

Editor's copy

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THE SIBERIAN IRIS



# The Siberian Iris

Spring 1975

Volume 4 Number 1

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The Siberian Iris is published semiannually by the Society for Siberian Irises. The Editorial Offices are at 235 Koehl St., Massapequa Park, N. Y. 11762. Material printed herein may be reprinted only with the permission of the writer and the editor, Mrs. H. L. Edwards.

Deadlines for the Spring issue, March 1, and for the Fall issue, October 1; the earlier material is received before these dates the better for both writer and editor as that will allow for any necessary correspondence about possible cuts, changes or expansions.

Black-and-white photographs, and drawings in black ink, pencil or crayon, will be welcome, subject to the printer's judgement that he can obtain a clear reproduction. Please put your name and address on the back to insure that the material will be returned.

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Addresses of Committee Chairmen will be found in the Membership List starting on page 12.

Membership in this Society is open to members of the American Iris Society living in Canada and the United States, and to interested iris enthusiasts elsewhere. Dues are: Annual Single \$2; Annual Family, \$2.50; Triennial Single, \$5.00; Triennial Family, \$6.

Anyone wishing to serve on any Committee should write to the President who will probably be very glad to get the help. So will the Chairmen of any Committees who have two jobs to do!

# Editorial

Peg Edwards

With this issue we start our fourth volume of this publication. The start of a new volume seems like a good time to make some changes in the format, in publication policies, etc. It also seems like a good time to explain to the members what our publication is, and what it is not; what they have a right to expect of it, and what they shouldn't expect; and what they owe to it— because every relationship is in some ways reciprocal, each partner to the other.

The first change we have made is a different deadline for contributions. Instead of the former October 10 and March 10 dates we are now asking that all contributions reach this desk not later than October 1 and March 1. The reason for this is primarily the slowness of the mail. We are mailed as Third Class Matter, because for technical reasons we do not qualify as Second Class Mail. And Third Class may have as its goal delivery anywhere in the United States within 10 days; but in fact something that makes it from coast to coast within the ten days has been helped along by some minor miracle. I am not saying this on my own; it is what has been told to me by local Postmasters. So, by starting things off ten days earlier, we can perhaps get through the whole process of printing and preparing for mailing ten days sooner and thereby have them on the way to you soon enough to get there about the time they did when we started publication. Secondly the October date was pushed forward because the printing shop experiences its busiest times in the period October 20–December 10 and if we can get to the printer before this holiday printing rush gets under way we can get it back usually by November 1, whereas if we don't get there before the 20th we might not have it back before mid-November. If then. So the decision was made to switch to the earlier dates. Now what does this mean to you? If you have something to say to your fellow members, you must mail it early enough so it gets to my desk before the deadline. If you want to send something for the Fall issue, try to get it into the mailbox by September 25th. Of course, if you'd like to mail it as soon as it is written— I'd be happy to have it in August; an editor has a pleasant glow inside in contemplating material in hand well before the deadline.

As for what The Siberian Iris is, and is not: It is not a commercial publication in which the editor orders material from professional, paid writers, or sends a paid staff out to gather stories. When you are paying your writers you can make them cough up the story under threat of not getting any more orders, or of being fired from the job. Deadlines are usually met, and material available equals the size of the budget. But this is an amateur, specialist publication by and for its members. It has no budget to pay for articles (if you want to know what its budget amounts to, check the Treasurer's report!) and we can only ask people to

write for it- we can't make them do so. For an average issue I may send out 20 letters asking for material and feel lucky if I get five pieces of material back. Fortunately there are also a few members who don't wait to be asked- they feel they have something to say and they say it- and send it off early so that, if I'd like some part expanded a little, or feel that some phrase needs rewording, we have time to swap letters about it. But for the most part I must try to pry material from you out there at the other end of the line.

And what should that material be? Of course, any scientific or hybridizing breakthrough belongs here; news of new registrations and introductions; reports on Siberians at the convention; lists of new members. These come through quite regularly. But we also should have comments on what was seen in a local garden, how Siberians grow in a difficult soil or climate, a new way to use Siberians in the garden. And unless you write and tell me that you went to So-and-So's garden in bloom season and saw some lovely seedlings, how can I know that you have the makings of an article? If Sally Jones lives where soil and climate should make growing Siberians difficult, in one little pocket surrounded by areas which are good for Siberians, I have no way of knowing that she has overcome difficulties and has a story to tell- if she doesn't tell me so. If Richard Roe is growing Siberians in his young azalea planting and getting a very colorful effect while he waits for the azaleas to grow up and take over the space, and nobody writes me- how can I know about it- and how can I know that he has something that could make some good black and white snapshots to go with the article that is buried there? Doesn't anyone see the funny side of growing Siberians? Doesn't anyone have a complaint about some problem that they would like the Research Committee to get to work on? These are all things that should appear in TSI; but unless you out there use the Postal Service as a two-way passage, they can't get into print.

And what about the Robins? The Hybridizers' Robin Editor does send me copies of the meaty parts of the letters; but by and large these are useful mainly to keep me in touch with work that may at some time develop into a good story: progress reports, not finished tales. But I don't hear from the other Robins; doesn't anything ever happen? Doesn't anyone ever report on a better way to start seed, or a better time to transplant in his locality, or a better way to discourage borers?

So keep in mind that TSI is not only for the members; it must also come from the members to the editor. Don't wait to be asked, or if you are asked, try to answer. Maybe your honest answer has to be that you don't know the answer; you've been trying for five years to get them to do well in your garden but they still look rather sad and wispy, and can anyone else tell you what you could do to improve your soil or your ways

of handling Siberians. I can print your problem and maybe someone else will come through with the solution. But if you don't ask, nobody can answer.

So you see, if you want the publication to range over the whole area of Siberians; if you don't want it to turn into a Learned Publication for the researchers and the hybridizers, or a dull reporting of statistics—the answer lies on your desk.

If you don't write it, we can't print it.

(And don't forget the deadlines! Bottom of page 1 in every issue.)

---TAKE PICTURES---

Treasurer's Report- Gunther Stark

On Hand . . . . .	\$1516.08 (Jan. 1 1974)
Dues received . . . . .	326.25
Miscellaneous income . . . . .	16.05
Interest . . . . .	55.00
Auction net . . . . .	382.75
Total income 1974 . . . . .	<u>780.05</u>
	2296.13

Expenses

TSI spring issue . . . . .	191.40
Reprints . . . . .	21.80*
Dues notice cards . . . . .	11.00
Secretary's expenses . . . . .	18.93
TSI fall issue . . . . .	193.44
Total Expenses . . . . .	436.57
On hand, 1 \$500 certificate of deposit, 1 \$1000 certificate of deposit . . . . .	1500.00
Checking account . . . . .	<u>359.56</u>
	2296.13

\*It was found that some of the early issues were missing from the President's file of TSI and copies were made to fill the gap.

(2¢ worth: Please, dear people, take note that without the auction take we would have gone into the red again. And the only reason we have the surplus in the bank is because of previous auction receipts. Any volunteers to put on an auction in your locality?)

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Check your address for your due date for dues. If we are wrong, write us.

# Sapphire Bouquet

Kevin Vaughn

**SAPPHIRE BOUQUET**, a 1966 introduction of Gladys Wiswell, has blossoms of an unusual, intense, rather deep shade of true blue. Its shape is a somewhat more short-shanked version of *Gatineau*. The flower is lightly ruffled and the bloomstalk stands at about 22" tall- just right for the front of the Siberian border.

Once when Mrs. Wiswell was visiting my patch of Siberians she suggested that if I were to cross it with some of the *White Swirl* children I should get some nice seedlings. For a mate to it I chose *Bee Warburton's* wide, light blue *BLUE SONG*. The stylearms on this one are perhaps the most beautiful of all iris parts- pale blue heavily banded with turquoise and distinctively fringed.

The result of this cross, made both ways, was particularly happy. Of about 200 seedlings I could not find one bad one in the lot- and this, as all hybridizers know, just never happens. All were handsome shades of deep blue with considerable amounts of turquoise on the style arms and as a flush in the central area of the falls. All were about 24" in height and made neat compact clumps, and they had flowers with a strong, rather stiff flare and considerable ruffling on all parts. My favorite had pale blue style arms and deep blue standards and falls, with virtually no markings in the falls. When the seedling bed was at peak I decided it was useless to try to number any until they were all blooming together so I have left the entire patch undisturbed to look at again next spring.

If you have *Sapphire Bouquet* try it this year with some of your blue descendants of *White Swirl*- you won't be disappointed.

(2¢ worth) Kevin's results seem to suggest that perhaps the turquoise markings are dominant to the solid color; or, alternatively, that all Siberians carry a gene for them as a recessive which pops up when a seedling gets the recessive from both parents. But in the latter case I should think we would have had a lot more blues with turquoise markings than we do. Whatever the case, it is certain that the gene turns up when blues are crossed with *WHITE SWIRL* with a fairly high rate of frequency. Yet it certainly existed before *WHITE SWIRL*; *TURQUOISE CUP* is now in its 50s, and apparently it has come from *GATINEAU* in some crosses, but not in others. Perhaps the Research Committee would like to investigate?

Kevin was quite right in keeping the batch undisturbed for another year; first-year bloom is not always typical. Perhaps this fall we can have a further report- including some comment on branching? It seems to me- but this is personal opinion- that on plants with fairly short stalks I would prefer not to have many branches, but instead more buds in each of the (fewer) sockets. Branching seems to me to call for tall stems. Who agrees; who disagrees?

# The Genus *Iris*

Sherman Preece

An extremely important publishing event for those interested in the genus Iris occurred late in 1974. Dover Publications, Inc., of New York issued a reprint of the famous book by William Rickatson Dykes entitled THE GENUS IRIS. The Dykes book was first published in Great Britain in 1913 by the Cambridge University Press, and it contained what was then the authoritative body of knowledge about the various species in the genus Iris. The volume also contained forty-seven elegant colored drawings of various irises by F. H. Round, one colored plate of iris seeds by Miss R. M. Cardew, and thirty line drawings by C. W. Johnson.

The Dover edition is an unabridged republication of the original book with the text and all figures and plates shown 20% smaller than in the original work. Even with the slight reduction in size, this is a handsome 12 1/2 x 8 3/4", 245-page volume, hardbound in a rich purple cover with an attractive dust jacket illustrating Iris fulva and Iris fulvala in color.

The colored plates are reproduced authentically from the well-executed drawings of the original edition. Of special interest to the Siberian iris enthusiast are the first six plates which illustrate Ii. sibirica and orientalis, I. wilsonii, I. forrestii, I. chrysographes, I. clarkei, and I. bulleyana respectively.

Much information has been learned about irises since Dykes' work first appeared, many new iris species have been named, and some major revisions have been made by such authors as Lawrence, Rodionenko and Werckmeister. Even so, this reprint edition is a valuable and enjoyable addition to the iris library because of the basic material it contains- which was written half a century ago and more by a real iris expert-, the attractive color plates, and the added historical interest.

The reprint edition is available from Dover Publications, Inc., 180 Varick Street, New York, N. Y. 10016. The price is \$20, plus 35¢ for postage and handling, and of course for New York State residents the sales tax must be added too.

(2¢ worth: I can testify to the beauty of this reprint; my husband gave it to me for Christmas. If you want a lovely book for your coffee table that is not just a 'coffee-table book' this is it. It is far too nice to cram into a bookshelf; besides, you will probably want to look at it fairly often- and read it, for the information is far from being out of date. )

# A Clue to Better Germination?

Peg Edwards

In January I attended a joint meeting of the Daylily and Iris groups of the Long Island area at which the speaker, an evergreen daylily enthusiast, told among other things how she sows her daylily seed. She said she dug a small hole, poured in all the seed of one batch, and pushed the dirt back on top. She claimed to get nearly 100% germination. This struck a spark in my mind. That evening, while enjoying my Saturday evening can of beer, I found myself thinking about my own experiences and remembered something I had read somewhere about seeds germinating well when crammed together.

The next week I dug out of the library several books that I knew I had read and which I thought might have held the passage in my mind. No use; none of them had it. A second trip to the horticultural shelves was no help, either. So I cannot say where it was, or when I read it, nor can I quote it precisely. But somewhere, someone, speaking with the voice of authority, said that some kinds of seeds germinated more freely when in the close company of their kind, and that with some difficult seeds there might be no germination at all if the seeds were planted one by one in separate pots or spread out in a roomy flat, but when put in a tight bunch all would sprout. In some cases this was known to be the result of a chemical reaction resulting from two or more chemicals being leached out of the seedcoat- from different parts of the coat- in the presence of water, and there mingling to form a compound which could eat through the coat, or soften its hard surface enough to allow water to penetrate and start the embryo expanding enough to break through its cover. In other cases the cause appeared to be mechanical- perhaps the water trapped between the adjacent seeds was held in place enough longer than it would be if only the soil was holding it there, to let the moisture soften the coat and penetrate to the embryo.

And I also remembered- but alas, I don't keep such detailed records that I can say which batches of iris seed were involved- that sometimes seeds that had spent a month or two crammed into a small pill bottle, with a little damp vermiculite in the chilliest part of the refrigerator, gave me close to 100% germination, while similar crosses sown in a small flat before being refrigerated gave much lower percentages. Seeds sown outdoors in the ground, in neat rows, well spaced so the seedlings have room to grow, have rarely given me more than about 50-60% germination and some have not germinated at all. But I have wondered if part of this result mightn't be caused by seeds stolen by birds or squirrels, or eaten by some soil-dwelling insect.

So I am offering this suggestion to the Research Committee: set up an

experiment along somewhat these lines.

Obtain a large quantity of seed of one specific cross, to insure that the seeds will be as genetically alike as possible. Divide them into batches to be treated in the following ways:

1. seeds placed in a small container with an equal volume of damp vermiculite, perlite or other gritty medium. Store 6 weeks at a temperature of about 35 F. (Plastic pillbox would do)
2. seeds placed in a flat of sandy soil, spaced about 1" apart, moistened until the surplus runs out through the drainage holes and then placed in a plastic bag, firmly closed, in the same cool place as the small container.
3. seeds placed in a small container, as in 1. above, but stored out of doors in a cold frame or other protected place.
4. seeds sowed as in 2. above, stored as in 3.
5. seeds sowed in a row in the ground, exposed to the weather but with some protection from the depredations of squirrels and birds.
6. seeds sown in a 3" pot of any good potting mixture and placed under a plant lamp at room temperature as soon as sown.
7. seeds refrigerated as in 1. and 2. above but dry and without any moisture-holding medium about them, then sowed singly in individual pots or peat blocks (might try both), and placed under a plant lamp or on a sunny windowsill.

I would think that there should be not less than 25 seeds in each batch. Batches 1 and 2, after their chilling, could then be placed in a suitable place for germinating- plantlamp or sunny windowsill; batch 3 should be sowed in a good soil medium as soon as the ground starts to warm up in the spring, with protection as in 5. If any seeds are left after 'filling the classes' they might be tossed into a patch of weeds to see how they would behave left to nature alone. It might also be an idea to try dropping a whole, unopened pod, onto the ground where it would be covered by the natural debris of autumn, to see if possibly there is a good reason for the hardness of the seed capsules of some Siberians- particularly among the 28 chr. group. I have found pods on the ground during spring cleanup which had several seeds left in them and no sign that they had opened to release any seeds; these were almost certainly pods I had left to ripen for use in dried flower arrangements and then forgot or failed to collect for some other reason, which had snapped off the stalk during the winter. If there is a chemical action involved, it might possibly be not between seed and seed, but between seed and pod. I do not think this is likely, though, as seeds that have fallen from the pod seem to germinate fairly freely.

While on the subject of possible research projects, I would like to

suggest another line of investigation. I have found that when I line out Siberian seedlings (and even more so with Californicae and Cal-Sibes) the same year that they germinated, I lose a very high percentage of them over the succeeding winter, although the survivors do mostly bloom the following spring. If I leave the seedlings in the flats until the second spring, in a cold frame, they will take another year to come to bloom- but nearly all will survive to bloom. The nearest to an exception to this rule is when I have started the seeds by refrigerating them as soon as harvested, and then set them to germinate indoors as early as October, so that by the following May they are fairly sizable, sturdy little plants. These seem to have grown enough between May and October to be able to pull through the winter with few dropouts. In any case mulching (my answer to so many problems) doesn't seem to make any difference in the survival rate; evidently the size of the plant is the important thing. But without some sort of control setup it would be hard to say whether this is because of my particular soil and climate problems or is common to other situations as well.

Does anyone have any further questions that might encourage the Research Committee to tackle these matters? I don't have the time nor the space to investigate them myself, but I for one would like to know the answers.

In fact I believe the whole matter of growing Siberians from seed deserves investigation. Most of us have been working 'by-guess-and-by-golly' using techniques we have learned from growing other, usually bearded, irises, which may not always apply, or even from growing other kinds of things from seed, in which case the methods may be actually handicapping us. What is the best way- or what are the best ways- of growing Siberians from seed to blooming plant? How can we get optimum results- which I would define as bringing the greatest number of plants to bloom in the shortest time? Is there such a thing as keeping them growing too long in any one year- would I, for instance, be better off to start seeds through the chilling process in October, transferring them to planting medium in January, and lining them out in June, rather than keeping them growing for nearly a full year before they face their first winter outdoors? Would they be better off if I gave them not only the chilling but a few short turns in the freezing compartment? Does anyone know what is the 'stop-growing' point on the thermometer for the 28 chr. Siberians (many hardy plants, while staying green and not escaping into dormancy, stop growing at 43 F. while others continue to grow at temperatures below freezing. Chickweed, for instance, seems to remain active at least as low as 20 F.)? Does heat inhibit growth? If so, how much heat- 75, 85, 90 F.? Could it be that the seedlings I line out their first year are actually being held back not by the cold of winter but by the high temperatures of August leaving them ill-equipped to take the cold?

In short, how much do we really know, and how much are we guessing, in our present methods of growing seedling Siberians? After all, if we aim at improving the breed, the place to start is in getting our seeds -as many as possible- from the pod to the blossom. The more seedlings we lose between these points the fewer potential improvements we can come up with- and the more potential improvements die prematurely, never to add to the genetic stock.

Help, somebody!

\*\*\* Pictures \*\*\*\* Black-and-white pictures \*\*\*

*a Post for Mildred J.*

For the first time since April 1965, the name of Mildred Johnson does not appear as a member of the board of our society. After three years as Publicity Chairman, Mildred took on the job of Secretary, and served through the fall of 1971- seven long years of dealing with the many problems of that difficult job. Then for another three years she was a Director of the organization. Now she has retired from active practice- as they say about doctors- but if I know Mildred she isn't going to sit with her hands in her lap. She will no doubt continue growing, looking at, loving, and talking about Siberians, demonstrating their uses in flower arranging, promoting them wherever she finds anyone to listen.

I never met Mildred; what she looks like I don't know. But for most of those years we were in frequent correspondence- sometimes rather sporadic, due to my occasional bouts of losing letters in the hurrah's nest on my desk and her occasional trips to visit her daughter, but we always seemed to get caught up again. I don't think either of us will forget the grisly period in which the mailing list for TSI got lost in the mail, and in consequence the November issue didn't get into the mail until January- and rather late in the month, as I recall. The lost list was never found, but Mildred- heroically!- retyped the list on fresh rolls of sticky paper. And when I say heroically I kid you not; I have done it and it is an awful job.

For some time, before I took on the editorship, she cut the stencils for TSI; and ran off the copies, collated them, stapled them, and addressed and mailed them in a couple of emergencies when Charlotte Withers, who was then doubling in brass as President and Editor, was unable to see the issue through the press. In fact, in all her years of service on the Board, she never felt that her contribution to the society was limited to the duties called for by the title she held, but turned her hand to whatever she was needed for.

Thank you, Mildred. And try to get a little rest now, kid?

MEMBERSHIP LIST (as of Jan. 1. 1975)

Please, if your name is not on this list and you think it should be, do not write the Editor; write the Secretary. The Editor receives the list from the Secretary and is not in a position to check on the accuracy of the list or make corrections in it.

Mr. Lewis E. Albert, 3965 Sixth St., Goodview, Winona, Minn. 55967  
Mrs. George W. Allen, 410 Olive St., Malverne, Kans. 67110  
Dr. Ray C. Allen, Kingwood Center, Box 1186, Mansfield, Ohio 44903  
Mrs. Leona Bahret, 16 Germantown Rd., Danbury, Conn. 06810  
Mr. S. Houston Baker, Great Meadows Rd., Box 131, Hope, N. J. 07884  
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Mrs. Francis F. Bourne, 1363 Swigert Rd., Barberton, Ohio 44203  
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Mr. Harley E. Briscoe, Rte. 1, Whitehall, Ill. 62092  
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Canadian I. S., c/o Mr. Frank Garrity, 152 W. 18th St., Hamilton, Ont.  
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Mrs. J. H. Chenoweth, 7606 Central Av., Lemon Grove, Calif. 92045  
Mrs. W. G. Childers, Bowles Rt. Box 215, Hamlin, W. Va. 25523  
Ms. Mary Jo Christenson, 4550 Christenson La., Littleton, Col. 80123  
Clara B. Rees I. S. c/o Dr. John D. Nelson, 19887 Merribrook Dr.,  
Saratoga, Calif. 95070  
Mr. Ronald D. Clayton, 1102 N. Galena Av., Dixon, Ill. 61021  
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Mrs. Verna C. Cook, 6924 Pacific Hwy East., Tacoma, Wash. 98424  
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Mr. & Mrs. Bob Crockett, 2005 Bird, Joplin, Mo. 64801  
Mr. B. LeRoy Davidson, 911 Western Av. # 200, Seattle, Wash. 98104  
Miss Mary C. Davis, 1201 S. E. Leach, Des Moines, Iowa 50315  
Mrs. Robert Day, Box 81, Sierra Madre, Calif. 91024

Mrs. Alan W. Denney, 477 Upper Mesa Rd., Santa Monica, Calif. 90402  
 Mrs. Dolores Dillavou, 2609 S. Hinsdale Rd., Des Plaines, Ill. 60018  
 Mrs. Donald Dopke, 15056 Strathmoor, Detroit, Mich. 48227  
 Mr. Geddes Douglas, Hill Rd., Brentwood, Tenn. 37027  
 Mr. & Mrs. Robery Dunn, 4828 Jella Way, N. Highlands, Calif. 95660  
 Mrs. H. L. Edwards, 235 Koehl St., Massapequa Park, N. Y. 11762  
 Mr. Albert Ellis, 19 McClure Ave., Brantford, Ont., Canada  
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 Mrs. Lawrence D. Anglerth, 2461 22nd St. Rt. 2, Hopkins, Mich. 49328  
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 Mrs. Una Hamilton, Box 667, Brookshire, Tex. 77423  
 Mr. Claude A. Hanson, 3417 Kelly Way, Boise, Idaho 83704  
 Mr. Larry Harder, Ponca, Nebr. 68770  
 Mrs. Evelyn Hayes, 18884 Idaho Ave., Le Moore, Calif. 93245  
 Mrs. Mary Alice Hembree, 951 Brown Rd., Somerville, N. J. 08876  
 Mrs. Wilbur L. Highley, 219 New St., Tuskegee, Ala. 36083  
 Mrs. Sumner Hockett, P. O. Box 220, Hayden, Colo. 81639  
 Mrs. Karol L. Hujsak, 3227 South Fulton, Tulsa, Okla. 74135  
 Mr. Sterling Innerst, R. D. 1, Dallastown, Penna. 17313  
 I. S. od Minnesota c/o Ms. Joan Cooper, 212 W. County Rd. C, St. Paul, Minn. 55113  
 Mr. Frederick C. Jahnke, 745 N. 3rd Ave., Cedarburg, Wisc. 53012  
 Mrs. Merrill S. Johnson, 2275 Kensington Ave., Salt Lake City, Utah 84108  
 Dr. Howard S. Jordan, 220 Woodlawn Av., Athens, Ga, 30601  
 Mrs. Clarence F. Joris, 1116 H. St., San Bernadino, Calif. 92410  
 Mr. David E. Joyce, 251 S. 46th St., Philadelphia, Penna. 19139  
 Mr. Carl V. Julien, 145 Village Circle West, Paramus, N. J. 07653  
 Mrs. Charles J. Kavan, 2310 S. 49th St., Omaha, Nebr. 68106  
 Mr. Harry B. Kuesel, 10 S. Franklin Circle, Littleton, Colo. 80121  
 Rev. T. H. Leemhuis, Box 225, Cornell, Ill. 61319  
 Ms. Leona Glee Lofton, 3279 S. Franklin St., Englewood, Colo. 80110  
 Mrs. Walt Luihn, 523 Cherry Way, Hayward, Calif. 94541

Mr. Harold Marshall, R. R. 1, Loomis, Nebr. 68958  
 Mrs. Evangeline Martindale, Rte. 4, Sioux Falls, S. Dak. 57107  
 Mr. Donald K. Marvin, 22 Mechanic St., Mattapoisett, Mass. 02739  
 Mr/Mrs. William G. McCallum, 2611 Southlawn Dr., St. Paul, Minn. 55109  
 Dr. & Mrs. Currier McEwen, South Harpswell, Me. 04079  
 Dr. William G. McCarvey, 1 Etwillia Lane, R. D. 3, Oswego, N. Y. 13126  
 Mr. & Mrs. James McLaren, Box 4439, Huntsville, Ala. 35802  
 Mr. & Mrs. Daniel McNamara, 68. Brookterr Rd., Hightstown, N. J. 08520  
 Miss Ruth Messer, 750 Joliet St., West Chicago, Ill. 60185  
 Mr. H. N. Metcalf, Montana State U., Dept. of Plant & Soil Science,  
 Bozeman, Mont. 59715  
 Mrs. J. R. Millikan, 640 N. Manus Dr., Dallas, Tex. 75224  
 Mr. Gene Moglia, 999 Little East Neck Rd., Babylon, N. Y. 11704  
 Mr. Ian C. Morgan, 22 Holton Ave., Westmount 217, Quebec, Canada  
 Mt. Diablo I. S., 1821 Gross Lane, Concord, Calif. 94519  
 Mrs. Hunt Wenon, Court Place, Chatham, Va. 24531  
 Mr. Josiah T. Newcomb, R. D. 5, Brooks Rd., Binghamton, N. Y. 13905  
 Mrs. George Ney, Jr., 2517 S. Brisbane Ave., Milwaukee, Wisc. 53207  
 Dr. Norman Noe, Mallard Dr., Martinsville, N. J. 08836  
 Mr. Samuel N. Norris, R. R. 2, Owensboro, Ky. 42301  
 Mrs. Stayton Nunn, 11122 Claymore Dr., Houston, Tex. 77024  
 Mr. Lee F. Nydegger, 250 8th Ave., N. Y., N. Y. 10011  
 Mr. Kavin Okins, 7324 West River Rd. N., Brooklyn Park, Minn. 55444  
 Mrs. Berenice Parretta, 3934 Burke Ave. N.E., Rt. 4, Louisville, Ohio  
 44641  
 Mr. Oliver Pease, Rt. 1, Iris Rd., Dolgville, N. Y. 13329  
 Mr. William H. Peck Jr., MTD Rt. Box 30, Oyster Bay, N. Y. 11771  
 Mrs. Jack G. Peltier, 2 Bluejay Dr., Wyomissing, Penna. 17313  
 Mrs. Russell Peters, 140 Sussex Ave., Sewell, N. J. 08080  
 Mr. & Mrs. William Poston, 3212 Peach Tree Court, Bakersfield, Calif.  
 93301  
 Dr. Sherman J. Preece Jr., Dept. of Botany, 3329 Darrell Lane, U. of  
 Montana, Missoula, Mont. 59801  
 Mrs. R. Moore Price, 78 Chapel Rd., New Hope, Penna. 18938  
 Mrs. A. K. Primos, 1750 Meadowbrook Rd., Jackson, Miss. 39211  
 Mr. J. Donald Puett, 2305 Cleveland, Baxter Springs, Kans. 66713  
 Mrs. Albert Ray, Rt. 1 Box 74, Mabton, Wash.  
 Mrs. Lorena M. Reid, 17225 McKenzie Hwy. Rt. 2, Springfield, Ore.  
 97477  
 Mrs. John H. Reider, 4919 Wall Bank, Downers Grove, Ill. 60515  
 Mrs. Robert M. Reinhardt, 14151 W. National Ave., New Berlin, Wisc.  
 53151  
 Mrs. Victor Repp, 2868 Southern Rd., Richfield, Ohio 44286  
 Mrs. Wm. N. Rhodes, P. O. Box 78, Osage, Okla. 74054  
 Dr. or Mrs. A. W. Rice, 2817 Avenham Ave. S. W., Roanoke, Va. 24014  
 Mrs. Richard Richards, Box 433, Mt. Baldy, Calif. 91759

Mr. Henry Rigg, 205 S. Euclid Ave., St. Louis, Mo. 63110  
 Mr. & Mrs. Harold D. Ritchie, 1713 Camas, N. Y., Renton, Wash. 98055  
 Ms. Rita Alice Robinson, 3816 N. Linda, Oklahoma City, Okla. 73112  
 Mr. George Rodosky, P. O. Box 724, Kinsman, Ill. 60437  
 Mr. Arthur E. Rowe, Jr. RFD 3 Box 215, Bentonville, Ark. 72712  
 Library, Royal Botanical Gardens, P. O. Box 399, Hamilton, Ont.,  
 Canada L8N 3B8  
 Mr. & Mrs. Nathan Rudolph, 405 Lakelawn Blvd., Aurora, Ill. 60506  
 Mrs. Orpha Salsman, 14016 8th Av. South, Seattle, Wash. 98168  
 Mrs. Sam Sargo, RFD 7 Box 72, Hot Springs, Ark. 71901  
 Mr. Don Saurers, 2610 Elliot Ave., Columbus, Ohio 43204  
 Mr. Robert Savage, 33 Ona Lane, Newburgh, N. Y. 12550  
 Mr. Jake Scharff, 4818 Normandy Rd., Memphis, Tenn. 38117  
 Mr. Robert Schreiner, 3625 Quinaby Rd. N. E., Salem, Ore. 97303  
 Mrs. Ernest Segeseman, 380 Crescent Dr., Franklin Lakes, N. J. 07417  
 Mr. Wm. J. Seidl, 732 S. 19th St., Manitowoc, Wisc. 54220  
 Mrs. Louise D. Sellers, 308 Threadgill St., Wadesboro, N. Car. 28170  
 Mr. & Mrs. James H. Shepherd, 7 Steven Rd. Box 429, Westboro, Mass. 01581  
 Mrs. Marthella Shoemaker, Box 549, Nicoma Park, Okla. 73068  
 Mrs. Harold Slessman, Rt. 2, Willard, Ohio 44890  
 Mr. Richard J. Sloan, 6450 Jonathan Lane, Gurnee, Ill. 60031  
 Mr. Robert R. Smith, 4470 Orange St. Pat. 36, Oakland, Calif. 94610  
 Mr. George H. Spalding, 146 Genoa St. Apt. A, Arcadia, Calif. 91006  
 Mr. Pete Stadter, 940 W. Madison, Pontiac, Ill. 61764  
 Mr. Gunther Stark, Norwalk, Iowa 50211  
 Mr. Ross Swinford, R. D. 9 Box 316, Anderson, Ind. 46011  
 Mrs. Joseph E. Terrill, Rte. 1, Burlingame, Kans. 66413  
 Mr. Paul B. Thelin, 1220 Ave. A, Gothenburg, Nebr. 69138  
 Mrs. Sven I. Thoolen, 255 Manzanita Dr., Orinda, Calif. 94563  
 Mrs. Wesley N. Tiffney, 226 Edge Hill Rd. Sharon, Mass. 02067  
 Mr. Eugene D. Tremmel, 5613 Wallings Rd., N. Royalton, Ohio 44133  
 Mr. Charles R. Trommer, Tranquil Lake Nursery, River St., Rehobeth, Mass.  
 02768  
 Mr. & Mrs. James S. Tucker, 1424 S. Perrine, Rt. 2 P. O. Box 230,  
 Centralia, Ill. 62801  
 Mrs. Carleton J. Ulm, 135 N. Walker St., Taunton, Mass. 02780  
 Mr. Mitchell W. Vail, 22 Pine Ridge Circle, N. Syracuse, N. Y. 13212  
 Mrs. Edward L. Valentine, 1750 Woodard Rd., Elma, N. Y. 14059  
 Mr. & Mrs. Carlton Van de Water, P. O. Box 8, Mitchell, Ore. 97750  
 Mr. Harold W. Van Treese, 9350 Vandergriff Rd., Indianapolis, Ind. 46239  
 Mr. D. Steve Varner- Illini Iris, R. Rt. 1, N. State St. Rd., Monticello,  
 Ill. 61856  
 Mr. & Mrs. Edward E. Varrum, 6705 Landerwood Lane, San Jose, Calif.  
 95120  
 Mr. Kevin Vaughn, 2017 South Athol Rd., Athol, Mass. 01331

Mr. Julius Wadekammer, Rt. 2 Box 141 A, Rogers, Minn. 55374  
 Mr. George H. Wagner, 3465 Upper Mountain Rd., Sanborn, N. Y. 14132  
 Miss Mary Wais, Rt. 2 Box 49, Lebanon, N. J. 08833  
 Mr. & Mrs. Kenneth Waite, 6 Tow Path Rd., Westfield, Mass. 01085  
 Mrs. Fred P. Walther, 474 Upper Mountain Rd., Upper Montclair, N. J.  
 07043  
 Mrs. F. W. Warburton, 2 Warburton Lane, Westborough, Mass. 01581  
 Mr. George Watts, 135 King St., Armonk, N. Y. 10504  
 Mrs. Harry J. Weil, 2036 Red Coach Rd., Allison Park, Penna. 15101  
 Mrs. Troy R. Westmeyer, 60 Gary Rd., Stamford, Conn. 06903  
 Mrs. Barbara B. Whitehouse, 158 W. Bacon St., Plainville, Mass. 02762  
 Mr. James S. Wightman, 394 Cedar Flat Rd., Springfield, Ore. 97477  
 Mrs. A. D. Wilder, 2219 Mathews SE, Huntsville, Ala. 35801  
 Mr. Bryce Williamson, P. O. Box 972, Campbell, Calif. 95008  
 Mrs. James Wilson, Box 41, Riggins, Idaho 83549  
 Wisconsin I. S. c/o Mrs. John E. Troka, 2511 E. denton Av., Milwaukee,  
 Wis. 53207  
 Mrs. John Withers, 30 Stephens Ave., Lakeland, Fla. 33801  
 Mrs. Jean G. Witt, 16516 25th N. E., Seattle, Wash. 98155  
 Mr. Guy C. Wood, 1860 Bayshore Dr., Englewood, Fla. 33533  
 Mr. Ira Wood, 37 Pine Court, New Providence, N. J. 07974  
 Miss Nadine Yunker, P. O. Box 8, Taycheedah, Wis. 53090  
 Mr. Clinton Ziems, R. D. 1, Box 2, West Monroe, N. Y. 13167  
 Dr. Lloyd Zurbrigg, 903 Tyler Ave, Radford, Va. 24141

#### Overseas

Mrs. Marlene Ahlberg, 3171 Rotgesbuttel Nr. 145, West Germany  
 Mr. Eckard Berlin, Gartenarchitekt, Kutzbergerweg 2, 795 Biberach/Riss,  
 West Germany  
 Mr. Harry Blythe, Sunnyside Gdns, B. O. Box 444, Frankston, Victoria,  
 Australia  
 Miss Waltraud Busbach, Aussere Sulzbacher Str. 18, 85 Nuremberg, Germany  
 Mrs. H. E. Collins, R. D. 1, Tauranga, N. Zealand  
 Mrs. Lucy Delany, 21 Gladstone Rd., Richmond, Nelson, New Zealand  
 Mr. Akira Horinaka, Manchidani 8-7, Nishinomiya City, Japan  
 Mr. Grant Ileo, 81 King's Ave., Matua, Tauranga, N. Zealand  
 Mr. Noritaka Kitahara, 2-6-35 Nishi, Kunitachi City, Tokyo, Japan  
 Director Mr. Roman Kutylowski, ul. Plowce 6, Warsaw, Poland.  
 Mr. R. R. MacGregor, Box 1410, Canberra City A. C. T. 2601, New South  
 Wales, Australia  
 Mr. Tukasa Makino, 1-24-26 Minamisakurazuka, Toyonaka 560, Japan  
 Mrs. T. E. B. Poole Jr., Lavelle 152, Temperley, Prov. de Buenas Aires,  
 Argentina  
 British I. S. c/o Mr. R. Usher, 78 Wilmot Way, Banstead, Surrey, England

## Meet Some Distant Cousins

Ann O'Nimmo

Anyone who grows any kind of iris will agree that they do kind of leave you with a couple of lulls during which they are either not in bloom at all or, at the least, not blooming very lavishly. Yes, dears, I know about reblooming irises; but they are kind of episodic in most parts of the country, and in some places most of them won't flower at all out of the regular iris season. And what do you do between the snowdops and the first dwarf beardededs? The reticulatas are dear little things but few of them are very good at multiplication (I have found that J. S. Dijt is the only one that really spreads and self-sows in my garden; Cantab increases slowly and several others hold their own.) Also their season is quite short.

One cousin of the iris which goes quite a way to fill the early gap is the crocus, which is a member of the Iridaceae- one of the family, really. And in many parts of the temperate zone, by judicious distribution through the various parts of your garden, you can have them blooming for over two months. Not all the same ones, of course!

In my garden the crocus season starts, sometimes as early as the end of January, with C. seiberi, C. ancycensis, and C. chrysantha LADY KILLER. All of these seem to increase well; a single bulb (really a corm) of ancycensis produced 11 flowers its first year, a bunch over 2" in diameter the second year, and when after six years I had to lift the clump it was in, from an original 6 corms I took up over 100 big enough to bloom, plus who could count how many tinies that, the next spring, produced one or two blooms. These are a bright yellow, smaller than the CLOTH OF GOLD which is the first of the Dutch Crocuses to bloom but with the same brilliance, like a patch of sun shining on the ground instead of up in the sky. Seiberi is a pretty lavender and another good increaser, making fat clumps quickly. Both of these will scatter seeds around if they are happy, and they usually are. LADY KILLER, white with dark violet on the outside of the three outer petals, will make seed, but the seedlings differ from the parent. It also increases readily, as most of the crocuses do, though few multiply as fast as seiberi and ancycensis.

Soon after these three, some other C. chrysantha varieties get going- SNOW HUNTING, a good small white, CREAM BEAUTY, which really is the color of good coffee-cream, BLUE BIRD, a light lavender-blue outside with white inside, BLUE PEARL, pale pearly blue outside with a blue-white lining, GOLDBLOCKS, a softer, buttery yellow, without the orangy cast of ancycensis, ZWANENBERG BRONZE with brown markings on the outside of the three outer petals, on a bright yellow ground- sort of LADYKILLER turned yellow. PRINCESS BEATRICE is described as Lobelia blue but to me that

has a little more lavender than this one has in its blue. There are a number of others which I haven't tried as yet, offered in several catalogs which you might want to try.

All of this group, commonly called Snow Crocus or Winter-Flowering, are smaller in size of the individual flower than are the more common Dutch or Exhibition crocuses. They also have a wider range of colors and usually more flowers to the corm, and usually build to a good-sized patch from 5 or 6 corms in just a year or two. By the time they are reaching the end of their flowering period- a good month after the first blooms open- the larger crocuses are starting to bloom. Most of these are in the white-lavender-purple color range, though there are some yellows, mostly derived from C. susiana (CLOTH OF GOLD is the best known) which bloom a little earlier, overlapping the end of the Snow Crocus season. These larger ones brighten the garden for about three weeks.

That's to say, you can have a season of crocuses for about seven weeks if you plant them all in the same part of the garden. By putting clumps of the same variety in different exposures you can stretch this quite a bit. A clump close to the south side of the house, say within a yard or so of the foundation, will bloom a week sooner than one in a sunny spot at the far end of the garden, and a third clump placed where it is shaded in the morning may hold out another week or more. So by judicious distribution of a dozen bulbs you can stretch the season to nine or ten weeks. By which time, the first dwarf bearded might be in bud!

Where can you get these early crocuses (the larger ones can be found at any nursery or garden center)? Mostly from catalogs. I have had them from P. de Jager, Park Seed Co., Burpee; my first meeting with them came from a little box at the local supermarket, marked Crocus chrysanthus Mix; there were a dozen corms in the box and the next spring they bloomed right through a late February snowfall, half a dozen colorings and over thirty flowers. And they grew and they grew, and the bees pollinated them, and seedlings grew up among them with variations of the color schemes- there must be a couple of hundred of them by now in that patch. They 'hooked' me. I started buying the named ones.

Even more, I've bought and planted some of the autumn bloomers (which are not to be confused with the so-called Autumn Crocus which is really Colchicum, a member of the Lily family.) The fall-blooming crocuses are mostly in shades of lavender and violet, with a few white or at least whitish ones. C. ochroleucus, which blooms rather late, sometimes into November for me, is a creamy white; C. speciosus albus, which is one of the first out, sometimes as early as the end of August, is really white. Individual flowers of these don't last more than about ten days but the corm will produce four or five flowers in succession, and the various

species spread nicely through their season. It is no use putting these in different parts of the garden to extend the season, though, as they seem to be incited to bloom by day length rather than temperature as the spring ones are. The autumn bloomers are larger than the early spring kinds, almost as big as the Dutch ones and have rather longer necks so that they are held well above the first drifts of dead leaves.

I keep daring myself to try crossing the autumn ones with some of the little snowbabies; so far I've managed to hold off (I'm in enough mischief as it is) but no doubt I'll succumb one of these years. The pollen can be held over for several months in much the same way as that of the bearded irises, and who knows what such a cross might produce? Bright yellow autumn-bloomers? Taller earlies? Maybe even rebloomers?

Another cousin of the Iris which many of us grow is the Gladiolus. This does fill in nicely that summer gap in the iris bed, but it is such a nuisance having to dig them up in the fall- especially to get them out without disturbing the irises. Or is it? Actually, you can get a very nice effect without buying the finest named varieties, that you certainly wouldn't want to treat as annuals. Buy a bag of mixed glads, which are fairly inexpensive, and let them stay in the ground to live or die over the winter. In the milder parts of the US quite a lot of them will survive. Here in southern New York I have had bloom the second year on as many as half a bag of 50 corms. A few of the varieties from my first try at letting them naturalize have been blooming now for three or four years- years of open winters with no snow cover to protect them from the worst of the cold. Last summer some of these produced three and four stalks well equipped with flowers and held nicely upright without staking. Gladiolus planted close to the foundation on the east or south side of the house may well not only survive but produce real exhibition stalks if they are adequately fed a couple of times a year. I have seen, in what was my mother's garden, stalks of glads that I had planted ten years before- a dozen stalks from one original corm, five and six feet tall with twenty or more flowers well over five inches across. Whether one could do this in Vermont, or Idaho, or eastern Quebec, I don't know; probably not. But I suspect it could be duplicated in more of North America than most people think.

There is a type of glad sold through some of the bulb catalogs, called hardy gladiolus. I have also seen seed of these listed in the Park Seed catalog and they are probably available from others whose mailing list I'm not on (not yet; give me time!) These are mostly of three species- nanus, colvillei and byzantinus, with a few named varieties. They are very dainty and small, with loose, open sprays of blooms on slender stems. They are hardy- to the extent that they can be grown out of doors without being lifted in fall, much farther north than most of the usual highly bred ones; but they need some protection wherever

temperatures get below about 25 F. without a snow blanket, or below 20 even with a snow cover. I doubt if they can be grown at all where the thermometer drops below zero. They also bloom with the TBs, and as they are far from spectacular I doubt if they would have much appeal for the big-flower enthusiasts. But people who like the Siberians might enjoy these in among their clumps, and they would extend the range of colors as they are in the pink to red range mostly. G. colvillei THE BRIDE is white marked with touches of a clear light rosy crimson- not the pure white it is usually described as; the pinks and reds are inclined to the purple side of red. From seed they are slow to come to bloom size, but if you have patience you will be rewarded with a nice range of colorings.

There are other irids you can grow to fill in when the irises are not blooming for you. *Belacanda* is hardy through much of North America and makes a pretty plant with flowers in yellow, orange, and rather coppery red, blooming in June; but it isn't the flowers it is grown for so much as the seed capsules, which open to show clusters of shiny black seeds like a large blackberry. These can be used indoors in dried-flower bouquets and seem to be able to hold up all winter (after which you can plant the seeds and increase the supply.) Many of you know the *Sisyrinchiums*, the blue-eyed grass; but these also bloom mostly with the irises and would kind of get lost in the shuffle when their more elegant cousins are in flower. *Lapeyrousias* are hardy south of the Mason-Dixon line and in some places north of it, and with protection can be grown even farther north, and they bloom in summer with red or rosy flowers.

If you don't mind the work, there are other irids which can be put out in the summer garden to bloom, then lifted and stored over winter indoors: *Montpretia*, *Acidantha*, *Tigridia*, which can be set out in late spring to grow and bloom in the summer and dug after the first frost- some of these will be hardy in the more southern areas. There are several irids which are houseplants in much of North America, which will benefit from being set out in their pots on the terrace in the shade of a tree during the heat of summer, but these should be brought in before the nights grow chilly- *Freesias*, *Ixia*, *Moraea*, *Sparaxis* among others. The bulbous ones, *Freesia*, *Ixia*, and *Babiana*, can be started in pots outside late in spring and brought in about Labor Day for indoor bloom (if they haven't already started blooming!) or can be started in early fall in a coldframe and brought in as soon as growth has started to bloom in the winter or early spring. *Dierama* has survived the winter in my cold frame in the ground, but never amounted to much; still, it may be hardier than its reputation would indicate and might be worth trying in the south outside of California and Florida, with some protection.

At any rate, there are enough irids that can fill gaps in your garden so than no iris nut need say 'the irises are gone, the garden is bare.' Have fun!

## Notes and Quotes

We had hoped to have something about Siberians in Australia and New Guinea, but apparently the flu hit those of our Society who made the trip and they just were not up to taking notes- and I suspect there was an element of jet fatigue involved as well. Bee Warburton did say that she didn't need notes to remember "the penguins, and the koalas, and the perfectly terrific birds in Australia. There is one that has plainly to be seen on its body red, orange, yellow, green, blue and violet. Honestly! And the Kookaburra which sits over picnickers' heads and swoops down for scraps. AND the Platypus in the platypussery...who hid until all the people except me got tired and left, and then came out and browsed on his worms...they have an earthworm farm just for the platypussery."

But for the most part I'm afraid we will have to depend on any articles on the trip that come out in the AIS Bulletin for our information on Siberians down under.

Dr. McEwen had offered to write a report on the results (what results?) of his and Bee's study of the likelihood of pollination of flowers treated in various ways, but this has still not come through so all we can offer is his brief comment in the letter he wrote me- "After three years of effort it proves to be a bust because, although none of the flowers treated set pods, neither did twenty control flowers just allowed to open naturally. It just shows that even the natural bee pods don't occur all that often. So, to do the study properly would require huge samples of flowers- perhaps 100 or more in each of the eight test groups." Seems to me, though, that at least the effort has shown some result, even though a negative one: reasonable care in protecting one's crosses will make it quite sure that the seeds are the result of the cross intended and not self-pollination before the hybridizer got to it. This is more useful than might appear at first glance, as there had been quite a body of thought which held that Siberians self-pollinated before or immediately upon opening. If this were the case there would have been some pods set; plants which self-pollinate will normally set seed on a good percentage of the flowers, from about a third to 100% depending on the formation and genetic background of the genus or species, because they are so constructed that the pollen inevitably is brushed from the anther to the stigma in the process of developing to blooming stage and failure to set seed in such cases usually is the effect of a genetic discrepancy in the plant's ancestry. Also such kinds of plants are not often attractive to pollinating insects; but Siberian irises do seem to attract bees and other insects and are designed in such a way as to induce these insects to do the job for them. So I would expect that any attempt to produce selfed seed from flowers that have not been allowed to open

naturally to pollinating insects would result in no takes. And that was the result Currier and Bee did get.

A letter from an overseas member, Marlene Ahlberg, inquiring about back issues, asks about other sources of information on heredity in Siberians. Aside from what is available in Garden Irises, which is not very much even if you can get hold of a copy, there really is not much to be had in any publication available to the layman. If any of our members do know of such sources we'd appreciate having the information to pass on. -I think our hybridizers might have to look to their laurels in a few years if Marlene can carry out her plans. She has rented what she calls a small meadow of 2000 square meters- this would be about 18,000 sq. ft. and to me, looking at my little back yard, it sounds like quite a lot!- and has so far dug enough to plant 300 seedlings, mostly 40s but some 28s, and is in hopes of finding something with a tendency to rebloom; and also is planning work on tetraploids of which she has several of Currier's! And just to help it all along she is a biology teacher!

We Do Get Questions- but sometimes we can't answer them. Someone wrote me to ask how she could grow Siberians on very sandy soil, rather coarse and gritty, which, she says, practically swallows fertilizer and humus as fast as she adds it. This is a question to which I would very much like to hear an answer as I have the same problem. If it were a matter of preparing ground for a couple of clumps I could say, pick up an old bathtub and sink it in the garden and fill it with suitable soil but I doubt if this lady would be any better able than I am, to sink enough bathtubs to accommodate several dozen Siberians- even if we could afford to get the tubs in the first place! Can anyone suggest some other method of dealing with this problem?

Since no entries were received for the CONTEST proposed on p. 20 of the Fall 1974 issue, nobody gets the needlepoint keytag. Pity; I have the obverse done with a nice little Siberian on it. I guess I'll just put my own monogram on it and keep it...unless someone is inspired to send in something before October 1? I even had judges lined up- very impartial ones; gals from my garden club who belong to other plant societies (some of which have the same problem of plants mislabeled) and can understand the purpose of the contest. At the same time none of them would know any of the entrants so they would not be swayed by prejudice. But the call never came for them to get to work. Sad!

As I am sure you have all noticed, there is no President's Page in this issue. Since Dr. McCarvey has not answered my letter of reminder about it, and phone calls have also amounted to just listening to the unanswered ring, I can only conclude that Bill and Esther took advantage of their new freedom (Bill retired last fall from his work as

Professor of Psychology at Oswego University) to indulge in a nice long winter vacation. I'm sure that if I'd had to spend so many winters in Oswego I'd grab at the first chance to get away from the snow and the cold. Living as I do in the subtropics of the South Shore of Long Island I don't feel the urge. (We did have a snowfall this year; about eight inches on Lincoln's Birthday, but within a week all traces were gone, the early crocuses were in full bloom south of the house, and the tiny trumpet daffodil, N. asturiense a.k.a. N. minimus, was showing its yellow buds.) There will be a President's Page in the Fall issue and thereafter if I have to go to Oswego and stand over Bill until it is written! You hear me, Willyum?

Oh yes, that snowfall. It was the first time since New Years Day 1971 that we had had enough snow to get out the snowblower. So when it had piled up to about 2", Himself got it out and tried to start it. Guess what happened? Yeah, sure. While he was trying to get it to start I was out there shivering (21 F.) and shoveling. However I only had to clear enough path for the mailman; Harry gave up finally and after lunch he went out and did a good job. The blower is now in good working order, so of course there hasn't been a flake fall since.

And here I am with a page and a half to go and not an idea left in my mind. Don't you kind of wish that someone had written just one more article for us? Well, why didn't you?

---Black-and-Whites---

---Pictures!---

Maybe something I picked up recently will be a help to someone in starting seeds or potting plants. Anyone who has ever tried to make a piece of broken clay pot stay put over the drainage hole of a flowerpot knows that eventually as the pot is watered, time after time, the soil in the pot begins to filter down with the water that drains out the bottom, and the soil line at the top sinks lower. For another thing, if you are using plastic pots which have their holes around the sides of the bottom, potshards just will not cover. I have tried various solutions and have heard of others that to my mind were not likely to be any better. The best results I have found so far are packing the holes with wads of unmilled sphagnum moss soaked in water and then squeezed almost dry; the flaw in this, if the pot is intended to stay in use for some time, is that eventually the moss decays and breaks down into fine particles and, like the potting mix, begins to drain out the bottom. In small pots with not too much weight of soil I have used paper toweling doubled and folded so as to fit the whole bottom of the pot with a turn-up of about 1/2" all round. This may be good for as much as six months. Then it falls apart from old age. And it is no use at all in anything

larger than a 2" pot; even the most tear-resistant toweling will begin to rip if the pot is lifted while the paper is wet. However a recent publication offered what seems to me to be a really good idea: old nylons cut into sections to suit the pot. I have tried it out and it does work, and since the nylon just doesn't rot it should last as long as the pot. You cut a piece from the leg of the stocking about one to two inches longer than the width of the bottom of the pot, press it down in allowing the cut ends and the two folded edges to turn up against the sides of the pot; put in some dirt and pack it firmly against the line where side meets bottom to hold the nylon in place while the pot is filled. With small square plastic pots I simply pulled the cut piece into a ring and pressed this down into the four corners allowing the cut edges to flop out toward the center. The dirt will hold it all in place nicely.

Which brings up another use for old nylons (and if this sounds a bit like Heloise's column, is that bad?) Rather than go to all the work of making the pouches as suggested last year, you can simply cut suitable lengths of stocking (yes, yes, you can use pantyhose the same way) open then wide and slip over the bud and then fasten in place top and bottom with a twistem. I guarantee you that no bug big enough to pollinate the flower will get through the nylon; you can see quite clearly when the bud has reached the point of opening up- but it won't actually open until you take off the nylon- and the fabric is soft enough to prevent its damaging any essential flower part, though in slipping it off a flower that is trying to pop open you might tear a petal or two. Roll the stuff gently upward to take it off; or perhaps if you want to put it back on the flower as soon as the cross has been made, you could roll it down, and then if you unroll it carefully perhaps the falls will be gently folded back up over the standards. One nice thing about the nylon hose is that they have a tendency to shed water rather than let it penetrate; raindrops hitting it tend to run down the ribs (or whatever you call the chains of stitches going the length of the stocking?) but to make sure of this perhaps one should be certain that the nylon section is right side out. The wrong side has ribs going crosswise.

Have a good summer and wonderful bloom, and remember:

**GET IT DOWN IN BLACK AND WHITE!**

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