

*The Lincoln Iris Society's*

# *Rainbow Messenger*

*A More or Less Monthly Publication for Anyone who Loves Irises!*

Edited by David & Marjorie Lionberger

Lincoln, Nebraska

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## *President's Message*

Angie Vandersnick, our guest speaker at the February meeting, provided an interesting program that all enjoyed. She is a very knowledgeable person and answered many questions from various LIS members. Angie's family owns and operates Nebraska Nursery and she invited everyone to visit their business here in Lincoln. She also donated several items from their business for door prizes. Thank you Angie and Nebraska Nursery!

As I write this, the Husker Lawn and Leisure event is coming to a close. Thank you to all that volunteered to staff our booth. Also a special thanks to Dean Douglas for his work in organizing our involvement in this annual activity. From the members I have talked to, it seems our booth attracted many people. Lots of questions pertaining to iris culture were asked and our members provided knowledgeable answers to all. Many show and sale handouts were distributed, as well as several LIS and AIS membership applications. I am sure this event will be one of the topics at our next meeting, so it will be interesting to hear our volunteers' experiences and opinions as to the success of its endeavor.

*David Lionberger*

## *President's Quote*

I love spring anywhere, but if I could choose I would always greet it in a garden.

*Ruth Stout*

## **Meeting**

**Date:** Monday, March 30, 2015

**Time:** 6:30 p.m.

**Location:** St. Andrews Lutheran Church  
1015 Lancaster Lane, Lincoln, NE

**Program:** Presentation on Clematis  
Gary White

**Hosts:** Dorene Sillman and Judy Douglas

## **March Program**

Clematis will be the topic for this month's program presented by Gary White. A very popular climber that does require some special care. Gary will have valuable information for proper clematis culture.

## **Questions about Iris or LIS**

*Contact:*

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Jenny Cich

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## Spring Affair

*Jenny Cich*

The Lincoln Iris Society will be participating in the biggest gardening event in Nebraska, the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum Spring Affair Plant Sale. The 2015 Spring Affair will be held in the Lancaster Event Center's Pavillion 1. Four to five thousand gardeners come to the Spring Affair plant sale for the chance to select from more than 500 different plant varieties with 45,000+ plants available for sale in addition to plant talks and garden vendors (like us!) all under one roof.

Our booth will be educational in nature where we will be available to answer questions on growing iris and promoting the LIS and our 2015 schedule of events. The booth will need volunteers Friday evening 6-9 pm and Saturday from 9 am-2 pm. If you are interested in representing the LIS during this event, please contact Jenny Cich at [jennycich@gmail.com](mailto:jennycich@gmail.com) or watch for the signup sheet that will be circulated at the March meeting.

For more information on this exceptional gardening event you can check out their website <http://arboretum.unl.edu/spring-affair>

## AIS MEMBERSHIP VOUCHER

*Jenny Cich*

A \$25.00 VOUCHER MAY BE YOURS! The Voucher Program is here for any new member of AIS, any new E-Member, or for any current member who upgrades membership; that is, upgrades from a single membership to a triennial or to a dual, or an E-Member who upgrades to multiple years of E-Membership. The program works like this: each new or upgraded member will receive a voucher in the mail from Membership Secretary, Tom Gormley. Included with the voucher will be a listing of participating nurseries that accept the voucher with an order for irises. The listing will show what value each nursery places on the voucher and the minimum order each nursery requires. The list will also appear on the AIS website, [www.irises.org](http://www.irises.org) When you mail your order to one of the participating nurseries, include the voucher with the order. If you order online you must include your voucher number with your order. Your voucher can be used only once and with the nursery of your choice. The voucher must be redeemed promptly. The voucher value does not count toward a minimum purchase amount. Most vendors do not treat this as a discount off the order, but rather will provide you with a plant of their choice at the value listed for the voucher. You will pay the shipping charge on your order as usual. If you have any questions about this program please contact Tom Gormley, Membership Secretary, PO Box 177, DeLeon Springs, FL 32130, [aismemsec@irises.org](mailto:aismemsec@irises.org)

## **Spring Clean-up Reminder**

With the warm and dry days we have had in early March, it is time to clean those iris beds. Removal of leaves and other blown in debris is most beneficial for borer control. Eggs that were laid last fall will hatch with two consecutive days of 70 degrees or warmer. With trash removed from around the rhizomes, sunshine and wind will dry up the wet soil that compacted trash creates. Excessive moisture encourages rhizome soft rot which is damaging as well as unpleasant. The odor which is similar to rotten potatoes is unforgettable. Fresh air moving freely through the iris clump will help avoid leaf spot especially through extended cloudy and damp days. All material removed from the iris bed should be removed from the property and not composted. Garden cleanliness is a positive practice which will greatly reduce the use of chemicals.

A very important benefit which the gardener receives cannot be over looked. Fresh air, sunshine and exercise are most healthy after a long winter, if not overdone!

## **Membership Update**

*submitted by Linda Rader*

Renewing members. Please add them to your membership booklet.

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Susan Johnson Russell  
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Lincoln, NE 68506  
402-304-1931  
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Velda Coffey  
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Hickman, NE 68372-9468  
402-792-2919  
mccupatea@aol.com

## **Should I Fertilize My Iris?**

This question is common among iris fanciers in the spring season. A professional soil test is the most reliable source to determine the specific requirements of your gardens nutrients and acid balance. Most iris gardens will benefit with a light application of fertilizer in early spring and another light application a month after bloom time. Fertilizer low in nitrogen such as 5-10-10 is beneficial for healthy growth and good bloom. As 5-10-10 is sometimes difficult to find except in small quantities and high prices, a 10-10-10 fertilizer will serve the purpose and is economical and available in larger quantities. Most Farm Co-ops carry a variety of fertilizers as well as gypsum in pellet form. A light application of gypsum applied when fertilizing is also beneficial. Too much fertilizer is worse than too little, so be conservative with both fertilizer and gypsum. High nitrogen can lead to soft rot problems. Sprinkle both products lightly around the iris bed and gently rake them into the soil. Remember iris roots are not very deep and can easily be disturbed and injured by deep raking or cultivating. Try to avoid applying fertilizer to the top of the rhizomes as fertilizer burn can occur. An old small and soft paint brush attached to a broom handle makes it easy to gently brush excessive fertilizer off the rhizomes. A good deep watering after application is advisable and water sparingly thereafter.

## **Change of Address**

If you move or change your address for any reason, please notify the Membership Chairman, as soon as possible. Be sure to include both your former and new address and your e-mail address.

Send updated information to:

Linda Rader  
701 Old Cheney Rd.  
Lincoln, NE. 68512-1168

Or you may e-mail:  
rizndough@yahoo.com

## *Succumbing to the Iris Virus*

*continued from the February issue*

*By David Lionberger*

We had departed from the Douglas garden, with determination to pursue our interest in iris by attending the Lincoln Iris society's spring show and visiting Bev and Bob Smith's garden.

The iris show was astounding. Beautiful irises of all kinds were arranged in displays that society members proudly exhibited. Various friendly society members made us feel welcome and happily shared their enthusiasm and knowledge of the genus iris. We found it not only beautiful, but the glowing embers of the iris virus were now fanned into flickering flame. Without hesitation we joined The Lincoln Iris Society.

Shortly thereafter, we drove to Prairie Home, Nebraska, and visited Prairie Valley Gardens owned by Bev and Bob Smith. Once again we were warmly welcomed to another beautiful garden containing not only iris, but a variety of other flowers, most of which were in full bloom. After touring the gardens and placing an order from their catalog, we were asked to sit down and visit. In the course of our conversation Bob mentioned he was into hybridizing iris. He explained the process and offered to show us how it was actually performed. We laughed as he told us that Mr. Ensminger had shown him how to hybridize iris and "It ruined my life". Bob had a great sense of humor and he and Bev are greatly missed by their many friends. As we were leaving, Bob walked with us toward our car. Near the parking area we stopped to admire a beautiful bronze, copper and gold iris that would cause anyone to stop in their tracks. I immediately said that I wished to add this iris to our order. Bob explained this was a seedling he had hybridized and it was not for sale. Then he added "However, as you admire it so much I will include one in your order as a gift" This lovely iris now flourishes in our garden. Its marker proudly displays Bob's seedling number and all visitors comment on its striking beauty. I credit Bob for my interest and involvement in hybridizing. I have used his seedling in hybridizing and eagerly await the results.

*to be continued...*