

For Iris Lovers in the Cold Zones



Aurora

Newsletter of the Can-West Iris Society

Winter/Spring 2013

Volume 7, Issue 1

Update From the Organizing Committee

I would really like to be writing that spring is in the air and that the temperature is rising and the ground warming in anticipation of a great gardening season in 2013. I would really like to, but I can't. As I write this it is -22 and there is yet another snow storm coming. For most areas of the prairies, this has been a most unusual and definitely not normal winter. For most of us, we are still under feet of snow and spring is no where in sight. But it has to end, right? It just has to. And hopefully winter will have loosened its grip on us soon. That's it about the weather. On to the exciting year 2013 is going to be for CWIS.

The Organizing Committee has put together a great events year for us all. See page 2 for all the events planned. If you are planning to come out to Gardening Saturday, drop by the booth we are sharing again this year with the Manitoba Regional Lily Society and say hello. The next event, Chuck Chapman's presentations, are our first time attempting such an event and I hope we can count on your support! See page 3 for the details. Arrangements are being made to have his presentations video taped and the DVDs placed in the library so all those members who are unable to join us will have access to the wealth of experience and information that is going to be shared. If you are able to attend, I promise that you will not be disappointed. And then it is on to the annual show. Information is outlined on page 4 and the full show schedule will be sent to all members separately. So whenever this snow finally melts, be on the lookout for that stem that just could win you Best in Show.

Included in this issue, too, is a member profile. Please read all about our Alaskan member, Debbie Hinchey. She is one busy lady and she is sharing herself and her gardens with us starting on page 5. A teaser for the 2013 rhizome sale on page 2 and news from the AIS and Region 21 rounds out this edition on page 10.

So gather your beverage of choice, sit back and enjoy the issue and please, help us as we all try to **Think Spring** and bring it just a little closer! As always, you can contact any of us on the Organizing Committee at:

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

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

2013 CWIS Events

**Friends of Gardens Manitoba
Gardening Saturday - March 23rd
Canadian Mennonite University, North Campus,
500 Shaftesbury Boulevard, Winnipeg MB
(9 a.m. to 4 p.m.)**

**Chuck Chapman Presentations
Sunday, April 21st at 1 p.m.
Bourkevale Community Centre
100 Ferry Road, Winnipeg MB
(See article page 3 for additional information)**

**6th Annual AIS sanctioned Show
Sunday, June 9th
Bourkevale Community Centre
Open to the Public from 1 to 4 p.m.
(See page 4 for further information)**

**Annual Member Rhizome Sale
Friday, August 2nd to Thursday, August 8th
(Tentative dates, pending confirmation of rhizome arrival)**

CWIS Rhizome Sale 2013

To whet your appetite for this year's sale, I am pleased to announce that our major supplier will be Tom Johnson and Paul Black's Mid America Gardens. Check out their website at <http://www.beardedirisflowers.com/> and start making your lists. Since we did their TBs in 2007, this year's sale will concentrate on the Median class. Both Paul and Tom are very much looking forward to supplying us with the newest and best of their creations.

We are also soliciting donations to augment the sales this year which will run the last week in July or first week in August depending on rhizome arrival. Please have a look at your iris in the spring and let me know if you have some you would be willing to donate. Named or no-names, all donations are welcome. Any class, any size! If they don't have a name, a photo would be appreciated. Please contact BJ at jacksonb@mts.net.

CAN-WEST IRIS SOCIETY PRESENTS

April 21st 2013 at 1:00 p.m.

Bourkevale Community Centre

100 Ferry Road, Winnipeg, Manitoba

CHUCK CHAPMAN, CANADIAN IRIS HYBRIDIZER

Presentation Topics:

"Iris Through the Seasons" and "Breeding for Cold Climates"



For those of you not familiar with him, Chuck is the owner and operator of Chuck Chapman Iris, one of Canada's largest iris speciality nurseries.

He has been putting out a catalogue since 1991 and currently sends plants to many foreign countries as well as across Canada and USA. He grows about 1500 named varieties and lists about 750 in his catalogue, including many species of iris plants.

His farm, located just north of Guelph ON, consists of eleven acres of sandy loam with about 2 acres of natural wetlands. Here there are about four acres of iris plants under cultivation - almost half of it seedlings under development. This is probably the most northern iris farm in existence and certainly the most northern location that produces new bearded iris plants. There is little snow cover most winters and the springs are cold and wet.

Chuck does extensive plant breeding and carefully selects plants for good growth as well as beauty. His "carpet" series of plants are exceptionally hardy and easy to grow plants that produce a carpet of bloom over a long bloom time. All plants are carefully selected to be hardy in the Canadian garden. A number of his rebloomers will rebloom as far north as Winnipeg and some are close to being everblooming in southern Ontario. Chuck has registered over 100 iris cultivars from his hybridising program and his hybrids have won over 30 international awards, including several gold and silver medals from the German Iris Society

Chuck has done research on various aspects of iris genetics and written a number of articles on his findings and makes presentation in Canada and USA each year. He is a member of numerous iris societies and keeps in touch with iris experts around the world.

So come on down and join us for an exciting iris afternoon! CWIS members have free admission but if you'd like to bring a friend, the non-member admission is just \$5.

**This is the chance of a lifetime to learn from one of the best!
You don't want to miss it!**

6th Annual Iris Show of the Can-West Iris Society

Sunday, June 9th 2013

**Bourkevale Community Centre
100 Ferry Road, Winnipeg, Manitoba**

Admission is free and we are open to the public from 1 to 4 p.m.

Show Chair: B.J. Jackson, jacksonb@mts.net

Exhibitor information is available in the full show schedule you will have received in a separate file along with this newsletter or it can be downloaded from the website at: <http://cwis.webplus.net/> Just click on "Go There" under 2013 show schedule and you will have it.

We are looking for volunteers also, so if you have an hour or two to spare please consider volunteering. We cannot do what we do without your support. Assistance is required with everything from setting up tables to organizing and setting out display containers, greeting visitors in the afternoon, helping out in the kitchen or at the rhizome sale table, etc. Just let us know when you are available and we will find a job for you! The rhizome sale table can always use your donations, too, so please have a look when the snow is gone and see if you have anything to donate. This sale has become a significant fund raiser for CWIS so rather than tossing them in the trash, please consider donating some to the sale table.



*This year's show schedule cover is
SDB Pippi Longstockings.
Photo taken in the garden of BJ Jackson, 2012*

Member Profile

(All photos courtesy of Debbie Hinchey)

Hello, my name is Debbie Hinchey and I live in Anchorage, Alaska.

With the gentle, but very persistent urging from our illustrious editor, I am writing. She asked me in November 2011 about writing about myself and garden for the Member Profile. We “met” through “conversations” with the (Yahoo) Iris chat group (iris-species@yahoogroups.com.)

I happened to join that group nine years ago when I unknowingly sat next to an iris lover at dinner during the North American Rock Garden Society Winter Study Weekend in Portland, Oregon. After returning home I received a note from her suggesting I join the Species Iris Group of North America. I had not even remembered talking about iris, but I like iris so I went on-line to learn about the group. With enthusiasm, I immediately joined. It was probably about the same time I heard about the Can-West Iris Society, and joined that, too.



A view of one of Debbie's gardens with I. pseudacorous in the centre.

Lately, I have been very busy as the Director of the Pacific Region (of National Garden Clubs.) In this two year term, I have had to travel to nineteen conventions and meetings all over the Lower 48 states, review two years worth of scholarship applications from around the U.S., and initiate and/or complete more paperwork than I ever thought possible for a gardener!

In 1985 I graduated with an Interdisciplinary Master of Science degree in Horticulture from the University of Alaska-Fairbanks. I got the degree in hopes of being hired as a Horticulture agent with the Co-Operative Extension Service. The short story is that I graduated too late and had already worked (since 1974) in the best horticulture jobs possible, so I started my own business.

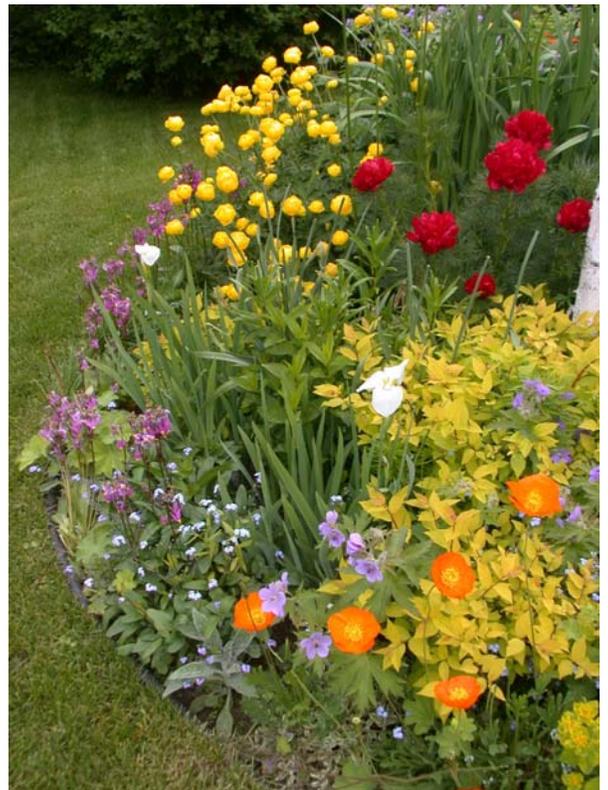
I first took any job that anyone would call me to do. Soon, however, I realized several important facts: that I liked working on commercial properties much more than residential; that I knew more than most in the local landscape industry about design, installation, and maintenance of annual and perennial flowers, and pruning of woody ornamentals; and that I did not want to have to deal with motorized equipment. So, that is the direction I decided to pursue. It was scary at first, but every year my landscape (maintenance mostly) business doubled and then I opened a retail greenhouse to complement the first business.



In the center are Iris sanguinea seedlings grown from SIGNA see.



A white Iris setosa with other garden plants (with that bright color scheme that was not the original plan) but that happened to be an open spot.



With commercial buildings it is easier to work in the evenings when the businesses are closed. This is easy with our well-lit summer nights. The problem, however, with having all this success was that I was now dependent on employees that drove me crazy, more of my time was spent as a manager than a gardener, and I had no time to sleep. Something had to give, so I closed the greenhouse in 1991 and helped some of my employees start their own businesses and gave them some of the jobs. Now, I work by myself on the landscapes of only four commercial buildings and four duplex apartments; do a little bit of consulting; and “by default” work as a bookkeeper for five small family-owned businesses.

Also by default, I am the “hardy perennial” president of the Alaska Rose Society. We maintain the Centennial Rose Garden which is located in a public park and grow about a hundred shrub roses, with most of them being “Canadian roses”. I joined National-Roses-Canada about six years ago and enjoy reading about the roses we can grow.



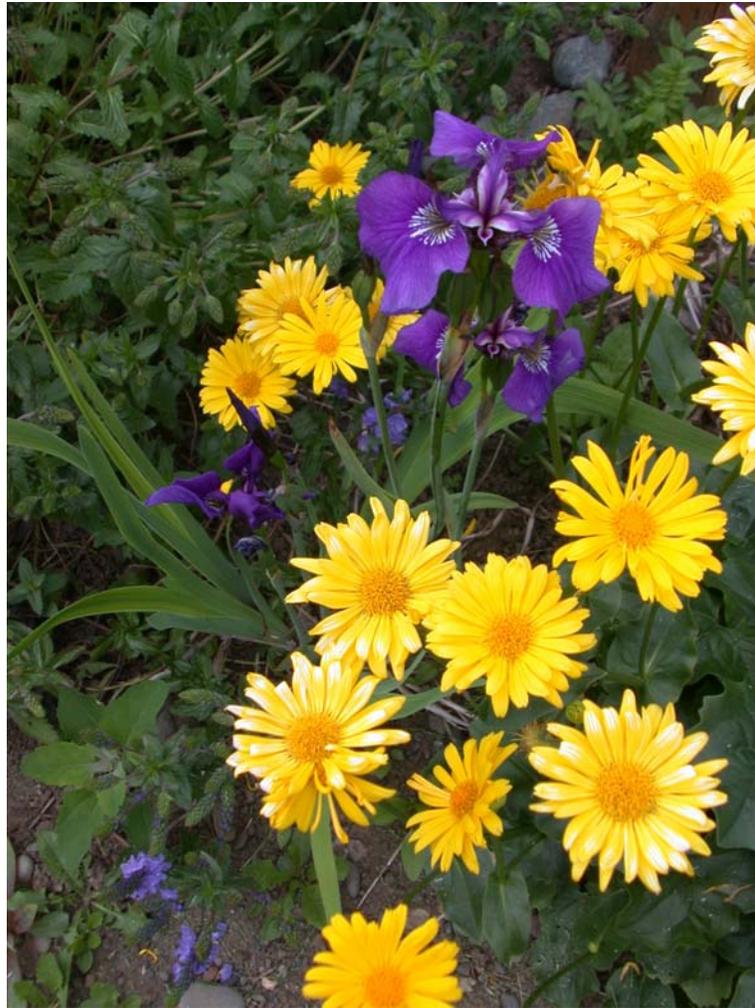
Iris setosa with Euphorbia polychroma trying to take over

Until very recently I was the editor (for the last two years) of the newsletter for the Alaska Pioneer Fruit Growers Association (a group I helped start in 1985) as a forum for us amateurs interested in growing fruit. Collectively, our members have probably done more experimentation (in our own yards) and compiled more information on Alaskan fruit-growing than any other entity. As far as I know, we only have “hobby scale” orchards in Alaska with the largest selling about 500 pounds of apples. Now, I am the Treasurer of the group.

A couple years ago I (again) became a member of the North American Fruit Explorers mostly because they would be holding their 2012 annual meeting and conference at the University of Saskatchewan. The work done by the U of S fruit research center (headed by Dr. Bob Bors) has been a boon to us. As you now know, I was VERY busy, but I just HAD to take this opportunity to visit this “hardy fruit Mecca” and meet other enthusiasts - in the six days I happened to have open between other commitments. We are growing all the “Canadian fruit” we can get our hands on.

So, as you may have noticed, we are eagerly looking over the border to see what the Canadian plant researchers have developed so that we can buy it. The restrictions on importing rose family plant materials into this country, however, make things difficult.

When I joined CWIS about four years ago, I was excited about the iris sale and the chance to try some of the iris that grow well for you folks in the colder climates of Canada. I was later surprised to hear that even the importation of iris was difficult or very costly - but have not actually followed through to see if that was true or not.



Iris setosa (Alaska's only native iris) with *Doronicum*
(Leopards Bane)

We seem to be much more successful with beardless iris than with the bearded ones. Perhaps, because of our cool, short (but getting significantly longer) summers - that are often damp in the last half - are not what they want. Or maybe, I do not have enough experience with bearded iris surviving more than a few years, because I am a plant collector and my beds are just too full! Since people know about my interest in irises through the talks I have given, I am now hearing about bearded iris that are doing well. They seem to have been passed along (without their variety names) by gardeners for decades. Gratefully I received two of them a few years ago that are thriving. It could also be that with all of the breeding that has gone into them

over the years, some are just bound to be hardier than others. Since we cannot tell by looking at them, I suppose we just have to try every one of them!



Shared by a friend and originally from Juneau, these two unknown bearded iris happily grow in Debbie's gardens.

I have been asked to start an iris club here, but I just do not have time to do that. (While others want ME to start a group for delphiniums, others want a bulb group.) I am also one of the founding mothers of the Alaska Botanical Garden and the Alaska Native Plant Society, and a member of the Anchorage Garden Club, Alaska Rock Garden Society, Herb Study Group, Cook Inlet Bonsai Study Group, Primrose Study Group, and so far still resisting the pull of the Alaska Orchid Society. I used to have time to quilt and still want to spend some free time (when I find it) to enjoy my membership with the wood carvers.

Regrettably, at this late date and firmly against the editor's deadline, I realize I have not written much about the iris we grow, so I suppose I will have to write about them sometime later. I do hope, however, you get a sense of what we can grow by what I have touched upon.

Volunteers Needed....

Volunteers are needed for a variety of tasks associated with both the Annual Show (June 9th) and the Chuck Chapman presentations (April 21st).

If you can help out at either or both events, please contact BJ at jacksonb@mts.net.

AIS & REGION 21 UPDATE

From the RVP

As we dream of 2013 bloom season I hope we can take a few moments to reflect on the successes of our past year. The AIS has been focused on upgrading member services and increasing web-based resources. I would encourage you to go to the AIS web site and use them. There is the encyclopedia (WIKI), and links to different web sites/blogs where you can view and add comments or information to check out. This upcoming year our new AIS president Jim Morris has asked regions to focus on revitalizing and increasing membership.

There are many ideas being looked at with some to be implemented soon so watch your Iris Bulletin for information and updates. Florentine Silk has been named our first ever IRIS of the Year.

If you have any questions/suggestions/comments about AIS or things you would like to see please feel free to contact me. This is your AIS and Region 21 and I would like to help make it better for you.

Save the Date: AIS Region 21 Spring Regional Meeting: Sioux City Iowa, May 17-18th. Details will be posted to the website as they become available.

Thank you and Happy Growing. Ron Cosner

Region 21 Enters the Blogosphere

It may be hard to believe but even Region 21 has stepped into the electronic age of communication with the launch of the Region 21 blog. What is a blog you may ask? Isn't that where folks talk endlessly about their lunch preferences you might wonder. Truthfully, a blog is simply an electronic forum to hold a conversation with others of similar interests. In Region 21's case we've created a place to post regional and affiliate events, read your newsletters, learn a little about the region and much more. Check out the site at www.aisregion21.com to see what events are happening in the region. You can even post a comment or ask a question. Wayne Messer is the blog administrator if you have questions about adding content to the site. Local affiliate secretaries or web-masters can contact him to receive login information in order to add information about their events or news.