

# The Siberian Iris



Spring 1995

# THE SIBERIAN IRIS

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Front Cover: *Iris chrysographes*  
Curtis's Botanical Magazine, October 1910

Photograph: Courtesy of the Hunt Institute for Botanical  
Documentation, Carnegie Mellon University,  
Pittsburgh, PA

## FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

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This issue of TSI marks a change in leadership of SSI as I take over from Hal Stahly for a three year stretch as President. Hal, and all those who have gone before, have laid a very solid base for the Society and I see it as an important part of my job not to mess this up. Nothing much is broken. There is plenty to celebrate about the current status of Siberians, particularly the membership in SSI, which continues to grow rapidly, and the increasing interest in and respect for beardless iris in general. In 1985 we had 360 members of SSI. This year it will be close to 700. As the baby boomers continue to mature and realize that the highest expression of human life lies in gardening, we can hope for further increases in membership. How about 1,000 members by 2,000? One thing we must continue to do is write popular articles about Siberians that can help to introduce them to the general gardening public and to popularize them as perennials. The last such article I remember was by Anna Mae Miller. This was published about two years ago in Fine Gardening and we are ready for another one (or two) in some of the growing number of gardening magazines. When Currier McEwen's revised and enlarged book appears, it will also give us a wonderful boost.

Some other projects we can consider for the coming year are to explore revision of the Judge's training manual and to coordinate the timing of Siberian conventions to minimize conflicts with other iris groups. It is ridiculous that next year the Siberian and Japanese Conventions will be held on the same weekend. Never again! We need to breathe some new life into the Siberian Robins and I am pleased to say that Dale Hamblin has agreed to act as Robin Chairman. You will find a call for new members on page 32 of this issue. Membership in a Robin is an ideal opportunity to learn from and make friends with other siberianites. We need more Siberian hybridizers too and need to look for ways to encourage people to get started. Barbara Schmieder's program at the Siberian Section meeting in Pennsylvania will focus on the irises of Marty

Schafer and Jan Sacks. This will prove that we do have talented and devoted young Siberian hybridizers -- we just need a few more of them.

This is a volunteer society. The vitality of SSI depends on it. If you have an interest in serving in any capacity, please let me know. You don't have to be an "expert" to play a part and the contact with other members can be very rewarding. Finally, I do hope you will share your thoughts and ideas about SSI with me at any time. If there are items YOU would like to see on the agenda for the next three years, let me know. The Siberian Board meeting at the AIS convention in York, PA is one place to have some input -- and anyone is welcome to come and participate. Please do.

Bob Hollingworth

**Be sure to join us at the AIS Convention in Hershey,  
Pennsylvania for our society's meetings.**

**Siberian Society Board Meeting**  
Tuesday, May 23rd, 4:00 pm - 6:00 pm

**Siberian Section Meeting**  
Wednesday, May 24th, 3:00 pm - 4:00 pm

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## AIS AWARDS FOR 1994 CONTINUED

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*(See Fall 1994 issue of TSI for 1994 AM, HM and Morgan-Wood Medal winners)*

### HIGH COMMENDATION - Congratulations to:

Hollingworth, R.	84U2B18	7
	(That's My Baby R. '93)	
	88V3B3	24
Schafer/Sacks	S87-10-1	12
	S86-8-116	
	S86-20-1	8
Silverberg, D.	89-43-F	6
	(In Her Glory)	
Wilhoit, J.	82-6-A	5

### EXHIBITION CERTIFICATES - Congratulations to:

Dale Hamblin	SB-93
Calvin Helsley	Carmen Jeanne
Hill, Mrs. E.J.	#18-8
Morley, Kevin	M/S 91A
Ney, Lavone	LN'94
Varner, Steve	92A04
Waddick, James	RS-88
Wilder, Ruth	WW2
Wood, John	W-115-90

### BEST SHOW SPECIMEN - Congratulations to:

EXHIBITOR	SPECIMEN	SHOW
Carol Warner	Snow Prince	Towson, MD
Paula Meyer	Maranatha	Fond du Lac, WI
Lavone Ney	George Henry	Hales Corners, WI
Agnes Tupes	Silver Edge	Miranda, CA
Calvin Helsley	Festival Prelude	Springfield, MO

## 1994 REGISTRATIONS AND INTRODUCTIONS

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**ANTICIPATION ORANGE** (Lorena Reid, R. 1994). Sdlg. 8S23-2J. SIB, 24-30" (61-76 cm), L. S. pale orange crush, slightly deeper gold midrib; deep gold stylearms, edged pale orange crush.; F. pale orange crush, large deep gold signal shading paler into orange crush area. Clear yellow sdlg.: (*I. chrysographes* sdlg., maroon with white signal x unknown) X self. Laurie's Garden 1994.

**ASHFIELD CLEMENTINE** (Anne Watson, R. 1994). Sdlg. AW1. SIB, 32" (81 cm), M. S. violet-blue, ultramarine veining, white signal; style arms ribbed in almost mid-prussian blue, shading to lilac violet-blue at edge. F. violet-blue with ultramarine veining, gold signal edged white; flat form. Parentage unknown.

**CHANDLER'S CHOICE** (Currier McEwen, R. 1994). Sdlg. ST(6)78/134. SIB (tet), 32" (81 cm), EML, S. and stylearms dark red purple (RHS 77A); F. red violet (80A) with near-black 79A) veins, giving overall effect darker than (77A); pale yellowish white signal with 1/2" violet (87A) halo. Hubbard X Happy Event.

**CLARICE ANNIE** (Clarice Pye, R. 1994). SIB, 34" (86 cm), M. S. navy blue; stylearms wine with blue midribs; F. dark blue, spoon-shaped gold ray pattern, gold edge; no fragrance. Parentage unknown.

**DANCING SHADOWS** (Anna Mae Miller, R. 1994). Sdlg. 80.17.1 SIB, 45" (114 cm), M. S. purple (RHS 93B); F. same but velvety upper half appears darker, tiny white eye signal. 77.13.35, Dancing Nanou sib. X unknown. Ensata Gardens 1994.

**DREAMING BROWN** (Currier McEwen, SIB, R. 1988). Earhart, Seaway Gardens 1994.

**ELISABETH MCEWEN** (John W. White, R. 1994). Sdlg. JKM x SP-3. SIB, 32" (81 cm), EM. S. pansy (RHS 83A to 83B); style arms slightly bluer (86B) lightening to near white on edge; F. pansy (83A), signal white. Janet K. Merrill X Shirley Pope.

**FISHERMAN'S MORNING** (James Copeland Sr., R. 1994). Sdlg. 88-15. SIB, 31" (80 cm), M. S. rosy red-violet (RHS 77A); style arms veined and shaded purple (77B), light violet-blue (97C) edge, turquoise (107B) midrib; F. rosy red-violet (77A) with dark violet-blue (95A) central zone. 82-06: (Dear Delight X Pink Haze). Ensata Gardens 1994.

**HARPSWELL PRELUDE** (Currier McEwen, R. 1994). Sdlg. T(8)88/1(2). SIB (tet.), 20" (51 cm), VE & RE. S. medium violet-blue (RHS 90C); F. darker (93B), brown-gold signal. White Prelude X Lucky Lilac. Seaways Gardens, Eartheart Gardens 1994.

**HARPSWELL VALOR** (Currier McEwen, R. 1994). Sdlg. T(7)85/97(6). SIB (tet), 30" (75 cm), M-VL. S. dark violet blue (RHS 90B), veined darker (90A); tufted violet (86B) style arms infused red-violet (83D); F. velvety dark violet-blue (90A) veined darker (95A), white signal; ruffled. Regency Buck X T(6)82/114: (Adj sib x Dear Dianne). Earhart, Seaways Gardens 1994.

**HEATHER'S GEM** (Elsie Lucas, R. 1994). Sdlg. A89/3x181. SIB, 36" (90 cm), ML. S. mid-blue; pale blue-cream style arms, turquoise midrib; F. mid-blue shaded deeper, fine white edge, yellow-green hafts blending with burgundy veining at edge; flared, lightly ruffled; slight fragrance. Parentage unknown.

**HOAR EDGE** (Jennifer Hewitt, SIB, R. 1990). British Iris Society 1993.

**JUST BECAUSE** (Martin Schafer/Janet Sacks, R. 1994). Sdlg. S86-27-2. SIB, 30" (76 cm), M. Ruffled mid blue-violet (shades of RHS 94B to D), very small white signal on F.; style arms with bluer midribs, turquoise side-ribs and

darker blue-violet edge; slight fragrance. Purple Prose X Springs Brook. Joe Pye Weed's Garden 1994.

**KAIPARA HARBOUR** (Mrs. M.P. May, R. 1994). Sdlg. 205. SIB, 28" (70 cm), EM. S. light blue; F. light blue, shaded light violet on hafts, light violet signal; no fragrance. Swank X Castlegrace.

**KAIPARA MAGIC** (Mrs. M.P. May, R. 1994). Sdlg. 547. SIB, 21" (52 cm), M. S. slightly lighter than F.; F. mid-blue with conspicuous white edge, white signal veined blue. Parentage unknown.

**LAKE KEUKA** (Dana Borglum, SIB, R. 1991). Abbey Gardens 1994.

**LEE'S BLUE** (John Coble/Robert Bauer, SIB, R. 1993). Ensata Gardens 1994.

**LEO HEWITT** (Jennifer Hewitt, R. 1994). Sdlg. T8311. SIB (tet.), 33" (84 cm), M. S. medium to dark blue-violet, veined darker; F. deep blue-violet with variable fine gold edge, gold signal; tailored flaring falls, upright standards; no fragrance. Sdlg. (parentage unknown, from McEwen seed) X Silver Edge.

**MESA PEARL** (John Coble/Robert Bauer, SIB, R. 1993). Ensata Gardens 1994.

**NEAT TRICK** (John W. White, R. 1994). Sdlg. JKM x SP-1, SIB, 35" (89 cm), EM. S. near blue violet (RHS 89C); style arms lighter blue (93C-93D); F. dark blue violet (89A), splashed white, with pale yellow green signals; no fragrance. Janet K. Merrill X Shirley Pope.

**ROSEBUD MELODY** (Anna Mae Miller, R. 1994). Sdlg. 85.7.2. SIB, 28" (71 cm), M. Velvety purple (RHS 96A) self; rosebud shape. Almost a Melody X Fattaneh. Ensata Gardens 1994.

**RUFFLED ROUND**(Currier McEwen, R. 1994). Sdlg. T(8)84/104(1). SIB (tet), 28" (70 cm), M. S. dark violet-blue



(RHS 93B); F. darker (93A), small white signal; velvety and ruffled. Regency Belle sib X T(7)81/111(8): (Marshmallow Frosting x (Dear Dianne x Happy Event sib)).

**SIMPLE GIFTS** (R. M. Hollingworth, SIB, R. 1992).  
Windwood Gardens 1994.

**SPRINKLES** (John Coble/Robert Bauer, SIB, R. 1993).  
Ensata Gardens 1994.

**STRAWBERRY FAIR** (R. M. Hollingworth, SIB, R. 1992).  
Windwood Gardens 1994.

**SUPERACT** (Barry Blyth, R. 1994). Sdlg. 4. SIB, 30" (76 cm), ML. Iridescent violet F. with 1' blue-lavender central area blended green and white. Parentage unknown (from McEwen seed). Tempo Two 1994/95.

**SUPERNATURAL** (Barry Blyth, R. 1994). Sdlg. 2. SIB, 32" (81 cm), ML. Light magenta-red wine, F. with white and blue lines radiating from very faint blue-violet central area. Parentage unknown (from McEwen seed). Tempo Two 1994/95.

**SWEET SUCCESS** (D. Steve Varner, SIB, R. 1993). Illini Iris 1994.

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## IN PRAISE OF...DEMURE ILLINI

(My Diamond in the Rough)

By Dale Hamblin \_\_\_\_\_

When you grow over two hundred Siberian cultivars you start to expect certain things and sometimes when you're not expecting it they surprise you.

This was the case in 1994 when **Demure Illini** (Varner '84) became my "Diamond in the Rough" for outperforming its previous three years and outperforming every other variety in my yard. It started blooming May 25th and bloomed continuously until July 2nd. And it probably would have bloomed longer if the weather had not been so hot and dry.

**Demure Illini** (parentage **Showdown X self**) produced three branches on some stalks and some terminals had three blooms for a high total of nine blooms and a low total on some stalks of six blooms. The flower stalks were staggered around the plant. The foliage is not excessively tall and the flowers around the outside bloomed lower making a very nice clump.

Its color is a beautiful grape red with a very large white signal veined red. The blooms hold their shape nicely and in my yard the flower beckons you "come hither". It is the number one plant all my neighbors want and visitors gather around.

Its ability to outperform more recent and expensive varieties make it seem as if it were my own Siberian treasure.

## ESTHER C.D.M. ALIAS GULL'S WING

By Julius Wadekamper \_\_\_\_\_

After Dr. McGarvey died Mrs. McGarvey invited Borbeleta Gardens to come to Arkansas and dig Dr. McGarvey's seedlings. She wanted us to evaluate them and introduce any worthy material.

Several were outstanding. Amongst them was a superlative blue with darker veins that we named **Billy Mac**. Another, the best white we had ever seen, was named **Gull's Wing** and a third which was a light raspberry and a very late and long bloomer was named **Raspberry Snow**. This one bloomed over six weeks in the garden.

These plants, among others were all under number. In all we received about 25 seedlings. Regarding the other 23, while some of them may have served as good parents for one or another trait, they were not in our estimation worthy garden material for introduction.

The white Siberian, a late bloomer, was really special. We grew it next to **Wing on Wing** and **King of Kings**, two virtually indistinguishable from each other, only that one blooms three days before the other, but **Gull's Wing** outclassed them both, good as they are. We introduced **Gull's Wing** in 1989.

A couple of years later I had chance to see **Esther C.D.M.** (a McGarvey white) in another garden, and it struck me as being similar to **Gull's Wing**. I purchased some plants of "Esther" and planted them in a field row next to **Gull's Wing**. The two are identical! It is now my conclusion that the seedling we received from Bill McGarvey's garden was indeed the one he called **Esther C.D.M.**. Mrs. McGarvey did tell us that he did not label it in the garden for fear of vandalism. Some of the plants in his New York garden had been dug out while he was in Arkansas and after he died. You may recall that Dr. McGarvey introduced **Esther C.D.M.** in 1982 through the AIS Bulletin at \$1,500.00.

We are now wrestling with the question of what to call the white iris that we received as a "seedling". We have done a lot of publicity on **Gull's Wing** and frankly we think it is the better name. If you have **Gull's Wing** you should at least be aware that it may be the same plant as **Esther C.D.M.**

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*(This is pertinent in 1995 since **Gull's Wing** is eligible for an AM award and **Esther C.D.M.** has already gone through the awards process. This has been brought to the attention of Melody Wilhoit, AIS Awards Chairman. ED.)*

*Another point regarding awards - Jim Copeland's **Fisherman's Morning** is listed in the AIS ballot as eligible for an HM. Since it was only introduced in 1994 it will not be eligible until 1997 and a vote for **Fisherman's Morning** will not count. Use your precious vote elsewhere. ED.)*

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## THOSE VERSATILE SIBERIANS

If your Siberians are becoming overgrown try this: a man writes in the February 1995 issue of Fine Gardening magazine that he uses Siberian foliage in place of twine to tie up his tomatoes etc. He swears the plants don't miss a few leaves and he composts his "twine " at the end of the growing season.

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## IN MEMORIAM - PEG EDWARDS

By Currier McEwen

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It is a sad commentary on modern life that only now have we learned of the death on March 6th, 1993 of the founder of our Society for Siberian Irises, Mrs. Harry L. Edwards, lovingly known as Peg by her friends and by Siberian iris enthusiasts around the world. Peg Edwards was a creative person with a happy ability to get things done, and naturally became personally involved in many activities in her home community of Massapequa Park on Long Island some twenty miles east of New York City.

In 1956 the members of AIS Region 2 decided to reorganize the region as an association called Empire State Iris Society. In order to enable members to become more locally involved, the region was divided into several areas, one of which embraced Long Island, Manhattan and Staten Island. This they named the Three Island Area. Peg Edwards who had joined the American Iris Society the year before, was asked by Ruth Blenis, then president of Empire State Iris Society, to see what she could do to promote activities on Long Island. Peg accepted the challenge and carried it out with her usual enthusiasm and success, organizing shows and meetings. In addition to her efforts specifically concerned with irises, she helped form the Massapequa Park Garden Club and was its first president.

As is clear from her membership in these organizations, Peg's general love of gardening had grown to include a particular interest in irises. She was never able to have a large garden, but it always contained many irises including Siberians, which at that time, largely through the introductions of Fred Cassebeer and William McGarvey, were beginning to catch the attention of iris growers. In 1959 Peg wrote an article in the Bulletin of the American Iris Society (no. 154, pp. 65-69) regarding the past and future potential of Siberian irises. This aroused so much interest that she was prompted to discuss with other

enthusiasts the desirability of forming a society to be specifically concerned with Siberian irises. With the support of thirteen others, and especially that of Bee Warburton, the idea became a reality with the founding of the Society for Siberian Irises in 1960 as a section of the American Iris Society. Peg Edwards served as the first president and as editor of a newsletter which she developed into The Siberian Iris. Her witty, informal style was enjoyed by the members of SSI and other readers for the full 24 years that she continued as editor. It can be no surprise that when the SSI Distinguished Service Award was established, Peg was the first to receive it.



*This photograph (from a color slide of Currier McEwen's) was taken at the 1970 AIS Convention in New York.*

**L to R. HARRY KUESEL, BEE WARBURTON (under the hat!), BEN HAGER, PEG EDWARDS, PEGGY BURKE GREY, AND BILL MCGARVEY.**

Lack of space prevented Peg Edwards from any extensive hybridizing program and she registered only two: "Star Wheel" which was not introduced but was a forerunner of the type with six falls being developed today by Ho Shidara, and **Velvet Night** which was the winner of the Morgan Award in 1969. Only two, but one an innovation and the other a Morgan winner!



**VELVET NIGHT (Edwards '61)  
MORGAN AWARD WINNER 1969**

**Photo: From a color slide provided by Mike Lowe**

In her later years, and especially following the death of her husband, Peg was no longer able to attend AIS and other conventions, but in spite of increasing disability she continued to be active with the local garden club until a year or two before her death.

Peg was a delightful person, witty and warm hearted, and always an inspiration to growers of Siberian irises. She was not only the founder of our society and editor of TSI but was a stimulus and supporter in many other ways as well. It is a privilege to be able to pay tribute to her on behalf of the society to which she gave so much and served so devotedly.

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## COLOURS OF FLOWERS

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I notice in plant-lists the most reckless and indiscriminate use of the words purple, violet, mauve, lilac and lavender, and as they are all related, I think they should be used with greater caution. I should say that mauve and lilac cover the same ground; the word mauve came into use within my recollection. It is French for mallow, and the flower of the wild plant may stand as the type of what the word means. Lavender stands for a colder or bluer range of pale purples, with an inclination to grey; it is a useful word, because the whole colour of the flower spike varies so little. Violet stands for the dark garden violet, and I always think of the grand colour of *Iris reticulata* as an example of a rich violet-purple. But purple equally stands for this, and for many shades redder.

Snow-white is very vague. There is nearly always so much blue about the color of snow, from its crystalline surface and partial transparency, and the texture is so unlike that of any kind of flower, that the comparison is scarcely permissible. I take it that the use of "snow-white" is, like that of "golden-yellow", more symbolic than descriptive, meaning any white that gives the impression of purity. Nearly all white flowers are yellowish-white, and the comparatively few that are bluish-white, such, for example, as *Omphalodes linifolia*, are of a texture so different from snow that one cannot compare them at all. I should say that



most white flowers are near the colour of chalk; for although the word chalky-white has been used in a rather contemptuous way, the colour is really a very beautiful warm white, but by no means an intense white. The flower that always looks to me the whitest is that of *Iberis sempervirens*. The white is dead and hard, like a piece of glazed stoneware, quite without play or variation, and hence uninteresting.

Gertrude Jekyll in *Wood and Garden*, 1899.

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## WHITHER SIBERIANS? THE LONG VIEW

By Sarah Tiffney

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I bought my first Siberian irises in 1927-28, and started to grow them in earnest in the mid-fifties when we got a big garden space. At the same time Eleanor Westmeyer and I collected almost all the cultivars then available. For many years it has been fascinating to watch the development at the hands of a few devoted growers, and then to see the great

burst of interest in hybridizing which has resulted in the beautiful varied Siberian irises we have today.

Looking back over this long floral history I am struck with one thing - we have been seeing the same sequence of development as that which must have produced the

magnificent modern Japanese irises. The Siberians are going through the same process that the Japanese went through in the last 200 years.

The original species of the 28-chromosome Siberians (*I. sibirica* and *I. sanguinea*) and of the Japanese (*I. ensata*, formerly *I. kaempferi*) are quite similar in flower style and plant habit, though not identical of course. From the simple Siberian species we have already developed larger flowers with much broader petals, ruffling and horizontal falls, very different in effect from the parent flowers. We now have even some flat six-petaled flowers whose standards have taken on the characteristics of falls, like the "double" Japanese; there have been several reports of "petaloid anthers", common in JI's, and variegated Japanese-type colorings appearing in Siberians. Evidently the same potentials for development are present in the Siberian species and in the similar Japanese species. If you wonder how those devoted Japanese gardeners developed their magnificent modern irises, this is how.

With further development of the Siberians I think they will become more like the modern Japanese, though of course not identical. There will be specific differences in appearances, and the different bloom seasons and growth habits will mean that we have big beautiful temperate zone beardless irises for different times and different situations. In addition the Siberians have one thing that the Japanese lack - the beautiful yellow coloring pioneered by Currier McEwen.

This whole sequence has been a fascinating process. I am very glad that I have been around to observe it.

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## LANDSCAPING QUALITIES: A RATING SYSTEM

by Carol Warner and Jim Wilson \_\_\_\_\_

Siberian irises are superb landscape plants! Their persistently neat, stiff, grasslike foliage is an asset to the perennial border throughout the entire growing season. Individual Siberian iris varieties bloom for a period of about seven to twenty-one days. The foliage, however, should be attractive for 150 to 180 days.

The garden judging section of the *Handbook for Judges and Show Officials* assigns 40 points to the plant. This is divided as 15 points for garden effect, vigor and stamina; 10 points for foliage; and 15 points for stalk, buds and branching. However, our catalogs and checklists place almost exclusive emphasis on the flowers with very little mention of the quality of the cultivar in the landscape. Although garden judges can and do make significant efforts to include landscape qualities in considering plants in the AIS awards system, it is often only on extended observation of a variety that a home gardener can get any idea of its specific vigor and growth habits.

A reasonable approach to solving this problem may be to adopt some sort of rating system. Other plant societies have set a precedent; e.g. the American Rhododendron Society rates flowers and foliage on separate 1-5 scales. Ratings have the advantage of being easily compared and the disadvantage of being taken to mean other things than they actually do. Also, providing additional information in any form always carries with it the risk of error, misjudgment, and evaluations that pertain to conditions that differ from those where the plant is finally grown. Nevertheless, those of us who have become familiar with the habits of many Siberians have developed a body of knowledge about their behavior which could be of great value to home landscapers.

The ideal rating system should be both simple and unambiguous. Providing a single number from 1-5 would be a step forward and simple, but would not tell much about

the plant and what earned it a high or low rating. Writing detailed descriptions of each plant's habits could allow thorough evaluations, but could consume extensive space and time, of both raters and readers. The system described here is based on 1-5 ratings in three areas: plant vigor and clumping, foliage habits and bloom habits.

**Plant vigor and clumping:** Vigorous plants that quickly establish well-formed clumps rate a 5. Slower growing plants that may take longer to reach good form and may also go longer before division are represented by lower numbers. Some gardeners who are eager to avoid the rampant growth of some varieties make seek out those rated 4 and 3.

**Foliage habits:** Clean, stiffly upright foliage is rated 5. Foliage that arches slightly but stands up well through the season is rated a 4, and may be preferred by some for its grace. Lower numbers indicate greater arching, tendency to collapse in late summer, and/or greater than average susceptibility to foliage problems.

**Bloom habits:** Varieties that hold their flowers above the foliage, preferably on branched stalks that distribute the bloom attractively, received the higher number ratings in this category.

Such a rating is not intended by any means to be complete in itself, but instead to complement the information that is already available, which usually includes AIS awards received, a good description of the flower, the height, ploidy, season of bloom and whether there is a tendency to rebloom.

One of the most challenging aspects of reporting these characteristics is the variation that results from different growing environments. At the national convention in Portland, for example, some varieties were certainly more vigorous than they are in Maryland. Consequently there is a very legitimate question about whether a home landscaper would be better served by a single rating for each variety, perhaps coordinated by an SSI panel, or depend on independent evaluations done by a nearby grower.

A first effort at rating 68 of the varieties grown at Draycott Gardens has been completed over the last two years. It is based entirely on local conditions and at present makes no attempt to include information from other regions. \*We welcome all levels of reaction to the experiment -- if the initial ratings correspond to others' experiences, if this system could be improved upon and if the idea has value.

## INITIAL RATINGS AT DRAYCOTT GARDENS

vigor and clumping/foilage habit/bloom habit

Ann Dasch	4/4/4
Anniversary	5/2/4
Aqua Whispers	4/4/4
Augury	2/5/2
Blue Burn	5/5/3
Butter and Sugar	2/3/3
Caesar's Brother	5/5/5
Cathy Childerson	4/1/5
Chatter Box Belle	3/2/4
Contrast in Styles	4/3/3
Dance Ballerina Dance	3/4/3
Diane's Daughter	2/4/2
Dreaming Yellow	4/4/3
Esther C.D.M.	4/5/5
Forrest McCord	4/4/4
Four Winds	4/4/3
Frosty Rim	5/5/5
Golden Crimping	2/3/1
Harbor Mist	3/3/3
Harpwell Happiness	4/3/3
Harpwell Haze	4/3/3
Hubbard	2/2/3
Illini Flirt	4/5/2
Indy	4/4/4
<i>Iris sibirica nana alba</i>	5/5/3
Jewelled Crown	4/4/3
King of Kings	2/4/4
Lady Vanessa	4/3/5
Laughing Brook	4/4/3
Liberty Hills	4/4/4

Limeheart	4/3/4
Linda Mary	5/5/5
Little Tricolor	5/4/4
Lucky Lilac	2/3/2
Mabel Coday	5/3/4
Maggie Smith	5/5/4
Marilyn Holmes	4/5/3
Marshmallow Frosting	4/3/4
Moon Silk	4/3/3
Orville Fay	4/4/4
Over In Gloryland	5/4/3
Pansy Purple	3/4/4
Pink Haze	4/3/5
Queen's Gambit	3/4/3
Regency Belle	3/3/3
Regency Buck	3/3/3
Reprise	5/4/4
Ruffled Velvet	4/5/4
Sea Shadows	4/4/3
Serenade In Blue	3/4/3
Shaker's Prayer	5/3/4
Shirley Pope	4/5/4
Sky Mirror	4/4/4
Snow Prince	3/4/5
Sparkle	4/3/4
Spirit of York	5/3/4
Springs Brook	4/3/4
Steve Varner	4/5/4
Sultan's Ruby	3/3/4
Super Ego	4/4/4
Swirling Lavender	4/4/4
Teal Velvet	3/5/4
Tealwood	3/5/4
Temper Tantrum	4/5/4
White Swirl	4/4/3
White Triangles	4/3/3
Windwood Spring	3/3/3
Wing on Wing	3/4/4

*\*(Is this a worthwhile idea - what do you think?  
Please respond and we will print as many replies as  
space allows in the Fall '95 issue of TSI. ED.)*

## **IRIS TYPHIFOLIA - A REVIEW**

*Since several people are busy using *I. typhifolia* in breeding, it seems useful to have a record of growers' observations on the plants raised from seed which came to us from Drs. Zhao and Waddick before we have too many selections and hybrids available.*

**By Kevin J. Morley** \_\_\_\_\_

I'm excited about what *I. typhifolia* is going to add to the diversity of garden Siberians. From my observations in the Kansas City area the bloom season is about two weeks earlier than **Indy** or **Blue Hyacinth**, adding about 50% to the length of the Siberian season. The blades are narrower than other sibs., giving a more graceful look to the plants, even after the flowers are gone. The flowers tend to vary a great deal in form, many with pendant falls, but some with flaring falls that emphasize the delicate bloom. The shape of the falls varies from oval to round or heart shaped, while the standards can be vertical or flaring. The colors that I have surveyed are all shades of red and blue-violet, with many contrasting midribs. All that I have seen have at least one branch, if not two or three.

The best specimen of *I. typhifolia* that I have seen so far is "Caitlin's Smile", registered in 1993 and due to be introduced in 1996. This gem was grown from seed obtained from Jim Waddick. I was impressed by the balance and grace of the form, along with good branching and pleasing shades of blue-violet with a yellow and bronze signal surrounded by a white flush.

This selected species readily cross-pollinates with other Siberians; so far I have obtained seed from "Caitlin's Smile" X **Aqua Whispers**, **Contrast in Styles**, **Devil's Dream**, **Dutch**, **Esther C.D.M.**, **Gull's Wing**, **Indy**, **King of Kings**, **Mabel Coday**, **Magenta Moment**, **Shirley Pope** and **Sky Mirror**. I should see the first bloom next season with a cross between a two branched stalk of **Indy** X "Caitlin's Smile". I can

hardly wait.

The potential for *I. typhifolia* has just begun to be explored. It's an adventure considering the possibilities of combining these genes with the *I. sibirica* X *I. sanguinea* hybrids... a treasure chest just waiting to be opened. A cornucopia of Siberians starting to bloom in early April will be a valuable asset to our gardens.

**By John Coble** \_\_\_\_\_

This is a summary of the 100 plants of *I. typhifolia* which we grew from seed. Since about 50% of these bloomed, it did allow us to observe great variance in blossoms and foliage. There was more variety in these plants than we expected to see from seeds of a true species. I presume that the packet of seed we received was not the seed of one or two pods from one plant. The variation must be from one packet of seed taken from a bag of seed collected from many plants from various regions in NE China.

The following bloom notes were taken during May 1992: between May 15th, when the first plants started to bloom, and May 25th, when we started three consecutive nights of frosts which froze all remaining buds!

***I. typhifolia*: BLOOM NOTES - May 15-25**  
**FOLIAGE NOTES - September 10**

Overall (generally): Rows appear dark green, with larger (taller and wider foliage) plants being more blue-green.

Rows average 24" tall: Tallest plants noted were 35-36" (a few leaves at 38" tall). Shortest plants (genetic or cultural?) were 12-18".

Spiral twist to foliage not more pronounced than in most other garden Siberians.



Overall effect is definite thinner foliage: average is 6mm wide (most common). Widest was 12 mm; smallest was 4mm (on the 12" plant). These measurements were taken about halfway up the leaves from the ground on healthy plants. Bloom notes are only on those plants tagged to keep, that varied from the "normal".

- #2E White signal patch, medium blue. At 8" above ground, 5-10mm foliage.
- #5E White signal patch, darling. Total plant ht. 12". 2-4mm foliage at 5" up the leaves.
- #19E Large bloom, signal lines not prominent, med. color with light halo. Had two stalks. Total ht. 29". 6-10mm wide foliage at 15" above ground.
- #14W Large, dark bloom. 27" tall; 6-9mm foliage at 15" above ground.
- # 10ammW Small branched (2) purple; small flower; nice. 24" tall; 4-6.5mm foliage at 10".
- #13ammW Large bloom, light bkg. w/lines. 29" tall; 6-10mm wide at 15".

The variations in flowers was even greater than recorded here. Among the normally blue-violet flowers were some in darker and lighter shades. Some had pronounced white signal areas and a couple caught our attention with almost no white signal (#14W). The plants with 12mm foliage looked like many other garden Siberians.

In 1993 and 1994 the mature clumps were very floriferous, as would be expected for Siberian species (or good hybrids) on second and third year clumps. The genes for branching are present but not more than half the seedlings showed this trait. The variations in form and color held as did the differences in foliage width. The whole plant with its narrow foliage has the garden effect (after bloom) of an upright, gracefully arching ornamental grass. By mid-summer the arching leaves are three feet tall.

Three plants have produced one or two repeat stalks about one month after the initial bloom. One plant has produced repeat stalks for three years; and one year produced two

repeat periods, each about three weeks apart. This seedling was crossed with several garden Siberians (like **Reprise**): the crosses were made on repeat stalks of both parents. In the rows of 5 month-old seedlings, the genetic effect could be seen in that most of the seedlings had narrower blue-green foliage. This year (1995) we shall see if there is genetic inheritance for early bloom, blue-violet dominance, signal color and size etc.



**Bauer/Coble seedling 93-C mentioned above which had two repeat bloom periods.**



**Bauer/Coble seedling 93-D with light wire rim.**

Like quite a few other people we were eager to begin working with *I. typhifolia* when seed became available from China courtesy of Jim Waddick. In 1991 we lined out about 120 typhifolia seedlings. Over the last two years we have been observing the plants with interest, particularly because of the degree of variability between them, which gives the hybridizer notions. Flower colors are all in the basic iris blue-purple range but vary in intensity from quite light to quite dark. In some cases a clear reddish tinge is present, especially in the styles. Some seedlings have rather striking white signal patches on the falls (e.g. see the photo of 92H3B11) whereas others have no signal at all. Perhaps the greatest degree of variation occurs in the flower form. We have everything from fully pendant falls (92H3B11), to partially flaring ones (92H1A5), to falls that are completely flaring (92H4B9). The standards are always upright and relatively narrow. Branching is usually present with one branch being typical and two not unusual. There have been up to 4 flower buds per terminal, but 2 or 3 is typical. Flower stalks have been in the range of 24-36 inches.

Very early growth and flowering occurs, as expected, but a somewhat unexpected bonus has been a degree of rebloom. 92H4B9 has rebloomed in each of the last two years, though not profusely. The foliage shows relatively little variation -- all plants have the narrow upright spiraling foliage typically associated with this species.

Negatives? There seems to be a tendency for the foliage of some seedlings to collapse later in the summer and the flower stems have a tendency to "gooseneck" at times. Some flowers are frankly undistinguished in form and color. Most of these seedlings have grown rapidly, but the ratio of flowers to foliage is not always high, at least so far. However, several plants have a strong combination of qualities, and if they continue to look good again this year, one or two may be registered next year.

Like everyone else we find that typhifolias are highly



**Hollingworth Seedling  
H3B11 with fully  
pendant falls.**



**Hollingworth Seedling  
H1A5 with partially  
flaring falls.**



**Hollingsworth Seedling  
H4B9 with flaring  
falls.**



***I. typhifolia* foliage  
backed by typical  
Garden Siberian leaves.**

fertile both as pod and pollen parents with a range of 28 chromosome Siberian derived from *I. sibirica* and *I. sanguinea*. The seeds from these crosses germinate well and the seedlings seem vigorous. So these gene pools are now being mixed vigorously throughout the Siberian world. What will this bring? Obvious things that *I. typhifolia* will contribute are earliness (hopefully combined with the hardiness to withstand some late frost damage around here) and a new type of foliage. What else may be hidden in the recessive zones of the typhifolia gene pool should become apparent over the next few years as first and second generation crosses begin to bloom. So far our crosses have involved garden Siberians with broad, full flowers including early whites and reds (Indy seems to have been the choice of several people, ourselves included). I don't know of any really early white Siberians, so *I. typhifolia* may be an aid in developing these. We also have made crosses with diploids that have large signal patches to develop this theme with typhifolia. Of course, some of these seedlings have been treated with colchicine to develop tetraploids. Several of the first typhifolia bee seedlings were similarly treated, but none seem to have produced any tetraploid parts, and my impression is that typhifolia seedlings are a bit more resistant to colchicine than those of typical garden Siberians.

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## NEW MEMBERS

---

An enthusiastic welcome to our 63 new members:

- Adams, Mrs. Donna, 1453 Iroquois, Detroit, MI 48214-2715  
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Boileau, Jean-Marc, RR. 1, Box 592, Chelsea, Quebec  
Canada J0X 1N0  
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Cross, Libby A., 8907 Potts Creek Rd., Covington, VA 24426  
Cullen, Prof. Patrick, 300 W. 108th St., Apt. 81, New York,  
NY 10025  
Eckhoff, Judy, Hutchinson Iris Club, PO. Box 28, Haven,  
KS 67543-0028  
Friesen, Mary A., N3739 Cty. Highway K, Granton,  
WI 55436  
Funkhouser, Bill, Park Seed Company, Cokesbury Rd., (Hwy  
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Hollingsworth Nursery, Don/Lavon Hollingsworth,  
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Holmberg, Arnold T, 4720 Pillsbury Ave. S., Minneapolis,  
MN 55409-2518  
Jaenisch, Dorothy M., 3105 Brownhurst Cove, Louisville,  
KY 40241  
Jarrett, Stacey, 1242 Billie Ct., Merced, CA 95340  
Johnson, M/M Scott/Cindy, 7310 Zanzibar La. N.,  
Maple Grove, MN 55311  
Jones, Alice W., 67 Brook Rd., Weston, MA 02193-1766  
Jones, Charles M., 31726 Sunrise Ave., Dowagiac, MI 49407  
Jones, John, Landscaping Lifestyles, 33246 Hickory Ave.,  
Rt. 1, Sioux City, IA 51108  
Jurik, Kristin M., Rt. 1, Ames, IA 50010-9713  
Kendall, M/M Robert B., 35 Suncrest Dr., Watertown,  
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Kilpatrick, Mrs. Marcia, 139 Kenyon Rd., Hampton,  
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Kilty, Kurt, 1722 Papermill Rd., Meadowbrook  
PA 19046-1019  
Klamer, Don, 4659 Reg Rd. 81, Beamsville, Ontario L0R 1B1,  
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Kuitens, Jane H., Jane's Herb Farm, 1042 State Rd, Webster,  
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Lewis, Mrs. Verna V., 21414 196 Ave. SE., Renton,  
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Mueller, Laurie M., 7598 Morrill Rd., Mazomanie, WI 53560  
Murphy, James P., 150 Geranium Rd., Ruckersville,  
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Palumbo, Joan, Montauk-Art-Daylilies, PO Box 518,  
Montauk, NY 11954  
Patry, Sandy, RR 2, Almonte, Ontario K0A 1A0, Canada  
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Pohlman, Neal E., R2, Box 5, Stanton, NE 68779



Roberson, Jessica M., 2285 Jessica Way, Redding, CA 96002  
Robinson, Pat, 1515 N. King St., Santa Anna, CA 92706  
Royer, Christa, Librarian, Greater St. Louis Iris Soc., 9104  
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WV 26726-9801

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## **ROBIN FLIGHTS**

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Currently there are only two Siberian robins in circulation that we know of - a Hybridizer's Robin, directed by Anna Mae Miller and Robin #1, a general Siberian growers' robin, which has been flying continuously for 25 years under the nurturing care of Dorothy Hamilton.

Joining a robin is a great way to exchange information. Through letters, which usually come around once or twice a year, experts share their knowledge and newcomers learn by asking questions - a perfect fit! It could be a growers' robin, one for hybridizers or perhaps one with particular interest in older Siberians.

If you are interested in being a robin member or a director, (the main task of which is to make sure the letters keep circulating in a timely fashion), please contact:

Dale Hamblin  
152 Idlewild  
Mundelein, IL 60060

## THE LAST WORD

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Our front cover comes to us courtesy of the Hunt Institute - isn't it beautiful! They once again gave us permission to use an illustration from their outstanding collection of botanical documents. As you may have noticed, I usually have to use my in-house photographer for covers for TSI. This is not my choice - but very few come to me from other sources. I was delighted to see a cover shot of Clarence Mahan's garden (complete with Siberians) on the cover of the AIS bulletin - but would have given my eye teeth to have had it for TSI. So how about it photographers? Please send those landscape shots.

In the Fall '94 issue you may have noticed a little piece named "In Praise of...". This was information taken from notes sent to me by Anna Mae Miller for use as filler material. Before that issue was in the mail Dale Hamblin sent a letter, completely unsolicited, which included material for a second "In Praise of..." (see page 9). What a great idea! Many of you who do not have the time or inclination to write a full-blown article will surely be eager to write a few lines about a favorite cultivar - its strengths, quirks, whatever makes it valuable to you. It would be excellent to have several on hand to fill those awkward half and quarter pages orphaned at the end of longer articles, and they would certainly make interesting reading.

We are having our popularity poll again after an absence of a couple of years. Please take the time to fill out your ballot, with comments if possible, and send it to Dorothy Hamilton who has very kindly agreed to do the tabulation once again.

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All back issues are \$2.50 each if available. We no longer have copies of some of the early issues. Judging standards should be ordered from AIS. Checks for publications, payable to The Society For Siberian Irises, should accompany orders. Send to the Publication Office c/o Howard L. Brookins, N75 W14257 North Point Drive, Menomonee Falls, WI 53051.

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A preview of this convention will be available beginning in September 1995. It will be in two forms - a set of slides or a videotape - your choice. If you or your group would like to see the latest Siberian introductions and seedlings and a glimpse of the gardens which will be on tour, send \$5.00 (check made out to I.S.M.) to Marty Schafer at 337 Acton St. Carlisle, MA 01741 and indicate the date you would like the program.

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Single Life	\$100.00	Family Life	\$120.00

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**Back Cover: Limeheart** - in the garden of Roger Nelson,  
Brooks, Oregon

**Photo:**Bob Hollingworth

