 p.m. in the Travel Alcove, at Grant Park, 1120 Grant Avenue in Winnipeg: CWIS members Susan LeBlanc, Seeds, March 28; **Sandy Eggertson**, Iris, April 25; and **Jennifer Bishop**, Hosta, June 27.

Jennifer Bishop will also be speaking on Hosta to the Charleswood Garden Club on April 11th

Brenda Newton is speaking on Heuchera in Deloraine on March 29 and Gardening on a Budget at the Westman Gardeners Hort Day in Brandon on April 21.

If you would like to publicize any of your speaking engagements in future issues, please pass the information on to B. J. Jackson at jacksonb@mts.net. Our members have diverse interests in addition to iris so if you are looking for information, try and come out!