

The
Siberian Iris



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MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENTS

All members of this Society residing in the United States and Canada shall be members of the American Iris Society. Dues shall be \$1.00 per year.

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PRESIDENT'S PAGE
Charlotte Withers

Since this page is usually the last to be written before the Siberian Iris is sent to the printer, I feel either a sense of satisfaction or frustration. Today it is one of gratitude for those articles sent in by the members at the last moment for this issue.

It has been a long time since I had the pleasure of looking down in my garden and seeing clumps of Siberians in bloom but the memory still lingers and so with anticipation, I am looking forward to this spring. I wonder if all of those clumps transplanted after bloom season last year will come through one of the craziest winters - hot and cold, dry and wet, lots of snow and no snow. In years past the Siberians were able to take it--that is, the cold and snow, but what about 60 degree temperatures in February and no snow! This was another of those record breaking days, with 84 in early April. Now please understand, I like nice warm weather but would prefer the weatherman to be neat and tidy and put the temperatures in order - from 32 to 40 to 50 and so on.

Let's talk about the AIS meeting in Berkeley on April 28 through May 2nd. Are you going to be there? Well, due to poor planning and conflicting dates on my part, I shall be unable to make it. However, I am hoping that some of our Directors are there and can extend a hand in welcome to you. In spite of the fact that I have just recently returned to North Dakota after spending several months in the south, this issue should be in your hands before you leave for the meeting.

As you have seen from the schedule of garden tours, one garden where we hope you will see Siberians in bloom is that of Ben Hager, Melrose Gardens, Stockton, on Wednesday, May 1. I am not sure that there will be Siberians in any of the others. I can state positively that you will see them next year in Milwaukee.

It has been suggested that we publish our newsletter at least three times per year. Yes, this might be a good idea if we were able to find enough items to bring each issue up to a reasonable standard of size and content. However, we are willing to listen to any suggestions from our members. Another idea brought out was to issue a short condensed version of all of the earlier issues for sale to those members who have joined us in the last couple of years. While we do have some back issues on hand, perhaps by omitting some articles of a repetitive nature, and just include items of information, we could make available all of the back issues in one volume. Let us hear your comments on this idea.

As you will notice on the back of the cover we have listed all of the commercial sources for Siberians as we know them--and if you know of others, please send the names to us and we will include them. We are anxious to publicize as much as possible sources for the gardener to obtain Siberians. To popularize Siberians one must be able to buy and grow them.

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EXPERIENCE WITH SIBERIANS - 1967
Currier McEwen - New York

The 1967 season is memorable to the McEwens for four reasons which will be briefly mentioned here. The first was the moving of our irises from New York to Maine. We had grown daylilies in Maine ever since we first started them in 1956 because their blooming period found us there on summer holidays; but the irises bloomed while we were in New York and so were kept there. In 1967, however, the prospect of partial retirement made it appropriate for the irises to go to Maine also, so the move was made. There is nothing very noteworthy to report. The principal problem was to choose what to take from the seedling beds. By dint of stern self-control we finally decided on 66 tall bearded, 85 Siberian and 17 Japanese irises out of about fifteen hundred plants. The rest were left for any neighbors who might care to dig them. In the case of the tall bearded and Japanese irises and the diploid Siberians we took only small pieces except for a few we might someday introduce. In the case of tetraploid Siberians, however, we took several pieces from each clump to make sure of having tetraploid or chimeral stock in case the plant proved to be a sectorial chimera. The roots were thoroughly soaked with water before the plants were placed in the car for the 350 mile trip. All were planted within a week. While waiting for planting they sat on the grass in the shade of a tarpaulin and the roots were kept moist. All healthy plants made good growth between September 7th when they were planted and mid-October when we returned to New York.

My second topic concerns those plants which were not healthy. We did not see the Siberians in New York between June 29th and September 3rd. On the latter date when we came to dig them for transportation to Maine it was at once apparent that some were sick, and on digging the trouble was found to be borers. By that date the borers were fully grown and the rhizomes were very severely damaged. Borers in tall bearded irises seem to find enough to eat in one rhizome. This unfortunately was not the case with the small rhizomes of Siberians in which the borers apparently soon devoured the entire substance of one rhizome and then moved on to another. The result was that even clumps a foot or more in diameter might be left with only one or two viable bits and smaller clumps could be completely killed. The most serious casualty was one of our best colchicine treated seedlings which we have nicknamed Big Blue but not yet registered. This large blue chimeral daughter of WHITE SWIRL with falls $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide was almost completely destroyed. We salvaged six single rhizomes out of a clump which had been almost two feet in diameter, and only three of those showed any signs of life when we last saw them in Maine last October. Whether any survived the winter remains to be seen.

This experience makes me wonder how common this trouble is. Certainly we have not encountered it before but our Siberians previously have been in or near beds containing tall bearded irises and received DDT spray when the latter did. All of our affected plants were in one large bed on the property of a friend who kindly gave us space when we had filled all possible places on our own property in New York. There

were only a few tall bearded irises and about a thousand Siberians in this garden and I never bothered to spray it. I will be much interested to know the experience of others with regard to borers in Siberian irises and whether spraying to protect against them is advised. Needless to say we took great pains to leave no borers alive. We have not previously encountered them at our home in Maine and I trust we have not introduced them there.

The third topic concerns new varieties of Siberian irises which we acquired during 1967. I had previously received several of Mr. Maurice Kitton's 40 chromosome cultivars from the Orpington Nurseries in England in 1965 but they were planted very late in the fall and only one, CAPE DAZZLE, survived that bitter winter. A trip to England in April 1967 provided opportunity to obtain some more. To my regret I did not meet Mr. Kitton who was away but I had a pleasant visit with Mr. Laurence Neel at Orpington Nurseries and obtained plants of Mr. Kitton's OYSTER BIRD, YELLOW COURT, COPPER GLOW, COPPER ELF and YELLOW APRICOT, all of which are 40 chromosome cultivars, and his WHITE MAGNIFICENCE which is a 28 chromosome variety. I also had a delightful visit with Mrs. Doris Hansford and her husband in their garden in Surrey and brought away with me several sister seedlings of her lovely yellow CHARM OF FINCHES. These also are, I believe, 40 chromosome varieties and are derived from J. bulleyana. Mrs. Hansford gave me, too, a plant of another seedling from the same breeding line which she said has the usual bulleyana coloring. Most of the plants from Mr. Neel and all of those from Mrs. Hansford seemed to be doing well last October and I wait for the Spring to learn how they stood the winter.

I also received four Siberian irises from Mr. Kutylowski in Warsaw, Poland, in exchange for some which I had sent to him. They are Max Steiger's WEISSER ORIENT, Harry Randall's THE GOWER, a Russian seedling of Rodionienko named FYALKOWYA and a native Polish species. I am most eager to see these bloom and hope that they survive the winter in spite of their late planting on October 3rd. My other treasured acquisitions in 1967 were a seedling of pink breeding from Bill McGarvey and his DEWFUL. I must mention also Mr. Leonard Brummit's CAMBRIDGE. Although purchased in 1966 it bloomed for the first time last season. It is a lovely shade of light blue and has excellent form but the haft markings and the yellow blaze on the falls were rather harsh to my taste.

My final topic is our own seedlings. I have registered four but through procrastination did so too late for them to appear in this year's list and I will therefore mention them here. EARLY BLUEBIRD is a cross of TYCOON x PLACID WATERS. It is a rich blue of good color and large flowers but its chief features are its earliness and length of bloom. It starts three days before OTTAWA and is in continuous bloom to the very end of the season. Last year the last Siberian bud to open in our garden was on WHITE SWIRL and EARLY BLUEBIRD opened its last bloom the day before. Thus its season of bloom was a good ten days longer than any other Siberian in our garden. LITTLE WHITE is a miniature with small, horizontally flaring flowers which are nicely in proportion to the 18 inch scapes. The small yellow blaze on the falls

is completely covered by the style arms with the result that the flower looks pure white except for a tiny green throat as one looks down on it. It is from a seedling derived from GATINEAU and SNOW QUEEN by pollen from a companion seedling. The third seedling, which we have named SALLEY KERLIN, is from WHITE SWIRL by GRAY DOVE. It is even more ruffled and round in form than its pod parent and is a lovely shade of pale blue with scarcely noticeable white blaze. The flowers are at foliage level and below but to my surprise this does not detract from its attractiveness, at least to me. Although not quite as close to true blue as CAMBRIDGE I find it more pleasing. The fourth registration is MARILYN HOLMES, a rich violet-blue from WHITE SWIRL x BLUE BRILLIANT. This, too, has wide horizontal falls which give it a very round form; it is a complete self with no visible blaze. All these varieties are fertile and I look forward to the seedlings from them which will bloom next year or in 1970.

The colchicine induced tetraploids and chimeras continue to look very promising. The best new one, a 4-2 chimera, is a very large flower of wine red. Its chief merits, however, are great substance and a velvety sheen which give a depth and richness to its color which I have seen in no other red Siberian.

The blooming season in South Harpswell, Maine (near Brunswick) is about Mid-June to July 7th. If any members of the Society For Siberian Irises should be in that neighborhood we would be most happy to see them but it would be best to phone (207-833-5438) to make sure someone is home.

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ROBINS

I'm not talking about the feathered kind but rather those letters which bring so much pleasure to members of our Society. Remember to be courteous enough to notify the Flight Director when you are mailing the Robin on to the next person and PLEASE don't hold Robins so long - it is too easy to forget you have it. If a Robin contains slides be careful in handling them--finger prints are not good for the face of the slide. Pack them carefully between rigid sheets of cardboard or other suitable mailing folders. The owner of a slide does not want to lose it through destruction or in your desk drawer. You know you LIKE TO LOOK AT THOSE SLIDES - so be considerate and take care of them.

Our Robin Director is listed in the front of this issue. If you would like to join one--drop him a line and he will arrange for you to be in one. Many wonderful friendships have developed from the exchange of a few letters in a Robin. So join the fun!

* * * * *

I see the world through an open heart as well as open eyes.

* * *

IMPLICATIONS OF TETRAPLOIDY IN SIBERIANS

Peg Edwards

Now that we have tetraploids - and I imagine some of them will be on the market before much longer - what can we expect to result from them? Will we have better Siberians - or merely bigger ones?

The tetraploids so far - at least those of which I have seen pictures - have lost something of the airy gracefulness of the diploid Siberians; on the other hand their colors appear to be much more vivid and brilliant. We probably will not know, until breeding gets into the second, third and even fourth generation, whether the breeders will be able to recapture the lost grace. Some of it probably will never be available in tetras because they have more substance, more 'starchiness' as Dr. McGarvey calls it, which means that the petals are too firm to flutter nicely in the passing breeze. On the other hand, the falls will probably be more consistently horizontal instead of hanging and the standards less inclined to sag or flop, which should mean a flower that presents more visible surface over and above the larger actual size of the bloom, and combined with the more brilliant color, the flower should make a more impressive display in the garden. Just how effective this will be depends to some extent on how vigorous the plant will be - and this is a point on which we still don't have much information. If the plants should prove to be vigorous - if they produce as many stems 'per square foot' as the diploids, I can see a little trouble ahead. If they produce flower stalks of great uniformity - still more trouble! In either case, and still more if both prove to be the case, we are liable to find that instead of the characteristic Siberian effect, which to my eye resembles a flight of butterflies, we have so many large blooms so closely bunched that the individual bloom is lost in the mass. This might well be effective in the garden but it wouldn't be the Siberian as we have known it.

However, if we can make any judgements from the history of the Tall Bearded iris, the plants will probably be more loosely constructed - the flower stalks more widely spaced, and perhaps fewer increases per year, and with - still - some variation in the height of the stalk. In short, vigor, instead of being spread over many stalks, will be concentrated in fewer but larger and stronger ones. Perhaps, too, we will have more substance in the foliage - and less of the unsightly flopping which occurs in far too many Siberians after blooming and makes the plants somewhat less than beautiful during the summer.

Another area in which these new Siberians may well be a blessing is in interspecific breeding. By using pollen from tetra on some of the 40-chromosome species, some lucky soul or souls may turn up fertile hybrids - amphidiploids, resembling in this respect the chamaeirises and the TB x pumila SDBs in the bearded group in that they can breed freely among themselves and can also be crossed back to pure tetras of either group - 24 or 40 - to produce beautiful though probably largely sterile hybrids, like so many of the newer intermediates of the bearded group.

Imagine the possibilities of getting true yellows that are hardy anywhere Siberians can be grown! And once the color range has been opened up to the ordinary amateur breeder I believe we could see just such a color explosion as has taken place in the bearded irises in the last 50 years. And why not? We have at least as good a potential; we start with much the same colors - white, lavender-blues, violets, yellow, some bicolors and even tricolors, and a pattern - the veined or dotted fall. Almost the same material as is found in the diploid bearded irises. And we have one advantage that the earlier breeders of TBs didn't have - we have their example to encourage us. Where they were largely groping through a dark tunnel with little idea of what might turn up at the other end (and I am sure that if in 1920 you had asked Mr. Mohr or Dr. Mitchell about the possibilities of producing real pinks, or such dark, intensely marked plicatas as, say, High Life, they would have said it might happen some day. In the first edition of his book on irises Dr. Mitchell was rather dubious about the chance of producing a white and yellow bicolor - I remember this particularly because in my copy I pencilled in the one word 'Pinnacle' at that point!) we do know what they were able to do and to a considerable extent why they got the results they did. Another thing we know is that to a very large extent this breeding progress resulted from the introduction of tetraploid varieties and the consequent loosening up of genetic recombination. Which, of course, is just what we should expect to find as a result of having tetraploid Siberians available to breeders. I will even go out on a limb and say that I would not be surprised to see some of these results beginning to appear at least in the registration lists in ten years. (That's a nice broad limb, strong enough to hold my weight!)

Another possibility is the use of tetraploid Siberian pollen on species of some of the more closely related series; I am thinking particularly of the Californicae, and am looking forward to getting my hands on a tetra Siberian to see what can be done here, but quite possibly the same sort of hybrids could be produced with other Apogon series, perhaps especially the Spurias and Louisianas. The thing to remember with both these basic types of breeding - tetra Sib. x diploid Sib., and tetra Sib. x other (diploid) Apogon, is that while the odds are really quite high against the possibility of one bit of tetraploid pollen finding one mutated ovum of the diploid seed parent, they are not impossibly so; it has certainly happened, more than once, with bearded irises, and not only as a result of human effort. Something of the sort must have happened in nature to produce the tetraploid species from which our tall bearded irises have been developed; something along these lines must have produced chamaeiris; the same is true with the pumilas. Tetraploids aren't exactly 'natural' - the general rule seems to be that plants, like animals, which are bisexual are diploids. But the fact that we find in nature a good many plants which are not diploids - and plants in nature have been counted as triploids, tetras, pentaploids (5 sets of chromosomes) and on up the line to as many as 10 sets, indicates that this type of breeding is by no means a waste of time. It will probably mean that quite a few people will have

to make a great many crosses and watch over the seedlings very carefully - with some knowledge of what to look for so that the crucial seedling is not thrown out as a 'dog' - but it is quite feasible and I think is bound to happen before very long. I suspect that the first such hybrids will not be particularly finished, or even very handsome, they will be 'breeders' irises' - but look at Progenitor, and what came of that horrid little mutt.

I'm kind of looking forward to some Siberian mutts. How about you?

* * * * *

NEW ZEALAND COMMENTS

Lucy Delany

At the New Zealand Iris Society Convention, held in Nelson in 1956, the late Dr. Savile remarked to me that if I grew seedlings from my patch of sibiricas, I would get something worthwhile.

I sowed pods from all of the ones I had, and among them was a pod x from CAESAR. This was a 'freak' in that it had on one side a swelling that gave it the appearance of 'mumps'. When I opened the pod, I found a complete little extra pocket along the division of one segment. The seedlings from this pod were all good deep colours and good form, - some had blue or blue violet 'flashes' - but one was larger than the others and had a vivid peacock blue flash. This was named NELSON BLUE.

So far I have had no seedlings from it, though I once sowed something that I thought was worth trying. Each year it appears to set but the pods do not produce anything, nor do they grow more than $\frac{1}{2}$ the normal size. Most of the sister seedlings have plenty of pods with good seed, I have today sown the seed from one of these.

The original pod was by no means the only 'freak' one on that clump that year, but I can't remember ever seeing them since. Does anyone know what might have happened to cause this and is NELSON BLUE which is larger than most sibiricas, the result of it?

(Editor's Note: My apologies to Lucy for not getting this article in our last issue. Since this was sent they have had another convention in New Zealand and another iris season--a wonderful one I hope. We would like to hear how her seedlings are coming along.)

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It takes $1\frac{1}{2}$ acres of horticulture to produce clean air for 30 people - so they say - and you think we gardeners aren't important!!

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HOW SHOULD I PLANT IRIS SEED?

Ed Jaeger - Salt Lake City

For years in the past I have read how iris seed should be planted. Some say they have to be frozen. In the warmer climate, it has been reported that the seed has to be refrigerated before planting. The Robins and iris bulletins from different parts of the country report that tuna fish cans, milk cartons, and gallon cans cut in half and buried in the ground are used to plant seed in so they can be moved from indoors to the outdoors and visa versa.

A friend called and said he had a sure way of germination. I took time to investigate this system. What it amounted to was a cold frame about ten inches deep with a soil mixture of one-third garden soil, one-third sand, and one-third peat. He went on to explain that little furrows were dug. An inch of sand was laid in the bottom and then the seed was placed with another inch of sand covering them along with an inch of manure and topped with an inch of soil. My poor back ached while I stood there thinking of the work involved if one were to plant a couple thousand seed.

I have tried the ideas mentioned above, and after the first year I discovered the containers had their faults, and they were hauled away by the garbage collector. As I recall about three years ago I had so many containers with iris seed planted in them that I had forgotten where they all were. A year had lapsed before they were all located. Some had been destroyed by dogs, others had been walked on by the neighbor's children, and the balance had a few sick iris fans showing. So there went half a winter's work bringing records up to date. Oh, my aching back! What a lot of work some people can think up for themselves.

I have completely given up on the idea of using all those silly little containers and have reserved a spot in back of the garage that has no specially prepared soil, but is well worked each year. In the fall I go out and dig some furrows about an inch deep, take the seed out of the garage where they have been lying since harvest and spread them out. At the end of each row is a tag giving the parents. When I first started this method, I did make a count of the seed before planting, and a count of the germination and learned I was only losing about 25 per cent of my seed. But I found keeping records was no longer necessary. I may be losing a Dykes Medal winner, but I will worry about that at a later date.

I have tried this system on all the small irises, the tall bearded, Arils, Siberians, Spurias, Hemerocallis, and even the Dutch, which are too slow; and I don't have that much time left on this earth. The only seed that I haven't been able to germinate without special care are the Japanese and Louisiana. In most cases it takes two years for these to show in this particular climate. This is too long for me so I let the people in the warm, moist climate do this work.

As I sit here writing, I recall back two years ago when I picked a bee pod from Caroline Jane. I went to a corner of the yard and scattered the seed on top of the ground. I just kicked a little dirt over the top of them. The next spring that spot looked like I had planted a new lawn.

The question is: Is there a way to plant your iris seed? Records of every seed planted is a time consuming project, unless a person is working on a special project. Usually a tag at the end of each row will serve the purpose nicely.

Save some of that time and work, let's go fishing this season!

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SOUTH AUSTRALIA COMMENTS

We have a very good member down under in Australia in the person of Mr. R.S. Chandler of Glenelg North, South Australia. Let me quote a few words from one of his very interesting letters recently received by your president, "I think I told you before that I have only been growing Siberians for 2 years and I really thirst for knowledge about them.---I really appreciate very much how difficult it would be to get articles written for the magazine. I note that you do not have a very large membership in your group and undoubtedly they are scattered far and wide so it would fall to a very small proportion of your members to write articles and do the necessary work in running the group. --I have some Siberians that I only started growing 2 years ago, when I purchased 9 from a commercial grower in Australia: FAIRY DAWN, SILVER TIP, RED FLARE, CAESAR, TYCOON, MY LOVE, GATINEAU, ROYAL HERALD and SNOWY EGRET. They have done really well and this year the clumps were magnificent and covered with flowers. Shortly after obtaining these hybrids I wrote to the British Iris Society Seed Pool for some specie seed. I obtained chrysographes, chrysographes, rubella, wilsonii, forrestii, delavayi, bulleyana, sanguinea, some forrestii hybrids and delavayi x clarkii. Most of these have grown well and I hope to flower some this season. From the New Zealand Iris Society Seed Pool I got clarkei and some seed called White Swirl X--I don't know whether this is a self cross or not - but I rather suspect it is. Clarkei has not germinated yet but the WHITE SWIRL X are doing well. These are the sum total of my Siberian irises (I think the new varieties are few and far between due to import problems). I am really interested in flowering these species and doing some hybridizing of my own. You will appreciate the length of time involved in growing from seed - flowering, hybridizing, and waiting for these hybrids in flower. I have a long road ahead of me.

One thing I have found out and that is not to plant these seedlings out too small. (Some people advocate planting the seedlings out as soon as they can be handled). I did this with some of my early

(Continued on page 275)

SIBERIAN IRISES
They Grow and Bloom Like Crazy in Our Town
Mrs. Littleton Upshur

I grow only a few varieties of Siberian irises, around twelve or fifteen varieties. Actually they grow and multiply so rapidly that I do not have space for many different varieties.

At present I am growing only three of the recent introductions. These are TOWANDA RED FLARE, TEALWOOD and WHITE SWIRL. Of the older varieties, I prefer TYCOON, MOUNTAIN LAKE and SNOWY EGRET. All of these except MOUNTAIN LAKE are most prolific, and it is so lovely that I find it well worth the effort to grow it.

The Siberians in my yard are so prolific that they must be divided every three or four years except the ones that are planted in places where I want to control washing of soil.

Of all of the different kinds of irises that I have ever grown, the Siberians are the most versatile, the easiest of culture, and they require the least care and attention.

I grow them at the back of my front border in front of a tall hedge planted by my neighbor. There they get almost full sun. While they will bloom if they do not get full sun, the bloom is much more prolific if they do get full sun.

The front of this border is edged with Paltec and Tectorum. Sandwiched in between are a large number of the C.G. White breeders. These I like because of their "Joseph's Coat" colors. I fill in with spring flowering bulbs. Later on I plant low growing bedding plants. The Siberian foliage furnishes a background for them.

Other Siberians are planted alongside a porch on the north side of the house. They bloom about half as well as they do when planted in the sun, but the foliage is green and pretty. This bed is filled in with Adjuga, and the border is made of Baby Breath fern.

My yard has quite a fall from front to back. The drainage problem at the lower corner gave me a great deal of trouble. Every time we had a hard rain, the soil would be washed away from the house. I had had the spot filled in with soil a number of times only to have it washed away by one of our frequent heavy rains. Yes, you've guessed it. I planted around a dozen clumps of the Siberian irises there. Now instead of an unsightly spot, I have a beautiful one, particularly when the Siberians are in bloom and they do bloom quite well there, even though they get only a half day of sun.

Across the way from this corner, I am growing about a dozen large

Camellia plants. Siberian and Louisiana irises are planted under the Camellias. They are large enough to allow enough sun to insure bloom. Siberians are almost perfect for that trouble spot where nothing else seems to fit the bill. Here in Jackson, the foliage stays pretty and green until late fall. Another plus for them is that they multiply so rapidly. I've been able to give "a start" to many of my friends.

I've never done any hybridizing with the Siberians.

Most of the soil in this part of Jackson is river marl. I live not far from Pearl River. It is as hard as a brick--soil--when dry, and as sticky as glue when wet, so most of my soil is "made" soil. I've bought some good soil, however, the marl has been dug out of most of my yard. I have built it up with peat, compost, sand, and well-rotted manure. Nearly all of it is in good condition now.

Our summers are hot and humid much of the time. The soil is often dry, but I have outlets in several places, so that watering isn't too much of a problem. We have too much rainfall in the spring, and often, but not always, in the fall also.

The Siberians, the Spurias, Louisianas, the C.G. Whites and around a dozen specie irises all do well, exceptionally so, I might add, here in Jackson.

We do have classes in our annual show for the Siberians as follows:
A single specimen; a group of 3 stems, all alike; a group of 6 all alike; a group of 3 stems all different and a group of 6 all different.

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Editor's Note: Thanks to Eleanor Upshur for the above article. She lives at 1509 Belmont Street, Jackson, Mississippi. It is wonderful to hear of the versatility of our beloved Siberians. Sometime ago I received an inquiry about Siberians for a public garden in Birmingham, Alabama, not too far north of Jackson, and have wondered if they were able to grow Siberians in this area with success. Probably we could impose on Mrs. Upshur sometime when she goes to Birmingham to check and see if there are any Siberians there.)

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South Australia - Continued from page 273

germinated seed but lost a fair percentage. Those which I planted 4"-6" in height came away fine. This I have done since and have had good results."

It is fun to read of the experiments of our members here and over seas with both seeds and plants. I am wondering about the composition of the soil in his locality. Maybe he will tell us more about it next issue.

IMPORTING SIBERIAN IRISES
Sarah Wing Highley - Ohio

To some people the very thought of importing plants stops the whole project right there. Someone says Aunt Tilly's husband tried and the Officials took all those lovely plants away from him and DESTROYED them. Someone else says it is illegal to import any living plant material. Other people say "Sure it is legal, but useless. It always arrives dead." Others say "By the time the permit arrives it is past the planting season and too late to order." The final stopper is "I think I could do it, but I don't have the faintest idea where to order or the prices."

Each of these statements has at least a small amount of truth in it, but not enough to halt a serious person. Let us look at the first statement. Aunt Tilly's husband bought her a plant in a foreign country. She either wrapped it in her girdle and hid it in a suitcase or else she babied that darn thing the whole four weeks they were abroad. When they came to customs, the plant was confiscated. The inspector was just doing his job, maybe the little plant would have done no harm, but it was destroyed. Why? There were no inspection certificates or import permits or all the other papers necessary to prove the origin and associations of the plant. That plant could have even been in a pot of dirt. Dirt gives plant and animal disease control personnel nightmares. Just imagine the long list of horrible bacteria, fungi, and insects which are found in the dirt of the world. Most of them have been found in flower pots.

In times past the Plant Quarantine laws were much more severe than they are today. They did practically prohibit everything or so it seemed to the poor gardeners. Now the foreign growers have cleaned up, new techniques were found to deal with problems and while some classes of plants are prohibited, as are things from certain areas, irises do not come into these categories. One hypothetical exception would be those from Communist China. There are stocks of the siberian subsection species available from other parts of the world and I have heard of no breeding of horticultural varieties in that area.

Plants do die in transit. This is one of the hard facts of life to us gardeners. It is also possible to kill a plant by moving it three feet to the east in your own garden. Plants properly grown, properly packed and carefully shipped by the best method for the plants in question, will live more often than they die. This problem is compounded by the distance they must travel, the nature of our favorite type of iris, and yes, fumigation, inspection, etc. Still it is possible to receive good plants in wonderful condition. It was so in my case. Time in transit is only slightly less important than the skill of the Grower when dealing in Siberian irises.

"By the time the permit comes, it is too late to order." This is

the man who plants garden peas after his neighbors are planting tomatoes and corn. Common sense suggests the answer to this problem. Start early! It is advisable to order early anyway, then your chosen grower can set aside your plants and let you know if any will be unavailable and of course, by an early order you get first choice.

The last problem is a little harder, but the information really is not secret. There are several avenues of approach. First, if you know someone who has similar plants, he may be glad to tell you where he got them, then you can go and do likewise. If you read about the plant in the American Iris Society Bulletin, write and ask the person writing the article. If the plant has been registered with the AIS, look again, it may have been also introduced, if so, the name and address of the grower is in the back of the book, simple and convenient. Join foreign iris societies! Start with the British Iris Society and brace yourself for a wonderful shock. Siberians are both common and popular there, show reports mention the various cultivars; often with excellent comments about them, their faults and strong points. Siberian subsection seed was obtained from their Species group last fall. And last, but I hope not least, you can read articles about "How to Import Irises" such as this one.

One source of supply, the only nursery in England specializing in the newer Siberian irises is:

The Orpington Nurseries Company, Ltd.
Rocky Lane, Gatton Park, Reigate, Surrey
Mr. Laurence Neel

Mr. Neel is the proprietor, he deserves a special thanks for his un-failing patience with a most confused customer, me! The plants are from the hybridizing efforts of the Kittons and Brummits, who are the foremost hybridizers of Siberian irises in Great Britain.

To import plants, first locate a source, then obtain an import permit. The import permit is obtained from the Permit Section, Quarantine Division, United States Department of Agriculture, 209 River Street, Hoboken, New Jersey. You must mention the type of plant material, Siberian Iris Plants, and the method of shipment, Air Parcel Post, when you apply. It usually takes two or three weeks to obtain the permit. When it comes, read it carefully and then follow directions exactly.

This permit and your provisional or final order should be sent early. A provisional order gives the grower a chance to quote changes he may recommend and shipping charges. These charges also include the expenses in obtaining the necessary permits. Packing is more elaborate and shipping is more expensive on those coming to the United States than those going to London.

The package is delivered to the Quarantine Station where it is inspected and treated, then mailed to you. The address used is the one you placed on the permit so be sure it is correct. There is one final

cost to be considered. The postman will collect the duty when the package is delivered. This is 10% of the declared price, which the grower states on his part of the paperwork. You should have some change handy also, Postmen never seem to have change.

When the plants arrive, remember they have been through a lot and must be cared for promptly. First, immediately open the package and check. If any are the least bit dry, they must be moistened immediately. It is often best to soak all the plants, leaves and all for a few hours in water. Then plant as soon as possible, water it with a weak solution of fertilizer, and mulch well to preserve soil moisture. After the ground is frozen a further mulch of evergreen branches can be added to prevent heaving if this is a problem in your garden.

It is apparent from their parentage that Mr. Kitton's "yellow Hybrids" may prove intolerant of dryness. Dykes recommends growing all of the Siberian subsection species in a soil rich in humus where their roots can grow DOWN into water. He further states he has had no problems with Siberian species grown in this manner.

Mr. Neel has stated that Mr. Kitton used boards between his iris rows to provide easy walking. He feels these boards act as a mulch in the originator's garden.

In view of these statements, my own findings on Siberians under mulch and the reported losses of some of Mr. Kitton's plants in this country, I definitely recommend that these cultivars be kept mulched as much as possible.

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AMENDMENT RECOMMENDED

After some discussion by the members of the Board of Directors it has been recommended that a change be made in our Constitution. Please read and act upon the recommendation enclosed with this issue.

We feel this is an important change and one very badly needed. We therefore ask that you consider the recommendation and send your vote to

Mrs. John Withers, President
Society for Siberian Irises
Mandan, North Dakota 58554

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NEW COMMITTEE MEMBER

It is a pleasure to announce a new member to our committee on Registrations and Awards and I sincerely hope all of our members will cooperate with him.

Mr. Kevin Vaughn, 2017 South Athol Road, Athol, Massachusetts, is one of our newer members and in answer to questions we find out he is interested in hybridizing Siberians. We are glad to hear this. At present he lists 17 newly planted Siberians but I will bet he enlarges this list in the near future.

In his letter he states, "I think it would be nice to have a Morgan Medal. You don't want an Eric Nies Medal before we get a Morgan Medal, do you? Maybe we could take an example from the Spuria fans. If someone has that extra special seedling, why don't you introduce it and send one third of the profits (like they did with Belise) to the support of the Morgan Medal or have the Society start a fund where individuals could contribute. Think about it.

This afternoon I noticed my first Siberian seedling for this year. It gives one a kind of a thrill to see that first seedling. Other ones I planted seed from were TEALWOOD x (TEALWOOD x BLUE MOON), TEALWOOD x (TEALWOOD x CANFORD), WHITE SWIRL x (WHITE SWIRL x ERIC THE RED), SNOWY EGRET x self, CAESAR'S BROTHER x Self, Kalich dark blue seedling x ?, and GATINEAU x Self (also various 40 chr. hybrids).

I have a special interest in the "flats" and my three favorites are WHITE SWIRL, BLUE MOON, and TEALWOOD. Goals are better branching, new colors, and tetraploidy."

(President's note: Thanks for offering to serve on this committee-- we will be waiting to hear from you again in future issues.)

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TAKE A PICTURE

Again, as the iris season approaches we ask all of our camera fans to point the lens in the direction of the Siberians in your gardens or your neighbors' gardens. We have MANY pleas for slides of the newer introductions. How can we expect our lovelies to become popular if there are no pictures or slides available to prove their beauty, grace and charm.

We need black and white as well as the colored slides and pictures since prints in black and white are more usable for printing in our bulletins, newsletters and other publications than the colored ones.

Again, we stress the fact that having a slide program on Siberians for your garden club meeting is excellent publicity. Drop a note to our slide chairman, Betty Rowe, whose address is listed on the first page.

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AN OPEN LETTER TO THE MEMBERS
Peg Edwards

Dear Siberian Enthusiast:

This is a rather thin issue. Each issue seems to be a little thinner than the previous one. When we started The Siberian Iris we hoped that before too long we would be able to make it a quarterly. Instead, at the rate we are going, we may have to make it an annual...Who's to blame?

Not us, we have pried, wheedled, even (I confess) bribed. 'I'll write something for you if you'll do something for our publication'-- that sort of thing. We have all but wept in print (all right, in mimeo) asking you to send us material for future issues. I'm sure you grow at least a few Siberians - otherwise why join this Society? I know that 'writing' is not easy for someone with no experience - but surely you write an occasional letter to a friend; I know some of you write letters for Robins - and some of your letters are interesting and informative (well, all right, all of them are).

Writing for The Siberian Iris is no different. It is NOT literary creation we are looking for; just simple comments on Siberians as they grow for you. Write us a letter. If you can't type, write longhand. If your handwriting is illegible, block capitals will serve nicely. (Hey, Peg, I worked for a doctor and could read his writing so give me a chance to decipher it, will you -Co-editor) If you aren't sure of the spelling, approximate - I have a good dictionary, and I need it; my own spelling is not always so hot. I can remember my own first appearance in print. I was surprised at how much more intelligent the results looked than they had when I set them down on paper. It really is quite exciting to the non-author to see something he wrote, actually printed in a paper. (Why do you suppose most newspapers and magazines have 'letter to the editor' departments? Exactly - that lovely feeling of ego boost when the ordinary joe sees his words in print.) Why don't you try it this year?

What do you want? We would like to hear: your opinion on the relative merits in your garden of, say, CAESAR'S BROTHER and ROYAL HERALD: what the cold snap in May did to some of your Siberians; how you got interested in Siberians in the first place; what happened with that try at pollen-daubing a couple of years ago; how that batch of seedlings turned out and why you threw them all away (or did you keep one for sentimental reasons?) And how about telling us what you would like to see us tackle - both TSI and the Society. Are there topics you think we haven't covered - or perhaps not covered sufficiently for you? Would you be willing to pay more dues in order to have the publication offset instead of mimeo? Do you have any ideas on how we could build up our treasury so that we could support some kind of research project? What do you think about test gardens and would you be willing to take on such work.

In fact, anything that has to do with Siberian Irises, the improvement of our publication, the increased usefulness of our Society. That's what we would like to hear from you.

And don't just stop with one try. Believe me, it is very nice, on a cold winter night, to sit down with a pad of paper and pencil and scribble your ideas about your garden - how you plan to remake a border to show off the Siberians (and other irises, of course) to better advantage, or how you think you could improve your soil or keep down the weeds, or what other kinds of plants seem to you to look well with your Siberians. I think, myself, that once you have tried, and your article has seen print, you will irresistably find yourself doing it again. Writing for publication is an insidious disease but a very pleasant one.

Isn't it about time you stopped letting George do it, and tried doing some of it yourself? Remember, if you find your publication unsatisfactory - the remedy is under your hand - your pencil or ballpoint or the keys of your typewriter.

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WHY SOME GARDENERS ARE FRUSTRATED

Peg Edwards

1. Magnificent rosebush decides to be a climbing rose and drapes itself over fence, which belongs to neighbor. Neighbor complains because his runty little multiflora isn't getting enough sun.
2. Mailman plunks large box on top of nice clump of crocus just coming into bloom, rings bell and departs without waiting to see if anyone is home.
3. Newsboy hurls folded paper from sidewalk in general direction of door, lands it in large prickly pyracantha, breaking two shoots and ruining gardener's hands in course of resulting rescue operation.
4. Visiting child, with unerring accuracy, picks only flower of only bulb of new daffodil that has just opened. Ignores several hundred commoner sorts.
5. Weatherman predicts snow flurries for March 22; one continuous flurry produces 15 inches of utterly unnecessary white stuff. Consequently, no flowers for Easter.
6. Seed order arrives with one substitution - the one batch of seed that couldn't be gotten anywhere else.
7. New seedbed is dug, worked fine, fertilized, smoothed and planted. Cats immediately head for it but are warned off, and netting is strung over it. Next morning bed is well turned over, netting tumbled beside it, large number of cat tracks clearly visible. Someone else's cat!

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GENERAL SOURCES FOR SIBERIANS

D. Steve Varner, Illini Iris Route 1, N. State Road Monticello, Illinois 61856	Tealwood and Others
Cassebeer's Iris Gardens 414 Strawtown Road West Nyack, New York 10994	Many- own and others
Fairmount Gardens 166 Fairmount Street Lowell, Mass. 01850	Twenty Varieties
Old Brook Gardens Harry B. Kuesel 19 Mary Lane Greenvale, New York 11548	McGarvey Siberians
Melrose Gardens Ben Hager 309 Best Road South - A Stockton, Calif. 95206	Rich's - Dark Eyes Ben's - Sparkling Rose Ruby Wine Others
Gable Iris Gardens 2543 38th Avenue South Minneapolis, Minn. 55406	Many - Good Selection
Mrs. Herman Knock 6705 N. Cliff Ave. Rte 2, Box 185A Sioux Falls, S. Dak. 57100	Beth Ellen Dark Marine
Englerth Gardens 4652 Division Ave S Grand Rapids, Mich. 49508	Good Selection
Orpington Nurseries, Ltd. Rocky Lane, Gatton Park, Reigate Surrey, England	Kitton and Brummit Introductions

(Several others have had them listed but we cannot confirm present stocks for sale. Can you?)