

For Iris Lovers in the Cold Zones



Aurora

Newsletter of the Can-West Iris Society

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Update From the Organizing Committee

Here we are in July already. How did that happen so fast? June just seemed to fly by. The irises gave it their all in a seemingly condensed free for all with none of the normal progression usually seen. In short, the heat brought out a lot of the worst in the iris garden this season but it also brought out the best in some of them. The best word to describe the 2018 season would be odd.

The 11th annual show weekend was a success in spite of everything Mother Nature could throw at us. The education event went well in spite of wind, rain and cold. Please see pages 2 and 3 for those reports. Thank you to everyone who helped out with everything. And a very big public thank you to Sandy Proulx for opening her home to our guest judges Sandy Ives and Maureen Mark from Ottawa ON for the weekend; for hosting the education event/judge's training sessions at her home garden when the venue needed to be changed at the last minute, and for getting Sandy and Maureen where they needed to be and wanted to go.

And now that full summer is upon us, thoughts turn to the annual rhizome sale. The preview of this year's supplier and what you can expect can be found on page 5. An added treat is an iris adventure embarked upon and brought to fruition this spring for a member's garden club. Check it out on page 6. And to round out the issue, additional show photos can be found starting on page 9. The photos in this issue were contributed by Ted Sobkowich, El Hutchison, Sandy Proulx and Nancy McGowan. My thanks to you all for sharing them.

As always, if you have article ideas, questions or need to contact the Organizing Committee, just send us an email. We can be contacted at:

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Education Event/Judge's Training

Six hearty souls ventured out into the cold, wind and wet on Saturday, June 2nd to participate in the education event presented by guest judges Maureen Mark and Sandy Ives. Held at the garden of Sandy Proulx after circumstances necessitated shifting it from Sandy Eggertson's gardens, participants took in two sessions during the afternoon. The first, a power point classroom judge's training presentation on the Siberian irises, was given by Sandy Ives and the second, garden judge's training, was offered by Maureen Mark. Three of the six CWIS members in attendance wrote the accompanying tests.

Since they were coming anyway to judge the show on Sunday, both Sandy and Maureen agreed to add this event to the weekend schedule and it was indicated by those present that it was well worth the discomfort experienced from the weather.



Participants in the Saturday education event and judge's training from left: Ted Sobkowich, Sandy Proulx, Maureen Mark (instructor), Len and Rita Giesbrecht. Missing from the photo are Mary Kurtz, Sandy Ives and El Hutchison (who was taking the picture)

CWIS 11th Annual Show Report

(By: BJ Jackson, Show Chair)

After a roller coaster spring and a very cold and rainy previous few days, CWIS members and friends were in fine form Sunday, June 2nd. I have never seen so many different techniques employed for encouraging blooms to open in time for the judging. The window sills had vases sitting on them in sunbeams. There were vases outside in the sunniest spots, too. And a few enterprising exhibitors even were seen in the kitchen teasing reluctant blooms to open. Some were successful and others were not. We also had one new exhibitor who learned a lot, too.

The results on the show bench were very nice to see. In total, 52 stems of 46 different varieties were judged from 8 exhibitors. There were 5 TB, 19 IB, 8 MTB, 19 SDB and 1 Sp-X. For the first time in many years, the Historic Section had a good representation. The display table held another 13 specimens and 1 arrangement. And during the day it was discovered that one of our guest judges was also an accredited design judge. After the judging of stems was done, there was a lot of talk about design techniques provided to the design and anyone interested.

As for the judging on the show bench, guest judges Maureen Mark and Sandy Ives along with El Hutchison, BJ Jackson and apprentice judge Sandy Proulx certainly had their work cut out for them. Maureen and Sandy were also able during the judging to provide the required exhibition training for Sandy at the same time and a refresher to El and BJ during the judging process.

The sale table was its usual hub of activity early in the afternoon. So much activity that it totally sold out. I think that is definitely a first! And there certainly were a lot of iris to start with. To those who gave from their gardens by donating rhizomes to the sale table, thank you.

My thanks, too, to the all the volunteers who gave of their time and energy to help out on the day including El Hutchison, Brenda Newton, Len Giesbrecht, Duane Sparrow, Jennifer Bishop, Mary Kurtz, Gwen Jamieson, Thelma Czarnecki, Mary Veldman, Deborah Petrie, and Rita Giesbrecht.

I normally hesitate to include volunteer names in the show report for fear of missing someone. But CWIS cannot do what it does without the volunteers and I want to acknowledge their willingness to step up and get the job done. So if I have missed anyone, my sincere apologies. It definitely wasn't intentional. And finally, a big thank you to all the other members and friends who made the day a success

by coming out to the show to see some beautiful iris, to learn something new, to make new friends and talk iris!

And now to the 2018 results:

Awards

AIS Best Specimen In Show - MTB Merit exhibited by BJ Jackson

CWIS Best Canadian Stem in Show - not awarded

CWIS People's Choice - TB English Cottage exhibited by Mary Kurtz

CWIS Best Historic Iris in Show - TB Berkeley Gold exhibited by El Hutchison

Sweepstakes

AIS Silver Medal & Certificate (most first place ribbons) - Rita & Len Giesbrecht (6)

AIS Bronze Medal & Certificate (second most first place ribbons) - BJ Jackson (4)

Section Certificates

Section A: Miniature Dwarf Bearded - not awarded

Section B: Standard Dwarf Bearded - Cocoa Pink exhibited by Rita & Len Giesbrecht

Section C: Intermediate Bearded - Arctic Fancy exhibited by El Hutchison

Section D: Miniature Tall Bearded - Merit exhibited by BJ Jackson

Section E: Border Bearded - not awarded

Section F: Tall Bearded - not awarded

Section G: Other - Alpha Gnu Sp-X exhibited by Rita & Len Giesbrecht

Section H: Collections - not awarded

Section I: Seedlings - not awarded

Section J: Historic - Berkeley Gold exhibited by El Hutchison

Section K: Unidentified - Unknown exhibited by Diana Dhaliwahl



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Sp-X Alpha Gnu



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TB English Cottage



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MTB Merit

Rhizome Sale Preview

And now for the scoop that everyone has been waiting to hear about!

Confirmation has been received that our supplier for the 2018 sale will be Aitken's Salmon Creek Gardens! Did you know that renowned hybridizer Terry Aitken is a home town boy? He originally hailed from Winnipeg and still has family in the province. Therefore, he knows what does well here and what doesn't. Terry and wife Barbara have promised us a great selection of bearded iris comprising their introductions from recent years as well as from those hybridizers for which they introduce which include Chuck Bunnell, Chad Harris, Stephanie Markham, Marky Smith, and Kevin Vaughn. It has been several years since they last supplied our sale and they have some real beauties they guarantee we will be pleased with. We don't know exactly what we will be getting yet (that is one of the reasons we are able to negotiate such a great deal which we can pass on to our members) but if you would like to have a look at their website and familiarize yourself with their offerings, please have a look at:

<https://flowerfantasy.net/>

The Rhizome Sale Committee has scheduled the sale to run from Monday, July 30th to Friday, August 3rd depending, of course, on arrival of the iris. Terry and Barbara have assured me they will arrive on time but with Canada Border Services, one never knows. The list will be sent to members' inboxes at precisely 7 pm (barring any technical glitches which have been known to happen). Since orders are filled on a first come, first served basis, time is of the essence in ensuring all of your first choices are available.

The sale will be augmented by donations from our members as well. I have doubts there will be as many varieties as last year (when there were 83 on the list) but if we get all that have been promised, it is going to be quite the list to choose from this year so you will have to be fast. There is still time to donate so contact BJ Jackson if you find you have a few extra you don't want or need.

We strongly recommend that you review last year's sale instructions on the CWIS website to reacquaint yourself with the process. It is basically the same this year but a few changes are being made so **READ THEM CAREFULLY** when they arrive with the list in your inbox. And most of all, have fun while you acquire some new beauties for your garden. That is, after all, what it is all about.



An Adventure In Iris

(By Nancy McGowan)

(South Interlake Garden Club serving Stonewall and surrounding communities)

April 13th, walking around the yard. Still minus degrees but I'm checking out the yard as all good gardeners do in early spring. The ground is still frozen, and I can't get my wooden name sticks that have fallen out back in the ground but I can see new growth in areas of the garden free of snow – including my iris, right along the other tough nuts of spring, the columbine.

Iris continue to impress me. Such a reliable plant and such pretty shades of purple and white. A presentation on iris by Len Geisbrecht of the Can West Iris Society in May 2017 at the local library changed that thinking for all in attendance. Len gave us all an appreciation for the colour brown in iris.

I joined the local garden club a couple of years ago and was tasked with the job of Education and Activity Planner. How hard could it be? I spent many a night scouring the internet looking for the perfect topic that I would get a full house for. I must admit that I had been interested in iris for a few years and had a few different ones but mostly in purples and yellows. So of course, "iris" was searched and it brought up the Can-West Iris Society website. This led me to BJ Jackson who then put me in touch with Len who agreed to come out and share his love of the iris! It was the beginning of an iris adventure.

We had a great turnout for Len's presentation and we were really in awe of all the slides that he produced of the iris in his garden – the variety, the beauty, and the cool names! One of the audience members took pictures of her favourite slides. Len opened up a whole new world of iris for many in the audience. No longer "just an iris", but now, "look at that iris!". Len shared his know how and encouraged us even more by bringing some iris to share. Hooked.

Len's presentation was the beginning. The CWIS website brought me also to the Iris Show which in turn allowed me to purchase a few more iris at a great price. Then, I was made aware that a membership could get me in the annual fundraising sale. Well, what fun! So, I signed up and participated in it. A bit of a newbie, I was a little overwhelmed by the magnitude of the different iris available and of course had to look at the pictures because words did not do them justice. So, I made my selection and managed to get a few that were not sold out.

During this sale process I got to thinking about our local Plant Auction held in May each year where we auction off a variety of plants donated from our gardens. How

wonderful it would be if we could offer some named varieties of different iris. So, I contacted BJ and asked to purchase any of the leftover iris for our auction. Well, this continued the iris adventure!

I did purchase and receive 90 iris of over 20 different varieties. Yahoo! How exciting!!! Until the real work begins. Not only did I have to plant my own iris that I had purchased, but also then pot up all the auction plants for next year. A little daunting. A couple of friends donated pots and another friend came over for the potting. Luckily, I had had a load of nice topsoil delivered for my bed rejuvenation project, so soil was easily accessible. We got the planting done fairly quickly considering the numbers but then had to move them all somewhere where I could look after them for the rest of the summer. At many points I wondered, what did I get myself into. I inspected the iris regularly and fretted over them if they didn't look to be doing anything. I had made a commitment to have these iris available for our sale next year. They had to live!

Then came the fall. I have never over wintered plants in pots but was told that sinking them into the ground would help them to survive. I had by chance maybe once or twice actually over wintered iris on my lawn by mistake, but here I had the pressure to ensure survival. So, I tilled the vegetable garden, dug the holes and set in the iris. And said a prayer to Mother Nature.



Winter came and went, spring arrived, and I was checking every day during the melt to see how the iris did over the winter. And, they did great. I had a few that didn't survive but still over 80 for the sale!! Yay! Whew!

Next thing to consider, how to label and sell these wonderful specimens. We decided that each plant needed a picture and a description, so the purchaser could be awed by the beauty of each of these iris (unfortunately they didn't bloom for the auction, but many did after). Then came the pulling them out of the ground, cleaning off the pots, boxing them up and loading them into the back of the truck (and the backseat!) the night before the auction. The day of the auction we set out a sale table with a set price for the iris and reserved one tall bearded, the beautiful Saturn, for the actual auction – it fetched a good price! It was a very successful sale.

There were a few left over which we didn't mind as they were then planted in various public flower beds around Stonewall. This way, we get to share the love of the iris with the entire town.



Was it worth it? Would I do it again? Probably.

More Photos



From top: Len Giesbrecht accepts the AIS Silver Medal and Certificate for most first place ribbons in show; Rita Giesbrecht accepts the Section Certificate for SDB Cocoa Pink; MTB Bangles on the show bench and Diana Dhaliwahl's beautiful design.



From top: Sale table busy; TB Berkeley Gold, Historic section and Cup award winner and Unknown TB in Section K. We weren't able to identify it but felt it worthy of a first place ribbon which is not often given in that class.