



BC Iris Society Newsletter

Issue 4.1

Iris--the flower for all seasons.

Winter / Spring 2009

President's Message

Ted Baker

The most important event for BCIS members this past year was the great iris bloom season. We can feel good about most things when the iris are blooming!

Are we making progress? Yes! The Annual General Meeting [AGM] was well attended, with Penny Santosham coming from Penticton traveling the farthest distance. After the meeting, Pat Spiers provided a wonderful lunch and will be doing it again this year -- so plan to attend. Some of us were able to visit our iris friends in Washington and Oregon which are in Region 13 of the American Iris Society [AIS]. There we met with many of the "Rock Stars" of the iris world. We not only saw some wonderful iris but we were treated like an important foreign delegation! As noted in the Fall Bulletin, we made \$808.00 through the sale of iris donated by Mid-America Iris Gardens and the Yakima Valley Iris Society. Most plants multiplied well and we hope to have a sale again this year for members and the public.



At the AGM last March the decision was made to host the 2011 AIS Convention in Victoria. It was approved at the AIS 2008 National Convention in Austin, Texas. Now is the time for each of us to prepare to attend. It would be wonderful to have as many BCIS members at the convention as possible. This is the premier event for the AIS during the year and it will never be more accessible for most BCIS members. While we have done a lot of preparation work so far, there is still much to do. Elsewhere in the Newsletter is a list of Committees and Committee Chairs that you can volunteer for. If there is something you would like to do please let the Committee Chair know that you would like to help. Two of the next big requirements will be to organize a weeding regime for the iris beds at Glendale Gardens. All the other gardens have staff that will do the weeding but we must keep the Glendale beds clean.

Also, we will have about 2000 bearded iris to plant, probably during the first week in August. For those of you who are farther away from Victoria, there will be lots to do during the Convention. For example, Diane Whitehead, Registrar, would be happy to know if you could help at the registration desk. Also, we need someone to Chair the Awards Committee. The work of this committee will also be done during the Convention and consists of collecting and tallying votes.

I would like to extend a warm welcome to all our new members. We currently have 141 members so our numbers continue to increase, but somehow I think there are still many people

out there who love irises, don't know we exist, and would benefit from becoming a member. So, we will continue to promote BCIS along with irises. Salt Spring Island continues to have the largest concentration of members but the percentage gets lower all the time as more people join from other areas. A group from the King County Iris Society joined last year so we are now international! Remember, if you have any questions or ideas to help BCIS better meet your needs and expectations, please give me or someone else on the Executive a call. Also, if you would like to become a member of the Executive, please let me know.

Finally, I would like to thank the many members who have worked so hard to make this past year a BCIS success. Thanks to the Executive members and the 2011 Organizing Committee who have helped move our plans forward. A special thanks to the staff at the four convention gardens who have prepared the planting beds for the 2011 guest iris. We have received \$2,500.00 from other iris groups for the convention and this kind of support is amazing! Thank you to everyone, within BCIS and others, who make small and large contributions including hosting meetings and arranging tours; transporting, planting and mulching the 2011 guest irises; contributing to and editing our publications; and providing ideas. This input is vital to our success.

American Iris Society ♦ 2011 National Convention Victoria, May 30th to June 4th

And the slogan isIRIS-ISTABLE VICTORIA 2011. Kate Brewitt sent in this gem which received the most votes from the 2011 Organizing Committee! We received 46 entries. This slogan will appear in our promotion of 2011. It is one-of-a-kind and should be remembered for years to come. Congratulations Kate and many thanks to all those who participated!

The 2011 AIS convention is a large undertaking and many BCIS members have said they would like to help. There are opportunities for everyone to contribute!

Following is a list of committees and committee chairs from which you can identify where you might be able to help. Please contact the appropriate person if you find an area of interest.

General Chairperson: Ted Baker, 250 653 4430, tedebaker@shaw.ca

Vice-chairperson: Randy McEwen, 250 592 9767, mcewen2@telus.net

Guest Irises Chairperson: Karen Phillips, 250 592 3809, kphillips@islandnet.com

Karen will need help with the sorting and planting of the approximately 2000 bearded irises in late July or early August 2009.

Registrations Chairperson: Diane Whitehead, 250 658 5640, voltaire@islandnet.com

Diane will need members to complete a shift at the registration desk at the Convention.

Transportation Chairperson: Bill Dumont, 250 743 9882, wedumont@hotmail.com

Bill will need two Bus Captains for each of the 10 to 12 buses. This is a fun task. People who know the Victoria area and can answer questions and make comments about the area would be good.

Secretary: Jan Henning, nitinat@shaw.ca

Fund-Raising and Sponsorship Chairperson: VACANT

Treasurer: Gina Ballard, r-ballard@shaw.ca

Program and Meeting Chairpersons: Val and Howard Smith, 250 598 3385, valsmith@island.net and hsmith@island.net

Hospitality Chairperson: Keith Rogers, 250 743 4474, smithrogers@shaw.ca

Keith will need help with hosting guest events, preparing table centerpieces, and making up gift bags etc.

Publicity Chairperson: Kate Brewitt, 905 841 9676 justonemoreiris@yahoo.ca

Kate has a couple of people on her committee but needs someone who can promote the Convention on Vancouver Island.

Awards Chairperson: VACANT.

We need someone who, along with a few others, will collect and count the ballots for the various awards resulting from the judging of the guest iris. This is an ideal task for out-of-town members as a tabulation of awards is done on the final day for presentation at the evening banquet.

Tour Garden Chairperson: Brenda Dumont, 250 743 9882, me@brendadumont.com

Brenda needs a group of member volunteers who are willing to maintain [weed!] the iris beds at Glendale Gardens. It is critical that we get volunteers to take this on. All the other gardens have staff or volunteers who do the weeding but we may have to help in some instances.

Convention Booklet Chairperson: Joyce Prothero, 250 537 9215, jprothero@saltspring.com

Joyce will contact other Committee Chairs for information.

Silent Auction and Boutique Chairperson: Chris Hall, 250 652 8013, the-halls@shaw.ca

Chris will need people to help mostly at the Convention for the Silent Auction, a fund-raiser for the American Iris Society. She will need to staff the venue during the hours when it is open and also needs help to set up the sale items. The Boutique is a fund-raiser for BCIS and we need all the iris-related articles that people wish to make and/or donate. Also, Chris is looking for artisans who create iris and other related items that those attending the Convention might buy. If you know of someone who would like to have a table at the Convention, contact Chris.

Convention Web-master: NEW POSITION.

We will need a sub-website dedicated to the convention, and within the BCIS website. If you are interested in this undertaking, you can see this Kansas City Convention site by going to the AIS website www.lris.es.org and clicking on Conventions.

GOING, GOING, GONE!

Kate Brewitt

Congratulations to Dorothy Robison who placed the winning bid for Barry Rafuse's beautiful painting, *Garden's Marvel!* Dorothy tells us "(the painting) looks absolutely grand" hanging on a wall over her staircase where she can admire it either going up or coming down. We also understand it was an early Christmas present to herself. Great idea, Dorothy...and Merry Christmas!

BCIS would like to thank Barry Rafuse for generously donating his painting to help raise funds for our Society. We raised \$310 which will be put towards future events such as garden tours and workshops. Thanks, too, to all those members who supported this fund-raiser by participating in the bidding.

"A Real Eye Opener": The BCIS Trip to Oregon and Washington, May 2008

(Ted Baker Photos)

"A real eye opener" was the way some of the members described their experience while on a BCIS trip to see gardens in Oregon and Washington. We also met some "Rock Stars" of the iris world. Following are brief accounts of what was seen on the tour.

Point Defiance Park

John Veillette

En-route to Salem, Oregon, the BCIS group arranged to stop at Tacoma's historic Point Defiance Park where the Pierce County Iris Society maintains a display garden. The design of raised, geometric beds was constructed by the Parks Department, but was planted and is maintained by the society. Notable were the handsome vintage cobblestones used to construct the walls supporting the beds. Raised beds really do show the plants off to advantage. It was a little early for the TBs, but there was a broad range of plants and some great displays to admire. 'Sailor', an intermediate bearded, was putting on a fine show and the variegated *Iris pallida* was a knockout. *Iris tectorum* was beautiful too. Society members were on hand to provide a warm welcome with generous refreshments. This fine reception was organized by Rita Butler. As usual in public gardens, labels disappear, but the members thoughtfully brought the planting plan to answer questions about names. It was a great beginning to a very rewarding trip and I, for one, added several names to my must-have list as a result of this visit.



Dancing Oaks Nursery

Jenny Cree

We approached Dancing Oaks Nursery up a long driveway with occasional glimpses of wild iris, and entered by impressive gates designed and made by Leonard Foltz. Leonard and his partner, Fred Weisensee, are self-confessed plant addicts who, in the off-season, travel widely in search of new and unusual plants to add to their collection and display.

The nine-year-old display garden has mature specimens and groupings of plants which are imaginatively placed to capture the eye and raise the spirits of keen gardeners. Rare specimens abound and I, for one, was very impressed with a tricolour beech tree, *Fagus sylvatica roseomarginata*, a tree I had heard about but never seen. The leaves were wine, pink and white, and truly beautiful. It should live for many years and give pleasure to all who see it.

The water features are unique. Instead of the more usual fountains, sculptured containers packed with water-loving plants, steadily dripping water, abound. A replica of the head of a hippopotamus, just showing above the water, with the entire display surrounded by a variety of water-loving iris and shrubs is visually pleasing.

As members of the BC Iris Society, we were impressed by a display of Pacific Coast Iris in a rainbow of colours. Many members are collectors of these beautiful iris and here was a collection to drool over.

Dancing Oaks Nursery specializes in rare and unusual plants, shrubs and trees. There were displays of metal sculpture and hand-blown glass candle lights -- ideal for quiet and romantic evenings in the garden -- and a set of the largest wind chimes imaginable.

Leonard spent a great deal of time with the group impressing us with his enthusiasm and knowledge of his extensive collection of plants. We are most grateful to him for making our visit so memorable.

We were also entertained by a tree-climbing cat whose contortions would not have been out of place at the *Cirque de Soleil*.

The visit terminated with refreshing tea in the pavilion and a visit to the washroom facilities to view a porcelain washbasin with a waterfall faucet. Nothing at Dancing Oaks is "ordinary!"



Schreiner's Iris Gardens

Penny Santosham

Every garden that we visited on the tour was fascinating for different reasons but I chose to write about Schreiner's. I felt most "at home" in their real garden settings as well as impressed with the variety of iris experiences available at one location. It should be noted, though, that Schreiner's has been operating for over 80 years and is a major commercial entity that caters to bulk orders, large groups of visitors and retail shopping, whereas some of the other nurseries are fairly new, or operate in small acreages -- even backyards -- with the focus on hybridizing, not tourists or sales.

I would have liked to see Schreiner's from above -- I imagine it like a giant quilt. The small center area is comprised of a rectangle of parking lots and buildings, surrounded by two hundred acres of multicoloured iris fields. We spent about three hours at the facility but I needed twice as long to see everything: I missed some of the garden beds, the seedling fields, and the gift shop....oh well, there's always next time!



Joyce Prothero and Ray and Pat Spiers enjoying Schreiner's irises.

What we did see was spectacular! The display gardens were arranged in three-acre rectangles with flower beds around the perimeters and two rows of ten rectangular beds side-by-side covering the whole interior space. There were two full gardens and two smaller ones surrounding the family houses. Wide paths were of close-cut grass and the gardens were sheltered by 15-foot hedges on all sides. Every bed was chock-full of flowering shrubs, perennials, climbing vines and annuals. It was a riot of colour and difficult to focus on one area before something else caught your eye. Complimentary plants separated clumps of individual irises which each with a good-sized, clearly labeled sign with the name, type and year of introduction, as well as the hybridizer. One bed had only Dykes Medal winners with their award year -- stretching back to 1938. Several small circular beds in the middle walkways had colour-coordinated irises or ones highlighting something special such as miniature tall bearded irises or plicatas. Several beds featured Siberian irises (a limited amount) and the side beds displayed dwarfs.

In addition to the outside gardens, the middle section of a huge barn had three rows of thirty-foot-long tables. Down each side of the tables were glass bottles, each containing single stalks of two or three different labeled irises including their price. At a rough count, I figured about 400 different kinds were on display. I think these were set up so people could choose irises to order without having to hike around the acreage. To facilitate the sales, there was a small corner office with catalogues, forms and information sheets. The walls of the display barn were covered with historical photos and stories; pictures of award winning irises; charts about hybridizing and growing, digging, packing irises, and so on. The rain didn't dampen my pleasure in the gardens, but having a dry viewing area was certainly nice!

Attached to the display area were two side sections. One was a gift shop with iris-themed items such as candles, napkins, artwork, note cards and so on....I didn't have time to go in. A little snack bar was next to this. Off the other end of the barn was a big area filled with about 50 large buckets of iris bloom stalks for sale at \$1 a stem. Adjacent to the barn was a large packing building and on the other side were machine sheds and then fields of irises as far as the eye could see. An incongruous but necessary feature was a row of 15 outhouses along the shed wall - I'm thinking bus tours or holiday weekends?

We were very fortunate that Steve Schreiner took the time to give our group a 20-minute talk



about the history of the gardens. He recounted how the family had started the iris business in the eastern USA and after several difficult winters chose to relocate in the Willamette Valley of Oregon. He described how the business grew from his grandparents' time to the large family affair it is today. As well as discussing aspects of mass planting, weed control, fertilizing and harvesting, Steve described hybridizing and laughed about how 'Dusky Challenger' and 'Stepping Out', both TB, have been the favorite iris in

North America for 19-plus years, yet these are about the only two iris for which they have no records about their parents.

Visiting Shreiner's Gardens was the highlight of the Oregon Tour for me. Thanks so much, Ted and Marian, for making it happen and thanks also to Ali van Klei, my amazing driver from Cross Wind Garden in Chilliwack. I recommend that anyone who is passionate about tall bearded irises should put a visit to Schreiner's on their wish list and make travel plans for the near future.

Mid-America Iris Garden

Ali Van Klei

The BC Iris Society was treated to visiting many very good gardens this year! One of those was Mid-America Garden, home to Paul Black, Thomas Johnson, and a trio of canines Cher, Fancy and Nickel. Mid-America Garden is located in the beautifully fertile Willamette Valley in Oregon. It boasts a well-designed garden which displays a wide variety of perennials including hostas, peonies, various trees and shrubs, and of course irises! In addition, the property also has rows and rows of bearded irises which have been carefully labeled and cultivated.



Mid-America Iris Gardens

(from left) John Veillette, Ray Spiers, Pat Spiers, Joyce Prothero, Doug Maclaine-Pont, Henry Pauls, Ali van Klei, Thomas Johnson, Byron Waterhouse, and Ted Baker

There was excellent bloom in the tall bearded irises, and the range of color, shape, and style of bloom was almost too much for the eye to process. Needless to say, many members used their trusty digital cameras to capture each image to be enjoyed (and no doubt critiqued!) at a

later date. A highlight for me was that there were several Siberian irises blooming. The more simple nature of the Siberian bloom provided a welcome oasis from the wild tapestry of variation found in the bearded blooms. 'Three Hand Star', 'Plum Frolic', 'Just Cruising' and 'Bells and Whistles' were just a few that were well in bloom and very beautiful. They certainly went on my must-have list!



Another point of interest was the large area of new bearded seedlings which had recently been planted. This planting graphically illustrated the large volume of seedlings that need to be nurtured along for several years before one, or maybe two, are actually introduced as a new variety. Seeing this certainly gives greater understanding to the prices of new introductions!

Enjoying refreshments at Mid-America Gardens

It was indeed a great pleasure to visit this garden and I look forward to a repeat visit!

Keith Keppel Iris Garden

Ted Baker

We knew we would see a lot of bearded iris when we visited Keith's garden, but for those who fancy other types of iris there were a nice selection of Siberians, Dutch, and Pacific Coast, and also a few Arilbreds. But the acres of tall bearded iris in full bloom were the stars of the garden. In the past few years, Keith has won two Dykes Medals, one for 'Crowned Heads' and the other for 'Sea Power'. We saw quality everywhere.



Keith Keppel Iris Garden

(from left) Keith Keppel, Ray Spiers, Pat Spiers, Joyce Prothero, Ted Baker, Byron Waterhouse, and John Veillette

We were treated to a vision of long rows of what we thought were magnificent seedlings only to learn that most of them were destined for the compost pile! Keith said that after over 50

years of hybridizing he looks for faults on seedlings and not for pretty flowers! That comes later. Keith also said he was cutting back -- hard to believe when you saw the 11,000 seedlings he had lined out earlier in the year!

Fortunately, Barry Blyth from Tempo Two Nursery in Australia was staying with Keith and Phillip so we were able to visit with him. He and Keith do a lot of hybridizing together and Keith grows many of Barry's introductions.

We saw so many wonderful irises but I was particularly impressed with 'Gitano', a 2008 introduction with peach standards, imperial purple falls and an apricot peach triangle sunburst around red orange beards. Also very lovely was 'Platinum Class', a 2006 Blyth introduction. It had pale lavender standards with a creamier edge, lavender falls and white beards tipped coral orange. 'Persona', a 2005 miniature tall bearded Keppel introduction was "pixie cute" as Keith describes it. It boasts soft rose beige standards which age to tan, and white flared falls veined violet.



There were just too many wonderful irises to see in only two hours which was not nearly long enough to feel satisfied! Before we left, Keith and Phillip treated us to coffee, tea, cookies and lots of good information. We will be back!

Adelman Peony Gardens

Ted Baker

It was definitely early in the peony season when we visited Adelman Peony Gardens; however, while looking across the fields, you could see splashes of reds, pinks and whites as the early blooming varieties gave us a great welcome. Carol Adelman also gave us a great welcome and tour of their operation.

Inside a large building, there were cut flowers on display and we were able to purchase peony-related books and other items. We then looked at their potted sale plants and Carol described *intersectionals*, crosses between tree and herbaceous peonies. Growth is great, leaves are often cut like a tree peony, colours can be unusual including very good yellows, and a mature plant can have up to five dozen blooms. 'Garden Treasure' (Hollingsworth '84) is an excellent Intersectional peony.



But we were there to see fields of peonies and we were not disappointed. As we toured, Carol discussed planting, weed and disease control, and fertilization. "Remember to mound the soil, lay the peony root with the eyes on top and cover with two inches of soil. This will give you a good established plant with a solid root system in three years," Carol said. Peonies and iris grow well together so I am sure our visit will ensure that both are planted in the gardens of those who were on the tour.

Aitken's Salmon Creek Garden

Pat Spiers

The Aitken's Salmon Creek Iris Garden is situated in the rolling countryside near Vancouver, Washington. Since they started the garden, over thirty years ago, the area has become quite built up, leaving theirs the only agricultural establishment in the district.

We were most hospitably received by Terry and Barbara and were shown all the new introductions and the different varieties being grown for sale.

A killdeer had built its nest right in the middle of the main iris field and kicked up a terrible fuss if anyone went near, so we kept our distance. However, there was plenty more to see.

A few Siberian irises were coming into bloom and there was quite a collection of Pacific Coast Iris in a shady area near the house. Terry also showed us some of the species iris he was using in breeding.

Of the new introductions, we were most impressed by the space-age iris 'Battle Star Atlantis,' which has graceful little horns projecting from its beards.

After our tour, we were regaled with hot drinks and home baked goodies, including rhubarb bars. Everyone wanted the recipe for these and Barbara kindly sent it along so we could share it with everyone.

Rhubarb Bars

4 cups diced rhubarb
1-1/2 cups sugar
3 tbsp flour mixed with the sugar

Bring to boil over medium heat; simmer gently until thick, stirring so mixture doesn't stick to bottom of pan. Remove from heat. Add 1 tsp. vanilla. Cool slightly.

1 cup brown sugar	3/4 cup soft butter or margarine
1-1/2 cups flour	1/2 tsp soda
1-1/2 cups oatmeal	1/2 cup chopped nuts - pecans, walnuts, filberts?

Mix until crumbly. Pat 3/4 of crumb mixture in bottom of greased 9 X 13 baking pan. Press firmly. Pour rhubarb mixture over base. Top with remaining crumb mixture. Pat gently to firm. Bake 350 degree oven for 30-35 minutes, until top is lightly browned. Cool, refrigerate before slicing for firmer bars and easier slicing.

This is an adaptation of a recipe from Florence Weed, long-time member of the King County Iris Society.

Breaking the Siberian Colour Barrier

Marty Schafer and Jan Sacks of Joe Pye Weed's Garden, Carlisle, Massachusetts

Planting out and watching several thousand Siberian iris seedlings develop is perilous at first. During their first year you have to protect them from being chewed up by cutworms and rabbits, undermined by moles, and stomped down by deer. After the first year, the plants are pretty much able to take care of themselves, and the fun begins.

We have been watching this transformation from a single blade at infancy to the full flowering of maturity for about 25 years. We have also watched the rows of flowers change from predominantly blue-violet and white to a much broader range of colours. The challenge in Siberians when we started breeding was yellow. Currier McEwen had given us 'Butter and Sugar' (1977). The next step was to make yellow flowers in stronger colours, on stronger plants, with more flower variation. Marty's idea was to cross yellow flowers with blue ones. The blues had a lot of experience behind them, were stronger, had better form and branching. Many breeders chose to search for better yellow by crossing yellows with whites. Marty has always had a tendency to go in the *other* direction -- in this case it has made a world of difference.

It turns out that blue and yellow pigments in Siberian irises do not have a simple dominant-recessive relationship -- where one colour completely masks the other. Sometimes in our seedlings the yellow genes line up and a beautiful yellow seedling is born. However, in other seedlings both blue and yellow appear together in the same flower resulting in some unusual looking flowers. When they first appeared, our descriptions were "spooky," "conflicting," "blue and gray," not to mention "ugly." We eventually settled on a neutral description -- "overlay pattern" -- because we felt (or hoped) that eventually this combination of pigments would be important and productive. After several generations, our field of seedlings has proven this to be correct. Blues are getting bluer, yellows deeper, reds redder, and new colours and new patterns are appearing.

There are so many new and exciting seedlings every year. Some shine on their own merits and are evaluated for possible introduction. Some are clearly flawed or unfinished but have qualities that demand moving their genes into future generations. Some are saved or bred on a whim. We thought we'd share with you a few of the seedlings that are coming along that excite us.

Brand new and seen for the first time this year is S05-43A-53. We call the colour "new red" as opposed to the wine-red that is typical of Siberians. We have been seeing new red in seedlings for several years but never this bright. The flower was small and narrow, though it had some ruffling and was attractive in many ways. Its stems and leaves were the shortest in the cross, which might be a positive quality (we are always looking for dwarf Siberians) or they might have been stunted by vigorous siblings. One of its parents was a velvety plum purple, which came from a background of red and yellow overlays. The other parent was an exceptional but flawed seedling from pink and yellow overlays which had a fabulous apricot ground with a bright cherry spot around the signal. Unfortunately these colours were fickle and only appeared in certain weather conditions we have yet to understand. In this seedling, S05-43A-53, the colour seems quite stable. What makes it stable is an important question still to be answered, for this and many other seedlings.

The "fickle" parent, mentioned above, with the apricot ground and cherry spot, showed so much potential that Marty crossed it with many other seedlings. One of these was a cream with cherry shoulders and large yellow style arms. Its colouring was also somewhat unstable. There were a number of seedlings from this cross which opened with apricot to yellow falls and large bright cherry spots. Most of them faded badly. One, S05-47-2, stood out. Its fall colour is not as

apricot as its parent, but its cherry spot is lovely. The color does fade somewhat, but not unattractively, and it has good shape and abundant bloom. We will continue to watch it, and breed for more stable colour. The apricot in there really charms us. On the top of our wish list for Siberians is to create orange flowers!

While pink and yellow overlays may someday produce orange Siberians, they are certainly producing truer pinks right now. For many years "pink" in Siberians was more of a lavender or cool orchid pink. S04-33B-50 is one of the best pinky pinks. It is a child of two pale pink and yellow overlays, one of the parents is 'Pretty Polly,' introduced in 2007. All the seedlings in this cross had lovely colour and we have saved five of them for further evaluation. All showed great vigor and have made fine large clumps. One of them has decorative spathes brushed with red which makes the clump beautiful as it is coming into bloom. S04-33B-50 has the most vibrant pink colouring, even though the intensity varies. We're not sure if we will ever see flamingo pink in Siberians, but we can work toward it.

Perhaps not as high on everyone's list for Siberian colours is brown. Our first brownish Siberian was 'Humors of Whiskey' (2007). It is actually a pink and yellow overlay, with enough violet mixed in to create golden brown. The colouring of 'Humors of Whiskey' is pretty smooth, though not as smooth as S03-28-3, a cocoa brown amoena we are considering for introduction. Sometimes these pink, yellow and violet combinations produce more of a speckled pattern. S02-9-10 is one of these. Its standards open speckled violet and fade to almost white; the falls are yellow with heavy speckling in a pinkish brown. Its flower is small and somewhat narrow, rather species like, yet very nicely shaped. Its vigor is unparalleled and it produces an incredible number of well-branched stalks which are held well above the foliage. And it has one other quality that we love - its flowers smell sweet. While a few Siberians are fragrant when you stick your nose into the flower, this is the first Siberian we have ever noticed from afar -- wondering where the scent was coming from. This seedling will definitely be introduced.

Also emerging from these blends of brown, pink, violet and yellow is a different kind of yellow Siberian. Yellow Siberians have always been -- well -- yellow, with white or pale yellow standards. Very clean - no other colouring. Now we are seeing yellow flowers with reddish brown around the sides of the signals, such as S04-7A-11, or with purple in the heart of the styles and reddish brown speckles on the falls, such as S04-22C-10. We have been seeing this colour pattern for several years, but these flowers have nice form, good size, and substance.

As is clear in previous paragraphs, we do not shy away from small-flowered Siberians. We love both large and small flowers and are glad that the Siberian Section embraces a great variety of size and form. One of our littlest flowered seedlings, S03-28B-10, is also one of our favorites. Its parents are 'Tree of Songs' (2006), a tall, vigorous, small-flowered bright yellow; and 'So Van Gogh' (2005), a true bicolour with blue-violet standards and yellow falls veined blue-violet, also small-flowered. Our garden name for 28B-10 is 'Paint Spot' because it looks like someone went around with a paint brush and dabbed a spot of blue paint on the tip of each fall. The colouring is softer than 'So Van Gogh,' with light blue standards and "paint spot," and lighter yellow falls. The plant is taller than a dwarf, but its whole appearance is delicate.

With all this overlay stuff going on, most of the new seedlings in our field have some interplay of yellow with other colours, but sometimes we see blends where the yellow influence is not apparent. S05-25-16 is one of these blends. It is a large flower with wide, overlapping falls which are dappled blue-violet with deep red-violet rims. If that isn't enough, it has nicely curled, pearly style arms with bright blue mid-ribs. It is a grand flower -- it will be several years before we decide if the whole package is worth introducing. We will be introducing a Siberian with a rim in 2009 that is a cousin, one generation back from S05-25-16. Its number is S01-25-10. It is a medium size flower, has a dark violet rim on violet falls, pale violet standards, and white styles with aqua mid-ribs. The contrast of the light top and darker bottom, with the glow of aqua is striking. The plant makes a beautiful clump and blooms for a long time. A very different seedling, S04-20B-50, also had a lot of blue on the styles. They were

less aqua and more of an antique blue. This flower was very poor in other ways, and has already been discarded, but not before Marty used its pollen on several other seedlings with blue styles and other good qualities.

Style arms are one of our favorite decorative features in Siberians. Their colouring, size, shape, position in the flower, and ornamentations provide many creative possibilities, though perhaps we had better leave this subject for another time. We hope you have enjoyed this brief look into our seedlings of the future.

Growing *Iris ensata*

Chad Harris, Mt. Pleasant Iris Farm, Washougal, Washington
(Chad Harris and Dale Grams Photos)

I can think of no other iris that is so influenced by good culture than *Iris ensata*. If the proper culture is met, a typical plant will throw taller bloom stalks, more branches with extra buds, and larger flowers.

The most important need of *I. ensata* an understanding of its growth habit and why growth diminishes so quickly. If you start with a single strong fan, newly transplanted three inches deep in the fall, that winter and following spring the plant will set up a root system. It should not be expected to bloom, and if it did it certainly would not be typical. The second year, with proper soil, water, and light that single fan should have increased to four to six fans, with good bloom, but also one inch above the old rhizome. The third and prime year, the rhizome mat will be another inch higher with 16 to 36 new fans. Going into the fourth year, again the rhizome mat will have formed on top of the old, but now probably only one half of an inch because it is now at the soil surface. This fourth summer the plant is still strong and increases to 64 to 216 fans! Though the fans may still look good, the root system is starting to suffer and collapse. Still the plant tries to grow into its fifth year, setting new rhizomes on top of old. But above the soil line and with no new root contact the plant begins to die. With this growth habit I like to lift and divide every three years, replanting three inches deep. Mind you, this scenario is of a typical well-grown plant. Some plants, due to genetics, start to collapse in year three and need to be lifted and divided every two years.



To grow strong, healthy *I. ensata* plants is more exacting than difficult, for they truly are tough plants. They are naturally found not only in Japan, but Korea, China and Siberia, growing in rich acid soil that is moist to wet.

The pH factor for *I. ensata* is critical, living at 5.0 to 6.8 but thriving best around 5.8. Garden lime and new concrete are fatal. It has also been reported that bone meal is fatal, but I have not done a trial to confirm this.

The foundation of any garden is the soil and *I. ensata* demands a good solid foundation. Rich, heavy soil with ample organic matter is needed. I start with a good top soil that is approximately five to

10 percent clay, and add 20 to 30 percent organic compost (well rotted cow manure) at every transplanting. I also recommend mulching with garden compost (two to three inches deep) as this helps suppress weeds, retains moisture, keeps the soil cool, and slowly feeds the plant for three years.

Because it grows all summer long, *I. ensata* is very demanding of its water needs. I like to say wet in the spring and moist in the summer and fall. Take a clue from its natural growing site; not in, but next to fresh water, or in a meadow with a high water table. You may say, "But wait, I have seen photos from Japan with irises growing in the water." If they truly are growing in the water then they are a close cousin, *I. laevigata*, which is a great iris also. But if it is a photo of *I. ensata*,



the field was temporally flooded or potted plants were sunk only for the bloom time. We have a constructed pond that has a sustained water level. I planted three test plants ten years ago, one in the water, one on the shore, and one eight inches above the water table. The iris in the water died in two years by drowning. The plant eight inches above the water died in four years because it grew out of the soil and dried out. The iris next to the shore is not strong and robust, but is still surviving and blooming after ten years. It seems that the soil is so saturated that the old rhizomes rot away leaving the new in

contact with the soil so that it can send out new roots each year. Out in the fields we irrigate each bed with four to six inches once a week from spring until the fall rains start on late October.

The light requirement is not as critical as the past three cultural needs (pH, soil, water), though the plants will grow and bloom their best in full sun and/or light afternoon shade.

For centuries, Japanese hybridizers have been working with *I. ensata* known there as Hanashobu. Using only *I. ensata*, many different flower forms and color patterns have been achieved. Since they were introduced to the rest of the world, other hybridizers have been working with them. Only recently have tetraploid plants and interspecies hybrids using *I. pseudacorus* and *I. virginica* become available. Presently most plants are 32 to 42 inches tall with a grass-like foliage similar to a Siberian iris. Though the plant is handsome (receiving 50% of the points in garden judging) it is the flower that is so captivating.

A field in bloom seen from a distance will have all shades of violet with a few clear whites to add some sparkle. As you move closer, the violet shades start to electrify or turns to soft pastels from red-violets to pinks, dark purples to stormy sea blue-violets. When viewed up close, it is the patterns that excite the eye -- from the soft random stroke of a paintbrush of colour called a brushed pattern, to wide bands and sharp rims. Also to be discovered are broken patterns where no two flowers look alike. Some flowers have freckles while others have been sanded by a garden pixie with fairy dust. Sunray patterns glow where the veins are lighter than the body. And veined patterns look like a spider webbing laid on the flower. Add to this mix your choice of a flower with three falls (petals), six falls, nine falls or more and you have the makings of a flower for any taste.

I hope I have sparked your interest in Japanese iris for they truly are only demanding and not difficult to grow. If you wish to see new varieties along with older favorites, the next National Japanese Iris Convention will be hosted by The Greater Portland Iris Society in June 2011.

Okanagan Update: Fall 2008

Penny Santosham

September 4th: A lovely summer day with temps in the 80s (27C) although nights are down to 5C-10C. Frost will happen any time so I won't move any tall bearded [TBs] but this morning I mailed a box of rhizomes to Ali van Klei (Cross Wind Gardens) and Henry Pauls in Chilliwack. Ali drove and Henry entertained us during the Oregon Iris Garden Tour in May. Their passion is for Siberian irises (both have about 300 kinds) so we had some lively discussions en route as I feel bearded irises are the royalty of the iris world.

The US tour experience was truly the highlight of my iris year and I returned home shell shocked after seeing thousands of gorgeous irises in such a short time....simply amazing! There was no time to absorb everything as it happened and my mind is still in processing mode. The report I wrote on Shreiner's Iris Garden is elsewhere in the newsletter. The other tour -- a once-in-a-lifetime event -- was meeting six renowned iris hybridizers: Barry Blyth (Australia), Terry Aiken, Paul Black, Thomas Johnson, Keith Keppel, and Steve Schreiner. I'll never forget Keith's comments about growing irises, "Like children, they may behave beautifully at home but you never know what they will do at someone else's house." Seeing newly-bred irises, not even on the market yet, was another thrill.

It's hard to put the shovel down when the sun is blazing so I have been dividing and rearranging my dwarf irises as they don't mind late season moves. This is a result of finally cataloguing and making a photo album of my 46 varieties: their colour combinations are wonderful. 'Chanted' (Blyth '90, SDB) is a creamy pink with blue shadings on the standards and a big blue beard. 'Music' (Keppel '99, SDB) has peach standards and burgundy plicata falls. They all make delightful spring clumps at the front of my borders and they multiply so generously that I have lots to give away - even little gardens have space to tuck in a few. 'Trajectory' (Black '97, SDB), a tall dwarf at 13 inches, bloomed for five weeks.

Although we didn't have an official Okanagan tour this year, we did have "open gardens" at our property four times in June: a church fund-raiser, orchestra ladies (I'm a flutist), and two garden clubs. The question I kept hearing was, "Can I buy some?" This is a matter I'll think about over the winter as most of my clumps are ready for dividing and I've been told that people take better care of plants they pay for. Any advice will be appreciated. However, we are already planning a North Okanagan Iris Garden Tour for next year - probably early June - so mark it on your calendar. And do plan to visit Tom and I en route.

Last fall I wrote about the Okanagan group's iris dig and photo gallery for the Summerland Ornamental Gardens Sale. It was a big success in terms of money and interest but unfortunately I heard that having the sale in mid-September was too late for the rhizomes to get established and lots had died over the winter. So....we are going to try a new approach. At the sale on September 13th as well as the spring sale in May, there will be photo displays and order forms. More order forms will be available in the garden during bloom time. Then we will dig and fill the orders in July or August. I'll report back next year on how it unfolds.

My hybridizing: The three seedlings left from 2006 crosses (120 seeds) are looking lush but haven't bloomed for me yet.....hmmmm! Could they be sterile? I read that is a possibility. The four big pots of 2007 seeds that I sunk in the ground last fall to stratify naturally over the winter worked much better than the refrigerator/pot up inside technique. The pots are in a permanent location as the seeds are viable for 18 years. Over the course of the summer, 12 seedlings appear and all replanted successfully when they reached five inches; no loss to damping off like the inside method. So...2009 could be the year when the first Okanagan-bred Dykes Medal Winner appears!

Tom's Garden: Would you believe he has two TB's ready to REBLOOM in his new garden and I don't have any? Well, he did buy the most expensive soil available and has wonderful exposure, plus the rhizomes came from my garden, but still.....! 'Betty Dunn' and 'Rosey Wings' are doing the honours and I have a feeling more bloom stalks will appear if the warm spell continues. Our summer really didn't even start until July so these irises are a big surprise. Tom confessed he watered a fair bit and even used 15-30-15 through July and August. He said the fertilizer was "really" for his other flowers but some "may" have gotten on the irises too. Could this be a technique we should all try? The "other flowers" are annuals I recommend for inter-planting with irises. They are easy care, low water, airy, self-seeding and shallow feeders. The hummingbirds and bees love them and they make a bright, colourful show: Godetia, Poppies, Clary sage and native Larkspur.

Garden Club Power Point Presentations: The PP presentation for the Kelowna Garden Club in early June was lots of fun and we enlisted a couple of new members for BCIS. A few keen souls even nipped down the next day to visit our garden here outside Penticton. We learned two new things: 1. Deer eat irises in the Kelowna area (I recommended using Plantskidd); 2) Ball-point pens for permanent labeling are cheapest at Princess Auto Shops. I will be doing a presentation for our Penticton Garden Club next May and hope to have some new locals join us for the North OK garden tour and meet BCIS members coming from around the province.

Last words: Again in June at the local garden show, Tom took the top iris award - 'Titan's Glory' this time. My 'Whispering' was second. Also, I entered every class that I could put an iris into (all white, 6 perennials, perennial arrangement, heritage arrangement, flower colour matching container etc.) so I accidentally won the trophy for Border Plants. Now isn't that a happy, surprise ending for my update!

Lone Star State AIS 2008 Convention - April 14 - 19, 2008 - Austin, Texas

Kate Brewitt, AIS Region 16 RVP and Terry Laurin, Assistant RVP (Kate Brewitt Photos)

We had no idea what the weather would be like in Austin in April. All we did know was that it was going to be warmer than the 10C we were leaving behind. As luck would have it, the weather was better than we could have asked for. A local couple informed us that at this time of year, weather is unpredictable in Texas. We were lucky to have 80F-85F/27C-30C and no rain...well, one night it rained but the tornadoes missed Austin! I think that's what they meant by "unpredictable."

As with all AIS National Conventions, the week started with Board and Section meetings. There were also Section programs which ranged from power point presentations to question-and-answer periods. These programs are informative and entertaining. During the one presented by the Reblooming Iris Society we had the pleasure of hearing Terry Aitken, Richard Richardson, and George Sutton speak on hybridizing iris for rebloom. Terry and George spoke from the perspective of professional hybridizers while Richard, who calls himself a "white-collar" hybridizer because he crosses what he likes, suggested his approach was more fun albeit unscientific. The Tall Bearded Iris Society had a forum with Keith Keppel, Paul Black and Barry Blyth. Each hybridizer gave a presentation on the iris traits they are experimenting with: everything from yellow ground plicatas to small-flowered TBs. It will be interesting to see what each hybridizer introduces in the next few years.

With business behind us, we looked forward to three days of garden visits. The hosts at the gardens openly welcomed the conventioners, supplying plenty of food, drink and hospitality at every stop. (Note: the cinnamon sticky buns at the Murphy Garden were to die for!)

Roger and Marney Abel Garden

This estate home located in the rolling hills west of Austin nicely displayed irises in combination with other perennials such as poppies, canna lilies and hostas while bare spots were filled in with annuals such as begonias and dianthus. There was even a display of Louisiana irises planted in a grouping of twelve large pots. After admiring the irises one couldn't help but wander the property to take in the garden statuary as well as the beautiful vistas.

Bannockburn Baptist Church Garden

Located in southwest Austin, the iris display gardens occupied a mere sliver of the nine acres of gardens which surround the church. Jack Campbell, Garden Ministry Chairman, has 50-plus years of gardening and farming experience. This experience showed in the beautiful display put together for the conventioners.

Brushy Creek Community Centre Garden

Considering the gardens at this Community Centre are only in their fourth year, they were awash with colour. The central garden is a xeriscaping demonstration garden using plants native to Central Texas. This is where I fell in love with 'Bride's Blush' (M Sutton '04) resulting in a purchase from BCIS.

San Marcos Tourist Information Centre Garden

The beds designed for the display irises were made of curved cement retainer blocks resulting in a lovely ring-within-ring garden with wide walking paths and a space for a fountain in the middle. There were so many irises in bloom here that I almost missed the bus as I raced back to get just one more picture.

The Schroeder's Farm



A 150-year old horse farm on 100 acres southeast of Austin. Over 500 guest irises were displayed in long rows, in the middle of which was an eight-foot structure resembling Owl's house in *Winnie-the-Pooh*. "A sense of humor makes friends for iris," says Sandy Schroeder.

The Murphy Garden



On the drive into these gardens we were greeted by fields of colourful wildflowers such as Indian paintbrush, pink primrose and bluebonnets. The property overlooks a large lake which creates a beautiful backdrop for the raised beds containing over 600 guest irises.

The Natural Gardener

This is a large award-winning commercial plant nursery. Not only was there extensive iris

display gardens but there was a maze and a large teepee used for meditation. After viewing the irises, one could peruse the Butterfly and Succulent Gardens...or visit the gift shop. Various other activities were offered at the Convention hotel. Friday night was the Geek Dinner and auction, offering gift certificates from commercial iris growers and iris-themed items. Proceeds go to the AIS Electronics Services fund that sponsors such things as online iris databases. There was also a Silent Auction where you could bid on everything from old copies of the *AIS Bulletin* to gift certificates for new introductions. The Convention boutique was a fun place to go when you had a spare moment. Here you could buy everything from jewelry to mouse pads.

And as with every convention, judges' training sessions were given. Dr. Epperson gave his always-entertaining talk on "Awards and Ballots," plus there was another session on Arilbreds. Some of us even had the pleasure of receiving show training from George Sutton. The final evening was the awards banquet. This is where garden-weary iris lovers meet for a final evening of good food and good company. Awards were presented to the hybridizers whose introductions had received the top award in its classification. Also presented were the convention awards selected by convention attendees. The results were as follows: Ben Hagar Cup (Best Median Iris) - 'Crow's Feet' (Black '06 - BB); President's Cup (Best Iris from a Region 17 Hybridizer) - 'Jean Queen' (Burseen '05 - TB); Franklin Cook Cup (Best Iris from a hybridizer NOT in Region 17) - 'Gypsy Lord' (Keppel '06 -TB).



'Crow's Feet'



'Jean Queen'



As another great AIS Convention came to a close, we said our goodbyes and went home to our respective states and provinces. Region 17 did a wonderful job pulling this Convention together. The 2009 National Convention is in Kansas City, MO. We hope some of you will be able to attend. For details you can go to www.kciris.org/AIS_Convention.

'Gypsy Lord'

2008 Society for Japanese Irises Convention Remembered

Margaret Spence, Cascadia Iris Gardens, Woodinville, Washington (Ted Baker Photos)

It was a dark and stormy night - no, really... My husband, Patrick, and I, along with George and Carla Lankow boarded a plane in sunny Seattle, Washington, on July 2nd. In the airport, we were joined by Ted Baker, who was also on our flight. Many hours later, we landed (barely) in stormy Detroit, Michigan. As we headed east to the 2008 Society for Japanese Irises (SJI) Convention in Kalamazoo, Michigan, the Midwest was being pounded by a severe storm. Not only were we nearly diverted to Columbus, Ohio, but our connecting flight to Kalamazoo was canceled. It was about this time that we and the Lankows "lost" Ted. The four of us ended up hitching a ride in a rental car with a complete stranger who was heading home to Kalamazoo after a business trip, and it turns out Ted found his own rental "carpool" buddy.

While our travel to Kalamazoo was memorable in its own way, the storm was followed by four gorgeous days of sunny blue skies - perfect for touring gardens and viewing irises. And, since the storm came two days before the garden tours, it washed away all the old blooms and left enough time for new flowers to open.

Our first convention day's activities included taking a taxi to the airport to pick up our rental car, changing hotels (we do *not* recommend the Super 8 in Kalamazoo), recovering from our travels, then gathering at the Latvian Heritage Center for the first night's dinner and slide shows. I added some excitement for everyone by getting into a minor car accident less than a mile from the Center. While the Lankows walked the rest of the way (and let everybody know what happened), Patrick and I took care of all the logistics (police, ticket, tow truck, new rental car). We arrived at the Latvian Center just in time to see the last few minutes of Japanese iris (JIs) and pseudata (JI and pseudacorus crosses) slides presented by convention attendees. After the program, John Coble (Ensata Gardens) introduced me to his sense of humor by asking the Lankows if they wanted a "safe" ride back to the hotel. We ended our first day in Kalamazoo with a nightcap in the Lankow's room joined by Chad Harris, Ted Baker, and Terry and Barbara Aitken.

Our first day of garden tours began at the home of Jim and Bev Munson. While their home was on a lake and beautifully landscaped, we only found a few JIs. The rest of the garden showcased the Munson's collection of hostas, daylilies, and other shade-loving plants, along with lots of garden art and critter sculptures. While we were itching to see JIs and pseudatas, we had the opportunity to meet and talk with other attendees until it was time to visit our second garden of the day. Before getting off the bus at the home of Jim and Jill Copeland, we were treated to a short tour of the graveyard next door so the bus could turn around. Then we went straight from the bus to Jim Copeland's famous fish fry lunch. After lunch we wandered out to see the Copeland's own hybridizing gardens as well as their convention display bed. We enjoyed viewing JIs and pseudatas, including seedlings, recent introductions, and new introductions. The irises in the display garden looked great, and most of the pseudatas were very large plants with many blooms. It turned out that pseudatas are Jill's favorite type of iris, and she babied them with heavy feedings and lots of water. Jill also provided Judge's Training on pseudatas in her garden. After the day's tours were done, we returned to the Latvian Center for dinner. Thankfully, the short drive was uneventful this time, and we enjoyed a fine meal followed by an impromptu kazoo band performance and a program by John Coble on the history of Ensata Gardens.

For our second day's tours, we started off at Ensata Gardens (John Coble and Bob Bauer). We roamed through Ensata's sizeable commercial garden, which also included daylilies, and the convention display bed. I also enjoyed viewing the well-manicured lawns and gardens around John and Bob's 1850s Victorian home while Patrick spent quality time with the other JI



John Coble giving Japanese iris Judge's Training

hybridizers and picked their brains. John also treated the tour group to a Judge's Training on JIs. After a lunch of chicken tenders, fries, and coleslaw, we headed off to our final garden, hosted by Dick and Eileen O'Melay. At the O'Melay garden, we enjoyed the display beds, as well as the rest of the landscaping, which included a pond with waterfall and a planting of JIs. After our tours were done, we headed back to the hotel to clean up and then returned to the Latvian Center for our final dinner together. The dinner was followed by information about the next SJI convention in 2011, presentation of convention awards, presentation of the 2007 Payne Medal, and an auction. Dennis Hager received the Best Seedling Award (seedling 04-06-04), and Lee Walker received the Best Iris Award for 'Kool Craola Ice' (2005). John White received the 2007 Payne Medal for 'Dirigo Pink Milestone' (1999).

After spending a post-convention day at Ensata Gardens and visiting Ana Mae Miller, another hybridizer, we headed back to Seattle. This time we left just before the next storm rolled through Kalamazoo. For us, the 2008 SJI Convention truly was "A Convention to Remember."

"Iris Lady of Clearwater"

Lynn Waterston

"Iris Lady of Clearwater" is what all my friends call me. I don't know why, though. Could it be I am addicted to irises? Irises happened for me when I chanced to buy 'Liaison', and a friend gave me 'Jesse's Song' and 'Caliente'. I was so taken by the colours, and when 'Liaison' bloomed I was hooked. I had never seen anything so gorgeous. In 2003 I acquired a computer and found all the wonderful iris sites and those gorgeous pictures. And I could get them to my home with just a few pushes on some buttons. It didn't all come that easy though, and I had lots of work to do to get ready.

I needed to find new areas to make flower beds and as my soil is heavy clay, my husband catered to me by bringing in loads of sand, but the digging was up to me. Each year my husband loses a small bit of lawn and I gain more irises. When he sees me digging, he just says, "More irises." I currently have 170 thriving irises and a list started for next year. I sell a few rhizomes every year to support my habit. This year most of my irises went to New Brunswick and I have gained another new iris friend. I have lots of people stop by just to see all the blooms. Also, a very dear friend who is a photographer spends a great deal of time here taking many many pictures, so my irises are also featured on cards.

Clearwater is 115 km north of Kamloops on the Yellowhead Highway and we are called the Gateway to Wells Gray Park. Winters can be very harsh. I am lucky enough to live in a very sheltered location with my own micro-climate (temperatures 5C warmer than most of Clearwater). As I write this, we have 16 inches of snow and I can once again be thankful that my irises are safe and sound for the winter. I get to just sit back and make new plans for next spring. I can spend hours on the computer looking at all the new irises that are available and marvel that each year they get more gorgeous than the year before.

If everyone gets as much enjoyment out their gardens--and especially the irises as I do, then they have a very rewarding life. I wish everyone a wonderful 2009 in your gardens.

Tour of Government House and Gardens



BCIS Members enjoying the bearded iris planting at Government House gardens. This is one of host gardens for the 2011 AIS National Convention.



Members were given a tour of Government House

(Ted Baker Photos)

Connecting Gardening with Lifestyle

Andrea LeBorge,

[First published in the Salt Spring Island Garden Club Newsletter, *The Grapevine*.]

For Brian Minter, gardening is all about the “pursuit of happiness.” In his presentation at our October meeting he encouraged us to bring joy to our surroundings by creating gardens for relaxing in, connecting with nature, and nurturing our souls.

Brian highlighted some of the demographic and social factors currently facing the gardening industry. Firstly, the baby boomers are beginning to reduce their gardening expenditures and are migrating towards smaller spaces. Secondly, the X and Y generations aren't as connected to nature and gardening as the generations before them. The industry must adapt quickly to these changes and also embrace the trend towards greener inputs and sustainability. As this happens, he expects that gardeners can look forward to new innovations and creative solutions that will make gardening more interesting and eco-friendly.

Throughout the talk Brian reminded us that the value of gardening extends beyond our own backyards. As an example, he explained that trees help stabilize soil, absorb gases, replenish oxygen and ameliorate noise pollution. In the summer they can have a cooling effect of 8-10°, and in winter provide a windbreak and help moderate temperature. Planted strategically, trees can help reduce energy consumption and provide year-round interest. In public places like malls, parks, nursing homes and hospitals, green spaces can improve people's disposition, shorten recovery times, provide a calming effect, and help build pride in communities.

For me the highlight of the presentation was the slide show. Brian had a lovely collection of photos that reinforced his philosophy of connecting gardening to lifestyle. Current trends and ideas included:

Creating outside rooms and moving outdoors: Develop areas in your garden where you can relax and enjoy the results of your hard work. Set up a table and chairs in a “tropical garden room” with palms, bananas and other large leaf specimens that transport you to another part of the world.

Creating year-round interest: Plan a garden with year-round colour and texture. New *Heuchera* and *Heucherella* varieties are great plants for winter colour; grasses are another way to xeriscape and create texture in your garden. Check out the great selection of grasses for sale by Seeds for Malawi for inspiration.

Eliminating lawns: Create a small space garden rich with flora and fauna; forget the perfect lawn.

Planting food: Incorporate food into your garden by using eye- and palate-appealing plants like Red Malibar Climbing Spinach, Red Boar Kale and other leafy greens.

Installing water features: Brian's organic swim pond is 100% chemical free. Water features create a magical effect in our gardens with sound, reflection, a place for wildlife and a space to connect with the elements.

Using your garden as an artist's palette: Make your garden beautiful. Incorporate mass plantings of Golden Bells and *Muscari* for the wow factor. Try planting some Pheasant Berry (*Leycesteria formosa*, Golden Lantern) which provides sunny yellow foliage with red new growth, interesting flowers in summer, and deep richly-coloured berries in the fall. Shake things up a bit by painting or staining your fence lavender!

Making the most out of containers: Create sculptures in a container using *Sedum*,

sage, *Heuchera*, grasses and other plants.

Exploring what's new: Take advantage of some of the exciting developments in the plant world like bud bloomer heather that gives 4 to 5 months of colour in the winter, or exciting new compact varieties of *Hydrangea* and terrific foliage plants that can be used for dramatic effect.

Finally Brian reminded us above all to "Have fun, take the ordinary and make it extraordinary, make it great!"

Editors note; Brian Minter is owner of Minter Gardens, an internationally- known show garden comprised of twelve theme gardens and a plant nursery at Chilliwack BC. Brian is also well known for his presentations and the promotion of gardening in general around the world and especially in North America.

Members News and Notices

Happy Birthday Graham Thomson!

Graham will be 100 years old on August 7th! BCIS members send our best wishes to you for a wonderful day and a wonderful year!

Graham is a charter member of BCIS and has his own collection of irises in Kingston, Ontario. He had his grandsons completely redo his iris beds this past summer in preparation for three days of celebrations with family and friends in August.

2009 Garden Tours

We will be having three Garden Tours this year. They include:

- Salt Spring Island on May 30th, tour organizer, Ted Baker:
- Langley area on June 4th, tour organizer Marian Vaughan:
- Okanagan on June 6th, tour organizer Penny Santosham.

More information about what we can expect to see can be found in the Fall 2008 *BCIS Bulletin*. Detailed information, including maps, will be included in the Spring 2009 *Bulletin*. Please note that the tours are for BCIS Members and friends but everyone must register with the Tour Organizer. This will ensure that suitable arrangements can be made for those attending.

Confirm your e-mail address and phone number

In addition to the bulletins and newsletter, several e-mails and/or phone calls are made to update members. If you have not been getting this information or are concerned about the correctness of your information please send the correct or updated phone number or e-mail address to Joyce Prothero. Also, please let us know if you move so we can make sure you get material sent out by BCIS.

Annual General Meeting..... February 14th, 10:00 am, at Pat and Ray Spiers. 431 Sky Valley Road, Salt Spring Island

Pat and Ray will again provide the lunch so you do not need to bring anything but your ideas!

During the meeting we will review our Executive, financial status, progress to date and make future plans. It is also a good time to spend some quality time together.

If you are coming from off island and if you would like to stay with members on Salt Spring Island, Pat Spiers will again be arranging billets and can be reached at 250 537 9452. We also need to know how many will be coming, so please call Alison Fenske at 250 537 5135 to confirm your attendance.

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