

Welcome

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



I. fulva along roadside near Baton Rouge

The Louisiana Iris

Louisiana Irises are increasingly recognized as native plants well adapted to garden culture. They also make fine water garden or rain garden plants and love aquatic or bog conditions. While sometimes referred to as water irises, their only real requirement is to stay damp and not dry out.

Louisiana iris cultivars grow well across the country and the color range is the widest of all the iris groups. Hybrids are derived from five North American species: ***I. brevicaulis***, ***I. giganteaerulea***, ***I. fulva***, ***I. nelsonii***, and ***I. hexagona***. *Fulva* and *brevicaulis* occur naturally as far up the Mississippi Valley as the Great Lakes, which largely accounts for the cold hardiness of hybrid cultivars.

What Is Zydeco Louisiana Iris Garden?

Until 2013, Zydeco was a commercial Louisiana iris nursery selling plants online. Today, it is a cooperative effort between the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and the Greater New Orleans Iris Society. City Park in New Orleans provides growing space for the Garden. Its purpose is to preserve, propagate and promote Louisiana irises and to make plants available to parks and other entities that will display them for public enjoyment and education. Special emphasis will be placed upon conserving both the various forms of the five species and old, historically important cultivars that can still be obtained.

What You'll Find On This Site

This site is designed as a **hub for resources on Louisiana irises**. It offers a wide range of

information, pictures, recommendations and links on "Louisianas," as these irises are called. Take a look.

GALLERY



Zydeco Louisiana Iris Garden formerly sold the hybrid introductions of Patrick O'Connor of Metairie, Louisiana, as well as irises from many other hybridizers. This Gallery previously was a catalog but now serves as a source of information on individual cultivars. Watch for the addition of new cultivars to the list. Suggestions and comments are welcome.



INSPIRATION

An extensive compilation of articles, pictures, and references on Louisiana irises, with an emphasis on their beauty and usefulness in the landscape.

GROWING TIPS AND CULTURE



Recommended growing practices and propagation techniques for different regions and under varying conditions. Links to relevant information on other sites.



ORGANIZATION

The Society for Louisiana Irises, an outstanding organization highly recommended as an ongoing source of information, particularly through it's web site and quarterly magazine *Fleur de Lis*.

HIGHLIGHTS

- [Iris Friendship Garden - Rochester, NY](#)
- [Baton Rouge Botanic Garden](#)
- [Jean Lafitte, LA](#)
- [Mary Swords Debailon Award Winners](#)



THE SPECIES

The natural history of the five native species that comprise the foundation of the modern Louisiana iris hybrids. Many pictures, including wild irises in their natural habitats.

NEWS

- The 2013 season was the last in which Zydeco had a catalog as part of a commercial iris operation. 2014 begins a transition to a new entity based upon a cooperative enterprise and the help of volunteers.
- The Zydeco website will continue as a source of information on Louisiana irises and the progress of the new effort. Conversion of some parts of the site might take a little while.
- In the future, [Louisiana Iris Gardens](#) will handle the introductions of Patrick O'Connor. Louisiana Iris Gardens can also be [found on Facebook](#).
- Take a look at the new page on the [Louisiana Iris Species Preservation Project](#) sponsored by the Society for Louisiana Irises and the [Greater New Orleans Iris Society](#).

BLOG



Iris Louisianne

Out of the swamps and into your garden

IMPOSTERS



Plants that can only wish they were Louisiana irises

Zydeco On Facebook





Louisiana Iris Introductions for 2014

Zydeco Louisiana Iris Garden previously introduced Patrick O'Connor's new irises. Since Zydeco is no longer a commercial nursery, those introductions will be handled by [Louisiana Iris Gardens](#). The Zydeco site will still display pictures of new introductions. There will be only one for 2014 but more will be forthcoming in the next few years.

Click on picture for larger image



EVERYTHING THAT RISES. R2014, Patrick O'Connor. 34", L. Ruffled yellow near self. Falls very wide with light olive green veins at base and narrow olive green dagger signal on a small orange thumbprint. Flaring standards a slightly lighter yellow. Very overlapping flower form. Wide, creamy yellow style arms somewhat frilly toward tips. *Mothership X German Coast.*

[Back](#)



Louisiana Iris Growing Tips and Culture



Additional Information

[Propagation](#)

[Culture Resources: Growing Information For Various Regions and Conditions](#)

The general garden culture of Louisiana irises is fairly simple. While these irises do have a few preferences, they are not difficult to satisfy.

Louisiana irises are adaptable to most parts of the country. Although the preponderance of the irises found in the wild occur along the Gulf Coast, two of the five species are indigenous as far north as Illinois, Indiana, Ohio and Kentucky. One, *I. brevicaulis*, is found in Ontario. Experience with Louisianas in colder climates has been good. There is a very successful public planting of Louisiana irises in Highland Park in Rochester, NY, for example, a spot some might have thought too cold.

Some cultural practices are constant regardless of latitude, and others need to be modified. More has been written about recommended growing practices in the South, and **Zydeco Louisiana Iris Garden** is located in New Orleans, which is challenged by only about an inch of snow every ten years. The experience underlying the following observations and suggestions is decidedly southern, but information on other climate conditions will be noted when known.

The [Culture Resources](#) link will take you to growing tips specific to other regions and states and to varying growing conditions. [Propagation](#) techniques for Louisiana irises are discussed on a different page as well.

General Location

The low and wetland origins of the native species should not imply that Louisiana irises require aquatic culture. They do love water and thrive in ponds and boggy settings, but Louisianas also grow and bloom exceedingly well in typical garden beds. These irises should not be allowed to dry out during periods of drought, however. They will stay green and grow through hot weather only with ample moisture.

Louisiana irises should be grown in half to full sun. Less than a half day of sun will diminish bloom. It is highly advisable to avoid close competition with large trees or plants with extensive root systems that would use most of the soil moisture. In hot climates, unless the irises are in ample water, full sun may stress the plants at certain times of the year.

Louisiana irises can be mixed with most smaller ornamental plants. They also can be grown in beds consisting entirely of irises, although iris-only beds may not be as attractive in late summer as the foliage begins to die back in preparation for the new growth cycle that begins in the fall. Any yellowed foliage can and should be removed to improve appearance and encourage new growth.

Soil Conditions and Preparation

An acid soil is often recommended for Louisiana irises, but this is not necessary. Soils in much of the Gulf Coast are acid, but some areas, such as parts of New Orleans and the Mississippi River flood plain, may be neutral or a bit alkaline. Since Louisiana irises were found in the wild in these areas, they had to be happy with the natural conditions. However, Louisiana irises grown in *very* alkaline soils, such as in some Western states, will exhibit yellow leaves and stunted growth. There has been no systematic test of the limits of tolerance in an acid or alkaline direction, but experience in the 6.5 to just over 7.2 range has produced excellent results.

Irises need a soil high in fertility and organic matter. Finely ground pine bark, composted oak and other leaves or rotted manure, for example, are excellent additions that should be worked into the soil when beds are made.

If the soil has a clay texture, adding some sand may be helpful. Although these irises in the wild may be found in clayey muck, a loose and friable soil is helpful in promoting growth and bloom in garden conditions, provided that the irises do not dry out.

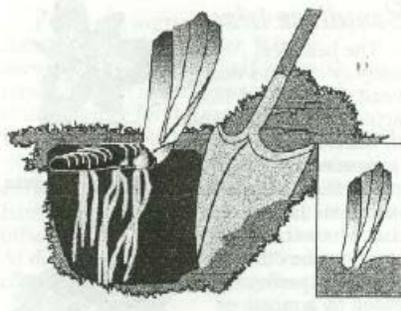
If the irises are grown in water instead of a garden bed, there are other factors to consider. With any container placed in a pond, a soil too light may tend to float away. Store-bought soils and amendments, unless designed for aquatic culture, may not be well adapted for pots immersed in water, and a heavier soil is advised. In water culture where the appearance of the water is not an issue, such as in natural ponds or large containers not intended to fit into a naturalistic pond setting, a wide variety of soil types seem to work well, from nearly soil-less mixes to typical garden soil.

If possible, prepare iris beds a few weeks before planting, but don't fret if you have to plant immediately. The traditional recommendation is to add the organic material (2-3 inches) and a generous amount of commercial fertilizer (for example, 8-10 lbs. per 100 sq. feet of 8-8-8) to the bed, and work in. An azalea/camellia fertilizer is a good choice if there is a need to adjust for an excessively alkaline soil. Organic fertilizers are also effective, although the amounts equivalent to a balanced chemical fertilizer are difficult to estimate, and not much guidance is available specifically applicable to Louisiana irises. If you want to use organic fertilizers, however, a [Georgia Cooperative Extension publication](#) may be useful (no longer online, but the link is to a pdf version).

Planting and Dividing

Unlike most plants, which go dormant or grow little in the winter, the growth cycle of Louisiana irises in their native range actually begins in the fall, continues through winter and culminates in a burst of rapid growth and bloom in the spring. When the weather gets hot, growth may slow or even stop, especially if moisture and soil fertility are not optimal. In the north, the winter growth may not occur, and snow and cold will interrupt growth cycle. Whereas bloom along the Gulf Coast may begin in mid-March, it may be delayed until June in attitudes such as the Upper Midwest.

Timing. Consistent with irises' growth cycle, the best time to plant and divide Louisiana irises along the Gulf Coast is mid-to-late August, September, October, not long after the period of new growth has begun. Irises planted later than November are not likely to become well enough established to reach normal size and bloom in the spring. In cold climates, fall planting is also recommended, but early enough to let them establish before the coldest weather. August and September are the preferred months. Transplanting immediately after bloom is not recommended. The hot weather following closely upon the bloom season will stress the plants, and little growth or even an early dormant period may result. The longer into the season foliage growth can be continued, the better the chances of good bloom the next year, because the plants have a greater opportunity to grow larger rhizomes to support bloom. If it is necessary to transplant after bloom, be sure to supply extra water. Alternatively, hold the irises over in water, or in pots set in shallow water and partial shade, until new growth has resumed or until the fall planting season. Growers in such warm climates in South Florida report that Louisianas can be divided at any time of the year.



Placement. Irises should be planted with about ½ to ¾ inch of soil covering the rhizome and, ideally,

1-2 inches of mulch over the soil. Planted about 12 inches apart, Louisiana irises can be left in place 3-4 years and will form clumps. Every several years, it is helpful to dig and divide the irises, thinning them out and replenishing the soil with organic matter as if preparing new beds.

Remember that the rhizomes grow longer as new leaves emerge, and varieties planted too close together will become mixed and difficult to identify. The rate of "traveling" varies with the particular variety, since the typical size of the rhizome varies. Two or more offsets generally form each year on either side of the rhizome, and their growth extends roughly perpendicular to the original rhizome, which results in the tendency for a clump to develop. Each rhizome blooms only once, then the offsets bloom in subsequent years. Keeping this grown pattern in mind is helpful in deciding where to plant Louisiana irises. (Plants produced as offsets will be identical in every respect to the parent rhizome; plants grown from seed will vary, perhaps markedly, depending upon the identity of the particular parents).

Watering

Watering is often necessary to achieve a sufficient growing season for good bloom. The beds should not be allowed to dry out. September and October are relatively dry along the Gulf Coast and it is important to give the iris beds a thorough soaking at least once weekly during such dry periods. In summer, a dry spell without good watering will cause growth to halt or even cause the plant to go dormant.

Fertilizing

In truth, fertilizing practices vary a good bit among Louisiana iris growers. The traditional advice has been: For new or replanted beds (to which fertilizer and organic material have been added at planting time), a light dressing of a complete fertilizer (2-4 lbs. per 100 square feet) is sufficient about two months prior to bloom (late January in Louisiana). Beds which have not been replanted in late summer are generally given two applications, a fairly heavy one at the start of the growing season, and then the light dressing just before bloom. Complete fertilizers such as 8-8-8 are said to be preferable to high nitrogen fertilizers. High nitrogen can cause the plants to produce leafy growth while suppressing flowering; it also is thought to render the plants more susceptible to some diseases. An acid-forming azalea/camellia fertilizer should be used if the soil tends to be too alkaline, as in parts of the West.

Many serious growers of Louisiana irises deviate from this recommendation in several respects. Some recommend a third feeding after bloom. Some favor liquid fertilizers, and some select fertilizers with additional nitrogen. Timed-release products are occasionally recommended, especially in water culture.

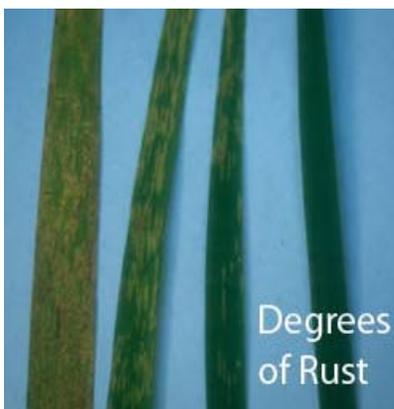
We do know that Louisiana irises are heavy feeders, and there is little doubt that **the average gardener fertilizes them a good bit less than optimal**. Failure of foliage to remain pretty and green in the hot months after bloom probably is due to insufficient water and less than optimal nutrition. Cases of problems from over-fertilizing are rare, but the complaint that "my irises did not bloom" is often associated with failure to fertilize.

Mulching

Mulching is an important part of good culture. Mulches serve many purposes, such as maintaining soil moisture, keeping weeds under control, increasing organic matter in the soil, and protecting against sun scald (see below). About 2-3 inches of rotted or even fresh leaves, pine straw or pine bark are excellent mulches. Materials available locally, such as bagasse (sugar cane fiber), should be considered.

Diseases and Pests

In their native range, Louisiana irises are not prone to many diseases and insect pests. Most growers are able to easily endure any small nuisances without having to resort to insecticides or other treatments. In other sections of the country, some additional problems are reported, and the grower is advised to seek information on local conditions. Some the links on the Culture Resources page may be useful.



Rust appears as red to dark-brown powdery spots, often surrounded by a yellow margin, on leaves and stems. Leaves may become severely discolored and die back. The rust does not appear to damage the plants severely, but it does make the beds look bad. Avoiding too much fertilizer, especially high nitrogen, is said to potentially limit the spread of rust. Some growers feel that cow manure, specifically, may promote rust.

The best way to avoid rust is to remove and discard withered leaves. Rust is a soil borne fungus, and if infected leaves are not permitted to decay in the garden, the life cycle of the fungus is disrupted. Stands of *Iris fulva* in the wild are often infested with rust. This is not due to gardeners who applied too much nitrogen, but rather by their unavailability to clean up and dispose of the infected foliage.

If an infestation of rust does begin, it is important to remove affected foliage to the extent possible (put it in the garbage can, not the compost pile). Some growers recommend spraying plants in the area of the rust with such products as Ortho's Garden Disease Control or Fertiloam Systemic Fungicide, but there is no substitute for removing the infected leaves from the garden. If the bad foliage remains, the rust is likely to return the next year; if it is removed, there may not be another outbreak for some years.



Leaf Miner is indicated by white streaks along the leaves, particularly near the base, in hot weather. It is caused by the larva of a type of fly. The outermost leaves may collapse, and, if they become unsightly, can simply be removed. Leaf miners rarely cause enough trouble to warrant treatment with an insecticide.



Iris borer may be a problem now and then in the Gulf South, but it is more serious to the north and in areas where bearded irises are grown. The worm enters the rhizome and may hollow it out and effectively kill it or destroy its ability to produce a bloom stalk. The first sign of a borer may be a center leaf in a fan that turns yellow and dies. This occurs because the borer, first deposited on the leaves, has worked its way down to the rhizome and devoured the growing tip. If one watches for center leaf damage, the borer can sometimes be found and destroyed before the rhizome is seriously injured.

Some chewed or damaged foliage may be evident early, before the borer has reached the rhizome. Sometimes it is possible to gently spread the leaves of a fan and kill the critter before it does real damage. A rhizome damaged by a borer will often produce offsets unaffected by the problem, so there is no need to discard the entire plant.

Snails and slugs may climb up the scapes and disfigure a bloom, particularly under conditions of high humidity and rainfall. Some growers use a commercial snail bait and others set out saucers of beer.

Snails are not a problem of sufficient severity that most do anything about it at all. Those who grow irises for entry in shows may be the exception.

Sun scald is not a disease, but a condition resulting from the sun scorching an exposed rhizomes in midsummer, causing them to become mushy and to deteriorate. Unlike bearded irises, Louisiana iris rhizomes do not naturally grow along the top of the soil, but usually just below the soil level. Sometimes, especially late in a season, the top of the rhizome may be come exposed. Adding soil or a mulch solves this problem.

Cutworms are sometimes a problem. Cutworms are chewing insects that will sever leaves and disrupt growth. One recommendation is a fertilizer fortified with an insecticide, such as that sold for control of lawn chinch bugs.

Moles and voles are serious problems in some areas. Some growers have reported growing Louisianas in containers sunk in the ground to prevent the rhizomes from being eaten. If drainage in the container is obstructed, this offers the added advantage of promoting constant moisture. This tactic obviously is more work than just digging a hole in a garden bed and planting an iris, and if the container is not sufficiently wide the irises will soon escape as the rhizomes grow longer.

[Back](#)

[INTRODUCTIONS](#) | [CATALOG](#) | [GROWING TIPS](#) | [INSPIRATION](#) | [THE SPECIES](#) | [IMPOSTERS](#) | [BLOG](#)

[Organization](#) | [Katrina](#) | [Contact](#) | [About Zydeco](#) | [Home](#) | [Site Map](#)



Louisiana Iris Inspiration

Pictures, Articles and Information



Flags Flying at Marie Caillet's Pond in Little Elm, Texas

Louisiana irises were virtually unknown as garden plants just a few years ago. Today, they are rapidly becoming widely recognized and popular in most of the country, not just in their southerly native haunts. How can one account for this rapid rise from their "discovery" as wildflowers in the 1920s and 1930s to an increasingly prominent place among garden perennials today?

Easy to grow? Yes. They have a few cultural requirements but are hardly difficult. Adaptable to variations in climate and soil? Very much so. North or South, water culture or garden beds. Wide range of colors and forms among the modern hybrids? Absolutely. About any color you can describe, with scapes of varying heights and flowers in nuanced shapes from flat to flaring and ruffled.

One can give any number of reasons why these plants have risen so rapidly to horticultural heights. But the real answer lies in the people who have worked with and championed them and in the stunning scenes these irises create in the garden and the wild.

The links below will take you to pages on this site and others that show off Louisiana irises and explain their rapidly rising popularity. **Click in the list below to jump to the category that interests you, or just scroll on down the page.** For information on growing, check out the [Growing Tips and Culture](#) page and for a look at the five species go to [Louisiana Iris Species](#).

[Articles and Pictures](#)

[Award Winning Louisiana Irises](#)

[Louisiana Irises in Public Gardens](#)
[Louisianas in the Landscape and Pond](#)
[Art](#)
[Iris Sites](#)
[Personal Garden Websites](#)
[Water Gardening](#)
[General Gardening Sites](#)
[Hard to Classify \(but interesting\)](#)

Articles and Pictures on Louisiana Irises



The late Marie Caillet was a founding member of the Society for Louisiana Irises and was well known in SLI and to many in the gardening public. She wrote frequently for the *SLI Newsletter* (now *Fleur de Lis*) and for national publications. An exceptionally nice article by Marie with beautiful pictures of her garden appeared in *Fine Gardening* in the July/August 1996 issue. For a limited time, Marie Caillet's article [Jazzy Louisiana Irises](#) is available in pdf format.



Another [Caillet article on Louisiana irises](#) appeared in *Pond and Garden*, which is no longer published but available in pdf format. It is a *273k download*. The magazine cover with a photo of the [Louisiana iris 'Marie Caillet'](#) is available as a separate jpg file.



Richard Sloan of Alma, Arkansas, is a long-time iris grower and currently Treasurer of the Society for Louisiana Irises. Dick has created a site, [Louisiana Iris Suite](#), with gorgeous pictures and insightful observations. By all means, take a look. Hosted by Victoria Adventure.



Slides from [Clyde Ikins' collection of Louisiana irises](#) in the Hill Country of Texas include some seldom seen cultivars. It is a nice set of pictures, so browse around the site for interesting information on water plants. Note the attached comments of Dick Sloan.



The [Tucson Area Iris Society](#) website has an excellent [collection of Louisiana iris pictures](#). There are galleries by Frank Over, Margie Valenzuela, and Tony Kurtz, with thumbnails that can be clicked for nice big pictures.



The [2003 Society for Louisiana Irises Convention in Lafayette](#) had wonderful garden tours. The website for AIS Region 1 (yes, that's Maine, Connecticut and Massachusetts, of all places) hosts a nice set of pictures from warmer climes.



The Summer 2006 issue of the Louisiana Wildlife Federation magazine contained a good, general [article on Louisiana irises](#) by Gary Noel Ross with nice pictures. This link is to the entire issue of the magazine on the LWF website; it is 1.5 megabytes in pdf.



Richard Sacher of New Orleans, owner of American Aquatic Gardens is a hybridizer of water lilies and a fan of Louisiana irises. His nursery was one of the first in Louisiana to bring a real variety of Louisianas to the public. Check out his [Gallery of Louisiana Irises](#) on the Victoria Adventure site.



Here is a gallery of [wild Louisiana iris pictures](#), probably *I. giganticaerulea*, found in a photo database to which photographers can upload their pictures. There is not a huge amount of variation, but the larger images have very nice detail.

The **Men's Garden Club of Houston** maintains a site with [a few Louisiana iris pictures](#) and



links to information on the **F.A. C. McCulla Memorial Iris Bed** at the Mercer Arboretum and Botanic Garden.

[Back To Topic List](#)

Award Winning Louisiana Irises



The **Mary Swords DeBaillon Award** is the highest honor accorded a Louisiana iris. The first award was made in 1948, and the winners collectively present a visual history of the development of these irises from the early years of their modern "discovery" to the latest work of busy hybridizers. This link will take you to **pictures of the DeBaillon Award winners**, but there are around 50 pictures, so be prepared for download time.

[Back To Topic List](#)

Louisiana Irises in Public Gardens



The **Iris Friendship Garden in Highland Park, Rochester, NY**, will turn you around if you think Louisiana irises will not perform in a cold climate. Photographer Gene Lupinetti has documented the Iris Friendship Garden every year since it opened in 2004, and his gorgeous pictures tell the story of this fabulous iris garden, a beautiful park and an amazingly adaptable plant.



The **Louisiana Iris Garden in the Baton Rouge Botanic Garden**, Independence Park. A handsome setting designed specifically for Louisianas and featuring many cultivars produced by the late Joseph K. Mertzweiller, one of the premier hybridizers of Louisiana irises.

Windrush Gardens, LSU Rural Life Museum, Baton Rouge (coming soon).

City Park, New Orleans, including the New Orleans Botanical Garden, the Sydney and Walda Bestoff Sculpture Garden, and the new Big Lake planting (coming in spring).

Longue Vue House and Gardens, New Orleans (coming soon).

[Back To Topic List](#)

Art



Artist **Margaret Stones** has chronicled the flora of Louisiana. **Her watercolor of "Louisiana Iris Hybrids"** show a group that exhibit the open, graceful and still beautiful form of the species and older hybrids. The website allows one to zoom in on smaller sections of the watercolor, which reveals nice detail.

Lori Young produces a series of very nice giclée's that feature Iris giganticaerulea. Take a look at the offerings of **L. Young Studio**.



[Back To Topic List](#)

Iris Sites



The Society for Louisiana Irises. The one organization dedicated for Louisiana irises. To learn more about it, go to [Organization](#).



American Iris Society. The national organization dedicated to all types of irises.



SIGNA, the Species Iris Group of North America, is devoted to all the irises, not just the Louisiana group, or Hexagona. Dennis Krumb has created a wonderful [Iris Species Database](#) for SIGNA that has pictures of a variety of forms represented within each of the species. When you get to the site, scroll down and click on each of the Louisiana species: I. hexagona, giganticaerulea, fulva, brevicaulis and nelsonii. A great website.



Rodney Barton has an excellent [North American Native Iris](#) page that is a must for pictures and information on the species. Click on "Alphabetical Listing" on Rodney's page (or click [here](#)) to see the entire iris species list, then select I. brevicaulis, fulva, hexagona, giganticaerulea or nelsonii to go to the Louisiana species.



Greater New Orleans Iris Society. This is a brand new site (July 2012) still under construction. There should be good information up soon, and especially in the lead-up to the April 2014 Society For Louisiana Irises convention, which GNOIS will host in New Orleans.



Tucson Area Iris Society. A fine website containing excellent information on the organization, the hybridizing iris activities of its members, and articles on iris culture and related topics. The Tucson Area Iris Society was the host for the 2005 Society for Louisiana Irises convention.



The **Greater St. Louis Iris Society** is one of a few local iris organizations that maintain a website, and this one is very nice. There is information on all types of irises on a well designed site. It looks like iris folks in the St. Louis area would do well to hook up with this group.

[Back To Topic List](#)

Personal Garden Websites

Some of the most interesting sites on the web are the pages that dedicated gardeners have created to share their personal gardens. When they grow Louisiana irises, there are often pictures, not just of individual flowers but of beautiful and creative uses in the landscape. Most of the following links take you to pages with Louisiana iris pictures, but while you are visiting, take a tour of the rest of the gardener's website.



Tom Spencer's Daily Muse at his [Soul of the Garden](#) site (and check this [older page](#), too).



Stone The Gardener's [Louisiana iris page](#) is well worth a look part of a very nice and varied personal garden site. Interesting reading and good information.

[Back To Topic List](#)

Water Gardening



Victoria Adventure. An excellent, non-commercial water gardening site. It has several pages relating to Louisiana irises that are cited above.



Epstein LaRue's Pond Page. This interesting site testifies to the diverse environments in which people enjoy ponds and to the interesting people who create them. Features articles, pictures and resources on ponds.

[Back To Topic List](#)

General Gardening



Dave's Garden is a general gardening site with lots of information on many topics. The "Plant Files" tab features uploaded information from members, including pictures and performance comments. There are quite a few Louisiana iris pictures, but limited comments and recommendations at this time. An exception is extensive input on 'Black Gamecock,' which is widely grown around the country. The information available on this cultivar may suggest the potential of a site like Dave's Garden for Louisiana iris aficionados and gardeners in general. Nice pictures of Louisiana irises. The Forums include threads on irises, often including Louisiana topics. Highly recommended site on gardening. Partial access is free, but full access is worth a few dollars.



Cyndi's Catalog of Garden Catalogs. An online catalog of online catalogs related to gardening and plant topics. Handy site.

[Back To Topic List](#)

Hard to Classify



This is a fun and fascinating five minute feature story on **National Public Radio** that features Jeanette Hardy, the author of *Gardens of New Orleans: Exquisite Excess*, interviewed over her cell phone by Scott Simon in 2001 while Jeanette was standing in the swamp in Jean Lafitte National Park, [eyeball-to-eyeball with Iris giganticaerulea](#). Scott presumably was comfortable in some studio somewhere.



Here's a site with a brief account of the battle between the magnolia people and the iris folks (the good guys) over the Louisiana state flower. The magnolias played rough and won, but now [Iris giganteaerulea is the official wildflower of the Great State of Louisiana](#). The picture on the site is of a plant collected in Texas by Rodney Barton. Go figure.



Here is a nice **video clip** by **Jerry Parsons** of the Texas Agricultural Extension Service that features Louisianas. It offers a pretty and amusing view of [Louisiana irises in the San Antonio Zoo](#). This is a 2.5 meg .wmv file that will open in your default video viewer.



The color range of Louisiana irises is said to be the widest among all the iris groups due to the naturally occurring reds represented by *I. fulva* and *I. nelsonii*. If this is not enough, you can go to the [Louisiana Secretary of State](#) website and [color your own Louisiana iris blossom](#) on the spot.

[Back To Topic List](#)

[Back to Top of Page](#)

[INTRODUCTIONS](#) | [CATALOG](#) | [GROWING TIPS](#) | [INSPIRATION](#) | [THE SPECIES](#) | [IMPOSTERS](#) | [BLOG](#)

[Organization](#) | [Katrina](#) | [Contact](#) | [About Zydeco](#) | [Home](#) | [Site Map](#)



The Species of Louisiana Iris



[Iris brevicaulis](#)



[Iris fulva](#)



[Iris hexagona](#)



[Iris giganticaerulea](#)



[Iris nelsonii](#)

Download a great [article on Louisiana irises in the wild](#) by Benny Trahan, Sr. from *Fleur de Lis*, the Society for Louisiana Irises' journal (1.5 megs). Also, a follow-up article in Winter 2008 on Benny's "find of a lifetime," his [rediscovery of the yellow *I. nelsonii*](#) (120k).

Take a look at the [Louisiana Iris Species Preservation Project](#) sponsored by the Society for Louisiana Irises and the Greater New Orleans Iris Society.

There currently are five recognized species in the **Series Hexagonae**, as the **Louisiana iris** group within the Genus *Iris* is called. They are: *I. brevicaulis*, *I. fulva*, *I. hexagona*, *I. giganticaerulea* and *I. nelsonii*.

Although there is variation within each species, all are considered to have an identifiable ecological niche and unique characteristics. Sounds simple, but as is usually the case in such taxonomical matters, there are questions and controversies at the boundaries. Since species are categories imposed by humans, there inevitably are differences in how people would construct them.

Species are rarely designated based on complete or perfect information, and it is possible that new evidence and especially new technology may lead to the combining of recognized species or the singling out of new ones. In fact, some people already classify the species differently. All those caveats aside, the current structure of five recognized species does its job of helping bring order to a complex iris world and assisting us in understanding the background of what we today call Louisiana irises.

The individual species pages on the Zydeco web site will show nice and representative pictures, hopefully generate some interest, raise a few questions, and link to more detailed information and references.

Overview

Louisiana irises are all related, of course, in being members of the same Series, **Hexagonae**, within the Genus *Iris*. (The series name is derived from the first species in the series to be named, ***I. hexagona***). All the species will interbreed both in nature, given the chance, and under the prodding of the hybridizer. Their natural ranges overlap only in limited areas, however - mostly, and perhaps only, in Louisiana. In the years after the 1920s when these irises were "discovered", both botanists and iris enthusiasts systematically searched -- especially in Louisiana and Florida but also other states of the Gulf Coast -- for "new" irises that might be additional species.

Many differing colors and forms were found and named as species, but most turned out to be natural hybrids, mainly of *I. fulva* and *I. giganticaerulea* origins. The work of **Percy Viosca of New Orleans** in the 1930s showed that there were only a few species that served as a foundation for many natural hybrids.

The Blues

The currently recognized species ***I. hexagona***, ***I. giganticaerulea*** and ***I. brevicaulis*** (brevicaulis at one time was called *I. foliosa*) consist of irises in the blue-purple range with occasional white forms found. Hexagona and

giganticaerulea certainly share a surface similarity. Some feel that these two should be regarded as the same species; more specifically that *giganticaerulea* should be considered a subspecies of *hexagona*, which was the first named. At one time, *I. hexagona* was thought to occur in Louisiana, but now it is considered to be confined to the southeastern states of South Carolina, Georgia and, especially, Florida, where there are huge populations of blue irises. Reportedly, *hexagona* is almost extinct in South Carolina, with most of its documented locations inundated by manmade lakes.

Despite an inclination by some to lump them together, there seem to be clear differences between *hexagona* and *giganticaerulea* with respect to size, bloom season and possibly other characteristics. *Giganticaerulea*, as the name asserts - meaning literally "Giant Blue" - indeed is a giant, growing to 5-6 feet or more in the swamp; *hexagona* is much shorter. Also, *giganticaerulea* is a relatively early bloomer and *hexagona* has a much later bloom period. Still, put them side by side and the similarities of the flower are strong. Proper classification is something for others to sort out and work needs to be done.

The other blue, ***I. brevicaulis***, is distinctly shorter than either *hexagona* or *giganticaerulea*, and it is very definitely a late bloomer. There is no confusing *I. brevicaulis* with the other blue species. It has a pronounced zigzag stem and is found in damp but relatively more upland and northerly sites. *Giganticaerulea* and *hexagona* are inhabitants of the lower regions of the Gulf Coast states (except for some locations in South Carolina and Georgia), but *I. brevicaulis* occurs up into the Mississippi Valley states of Illinois, Ohio, and Kentucky.

Florida Irises. The native irises of Florida are a special case. Most are considered to be in the Louisiana series, *Hexagonae*, and in the species *hexagona*, but evidence is emerging that there is more variation among these irises than previously acknowledged. Michael Gideon has systematically observed Florida irises in the wild and reports variations in form that may invite reconsideration of their status as members of a single species. Scientific work involving DNA testing is underway.

Whether or not a new species designation is appropriate for some of the Florida irises, recognition of different forms certainly is. Many of the Florida irises when moved elsewhere do not thrive, for example, but others do grow well and produce the massive rhizomes characteristic of *I. giganticaerulea* when it grows in water. Perhaps this suggests that Florida hosts multiple species, some well adapted only to Florida conditions. While there are huge numbers of irises growing in Florida, the red species, ***I. fulva*** and ***I. nelsonii***, are not there, except for a limited presence of *fulva* reported in the panhandle near Alabama. For more information there is a [Florida iris page](#) here and you can **download a three article series on the native "Louisiana" irises of Florida** that appeared in the quarterly magazine of the Society for Louisiana irises.

The Reds

Louisiana iris enthusiasts are fond of asserting that Louisianas have the widest color range of all types of irises. If so, it is ***I. fulva*** and ***I. nelsonii*** that deserve the the preponderance of credit, adding both red and yellow to the palate. While hybridizers of other types of irises have strained and labored to produce red cultivars, Louisiana iris hybridizers had them available and growing in the ditches and swamps.

Like *brevicaulis*, *fulva* is found well up into the Mississippi Valley. (It is probably the case that *I. fulva* and *I. brevicaulis* genes account for the hardness of hybrid Louisianas across virtually the entire country). *I. nelsonii*, on the other hand, has the most restricted range of any of the Louisiana group. Also the last to be designated as a species, by Randolph in 1966, *nelsonii* occurs in a relatively small and agriculturally threatened area a few miles Southeast of Abbeville, Louisiana. For years after their discovery in the late 30s by W. B. MacMillan, they were referred to as "Super Fulvas" or "Abbeville Reds." Randolph concluded that the *nelsonii*s are a stable population of hybrid origin, worthy of species designation, and mainly based on *fulva* input but with genetic traces back to both *giganticaerulea* and *brevicaulis*. The plants and flowers of *I. nelsonii* are much larger than *fulva*, and the swamp and wet woods of their limited range is not the most typical setting for *fulva*, which was not found in the immediate area.

Natural Hybrids

In Louisiana, where the natural hybridization between at least four of the species occurred -- with their blue and white, red and yellow forms -- a remarkable range of plants, wildflowers all, were available to jump start hybridization. The modern hybrids are almost entirely derived from this Louisiana stock, and that is one of the reasons that the name "Louisiana irises" is apt, even for species that occur now and then in wet locals across much of the eastern part of the country and into the Midwest. No less a figure than John James Audubon was the first to apply the "Louisiana" designation, with his depiction of *I. fulva* in his [painting of the Parula Warbler](#). Current hybrids are generally derived from all of the species, except for the East Coast species *I. hexagona*, which, so far, has been used hardly at all by hybridizers.

Additional Information

For additional pictures, information and links pertaining to particular species, click on the pictures above. If the subject is of interest, be sure to follow the links to the sites created by **Rodney Barton** and **Dennis Kramb**.

Rodney Barton's [North American Native Iris](#) web site has excellent pictures and other information, including maps showing the geographic range of each species.

[Dennis Kramb's species iris database](#) was created for the [Species Iris Group of North America \(SIGNA\)](#). Search by species name or page down and click on the Louisiana species in the list. You might want to check out the main [SIGNA](#) web site, also.

The [USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service](#) maintains a plant database. From this page, search by full name of species, for example, "Iris fulva" for information. The site offers maps of distribution by state and in some instances by county within state. Some of the information is incomplete or inconsistent with other sources, but interesting.

The [USDA Forest Service](#) has created a very nice site with pages on the wildflowers, [including native iris species that grow on Forest Service land](#). This is an excellent site for native plant and wildflower information, including extensive links to other sites. The site's distribution maps of the Louisiana species are taken from the USDA Plants database and show *I. giganticaerulea* restricted to Louisiana and *I. hexagona* occurring all across the coastal south and up into Missouri. This is in contrast to the more widely accepted view in Louisiana iris circles that *I. hexagona* is restricted to the East Coast and *I. giganticaerulea* extends into Texas and Mississippi. Compare the USDA maps to those on the Rodney Barton website listed above.

There are several good histories of Louisiana irises that weave together information about the species, the story of their "discovery" and the development of the modern hybrids. For an online source, see [Tom Dillard's Louisiana iris history](#) from the Society for Louisiana Irises Newsletter, now renamed as the quarterly journal *Fleur de Lis*.

See also the Society's definitive [book on Louisiana irises](#) for a chapter on their history by Richard Goula. In the second edition, Goula's history chapter from the first edition was repeated with slight modification but without attribution. Also on the Society for Louisiana Irises web site, click here for [species pictures](#) and other information.

Take a look at this [LSU Library Special Collections](#) site dedicated to the work of [Percy Viosca](#), one of the important early figures responsible for sorting out the confusing array of Louisiana iris species and natural hybrids that were found in Louisiana. You have to use the search feature to isolate Viosca's iris pictures, which are old, black and whites taken before 1935. They include flower closeups and landscape pictures. Other pictures on the site document scenes in South Louisiana recorded by Viosca, one of Louisiana's "preeminent naturalists."

[Richard Sloan](#) has created a series of beautiful pages on Louisiana irises and his [Louisiana iris species page](#) has both beautiful pictures and good information. Be sure to follow the links at the bottom to see Dick's other Louisiana iris pages.

The [Flora of North America](#) website has an interesting iris page with technical descriptions to the [iris species, including Louisiana irises](#), and links to distribution maps and illustrations. The source is interesting in that it describes *Iris savannarum*, which was once included among the recognized Louisiana species. The Flora of North America treats it as *I. hexagona* var. *savannarum*, and places it in South Florida, Southwest Georgia and Southeast Alabama. This overlaps *I. hexagona*, which this source shows as limited to a relatively small area of North Florida and the East Coast of South Carolina. This view corresponds to the observations of some that there is more variation in the Florida irises than is supported by the one species, *I. hexagona*, generally attributed to the state.

Each individual species page on the Zydeco web site has additional links to information on the particular species.

[INTRODUCTIONS](#) | [CATALOG](#) | [GROWING TIPS](#) | [INSPIRATION](#) | [THE SPECIES](#) | [IMPOSTERS](#) | [BLOG](#)

[Organization](#) | [Katrina](#) | [Contact](#) | [About Zydeco](#) | [Home](#) | [Site Map](#)



Plants That Pretend To Be Louisiana Irises

Imposters? Louisiana iris impersonators? Too harsh perhaps, and probably the wrong connotation. The real problem is not with the plants but with the level of knowledge about them.

Given a dearth of horticultural information, almost any plant can be misidentified. After all, even where it grows wild in South Louisiana wetlands, "**ditch lily**" is one of the local names often applied to the unique native *Iris giganticaerulea*. Hardly accurate and certainly insufficient respect for the "State Wildflower."

The most frequent cases of mistaken iris identity undoubtedly vary by area of the country. This page is shaped by experience in South Louisiana, where a number of popular iris types are not often found. For example, Bearded irises are not commonly grown and Siberian irises are very rarely seen. Consequently, both types generally escape being fodder for error. Others are not so lucky. If it looks like an iris and is growing in Louisiana, shouldn't it be a Louisiana iris? Unfortunately, not always.

The most frequent and aggressive imposter is the common yellow flag, ***Iris pseudacorus***, a European transplant and not a native. "*Why don't my yellow Louisiana irises bloom?*" is an all-too-common question from gardeners seeking advice on growing Louisiana irises. Invariably what they have is the yellow form of *pseudacorus*. *Pseudacorus* blooms more reliably in water, but often puzzles and frustrates those who have them in their garden.



I. pseudacorus

It's not just a local error, either. Do a Google or eBay search for "Louisiana iris" and look through the images. You will find yellow flag imposters among the real things.

Pseudacorus is not the only culprit. There are a number of others irises or iris cousins that invite a case of mistaken identity.



I. virginica

Iris virginica is sometimes mistaken for a Louisiana iris, but it at least is native with a range that significantly overlaps that of Louisiana irises. It also likes similar boggy conditions and in some places can be found growing in the vicinity of Louisiana species in the wild.

Virginica is a nice plant, worthy of garden culture, but just not closely related to Louisiana irises. Ironically, it is a closer relative of *pseudacorus*, exhibiting the same midrib in the leaf that Louisianas lack. But *virginica* is a better citizen than *pseudacorus*, and will not crowd out its neighbors in the garden.

You may happen across the YouTube clip about [Giant Blue Native Irises and Yellow Flag Irises](#). The yellow flag shown is indeed *pseudacorus*, but the lead close-up picture is not a Giant Blue, a term usually reserved for the tall Louisiana species *I. giganticaerulea*. Rather, it is a *virginica*. *Virginica* almost always is a much shorter

plant and would never be mistaken for *giganticaerulea* based on stature. There is a passing similarity in the flowers but with distinctive differences.

The Cousins



Dietes bicolor



Dietes grandiflora



Neomarica gracilis



Neomarica longifolia

These are familiar plants, related to irises but not actually in the Genus *Iris*. **Dietes** and **Neomarica** are genera in the Family Iridicidae, and thus related to true irises. The flowers share the same six petal structure and blade-like leaves as irises and understandably enjoy such common names as **Butterfly Iris** (Dietes) and **Walking Iris** (Neomarica). The flowers are distinctly smaller than most irises, however, around two inches across. The available forms are nice plants and rightfully enjoy a place in many gardens.

Dietes and Neomarica are natives of the Southern Hemisphere. All true irises, all two hundred or so species, hail from the Northern Hemisphere.

Beardless Brothers

A logical question, not unheard of but a real stumper, is one such as this: "What's the difference between a Louisiana iris and a Japanese iris?" It's a real challenge to know where to start on that one. What's the difference between a Ford and a Toyota? Same problem.

Louisiana irises and Japanese irises are classified as "beardless." Siberians, Spurias, Pacific Coast Natives, and several others (including the virginicas) are also beardless irises.

As might be expected, there are certain similarities among all beardless irises. Many of the more telling differences relate to other characteristics than the flower, such as the shape of leaves, growth habit of their rhizomes, color range, and climate and soil tolerance. But, there is so much variation in flower form *within* each group that it is impossible to show just one or two pictures that are representative. Given the pictures selected, it would be very easy to confuse a given Louisiana with a Japanese iris, for example, but over a range of pictures the common patterns and distinguishing features would become clearer.

A better alternative than a handful of pictures is a little research project. This site is a good place to start on Louisianas, but point your browser to Google and a wealth of information on irises of almost all types can easily be found. The American Iris Society has a good starter page on [beardless irises](#). And the beardless irises are a relative few among the two hundred-plus iris species worldwide. If you want to get deeper into the amazing variety of irises, check out the website of [SIGNA, the Species Iris Group of North America](#).

[Home](#)

[INTRODUCTIONS](#) | [CATALOG](#) | [GROWING TIPS](#) | [INSPIRATION](#) | [THE SPECIES](#) | [IMPOSTERS](#) | [BLOG](#)
[Organization](#) | [Katrina](#) | [Contact](#) | [About Zydeco](#) | [Home](#) | [Site Map](#)



Iris Louisianne

Out of the swamps and into your garden

- HOME
- ABOUT
- CONTACT
- WHAT ARE THEY?
- CAN I GROW THEM?

SUBSCRIBE 

A Survivor

by PATRICK on APRIL 17, 2010

I was very happy to see this iris blooming last weekend and for a couple of reasons. First, it is a survivor. It is growing in the shallow edge of the New Orleans City Park lagoon that is a remnant of old Bayou Metairie. The City Park lagoon system is connected to Lake Pontchartrain via Bayou St. John, another remnant waterway that at one time was part of a system of canals that connected the Lake with the commercial district downtown. That was back before there were roads all the way out to the lakefront.



Storms can push brackish Lake water up Bayou St. John and into the lagoons. After the levees failed in Hurricane Katrina, it wasn't primarily the open Bayou that channeled the salty water; the water poured through the breaches to the tune of seven feet and more in some areas the City. Plant life suffered unbelievably and the irises were among them.

Some varieties of Louisiana iris are a



ZYDECO LOUISIANA IRIS GARDEN

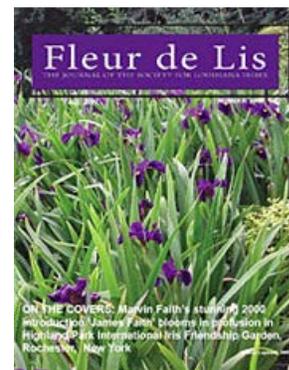


SOCIETY FOR LOUISIANA IRISES

THE BOOK

IRIS FRIENDSHIP GARDEN

FLEUR DE LIS



The quarterly journal of the Society for Louisiana irises.

BLOGROLL

[Always Growing](#)

[Can You Dig It?](#)

[Davy's Louisiana Gardening Blog](#)

little tolerant of salt water, but prolonged

exposure will kill them. Because a drought after Katrina denied a good flushing with fresh water, there was quite a bit of damage, and salinity in the lagoons remained high. I grew Louisianas not far from the Park in half barrels with no drain holes, and the salt water could not get out during the six or so weeks that passed before I could return. A few were entirely dead and all were badly damaged. Removed from the barrels though, they did recover well.

To all outward appearances, the City Park lagoons look like a natural home for Louisiana irises. And before New Orleans became entirely developed, there were vast numbers of native irises growing in what were cypress swamps and low areas. After Katrina, the salty lagoons did not seem so hospitable.

Today there is better control of the entry of brackish water as a result of a weir and fresh water pumps that add good salt-free water to the mix. A few years ago as the lagoons were in recovery, a group of local iris enthusiasts planted a large number of rhizomes along the banks of Bayou Metairie, including some down in the water. It does appear that a number did not make it, but last weekend there were many scapes up with buds about to open. And the early bloom in the picture showed that the lagoons are indeed a habitat in which Louisiana irises can grow. Another big storm will provide a better test, but so far, so good.

The second reason this picture made me happy is that a Louisiana iris just looks so "right" blooming in water. The flowers and foliage have a graceful form. Both wild and hybrid Louisiana iris flowers can be showy, but the plants are not just a vehicle for gaudy blossoms. There are different flower shapes but this flaring one is my favorite. It approximates the natural shape of the species *I. giganteaerulea*.

Louisiana irises look good on dry land, too. Most people grow them in ordinary flower beds, and as long as they don't dry out, they do just fine.

City Park is 1300 acres large. It has made tremendous strides in recovery from Katrina. In fact, it is booming. Those interested can take a look at its website, including a map that shows the lagoon system.

<http://neworleanscitypark.com/mapofpark.html> The Bayou Metairie remnant is in the lower right. Bayou St. John runs the entire length of the park along the right side of the map.

{ 7 comments }

A Florida Native Iris Blooms In New Orleans

by PATRICK on APRIL 6, 2010



Louisiana Irises in Rochester, NY. Photos by Gene Lupinetti.

BATON ROUGE BOTANIC GARDEN



HOW TO GROW THEM



RICHARD SLOAN'S IRIS PAGES



PROPAGATION



[Dig, Grow, Compost, Blog](#)

[Digging](#)

[Evey's Blissful Garden](#)

[From My Corner of Katy](#)

[Grounded Design](#)

[Grow Where You're Planted](#)

[New Dawn Garden](#)

[Our Little Acre](#)

[Outside Clyde](#)

[The Rain Forest Garden](#)

THE SPECIES



Iris fulva, one of the five.

MARY SWORDS DEBAILLON AWARD WINNERS, 1948 – 2009



Tom Dillard photo of M.D. Faith's 'Henry Rowlan'



This past Saturday, Longue Vue House and Garden held its “Iris Day” emphasizing the contributions of Caroline Dormon, the Louisiana conservationist who originally designed the Wild Garden there, I think in the 1940s. The event was very nice but was one of the casualties of the lingering winter since only a half dozen irises were in bloom. All were species, including several fulvas, a *giganticaerulea* and an *I. hexagona* collected by Benny Trahan in Florida.



Iris hexagona collected in Florida

All the irises were pretty, but the *hexagona* was the one that interested me most, for two reasons: one, in form the flower looked exactly like a Louisiana *giganticaerulea*, but the plant was notably shorter. Two, it was an early bloomer, right there with the *fulva* and *giganticaerulea*, which are known

to be early. And yet, one of the characteristics associated with *I. hexagona* is that it is a late bloomer. In fact, plants from South Carolina given to me as *I. hexagona* have always bloomed very late, just as does *I. brevicaulis*, reputed to be the latest blooming Louisiana.

So, what's up? Just a fluke in an oddball bloom season? Anything is possible and you shouldn't generalize from a single instance. But who's going to stop me? I fall in with those who think that the taxonomy of the native irises of Florida has not been entirely sorted out yet. The generally accepted view is that all the native irises of Florida that are broadly in the Louisiana group are *I. hexagona* and that *I. hexagona* is limited to the East Coast of the U. S. (not including Louisiana). It would not surprise me if careful study eventually concluded that **some** irises in Florida were essentially the same thing as Louisiana's *giganticaeruleas*, but that others are significantly different critters.

One difference between the Florida iris blooming at Longue Vue this week and Louisiana *giganticaeruleas* is that the Florida flower is a much deeper blue. I would call it a blue-purple. *Giganticaeruleas* are much lighter blue, sometimes light lavender, or even pale blue approaching white. By no means are all Florida irises this dark, but except for hybrids, irises found in Louisiana don't show such a dark blue.

It is unfortunate that the Florida natives have barely worked their way into the ancestry of the modern Louisiana iris hybrids. The sensation caused by the discovery of Louisiana irises in the 1920s and 1930s was limited to Louisiana itself where the vast bulk of collecting occurred and where

amazingly varied natural hybrids were found. With scant exception, the stock of the modern hybrids originated in Louisiana. But given that dark blue color found in Florida, that is an unfortunate omission.

Those interested in Florida's native irises might want to check out an [article](#) that appeared in the Society for Louisiana Irises' quarterly magazine.

{ 3 comments }

First Bloom Of The Season

APRIL 3, 2010

Here is the first Louisiana iris bloom of the very late season. It's a relatively short (24") seedling (No. 03-07) with a smallish, open flower. There's no huge splash in the garden since it is not a huge flower, but the color pattern is interesting. The parentage is complicated: (Mudbug x ((Harland [...]

[Read the full article →](#)

The Longue And Short Of It

MARCH 29, 2010

I took a look today at the Louisiana irises at Longue Vue House and Garden in New Orleans. There's nothing in bloom yet, but the plants look fantastic. There are many, many scapes showing, and the work of the last couple of years will be paying off very soon. With the damage from Hurricane [...]

[Read the full article →](#)

A Start

MARCH 28, 2010

You have to start somewhere. I've worked a good bit on the structure of this new blog but have waited to actually write an entry. With the first Louisiana iris bloom of the season a couple of days ago, the time is right. The first order of business will be to report on the progress [...]

[Read the full article →](#)

Get smart with the [Thesis WordPress Theme](#) from DIYthemes.

[WordPress Admin](#)



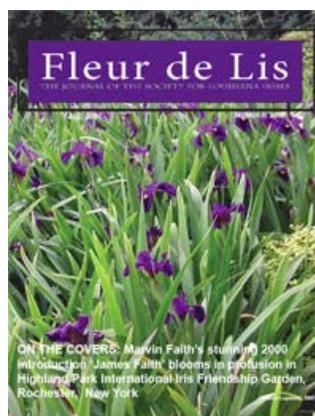
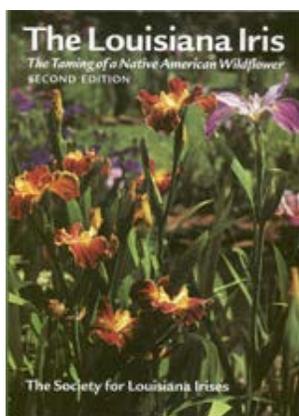
Louisiana Iris Organization



Society For Louisiana Irises

SLI is *the* resource for those interested in Louisiana irises. Organized in 1941, this Society and its key members over the years have been largely responsible for the growing popularity of Louisiana irises. Go to the [Society for Louisiana Irises site](#) and the starting point for a wealth of information on Louisianas. Members of SLI receive a quarterly journal, *Fleur de Lis*. It is a full color magazine that covers the latest cultivars, growing culture, propagation, Society activities and many other topics. A great resource.

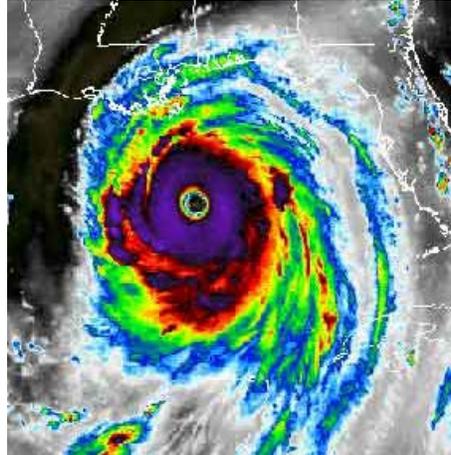
The Society was responsible for [the definitive book on Louisiana irises](#), now in its second edition. By all means, take a look.



[Home](#)



Our Bad Weather



Hurricane Katrina

August 29, 2005

Eventually, we will stop talking about Katrina. But not yet.

Hurricane Katrina inflicted almost unimaginable damage on many areas of New Orleans.

Some neighborhoods were relatively unscathed and others were devastated. Estimates are that only 25 percent of Orleans Parish homes escaped flood damage. In the areas hardest hit, and they are extensive, the recovery has been decidedly variable. In higher income areas, some people had the resources to rebuild before the federal assistance finally started flowing, which for homeowners really has been in just the past year. Elsewhere, the progress has been exceedingly slow, and no one really knows who will come back. The Orleans Parish is at almost 80 percent of the prestorm population, although suburban areas are about back to about the same level and non-flooded areas probably have grown some.

We live in suburban Metairie, in Jefferson Parish, only about 8 miles from downtown New Orleans. We had less than one foot of water in the house, all due to pumps that failed to work when the operators were evacuated across Lake Pontchartrain for the worst of the storm and were unable to return immediately after it subsided. Had the levees failed on the Jefferson instead of the Orleans side of the 17th Street Canal (which separates the two parishes), we would have had 6-10 feet or more of water instead of New Orleans. The storm was beyond our control but the disaster was manmade and mainly the result of human error in the design and construction of the levees.



This satellite photo shows why the New Orleans area requires protection from storms. We sit mostly below sea level and directly south of the Lake. We are surrounded by marsh and swamps and are bisected by the Mississippi River. The naturally high ground hugs the Mississippi, as is very clear up river. The city, though, has grown out through low lying areas to meet the lake. But it is a unique and fascinating place to live, the irises grow well, and the food is absolutely wonderful. And properly-constructed levees would have averted the Katrina catastrophe.

In Metairie, the water was not salty and stayed only two days. The stock of Zydeco Louisiana Iris Garden in Metairie was in no way harmed, except that we had to move to Baton Rouge for six months while our house was being renovated. We were not here to water as often as the plants would have liked, and the hurricane was followed by a fairly long dry spell. But that was a relatively minor matter.

Some of our stock was in a New Orleans community garden where the 17th Street Canal levee breach, on the New Orleans side of the canal, did let brackish water into the city.

Those irises were mainly grown in half barrels with no drainage. Almost all of them sat in the salt water for around six weeks before I could even get back to look. A few were killed outright and all that the flood waters got into were damaged. The damaged ones began to recover after they were removed and replanted. They sure don't like salt water, though. If you are interested in what it did and don't mind a **389k download** of a pdf file, take a look.

Katrina at the Community Garden

We count ourselves among the lucky ones in New Orleans. We are back. Far from organized and looking at a lot of weeds as bloom season begins. But we survived and did not lose our house. Too many people lost their homes and a tragically high number their lives.

As of early 2010, Metairie is back to near normal. Except for a few vacant lots where buildings once stood, you really can't tell there was a hurricane. Parts of New Orleans not flooded look fine, also, and these include the French Quarter and much of Uptown along the River. The tourist areas look fine but there are not yet enough tourists, although that is improving. The city has supported major events including Mardi Gras, the National Championship college football game, Jazz Fest and others.

Many of the deeply flooded sections, which are extensive, still look like a ghost town in some areas with one flooded and usually gutted home after another. We are looking at a ten to fifteen year recovery from this point forward and have many problems to work through. Still, New Orleans is unique and remains a great place to visit. Hopefully, the "new normal" will be better. It will just take a while to fully emerge.



[Home](#)

[INTRODUCTIONS](#) | [CATALOG](#) | [GROWING TIPS](#) | [INSPIRATION](#) | [THE SPECIES](#) | [IMPOSTERS](#) | [BLOG](#)

[Organization](#) | [Katrina](#) | [Contact](#) | [About Zydeco](#) | [Home](#) | [Site Map](#)



About Zydeco and Louisiana Irises

Zydeco is an indigenous music of Louisiana that evolved from rich and diverse cultural origins. It developed from the music of French speaking people of color in Louisiana. In the 30s and 40s, this music was very similar to Cajun music, but after WWII it began to take on different influences, including blues and rock and roll. While the fiddle is generally absent, Zydeco added the accordion, electric guitar and bass, drums, sometimes a saxophone, and it employs a distinctive corrugated metal rubboard called a frottiour.



Louisiana irises also are indigenous to Louisiana, have diverse origins, and the hybrids have evolved a rich blend of colors and forms. For Louisiana irises, like Zydeco music, the period after WWII was one of extraordinary development as new forms were discovered and hybridization transformed and expanded the diversity of the plants.

Both Zydeco music and modern Louisiana irises are a gumbo of distinct influences blended to excite the palate and stimulate the senses. And like Cajun cuisine, they are both highly adaptable to the preferences of the entire country



Zydeco Louisiana Iris Garden is the outgrowth of a thirty year hobby growing and hybridizing these irises. It evolved after 2000 into a small commercial nursery selling Louisiana irises online. That phase ended in 2013.



Today, Zydeco is the process of transition to a cooperative effort between the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and the Greater New Orleans Iris Society with the purpose of preserving, propagating and promoting Louisiana irises. Utilizing space in City Park in New Orleans, Louisiana irises are being grown for donation to other parks and entities that will display them for public enjoyment and education. Special emphasis will be placed upon conserving both the various forms of the five species and old, historically important cultivars that can still be obtained.

[Back](#)



[INTRODUCTIONS](#) | [CATALOG](#) | [GROWING TIPS](#) | [INSPIRATION](#) | [THE SPECIES](#) | [IMPOSTERS](#) | [BLOG](#)

[Organization](#) | [Katrina](#) | [Contact](#) | [About Zydeco](#) | [Home](#) | [Site Map](#)



Site Map

Homepage

Last updated: 2010, February 14

/ 2 pages

[Zydeco Louisiana Iris Garden - New Orleans - Come on in.](#)

[Zydeco Louisiana Iris Garden - New Orleans - Come on in.](#)

AboutZydeco/ 1 pages

[About Zydeco Louisiana Iris Garden](#)

Availability/ 3 pages

<http://zydecoirises.com/Availability/OrderForm.pdf>

[Availability and Terms](#)

[Why Fall Shipping](#)

Culture/ 5 pages

[Louisiana Iris Growing Tips - Culture and Propagation](#)

[Growing Culture Resources on Louisiana Irises](#)

[How To Propagate Louisiana Irises](#)

<http://zydecoirises.com/Culture/InorganicToOrganicConversion.C853.pdf>

<http://zydecoirises.com/Culture/IrisDoctor.WinterCareOfLA%20Iris.Fall-Winter2007.pdf>

Debaillon/ 1 pages

[Winners of Mary Swords DeBaillon Louisiana Iris Award](#)

FlowerPages/ 231 pages

[Louisiana Iris - Birthday Suit](#)

[Louisiana Iris - Living Large](#)

[Louisiana Iris - Lucky Dog](#)

[Louisiana Iris - Mothership](#)

[Louisiana Iris - Birthday Suit In The Garden](#)

[Louisiana Iris - Living Large In The Garden](#)

[Louisiana Iris - Lucky Dog In The Garden](#)

[Louisiana Iris - Mothership](#)

[Louisiana Iris - Acadian](#)

[Louisiana Iris - Adell Tingle](#)

Louisiana Iris - Andouille
Louisiana Iris - Ann Chowning
Louisiana Iris - Atchafalaya
Louisiana Iris - Avelline
Louisiana Iris - Barataria
Louisiana Iris - Barbara Elaine Taylor
Louisiana Iris - Bayou Fountain
Louisiana Iris - Beale Street
Louisiana Iris - Beausoleil
Louisiana Iris - Bellocq
Louisiana Iris - Bera
Louisiana Iris - Big Charity
Louisiana Iris - Birthday Suit
Louisiana Iris - Black Gamecock'
Louisiana Iris - Byron Bay
Louisiana Iris - Buff Dancer
Louisiana Iris - Bywater
Louisiana Iris - Caddo Gap
Louisiana Iris - Cajundome
Louisiana Iris - Cajun Merry
Louisiana Iris - Chef Menteur Pass
Louisiana Iris - Cherry Cup
Louisiana Iris - Chief of Chiefs
Louisiana Iris - Chuck Begnaud
Louisiana Iris - City of Ruins
Louisiana Iris - Clyde Redmond
Louisiana Iris - Colorific
Louisiana Iris - Cool Nite
Louisiana Iris - Creole Rhapsody
Louisiana Iris - Delta Star
Louisiana Iris - Dixie Country
Louisiana Iris - Dixie Deb
Louisiana Iris - Dog Eat Dog
Louisiana Iris - Duck Lady
Louisiana Iris - Early On
Louisiana Iris - Edith Dupre
Louisiana Iris - EdmondRiggs
Louisiana Iris - Emory Smith
Louisiana Iris - False River
Louisiana Iris - Faubourg-St. John
Louisiana Iris - Feliciana Hills
Louisiana Iris - Fiesta Gal
Louisiana Iris - Flareout
Louisiana Iris - Frederick Douglas
Louisiana Iris - Frenchmen Street
Louisiana Iris - Friends Song
Louisiana Iris - Frogmore
Louisiana Iris - Full Eclipse
Louisiana Iris - Gentilly
Louisiana Iris - German Coast
Louisiana Iris - Graceland
Louisiana Iris - Grand Coteau
Louisiana Iris - Great White Hope
Louisiana Iris - Harland K Riley

Louisiana Iris - Heavenly Glow
Louisiana Iris - Henry Rowlan
Louisiana Iris - Highland Road
Louisiana Iris - Honey Galore
Louisiana Iris - Honey Star
Louisiana Iris - Hurricane Colin
Louisiana Iris - Hurricane Party
Louisiana Iris - Hush Money
Louisiana Iris - I Remember You
Louisiana Iris - Irish Bayou
Louisiana Iris - Jean Bush
Louisiana Iris - Katrina Dog
Louisiana Iris - Kay Nelson
Louisiana Iris - King Louis
Louisiana Iris - Kristi G
Louisiana Iris - Lafitte Celebration
Louisiana Iris - Lake Sylvia
Louisiana Iris - Lakeview
Louisiana Iris - Lightning Quick
Louisiana Iris - Lillie Edwards
Louisiana Iris - Little Woods
Louisiana Iris - Living Large
Louisiana Iris - Longue Vue
Louisiana Iris - Lower Nine
Louisiana Iris - Lucky Dog
Louisiana Iris - Lottie Butterscotch
Louisiana Iris - Macs Blue Heaven
Louisiana Iris - Magnetic
Louisiana Iris - Marie Caillet
Louisiana Iris - Marie Dolores
Louisiana Iris - Miss Gertie's Bonnet
Louisiana Iris - Metairie Ridge
Louisiana Iris - Mister Joe
Louisiana Iris - Monkey Hill
Louisiana Iris - Mothership
Louisiana Iris - Mudbug
Louisiana Iris - My Friend Dick
Louisiana Iris - New Basin Canal
Louisiana Iris - Noble Moment
Louisiana Iris - Nottoway
Louisiana Iris - Now And Forever
Louisiana Iris - Peaches In Wine
Louisiana Iris - Our Parris
Louisiana Iris - Percolatlor
Louisiana Iris - Persistent Cuss
Louisiana Iris - Poverty Point
Louisiana Iris - Praline Festival
Louisiana Iris - President Hedley
Louisiana Iris - Pristine Beauty
Louisiana Iris - Professor Neil
Louisiana Iris - Prytania
Louisiana Iris - Red Beans
Louisiana Iris - Red Dazzler
Louisiana Iris - Red Velvet Elvis

Louisiana Iris - Red Echo
Louisiana Iris - Rich Jewel
Louisiana Iris - Rigolets
Louisiana Iris - Scarlet Lady
Louisiana Iris - River Road
Louisiana Iris - Rose Cartwheel
Louisiana Iris - Shizuoka Sunrise
Louisiana Iris - Sinfonietta
Louisiana Iris - Southdowns
Louisiana Iris - Storyville
Louisiana Iris - Sunshine Bridge
Louisiana Iris - Tchoupitoulas
Louisiana Iris - Thanksgiving Fest
Louisiana Iris - Tickfaw
Louisiana Iris - Twelve Mile Bridge
Louisiana Iris - Twisted Sister
Louisiana Iris - VelvetMemory
Louisiana Iris - Vermillion Queen
Louisiana Iris - Victoria Inn
Louisiana Iris - Whereyat
Louisiana Iris - Willow Mint
Louisiana Iris - Zydeco
Louisiana Iris - Iris brevicaulis
Louisiana Iris - Iris fulva
Louisiana Iris - Lottie Butterscotch
Louisiana Iris - Edith Dupre
Louisiana Iris - Iris giganteaerulea
Louisiana Iris - Barbara Elaine Taylor
Louisiana Iris - Iris giganteaerulea Rose Purple
Louisiana Iris - Baton Rouge Passalong
Louisiana Iris - "Vinicolor"
Louisiana Iris - Adele Tingle in the Garden
Louisiana Iris - Andouille In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - Atchafalaya In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - Barataria In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - Bayou Fountain In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - Big Charity In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - Birthday Suit In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - Black Gamecock In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - Bywater In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - Lower Nine In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - Cajun Merry In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - Chef Menteur Pass in the Garden
Louisiana Iris - Cherry Cup in the Garden
Louisiana Iris - Chuck Begnaud
Louisiana Iris - City of Ruins In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - Colorific In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - Delta Star In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - Dixie Deb In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - Dog Eat Dog in the Garden
Louisiana Iris - Duck Lady In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - Edith Dupre
Louisiana Iris - Emory Smith In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - False River

Louisiana Iris - Flareout
Louisiana Iris - Frenchmen Street In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - Full Eclipse In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - Gentilly In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - Grand Coteau In The Garden in the Garden
Louisiana Iris - Great White Hope In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - Henry Rowlan In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - Highland Road In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - Honey Galore In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - Hurricane Colin In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - Irish Bayou In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - Jean Bush In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - King Louis
Louisiana Iris - Lake Sylvia In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - Lakeview In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - Lightening Quick In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - Lillie Edwards In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - Little Woods In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - Living Large In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - Lucky Dog
Louisiana Iris - Lottie Butterscotch
Louisiana Iris - Magnetic In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - Metairie Ridge In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - Monkey Hill In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - Mothership
Louisiana Iris - Mudbug In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - Noble Moment In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - Nottoway In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - Peaches In Wine In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - Percolatlor In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - Persistent Cuss In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - Poverty Point In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - Prytania In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - Red Beans In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - Red Dazzler In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - Red Echo
Louisiana Iris - Rigolets
Louisiana Iris - River Road In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - Rose Cartwheel In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - Shizuoka Sunrise
Louisiana Iris - Southdowns In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - Storyville In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - Sunshine Bridge in the Garden
Louisiana Iris - Tchoupitoulas
Louisiana Iris - Thanksgiving Fest In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - Twelve Mile Bridge In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - Twisted Sister In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - Victoria Inn In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - Whereyat In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - Zydeco In The Garden
Louisiana Iris - Iris brevicaulis In The Wild
Louisiana Iris - Iris Fulva In The Wild
Louisiana Iris - Lottie Butterscotch
Louisiana Iris - Edith Dupre In The Garden

[Louisiana Iris - Iris Giganticaerulea In The Garden](#)
[Louisiana Iris - Iris Giganticaerulea In The Wild](#)
[Louisiana Iris - Baton Rouge Passalong In The Garden](#)
[Louisiana Iris - "Vinicolor" In The Garden](#)
[Louisiana Iris - Bellocq In The Garden](#)

IndexPage/ 9 pages

[Zydeco Louisiana Iris Garden Introductions](#)
[Catalog of Zydeco Louisiana Iris Garden](#)
[Site Map Page 1 - Generated by www.xml-sitemaps.com](#)
[Abbreviations in Zydeco Louisiana Iris Garden Catalog](#)
[Catalog of Zydeco Louisiana Iris Garden A - C](#)
[Catalog of Zydeco Louisiana Iris Garden D - L](#)
[Catalog of Zydeco Louisiana Iris Garden M - Q](#)
[Catalog of Zydeco Louisiana Iris Garden R - Z](#)
[Catalog of Zydeco Louisiana Iris Garden - Species and Found Irises](#)

Inspiration/ 5 pages

[Louisiana Iris Inspiration - Pictures, Articles and Information](#)
http://zydecoirises.com/Inspiration/Vol3_No1_042_049.pdf
<http://zydecoirises.com/Inspiration/Summer06WILDLIFE.LAarticle.pdf>
[Iris Friendship Garden - Highland Park - Rochester, NY](#)
[Louisiana Irises in the Baton Rouge Botanic Gardens](#)

BatonRougeBotanicGarden/ 7 pages

[Baton Rouge Botanic Garden History](#)
[Baton Rouge Botanic Garden, Page 2](#)
[Louisiana Irises in the Baton Rouge Botanic Gardens, Page 3](#)
[Louisiana Irises in the Baton Rouge Botanic Gardens, Page 4](#)
[Louisiana Irises in the Baton Rouge Botanic Gardens, Page 5](#)
<http://zydecoirises.com/Inspiration/BatonRougeBotanicGarden/BatonRougeBotanicGarden.Fall2009.pdf>
<http://zydecoirises.com/Inspiration/BatonRougeBotanicGarden/LouisianaIrisGardenDedication.Summer2000.pdf>

IrisFriendshipGarden/ 8 pages

[Iris Friendship Garden in Bloom, Page Five](#)
[Highland Park Rochester NY Page One](#)
[Iris Friendship Garden in Bloom, Page Two](#)
[Iris Friendship Garden in Bloom, Page Three](#)
[Iris Friendship Garden in Bloom, Page Four](#)
[Iris Friendship Garden in Bloom, Page Five](#)
[Iris Friendship Garden in Bloom, Page Six](#)
[Highland Park Rochester NY Page Two](#)

Jazzy/ 2 pages

[Fine Gardening Article - Marie Caillet - Jazzy Louisiana Irises](#)
<http://zydecoirises.com/Jazzy/JazzyCaillet.pdf>

Katrina/ 2 pages

[Hurricane Katrina and Zydeco Louisiana Iris Garden](#)

<http://zydecoirises.com/Katrina/KatrinaAtTheCommunityGardens.pdf>

Organization/ 1 pages

[Louisiana Iris Organization](#)

Species/ 2 pages

[The Species of Louisiana Irises](#)

<http://zydecoirises.com/Species/Summer2007a.pdf>

Brevicaulis/ 2 pages

[Louisiana Iris Brevicaulis](#)

[Iris Brevicaulis in the Garden](#)

Florida/ 2 pages

[The Irises of Florida](#)

<http://zydecoirises.com/Species/Florida/FloridaIrises.pdf>

Fulva/ 2 pages

[Louisiana Iris Fulva](#)

[Iris Fulva in the Wild - Zydeco Louisiana Iris Garden](#)

Giganticaerulea/ 4 pages

[Louisiana Iris Giganticaerulea](#)

[Iris Giganticaerulea in Jean Lafitte, Louisiana - Zydeco Louisiana Iris Garden](#)

[Iris Giganticaerulea in Jean Lafitte, Louisiana - More Pictures](#)

[Iris Giganticaerulea in LaPlace, Louisiana](#)

Hexagona/ 1 pages

[Louisiana Iris Hexagona](#)

Nelsonii/ 1 pages

[Louisiana Iris Nelsonii](#)



Louisiana Iris Gallery 2013

[Explanation of Abbreviations](#)

[A - C](#)

[D - L](#)

[M - Q](#)

[R - Z](#)

[Species and
Found Irises](#)



Iris Giganticaerulea in the Town of Jean Lafitte, South of New Orleans

[Back](#)



Plants That Pretend To Be Louisiana Irises

Imposters? Louisiana iris impersonators? Too harsh perhaps, and probably the wrong connotation. The real problem is not with the plants but with the level of knowledge about them.

Given a dearth of horticultural information, almost any plant can be misidentified. After all, even where it grows wild in South Louisiana wetlands, "**ditch lily**" is one of the local names often applied to the unique native *Iris giganticaerulea*. Hardly accurate and certainly insufficient respect for the "State Wildflower."

The most frequent cases of mistaken iris identity undoubtedly vary by area of the country. This page is shaped by experience in South Louisiana, where a number of popular iris types are not often found. For example, Bearded irises are not commonly grown and Siberian irises are very rarely seen. Consequently, both types generally escape being fodder for error. Others are not so lucky. If it looks like an iris and is growing in Louisiana, shouldn't it be a Louisiana iris? Unfortunately, not always.

The most frequent and aggressive imposter is the common yellow flag, ***Iris pseudacorus***, a European transplant and not a native. "*Why don't my yellow Louisiana irises bloom?*" is an all-too-common question from gardeners seeking advice on growing Louisiana irises. Invariably what they have is the yellow form of *pseudacorus*. *Pseudacorus* blooms more reliably in water, but often puzzles and frustrates those who have them in their garden.



I. pseudacorus

It's not just a local error, either. Do a Google or eBay search for "Louisiana iris" and look through the images. You will find yellow flag imposters among the real things.

Pseudacorus is not the only culprit. There are a number of others irises or iris cousins that invite a case of mistaken identity.



I. virginica

Iris virginica is sometimes mistaken for a Louisiana iris, but it at least is native with a range that significantly overlaps that of Louisiana irises. It also likes similar boggy conditions and in some places can be found growing in the vicinity of Louisiana species in the wild.

Virginica is a nice plant, worthy of garden culture, but just not closely related to Louisiana irises. Ironically, it is a closer relative of *pseudacorus*, exhibiting the same midrib in the leaf that Louisianas lack. But *virginica* is a better citizen than *pseudacorus*, and will not crowd out its neighbors in the garden.

You may happen across the YouTube clip about [Giant Blue Native Irises and Yellow Flag Irises](#). The yellow flag shown is indeed *pseudacorus*, but the lead close-up picture is not a Giant Blue, a term usually reserved for the tall Louisiana species *I. giganticaerulea*. Rather, it is a *virginica*. *Virginica* almost always is a much shorter

plant and would never be mistaken for *giganticaerulea* based on stature. There is a passing similarity in the flowers but with distinctive differences.

The Cousins



Dietes bicolor



Dietes grandiflora



Neomarica gracilis



Neomarica longifolia

These are familiar plants, related to irises but not actually in the Genus *Iris*. **Dietes** and **Neomarica** are genera in the Family Iridicidae, and thus related to true irises. The flowers share the same six petal structure and blade-like leaves as irises and understandably enjoy such common names as **Butterfly Iris** (Dietes) and **Walking Iris** (Neomarica). The flowers are distinctly smaller than most irises, however, around two inches across. The available forms are nice plants and rightfully enjoy a place in many gardens.

Dietes and Neomarica are natives of the Southern Hemisphere. All true irises, all two hundred or so species, hail from the Northern Hemisphere.

Beardless Brothers

A logical question, not unheard of but a real stumper, is one such as this: "What's the difference between a Louisiana iris and a Japanese iris?" It's a real challenge to know where to start on that one. What's the difference between a Ford and a Toyota? Same problem.

Louisiana irises and Japanese irises are classified as "beardless." Siberians, Spurias, Pacific Coast Natives, and several others (including the virginicas) are also beardless irises.

As might be expected, there are certain similarities among all beardless irises. Many of the more telling differences relate to other characteristics than the flower, such as the shape of leaves, growth habit of their rhizomes, color range, and climate and soil tolerance. But, there is so much variation in flower form *within* each group that it is impossible to show just one or two pictures that are representative. Given the pictures selected, it would be very easy to confuse a given Louisiana with a Japanese iris, for example, but over a range of pictures the common patterns and distinguishing features would become clearer.

A better alternative than a handful of pictures is a little research project. This site is a good place to start on Louisianas, but point your browser to Google and a wealth of information on irises of almost all types can easily be found. The American Iris Society has a good starter page on [beardless irises](#). And the beardless irises are a relative few among the two hundred-plus iris species worldwide. If you want to get deeper into the amazing variety of irises, check out the website of [SIGNA, the Species Iris Group of North America](#).

[Home](#)

[INTRODUCTIONS](#) | [CATALOG](#) | [GROWING TIPS](#) | [INSPIRATION](#) | [THE SPECIES](#) | [IMPOSTERS](#) | [BLOG](#)
[Organization](#) | [Katrina](#) | [Contact](#) | [About Zydeco](#) | [Home](#) | [Site Map](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Everything That Rises'

R2014, Patrick O'Connor. 34", L. Ruffled yellow near self. Falls very wide with light olive green veins at base and narrow olive green dagger signal on a small orange thumbprint. Flaring standards a slightly lighter yellow. Very overlapping flower form. Wide, creamy yellow style arms somewhat frilly toward tips. *Mothership X German Coast*.

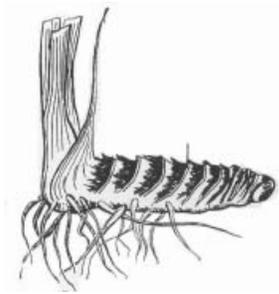
'Everything That Rises'" is named for the short story collection by Flannery O'Connor, *Everything That Rises Must Converge*.

[Back](#)



Louisiana Iris Propagation

There are two principal ways to propagate Louisiana irises: by division or cutting from the original rhizome, and by seed. Offsets produced from the original rhizome will produce identical flowers. It is sometimes said that irises will change color over time, but this is not correct. When an unexpected flower appears in a clump, it most likely is due to either other irises "traveling" into it by rhizome growth, to the remnants of a rhizome of another variety previously grown in that spot that has come back and grown large enough to bloom, or to a seed dropping and forming a new hybrid.



Rhizome Division

Rhizomes can be divided, ideally in the fall. In digging the irises, it is an easy matter to break off the new plants. Since offsets form in the winter or early spring, fall division allows the new plants to grow to sufficient size before being separated from the mother rhizome.

Rhizome Cutting

A rhizome will bloom only once. It is the offsets that will flower in subsequent years. The spent rhizome can be used to increase a variety, however. Cut a 2-3 inch section of the rhizome and place it in a medium of sand and vermiculite, sand and peat, commercial potting soil or a similar material. Cover the rhizome section with a quarter inch of the medium and keep moist. It is helpful to have treated the rhizome cuttings by immersing them for about ten minutes in water and bleach (10 percent) to deter any fungus that might cause the cuttings to rot.

In most instances, new offsets will form at the leaf scars. When these grow to six inches or more and have formed good roots, they can be carefully removed and planted out. The best practice probably is to simply plant out the rhizome cutting with intact offsets, since the new plants presumably will extract some nutrition from the old rhizome.

Some varieties more readily produce offsets by this method than others. When you examine a spent rhizome, you can sometimes see a small green "eye" along the side that is an emerging offset. Such a rhizome will quickly produce a new plant when treated as described here. In other instances, it may be months before new offsets emerge. Sometimes they never do, and the rhizome section will rot.

Offsets are sometimes produced toward the back end of the rhizome and sometimes near the growing end. Rarely, they will be found toward the bottom of a bloomstalk, much as seen in daylilies.



A recently dug plant showing the old bloom stalk and increases to either side.



The new offsets have been pulled off for replanting and the old rhizome with bloom stalk has been cut into 1 1/2 or 2 inch sections.

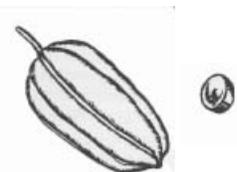


The sections of old rhizome placed in a medium of sand and peat or potting mix and ready to be covered with around a half inch of the medium.



New growth that has formed on rhizome sections of a different iris after about six weeks.

Seeds



Growing from seeds produces plants that will vary to a greater or lesser extent from the hybrid parents. Because hybrid Louisiana irises have descended from species that vary widely in color and form, it is difficult to predict what seedlings will look like. This characteristic makes Louisiana irises a fascinating subject for systematic hybridization. Hybridizers make controlled crosses, applying pollen from one cultivar to the flower of another cultivar. Bees randomly do the same work.

Following the bloom season, whether from deliberate cross-pollination or busy bees, seed pods will become apparent within days or weeks. In Louisiana, these seeds will mature in mid summer. The Fourth of July is an easy target date for taking the seed along the Gulf Coast, both because they generally mature about that time and because of a long weekend. This represents about a 90 day wait from pollination to mature seeds, so growers elsewhere can adjust accordingly. If a seed pod begins to brown and crack open earlier, however, it should be harvested. Seeds allowed to dry out in the pod may take an additional year to germinate.

The seed pods should be carefully cut open and the seeds planted about 3/4 inch deep in pots of garden soil or potting mix. If the pots are kept moist, the seeds should begin to germinate with the first cool nights in October

or November along the Gulf Coast. The seedlings can be planted into the garden in early spring. Most can be expected to bloom the following spring.

Pots of seed can be kept for several years if good germination does not occur in the fall following spring sowing.

Some crosses will produce seed that germinates readily and others exhibit delayed or poor germination. After the second year, significant additional germination is unlikely.

It is important to keep the seeds covered with soil or other medium not only to preserve moisture but to prevent the seed from being eaten by insects. The corky coating on seeds may cause them to rise to the surface over time, so additional soil may have to be added to pots.

[Back](#)

[INTRODUCTIONS](#) | [CATALOG](#) | [GROWING TIPS](#) | [INSPIRATION](#) | [THE SPECIES](#) | [IMPOSTERS](#) | [BLOG](#)

[Organization](#) | [Katrina](#) | [Contact](#) | [About Zydeco](#) | [Home](#) | [Site Map](#)



Resources for Growing Louisiana Irises

You may be interested in growing tips and cultural suggestions for special conditions or areas of the country outside the Gulf Coast. The links that follow take you to various pages and other sites that deal with growing Louisiana irises. Sometimes the information is limited and often parts of it are repetitive, but you may find some nugget applicable to your specific situation or an article that addresses a similar climate.

General

The **Society for Louisiana Irises** website has several articles on culture, including an excerpt from the Society's **definitive book**. You can access all the SLI articles from on **Louisiana iris culture on the website**.

Go to this site to join the Yahoo **discussion group on Louisiana irises**. Group members discuss culture and other topics pertaining to Louisiana irises. Join the group and ask your questions.

HGTV also has a general article on **Louisiana iris culture**. While you're on the HGTV website, do a search for "Louisiana iris."

Water and Bog Culture

A long narrative with emphasis on **water culture of Louisiana irises** on the website of a commercial **water garden in California**. If you looked at this site in the past, you saw that the formatting of the page was terrible but it looks nice now and is quite legible.

Robert Treadway of Carlisle, Arkansas wrote an excellent article in 2004 for *Fleur de Lis*, the quarterly publication of the Society for Louisiana Irises, on **growing Louisianas in plastic lined beds** to save water and increase bloom.

A recent (July 2007) but short tutorial on how to grow **Louisianas in ponds**.

HGTV has an brief article by Maureen Gilmer on **irises for boggy conditons**, including just a little on Louisianas.

Region

Gulf South

The **LSU Cooperative Extension brochure on Louisiana irises** is available as a pdf document. A good, brief overview of recommendations particularly applicable to the South.

LSU Horticulturist **Dan Gill** is an authoritative source on a wide range of plants and growing practices applicable to the Gulf Coast. Dan periodically discusses Louisiana irises in his New Orleans newspaper column and elsewhere. Point your search engine to "Dan Gill Louisiana" and you will find examples of his iris and other plant expertise.

The Garden Club of Houston created a video on growing Louisiana irises featuring **Josephine Shanks**, a longtime grower of Louisianas. The information has wider applicability than just Houston or only the Gulf Coast. A very informative, nicely done video.

Kansas and Missouri

The website of Region 18 of the American Iris Society, presents **iris culture suggestions for Kansas and Missouri**. Scroll down and you will find the Louisiana iris information at the bottom of the page.

Arkansas and Oklahoma

M. D. Faith's "**Iris Doctor**" column in the American Iris Society's Region 22 (AR and OK) newsletter discusses Louisiana iris culture with an emphasis on winter care. M. D. gardens

in Searcy, Arkansas, north of Little Rock.

State

<p>Arizona</p>	<p>The Tucson Area Iris Society, hosts for the 2005 Society for Louisiana Irises convention, offer Louisiana iris culture recommendations on a beautiful website. You'll have to scroll down several pages to get through the bearded iris information.</p> <p>The Sun Country Iris Society in Phoenix had a brief section on Louisiana iris culture but it is not active at present. Perhaps it will be restored. The link takes you to the organization's site.</p>
<p>Arkansas</p>	<p>The University of Arkansas Extension's treatment is a bit longer and offers helpful comments from someone who has grown and enjoyed Louisiana irises.</p>
<p>Florida</p>	<p>A nice, brief write-up of Louisiana irises in Florida, a very interesting "photographic encyclopedia of landscape plants."</p> <p>The University of Florida Extension in Miami-Dade offers cultural recommendations or plants that grow from bulbs, corms, tubers and rhizomes which contains some specific suggestions for growing the native Iris hexagona, which should apply to Louisiana iris hybrids also.</p>
<p>Iowa</p>	<p>There is not too much information from the Iowa State Extension but it is interesting that Louisiana irises are now recognized as good garden plants across the midwest.</p>
<p>Kentucky</p>	<p>The Louisville Area Iris Society's website includes a few cultural suggestions on Louisiana irises for for their area.</p>
<p>Oklahoma</p>	<p>The Tulsa Area Iris Society site has a good, short article by Paul Gossett, past President of the Society for Louisiana Irises.</p>
<p>Texas</p>	<p>The Cooperative Extension Service at Texas A&M offers a few cultural comments on Louisiana irises. Look at this also. And this.</p>
<p>Washington</p>	<p>The King County Iris Society in Seattle has only brief information on Louisiana irises.</p>

[Back](#)

*If you know of any other source of good cultural information on Louisiana irises?
[Email](#) Zydeco and we will add it to the site.*

[INTRODUCTIONS](#) | [CATALOG](#) | [GROWING TIPS](#) | [INSPIRATION](#) | [THE SPECIES](#) | [IMPOSTERS](#) | [BLOG](#)

[Organization](#) | [Katrina](#) | [Contact](#) | [About Zydeco](#) | [Home](#) | [Site Map](#)

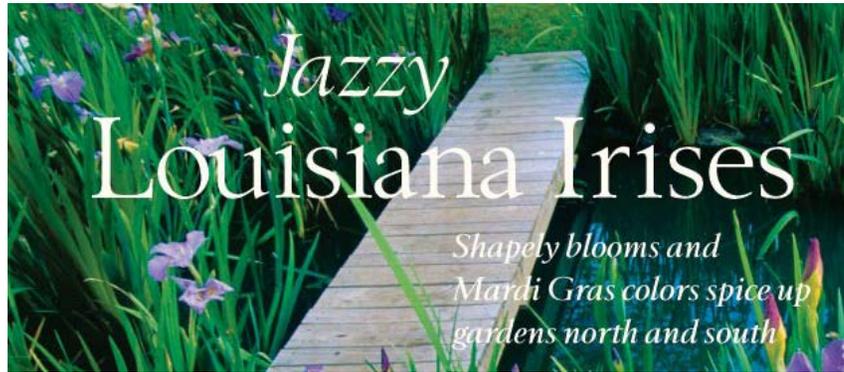
Embedded Secure Document

The file <http://www.zydecoirises.com/Culture/InorganicToOrganicConversion.C853.pdf> is a secure document that has been embedded in this document. Double click the pushpin to view.





Marie Caillet of Little Elm, Texas



by Marie Caillet

fine Gardening

No. 50, July/August 1996

In its July/August 1996 issue, [Fine Gardening](#) magazine published a wonderful article on Louisiana irises by Marie Caillet. Marie was a founding member of the Society for Louisiana Irises, co-author of the authoritative book on these plants and has been their stalwart promoter for many years. While she has written extensively on Louisiana irises, the Fine Gardening article was particularly nice, eight pages in length and beautifully photographed by Charles Mann of Santa Fe, New Mexico.

At one time, the *Jazzy* article was available online at the Fine Gardening website. Now, Fine Gardening has graciously made it available as a pdf file that can be viewed for a limited time.

The pdf file is 2.3 megabytes in size and so will be a substantial download over phone lines, but the article is well worth seeing and will not be available forever.

This is a near-timeless article by a wonderful person. Do keep in mind that it is now nine years old, and some information, such as the list of Louisiana iris sources, is partially out of date.

[Open Jazzy Louisiana Irises](#) (pdf 2.3 megabytes)



[Back](#)

Louisiana Irises

A NATURAL FOR WATER GARDENS

Text and photos by Marie Caillet

Some plants can be adapted to water gardening, but Louisiana irises are just naturally a water plant, having originated in the swamps and marshes of the Gulf Coast states. Their natural habitat is a wet, boggy area that floods during the winter and spring. They may dry out some during the summer and go dormant, but they begin their new growth once fall rains begin. If kept well watered in the dry summer months, the irises will produce larger rhizomes and more increases for bloom in the spring. Water is essential for tall, healthy bloom

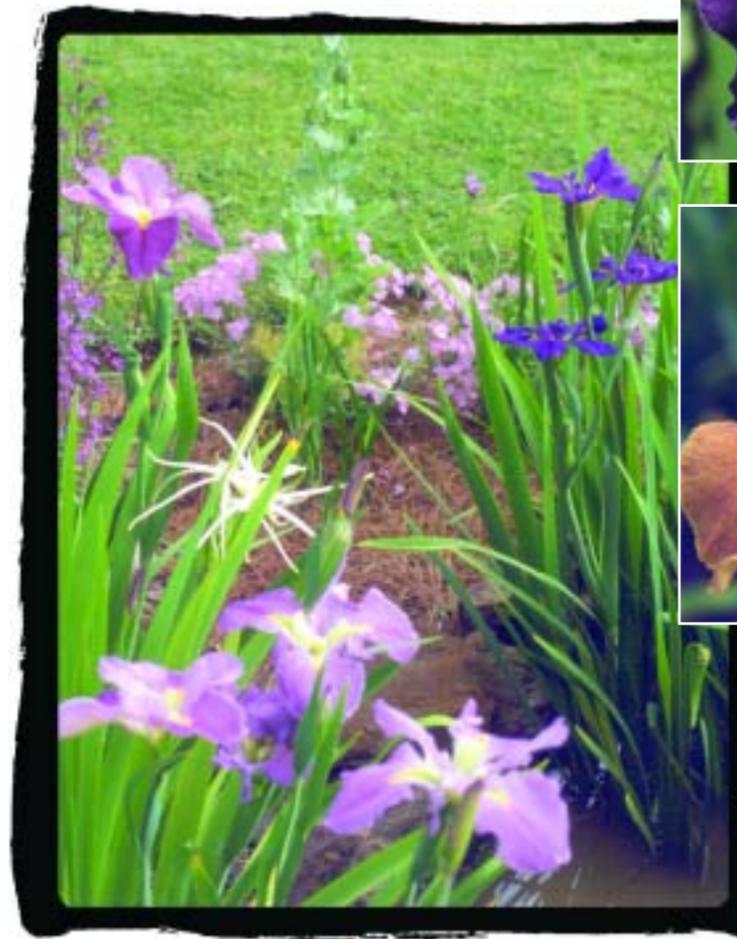
stalks and for maximum flower size.

Growing Louisianas in water also accomplishes other advantageous gardening jobs. The weeding needed in flower beds is avoided. Dead foliage will usually rot and sink into the pond or bog, which eliminates clean up. This decayed



matter in a pond serves as a natural fertilizer. The water serves like a mulch to cut the sun off the rhizome. 'Sun scald' on exposed Louisiana iris rhizomes results in stunted plants, poor bloom, and even death. This can be corrected in a raised bed by use of a heavy mulch, but it is not needed when the irises are grown in water.

Thus, all the basic requirements for growing Louisiana irises are naturally met by growing in water or bogs. The requirement of an acid soil condition may not always be true. They do grow best in a neutral or slightly acid soil but are known to grow and bloom in a more alkaline soil. *I. giganteaerulea* growing in the coastal



'Prof. Neil Mertzweiller'



'Bayou Fountain'



(above) 'Praline Festival'

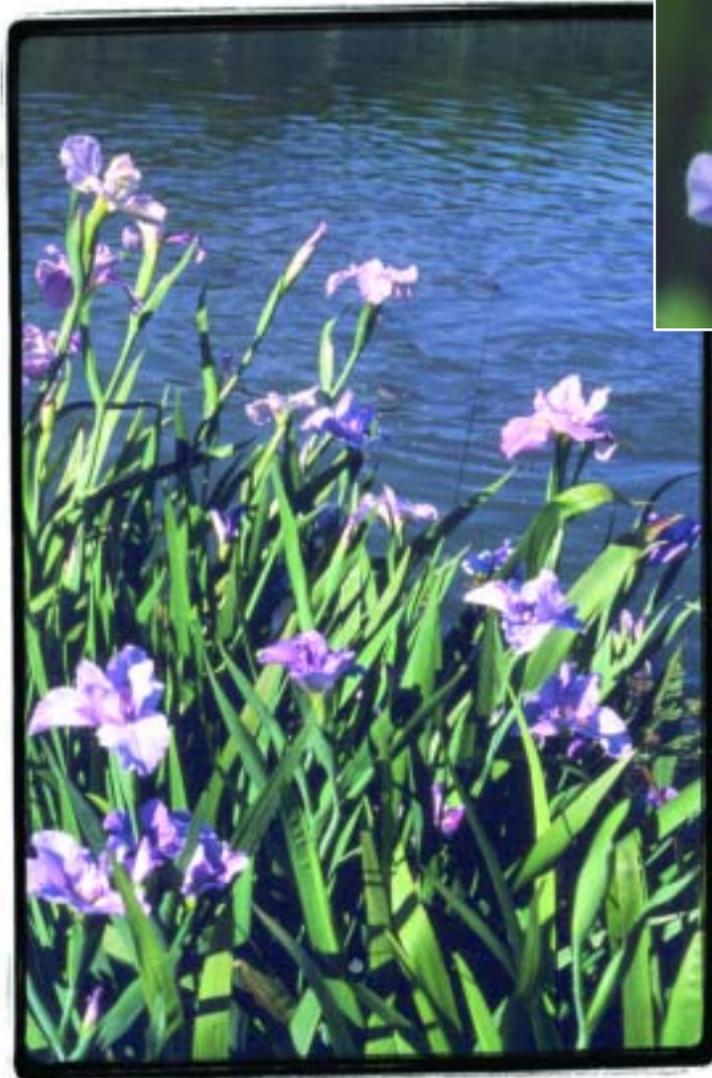
(left) The east end of Marie Caillet's pond...

marshes is known to survive in somewhat salty water, as occurs after a hurricane. Louisiana irises have adapted to my neutral or slightly alkaline soil in North Texas and show no adverse effects. They are practi-

Opposite page:
(inset) 'Cajun Sunrise'
(above) Marie Caillet's pond

cally free of disease, especially when growing in water. I do mulch the plants on the edge of the pond during a hot, dry summer to shade the rhizomes and keep them cooler. A mulch such as pine needles is less likely to float away with a rain. If the pond water level gets very low, water will need to be added. My pond is small enough to use a soaker hose around the perimeter, so that the irises on the outer edge can be watered.

Shallow ponds with a natural base of soil, espe-



'Aunt Shirley'



(above) 'Little Caillet'
(left) 'Edith Wolford'

cially a heavy clay that holds water, makes an ideal planting place. The banks or sides of a deeper pond or lake are also desirable, as the irises will grow both toward the shallower edges or even go deeper into the water. As the rhizomes spread into deep water, they may live and bloom without putting roots down into the soil. This will result in stalks that have no support or plants that become loose from old rhizomes and float elsewhere in the pond. In case of a heavy rain, they may even be washed out of the pond and into drainage areas. A pasture in north Louisiana is being covered with Louisiana irises that have washed out of a stock pond and floated

into lower ground. When snagged by debris and tree roots, they have settled in and rooted. This explains how certain native irises may have spread in natural situations as well as their spreading by seed dispersal.

Planting in a pond or the boggy edges of a lake requires only one step different to planting in a flower bed. Rhizomes must be anchored down in some manner until they can put roots into the soil. If not done, the rhizomes will fall over or be washed into the pond. A hairpin shaped wire can be used to anchor the new rhizome and allow it to settle in until it produces new roots. Such staples can be bought or can be made by hand with heavy wire. Plants moved in with soil attached, as with a potted iris, can be planted in a hole dug in the mud. In order for the plant to breathe, the foliage must extend above the water level. Do not trim the foliage shorter than the depth of the water where you are planting. Possible water depth varies, but 6 to 8 inches is considered a maximum for most cultivars. However, it is not unusual for some Louisiana irises to move into much deeper water. Tall cultivars will move into water 12 to 15 inches deep. The tetraploids hybridized by Joseph Mertzweiller are known for excellent growth and for producing 5-foot stalks when growing in a foot of water. A sustained period of ice on a pond will result in damaged foliage, but does not seem to affect the rhizome. New growth and bloom stalks will appear in the spring. With warm winters the pond water gives enough warmth for early bloom, but a frozen pond may slow the bloom period.

With smaller home gardens, many water gardeners have a small lined pond requiring all plants to be in containers. Louisianas grow



'Good Vibes'



'Starlight-Starbright'



'Creole Rhapsody'

equally well in a container, but will grow out of it rapidly. One of their drawbacks has always been the very long rhizomes that present a real problem in a container. One must use a wide mouth pot just to accommodate a well-grown rhizome, which can easily span the opening. When increas-

es come, they can cause plants to grow over the sides of the pot. Pots can be placed in any water depth and can be submerged. Some hybridizers are working toward shorter rhizomes and more compact growth that forms a clump rather than wide-spaced growth. Descriptions of cultivars will state this characteristic.

Modern hybridizing has developed Louisiana irises in all colors and in a variety of forms. Stalk heights vary from a foot to five feet or even taller. Those growing in water generally produce taller stalks than those grown on high ground. Tetraploids with larger stalks and better flower substance have come into general use and the interploids, a cross between tetraploids



'Koorawatha'

and diploids, are just coming on the market. One of the newest hybrids is a cross between a Louisiana iris and *I. virginica*, another water type species. It has the characteristic of *I. virginica* of maintaining better green foliage during a hot summer. It is also a rampant grower that keeps to a close clump... making it suitable for pot culture.

The bloom date will vary with climates, but it falls later than that of spring bulbs and prior to the daylily bloom, thus bridging a gap in your garden. Bloom will also be determined by the species in the background of a cultivar with some blooming early and others as much as a month later. Catalogs will give information as to 'early,' 'mid-season' or 'late.' A warmer than average winter will produce early bloom while a heavy and late winter will delay bloom. In relation to other water irises you may be growing, Louisianas bloom about the same time as *I. pseudacorus* and Siberian irises. Their bloom may be slightly later than that of *I. virginica* and much earlier than the Japanese irises (*I. ensata*). Since the Louisiana hybrids on the market are derived from various compatible species with different bloom periods, modern cultivars cover a wide bloom range. Some will open as much as a month earlier than others. By careful selection, one can have bloom over a period of several months.

Care after bloom is the same as for most perennials. Flowers produce many 'bee crosses' and quite large and heavy seed pods. To avoid stalks falling in the water and unwanted seedlings coming up, one should cut stalks after bloom. The natural growth and rotting of old rhizomes growing in water makes transplanting almost unnecessary. Gardeners with natural

lakes and stock ponds may never transplant but allow the Louisiana irises to grow much as they do in their native habitats. In my 15' x 40' shallow pond, partial removal and replanting has been done about every three to five years.

To learn more about these irises, join the Society for Louisiana Irises and receive their informative quarterly newsletters. (Dues are \$10.00 a year or \$25.00 for 3 years. Send to Elaine Bourque, 514 Garenne Rd, Lafayette, LA 70508.) Another source is the revised edi-



'Honey Galore'



(above) 'Duval Bluebird'
(left) 'Rose Cartwheel'

tion of *The Louisiana Iris* published by the Society in 2000. It is a hard cover book of 254 pages with 116 color illustrations, published by Timber Press, 133 SW Second Ave, Suite 450, Portland, OR 97204-3527. Price is \$34.95 plus \$6.00 shipping cost.☛

Marie Caillet has been growing Louisiana irises for 60 years and was the co-editor of the first edition of *The Louisiana Iris*, and is a contributing editor of the revised edition. She has written articles on Louisiana irises for numerous gardening magazines and iris publications. Marie Caillet is professor emerita at the University of Louisiana in Lafayette and is a charter member of the Society for Louisiana Irises.

A New Way TO EVALUATE POND PUMPS

by David A. Dec

Many of us have tried to compare pumps to see which one would be best for our pond. This has been difficult to do until now. The Creech Pump Index (CPI) allows us to compare the energy efficiency of any pump with any other pump. The larger the Creech Pump Index, the more energy efficient is the pump.

The origin of the Creech Index goes back forty years to the Illinois Institute of Technology, during work on my Ph.D. in Physical Chemistry. It is simply Physics. It compares the work done by a pump, i.e., the flow against the pump head, versus the power used to do the work. I have never seen it used for pond or pool pumps, but it does allow quick and easy comparisons.

Creech Pump Index =

$$\frac{[\text{GPM} \times \text{Total Dynamic Head} \times \text{Specific Gravity} \times \% \text{Efficiency}]}{[\text{Watts}]}$$

Key to Formula's Terms

GPM = gallons per minute
 Since many manufacturers list pump flow in GPH (gallons per hour), you may need to divide the GPH by 60 to determine the gallons per minute. Your pump's flow rate is determined by the total dynamic head. This figure is often available in pump manufacturers' charts. See TDH below.

TDH = Total Dynamic Head

Total Dynamic Head reflects how hard the pump must work to carry water from the pond to the water's re-entry point. Stated in feet, it includes both static height (the physical height of the water return point) and friction losses. Many pump manufacturers provide a chart showing the water's flow rate at various TDH's. This column is usually labeled "Head" or "Lift" with the corresponding water flow rate given for each foot increment of height. However, water flow is slowed by friction in pipe lengths, around elbows in the plumbing, and through diversion into filters or past UV lights.

Specific gravity = the density of the liquid
 For water, this is essentially equal to 1.0.

The %Efficiency is not usually given by pump manufacturers and often is 60% or much less, but since we don't know it, just ignore it and use 100% or 1.0. (If you knew the %Efficiency at any one point, you could calculate it at all points. You would divide the CPI by it to get the Maximum CPI and then divide all the other points by the Maximum CPI to get the %Efficiency.)

Watts = amount of electricity used to power the pump
 Unfortunately, some manufacturers list their pumps' amperage (amps), while others list the watts. To make the conversions:

Amps x Voltage = Watts or **Watts**
Voltage = Amps

Now we can calculate the Creech Pump Index for any pump, regardless of the data supplied by the manufacturer. For example, let's look at some of the pumps in the marketplace today:

Example 1:

W-Brand 2-speed pumps

HP	GPH	GPM	TDH	Amps	Volts	Watts
1	3,900	65	27.5'	8.8	115	1,012
1.5	4,410	73.5	35'	12.2	115	1,403
2	4,680	78	43'	16.4	115	1,886

The Creech Index is 1.8 for all 3 pumps.

Example 2.

Y-Brand

HP	GPH	GPM	TDH	Amps	Volts	Watts
2	2100	33.33	82'	25	115	2875
2	4200	70	74'	25	115	2875
2	6300	105	62'	25	115	2875
2	8160	136	43'	25	115	2875

The Creech Index computes as 1.0, 1.8, 2.3 and 2.0. It is not the same because the %Efficiency at 43' is twice the efficiency at 82' TDH, with its most efficient performance at 62' Ph. This is important information to know. However, if we average the Creech Indexes for the Y-Brand 2 HP, it is 1.8, the same as the W-Brand pumps.

Following are the CPI numbers for several very popular pond pumps

	HP	Creech Pump Index	GPH	GPM	TDH	Amps	Watts
Multi-HP	1/8	3.0	1,500	25	15.75'	0.33	76
Brand Y 1	1/8	2.3	1,800	30	15'	1.7	196
Brand X 1	1/8	1.5	3,852	64.2	4.6'	1.7	196
Multi-HP	1/6	3.0	1,650	27.5	19'	0.44	101
Brand X 2	1/6	1.7	4,116	68.6	5.78'	2	230
Brand Y 2	1/6	0.7	720	12	18'	2.8	322
Multi-HP	?	3.0	1,890	31.5	25'	0.65	150
Brand X 3	?	2.3	2,640	44	15'	2.5	288
Brand Y 3	?	2.4	2,400	40	21'	3.1	357
Multi-HP	?	3.1	2,385	39.8	40'	1.3	517
Brand Y 4	?	1.4	1,800	30	46'	8.76	1,007
Multi-HP	5/8	3.1	2,565	42.75	46'	1.6	637
Brand Z 1	5/8	0.8	2,000	33.3	20'	7.1	817
Multi-HP	3/4	3.0	2,726	45.4	52'	2.0	776
Brand Y 5	3/4	1.8	2,400	40.0	63'	12.26	1,410
Multi-HP	1	3.0	3,000	50	63'	2.6	1,035
Brand X 4	1	1.8	5,880	98	23'	11	1,265
Brand Z 2	1	1.9	7,200	120	34'	19	2,185
Multi-HP	2	2.4	4,200	70	67'	5	1,990
Brand Y 6	2	1.8	4,200	70	74'	25	2,875
Brand Z 3	2	0.9	3,600	60	58'	35	4,025
Multi-HP	3	2.3	6,000	100	62'	6.8	2,706
MultiHP	5	2.7	9,000	150	80'	112'	4,456

David Dec has been involved with ornamental fish keeping and breeding since the 1950's. He holds a BS in Biological Sciences from the University of Chicago and completed his work for a Ph.D. in Physical Chemistry at the Illinois Institute of Technology. He can be reached through his website at www.ColoradoKoi.com or at 303-883-8000.

Helen Neeb's **Pond & Garden**

"Creating backyard havens"

May - June 2001 • Volume 3, Issue 1

\$5.00 US
\$7.00 CAN



LOUISIANA IRIS

'Marie Gaillet'

Welcome

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



I. fulva along roadside near Baton Rouge

The Louisiana Iris

Louisiana Irises are increasingly recognized as native plants well adapted to garden culture. They also make fine water garden or rain garden plants and love aquatic or bog conditions. While sometimes referred to as water irises, their only real requirement is to stay damp and not dry out.

Louisiana iris cultivars grow well across the country and the color range is the widest of all the iris groups. Hybrids are derived from five North American species: ***I. brevicaulis***, ***I. giganteaerulea***, ***I. fulva***, ***I. nelsonii***, and ***I. hexagona***. *Fulva* and *brevicaulis* occur naturally as far up the Mississippi Valley as the Great Lakes, which largely accounts for the cold hardiness of hybrid cultivars.

What Is Zydeco Louisiana Iris Garden?

Until 2013, Zydeco was a commercial Louisiana iris nursery selling plants online. Today, it is a cooperative effort between the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and the Greater New Orleans Iris Society. City Park in New Orleans provides growing space for the Garden. Its purpose is to preserve, propagate and promote Louisiana irises and to make plants available to parks and other entities that will display them for public enjoyment and education. Special emphasis will be placed upon conserving both the various forms of the five species and old, historically important cultivars that can still be obtained.

What You'll Find On This Site

This site is designed as a **hub for resources on Louisiana irises**. It offers a wide range of

information, pictures, recommendations and links on "Louisianas," as these irises are called. Take a look.

GALLERY



Zydeco Louisiana Iris Garden formerly sold the hybrid introductions of Patrick O'Connor of Metairie, Louisiana, as well as irises from many other hybridizers. This Gallery previously was a catalog but now serves as a source of information on individual cultivars. Watch for the addition of new cultivars to the list. Suggestions and comments are welcome.



INSPIRATION

An extensive compilation of articles, pictures, and references on Louisiana irises, with an emphasis on their beauty and usefulness in the landscape.

GROWING TIPS AND CULTURE



Recommended growing practices and propagation techniques for different regions and under varying conditions. Links to relevant information on other sites.



ORGANIZATION

The Society for Louisiana Irises, an outstanding organization highly recommended as an ongoing source of information, particularly through its web site and quarterly magazine *Fleur de Lis*.

HIGHLIGHTS

- [Iris Friendship Garden - Rochester, NY](#)
- [Baton Rouge Botanic Garden](#)
- [Jean Lafitte, LA](#)
- [Mary Swords Debaillon Award Winners](#)



THE SPECIES

The natural history of the five native species that comprise the foundation of the modern Louisiana iris hybrids. Many pictures, including wild irises in their natural habitats.

NEWS

- The 2013 season was the last in which Zydeco had a catalog as part of a commercial iris operation. 2014 begins a transition to a new entity based upon a cooperative enterprise and the help of volunteers.
- The Zydeco website will continue as a source of information on Louisiana irises and the progress of the new effort. Conversion of some parts of the site might take a little while.
- In the future, [Louisiana Iris Gardens](#) will handle the introductions of Patrick O'Connor. Louisiana Iris Gardens can also be [found on Facebook](#).
- Take a look at the new page on the [Louisiana Iris Species Preservation Project](#) sponsored by the Society for Louisiana Irises and the [Greater New Orleans Iris Society](#).

BLOG



Iris Louisianne

Out of the swamps and into your garden

IMPOSTERS



Plants that can only wish they were Louisiana irises

Zydeco On Facebook



LOUISIANA
Wildlife
FEDERATION



Number 1

Volume 34

Summer, 2006



Iris

"Four Digits"

Tree Surgeons



CONTENTS

DEPARTMENTS

- 3 From The President and Executive Director
- 30 Tibby Sez

FEATURES

- 4 Wild Iris: Louisiana's Fleur-de-lis
- 7 "FOUR DIGITS" Down Under
- 11 Katrina Melons
- 13 Tree Surgeons
- 15 Conservation Awards
- 17 LWF 67th Annual Convention
- 21 Bog Festival

On the cover.....

Louisiana's fleur de lis, the giant blue iris (*I. giganticaerulea*), is the largest and most common native Louisiana iris species. It is recognized as the official state wildflower. There are four other native Louisiana iris species including the smaller copper iris, cherished for its unusual color. Iris grow along roadside bayous and ditches in Southwest Louisiana and on the edges of swamps in the New Orleans area, among other habitats. The Barataria Preserve of the Jean Lafitte National Historic Park is famous for the dramatic array of Louisiana iris that bloom there each spring.

Photos courtesy of Gary Noel Ross



*Official Publication of
the Louisiana Wildlife Federation*

VOL. 34 Summer 2006 NO. 1

Editorial Creed: To create and encourage an awareness among the people of Louisiana of the need for wise use and proper management of those resources of the earth upon which the lives and welfare of all people depend: the soil, the air, the water, the forests, the minerals, the plant life, and the wildlife.

Magazine Staff

Randy P. Lancot: Editor

Gary Noel Ross, Ph. D: Guest Editor

Louisiana WILDLIFE Federation magazine (ISSN 0738-8098) is the official publication of the Louisiana Wildlife Federation, Inc. The Federation office is located at 337 South Acadian Thruway, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70806. All editorial and subscription correspondence should be mailed to P.O. Box 65239 Audubon Station, Baton Rouge, LA 70896-5239 (Phone/Fax 225-344-6707;mailto:lwf@lawildlifefed.org. All manuscripts submitted for publication are subject to editing or rewriting.

Postmaster: Send change of address to: Louisiana Wildlife Federation, P.O. Box 65239 Audubon Station, Baton Rouge, LA 70896-5239.

Membership: For information, write to: Louisiana Wildlife Federation, P.O. Box 65239 Audubon Station, Baton Rouge, LA 70896-5239. Phone/Fax: (225) 344-6707. <mailto:lwf@lawildlifefed.org>

Visit Our Website

<http://www.lawildlifefed.org>



Wild Iris: Louisiana's Fleur-de-lis

Story and photos by
Gary Noel Ross, Ph D

In Greek mythology "Iris" was the female deity who transported messages between the earth and the heavens. She was



The Louisiana "fleur-de-lis." Although the original fleur-de-lis was inspired by wild irises in Europe, Louisiana irises were so widespread within the lowlands of French colonial Louisiana that the design became the symbol of the state's natural and cultural heritage.

symbolized by the rainbow, and referred to as "Goddess of the Rainbow." In science, the word "iris" is shared by two disciplines of biology: vertebrate anatomy and botany. Anatomically, the iris is the doughnut-shaped, colored part of our eyes. By expanding and contracting, the iris controls the amount of light entering the eye's portal, the pupil. Botanically, iris refers to a group of lily-like, often water-loving species within a genus of the same name. Most *Iris* species produce large, colorful, and elegant flowers—the inspiration for the noble fleur-de-lis ("flower of the lily") in early European artistic design and heraldry which eventually

became the national symbol of France, and the French colonies including Louisiana. In folklore the iris is regarded as a healing herb (used in the removal of freckles), as a pot-pourri fixative, and an ingredient in perfume. More recently, the flamboyant perennial has been referred to as the "poor man's orchid." Throughout the U.S. and Great Britain, its popularity is second only to the rose.

Irises are distributed worldwide. A special group, however, occurs as native wildflowers only in the lower Mississippi delta and along the Gulf coast. These were christened "Louisiana flag" irises ("flag" is a Middle English word for a variety of plants with sword-like leaves) by none other than America's premier 19th century naturalist, John James Audubon, when he painted it as a backdrop for northern parula warblers. Technically, not one but five species are Louisiana irises: *Iris hexagona*, *I. fulva*, *I. brevicaulis*, *I. giganticaerulea*, and *I. nelsonii*. The giant blue iris (*I. giganticaerulea*), the largest and most common species, is recognized as Louisiana's official state wildflower



Iris giganticaerulea, or "giant blue flag," is the official Wildflower for Louisiana. The species, however, is only one of five known collectively as "Louisiana iris." While the flower of the *I. giganticaerulea* is usually blue, white forms often emerge from the same plant.

(the bloom of the southern magnolia ranks as the official state flower).

When nature ruled, southern Louisiana boasted one of the grandest displays of spring color to be found anywhere on the North American continent. Early botanical chronicles describe the watery land of what is now Metropolitan New Orleans as a kaleidoscope of color. These same sources report that trainloads of visitors nearly swooned as they traveled between New Orleans and Lake Pontchartrain in response to the surreal displays of color.

Alas, that was then. The problem? Urban sprawl, drainage and pollution of wetlands, coastal subsidence and erosion, incursions of salt water, herbicides, and even exploitation by collectors. All have all contributed to a drastic decrease in native irises. Only two locations now host sizable populations: Cameron Parish in the southwest corner of the state and the Jean Lafitte National Historic Park's Barataria Preserve located near Marrero, across the Mississippi River from New Orleans. [NOTE: Hurricanes Katrina and Rita devastated both of these areas. The storms' impact on irises will be reported in an upcoming issue of Louisiana WILDLIFE Federation magazine.] However, small clumps of Louisiana irises can be observed along drainage channels within populated areas in the southern part of the state. Because of increased publicity, Louisianas are now being marketed by nursery centers, and botanical gardens are increasing their displays. The Baton Rouge Botanic Garden, for instance, has an extensive collection viewable to the public free of charge.

The five species of Louisiana irises are collectively referred to as "Louisianas." All share distinctive traits. For example, the plants require temperate climates with moist, acidic soils—ergo south Louisiana. Individual specimens are usually 2 to 3 feet tall, although records document titans between 5 and 7 feet. Foliage is long and blade-like and springs from a fleshy, shallow underground stem called a rhizome. Irises spread both by seeds and perennial rhizomes, hence the plants naturally grow in



Louisiana's official wildflower can be observed in the marshlands of Cameron Parish where this photo was made, and at the Barataria Unit of the Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve in Jefferson Parish. *I. giganteaerulea* is the tallest and most abundant of the Louisiana irises. The species can tolerate brackish water, an adaptation making it less vulnerable to hurricane storm surges.

dense clumps. From late March to mid April, mature plants send up a thick bloom stalk, often branched, flaunting 5 to 10 large (3-7 inches across) showy flowers that open sequentially, each lasting only 2-3 days.



Louisiana irises bloom usually in early to mid April. While the species are technically called "beardless irises," they often sport modified pistils that appear as an additional whorl of small petals. White or yellow markings ("signals"), so often common on petals, are thought to guide bumblebees, the irises' principal pollinators, to nectar sources.

Flower parts are "beardless," that is, they do not possess hair-like fringes as do the bearded irises which are the most commonly marketed irises in plant catalogues (see summary following story).

Flower form is unusually diverse, consisting of at least six major elements organized in two alternating whorls: petals (standards) and sepals (falls). Whorls range from open and flaring to arching and pendant. (Characteristically, petals are not as upright as those of the European bearded varieties which served as the model for the fleur-de-lis). Margins may be smooth or crepe-like. Frequently, each flower is augmented with an unusual third whorl: flared styles (a style is the elongate part of the female pistil) or petaloids (extra petals), which vary in length and often have elaborate crests. These are presumed to function as an "umbrella" to protect newly pollinated blooms from rainfall. Occasionally, double and semi-double flowers are produced. Floral colors range from pure white and yellow, to blue, lavender and violet, to orange, rust and red. Some varieties produce bicolored flowers; many sport pronounced "signals," that is, veining or streaking, spray or halo patterns, or blotching-all, presumably, to attract pollinators. Seedpods are large, slightly oblong, and so heavy that they often cause the stalk to bend; when dry, the pods are brown and buoyant in water. A typical pod of a diploid

plant will contain an average of 30 seeds; 10-12 in a tetraploid. Individual seeds are large, brown and typically shaped like a slice of melon; seeds mature within 80-90 days of pollination.

The broad spectrum of flora colors found in Louisiana irises eclipses all other varieties. This uniqueness results from a tendency for the five species to hybridize (cross) amongst themselves. For explanation, two paradigms have been offered. First: bumblebees. Rife in coastal Louisiana, these robust insects are the chief pollinators of irises; consequently, Louisiana irises are relatively fertile. Second: water. With high rainfall (55-60 inches each year) and low topography, land and sea are linked by a dendritic association of swamps, marshes, bayous, rivers, and man-made canals and ditches. The



Seedpod of a cultivated hybrid of *I. giganteaerulea*. Pods can float, making floods and tidal flows the principal means of plant distribution.

rhythm of this topsy-turvy world of mud and water is often punctuated by winter storms and summer hurricanes, many of which produce juggernaut tides that surge far inland. However, although the fields of iris are inundated, the plants possess a tenacious tolerance to water. In fact, seeds take advantage of the opportunity to hopscotch far and wide. The take-home lesson is that south Louisiana is the quintessential habitat for Louisiana irises.

Meanwhile, Louisiana irises have been given an auspicious genetic make over by

man. Enter Mr. Joseph K. Mertzweiler (1920-1997). A native of New Orleans and a retired Baton Rouge research chemist, Mr. Joe exhibited a decided fancy for irises early

considered by many to be the most powerful anti-inflammatory agent known to man. As such, colchicine is employed in the treatment of gout or gouty arthritis (an inflam-

hybrids, worldwide distribution of plants, and public education.

One might presume that plants so provocative would prove finicky to cultivate. Not so. It seems as if the severe conditions of their natural habitats have genetically predisposed the plants for an unusually high tolerance to environments, including non-submerged habitats. Individual plants are relatively resistant to most pests and diseases, also. Because of these adaptations as well as good PR, the hard-knock Louisianas are now cultivated successfully throughout most of the United States and in many other countries. Although Louisiana loses more wetlands each year than any other state, it appears as if the future of Louisiana irises, albeit under cultivation, is secure.

If esthetics and patriotism woo you to garden with Louisiana's technicolor fleur-de-



Many tetraploid (double chromosome) irises developed by native Louisianan Joseph K. Mertzweiler are now cultivated and exhibited in the BREC Independence Park Botanic Garden in Baton Rouge. Each year the "garden" holds plant sales to nurture iris enthusiasts.

in life. As a wee ten-year-old he would often traipse through the mucky swamps north of Lake Pontchartrain collecting irises, which he then transplanted to his family home in New Orleans. As a young adult he began experimenting with traditional methods of cross-pollination within his extensive garden. His goal was to create what technically is termed a tetraploid plant—"tet" for short. Defined as a type of genetic mutant with a chromosome (DNA) constitution double that of normal (diploid), natural tets were what had spawned the diversity in color in Old World bearded irises. No such natural hybrids, however, were ever discovered in Louisianas. Furthermore, laboratory attempts at creating such genetic varieties had always failed. So, in the mid 1960s Mr. Joe—already with a penchant for and training in chemistry—selected colchicine, a poisonous alkaloid originally extracted from the roots and seeds of the autumn crocus or meadow saffron plant (*Colchicum autumnale*), but easily synthesized. The potent chemical is known to inhabit cell division in both plants and animals by interfering with microtubule assembly during mitosis and to produce genetic anomalies or mutations in several non-related groups of plants.

[In the medical field, colchicine is con-

matory disease of the joints caused by the excessive accumulation of uric acid), treatment of certain cancers, management of acute back pain and familial Mediterranean fever, and to retard formation of fibrous or collagen tissue in the body—especially in the liver due to cirrhosis.]

After many failures, in 1973 Mr. Joe finally succeeded in creating two tetraploid irises. The plants were spectacular, and most important, hardy. To honor two botanists at Louisiana State University, Mr. Joe registered the hybrid varieties as "Professor Claude" and "Professor Ike." Other varieties soon followed. (Currently, there are more than 30 tetraploid varieties; all are registered and marketed.) In recognition of his innovative work, Joe Mertzweiler was awarded the prestigious American Iris Society Hybridizer's Medal in 1985. [NOTE: The Society for Louisiana Irises was founded in 1941. Headquartered in Lafayette, SLI is an independent and international organization with nearly 600 members and affiliated with the American Iris Society, established earlier in 1920. These sister organizations promote Louisiana irises by presenting periodic forums for professional discourse, recognition of outstanding members and achievements, research on and registration of new



"Colorific," one of the spectacular genetically altered irises developed by chemist and iris specialist, the late Joseph K. Mertzweiler who developed his first tetraploid iris in 1973.

lis, here are some suggestions. Foremost, plants must be systematically watered, particularly during summer and early fall when they are relatively inactive. Rhizomes must be mulched all year to avoid scorching by the summer sun and freezing during winter. Other requirements include at least a half-day of sunlight, acidic soils (pH 6.5 or

Continued on page 25

Transportation and Development and Wildlife and Fisheries. Although addressing this problem is a long-term effort, I am optimistic that it can be fixed for the benefit of this great swamp and the fish and wildlife that depend on it. We also received a positive response from LA DOTD regarding a resolution issuing concern with impacts of highway



Keith Saucier and Clint Mouser reach high to install a bluebird nest box at Coturie Forest in New Orleans City Park as part of the NWF Annual Meeting Restoration Day activities.

construction on stream water quality. Seems that the agency is willing to take extra precautions when scenic streams and sensitive habitat is involved. LWF's resolution calling for the establishment of a Prescribed Fire Council is well on its way to being implemented by a concurrent resolution of the Legislature sponsored at our request by Senator Robert Barham of Oak Ridge. Another, proposing to nominate Drake's Creek in Vernon Parish for designation as a state Scenic Stream has already passed the Legislature thanks to the sponsorship of Senator Joe McPherson of Woodworth. We are continuing to work on some of these and other resolutions adopted at this year's convention and I will have additional information to report on them in future columns.

So, you can see we have been busy and getting a lot done, thanks to your support. I hope next time I will have some good fish stories and other accounts of outdoor adventures to relate. Until then, I am

Yours in conservation,

Terry L. Melancon
President

Iris: Continued from page 6

lower), and heavy fertilization during autumn with manures, compost and/or acidic commercial preparations.

Louisiana irises are a natural for water gardens. Whether in container or in-ground pool, the crucial consideration involves periodic regulation of the water level, which must be kept no greater than 4-8 inches above the rhizomes during the summer, but then dropped to ground level each fall (the reduction encourages seed germination and renewed foliage, which must be water-free since complete submersion for the entire year will usually result in rot of the entire rhizome). Since Louisianas have a limited blossoming season, the water garden should be enhanced with an amalgam of summer and fall blooming aquatics. The verdant, upright foliage then acts as backdrop in a tableau that enables the plants to be enjoyed long past their spring dazzle.

Irises Cultivated in Louisiana Gardens

Louisiana iris (described above).

Bearded Iris (*Iris x germanica* variety *florentina*). Native to Mediterranean region and a popular perennial in most areas of the United States except the Gulf South. Prefers loose, dry, alkaline soils in climates with relatively low moisture and cool to cold winters. Many with large, multicolored flowers in March and April. Foliage silvery green, bladelike and short. The popular old garden "White Flag" does well in Louisiana as a perennial; plants have escaped cultivation and are often encountered in clumps at old homesites.

Yellow Flag Iris (*Iris pseudacorus*). Often considered a Louisiana native, but indigenous to Europe, western Asia, and northern Africa. Well adapted to soggy conditions in Louisiana, often escaping and establishing itself in dense stands in marsh-swamp habitats in association with native Louisianas. Blooms (March/April) are yellow and beardless, but sparse in the deep South. Tallest foliage of all irises; plants are often cultivated for the attractive foliage. Plants do well in both sun and partial shade, but are extremely invasive, out-competing most other plants, especially other irises.

Dutch or Wedgewood Iris (*Iris xiphium x I. tingitana*). Native to western Europe. Prefers loose, well-drained, alkaline soil.

Flowers (March) beardless in shades of purple, blue, yellow, bronze, and white. Foliage reedlike and short. Repeat bloomers for only 3-4 years along the Gulf coast.

Japanese Iris (*Iris kaempferi*). Native to Japan and China. Prefers moist, acid soil and morning sunlight in climates with distinct, cold winters. Flowers (April to early May) crepe-like but beardless, ranging from white to purple. Foliage thin, stiff, and tall. Not for the Gulf coast.

Siberian Iris (*Iris siberica*). Native to central Europe and Russia. Prefers moist, acid soil and sunlight or partial shade in climates with distinct, cold winters. Many varieties; flowers (March to April) beardless, on slender stalks, and usually small except in some cultivars; intense colors. Foliage short, grass-like and arching. Not for the Gulf coast.

For additional information on the Louisiana iris see: *The Louisiana Iris: The History and Culture of Five Native American Species and their Hybrids*, edited by Marie Caillet and Joseph K. Mertzweiller. 1988. Published by the Society for Louisiana Irises, Texas Gardener Press, P.O. Box 9005, Waco, Texas 76714.



Perhaps the most unusual member of the Louisiana iris group is *Iris fulva*, the "copper iris." The reddish color of this species was originally unknown in native or cultivated irises in Europe in the early nineteenth century.

[Introductions](#) | [Catalog](#) | [Growing Tips and Culture](#) | [Inspiration](#) | [Louisiana Iris Species](#)
[Organization](#) | [Hurricane Katrina](#) | [Email](#) | [About Zydeco](#) | [Back To Welcome Page](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden

Mary Swords DeBaillon Award Winners

The **Mary Swords DeBaillon Medal** is the highest award for an iris bestowed by the **Society for Louisiana Irises**. Beginning in 1948, the award has been given in most years since then. From 1948 to 1986, when the Society was unaffiliated with the American Iris Society, it was called an "Award," and subsequently a "Medal." Prior to affiliation, it was possible for an iris to win the award more than once. In several years and for various reasons, no award was made.

Mary Swords DeBaillon was an early enthusiast and collector of Louisiana irises. She corresponded with Dr. John K. Small and was an important figure in the "years of collecting." The Society of Louisiana Irises, formed in 1941, was originally named the "Mary Swords DeBaillon Iris Society."

To look chronologically at the DeBaillon winners from the first award in 1948 to those in recent years is to experience a telescopic review of the development of Louisiana irises beginning with the species and near-species forms of early natural hybrids collected in the wild in Louisiana. The review takes one through the results of early controlled hybridization and to the latest and most popular cultivars being produced today. The favored forms have evolved to larger, fuller, fancier flowers, but the appeal of the graceful and simpler forms of earlier plants remains strong, especially in a garden setting.



*Mary Swords DeBaillon in her garden,
1934*

[Click on pictures for larger version](#)



Mary S. DeBaillon



Bayou Sunset
W. B. MacMillan - 1949



Caddo

Caroline Dormon (collected) - 1948



Cherry Bounce
Ira S. Nelson - 1951



Royal Gem
S. Smith - 1952



Violet Ray
Caroline Dormon - 1953



Saucy Minx
Caroline Dormon - 1954



The Kahn
Caroline Dormon - 1955



Wood Violet
Ruth Dormon (collected) - 1956



Blue Chip
S. Smith - 1957



Wheelhorse
Caroline Dormon - 1958



Her Highness
W. Levingston (collected) - 1959

No picture available

Amethyst Star
Sidney DuBose - 1960



Louise Army
Charles Army - 1961

No picture available

Dixie Dusk
Matthews - 1962



New Offering
Claude Davis - 1963



W. B. MacMillan
Sidney Conger - 1964



Frances Elizabeth
Sam Rix - 1965



G. W. Holleyman
Ruth Holleyman - 1966



Dixie Deb
Frank Chowning - 1967



Black Widow
W. B. MacMillan-1968



Katherine Cornay
Charles Army - 1969



Marie Caillet
Sidney Conger - 1970



Delta King
Ben Hager - 1971



Ila Nunn
Charles Army - 1972



Mrs. Ira Nelson
Charles Army - 1973



Clyde Redmond
Charles Army - 1974



Charlie's Michele

Charles Arny - 1975



This I Love

Frank Chowning - 1979



Clara Goula

Charles Arny - 1982, 1987



Black Gamecock

Frank Chowning - 1989



Bajazzo

Mary Dunn - 1992

Eolian

Charles Arny - 1976



Ann Chowning

Frank Chowning - 1980, 1986



Easter Tide

Charles Arny - 1983, 1988



Acadian Miss

Charles Arny - 1990



Frank Chowning

Henry Rowlan - 1993

Mary Dunn

Ben Hager - 1977



Bryce Leigh

Frank Chowning - 1981



Monument

Mary Dunn - 1984



Rhett

Mary Dunn - 1991



Jeri

Neil Bertinot - 1994



Kay Nelson
Marvin Granger - 1995



Professor Jim
Joe Mertzweiller - 1996



Voodoo Magic
Henry Rowlan - 1997



Bayou Mystique
Mary Dunn - 1998



Professor Neil
Joe Mertzweiller - 1999



Cajun Sunrise
Joe Mertzweiller - 2000



Praline Festival
Dorman Haymon - 2001



Extrordinaire
Mary Dunn - 2002



Hot and Spicy
Heather Pryor - 2004



Red Velvet Elvis
Kevin Vaughn - 2005



Peaches in Wine
Heather Pryor - 2006



My Friend Dick
Richard Butler by M. D. Faith - 2007



Great White Hope
Dorman Haymon - 2008

Henry Rowlan
M.D. Faith - 2009

[Back](#)

[Introductions](#) | [Catalog](#) | [Growing Tips and Culture](#) | [Inspiration](#) | [Louisiana Iris Species](#)
[Organization](#) | [Hurricane Katrina](#) | [Email](#) | [About Zydeco](#) | [Back To Welcome Page](#)



HIGHLAND PARK ROCHESTER, NY

Left: 'James Faith' (Faith).
Below, from top: 'Sweet Miriam' (Hutchinson) and 'Prytania' and 'Tickfaw' (both O'Connor).



A world class Louisiana iris garden in Rochester, New York? Yes, indeed. Imagine that.

Louisiana iris enthusiasts for years have known that these plants are adaptable to conditions throughout most of the country and that they certainly don't require a boggy spot despite their wetland origins. What more compelling testimony than the Gene Lupinetti photographs on these pages?

Gene has documented the Iris Friendship Garden each year since its creation in 2004. His beautiful pictures show that a bold endeavor in Highland Park has been fully justified by spectacular results. Take a look.



Gene Lupinetti

[Iris Friendship Garden in Bloom](#)

[Highland Park](#)

[Back to Zydeco](#)

LOUISIANA IRIS GARDEN BATON ROUGE BOTANIC GARDEN INDEPENDENCE PARK



ABOVE: Three of Joseph Mertzweiller's irises: 'Scarlet Lady', 'Just Helene', and 'Colorific'. Joe conceived the iris planting in Independence Park and was heavily involved in its early planning and development. RIGHT: Mertzweiller's 'President Hedley'. UPPER RIGHT: A large clump of 'Flareout'. BELOW, from left: 'Flareout' (Granger), the award winning 'Cajun Sunrise', 'Bera' and 'Aunt Shirley', all by the late Joe Mertzweiller of Baton Rouge.



The Louisiana Iris Garden in Baton Rouge's Independence Park was designed specifically for Louisiana irises. It is not a water garden, however, and nicely illustrates how well Louisianas perform in typical garden beds provided that they are well watered. The range of colors and flower forms is huge. As the irises on this and subsequent pages show, the Garden is well worth a spring stroll in Baton Rouge. Visitors can look for bloom beginning in mid to late March and lasting into late April.



Scenes from BRBG

[1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#)

[How This Garden Came To Be](#)

[Back to Zydeco Louisiana Iris Garden](#)



Iris Brevicaulis



Photo by Robert Turley



Photo by Tom
Arbour, Ohio
Department of
Natural Resources

Iris brevicaulis is the most diminutive of the **Louisiana iris** species. Its flowers open down in the foliage, and sometimes its stalks lean or even lie on the ground. This iris has an excellent, zigzag stalk that lets its flowers open cleanly, and it often has more flower substance than the other species.

Brevicaulis requires moisture, but it is the most upland of the Louisiana irises. You won't find it in standing water, at least not for an extended period, but it may well be in muck. Brevicaulis is a late blooming iris that occurs not just along the Gulf Coast, but, like *Iris fulva*, well up into the Mississippi Valley states of Missouri, Kentucky, Illinois and Ohio. In fact, *I. brevicaulis* is found, although endangered, in Ontario, Canada.

Brevicaulis more than holds its own in importance and is thought to contribute both good form and cold hardiness to hybrids. It has been used extensively in developing modern cultivars, particularly by Arkansas hybridizers such as the trail-blazing Frank Chowning and the incomparable Richard Morgan. Chowning's '**Black Gamecock**', indisputably the most widely grown Louisiana iris in northern states, shows strong brevicaulis influence. *Iris brevicaulis* is a workhorse if not the show horse among the Louisiana iris species.

I. brevicaulis is sometimes referred to by the common names ZigZag iris and Lamance iris.



This is a photo taken of a print by John Carambat of Covington, Louisiana sold some years ago as a fund raiser by the Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge. It is an excellent representation, capturing the zigzag form of the stalk and a typical flower color.

[Click here for pictures of *Iris brevicaulis* in natural and garden settings](#)

For additional pictures and information on *Iris brevicaulis*, check out these links:

[Rodney Barton's *Iris Brevicaulis* page](#)

[Dennis Kramb's *Iris Brevicaulis* Page](#)

[Iris Brevicaulis in Ohio: Tom Arbour's Blog.](#) Documentation of brevicaulis in north central Ohio, not far from Lake Erie.

[Ohio DNR reports the status of *I. brevicaulis*](#) Just text but it suggests that brevicaulis is infrequent but widespread in Ohio.

[Missouri Botanical Garden](#)

[Flora of North America](#)

[Tennessee Vascular Plants Atlas](#)

[Endangered in Ontario, Canada.](#) This link on the Nature Conservancy of Canada website documents brevicaulis on Pelee Island in Lake Erie. The island is between Ohio and Ontario but on the Canada side of the border. Ontario dips pretty far south, and this location is actually south of Detroit.

[Margaret Stones' Watercolor.](#) Zoom in to see the beautiful detail.

[Back](#)

[INTRODUCTIONS](#) | [CATALOG](#) | [GROWING TIPS](#) | [INSPIRATION](#) | [THE SPECIES](#) | [IMPOSTERS](#) | [BLOG](#)

[Organization](#) | [Katrina](#) | [Contact](#) | [About Zydeco](#) | [Home](#) | [Site Map](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden

Iris Fulva



Photo by Joe Musacchia



Photo by Harry Wolford



Photo by Buddy Manuel



Photo by Buddy Manuel

Butterscotch fulva",
discovered by Steve
ShepardPhoto by A J Adams (click this one for
larger image)

The **Louisiana iris** species **I. fulva** is a wonder and a surprise. Few expect to encounter wild red irises, but they are out there and not just in Louisiana. The distribution of Iris fulva may be concentrated in the Bayou State, but it is found in wet areas in the Mississippi Valley as far north as Kentucky, Ohio and Illinois. Fulva genes are one of the principal reasons for the hardiness of Louisiana iris hybrids across most of the country.

Fulva was the second species of the Louisiana group to be designated. It was named by J. B. Ker-Gawler in 1812, the same year as the Battle of New Orleans, based on a specimen collected in the New Orleans area. Fulva is one of two species that is predominantly red, and it has been the principal contributor of red and related colors in modern hybrids.

"Red" in the Louisiana iris world is not the fire engine variety, but most often a rusty red color that sometimes is nearer a brownish orange. "Copper Iris" is a common name sometimes applied, and that is close to typical fulva color. But sometimes a color approaching true-red is found. Yellow forms are rare but have been found in both Louisiana and Arkansas.

The flower of fulva is relatively small, 3-4 inches across, and frequently all the petals droop. More flaring forms also occur. Fulva does not make the same splash in the garden as the much larger, more substantial flowers of hybrids or even some of the species. Comparison to fulva shows how far Louisiana irises have come in a relatively short period of time since systematic hybridizing began in the 1940s. That aside, fulvas are unique and charming wildflowers, with no need for apology or comparison to other plants. They are the real deal.



Two excellent fulvas entered by Benny Trahan in the show of the Acadiana Chapter of the Society for Louisiana Irises in Lafayette, Louisiana in 2002. The yellow form is an unusual deep, golden yellow. The few yellow fulvas found generally have been a lighter yellow, as exemplified by the picture at the top of the page.

Fulvas In A Slough Along A Louisiana Roadside West of Baton Rouge



[Click here for additional pictures of Iris fulva in the wild.](#)

For additional information on Iris fulva and pictures of other forms, check out these links:

[Rodney Barton's Iris Fulva Page](#)

[Dennis Kramb's Iris Fulva Page for The Species Iris Group of North America \(SIGNA\)](#)

[USDA Plant Profile with a map feature that shows location by county](#)

[Flora of North America](#)

[Missouri Botanical Garden Fulva Page](#)

[Another Missouri Botanical Garden page with a picture of a good yellow form](#)

[Still another Missouri source](#)

[A Kentucky Specimen](#)

[An Illinois Specimen](#)

[Tennessee Specimens](#)

[Margaret Stones' Watercolor](#) . Zoom in for detail.

[Back](#)

[INTRODUCTIONS](#) | [CATALOG](#) | [GROWING TIPS](#) | [INSPIRATION](#) | [THE SPECIES](#) | [IMPOSTERS](#) | [BLOG](#)

[Organization](#) | [Katrina](#) | [Contact](#) | [About Zydeco](#) | [Home](#) | [Site Map](#)



Iris Hexagona



Iris hexagona is the oldest recognized species in the **Louisiana iris** group (Hexagonae), having been named by Walter in 1788 based upon specimens found in **South Carolina**. Like other irises in the Louisiana series, *I. hexagona* inhabits wet spots. It is found in ditches, swamps and shallow slow moving streams in either full sun or half shade.

Despite its early designation, the range and composition of *I. hexagona* may be the most confused and uncertain of all the species in the Louisiana iris series. *I. hexagona* is the current designation for not just South Carolina irises of the Hexagonae but for all those found in Florida. At one time, *I. hexagona* was thought to occur in Louisiana as well, but today irises there that were once considered to be *hexagona* are regarded as variants of the giant blue **Iris giganticaerulea**.

Some do feel that **all** of the predominantly blue irises (including *giganticaerulea* but probably not the short *I. brevicaulis*) ought to be considered variations of *I. hexagona* rather than as separate species. That is not the most widely accepted view, however.

While the *hexagona* vs. *giganticaerulea* question smolders, ***a more burning issue is whether I. hexagona is an appropriate designation for all of the "Louisiana" irises that grow widely in wet areas of Florida.***

Irises of the hexagonae series are not at all widespread in South Carolina where the classification was born and where they apparently are limited to three counties. In Florida, on the other hand and in the words of Dr. John K. Small writing in *Addisonia* prior to 1930 about one particular Florida form: "The colonies are usually to be measured by the acres, often in extent further than the eye can reach..."

Beyond the sheer volume of plants among the under appreciated Florida irises, there are significant differences reported in form, color, and bloom season. And, many irises found in Florida appear noticeably different when compared to *I. hexagona* specimens from South Carolina, which might be considered the benchmark for the species.

All the pictures on this page are of South Carolina plants or plants of a similar form. **Contrast these to the range of flower forms found in Florida.**

The final word on species will be uttered by scientists and taxonomists, not by gardeners and hobbyists. But the scientists need to get busy. Taxonomy should help us understand the world, but more is going on among Florida irises than is explained by lumping them into a single, undifferentiated category as is the case today.

There are dissenting voices as will be evident from the **Florida page** and from following links below to the web sites of various authorities. Work is needed to resolve contradictory views and clarify or explain discrepancies apparent to close observers.



I. hexagona plate in *Addisonia*, a publication of the New York Botanical Garden, ca 1929.



Artist John Carambat's representation of Iris hexagona.



A South Carolina I. hexagona

For more information on I. hexagona, click these links:

[Rodney Barton's Iris Hexagona Page](#)

[Dennis Kramb's Iris Hexagona Page](#)

[USDA Plant Profile with a map feature that shows location by county](#). This source lumps I. hexagona with I. giganteaerulea, but the county distribution maps are interesting for particular states.

[Flora of North America - Iris hexagona](#)

[Google Image Search for Iris hexagona](#). Go to Google Images and type in "Iris hexagona". This search turns up interesting pictures and sources that are not found by other searches. There also are some cases of mistaken identity. After a few pages of listings, the results are often off-topic.

[Audubon blog](#). A nice picture and commentary from Florida. Shows a deeper blue-purple color than is found in I. giganteaerulea or I. brevicaulis.

[Back](#)

[INTRODUCTIONS](#) | [CATALOG](#) | [GROWING TIPS](#) | [INSPIRATION](#) | [THE SPECIES](#) | [IMPOSTERS](#) | [BLOG](#)

[Organization](#) | [Katrina](#) | [Contact](#) | [About Zydeco](#) | [Home](#) | [Site Map](#)



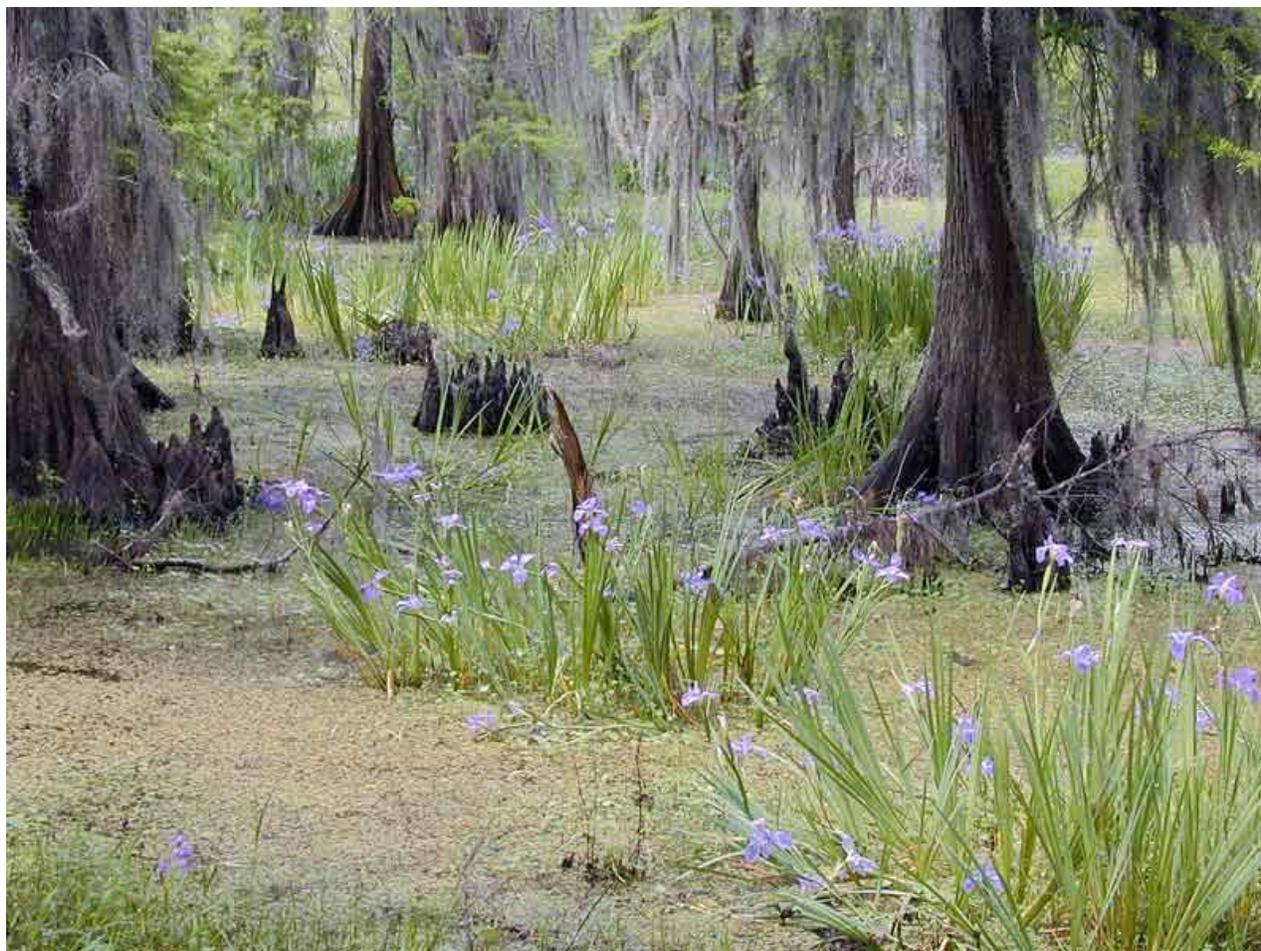
Iris Giganticaerulea



The giant blue **Louisiana irises** of the Gulf Coast are among the best recognized native plants. Louisiana's freshwater marshes and wooded wetlands historically provided the most extensive conditions suitable for this iris, and they grow in profusion where their habitat has been maintained. It is an April tradition to trek from New Orleans a few miles South to the Jean Lafitte area to see the masses of blue in the swamp. Across the southern part of the state, there is wide appreciation that the iris bloom is a special thing.

What is now in the City of New Orleans once consisted of fields of wild blue irises, as well as some fulvas. Development has left them without a hospitable environment save on the outskirts. In Louisiana, beyond a line 20 or 30 miles north of New Orleans, only a few vestiges of this species are found in local wetland areas. Outside Louisiana, giganticaeruleas are found in coastal Texas and Mississippi.

Iris Giganticaeruleas in the Town of Jean Lafitte, South of New Orleans



In a Cypress swamp in the Town of Jean Lafitte.

More Giganticaerulea Pictures:

[Natural and garden settings in Jean Lafitte, Louisiana](#)

[More Jean Lafitte pictures](#)

[Wild Louisianas in La Place, Louisiana](#)

For additional information and pictures:

[Rodney Barton's Iris Giganticaerulea Page](#)

[Dennis Kramb's Iris Giganticaerulea Page](#)

[Flora of North America](#)

[LSU Herbarium](#)

[Margaret Stones' Watercolor](#)

Blog entry by Rita Venable of Franklin, Tennessee who visited the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge. Rita's blog is devoted primarily to butterflies, and it is excellent.

Attakapas Swamp Tours. This not an iris site, but it has great pictures of the swamp in the vicinity of Lake Verret, a system of waterways west of Napoleonville and about half way between Lafayette and New Orleans. Lake Verret is a shallow lake with stands of beautiful cypress trees along its shoreline. Iris giganticaerulea is abundant. The swamp pictures on the site are excellent, and a couple of the iris pictures are exceptional. Browse the site, or go directly to the iris pictures: [iris one](#) (this is a "wow" picture, [iris two](#) (even better), and [iris three](#). These are large pictures for a web site but worth the download time.

[INTRODUCTIONS](#) | [CATALOG](#) | [GROWING TIPS](#) | [INSPIRATION](#) | [THE SPECIES](#) | [IMPOSTERS](#) | [BLOG](#)

[Organization](#) | [Katrina](#) | [Contact](#) | [About Zydeco](#) | [Home](#) | [Site Map](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden

Iris Nelsonii



Photo by Marie Caillet

Photo by Marie Caillet



Photo by Marie Caillet



Photo by Jim Murrain of I.

nelsoniis growing in Kansas City
garden..

Iris nelsonii is the most recently named **Louisiana iris** species, by Randolph in 1966. It was a sensation among Louisiana iris enthusiasts after it was "discovered" around 1938 by W. B. MacMillan. Apparently restricted to a small area Southeast of Abbeville, Louisiana, these plant were commonly called the "Abbeville Reds," or occasionally "Super Fulvas." Because of their size and color, they were used extensively in early hybridizing. A few yellow forms were also found in the relatively small area of its range.

The comparison to *I. fulva* was due to their color, and the superlative "super" reflected their size. In their native swamp habitat, they grow considerably taller and have larger flowers than *Iris fulva*, although they resemble *fulva* in color. Unlike *fulva*, however -- and much more like *I. giganteaerulea* -- the Abbeville reds were found in shallow water in cypress swamps. *Fulva* is more typically an inhabitant of wet sloughs and roadside ditches; wet areas to be sure, but not in the swamp per se.

Research has determined that *I. nelsonii* is a species of hybrid origin, with traces of *fulva*, *giganticaerulea* and *brevicaulis* in its background. It is presumed that the *I. nelsonii* environment was relatively isolated and, after unknown years of inbreeding, the population stabilized to create the species.

Whatever *I. nelsonii*'s origins, it was a fascinating find and was exceedingly important in developing the modern cultivars of Louisiana iris available today.

For additional information on *I. nelsonii*, click these links.

[Rodney Barton's Iris Nelsonii Page](#)

[The Nelsonii Page](#) on the website of the Species Iris Group of North America

The [Friends of Palmeto Island](#) State Park has a nice page on *I. nelsonii*. The Park is located near the swamp that is the habitat of *I. nelsonii*, and in cooperation with the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, the Park has introduced the species into the Park. Since the native stands of *nelsonii* are on private property and are considered endangered, the planting at Palmeto Island State Park is a major conservation effort.

[1958 Charles Arny article "The Importance of the Abbevilles"](#)

Especially see the links to Benny Trahan's articles back on the main Species page.

[Back to Species Page](#)

[INTRODUCTIONS](#) | [CATALOG](#) | [GROWING TIPS](#) | [INSPIRATION](#) | [THE SPECIES](#) | [IMPOSTERS](#) | [BLOG](#)

[Organization](#) | [Katrina](#) | [Contact](#) | [About Zydeco](#) | [Home](#) | [Site Map](#)

Fleur de Lis

THE JOURNAL OF THE SOCIETY FOR LOUISIANA IRISES

SUMMER 2007

NUMBER 208

ON THE COVERS: Thistlewood, the beautiful estate of Dick Goula, was a standout on the 2007 Garden Tours

©Tim Nutt

Wild Louisianas: Still Out There, Still Beautiful, and More Endangered Than Ever

by

Benny Trahan, Sr.
Slidell, Louisiana

Like many in South Louisiana, I was growing Louisiana irises before I really knew what they were. These plants are in many gardens, get traded around and often are a total surprise when they first bloom. In my case some seventeen years ago, plants dug because of their interesting foliage from the yard of my father-in-law's deceased aunt produced beautiful purplish blue flowers so impressive that I went to the library to find out something about them.

From my reading I discovered that the unidentified plants were irises, and specifically Louisiana irises. I found it exciting to learn that so spectacular a plant grows wild in the very state where I live. Research on the Louisiana iris species eventually led me back to the swamps and marshes but for reasons other than hunting and fishing. It has become a passion of mine to seek out and study the remaining wild iris populations.

Exploration

Every year since 1997, I have made many trips into the field to see Louisianas growing in their native habitat. Occasionally I travel great distances, but most excursions are two to five hours from my home in Slidell, Louisiana. A few are just an hour away. My longest trip involved two weeks searching throughout Florida for *I. hexagona*.

I often go alone on these trips, but I enjoy it when my wife Kathy accompanies me. Kathy does not enter the swamps, but it is nice to know someone is waiting. My oldest son Benny Jr. and his wife Debbie almost always make one trip each year with Kathy and me to the Abbeville area. We time it to take advantage of peak bloom and to coincide with the Society for Louisi-



Iris nelsonii in its home near Abbeville, Louisiana.

ana Irises show in Lafayette. My grandchildren like to participate in some of the shorter trips. They enjoy seeing snakes, turtles, alligators, ducks and the irises.

We make no rigid plans as to when or where to go, and I am always searching for new areas to explore. I utilize road and topographical maps and like to google "Earth" on the Internet to view aerial images of the sites I plan to visit and to search for promising new ones.

We enjoy looking for natural hybrids as well as the species and are always on the lookout for the rare white or yellow iris. We pay close attention to changes in the quantity of bloom and whether the irises are increasing, decreasing or even disappearing from certain areas.

Over the years, we have explored a large portion of the southern part of Louisiana. With a few exceptions, Louisiana irises are no longer found in great numbers at any one location. Though plentiful at one time, only small patches remain here or there in remote locations or in sparsely scattered spots along the sides of roadways. Very few areas offer a view of more than a thousand plants. Most of the large patches either are on private property or they are very difficult to approach.



Benny Trahan, Sr. is retired and lives in Slidell, Louisiana with his wife of 44 years Kathy. They have five children and eight grandchildren. His passion for his family and for Louisiana irises, both evident in his article, keep him very busy.

Habitats

There's a lot to be learned from getting out to see the irises in their native habitats, especially over a number of years. It helps clarify the niche of each species, although to some extent their habitats overlap. But the natural landscape has been irrevocably altered by the construction of roadways, buildings, oil patches, drainage canals, and irrigation ditches.

No species has adapted better to these changes than *I. fulva*. Fulvas are found primarily in low lying open areas such as the rights of way (servitudes) of utility companies cut through woodlands, or along the sides of roadways and streams running through wooded areas. They grow along the edges of, and to a lesser degree into, wooded areas for a short distance.

Most fulvas occur in and along the sides of shallow ditches adjacent to roadways and highways. These ditches usually contain significant water for only brief periods of time during and after a rain. Fulvas do not like to remain in standing water for long periods, but they do like their "feet" planted in moist to saturated soil conditions. While *I. fulva* is found in open areas, it seems to prefer a location near trees which offer partial shade or filtered sunlight. Because man has unknowingly created drainage areas ideal as habitat for *I. fulva*, it is now the least endangered of the five Louisiana species.

I. giganteaerulea loves water more than the other species. I have visited many sites where colonies existed on floating vegetation with their rhizomes and roots not anchored to the muddy bottom of the swamp. Along some roadways built through swamplands, I have witnessed giganteaeruleas extending out three or more feet from the bank where the water was several feet deep. These irises do best in standing water all year long. They like full sun to achieve best bloom, but when surrounded by trees they can attain their greatest height. Some grow to over six feet tall.

Giganticaeruleas can be found within a few miles of the Gulf of Mexico where they are making their "last stand" for sur-

vival. They do not face good odds for continued existence in these areas due to the loss of fresh water marshlands result-



Above: Nelsoniis generally are larger, taller and a deeper red than fulvas, with less of an orange infusion. **Below:** A variety of *I. fulva* forms.





The White Castle mystery red: A *nelsonii* form in *fulva* territory.

ing from erosion, saltwater intrusion, and past and future hurricanes. There are other populations of *I. giganticaerulea* in parts of South Louisiana further inland from the coast that appear to be holding their own at least for the present.

I. brevicaulis seems to survive well in either wooded, shady areas or in full sun. I have found them in pastures among short grasses where cattle graze and within deep woods under old live oak trees. *Brevicaulis* can't tolerate as much moisture as the other species, so they are typically seen on higher ground with good drainage.

I. nelsonii is found in a very limited area mostly south of Abbeville, Louisiana (hence the old name "Abbeville reds"). The *nelsonii* habitat today is virtually surrounded by sugar cane fields and is on private property. What is left of these beauties is within swamps of cypress and gum trees located in small depressions that appear to be two to four feet lower in elevation than the surrounding cane fields. These are narrow bands of swamp usually a half mile or less in width and one mile or so in length. The *nelsonii*s are found in standing

shallow water that may remain present all year. Sunlight still penetrates the defoliated tree canopy during growing season and reaches the irises below.

I have not been able to obtain information on the size or the exact locations of the Abbeville collecting sites of the 1960s. I can only speculate that a much larger area was available to those searching a mere fifty years ago. The remaining wild *nelsonii*s have not yet been destroyed by cane farming because of the expense required to fill

in the natural depressions in which they grow. They also are in prime deer hunting areas. I have no doubt that, unfortunately, the *I. nelsonii* remaining in its wild habitat will become extinct in the very near future.

Iris Heaven

Some refer to areas around Abbeville as "iris heaven." I certainly do. Four of the five species can be found within a two mile radius. The conditions are perfect for this meeting. The large blue coastal iris, *I. giganticaerulea*, is located along roads to the shores of the Gulf of Mexico, less than 15 miles from Abbeville. The Vermilion River runs through the town of Abbeville heading south towards the Gulf of Mexico. The winding river's course includes swamps and marshes. I am not sure if some of the land in that area is higher due to the river overflowing its banks and silting over or the possibility of underground salt domes that cause certain areas to be higher in elevation. In any scenario, *I. brevicaulis* has taken advantage of this circumstance and used the higher ground to make a home. *I. fulva* can be found throughout this area where moisture

is present in the soil, but water does not collect on the ground for long periods of time.

The prolific presence of these three irises in their individual but adjacent niches supports the conclusion that *I. nelsonii* was born as a hybrid. *Nelsonii* was strong enough and fortunate enough to find a niche of its own.

What's Out There

There is more variety of form and color among the Louisiana iris species than many realize. Despite extensive destruction of habitat, there is much still to be seen. Some of the forms we have found in the past include white and double branched *I. giganticaerulea* and a nearly six foot tall *I. nelsonii*. There are *fulvas* in a far wider range of colors than generally appreciated, including not only yellow but also examples that are orange, pink/purple, and a yellow with a pink blush. Yellow *I. fulva* is very rare. I have only found them in three different locations. I have not encountered any yellow *I. nelsonii* but it was found in the past.

The more time I spend with Louisiana irises in the wild, the more unanswered questions I have. I do not know why there is so much variation within all the species. Each new location of a species seems to have at least some characteristics different from the plants in a previous setting, sometimes prompting questions about their origins. The color of the flower, the number of buds, and the height of the scape are all different. *I. fulva* is reported to be 24 to 36 inches tall. However, I have observed them in natural locations reaching heights taller than 48 inches. *Fulvas* in one spot may have no branching, while in others the majority will have one or more branches. The bud count in some places is normally three or four, but others have produced five and six bud positions per scape. In some locales, the *fulva* scape has little or no zigzag pattern, while in others it is much more pronounced.

My most surprising find was near White Castle, Louisiana, on the west bank



In its native setting, there is no mistaking the tall *I. nelsonii* for *a fulva*.

of the River about 30 miles due south of Baton Rouge. One of my friends told me he remembered some irises growing in a ditch while working in an oil field about 20 years ago. The irises in that area should be *I. fulva*. When I found these irises, some were nearly five feet tall and some had multiple branches with as many as nineteen flowers on a single scape. The color range was from red to orange with a yellow infusion.

The White Castle irises are similar to *I. nelsonii*, but they were well over one hundred miles from the *nelsonii*'s Abbeville home. The location is in a ditch on the side of a sugar cane field. A house is situated a little beyond where the ditch ends,

and there are a few hunting camps down a dirt road. The irises there are so unique as compared to any other site that I have visited that I inquired at the nearby house, and an elderly lady who had lived there for 30 years reported that she knew nothing of the irises other than that they had always been there.

As to their origin, I can only speculate that they were collected from another place and transplanted somewhere along the drainage path of this ditch. If transplanted, they may have originated around Abbeville. In support of this theory, there is an oil pipeline in that area, and the town of Abbeville has a great deal of oil-related activity. It is possible that an oil field employee relocated from the Abbeville area with his family, and some *I. nelsonii* accompanied him. I will never know with certainty the origin of the White Castle irises, but the stand remains of significant interest, prompting a few trips there each year during bloom season.

Is there a clear dividing line between *fulva* and *nelsonii*? There is a great amount of variation within *I. fulva* and a lesser amount within *I. nelsonii*, but *fulvas* are so much numerous and widespread that is not a surprise. There is not as much purple in the color range of *I. fulva*, and not as much brick red in *nelsonii*. *Fulva* often exhibits a yellow infusion (copper appear-

Hunting Irises Not For Wimps

My son Benny, Jr. and I have encountered many types of wildlife while searching for irises in the wild. Some are beautiful and harmless like herons, wood ducks, pileated woodpeckers, deer, indigo buntings, and blue birds, to name a few. Others are in another category, like alligators and poisonous snakes.

We both have had water moccasins strike at us and miss, but Benny, Jr. has had the closest calls. On one occasion we were walking along the bank of a bayou looking far ahead for irises. My son was leading and stepped right over a coiled up moccasin sunning itself. He was lucky not to be bitten. Another time he was looking down at some *I. fulva*, and a non-poisonous rat snake struck at his face from the tree above.

In our searches we have seen hundreds of alligators, once Benny, Jr. was knee deep in murky water trying to get to some *I. giganteaerulea* growing in a clearing when he noticed an alligator about seven feet in length floating approximately forty feet away. The alligator submerged and subsequently reappeared about twenty feet from him. There was no way for him to quickly escape the muddy bottom swamp to a safe place, and he thought the splashing might give the alligator the idea he was wounded prey. After a few minutes of staring at each other the alligator turned and swam away. When he thought the gator was a safe distance from him, he continued on to the *I. giganteaerulea*, which turned out to be nearly seven feet tall.

We keep a change of underwear in the truck for just such occasions.

ance) that I have not seen in *nelsonii*. *I. nelsonii* can have a long narrow conspicuous spear signal, or, like most fulvas, it can exhibit no visible signal at all.

Small differences in coloration aside, I have observed no clear distinction between these two species. Specimens considered *I. nelsonii* could be regarded as exceptional fulvas, or weaker specimens of *I. nelsonii* might be seen as fulvas. The two usually are not found growing immediately next to each other, so one can easily identify them in their natural environment. But if they were mixed together, it would be a different story.

Whether the currently named species are the best categories or whether revisions should be considered, I will leave to the experts for debate. I do have reservations as to the species status of *I. nelsonii*. What I have observed is a very good natural hybrid. *I. giganteaerulea* and the *I. hexagona* that I observed in Florida are very similar, though there are variations in both groupings in the wild. With the very liberal parameters used to determine species status, I would not be surprised to find in the future one, two, or more species added to the list of Louisiana iris under the series hexagonae.

Natural Hybrids

One can only imagine what a thrill it must have been in an earlier era to wander through vast fields of irises in south Louisiana and find new forms, the natural hybrids of the species. With the huge colonies of the different species in proximity, it is no wonder that natural hybrids were abundant.

Finding natural hybrids is a different story today. With smaller colonies and greater distances between them, discovering even one new hybrid iris is unusual.

I have found only three or four natural hybrids I felt worthy of further study and preservation. Perhaps there are many more to be found on private property, but many more undoubtedly disappeared as agriculture took over the land. We are indeed indebted to the work of the early

iris collectors.

The Dim Future

I have always believed that the Louisiana iris species are on a death march. Their seeds can only float downstream towards the salty Gulf. The plants cannot advance very far to the north by rhizome

multiplication, tidal surge or local flooding.

Many years ago, and to a lesser degree today, urban sprawl claimed and is claiming large amounts of the wild Louisiana iris habitat. I have read articles recounting the once vast iris fields surround-



Above, a group of *I. giganteaerulea* near Abbeville. **Below**, Benny Trahan, Jr. among *giganteaeruleas* and showing how tall they can get in the wild.

ing parts of New Orleans. Large deposits of wild iris could once be found on the outskirts of small towns all over South Louisiana. However, residential development expanded into the surrounding areas and the once large masses of iris vanished. Additionally, the oil industry excavated canals from the Gulf of Mexico through coastal roadways to oil-related business locales in an effort to gain shorter and quicker routes to supply offshore drilling. These canals dissected swamps and marshes, allowing salt water from the Gulf to enter into iris habitat, destroying the irises in those areas. Swamps were and are being drained to create land more suitable for agriculture. Airplanes spraying herbicides very often overspray the intended fields, killing the irises growing adjacent to them.

Development of roadways and highways also destroys iris habitat. In an effort to save time and money, herbicides are used to control the growth of weeds along roadway ditches. It seems as though the decision has been made that it is easier and more cost effective to poison grass once every three months rather than cut the grass once each month, and the iris generally do not survive the poisonous solutions.

Natural disasters like hurricanes also drive salt water into the marshes, killing large populations of iris. Katrina had a huge impact on the Southeast portion of the State. The two or three weeks of standing salty water killed many of the rhizomes. I feel Hurricane Rita actually had a greater impact on the Louisiana iris species than Katrina. My son Benny, Jr. and I visited the Cameron area during the 2006 bloom season of *I. giganteaerulea* to determine the condition of this species. Cameron is the coastal Parish that abuts Texas. We did find some small stands in bloom, but not nearly as many as seen in years past.

Giganticaerulea is a very tough species and could temporarily rebound. If

Searching in Florida

I. hexagona is the one Louisiana species that I have not observed anywhere in Louisiana. The reason I ventured on a two week search for irises throughout Florida was curiosity stimulated by what I read in the Society's Fiftieth Anniversary publication of 1991.

Throughout the small book, especially in articles by Dr. John K. Small reprinted from the 1930s, Florida cities and towns were mentioned as the location of many of the then-designated species of irises. These irises are now classified as *I. hexagona*, although some do recognize *I. hexagona savannarum* as a separate variety within the species *I. hexagona*. (*I. savannarum* was one of the old, discarded species names). Even though all the East Coast irises are today considered to be *I. hexagona*, there had to have been sufficient variety among them to induce Small to extend several different species designations.

On a Florida map, I highlighted all the places mentioned in the book and planned the best routes to visit each one of them. I found and collected samples of irises in all the sites, except the white *I. albispinitus* that was reported to be near the Caloosahatchee east of Fort Meyers. The book described the location to be about 12 miles up the Caloosahatchee River but, I could not secure a boat to reach this site.

On my trip through the interior of Florida I saw the variety *I. hexagona savannarum* growing in moist soil in very large fields of several acres. These fields did not appear to hold water so the irises grow under conditions similar to *I. brevicaulis* in Louisiana. In most of the sites in Florida, the irises were growing next to canals, ditches and streams, similar to the places where *I. fulva* is found in Louisiana. Irises do not occur in the Everglades.

Overall, the Florida irises do favor *I. giganteaerulea* in many ways, but with some differences. The forms I saw are shorter, their color generally is a darker blue, and the leaves appear to be stiffer. I did not see a single white iris in Florida on either of the trips there.

The largest color difference is in the irises on the west coast of Florida in Dixie and Levy counties. The irises there are the darkest blue I have seen, darker than any *giganticaerulea* that I have encountered in Louisiana.

The shorter height of the Florida irises compared to *I. giganteaerulea* could be due to the soil. Florida has a siliceous sand, coarse base, while Louisiana has a rich black mud. This appears to be the most significant environmental difference between Louisiana and Florida, and it could account for the smaller size of Florida irises.

There is a good deal of variation among the Florida irises, but I leave it to the experts to determine whether they should all be lumped into *I. hexagona*. I personally did not find enough variation to warrant the naming of new species.

It is difficult to make a direct comparison of Florida and Louisiana specimens under like conditions. The performance of Florida irises in Louisiana is very poor for the first year or two, and then they seem to acclimate and begin to bloom. Perhaps in time there will be a better basis for conclusions.



Forms of *I. hexagona* collected in Florida.



Iris brevicaulis.

the missing iris or their seeds survived, they should be found a mile or so further north where much of the marsh grasses and mud settled.

There are too many reasons why the naturally growing Louisiana iris species will be extinct in the near future. I predict that the first to disappear from the wild will be *I. nelsonii*, followed by *I. brevicaulis*, *I. giganticaerulea*, *I. hexagona*, and finally, *I. fulva*.

I do not think anything can be done to protect the Louisiana species iris in their natural habitat. Their habitat is disappearing, and purchase of some of the remaining land is cost prohibitive. More of the species iris should be grown by iris lovers, and as the plantings multiply, when division occurs, replanting should be aggressively pursued in wild areas that could

support them. We could give them a new start under more controlled but naturalistic conditions.

Even this approach is risky and did not work for me. For years I had been



Benny Trahan, Sr. with an *Iris nelsonii* approaching six feet in height.

planting species irises in the swamps of Bayou Sauvage East of New Orleans. They were developing into fairly large colonies of red, white, blue, and purple blooms. Each year I looked for natural hybrids in my planted areas. Unfortunately, in the year 2006, they were totally destroyed by Katrina.

From my involvement with the species Louisiana irises, I have gained a greater appreciation for the swamps and marshes of our State. The serenity and beauty as well as the dangers are an attraction that beckons me to return year after year. I cannot adequately describe the scene of moss-draped cypress trees with their knees protruding from the dark, murky water with clumps of large blue or red flowered iris in the background. I wish everyone could witness this iris in its natural habitat.



Louisiana Irises Take Top Honors at Local Shows

Louisiana irises do well in iris shows—but only when quality stalks are entered and when judges are informed and not biased in favor of bearded irises. We are pleased to report that a Louisiana iris, ‘Henry Rowlan’ (Faith 2000), won the Best Specimen award at the Tulsa Area Iris Society show in Oklahoma this spring. It was exhibited by Society for Louisiana Irises president Paul W. Gossett of Tulsa. Adding more to the occasion was the win by another Louisiana, ‘Jacaranda Lad’ (H. Pryor 96), as First Runner-up. It was exhibited by Jo Ann Minter. Another Louisiana iris on the “Queen’s Table” was ‘Frosted

Moonbeam’ (H. Pryor 94), which was exhibited by Paul Gossett, and which won Fourth Runner-up.



Carolyn Gifford admires her winning entries, including ‘Laura Louise,’ in the Iris Society of Austin show.

Late news out of Texas reports that ‘Laura Louise’ (Mertzweiller 90), exhibited by Carolyn Gifford, won the “Best Louisiana” category in the Iris Society of Austin show. (Carolyn won Best Specimen with a tall bearded, ‘Cordoba.’) Louisiana irises often do well in the Austin show. Last year ‘Acadian Miss’ (Arny 80) took Best Specimen, while in 2005 it was ‘Cajun Sunrise’ (Mertzweiller 92) that reigned supreme.

If you know of iris shows in which Louisiana irises did well, please contact the editor at tomd@pgtc.com.

A Gallery of Amazing Fulvas



The colors of fulva go well beyond the range associated with the “copper iris.” Specimens have been found that are red, deep yellow, orange, violet, and pink. Unusual blends have also been discovered, including those shown with a gold base and a blush of red. Fulvas outside the reddish range are rare, however.

The Find of a Lifetime

by

Benny P. Trahan Sr.*

Slidell, Louisiana

When most people think of Louisiana irises they visualize flowers that are large and frilly. I envision something a little different. I think of where all these large and frilly irises came from. They all came from the wild species and their natural hybrids that were originally collected. I am currently growing over one hundred different Louisiana iris cultivars and enjoy these newer varieties, but the species will always have a greater attraction for me. I think seeing any of the five Louisiana iris species growing and blooming in their natural habitat is one of the most spectacular sites possible. We owe much to these Louisiana species and the early collectors, for they were the means that gave us all the Louisiana iris cultivars that we love and enjoy today.

As mentioned in a previous *Fleur de Lis* article, each year I make several trips into the wilds (swamps, marshes, etc.) and along road side ditches and canals when the Louisiana irises are blooming. These trips are made in search of interesting species and their hybrids. I began searching many years ago for the tall blues (*I. giganteaerulea*) and small reds (*I. fulva*). I have found, collected, and studied these forms for over a decade but after finding the location of *I. nelsonii* in Abbeville, La., I became less interested in the tall blues and small reds and became fascinated with the large red species, *I. nelsonii*.

Year after year, I collected several forms of this specie—but my dream was to find a yellow *I. nelsonii*. Several old publications mentioned that at over time a few yellow *I. nelsonii* had been found but they were very rare. Many years of my searching in those Abbeville swamps yielded no yellow *nelsonii*. There was an area of the Abbeville swamps I had never previously explored because of the higher water level in that locale and several sources had mentioned that there were no

longer *I. nelsonii* in this swamp. I decided late last April that I would make one attempt to explore what I could of that area. My sweet, supportive wife Kathy accompanied me on the four hour trip from Slidell to the Abbeville swamps. She waited in our parked car while I went in with hip boots and my camera. The walk in was grueling with about a foot of water and an almost equal amount of sticky mud. The path was made more difficult due to fallen trees and protruding cypress knees. After about an hour of my struggling through large spider webs, biting mosquitoes and so many caterpillars that at times I thought I could hear them chewing—and with no iris sightings—I decided to turn back and find my way out.

As I was crossing over a beaver dam I saw my first *I. nelsonii* plant about a hundred yards away. I was extremely exhausted from the hard wading and was having difficulty breathing due to the high temperature and humidity but I wanted to check out this plant. When I got to within 10 feet of the clump I noticed that all the blooms were spent except a few that were almost completely eaten by caterpillars. What was left of these few blooms looked like they could be pink or yellow? I have seen



*Benny Trahan lives in Slidell, La. near New Orleans. He is a long time member of the Society for Louisiana Irises.



A typical red *I. nelsonii*

these flower colors on some *I. fulva* but it was usually caused by some type of stress on the plant and the true flower colors appeared the following year. I was still excited and took a few pictures. I then pulled several rhizomes with their stalks and placed them in a plastic bag.

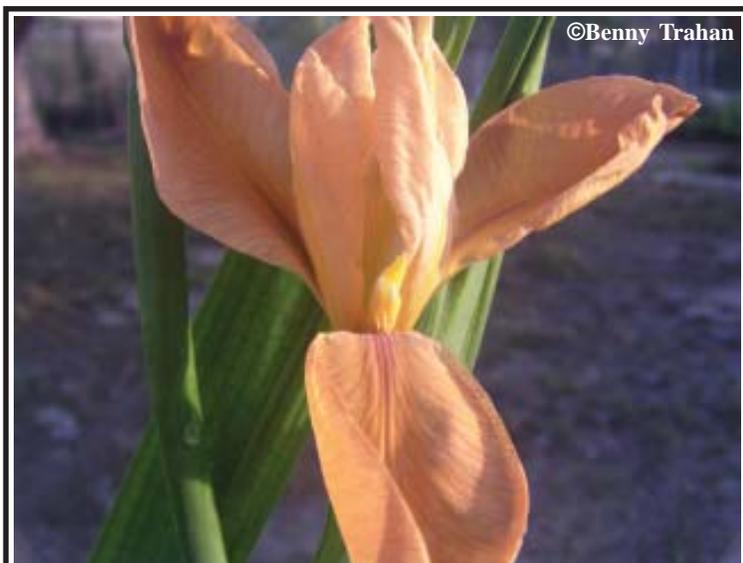
It took me an hour and a half to get back to the car and my patiently waiting wife. I was really excited and wanted her to see what might be the find of a life time. The bag had taken a beating and the stalks were in worse condition than when I had found them. I pulled them out and said what do you think? She said nonchalantly, yea they could be... are you ready to go? That's not exactly what I wanted to hear after the find of a life time. Any way, I drove the four hours home and immediately trimmed the stalks and planted the rhizomes in several three gallon pots. The pots were placed in a rubber lined area that contained about four inches of water. I sprinkled Osmacote on top. I am sure that each day for the next year my mind was on these plants wondering if I had indeed found the very rare yellow *I. nelsonii*.

Well this year, 2008, the long wait was over. The color on the first bud appeared and to my disappointment, it was as red as any *nelsonii* I had ever seen. Two days later I noticed the bud was a little lighter, almost orange and the next day it was a lighter orange and when it



©Benny Trahan

An *I. nelsonii* that the author thought could be pink or yellow



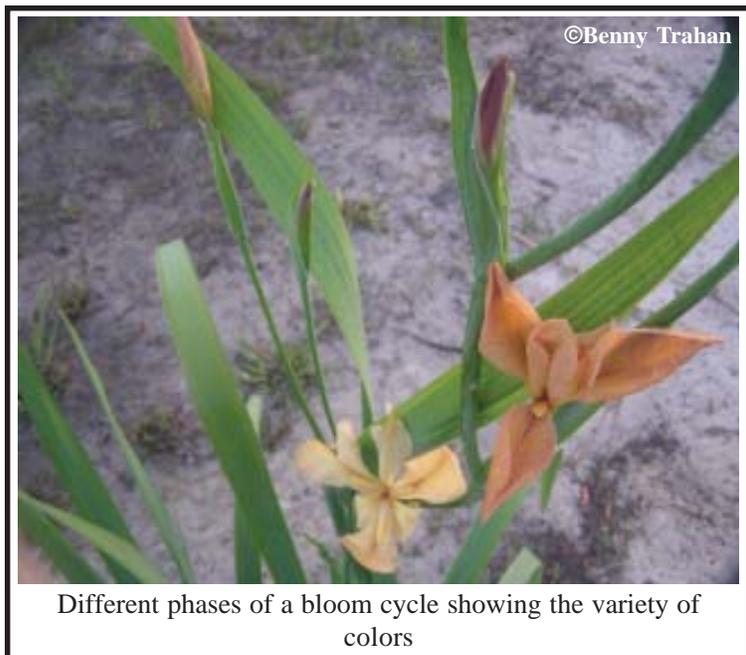
©Benny Trahan

The color of the author's *I. nelsonii* as it opened



©Benny Trahan

The author's *I. nelsonii* was yellow when it fully opened



Different phases of a bloom cycle showing the variety of colors

began to open it looked like a pinkish/orange. The next day it was fully opened and was a totally different color. Yes, this is the rare yellow *I. nelsonii*! This yellow is not the bright lemon yellow, but more of a cloudy or muddy yellow. In the 2007 *Special Publication of the Society for Louisiana Irises*, page 64, Frank E. Chowning described them this way. "Then, too, these giant fulvas occasionally produced so-called yellows which lacked the vivid yellow tones of the hybrids derived from the Maringouin and Arkansas yellow fulvas and were more tan than yellow. Still they produced additional means of producing fine yellows." The *I. nelsonii* were discovered by Mr. W. B. MacMillan around 1940 and for the next twenty years or more were heavily collected. They have now somewhat stabilized but are still in danger. I believe that no yellow *I. nelsonii* have been found or collected from the Abbeville swamps in the last 50 years.

This plant is fascinating. Most positions bare two buds each except the top position which have three buds. All the stalks had two branches but several had three branches. Each stalk had from 18 to 21 buds. The stalks are thick and very zigzag reaching over 40" in height. New fans are sprouting from the stalks above the rhizomes. This yellow surpasses, in vigor and many other qualities, all the red *I. nelsonii* I have ever collected. This is an interesting plant and one that will require a great amount of study.

It is very disturbing to me that these beautiful irises, both the red and yellow *I. nelsonii*, are not going to be around in their natural habitat much longer. Their very small habitat is being filled in with rice hulls (30' high), being dried out by canals dug to drain sections of swamps and the sugar cane farmers are gradually claiming a little more of the swamps each year.



The *I. nelsonii* was so prolific that new fans began to appear on the bloom stalk

Whatever happened to protecting wet lands? I am fundamentally against collecting wild plants, but I really feel that I have the capability and desire to help this species survive. If left in their present location and without protection there will be no *I. nelsonii* for our future generations to have the find of a life time.

[Introductions](#) | [Catalog](#) | [Growing Tips and Culture](#) | [Inspiration](#) | [Louisiana Iris Species Organization](#) | [Hurricane Katrina](#) | [Email](#) | [About Zydeco](#) | [Back To Welcome Page](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden

A Gallery of Florida Irises

All the Florida irises in the Louisiana series (Hexagonae) are today considered examples of *I. hexagona*. Among these irises there is far greater variation in form, color and bloom season than is evident among South Carolina plants, from which *I. hexagona* was originally named in 1788.

This uniformity of designation for diverse Florida forms was not always the case. Dr. John K. Small in the 1920s and early 1930s extensively studied irises in both Florida and Louisiana and named over 80 new species based upon what he found. Among Florida-only forms alone -- and beyond the previously established *I. hexagona* which he found to occur in Northern Florida -- Small named *I. savannarum*, *I. kimballiae*, *I. albispirtus* and *I. rivularis*.

Subsequent to Small's work, it was realized that many of the plants upon which his species were based were in fact natural hybrids or variants of other species. Eventually, recognition of all of Small's species was withdrawn with the exception of *I. giganteaerulea* which endured and was said to be restricted to South Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas.

If Small went overboard in handing out species names, perhaps the retreat from his work went too far in the other direction. Where once the varied Florida irises were recognized with species names, now that variety is for the most part unacknowledged in any formal or authoritative way.

Those interested in the Florida irises should see the series of [three articles that appeared in 2003 in the journal published by the Society for Louisiana Irises](#) (288k). A new book by Clarence E. Mahan, *Classic Irises and the Men and Women Who Created Them*, Krieger Publishing, 2007, has a chapter on Florida irises, also.

Resolution of such taxonomic questions as those involving the Florida irises depend upon far more than the range of colors and flower forms shown in pictures on this page, including increasingly complex DNA and other analysis. Whether the future holds new or renewed designation of Florida species beyond *I. hexagona*, the recognition of specific subspecies forms, or the continued maintenance of a unitary category is in the hands of taxonomists, botanists and other scientists.



Photo by Steve Shepard



Photo by Steve Shepard



Photo by Steve Shepard



Photo by Steve Shepard



Photo by Michael Gideon



Photo by Michael Gideon



Photo by Steve Shepard



Photo by Harry Wolford

The Case of "Iris Savannarum"

Small's abandoned species *I. savannarum* represents a form that is widespread in South Florida where irises typical *I. hexagona* occur rarely, if at all. [Flora of North America distinguishes savannarum from hexagona as follows:](#)

"Iris savannarum has often been included in I. hexagona, but differs in several ways. The capsules of I. hexagona are more obviously hexagonal, with smooth faces alternating with those that have two rounded lobes, whereas the capsules of I. savannarum are more rounded but with six obvious ridges, almost of wing like proportions. Iris hexagona has yellow-green leaves instead of the brighter green of I. savannarum. The leaves of I. savannarum die back after anthesis, while those of I. hexagona remain green. The flowering period of I. savannarum is almost one month earlier than that of I. hexagona in the area where both are known to grow. The sepals of I. savannarum are more acute at the apex than those of I. hexagona."

Harry Wolford of Palm Bay, Florida has assembled the following visual contrast between the prototypical hexagona and savannarum forms:



Above, a picture by Harry Wolford of an *I. savannarum* form from near Ona, Florida. Compare this picture to the artist's depiction of *I. savannarum*, left, published in *Addisonia* along with Small's description of the species, and also compare it to an *I. hexagona* of typical flower form, below.



[Back to Hexagona page](#)

[Back to Species Page](#)

For more information see:

[Rodney Barton's Iris Hexagona Page](#)

[Dennis Kramb's Iris Hexagona Page](#)

[Flora of North America - Iris savannarum](#)

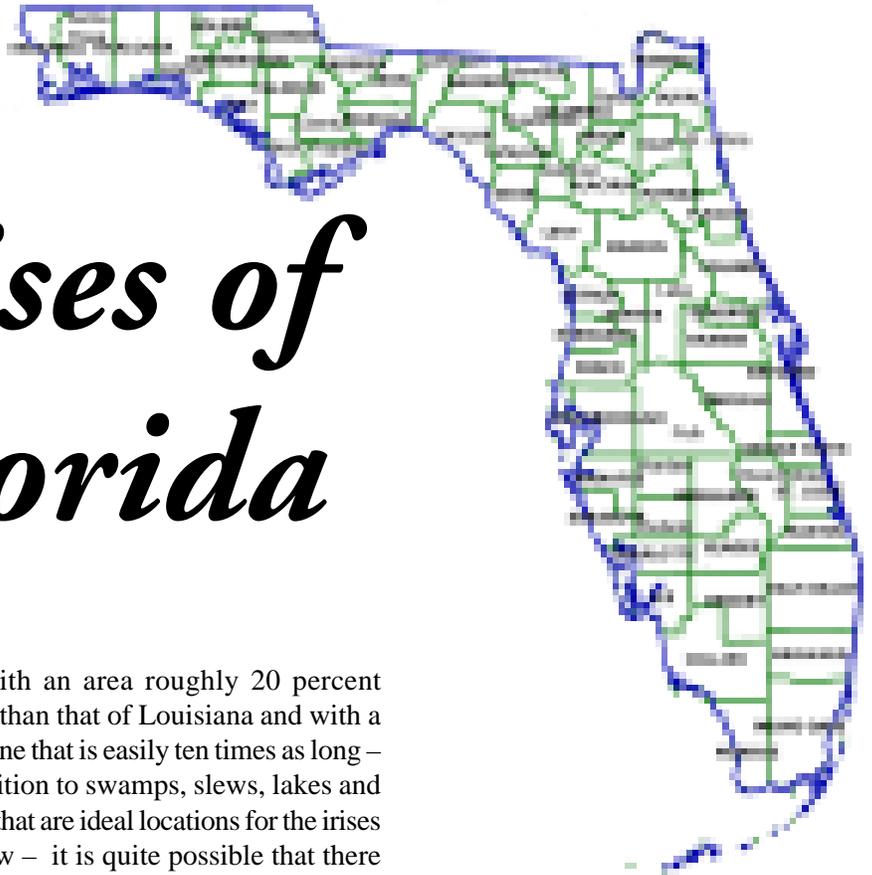
[Atlas of Florida Vascular Plants](#). Note the tabs to go to maps, images and other information. There is a good range of pictures.

[Florida Department of Environmental Protection](#)

[Nature Photography of Shirley Denton](#). Beautiful pictures from Florida. Hexagona or savannarum?

[Introductions](#) | [Catalog](#) | [Growing Tips and Culture](#) | [Inspiration](#) | [Louisiana Iris Species Organization](#) | [Hurricane Katrina](#) | [Email](#) | [About Zydeco](#) | [Back To Welcome Page](#)

The Irises of Florida



The Florida Hexagonae

BY SAM NORRIS

The second edition of *The Louisiana Iris* arrived a few days ago* and I am very favorably impressed by it. A letter from Marie Caillet indicated that she was worried about some mistakes that had been included in the book. Admittedly, if a person looks hard enough for mistakes one or two may be found, but these are very minor compared to the quality of the book. One thing I particularly liked was the photographs of the different cultivars, especially since the only two of mine that have been introduced were included!

Florida Ignored

One thing that was conspicuous by its absence was an almost complete lack of any reference to the irises growing in Florida. This has been the pattern in most publications of the Society for Louisiana Irises, but it certainly isn't because the irises are not growing there.

**The late Sam Norris of Owensboro, KY wrote this article a year and a half ago. He also contributed short pieces to SIGNA about the Florida irises.*

With an area roughly 20 percent larger than that of Louisiana and with a coastline that is easily ten times as long – in addition to swamps, sloughs, lakes and rivers that are ideal locations for the irises to grow – it is quite possible that there are more irises growing in Florida right now than were ever growing in Louisiana. I wonder if anyone has ever made a survey in an effort to determine how extensive the iris growth really is.

Masses of Irises

The SLI Fiftieth Anniversary Publication has a picture showing a field of “*I. savannarum*” in bloom, and speaks of them being there by the acre and going out of sight in the distance; so the lack of irises isn't the problem.

I never realized how extensive the iris fields were in Florida until Michael Gideon started corresponding with me. The new publication states “collecting Louisiana irises was an interesting and amazing part of American horticulture, but it is a part of the past.” Contrary to this statement, collecting the Florida irises is alive and well. Michael lives in Southern Florida, and he and his family have been collecting iris plants and seeds for a number of years. Last year he sent me some of his collected plants along with about 1,200 seeds for SIGNA. This year he did even better, more plants and twice as many seeds.

Michael's travels while collecting take him all the way from the Big Cy-

press National Preserve in the south to the St. Mary's river in the north. He has collected in the locations where Small gathered his samples, plus many to which Small never dreamed of going. Michael tells me that he has found every color and form that has been found growing in Louisiana, and there are probably many others that he has yet to collect.

Highlands Irises

One that really caught my attention was collected in Highlands County. What makes this one so special is the location where it was collected. The location was so dry that the irises collected there will not live if they are grown in the wet conditions in which the hexagonae normally thrive.

Michael sent me a start of this plant along with some others. If all goes well they should bloom this next spring. It remains to be seen if they can take my cold weather, but they are well mulched which should help out. The particular Highlands plant he sent me is a white, but there are probably other colors.

If this plant is so well adapted to the dryer conditions that too much water will kill it, it probably is far enough away from the norm that it should be classified as a

new species.

From what Michael has found, I would conclude that the majority of irises in Florida should be classed as a hybrid swarm. Small reported hexagona growing in the northern part of Florida, but to have the hybrid swarm there must be something for hexagona to hybridize with, if it is indeed one of the parents. Anyway you want to look at it, it seems very unlikely that any of the species growing in Louisiana is the other parent, so that means there is at least one other species growing in Florida that has never been recognized, possibly one that Small described and named.

Michael Gideon has been trying to interest some others in making the same kind of test on the Florida irises that Michael Arnold and Bobby Bennett made on the irises in Louisiana. Hopefully, those efforts will prove successful and new scientific evidence will become available about Florida irises.

Editor's Note: Michael Gideon makes no claims as to the species status of irises. He has worked to encourage scientific testing, and hopefully results will be available soon.



A View from the 1930s

The Distribution of Iris in Florida

BY H. HAROLD HUME

The seven species of iris native in Florida, as classified by John K. Small, fall naturally into four groups represented by (1) *Iris hexagona* Walt., (2) *I. savannarum* Small, *I. rivularis* Small, *I. albispirtus* Small, *I. Kimballiae* Small, (3) *I. virginica* L. and (4) *I. tripetala* Walt. Of these, the four constituting the second group are not known to occur outside the state, excepting *I. rivularis*, reported from Georgia close to the Florida boundary, while those representing the other three groups are found far outside Florida. Within the state the native species are widely distributed. *I. savannarum* is the most abundant and in some sections occurs in great colonies while *I. hexagona* and *I. virginica* are found in fair sized colonies in a few localities. The remaining four species are quite limited both in numbers and in distribution.

All are moisture and humus loving plants but, although water is essential to their distribution and the establishment of young plants, yet it is not always present in surplus throughout the year. Often iris plants are in shallow standing water continuously for weeks or months, but at other seasons there is no standing water where they grow. Water in optimum or in large amounts is most beneficial during their growing season. It is an interesting fact that all of them adapt themselves to ordinary garden conditions and can be grown success-

fully if particular attention is given to watering, indicating that the abundance of water so often present where they grow naturally, although not inimical to, is actually not necessary for the welfare of established plants.

Presumably either the irises now growing in Florida came from regions farther north or their progenitors did. Some, as *I. hexagona*, *I. virginica* and *I. tripetala*, still have their northern connections. Since their seeds are commonly water borne, they came in on the flood waters of long ago, moving from north to south, even as they may be brought in still from time to time on the floods of the rivers that originate to the northward and flow through western Florida. Under natural conditions they grow in locations where moisture below the ground surface, and at times above, is suited to their needs. Since they require ample supplies of water at certain seasons of the year for their well being, conditions best suited to their growth are found in the coastal plains areas, along streams and rivers, more particularly the St. Marys and St. Johns, and in the southern and western parts of the state where the land falls away south and west from the interior highlands. Seventy-five feet

*Dr. H. Harold Hume was a prominent horticultural author and an agriculture dean, provost for agriculture and acting president at the University of Florida over the period 1930 to 1949. This article is reprinted from the AIS Bulletin No. 47, April 1933. With the exception of *I. hexagona* and *I. virginica*, none of the species mentioned by Hume are any longer recognized.*

or thereabouts is the maximum elevation and by far the greatest numbers of plants are found at elevations only a few feet above sea-level. Among the highest points at which colonies of iris grow are the ones east of Chipley (*I. virginica*), south of Leesburg and north of Newnans Lake (*I. savannarum*).

The absence of irises from certain areas may be accounted for in part on the basis of soil reactions. They will flourish on soils that are quite acid, but it is equally true that apparently they also grow well on soils that are neutral or even alkaline in their reaction. Still it is undoubtedly a fact that soils may be so alkaline as to interfere with or check their growth. This may explain why they do not occur on the lower east coast of the state, for there none apparently are to be found much south of the Fort Pierce-Okechobee line, even though soils unquestionably adapted to their growth are to be found much farther south. Hence, while soil reaction may be to some extent a controlling factor in their distribution and may account for the presence or absence of plants in given areas, it is apparently not the only one and it is entirely possible that what took place affecting their distribution during geologic ages accounts for their absence from certain localities. Naturally, one would think that the Everglades would be adapted to their growth, yet none are found native in the Everglades proper. It may be that the general trend of drainage waters did not distribute them in that area. Certain mineral elements necessary for their growth may be absent from Everglade soils, and again they may have been crowded out by the rank growth of other plants. Irises native in Louisiana and those from other parts of Florida however are being grown successfully under cultivation when provided with mineral supplements.

Iris albispiritus. The northern limit of this form appears to be on the old Lakeland-Auburndale road at telephone pole 276, about four miles east of Lakeland. It is associated with willow and cypress on the north side of the road. The type locality is near LaBelle. It is

found in the LaBelle-Fort Myers area, on the west side of Lake Okechobee and west of Wauchula. Over this general area it is widely scattered, but not abundant in any one place. Usually it is mixed with *I. savannarum* and perhaps some times difficult to distinguish from the albino form of that species. White irises probably belonging here have been found at Red Level, but whether they are *Albispiritus* or only an albino of *I. savannarum* is not known. Further study and exploration is needed for this species.

Iris hexagona is confined to the northern portion of the state and apparently is not present south of a line drawn from Jacksonville to the mouth of the Suwannee. There is a small colony in Callahan, another small one a few miles west of Jacksonville near Hart Havenon

dance and in some localities there are large colonies. Compared with *I. virginica* and *I. savannarum* its range is quite limited.

Iris Kimballiae. Although reported by Small¹ as occurring on both sides of the upper peninsula, this species has been seen only at Appalachicola. As compared with *I. savannarum*, to which it is doubtless related, it is a less robust plant with smaller flowers and erect rapier-like leaves. North of the town the Sheip Lumber Manufacturing Plant is located. Near it a little creek or stream comes in from the west to join the Appalachicola River on which the plant is situated. This stream is crossed by a bridge for the railroad. Right at the south end of the bridge on the east side there is a small colony of *I. Kimballiae*. It is associated with *I. virginica*, willows, sawgrass, lizard's tail



"Iris albispiritus", scanned from a copy of the Hume article that appeared in the AIS Bulletin in 1933.

State Road No. 1, and a larger one south of Magville on State Road No. 13. It is probable that there are others in the Hart Haven-Maxville area. On the west side of the upper part of the peninsula, it is to be found in limited numbers at Cross City from whence it extends northward into LaFayette County and westward toward Perry and St. Marks. It is in this general area that it is to be found in greatest abun-

and buttonbush. Across the bridge (on the north side), it occurs among sawgrass on the west side of the track. On the east side a short path leads from the railroad to a boat cache inside a fenced area. Just after crossing the fence, close to the edge of the stream, *I. Kimballiae* grows in St. Augustine grass and it is also found nearer the boats. Farther out away from the bridge there is a small patch on the

east side of the railroad track. In the lumber yard there are a few clumps between the westernmost lumber piles and the wooded area that separates them from the railroad. Farther south, too, where there is a lot of *I. virginica* there are one or two clumps. The tallest flower stem measured forty inches. Here and there plants were in bloom when the location was visited (March 11, 1932). Had it not been for the frost of the previous night (March 10), which injured many flowers there would have been quite a showing.

Iris rivularis has been reported only from the general type locality in northeastern Florida and the writer has not been able to collect it although three attempts have been made. Small,² who described and named it as a new species, states that it occurs along streams flowing into the St. Marys River, but whether it occurs elsewhere than in the watershed of that river as it approaches its outlet is not known. There is every reason to believe it is quite local in distribution, but until additional collections are made its area cannot be delimited.

Iris savannarum. There are more plants of *I. savannarum* in Florida than of all other irises counted together. It also occurs more or less abundantly over a greater area in the state than any other species. It is found from the St. Johns River, where it turns eastward to the sea, south to Fort Pierce and Okeechobee on the eastern side of the state, and on the western side from the southern watershed of the Suwannee to the Big Cypress southeast of Fort Myers. Its distribution throughout these areas is, of course, not continuous. In the central portion of the state the northernmost point at which it has been found is almost north of Newnans Lake on the short road from Gainesville to Orange Heights. South of a line that may be drawn from the Suwannee to the St. Johns through the point just mentioned, *I. savannarum* is to be found here and there in comparatively small colonies in many different places. In the northern section it is not abundant, though there are fairly large colonies in the vicinity of

Otter Creek, but the great area in which *I. savannarum* occurs in countless numbers extends around the north side of Lake Okeechobee, southward around the west side and southwestward to LaBelle and Fort Myers. In that vast area, which extends from Wauchula westward to Bradenton and southward, it is to be found growing in colonies of many, many acres, while in the Okeechobee prairie section it is so abundant that one may look out across patches of *I. savannarum* of such size that their farthest sides can scarcely be seen. When in bloom these colonies are a wonderful sight. There are goodly sized areas on State Roads Numbers 22 and 24 where they approach the immediate vicinity of the St. Johns River. Definite locations at which it has been collected are almost too numerous to list.

Iris tripetala. Apparently, *I. tripetala* is found in Florida only west of the Appalachian River in the flatwoods in proximity to the Gulf of Mexico. Here, too, a lovely white form is occasionally found. The exact area for this species has not been determined, but it has been collected north of Appalachian, west of Wewahatchka and north of St. Andrews Bay. A careful survey of the area west of the latter point will probably result in extending its known area of distribution. It is a month to six weeks later in flowering than *I. Kimballiae*. Its usual blooming season begins about April 15th.

Iris virginica is peculiarly an iris of the watersheds of the St. Marys and St. Johns Rivers. It is found here and there along the banks of both. Usually it occurs in rather small colonies and nowhere does it cover great areas. The places where it is found in greatest numbers are along the Seaboard Air Line and the Atlantic Coast Line railroads north and northeastward from Callahan and along the Florida East Coast railroad from Bayard toward St. Augustine and west of St. Augustine toward the St. Johns River. It is not known to occur in peninsular Florida along the Gulf of Mexico, and it has not been found in the central portion of the state. It is present in a few places in western Florida, more particularly at the estuaries of several rivers

that, having their origin outside the state in areas to the northward, flow through Florida into the Gulf of Mexico. For the most part it is not found along State Road No. 1 in western Florida, only one small colony having been noted east of Chipley. It grows on the Ochlockonee River where the road from East Port (State Road No. 10) crosses it. The southernmost location as reported by Small³ is in the Big Cypress, southeast of Fort Myers. As this is an isolated patch, having no connection with any other to the northward, its presence there may be due to seeds carried by waterfowl or other birds. Localities for the species checked by the writer are: Black Creek, Green Cove Springs, Dun's Creek and Rice Creek at the St. Johns River, Ortega, Jacksonville (Willow Branch), Orange Park, Bayard, West Tocoli, Hastings, Palatka, Kingsland, Chipley, south of Glen St. Mary on the south prong of the St. Marys, Appalachian, Ochlockonee River (near mouth). It has also been reported from Lake City.

Iris colonies

In so many instances the iris species of Florida grow in unmixed pure groups that the occurrence of more than one species in a group or colony or even in close proximity is always interesting. Combinations, however are found at times. *I. virginica* and *I. Kimballiae* are to be found both together and in close proximity at Appalachian. In one large colony of *I. virginica* near the Sheip Lumber Manufacturing Plant a single clump of *I. Kimballiae* has been noted. In the railroad ditch the two were close together and near the lumber piles (between them and the railroad) they also occupy the same area. In this latter case *I. virginica* was numerous with only a few clumps of *I. Kimballiae* visible here and there.

At the edge of Green Cove Springs on the road from Shands Bridge, the ground is low and the ditches filled with a growth of such plants as crinum, sedges, lizard's tail, peltandra and iris. Here both *I. virginica* and *I. savannarum* occur in close proximity. In some cases the plants are intermixed.



An *Iris hexagona* specimen from the Carolinas showing the form typically associated with the species. It is blue but shorter than *I. giganteaerulea*. The falls appear rounded, an effect created because the hafts, the portion beneath the style arms, are very narrow.

At the north end of the bridge across Doctor's Inlet, *I. virginica* and *I. savannarum* grow together; the colonies are so mixed that care has to be taken in securing plants of the two species separately. On the road from Jacksonville to St. Augustine there occurs an interesting division of locations of species. About twenty-five miles from the ferry in South Jacksonville the highway crosses a ridge of higher land. It is about two miles wide and on either side of it the land is low. North of this ridge in the railroad ditches, *I. virginica* alone is found. South of the ridge it is replaced by *I. savannarum*. On State Road No. 48 (St. Augustine to Shands Bridge) about three miles west of St. Augustine, *I. virginica* and *I. savannarum* grow in the same general area. There is quite a large patch of the latter growing with willows at the beginning of the low lands.

At the east end of Shands Bridge on the north side in the flood area of the St. Johns there is a single little group of *Iris savannarum*. At the west end of the bridge *Iris virginica* only is found (on both sides of the road). The little group on the south side produces dark colored, delightfully sweet-scented flowers. These

scented blooms are rare, according to the writer's observations.

I. albispirtus is usually associated with or adjacent to *I. savannarum* wherever found in the great iris areas of South Florida from Lake Okeechobee to LaBelle and from Wauchula to Bradenton. Since there is an albino form of the latter, *I. albispirtus* is not easy to differentiate.

Notes

¹ Addisonia. 9: 59-60. pl. 318. D: 1924.

² Addisonia. 12: 11-12. Pl. 390. Mar. 1927.

³ Journal of the New York Botanical Garden, 32: p. 62. 1931.

Right: The plates at right and on page 13 are reproduced from the Society's Fiftieth Anniversary Publication, 1999. These plates were originally published in Addisonia in 1925-29 to illustrate the research of Dr. John K. Small, Curator of the New York Botanical Garden, in Florida, Louisiana and other areas.



I. hexagona



"*I. savannarum*"



"*I. Kimballiae*"

Discovering New Forms among the Hexagonae

Looking Hard in Florida

With almost all the former “species” now rejected and I. hexagona ascendant, what are we to make of the variety among Florida’s native irises?

BY PATRICK O’CONNOR

What we do not yet know, or is not documented, about the native irises of Florida apparently could fill volumes. The principal species attributed to peninsular Florida, *I. hexagona*, is believed by some to have company, and it is pretty clear regardless that the variety among the irises in the Series Hexagonae found in Florida far exceeds previous description.

I am singularly unqualified to offer opinions on these irises, having no first-hand knowledge of them. I certainly am not prepared to deal with whether there are more species out there than those that have been designated; or fewer, with the exceptional forms simply representing intraspecies variation. It seems that someone always wants to tinker with species designations, and why not? They are manmade categories useful to the degree that they encapsulate but do not obscure important characteristics.

Bruce Hanson, Curator of the Herbarium in the Department of Biology at the University of South Florida at Tampa, cautions that “true that species vary with habitat, with geography, with microclimatic conditions, et cetera. And in my opinion, horticultural hobbyists seem always to make too much of minor differences in color and stature.”

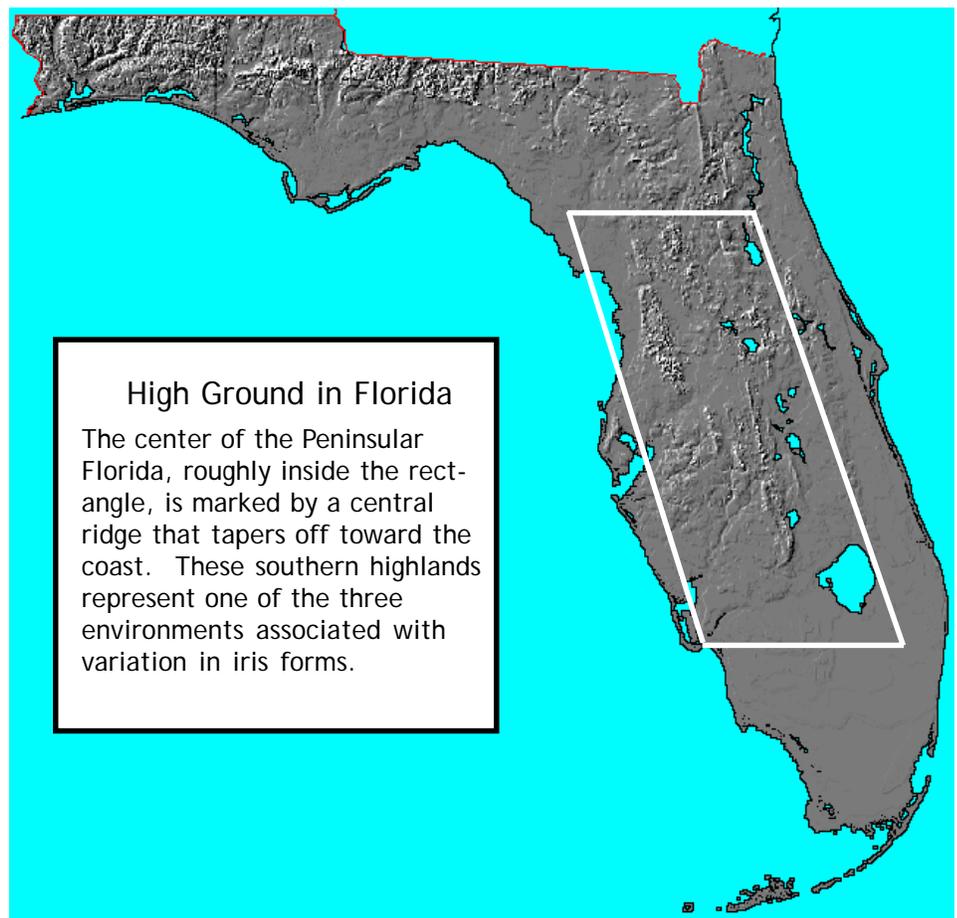
The widely accepted view today, unlike in the time of Small or Hume, is

that the indigenous hexagonae in Florida are limited to two or perhaps three species. *I. brevicaulis* has exceedingly limited distribution and is reported only from Jackson County, which abuts Georgia. *I. fulva* is reported only in Santa Rosa County, also in the panhandle and only a county away from Alabama. One source asserts that *fulva* actually was introduced to the state. The irises in the rest of the Florida, from the Georgia border to the southern tip, are *I. hexagona*. Bruce Hanson indicates that, barring taxonomic research to the contrary, *I. hexagona* will continue to be the designation of the Florida irises.

But Wait

Fair enough. But consider the work and observations of Michael Gideon and his family.

Michael Gideon lives in South Florida. He has devoted as much time and effort to the recognition and understanding of the Florida irises as any of the early collectors did with respect to Louisiana’s irises during the discovery days from the 1930s to the 1950s. Over several years, Michael and his family have systematically sought out the locations of native irises, collected samples, and observed them in garden culture. Based on the unexpected variety found, he has



The relief map was developed by Ray Sterner of the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory and used with permission. Additional information is available at <http://fermi.jhuapl.edu/states/>.



From top: A pale violet from Levy County; two views of a nice, veined purple collected by the Vestrands. Photos by Steve Shepard.

Hopefully, knowledge of what has been discovered so far will stimulate future work, including taxonomic analysis, to understand and appreciate these overlooked plants.

Geography

Michael Gideon has observed three different habitats in Florida that broadly correspond to variations in irises. The first is based on a north-south dimension. Florida is an elongated state stretching 447 miles from the St. Marys River to Key West.

Variation in climate as well as topography over this distance is associated with significant differences in iris bloom time. This creates separate niches in which irises have developed independently. Michael places the border of this north-south division at “an imaginary line running from Cross City in the west through Gainesville and east to Palatoka.” He says, “There’s a weather difference at this line with six weeks earlier winter and six weeks later spring. This keeps the southern forms in the south.”

Above the line grow the “northern forms”, which are generally the same as the irises found in Georgia. I gather that these are more typical of the original *I. hexagona*, named from specimens collected, I believe, from the Carolinas.

Within the southern region of peninsular Florida, and below the Cross City-to-Palatoka line, there is an additional division based on elevation and characteristics associated with highland versus coastal terrain. Not having firsthand familiarity with Florida, the notion of highlands came as a surprise, but the relief map on the previous page clearly reflects the central ridge.

Distinct differences have been observed between highland and coastal irises, and both differ from the northern forms. The highland forms are most interesting because they have been largely overlooked. Michael Gideon describes the highland habitat in this way:

“In many locations in the interior it’s almost desert like, the soil is pure silica sand and the sun burns off the surface moisture. One would

never imagine iris growing here and that’s why no one ever looked in the highlands. At some point the rainwater seeps out downslope. This is where the highland form exists. These seeps are usually not connected to any river and are land-locked. You must learn where to look. Usually, it’s a good hike in to these isolated bogs”

He also observes that these sites often are on private cattle land. Many acres not devoted to cattle have been transformed by the phosphate industry into a landscape inhospitable to irises. Cattlemen actually have protected these irises from destruction.

The highland forms are often white, but not always. Blues, purples and other color variants with the characteristics of highland irises are also found. These irises are shorter than the coastal forms, never taller than three feet, and with a flower smaller than the coastal irises, more on the order of *I. fulva* in size. The flower is spidery and the petals recurve, although exceptions are found. Interestingly, the highland form is not fond of over-wet situations. Perhaps it resembles *I. brevicaulis* in this trait.

The coastal irises have been described as “giant blues,” a phrase familiar in South Louisiana. The northern forms are also generally blue but shorter, and they sound like the originally described *I. hexagona*.

Michael sent me a large number of plants several years ago. Only two have bloomed, both blues that show no apparent difference from *I. giganteaerulea*. They were tall and robust. One was a coastal form from near Sarasota notable for its vigor and the monstrous rhizomes it produces. They match those of some *giganteaeruleas* that I once dug out of a freshwater marsh in Cameron Parish, Louisiana, each very stout and easily a foot or more in length.

Other plants sent from the highlands, and the northern forms, do not grow nearly that vigorously or produce such prodigious rhizomes, even while growing for me in identical garden conditions.



"I. albispirtus", named by Small. Compare to 'Cass White', right.

Except for the coastal forms, which thrive in the New Orleans area, the irises that Michael sent so far have not bloomed. They do survive, however.

Apparently some of the Florida irises are better adapted to the particular climate and soil of their niches in Florida than to the rest of the Gulf Coast. Or, perhaps my mistake was not knowing how to accommodate their origins. They probably deserve better treatment than I have afforded them.

Overlap and Variation

The observation of three generally distinct habitats should not imply that all Florida hexagonae fall clearly into one

grouping or another. In fact, one of the major observations made is that there is unexpected variation among the Florida irises that seems to extend well beyond three groupings.

Part of the reason for variation is that in places where the different environments intersect, as with the natural hybrids found in Louisiana, intermediate forms are produced. And, since seeds float downward (barring the effects of hurricanes), there is a tendency for some of the characteristics of the highland irises to drift downward also, so that there is a mix in the adjoining areas. The reverse does not generally occur since water and seed are not inclined to flow upstream unless pushed. Michael adds that, "Even now the rivers that drain out of the highlands usually go dry and that's what keeps the coastal forms out of the highlands."

In areas where plants with both highland and coastal characteristics are found, it was observed that the highland forms tended to be up on a levee, the coastals down in the water.

Another conditioning factor promoting variation is isolation. Many highland bogs are isolated from one another with little chance of cross contamination. That being the case, the irises in one area are free to interbreed over the years, many hundreds of them, and to develop unique and stable characteristics. This is not unlike what may have happened in Louisiana around Abbeville, where *I. nelsonii* developed, the product originally of other species.

It should not be surprising that, with time, a localized population could develop unique characteristics. The work of



'Cass White', collected by Kenneth Cass in 1985 in Lee County in the same area where Dr. John Small collected specimens from which "I. albispirtus" was named. 'Cass White' was registered by Robert Turley in 1996.

hybridizers has vividly demonstrated how much change in plant characteristics is possible very quickly through controlled crosses, so different characteristics might well pop up and then come to dominate an isolated population left alone to interbreed over a long period.

Michael feels that Small's white "I. albispirtus" is a cross between highland and coastal forms. Once thought to have disappeared, he rediscovered the so-called "Ghost Iris" after deciding to look inland and upland. He has now found it in numerous locations, but in wetter sites than the habitat of a pure highland form.

Michael cites the collected and registered 'Cass White' as an example of "I. albispirtus." It was, in fact, collected by Kenneth Cass in 1985 at the site where Small found "albispirtus."

Colors

One of the principal variations found is the existence of irises other than the blues and whites associated with *I. hexagona*. In a letter a couple of years ago, Michael reported yellows, reds, and other colors, and added, "The yellows and reds are only found in the highland form.



A "giant blue" from near Sarasota growing in a New Orleans garden.



Left, from top: spidery blue coastal form from near Sarasota; I. hexagona sample under study by Alan Meerow; a pale violet from Hillsborough county; and a deep purple from Polk County, showing the recurvature associated with the highlands form. Middle, from top: a Highlands County burgundy-violet; a Manatee County white; another white collected west of Palatka; and a very short I. hexagona, around two feet; Right, from top: a violet northern form from the Pinhook Swamp; a Polk County blue-purple.

The interior folks all speak of a bright yellow. So far we've found pale yellows and the opaque yellow with a violet flush. Kenneth Cass found a real nice

bicolor last spring." Apparently, many of the whites found in Florida are actually more of a cream color, which suggests the presence of yellow. More re-

cently, Michael indicated that the bright yellow has now been found.

The photographic evidence is interesting, although Michael has not had the time to emphasize creation of perfect pictures. His photography has been motivated by the need to create a record for himself of what he has found rather than creating sharp images of single blossoms.

I have seen quite a few of the pictures, and indeed there is a surprising degree of color variation. And, they supply clear documentation of the observed

differences in flower form. Other photos of Florida irises by Steve Shepard add supporting evidence.

My understanding is that the “reds” found in Florida are not on the order of *I. fulva* or *I. nelsonii*. Occasionally an iris has been found with a distinct reddish influence, but it would be incorrect to say that they are comparable to the two indisputably red species.

It is difficult to grasp and characterize differences in Florida irises in terms of color. My appreciation of it is that there are unexpected color variations, although not in great numbers. White is a predominant color in some localities, but that has been reported (and it is an interesting difference from Louisiana where whites are only occasional finds).

At least in comparison to Louisiana, the apparent absence of *I. fulva* in Florida appears to have suppressed the color range of “hybrid” forms found there. *Fulva* contributes both red and yellow to hybrid crosses. Still, interesting and unanticipated variety exists with the very real possibility that a full appreciation of Florida’s irises would reveal complexities in their backgrounds and relationships that we do not now understand.

Origins

Michael Gideon not only searches out native irises, but he has thought about them broadly and often in epochal terms. I am unable to do justice to these themes. He often refers to what Florida and the Gulf Coast were like before, during, and after the Ice Age. How the glaciers retreated, where the irises must have been deposited and how they developed. What the relationship is between Louisiana, Florida and other places along the Gulf Coast. Fascinating stuff with which I am ill-equipped to deal.

Another theme, equally fascinating, is the relationship between native irises and the native peoples of prehistoric times. There is clear evidence of the use of irises for their medicinal and other properties. It is plausible to entertain the idea that, to the extent that these plants were of value in the lives of these peoples, they were collected and planted near dwelling places or even traded.

Indeed, the pollen record in archeological sites clearly shows that irises were present. It is well documented that trade occurred over wide areas, with relationships between Florida, Louisiana and other areas northward into the Mississippi Valley. Perhaps some variation in Florida irises resulted from the intervention of man in ancient times. I am not sure where this leads specifically in terms of our understanding of what we find today, but it is a most interesting line of inquiry.

What Next?

The discoveries of Michael Gideon and his family invite at least as many questions as they answer. Are variations in plant growth due to local conditions? What happens when a coastal form is grown under highland conditions, and vice versa? Dr. Alan Meerow of the USDA Agricultural Research Service in Miami is involved in DNA testing of the Florida irises. That should help nail down relationships among Florida irises and possibly their relationship with irises from elsewhere.

It is sometimes difficult to understand why the irises of Florida have not

attracted more notice in iris circles, including SLI. Small called our attention to them long ago. Certainly, people living in proximity to these plants have appreciated them, and not just in recent times. Iris distribution is widespread in Florida, even if they are not always accessible.

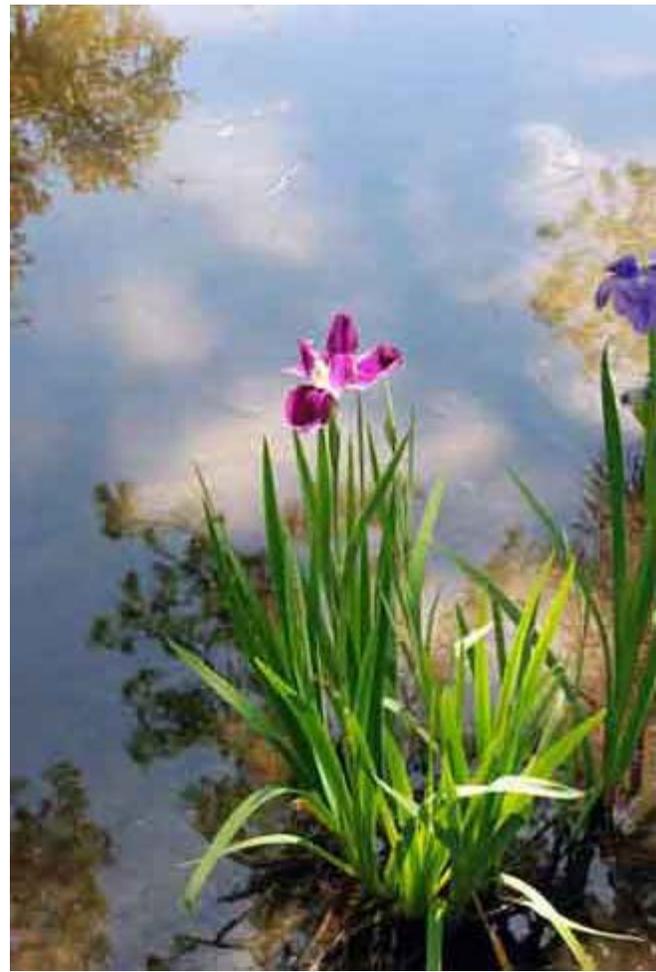
Benny Trahan of Slidell, Louisiana, who has systematically scoured the Louisiana countryside for new and different Louisianas still in the wild, also took a two week vacation to search among the Florida irises. In that time, he did not find great variation, but he was impressed that, if anything, the numbers of plants growing in Florida may easily exceed those in Louisiana, at least what is left today.

With such numbers of plants out there, spread widely over a varying climatic and topological field and often inaccessible, perhaps it should not be surprising that there is heretofore unappreciated variety in the irises of Florida. Hopefully, we are approaching a time when they will be more widely recognized and understood.



A clump of violet Taylor County irises. Photo by Steve Shepard.







Iris Louisianne

Out of the swamps and into your garden

[HOME](#) [ABOUT](#) [CONTACT](#) [WHAT ARE THEY?](#) [CAN I GROW THEM?](#)

[SUBSCRIBE](#) 

A Survivor

by PATRICK on APRIL 17, 2010

I was very happy to see this iris blooming last weekend and for a couple of reasons. First, it is a survivor. It is growing in the shallow edge of the New Orleans City Park lagoon that is a remnant of old Bayou Metairie. The City Park lagoon system is connected to Lake Pontchartrain via Bayou St. John, another remnant waterway that at one time was part of a system of canals that connected the Lake with the commercial district downtown. That was back before there were roads all the way out to the lakefront.



Storms can push brackish Lake water up Bayou St. John and into the lagoons. After the levees failed in Hurricane Katrina, it wasn't primarily the open Bayou that channeled the salty water; the water poured through the breaches to the tune of seven feet and more in some areas the City. Plant life suffered unbelievably and the irises were among them.

Some varieties of Louisiana iris are a



ZYDECO LOUISIANA IRIS GARDEN

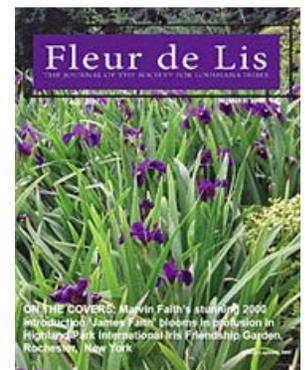


SOCIETY FOR LOUISIANA IRISES

THE BOOK

IRIS FRIENDSHIP GARDEN

FLEUR DE LIS



The quarterly journal of the Society for Louisiana irises.

BLOGROLL

[Always Growing](#)

[Can You Dig It?](#)

[Davy's Louisiana Gardening Blog](#)

little tolerant of salt water, but prolonged

exposure will kill them. Because a drought after Katrina denied a good flushing with fresh water, there was quite a bit of damage, and salinity in the lagoons remained high. I grew Louisianas not far from the Park in half barrels with no drain holes, and the salt water could not get out during the six or so weeks that passed before I could return. A few were entirely dead and all were badly damaged. Removed from the barrels though, they did recover well.

To all outward appearances, the City Park lagoons look like a natural home for Louisiana irises. And before New Orleans became entirely developed, there were vast numbers of native irises growing in what were cypress swamps and low areas. After Katrina, the salty lagoons did not seem so hospitable.

Today there is better control of the entry of brackish water as a result of a weir and fresh water pumps that add good salt-free water to the mix. A few years ago as the lagoons were in recovery, a group of local iris enthusiasts planted a large number of rhizomes along the banks of Bayou Metairie, including some down in the water. It does appear that a number did not make it, but last weekend there were many scapes up with buds about to open. And the early bloom in the picture showed that the lagoons are indeed a habitat in which Louisiana irises can grow. Another big storm will provide a better test, but so far, so good.

The second reason this picture made me happy is that a Louisiana iris just looks so "right" blooming in water. The flowers and foliage have a graceful form. Both wild and hybrid Louisiana iris flowers can be showy, but the plants are not just a vehicle for gaudy blossoms. There are different flower shapes but this flaring one is my favorite. It approximates the natural shape of the species *I. giganteaerulea*.

Louisiana irises look good on dry land, too. Most people grow them in ordinary flower beds, and as long as they don't dry out, they do just fine.

City Park is 1300 acres large. It has made tremendous strides in recovery from Katrina. In fact, it is booming. Those interested can take a look at its website, including a map that shows the lagoon system. <http://neworleanscitypark.com/mapofpark.html> The Bayou Metairie remnant is in the lower right. Bayou St. John runs the entire length of the park along the right side of the map.

{ 7 comments... read them below or [add one](#) }

Jan April 17, 2010 at 1:03 pm



This is a lovely bloom and looks just right in the water. My



Louisiana Irises in Rochester, NY. Photos by Gene Lupinetti.

BATON ROUGE BOTANIC GARDEN



HOW TO GROW THEM



RICHARD SLOAN'S IRIS PAGES



PROPAGATION



[Dig, Grow, Compost, Blog](#)

[Digging](#)

[Evey's Blissful Garden](#)

[From My Corner of Katy](#)

[Grounded Design](#)

[Grow Where You're Planted](#)

[New Dawn Garden](#)

[Our Little Acre](#)

[Outside Clyde](#)

[The Rain Forest Garden](#)

THE SPECIES



Iris fulva, one of the five.

MARY SWORDS DEBAILLON AWARD WINNERS, 1948 - 2009



Tom Dillard photo of M.D. Faith's 'Henry Rowlan'

Louisiana irises have buds but no flowers, yet. Being farther north than you, we have not warmed up as much as south of the lake. It looks like Marie Dolores will be the first to open. That is one I got from you, Patrick, and it has done very well in my garden.

Jan
Always Growing

Patrick April 17, 2010 at 2:39 pm



Jan, we are just hitting full bloom in New Orleans, but it was a late year. I'm not surprised that you are a week or so behind. I'll bet it will be a good year for you, though. Marie Dolores is a really good iris. I find it has the graceful form I like and really grows well.

Patrick

Mark Schexnayder April 17, 2010 at 3:21 pm



Patrick,

The plant(s) shown are undoubtedly one of the ones you donated your community garden irises nearby that was flooded. Your children look very happy and it must make a father proud! From these first plantings eventually resulted in the sculpture garden, Big Lake and other plantings throughout New Orleans City Park. While looking spectacular, our ladies also are performing the very vital function of stabilizing the shoreline and providing habitat and a refuge for the lower ends of the food chain such as grass shrimp, insect larvae and small fish.

There is no finer setting to see our lovelies than a "natural" bayou shoreline, particularly Metairie Bayou that was so salty just 10 years ago that even some of the cypress growing on the small islands died. The irises are like canaries in a coal mine; in this case to see them thriving with their feet in the water is truly a sign of health for this small oasis. Because of Zydeco (you) and the other generous donors like Ron and Bobbie @ Plantation Point, Rusty and Bud of Bois D' Arc, Jeff Weeks, Buddy Manuel and Benny Trahan and the hundreds and hundreds of volunteers, City Park is recovering very nicely, Thank you all.

Thanks also for hosting this blog, like everything you do, this is a first-class act. Very informative and beautifully laid out.

Mark

Charlotte April 27, 2010 at 11:02 am



What a wonderful blog and magnificent pictures!

Laura May 1, 2010 at 11:24 am



I am so glad I found your blog this morning-
I was attracted by two of my favorites:
anything Louisiana and gardening.

I'll be back.

I wonder if your variety of iris will grow in zone 9?



I live in South Texas.

Laura
White Spray Paint

Christian Louboutin May 18, 2010 at 1:44 am



thank! for this news it's a good infomation !

Nancy Bond May 26, 2010 at 5:01 pm



I agree with Charlotte — great blog and wonderful photos. I've added it to my list of Faves and look forward to exploring further!

Leave a Comment

Name *

E-mail *

Website



PREVIOUS POST: [A Florida Native Iris Blooms In New Orleans](#)

Get smart with the [Thesis WordPress Theme](#) from DIYthemes.

[WordPress Admin](#)



Iris Louisianne

Out of the swamps and into your garden

- HOME
- ABOUT
- CONTACT
- WHAT ARE THEY?
- CAN I GROW THEM?

SUBSCRIBE 

About

Iris *Louisianne* is part of the [Zydeco Louisiana Iris Garden](#) website, which contains extensive information on these fascinating and versatile plants. So why a blog too?

I have long felt that a garden journal would be a good way to communicate with other gardeners about Louisiana irises and other matters. The Zydeco website offers an iris catalog, but that enterprise, about five years old, was preceded by a hobby over many years of growing, hybridizing and enjoying Louisiana irises and many other plants. The *Iris Louisianne* blog will offer a more informal way of sharing what is on my mind about gardening and irises and of hearing about the garden experiences of others. Hopefully, it will be more like a conversation than an encyclopedia.

I'm not sure what subjects will arise. I expect to share some of my hybridizing results, my impressions of particular garden cultivars, and what I observe in my garden, in the wild, and wherever else I happen to be. Certainly some cultural experiences will come up, both good and bad. Every season brings both pleasant and not-so-pleasant surprises in the way plants perform, and often for mysterious reasons in both cases.

In large part, what this blog is "about" remains to be seen. I will be as interested as anyone to see what pops up.

-Patrick O'Connor

Leave a Comment

Name *



ZYDECO LOUISIANA IRIS GARDEN

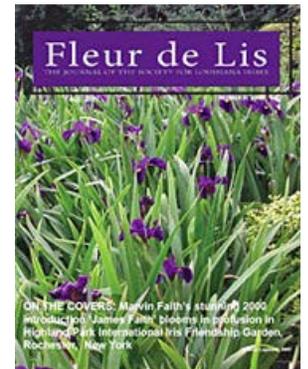


SOCIETY FOR LOUISIANA IRISES

THE BOOK

IRIS FRIENDSHIP GARDEN

FLEUR DE LIS



The quarterly journal of the Society for Louisiana irises.

BLOGROLL

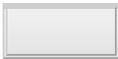
[Always Growing](#)

[Can You Dig It?](#)

[Davy's Louisiana Gardening Blog](#)

E-mail *

Website



Louisiana Irises in Rochester, NY.
Photos by Gene Lupinetti.

BATON ROUGE BOTANIC GARDEN



HOW TO GROW THEM



RICHARD SLOAN'S IRIS PAGES



PROPAGATION



[Dig, Grow, Compost, Blog](#)

[Digging](#)

[Evey's Blissful Garden](#)

[From My Corner of Katy](#)

[Grounded Design](#)

[Grow Where You're Planted](#)

[New Dawn Garden](#)

[Our Little Acre](#)

[Outside Clyde](#)

[The Rain Forest Garden](#)

THE SPECIES



Iris fulva, one of the five.

MARY SWORDS DEBAILLON AWARD WINNERS, 1948 - 2009



Tom Dillard photo of M.D. Faith's 'Henry Rowlan'



Get smart with the [Thesis WordPress Theme](#) from DIYthemes.

[WordPress Admin](#)



Iris Louisianne

Out of the swamps and into your garden

- HOME
- ABOUT
- CONTACT
- WHAT ARE THEY?
- CAN I GROW THEM?

SUBSCRIBE 

Contact

Leave me a comment and I'll get back to you.

{ 3 comments... read them below or [add one](#) }

Melinda Ellzey March 16, 2011 at 5:08 pm



Would like information on joining or participating in Iris Society

Patrick March 20, 2011 at 2:16 am



I don't know where you live or whether there is a local iris organization there. However, the Society For Louisiana Irises is a national, no international, organization that is very active and produces excellent information. The SLI website has information on joining, but browse around the site for more. Feel free to email me with other questions.

<http://www.louisianas.org/aboutsli/join.html>

Patrick

Patrick December 13, 2012 at 11:17 am



Sorry this is not a timely response. Two suggestions. One, go to <http://www.zydecoirises.com> and look at the catalog. Second, go to the Society for Louisiana Irises website and navigate to the Commercial Directory. Generally, new online catalogs go up in the spring. Most everyone will take orders beginning then for fall shipping. Locally, it depends. You might find a nursery that has some. Those specializing in water gardens might be the best candidates. Sometimes the big chain



ZYDECO LOUISIANA IRIS GARDEN

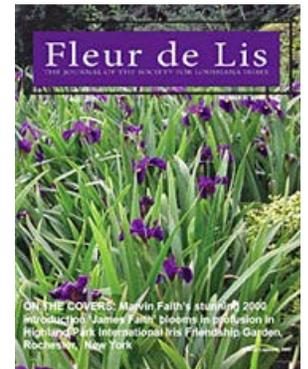


SOCIETY FOR LOUISIANA IRISES

THE BOOK

IRIS FRIENDSHIP GARDEN

FLEUR DE LIS



The quarterly journal of the Society for Louisiana irises.

BLOGROLL

[Always Growing](#)

[Can You Dig It?](#)

[Davy's Louisiana Gardening Blog](#)

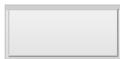
stores will get in a limited number of varieties in the spring.

Leave a Comment

Name *

E-mail *

Website



Louisiana Irises in Rochester, NY.
Photos by Gene Lupinetti.

BATON ROUGE BOTANIC GARDEN



HOW TO GROW THEM



RICHARD SLOAN'S IRIS PAGES



PROPAGATION



[Dig, Grow, Compost, Blog](#)

[Digging](#)

[Evey's Blissful Garden](#)

[From My Corner of Katy](#)

[Grounded Design](#)

[Grow Where You're Planted](#)

[New Dawn Garden](#)

[Our Little Acre](#)

[Outside Clyde](#)

[The Rain Forest Garden](#)

THE SPECIES



Iris fulva, one of the five.

MARY SWORDS DEBAILLON AWARD WINNERS, 1948 - 2009



Tom Dillard photo of M.D. Faith's 'Henry Rowlan'



Get smart with the [Thesis WordPress Theme](#) from DIYthemes.
[WordPress Admin](#)



Iris Louisianae

Out of the swamps and into your garden

- HOME
- ABOUT
- CONTACT
- WHAT ARE THEY?
- CAN I GROW THEM?
- SUBSCRIBE

What Are They?

If you came to this blog from the Zydeco Louisiana Iris Garden website and spent much time there, you probably have the answer already. Briefly, “Louisiana iris” refers to five species of closely related beardless irises native to the Eastern United States and to their many hybrids.

Each of the five species occupies a somewhat different niche in nature, and the blend of their genetic backgrounds in the hybrids has resulted in a group of plants that are adaptable to most of the country and to garden conditions that almost anyone can satisfy.

The header of this blog shows **Iris giganticaerulea**, which literally did come out of the swamps. It is a very tall blue species native to coastal Louisiana and extending west into Texas and east along the Mississippi coast and possibly farther. That’s it you see in the blog header. Giganticaerulea can grow to six feet tall in its habitat, which consists of open swamps and freshwater marsh. Sometimes a white form of giganticaerulea is found. That’s I. giganticaerulea you see in the header image of this blog, growing in a swamp near Napoleonville, Louisiana.

Iris fulva is smaller and typically red, although some see the color as brown, rust red or copper-colored. In truth, the color varies a bit and specimens have been found from red to orange. Yellow forms of fulva are rare but do occur. Fulva slightly overlaps the habitat of giganticaerulea, but in shallower water. And, it also grows up into the Midwest as far as Illinois and Kentucky, far away from the coastal giganticaerulea.

Iris brevicaulis is another blue (and rarely white) species, but it is the shortest of the Louisiana species, rarely exceeding 20 inches tall. And, like fulva, it grows up the Mississippi Valley into Ohio and even Ontario. Brevicaulis is found in wet areas but not in swamps or standing water. Given the contribution of brevicaulis and fulva to the Louisiana iris hybrids, their



ZYDECO LOUISIANA IRIS GARDEN

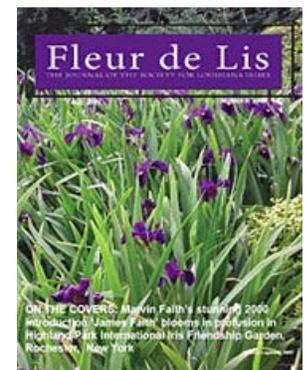


SOCIETY FOR LOUISIANA IRISES

THE BOOK

IRIS FRIENDSHIP GARDEN

FLEUR DE LIS



The quarterly journal of the Society for Louisiana irises.

BLOGROLL

[Always Growing](#)

[Can You Dig It?](#)

[Davy's Louisiana Gardening Blog](#)

cold hardiness is easily to understand.

Iris hexagona is an East Coast species found in South Carolina, Georgia and, especially Florida. It is blue and appears to be a shorter (and later blooming) version of the tall blue *giganticaerulea*. Florida is full of "Louisiana" irises and they generally are all considered forms of *I. hexagona*, but not without some controversy.

Finally, there is one more red species, **I. nelsonii**, found only in a small area southeast of Abbeville, Louisiana not far from the Gulf. *Nelsonii* is larger than *fulva* and was important in hybridizing. There also are rare yellow forms of *nelsonii*. *Nelsonii* has been determined to be a population originally of hybrid origin, and its small, swampy habitat is very much endangered from agriculture.

Today's modern Louisiana iris hybrids are derived from these species and the natural hybrids found in the wild. The story of these irises, including and lots of pictures, is detailed in a the [species pages](#) on the Zydeco site.

Leave a Comment

Name *

E-mail *

Website



Louisiana Irises in Rochester, NY.
Photos by Gene Lupinetti.

BATON ROUGE BOTANIC GARDEN



HOW TO GROW THEM



RICHARD SLOAN'S IRIS PAGES



PROPAGATION



[Dig, Grow, Compost, Blog](#)

[Digging](#)

[Evey's Blissful Garden](#)

[From My Corner of Katy](#)

[Grounded Design](#)

[Grow Where You're Planted](#)

[New Dawn Garden](#)

[Our Little Acre](#)

[Outside Clyde](#)

[The Rain Forest Garden](#)

THE SPECIES



Iris fulva, one of the five.

MARY SWORDS DEBAILLON
AWARD WINNERS, 1948 –
2009



Tom Dillard photo of M.D. Faith's
'Henry Rowlan'



Get smart with the [Thesis WordPress Theme](#) from DIYthemes.

[WordPress Admin](#)



Iris Louisianne

Out of the swamps and into your garden

HOME ABOUT CONTACT WHAT ARE THEY? CAN I GROW THEM?

SUBSCRIBE 

Can I Grow Them?

Yes, indeed. There really is no area of the U. S. where Louisiana irises cannot be grown. In very cold climates, such as in the Dakotas or other upper Midwest states, exceptional protection, such as a heavy winter mulch, are important. For the most part though, Louisianas grow throughout the country without the necessity of heroic measures.

The principal cultural requirements are few:

- **Ample water**, but boggy or swampy conditions are not necessary. Three of the five native species literally did come “out of the swamps,” but all — and certainly the hybrids — are happy in well-watered, garden-variety beds.
- **No less than a half day of sun** for good bloom. A little shade is a good thing, but full sun is okay with ample moisture. Avoid planting them under trees and in competition with tree roots.
- **Tolerant of acid to slightly alkaline soils** (despite some authorities who say acid only). Growers in the western states and other areas with high alkalinity may need to push their soil back to near neutral.
- **Lots of fertilizer appreciated**, either organic or synthetic. Louisiana irises are heavy feeders. A pound of 8- 8-8 for every ten square feet of irises, or the equivalent, is a good rule of thumb.
- **Divide and thin out the plants every few years in the fall**, replenish the soil with compost or other organic matter, and incorporate fertilizer. Fall planting is best in most of the country, since, unlike most plants, the irises growth cycle begins in very late summer. In cold climates, they may be dormant below snow until spring, but it is best to get them established in early fall.

{ 2 comments... read them below or [add one](#) }



ZYDECO LOUISIANA IRIS GARDEN

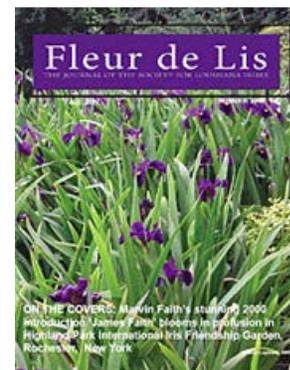
Zydeco
Louisiana Iris Garden

SOCIETY FOR LOUISIANA IRISES

THE BOOK

IRIS FRIENDSHIP GARDEN

FLEUR DE LIS



The quarterly journal of the Society for Louisiana irises.

BLOGROLL

[Always Growing](#)

[Can You Dig It?](#)

[Davy's Louisiana Gardening Blog](#)

Jim Kautz March 31, 2010 at 3:06 pm



Pat...

we are about to test your instructions. We plan to move our irises (and ourselves) to the Franklin, NC area. Not many places with lots o sun on our lot. And the lay of the land is certainly not Louisiana-esque. But they are lovely flowers and we'll do we all can to grow them and show them off.

We recently gave one of Maria's sisters some irises. She has planted them at her home in Brunswick, GA, where they should be quite happy.

Patrick April 1, 2010 at 1:09 am



Jim,
I looked at the map and you really will be in the mountains. I envy that. Those are pretty wet woods, so the irises should have enough water. The sun may be an issue. If less than a half day, the bloom might not be as great.

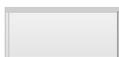
How soon is your move?
Pat

Leave a Comment

Name *

E-mail *

Website



Louisiana Irises in Rochester, NY.
Photos by Gene Lupinetti.

BATON ROUGE BOTANIC GARDEN



HOW TO GROW THEM



RICHARD SLOAN'S IRIS PAGES



PROPAGATION



[Dig, Grow, Compost, Blog](#)

[Digging](#)

[Evey's Blissful Garden](#)

[From My Corner of Katy](#)

[Grounded Design](#)

[Grow Where You're Planted](#)

[New Dawn Garden](#)

[Our Little Acre](#)

[Outside Clyde](#)

[The Rain Forest Garden](#)

THE SPECIES



Iris fulva, one of the five.

MARY SWORDS DEBAILLON AWARD WINNERS, 1948 - 2009



Tom Dillard photo of M.D. Faith's 'Henry Rowlan'



Get smart with the [Thesis WordPress Theme](#) from DIYthemes.

[WordPress Admin](#)



Iris Louisianae

Out of the swamps and into your garden

[HOME](#) [ABOUT](#) [CONTACT](#) [WHAT ARE THEY?](#) [CAN I GROW THEM?](#)

[SUBSCRIBE](#) 

A Florida Native Iris Blooms In New Orleans

by PATRICK on APRIL 6, 2010

This past Saturday, Longue Vue House and Garden held its "Iris Day" emphasizing the contributions of Caroline Dormon, the Louisiana conservationist who originally designed the Wild Garden there, I think in the 1940s. The event was very nice but was one of the casualties of the lingering winter since only a half dozen irises were in bloom. All were species, including several fulvas, a giganticaerulea and an *I. hexagona* collected by Benny Trahan in Florida.



Iris hexagona collected in Florida

All the irises were pretty, but the hexagona was the one that interested me most, for two reasons: one, in form the flower looked exactly like a Louisiana *giganticaerulea*, but the plant was notably shorter. Two, it was an early bloomer, right there with the *fulva* and *giganticaerulea*, which are known

to be early. And yet, one of the characteristics associated with *I. hexagona* is

ZYDECO LOUISIANA IRIS GARDEN

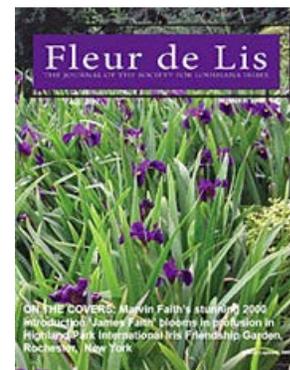


SOCIETY FOR LOUISIANA IRISES

THE BOOK

IRIS FRIENDSHIP GARDEN

FLEUR DE LIS



The quarterly journal of the Society for Louisiana irises.

BLOGROLL

[Always Growing](#)

[Can You Dig It?](#)

[Davy's Louisiana Gardening Blog](#)



that it is a late bloomer. In fact, plants from South Carolina given to me as *I. hexagona* have always bloomed very late, just as does *I. brevicaulis*, reputed to be the latest blooming Louisiana.

So, what's up? Just a fluke in an oddball bloom season? Anything is possible and you shouldn't generalize from a single instance. But who's going to stop me? I fall in with those who think that the taxonomy of the native irises of Florida has not been entirely sorted out yet. The generally accepted view is that all the native irises of Florida that are broadly in the Louisiana group are *I. hexagona* and that *I. hexagona* is limited to the East Coast of the U. S. (not including Louisiana). It would not surprise me if careful study eventually concluded that **some** irises in Florida were essentially the same thing as Louisiana's *giganticaeruleas*, but that others are significantly different critters.

One difference between the Florida iris blooming at Longue Vue this week and Louisiana *gigantaeruleas* is that the Florida flower is a much deeper blue. I would call it a blue-purple. *Giganticaeruleas* are much lighter blue, sometimes light lavender, or even pale blue approaching white. By no means are all Florida irises this dark, but except for hybrids, irises found in Louisiana don't show such a dark blue.

It is unfortunate that the Florida natives have barely worked their way into the ancestry of the modern Louisiana iris hybrids. The sensation caused by the discovery of Louisiana irises in the 1920s and 1930s was limited to Louisiana itself where the vast bulk of collecting occurred and where amazingly varied natural hybrids were found. With scant exception, the stock of the modern hybrids originated in Louisiana. But given that dark blue color found in Florida, that is an unfortunate omission.

Those interested in Florida's native irises might want to check out an [article](#) that appeared in the Society for Louisiana Irises' quarterly magazine.

{ 3 comments... read them below or [add one](#) }

The Rainforest Gardener April 8, 2010 at 9:49 pm



There are a lot of native iris's blooming right now in the ditches here in North Florida and for that reason its one of my favorite times of year!

Patrick April 9, 2010 at 2:40 am



Given the weather this year, if your irises are blooming now they must be a relatively early form. I know there are later blooming ones. I am not too knowledgeable about the Florida irises, but I do know there is more variety among them than is generally recognized. Not as much as in Louisiana where the two red species crossed with the blue ones in the wild



Louisiana Irises in Rochester, NY.
Photos by Gene Lupinetti.

BATON ROUGE BOTANIC GARDEN



HOW TO GROW THEM



RICHARD SLOAN'S IRIS PAGES



PROPAGATION



[Dig, Grow, Compost, Blog](#)

[Digging](#)

[Evey's Blissful Garden](#)

[From My Corner of Katy](#)

[Grounded Design](#)

[Grow Where You're Planted](#)

[New Dawn Garden](#)

[Our Little Acre](#)

[Outside Clyde](#)

[The Rain Forest Garden](#)

THE SPECIES



Iris fulva, one of the five.

MARY SWORDS DEBAILLON AWARD WINNERS, 1948 - 2009



Tom Dillard photo of M.D. Faith's 'Henry Rowlan'

in some areas creating beautiful and varied natural hybrids. It sure is fun to see what is out there each spring.

I enjoyed looking at your blog. Post a picture of those blue irises sometime.

Harry Woford February 27, 2011 at 4:21 pm



A great article, Patrick! I think you're quite correct in stating that many of the Florida irises are a 'different cat' than the Louisiana irises. Maybe during my live time they'll get it all sorted out!

We still dna testing!

Leave a Comment

Name *

E-mail *

Website



PREVIOUS POST: [First Bloom Of The Season](#)

NEXT POST: [A Survivor](#)







Iris Louisianne

Out of the swamps and into your garden

[HOME](#) [ABOUT](#) [CONTACT](#) [WHAT ARE THEY?](#) [CAN I GROW THEM?](#)

[SUBSCRIBE](#) 

First Bloom Of The Season

by PATRICK on APRIL 3, 2010

Here is the first Louisiana iris bloom of the very late season. It's a relatively short (24") seedling (No. 03-07) with a smallish, open flower. There's no huge splash in the garden since it is not a huge flower, but the color pattern is interesting. The parentage is complicated: (Mudbug x ((Harland K. Riley x Gold Reserve) x Flame On)) x Lemon Zest.

I let this one get scattered around to several locations in the reorganization following Katrina. I've finally consolidated it in one place and will look at it another year. The flower is not the big fancy ruffled thing in vogue now but I like the color. We'll see. I am on the fence about this one at present. The somewhat open flower does not bother me at all. As Caroline Dormon once said, they don't all need to be as big as a hat. Of course, in Dormon's day, I think hats were much bigger.



Louisiana iris seedling 03-07

ZYDECO LOUISIANA IRIS GARDEN

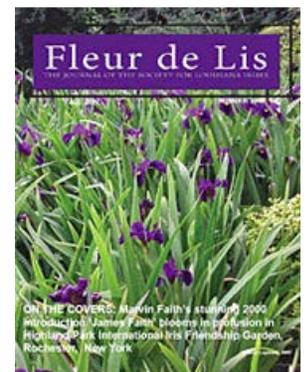


SOCIETY FOR LOUISIANA IRISES

THE BOOK

IRIS FRIENDSHIP GARDEN

FLEUR DE LIS



The quarterly journal of the Society for Louisiana irises.

BLOGROLL

[Always Growing](#)

[Can You Dig It?](#)

[Davy's Louisiana Gardening Blog](#)



Looking at the parentage reminds me that I wish I still had Chowning's 'Gold Reserve'. I gather that it is hard to come by. Dick Sloan has been looking for it, as I recall. I thought it was a fine iris and it still needs to be in circulation. I used to like Rowlan's 'Flame On' pretty well, too. It has a gold signal much wider than the dark red styles, which is unusual. I think I have some of that in a pot somewhere, suffering from neglect, no doubt.

{ 3 comments... read them below or [add one](#) }

Kylee from Our Little Acre April 3, 2010 at 1:01 pm



Hi Patrick,

Thank you for your identification of my yellow irises. Yes, they're aggressive spreaders for irises. My mom gave them to me some time ago. I've shared them multiple times. Gorgeous bloomers.

Congrats on your new blog! I'll have to come over and drool now and then. For example...those 'Henry Rowlan' irises...I can't stop looking at them! And the Iris fulva – LOVE that color!

Patrick April 3, 2010 at 2:57 pm



Hi, Kylee. I agree about 'Henry Rowlan'. And I also love fulva. They do not grow in my immediate area but they are about to start blooming in ditches and slews south and west of Baton Rouge. I'm not sure if fulva occurs in Ohio but it gets pretty far north. I learned last year that one of the Louisiana irises, *I. brevicaulis*, is native almost to Lake Erie. Check out this blog: <http://hiramtom.blogspot.com/2009/06/its-always-nice-to-find-what-youre.html>

Patrick

Jan April 4, 2010 at 9:38 pm



I, too, think this iris is a lovely color. I think there is room for the big and small flowered irises. You don't want everything the same.

Jan
Always Growing

Leave a Comment



Louisiana Irises in Rochester, NY.
Photos by Gene Lupinetti.

BATON ROUGE BOTANIC GARDEN



HOW TO GROW THEM



RICHARD SLOAN'S IRIS PAGES



PROPAGATION



[Dig, Grow, Compost, Blog](#)

[Digging](#)

[Evey's Blissful Garden](#)

[From My Corner of Katy](#)

[Grounded Design](#)

[Grow Where You're Planted](#)

[New Dawn Garden](#)

[Our Little Acre](#)

[Outside Clyde](#)

[The Rain Forest Garden](#)

THE SPECIES



Iris fulva, one of the five.

MARY SWORDS DEBAILLON AWARD WINNERS, 1948 – 2009



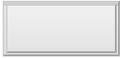
Tom Dillard photo of M.D. Faith's 'Henry Rowlan'

Name *

E-mail *

Website

AMERICAN IRIS SOCIETY



PREVIOUS POST: [The Longue And Short Of It](#)

NEXT POST: [A Florida Native Iris Blooms In New Orleans](#)

Get smart with the [Thesis WordPress Theme](#) from DIYthemes.

[WordPress Admin](#)



Iris Louisianne

Out of the swamps and into your garden

[HOME](#) [ABOUT](#) [CONTACT](#) [WHAT ARE THEY?](#) [CAN I GROW THEM?](#)

[SUBSCRIBE](#) 

The Longue And Short Of It

by PATRICK on MARCH 29, 2010



Louisiana iris foliage at Longue Vue

I took a look today at the Louisiana irises at [Longue Vue House and Garden](#) in New Orleans. There's nothing in bloom yet, but the plants look fantastic. There are many, many scapes showing, and the work of the last couple of years will be paying off very soon. With the damage

from Hurricane Katrina and reduced staff since, credit is due to Head Gardener Amy Graham and part-time gardener and native iris aficionado Tyrone Foreman. Those who donated irises will be proud, too, and include Benny Trahan Sr. of Slidell; Plantation Point Nursery in Mooringsport, LA, especially Bobbie Hutchins and Ron Killingsworth; and Rusty and Bud McSparrin at Bois d'Arc Gardens in Chacahoula, LA. I gave a few rhizomes, also.

Longue Vue is divided into areas with different themes. The irises are the centerpiece of the Wild Garden, occupying both sides of a long curving and sloping walk nearly a hundred yards long. The wild azaleas were beginning to bloom today, and there was Scilla and some nice viburnums. The other garden areas are entirely different, more formal and each unique.

The lush growth on the irises this year is impressive, and is due to the rainy winter and hard work of Tyrone and Amy. There was no bloom to report on



ZYDECO LOUISIANA IRIS GARDEN

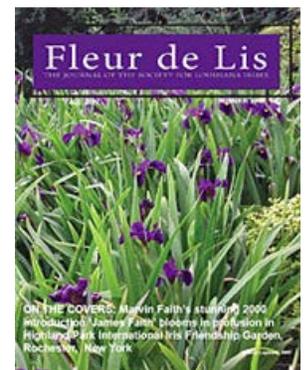


SOCIETY FOR LOUISIANA IRISES

THE BOOK

IRIS FRIENDSHIP GARDEN

FLEUR DE LIS



The quarterly journal of the Society for Louisiana irises.

BLOGROLL

[Always Growing](#)

[Can You Dig It?](#)

[Davy's Louisiana Gardening Blog](#)

yet, but I was struck by a section of *Iris giganticaerulea* and another of *Iris brevicaulis* in a part of the walkway devoted to species. There could not be a greater contrast in size, as can be seen in the picture. The *brevicaulis* are in the right foreground, growing less than a foot tall at this point. The *giganticaeruleas* are the monsters in the upper right center. Their foliage was between five and five and a half feet tall today. The blooms will be above that when they come. The *giganticaeruleas* were donated by Benny Trahan and he may have provided some particularly tall collected plants. In truth, I have never seen them grow this tall in a garden setting. All the other irises, including the many hybrid cultivars were between *giganticaerulea* and *brevicaulis* in height.

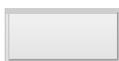
Longue Vue's Wild Garden will be a sight to behold in the coming weeks.

Leave a Comment

Name *

E-mail *

Website



PREVIOUS POST: [A Start](#)

NEXT POST: [First Bloom Of The Season](#)



Louisiana Irises in Rochester, NY.
Photos by Gene Lupinetti.

BATON ROUGE BOTANIC GARDEN



HOW TO GROW THEM



RICHARD SLOAN'S IRIS PAGES



PROPAGATION



[Dig, Grow, Compost, Blog](#)

[Digging](#)

[Evey's Blissful Garden](#)

[From My Corner of Katy](#)

[Grounded Design](#)

[Grow Where You're Planted](#)

[New Dawn Garden](#)

[Our Little Acre](#)

[Outside Clyde](#)

[The Rain Forest Garden](#)

THE SPECIES



Iris fulva, one of the five.

MARY SWORDS DEBAILLON
AWARD WINNERS, 1948 –
2009



Tom Dillard photo of M.D. Faith's
'Henry Rowlan'



Get smart with the [Thesis WordPress Theme](#) from DIYthemes.

[WordPress Admin](#)



Iris Louisianne

Out of the swamps and into your garden

HOME ABOUT CONTACT WHAT ARE THEY? CAN I GROW THEM?

SUBSCRIBE 

A Start

by PATRICK on MARCH 28, 2010

You have to start somewhere. I've worked a good bit on the structure of this new blog but have waited to actually write an entry. With the first Louisiana iris bloom of the season a couple of days ago, the time is right. The first order of business will be to report on the progress of the season. It is a late one. In New Orleans, it is normal to have bloom by mid-March, but it has been a relatively cold winter and cool early spring.

Our local iris society and the Acadiana group are having an iris show in New Orleans on April 10-11, a first here but the Acadiana group has a long history of shows in Lafayette. When we set the date, which coincides with the Spring Garden Show at the New Orleans Botanical Garden, we thought it might be too late for peak bloom. Now the nervousness runs in the opposite direction. It had better get warmer and stay that way. I'd rather not start this blog by complaining about the weather. Not that we have no experience with that in New Orleans.

I don't anticipate that this blog will be about Louisiana irises only. They will be a focal point, but I will feel free to ramble around. Where, I don't know. Time will tell.

{ 7 comments... read them below or [add one](#) }

Jan March 28, 2010 at 8:37 pm



So glad you decided to start a blog and look forward to other posts. I am glad to hear about the iris show. I know my sister and I will certainly be there since we are also going to the Garden Show. Here on the Northshore, my irises are not blooming, but I am hoping to see flowers



ZYDECO LOUISIANA IRIS GARDEN

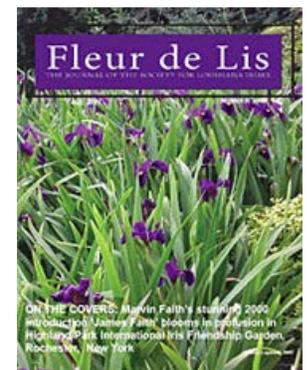


SOCIETY FOR LOUISIANA IRISES

THE BOOK

IRIS FRIENDSHIP GARDEN

FLEUR DE LIS



The quarterly journal of the Society for Louisiana irises.

BLOGROLL

[Always Growing](#)

[Can You Dig It?](#)

[Davy's Louisiana Gardening Blog](#)

soon since I did see some blooming in New Orleans last week.

Jan
Always Growing

admin March 28, 2010 at 9:11 pm



Hi, Jan. I'll look forward to seeing you and your sister at the show. I only have one iris in bloom and sure do hope we get warm weather. I was at Longue Vue today and there is nothing in bloom there. The irises look great though. When you're at the show, you might want to walk over to Big Lake (on the opposite side of the Museum from the Sculpture Garden). They put many new irises there in the past year.

Patrick

Harry Wolford March 30, 2010 at 12:52 pm



Patrick,

As always, you have done a SUPER JOB with your blog. While this speaks greatly for your talents, it also will do wonders to promote the Louisiana iris!! Thanks for doing this.

Harry

Aline Arceneaux March 30, 2010 at 1:06 pm



Congratulations. A beautiful piece of work. Sorry I can't make it to the show – have a wonderful one. The only spikes showing here are in the pond in the back.

Aline

Ron Betzer March 30, 2010 at 1:53 pm



Patrick, it looks great. You have a knack. I have a few stalks coming – Harry's Edna Claunch looks like it'll be the first to open. I'm looking forward to the show over there.

Ron

Cindy Dufrene March 30, 2010 at 2:18 pm



Hello Patrick. What a wonderful idea for this blog! I will be watching and reading it eagerly. Any chance you could post pictures of your iris as they come into bloom? Also, what is the name of your first bloom of the season? I would find it interesting to learn when and what blooms



Louisiana Irises in Rochester, NY.
Photos by Gene Lupinetti.

BATON ROUGE BOTANIC GARDEN



HOW TO GROW THEM



RICHARD SLOAN'S IRIS PAGES



PROPAGATION



[Dig, Grow, Compost, Blog](#)

[Digging](#)

[Evey's Blissful Garden](#)

[From My Corner of Katy](#)

[Grounded Design](#)

[Grow Where You're Planted](#)

[New Dawn Garden](#)

[Our Little Acre](#)

[Outside Clyde](#)

[The Rain Forest Garden](#)

THE SPECIES



Iris fulva, one of the five.

MARY SWORDS DEBAILLON AWARD WINNERS, 1948 – 2009



Tom Dillard photo of M.D. Faith's 'Henry Rowlan'

progressively in your area. At this time, I have scapes on Vermillion Queen and can't wait for them to burst into bloom.

Thanks for putting this out for those of us who are fairly new to cultivating Louisiana Iris. It will be a great source of information.

Cindy Dufrene

admin March 30, 2010 at 11:41 pm



Thanks, Aline, Cindy, Ron and Harry for the kind comments. I'm excited about this. We'll soon find out how much I really have to say. I will post some pictures on the progress of the bloom season. My first bloom was a seeding that looked a little scruffy. I think it might have been affected a little by a freeze a while back, but maybe it is just a scruffy seedling.

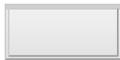
Patrick

Leave a Comment

Name *

E-mail *

Website



NEXT POST: [The Longue And Short Of It](#)





Username

Password

Remember Me



[Lost your password?](#)

KATRINA AND LOUISIANA IRISES IN MID-CITY NEW ORLEANS



The lovely Faubourg-St. John Community Garden after Katrina.



Seedlings in Kiddie Pools

2004 seedlings in kiddie pools. There is some new green showing, but it looks like all the foliage up at the time of the storm is brown.



Left: This close up shows the seedlings in the kiddie pools starting to come back. There are no drain holes in the pools, but they are shallow and the irises were probably not sitting in brackish water for long after the flood ended. Right: This plot contains seedlings grown the ground, not containers. The old foliage was completely gone but new growth is starting to appear in a few places.

Salt



The smaller pots had no drain holes. The nasty black water is visible in the first row. Only the few pots toward the back left had any surviving plants. Those pots were on higher ground and might not have been submerged for as long. Otherwise, I can think of no reason to account for the difference in the condition of the irises. The water line on the house in the background went up to the about the bottom of the siding and I gather it was several weeks before the water drained completely.

There is little doubt that the water was brackish. Look at the residue on the black pot in the picture above right. Looks like salt to me.



If there is any question about the corrosive qualities of salty water, look at the copper crossbar beneath the faucets in the garden. Note the metal handle on the faucet in the upper right and the absence of one in the lower left. It was there when I got back to the garden, but it crumbled in my hand when I tried to turn it. As if it were made of salt itself. Lot's wife is probably in the neighborhood somewhere.



Half barrels in the Community Visions garden. At the back left, note the several barrels with healthy green foliage. They were in a relatively high spot and in barrels slightly taller than the others. They took no flood water. The building in the background is an old ice house.



Mary Dunn's 'Mississippi Gambler' having gone bust.



The two barrels above were on lower ground and near the street but were not water tight and drained. The contrast below is between plants in one barrel that did not get flooded and others that did.



A banana tree fell onto these barrels but the foliage can still be seen. Some of it is new growth and some is old foliage that has not yet died completely. I think it would die if the plants are not removed.



The Barrels

Before . . .



These shots were taken in the Community Visions garden in Spring 2005. All these irises are growing in half barrels, most with no drain holes. They seemed to be happy campers. Little did they know.

The yellow iris in the lower left is 'Lightening Quick', a very vigorous cultivar. I can also see 'Bayou Fountain', 'Poverty Point', 'Andouille', 'Hurricane Party', 'Sunshine Bridge', 'Brazos Abundance', 'Prytania', and 'Sea Knight'. But where's Waldo?



The light purple in the middle is 'Bayou Fountain', which loves to grow in water. To the left is 'Southdowns' and to the right Dorman Haymon's 'Chuck Begnaud'.

Abbreviations Used in the Zydeco Louisiana Iris Garden Catalog

There are not many abbreviations. The entry for 'Andouille' will serve as an illustration.

ANDOUILLE. R1999. Sdlg. 94-22. 32", ML. Cherry red, narrowly rimmed white. Styles also outlined in white, with white tips. Inconspicuous yellow spear signal. *Irish Bayou* x *R. Morgan seedling L-113-B*. A vigorous red that is distinguished by its edging. Pronounced "ahn-do'-ee" and named for a Cajun sausage.

- R1999 Andouille was registered with the American Iris Society in 1999.
- 32" The terminal or top bloom on a stalk is 32 inches from the ground, as specified in the registration description. Usually this is above the top of the foliage. Variation can be expected under different growing conditions and in different parts of the country
- ML This iris blooms from mid season to late. Other irises may be described as early (E) bloomers, or combinations of E, M and L.
- Sdlg. 94-22 Andouille was given this seedling number while it was being evaluated and before being named at the time of registration. Not many people care about this. Maybe none do.
- Irish Bayou* x *R. Morgan seedling L-113-B* The italicized irises or seedlings named are the pod and pollen parents of the iris, respectively. Sometimes one or both parents are not known. The parents might be seedlings or other registered irises or a combination of both. If you have registration information on other Louisiana irises, such as is available through the [Society for Louisiana Irises](#), you could find out about the color and other characteristics of the parents. This background information would be useful if you wanted to use the particular iris in hybridizing.
- Description of flower parts Descriptions include information on the color of the petals (the falls and standards). If the color of the falls and standards is not specified separately, it is because they are the same or virtually the same. Often the style arms are a different color and that will be given. The color of the falls, standards and styles is required to be specified when an iris is registered. Other information may be given in this catalog, also, such as growth habit, vigor or some other interesting characteristic.

[Back to Catalog](#)



Louisiana Iris Gallery 2013

Explanation of Abbreviations

A - C

D - L

M - Q

R - Z

**Species and
Found Irises**

Click on picture for larger version



ACADIAN. R1956, Sidney Conger. 24", M. Standards light rose, splashed violet-rose; falls deeper rose red splashed violet-rose. A unique, velvety red combination. Older iris, but still great. *Caroginia x Rose of Abbeville*.



ANDOUILLE. R1999. Cherry red, narrowly rimmed white. Styles also outlined in white, with white tips. Inconspicuous yellow spear signal. 32", ML. *Irish Bayou x R. Morgan seedling L-113-B*. A vigorous red that is distinguished by its edging. Pronounced "ahn-doo'-ee" and named for a Cajun sausage.



ANN CHOWNING. R1976, Frank Chowning. 36", E. Current red self. Brilliant gold signal. *Miss Arkansas x W. B. MacMillan*. At one time considered the finest red Louisiana produced and the winner of the Mary Swords Debaillon Award, the highest given to a Louisiana iris. A beautiful iris.



ATCHAFALAYA. R1998, Farron Campbell. 34-35", EM. Velvety, very dark red violet, slight silver halo. Yellow signal and green crest on all petals. Style arms red violet. Lightly ruffled cartwheel form. Very vigorous grower. Some stalks lean, creating a rounded clump. *John's Lucifer x Jeri*



BARATARIA. R2002, Patrick O'Connor. Sdlg. 97-4. Bright rose-pink with cream styles tipped with rose. Inconspicuous yellow line signal in a field of cream veined rose. 34", M. *Buxom x Beausoleil*. A remarkably saturated, day-glo color.

BAYOU FOUNTAIN. R1992, Patrick O'Connor. Sdlg. 81-1. Blue-purple with a yellow signal on a white ground. Some white veining near signal. Dark red-purple



styles. 36", EM. *Unknown parentage*. A good, vigorous garden iris. Loves to grow in water, but does not require it.



BEALE STREET. R1996, Kevin Vaughn. 40-44", EML. Ruffled intense dark blue, falls veined deeper. Pale primrose yellow signal outlined black. *Bellevue Coquette x Marie Dolores*. An imposing iris and one of the best blues.



BEAUSOLEIL. R1999, Patrick O'Connor. Sdlg. 82-11. Tall, pale pink with a white suffusion. Style arms cream with darker pink band along midrib. Yellow line signal. 40-42", M. *Cajun Caper x unknown*. Delicate pastel colors on a tall, robust plant.



BERA. R1996, Joseph Mertzweiller. 30-34", M. Standards medium purple, narrow silvery white edge; style arms purple; falls slightly darker purple, veined, narrow triangular yellow signal. *Acadian Miss x Easter Tide*.



BETTY SEE. Wayland Rudkin, R. 2008. 31", EM. Standards lavender violet fading to edge, deepest color in center; style arms lavender violet. Falls same as standards but deeper. Signal gold steeple around raised gold line. Ruffled. (*Dominique selfed x Bayou Mystique*) X seedling.



BIG CHARITY. R2005, Patrick O'Connor. 32", M. Falls appear pink but consist of rose-plum and white veining. Standards are whiter, and the rose-plum veining is less pronounced. Signal is a bright gold line surrounded by a thumbprint of white veined gold. All petals are edged white, more noticeable in pictures than to the naked eye. *Sunshine Bridge x Kristi G*. Named for Charity Hospital in New Orleans, opened in 1736 and destroyed by Hurricane Katrina in 2005.



BIRTHDAY SUIT. R2010, Patrick O'Connor. Sdlg. 06-25. 36", EM. Falls white with very pale overlay of pink. Standards near white with some very pale pink toward edges. Styles cream with deeper, fleshy pink in alongside a lighter midrib. Signals are a loosely defined series of yellow lines, darker toward the middle; a few yellow lines repeated on standards. Slightly ruffled petals. *Honey Star x Nottoway*. The amount of pink coloring seems variable with the season; in 2009 it was near white but it has been more distinctly pink before. Growers in some areas of the country also have reported that the iris appears essentially white.

BLACK GAMECOCK. R1978, Frank Chowning. 24", L. A blue-black self with a narrow gold line signal. Performs well in cold and warm climates and possibly is the most widely grown Louisiana iris in the country. Undoubtedly comes from an *I. brevicaulis* background Increases rapidly. Unknown parentage.



BLUE SPLATTER. Wayland Rudkin, R. 2008. 31". E. Standards and recurved falls purple infused blue, scattered yellow veining. Style arms light yellow tinged red on back. Signal raised gold line on yellow ground. Ruffled. *Dominique selfed, x Bayou Mystique) X Hush Money.*



BYRON BAY. R1983, Robert Raabe. 39", E. The super terse registration describes this iris simply as "Gentian blue." It is a nice iris that deserves a few superlatives. It's an excellent, slightly ruffled mid-blue that benefits from a nice yellow, arrowhead signal. A favorite garden iris. *Clara Goula x (Clara Goula x Gatewood Princess)*



BUFF DANCER. R1985, Frank Chowning. Golden buff with orange line signal bordered brown; cinnamon crest and style arms. Another shorter iris, growing to 31 inches on well formed stalks. *G. W. Holleyman x Little Miss Leighly.*



BYWATER. R2005, Patrick O'Connor. 26", M. Pale blue standards and falls. White styles. Narrow line signal on falls, repeated less conspicuously on standards. Lightly ruffled. Really light blue. "The Bywater" is an old neighborhood in New Orleans down river from the French Quarter. It did not flood during Katrina. *Southdowns x Lake Sylvia.*



CAJUNDOME. R1988, Charles Army. 36", M. Large, rounded, beet red falls and purplish red standards. Very large yellow thumbprint signal. Styles red with yellow rib at base. *Ann Chowning x Charles Army III*



CHEF MENTEUR PASS. R2005, Patrick O'Connor. 36", M. Medium purple falls and standards. Showy thumbprint signal coarsely veined cream and purple, with yellow line in center. Lower half of styles cream, upper half red-purple. Loosely ruffled. *False River x Shizuoka Sunrise.* Originally registered as 'Chef Menteur' in 2003 but it was discovered that the name had been used in 1933. "Chef Menteur" literally means "chief liar" and is also the name given to a channel east of New Orleans that connects Lake Pontchartrain with Lake Borgne and the Gulf.



CHERRY CUP. Richard Morgan, R1988. 26-28", M. Full red with yellow wire rim on falls. Yellow line signal. *F. A. C. McCulla X Little Miss Sims.* HM 1993, AM 1996. One of the most brilliant reds available. A somewhat open and graceful flower form that makes an outstanding garden show.



CHIEF OF CHIEFS. R2008, Patrick O'Connor. 34", M. Rosy-orange falls with a orange thumbprint signal marked by rose-orange veins and a gold line signal. Standards broadly edged rosy-orange with a broad center band of pale yellow and darker center veins. Styles cream washed rose at edges and on style tips. Holds color better in a little shade. *Lemon Zest x Bellocq.*



CITY OF RUINS. R2007. A colorful mid-sized reddish rose. The falls are lightly edged white and the thumbprint signal is a loosely defined arrowhead with distinctly green in the center. The standards have some light green center lines extending a third of the way up the petals. The styles are a fleshy cream with linear rose markings and cream edges. The iris grows about 24 inches tall. Blooms mid season. *Lemon Zest x Tickfaw.*



CHUCK BEGNAUD. R1999, Dorman Haymon. Rich lavender, edged white, falls velvety; gold ray signal edged white; style arms dark lavender, lighter tip; ruffled, serrated. The edging and flaring form make this a gorgeous garden iris. Grows 25-28 inches tall and blooms early to midseason. A good grower, too. *Kay Nelson x (Lafayette Honey sib x Charjoy's Mike).*



CHOCOLATE CITY. R2011. 36", M. Sdlg. 08-05. Light brownish beige with undertones of rose, especially when just opened. Styles cream with hint of gold that partially hide the yellow arrowhead signal.. Very good stalks and form, plus nice foliage. *Princess Leia X Thanksgiving Fest.* Inspired by the ex-Mayor's famous description of New Orleans post Katrina, but the color is a blend, which is what New Orleans really is.



CLYDE REDMOND. R1970, Charles Army. 30", M. Registered as a cornflower blue self with a yellow signal. This is a relatively short and remarkably vigorous blue. The deep color and garden performance has made it very popular over the years. *Puttytat x Snow Pearl.*



COCODRIE. R2013. M, 26-30". Sdlg. 07-13. Standards and falls light orange, deeper toward tips and edges. Yellow starburst signal outlined deep rust-orange. Styles cream with hint of green, tipped light orange and with a deep orange ridge forming a distinct star. Falls light orange. Graceful, flaring flower form that shows up from a distance. *Lemon Zest x Frenchmen Street.* **2013 INTRODUCTION**



COOL NITE. R2000, Richard Morgan. 24", EM. Standards and style arms medium blue violet; falls dark blue violet, small yellow steeple signal. *Sea Knight X Lake Sylvia*



CREOLE RHAPSODY. R1998, Joseph Mertzweiller. 30-34", M. Falls deep wine red to rose red. Standards creamy white, wine red mid-rib and veining. Style arms green base, yellow green midrib, wine red tips and edges. Large yellow signal; lightly ruffled. *Colorific X Tetraploid seedling*

[A - C](#)

[D - L](#)

[M - Q](#)

[R - Z](#)

[Species and
Found Irises](#)

[INTRODUCTIONS](#) | [CATALOG](#) | [GROWING TIPS](#) | [INSPIRATION](#) | [THE SPECIES](#) | [IMPOSTERS](#) | [BLOG](#)

[Organization](#) | [Katrina](#) | [Contact](#) | [About Zydeco](#) | [Home](#) | [Site Map](#)



Louisiana Iris Gallery 2013

Explanation of Abbreviations

A - C

D - L

M - Q

R - Z

Species and
Found Irises

DEJA VOODOO. R2011, Patrick O'Connor. 32", M. Ruffled deep purple self, including styles. Bright yellow arrowhead signal, consisting of a series of segments outlined by purple. Signals are a loosely defined series of yellow lines, darker toward the middle; a few yellow lines repeated on standards. Slightly ruffled petals. *German Coast X Henry Rowlan.* **SOLD OUT**



DELTA STAR. R1966, Marvin Granger. 32-38", M. Deep purple self; six-petal led with signal patch on all falls. *Creole Can-Can X (Creole Can-Can x The Kahn).* Vigorous.



DIXIE COUNTRY. R1993, Kirk Strawn. 28", L. Standards and falls violet-blue. Style arms slightly lighter violet-blue. Inconspicuous yellow spear signal. A good grower that is one of the few hybrids of *I. hexagona* origin. *Lafitte's Retreat x collected I. hexagona, Cross City, FL.*



DIXIE DEB. R1950, Frank Chowning. 38", E. An older iris, long popular and with a terse registration description: "Sulphur yellow self; gold spot." The form of the iris shows its age, but it remains a graceful flower and a remarkably vigorous grower. It can dominate a planting, so give it space. *Lockett's Luck X Louise Austin.*



DUCK LADY. R2009, Patrick O'Connor. 36", M. Salmon self. Loosely defined yellow signal area on all petals, with darker salmon veining especially on falls and becoming olive green near center; falls have greenish spear signal in center. Styles salmon in center edged greenish yellow. Flower form flat to slightly cupped. *Frenchmen Street x Kelley's Choice.*

EARLY ON. R2005, Patrick O'Connor. 36", E. Medium orchid falls suffused white near center and white standards veined medium orchid, especially near outer edges. Style arms are cream with a distinct green cast and orchid on either side of the midrib. Yellow thumbprint signal with an orange center line becoming wine red



and extending almost to outer edge of falls. Irregularly ruffled flower. An early bloomer. (*Shizuoka Sunrise x False River*) X *Bubble Gum Ballerina*.



EDITH DUPRE. R1945, George Arceneaux. 27", E. The registration description: "Canary yellow with orange-red overcast; canary yellow style arms; small yellow crest. I. fulva type." A hybrid but apparently between red and yellow collected forms of *I. fulva*, making it essentially a species form. Great color contrast between the styles and petals. *Bazeti X Maringouin fulva (yellow)*.



ENGLISH TURN. R2012, Patrick O'Connor. 34", M. Medium rose falls and slightly lighter standards. Rounded flower form with overlapping lightly ruffled petals. Styles rose with distinct and frilly beige tips. Small yellow arrowhead signal. A handsome flower and very good increaser. *German Coast x Chuck Begnaud*.



EDMOND RIGGS. R2002, Richard Sloan. 38", M. Falls pastel lilac veined deeper, with yellow edge and reverse. Standards pastel lilac pink with yellow reverse. Style arms cream green. Signals yellow and extending to near end of petal, less intense on standards; edges serrated. Unknown parentage.



EMORY SMITH. R1999, Patrick O'Connor. 36", M. Blue-lavender self with cream styles tipped blue-lavender. Small white thumbprint signal with yellow center line. *Noble Moment x Sea Consul*. Excellent in the garden with lots of soft blue-lavender and contrasting creamy styles.



FALSE RIVER. R1992, Patrick O'Connor. 36", M. Deep red with showy thumbprint signal of yellow, veined red. Styles have a cream and green cast, tipped red. *Mocker's Song x Harland K. Riley*. An overlooked red with excellent substance.



FAUBOURG MARGNY. R2011. Sdlg. 08-10. 38", EM. Pale blue over a white ground. Falls recurve a bit. Styles white. Lightly ruffled. Orange dagger signal.. *Bywater X Beale Street*. Very vigorous. Named for an old New Orleans neighborhood that adjoins the French Quarter downriver. "Faubourg" is an old French word meaning roughly "suburb."



FELICIANA HILLS. R1987, Patrick O'Connor. 34", M. Pink self, yellow dagger signal tipped with a spear of deep pink. Styles deeper pink. One of the best clear pinks available and a good grower. *Deneb x unknown*.

FIESTA GAL. R1987, Charles Arny. 36", M. Registered as having blood red standards and falls, and a large bright irregular signal. Not sure about that exact



color, but it is a nice red and a good, reliable iris. *Valera x Charlie's Ginny*.



FLAME ON. R1985, Henry Rowlan. 38", EM. Standards cardinal red. Falls lighter. Very large bright yellow arrowhead signal that is wider and longer than the deep red styles. Deep red signals red (53B) crest and styles with green throat at base of styles. *Roll Call x Tarnished Brass*. The contrast between the deep red styles and the exceptional signals is the main feature of this older iris.



FLAREOUT. R1988, Marvin Granger. 17", M. Cartwheel form; all falls with signal on each petal. Light blue-purple. Styles greenish cream tipped blue purple. Styles have greenish cream background, which in combination with the styles creates a greenish white center area. *Double Talk x CQ69-1: (Creole Can-Can x Queen O' Queens)*. While the height given in the registration is 17", the true height is nearer 30".



FRENCHMEN STREET. R2002, Patrick O'Connor. 38", E. Light buff-orange self. Orange spear signal outlined in salmon with a streak extending to the tip of the falls. *(Shizuoka Sunrise x False) x Emory Smith*. Robust plants with large rhizomes and thick stalks which sometimes produce offsets like a daylily. Interesting color and pattern.



GENTILLY. R2003, Patrick O'Connor. 36", M. Peach-beige self. Yellow dagger signal surrounded with red-orange. Uniquely marked styles, green at center with cream and wine markings, and wine tips. *Hurricane Colin x Tchoupitoulas*. Average increase on a unique iris.



GERMAN COAST. R2007, Patrick O'Connor. *Faubourg-St. John x self*. 40", M. The purple, crepey flower is similar to Faubourg-St. John but on a much taller, very well branched stalk. The signal is a bright yellow arrowhead. The styles are purple wine, with purple frilly tips, a yellow-cream ridge, and greenish as the base. Has been a good parent.



GINNY'S CHOICE. R2003, Wayland Rudkin. 26", M. Standards and falls blue violet, Yellow steeple signal with greenish crest. Ruffled and recurved. *Cotton Plantation X Bayou Mystique*. HM 2008, AM 2010. Very nice flower and a prolific grower. I am finding that the tendency to have signals on the standards as well as the falls is variable.



GRACELAND. R1979, Mary Dunn. 32-34, M. Bright deep blue self, blended deeper in center of falls; no signal with a slight reddish cast to style arms. Vigorous. *Clyde Redmond x New Offering*.



GRAND COTEAU. R2009, Patrick O'Connor. 36", M. Light salmon standards and falls. Falls have deep salmon streak from tip of yellow arrowhead signal. Styles cream. (*94-1: Hurricane Colin x Irish Bayou*) X *Sharon Juliette*. Nice stalks and a pretty flower.



GREAT WHITE HOPE. R1999, Dorman Haymon. 51", EM. Stands dark blue violet; style arms near black, edged cream; falls very dark purplish violet; ruffled, flared. A big, imposing iris growing to 51 inches. Stands out. It's difficult to capture the color in pictures. *Jeri x Easter Tide*.



GRIS GRIS. R2011. 34", M. Sdlg. 08-38. Deep red self, approaching maroon. Styles slightly darker. Yellow dagger signal outlined in wine. *Andouille x Cherry Cup*. A gris gris is a Voodoo charm or talisman kept to ward off evil. Hopefully this iris will have the same effect.



GULF MOON GLOW. R1994, Albert Faggard. 40", EM. Standards light lavender blue, edged yellow. Style arms green, yellow edge and claws. Falls yellow green, heavily veined green, hint of lavender around edge, darkening toward center, long yellow green signal. *Easter Tide X Old South*.



HARLAND K. RILEY. R1970, W. B. MacMillan. 40", M. Yellow with brown veining on falls. Greenish styles. Unknown parentage. An old favorite that does not look that old. **SOLD OUT**



HEAVENLY GLOW. R1988, Richard Morgan. 36-42, E. An orange-coral. Peach might be a good description. The green styles make this iris stand out. The yellow signal is narrowly outlined rust. A good garden performer and a distinctive flower. Generally grows shorter than the registered height of 36+ inches. (*Missey Reveley x Ila Nunn*) x *Gold Reserve*.



HENRY ROWLAN. R2000, M. D. Faith. 43", EM. Standards and style arms blue purple; falls slightly darker. Bold golden yellow signal. This is a gorgeous iris. A smooth purple set off by the striking contrast with the yellow signal. Great stalks and a good grower. Winner of the Mary Swords Debaillon Award. *Voodoo Song x unknown*.





HIGHLAND ROAD. R2005, Patrick O'Connor. 30", M. Falls red with slight blue-purple suffusion. Standards are a light purplish pink. Style arms are cream, washed and tipped red-purple. Bright yellow crown signal. *False River X Prytania*. Named for the picturesque road in Baton Rouge that hugs the natural banks of the Mississippi.



HONEY GALORE. R1999, Ron Betzer. 32", M. Falls dark honey, veined and overlaid bright amber, orange buff edge. Standards orange buff. Lime green steeple signal. Style arms orange buff, infused black and green toward base. Lightly ruffled. *Louisiana Teddy Bear x Gladiator's Gift*. Nice iris and an unusual color.



HONEY STAR. R1991, Janet Hutchinson. 34", M. Standards. cream, veined buff wine, giving pale apricot effect. Falls cream, blushed and veined buff wine. Rich yellow signal. *Margaret Hunter X unknown*. A very vigorous plant from an Australian hybridizer.



HURRICANE COLIN. R1992, Patrick O'Connor. Rosy orange self. Showy yellow-orange crown signal. *Unknown parentage*. 37", M. A favorite iris from way back, a bee cross from the first abortive attempts to set seed. Has proven an excellent parent. Very nice color.



HURRICANE PARTY. R1986, Dorman Haymon, . 39", M. Lightly ruffled full red violet, slightly darker around large triangular yellow gold signal and down center of falls. Cream styles shading to full dark red violet; slight fragrance. *Blue Duke X Ann Chowning*. Excellent plant on a husky zigzag stalk. Heavy substance that resembles a tetraploid.



HUSH MONEY. R1998, Mary Dunn. 36", M. Standards cream with a blue cast. Falls cream toward center, light blue cast toward edges. Orange steeple signal on a cream-yellow ground. Styles greenish becoming cream at the tips. Ruffled. A very distinctive icy blue with contrasting orange and green markings. Unusual and pretty. *(Clara Goula x Clara Goula) x (Monument x Handmaiden)*.



IRISH BAYOU. R2002, Patrick O'Connor. Deep rose pink with rose veining over a powdery pink suffusion. Yellow arrowhead signal. Lightly fluted and flaring. Contrasting cream styles. *Deneb x Mac's Blue Heaven*. 36", M. This has been a good parent and grower.



KATRINA DOG. R2009, Patrick O'Connor. 36", EM. Falls peachy tan and slightly recurved. Standards lighter, near white. Ruffled. Styles cream with green overlay toward center. Yellow arrowhead signal with green veining and a green center spear. *Ann Hordern x Irish Channel*.

KAY NELSON. R1986, Marvin Granger. 20-22", M. Medium to deep lavender pink falls, with light greenish yellow signal. Standards light lavender pink. Ruffled. Winner of Mary Swords Debaillon Award, 1995. *Lafitte's Retreat x Charlie's Michele*.



KING LOUIS. R2002, Mary Dunn. 24", VE-E. Medium blue, with lighter style arms cream tinged green. Narrow white serrated edging. *Good Vibes x Good Vibes*.



LAFITTE CELEBRATION. R2002, Patrick O'Connor. 36", M. Warm coral pink with matching styles. Yellow arrowhead signal. *Feliciana Hills x (Dr. Dormon x Ann Chowning)*. The color is the main deal about this iris. Not many quite like it.



LAKE SYLVIA. Richard Morgan, R1991. 24", M. Medium blue, orange yellow signal. *Everett Caradine x Clyde Redmond) X Trail of Tears*. This short iris may be the most brilliant, saturated blue available. The color is hard to capture and it is less purple than shown. An open form and charming garden display.



LAKEVIEW. R2007, Patrick O'Connor. 36", ML. A violet red iris with contrasting greenish-cream styles. Opens with a flaring form but flattens. The falls are a richer violet red than the standards and are marked with deeper line red markings from the tip of the inconspicuous yellow crown signal extending most of the length of the falls. *Kristi G x Whereyat*.



LAURA LOUISE. R1990, Joseph Mertzweiller by Rusty Ostheimer) 28", ML. Yellow orange, signal yellow orange (17A). Parentage record lost, but it involved 'President Hedley', Mertzwiller's excellent yellow. 'Laura Louise' is an excellent, reliable garden iris.



LILLIE EDWARDS. R2002, Patrick O'Connor. 42", ML. Falls lavender violet with white rim, white suffused area with lavender violet veining near styles. Standards light lavender pink, white suffusion; style arms lavender pink; yellow lance signal; very broad, slightly recurved form. *Clara Goula x Mudbug*.

LITTLE WOODS. R2004, Patrick O'Connor. 20-22", M. Rosy pink. Falls have light wine line markings outlining a yellow-green line signal and then extending down the center of the petals. Styles light green becoming wine red toward center of the flower. *(Tchoupitoulas x Emory Smith) X Heavenly Glow*. An interesting shorter iris that multiplies very well.



LONGUE VUE. R1999, Dorman, Haymon. 38", M. A large, ruffled white of excellent form. Some olive veining, aging white. *Easter Tide x Dural White Butterfly*.



LOUIS ARMSTRONG. R2013, Patrick O'Connor. 36", M. Ruffled reddish purple near-self. Falls a slightly deeper color. Flaring, somewhat fluted flower form that shows well from a distance. Reddish purple styles have a light yellow margin and yellow midrib near the base. *Tchoupitoulas x Mister Joe*. Reliable bloomer and increaser.



LOW AND INSIDE. R2013, Patrick O'Connor. M, 24". Sdlg. 09-06 . Standards medium yellow. Falls medium yellow with darker rust-rose veins over lower two-thirds of the petals. Styles medium yellow with a deep rose wash on the lower third. Orange line signal. A short plant with proportionately smaller flowers. Forms very dense clump with a lot of increase. Zig-zag, brevicaulis-type stalks. 03-67 X Highland Road. 03-67: 94-20 x Prytania 94-20: (HK Riley x Gold Reserve) x Flame On. **2013 INTRODUCTION**



LOWER NINE. R2008, Patrick O'Connor. 36-38", EM. A smooth-colored, lightly ruffled pale yellow. The signal area is loosely defined and consists of a line of orange surrounded by greenish veins and a yellow orange ground that provides a richer contrast to the remainder of the pale yellow falls. The standards are pale yellow with inconspicuous greenish-yellow center lines. The styles are pale yellow. *Southdowns X (Felician Hills x Natural Wonder)*. This iris is a good grower and a clump will stand out in a few years. "Lower Nine" is the local name for the Lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans, utterly devastated by Katrina but hopefully headed for a rebirth.



LUCKY DOG. R2010, Patrick O'Connor. 28-30", L. Deep rose pink self. Styles are distinctly green at base becoming nearer cream and marked with very deep rose tips and center ridge. Signal is a wide yellow line that does not extend much beyond the styles. The outstanding feature of the iris is late bloom and rapid multiplication. There won't be many clumps still in full bloom when this iris is at its peak. The numerous stalks create a floriferous look, although the iris does not produce many double sockets. *Twelve Mile Bridge x Mister Joe*.



[A - C](#)

[D - L](#)

[M - Q](#)

[R - Z](#)

[Species and Found Irises](#)

[INTRODUCTIONS](#) | [CATALOG](#) | [GROWING TIPS](#) | [INSPIRATION](#) | [THE SPECIES](#) | [IMPOSTERS](#) | [BLOG](#)

[Organization](#) | [Katrina](#) | [Contact](#) | [About Zydeco](#) | [Home](#) | [Site Map](#)



Louisiana Iris Gallery 2013

Explanation of Abbreviations

[A - C](#)

[D - L](#)

[M - Q](#)

[R - Z](#)

[Species and Found Irises](#)



MAGNETIC. R1996. John C. Taylor. 47", ML. Registration description indicates cream standards edged pink with a darker central rib; buff falls with a rose pink spray pattern darker toward edge; buff styles and a yellow signal. To my eye, there is a rich brown tone that darkens the rose pink, and a glowing gold around the signal. *Desert Jewel x Dural Dreamtime*.



MARIE CAILLET. R1963, Sidney Conger. 38", ML. A blue-violet self and an excellent garden iris that has remained popular. It does not hurt that it is named for a founder of the Society for Louisiana irises (in 1941) and probably the best known person associated with Louisiana irises. *Acadian x W. B. MacMillan*



MARIE DOLORES. Dorman Haymon, R1986. 40", E. Ruffled white, veined orange. Orange signal. Cream styles. *Acadian White X Ila Nunn*. Very vigorous and excellent form.



METAIRIE RIDGE. R2003, Patrick O'Connor. 40", M. Falls medium rose, standards lighter. Styles deep rose. *Hurricane Colin x Zydeco*. Outstanding form, bud count and performance. Proving to be a an excellent garden iris.



MISTER JOE. R2005, Joseph Mertzweiller, registered by the Baton Rouge Botanic Garden. 30", M. Falls red with brownish undertones. Standards red-brown over a whitish suffusion, narrow yellow line on some petals. Style arms cream, light coral wash near tips. Yellow steeple signal. *President Hedley x Koorawatha*.

MONKEY HILL. R2005, Patrick O'Connor. 24", M. Falls red orange and standards salmon with light red-orange veins. Very large yellow arrowhead signal. *Tickfaw and Prytania*. Named for a mound of dirt at Audubon Park in New Orleans created for children to play on; the closest thing to a mountain in the city.



MOTHERSHIP. R2010, Patrick O'Connor. 36", M. Falls bright red with a slight hint of orange. Standards lighter. Bright, loosely defined yellow-orange signal with streaks of yellow-orange standards radiating out on the bottom half of the falls. Styles red orange with yellow midrib. (*00-17: Hurricane Colin x Tchoupitoulas*) x *Mister Joe*.



MUDBUG. R1999, Patrick O'Connor. 28", M. Medium purple. Styles red purple. Signal is a yellow orange line centered in a large white thumbprint area; darker streak at tip. *Dr. Dormon* x *I. brevicaulis*. The brevicaulis background shows in the excellent zigzag stalks. Up to 5-6 positions on a short iris. Good garden show.



MY FRIEND DICK. Richard Butler, by M. D. Faith, R1998. 35", M. Currant red, bold golden yellow signal. *Ann Chowning* X *self*. Large flower and good garden performer.



NEW BASIN CANAL. R2009, Patrick O'Connor. 34", M. Sdlg. 05-23. Falls reddish brown. Standards slightly lighter. Prominent yellow arrowhead signal with light green veins, outlined in deep maroon. Styles reddish brown with a yellow-green ridge and edges. Lightly ruffled. *Gentilly* X *Heavenly Glow*.



NOBLE MOMENT. Richard Morgan, R1985. A gorgeous blue-lavender iris with rich ivory styles and a yellow signal in a white blaze. Excellent grower and bloomer. A favorite for many years. The color contrast between petals and styles is wonderful. *Winter's Veil* x *Tru-Glo*.



NOTTOWAY. R2005, Patrick O'Connor. 32", M. Falls and standards are white. All petals have gold veins and falls. Falls have a deep gold center line surrounded by lighter gold veins. Style arms cream. Lightly ruffled. (*Hurricane Colin* x *Irish Bayou*) X *Sharon Juliet*. Named for a large plantation house up-river from New Orleans. **SOLD OUT**



NOW AND FOREVER. R1997, Heather Pryor. 35", M. Standards soft lavender, purple veining, white reverse. Falls soft lavender, purple veining, white rim and blush near lime green steeple signal. Style arms soft lime green, lavender tip. Lightly ruffled. *Cammeray* X *Classical Note*.





OUR SASSY. R2006, Wayland Rudkin. 36", M. Standards and falls dark red-maroon. Style arms maroon with lighter edges. Yellow steeple signal.. Ruffled. (*Dominique x self*) X *Bayou Mystique*.



PERSISTENT CUSS. R2004, Patrick O'Connor. 36", M. Rose pink falls with some white veining around signal. Standards a lighter shade with a white suffusion. Very long, showy cream style arms. (*Deneb x unknown*) x *Irish Bayou*. This iris has grown very well for a number of people and wouldn't go away without a name. Vigorous.



PINK POETRY. R1987, Henry Rowlan. Ruffled shell pink. Yellow steeple signal outlined deep rose. Creamy white style arms. 29", M. *Bryce Leigh x Winter's Veil*



PLUM GOOD. R2001, Ira Nelson, deceased, by Barbara Nelson) 30", ML. This is an old iris that was in commerce for many years before it was registered. Deep red, almost maroon, with an open form. Exceptionally bright and prominent signal. Styles reddish with yellow ridge and center. A good example of an older and distinctive iris that holds its own next to newer plants. *Unknown parentage*.



POINT AUX CHENES. R2005, Joe Musacchia. 34-38", M. Golden peach self, darker around signal; signal dark yellow. A nice warm color and good increaser. Graceful, airy form. *Red Echo x Chuck*



PONTCHARTRAIN BEACH. R2011. 34", M. Sdlg. 06-05. Medium rose over a lighter ground and with conspicuous darker rose veining, especially on the falls. Styles are cream streaked rose with hint of green at the base.. Yellow arrowhead signal. *Victoria Inn X Frosted Moonbeam*. Pontchartrain Beach was a famous amusement park on the Lakefront in New Orleans, now gone.



POVERTY POINT. R1999, Patrick O'Connor. Medium rose suffused white. Ages to powdery pink. Falls distinctly darker around edges. Large yellow arrow signal. Medium rose styles. *Ann Chowning x unknown*. 36", M. Very vigorous, wide foliage.

PRALINE FESTIVAL. Dorman Haymon, 1992. 34", M. Cream, heavily veined and dusted rose-tan, yellow-gold signal streaked green full length of falls; ruffled; rose-tan style arms, edged cream. *Valera X President Hedley*



PRESIDENT HEDLEY. R1979, Joseph Mertzweiller. 32-34", E. Dark yellow self with slight brown shading on the front edge of the falls. Darker yellow-orange line signal and yellow style arms. *G. W. Holleyman x ((seedling x Upstart x Belle Lou).* One of the first of the modern yellows, with a full, overlapping form.



PROFESSOR NEIL. R1990, Joseph Mertzweiller. Tetraploid. Falls dark, velvety red. Standards dark red. Large brilliant yellow thumbprint signal. 30 inches. Midseason. *Complex parentage: [C-76-4: (Professor Ike x Wheelhorse, colchicine treated)] x [C-76-88E: (66-G-Z, colchicine treated chimera x Professor Ike)]*



PRYTANIA. R2001, Patrick O'Connor. 28-30", EM. Deep yellow self. Orange line signal. *President Hedley x Hurricane Colin.* This shorter iris is a relatively sun fast yellow with double sockets on a zigzag stalk. Has produced interesting seedlings.



QUEEN JEANNE. Heather Pryor, R2002. 41", ML. Deep blue violet, lilac rim and reverse, falls with golden steeple signal overlaid on yellow blotch; style arms white blushed violet, lemon midrib; heavily ruffled. *Alicia Claire x 9/934-B: (Sinfonietta x 16/90-1: (Koorawatha x Alluvial Gold)*



[A - C](#)

[D - L](#)

[M - Q](#)

[R - Z](#)

[Species and Found Irises](#)

[INTRODUCTIONS](#) | [CATALOG](#) | [GROWING TIPS](#) | [INSPIRATION](#) | [THE SPECIES](#) | [IMPOSTERS](#) | [BLOG](#)

[Organization](#) | [Katrina](#) | [Contact](#) | [About Zydeco](#) | [Home](#) | [Site Map](#)



Louisiana Iris Gallery 2013

Explanation of Abbreviations

A - C

D - L

M - Q

R - Z

Species and
Found Irises



RED BEANS. R2007, Patrick O'Connor. 32, M. Blooms midseason A medium height rich, rusty red iris with a bright yellow steeple signal. The signal is outlined in deep red rust. Close to a perfect self with rusty red styles and standards only a shade less lustrous than the falls. This iris has an excellent stalk with double sockets at most sites. A vigorous, floriferous iris that makes an excellent garden plant. *Tickfaw X Prytania.*



RED DAZZLER. R1969, Hale. 20-28, M. Short and bright. Grows 20 inches tall or a bit more and is a vivid red self with a velvet sheen on the falls. No visible signal. Breeding involves Dorothea K. Williamson and fulva over three generations. This is another old, open and short iris that will contrast with modern hybrids. The color has not been surpassed.



RED ECHO. R1983, Henry Rowlan. Scarlet red. Grayed purple line signal. Scarlet red style arms and crest. 36 inches. A relatively small, open flower reminiscent of the species, but with a brilliant color. *Tarnished Brass x Terra cotta I. fulva.*



REMOULADE. R2013, Patrick O'Connor. 34-36", M. . A clear reddish orange, about the color of a remoulade sauce. Falls and standards the same color but with a bit more saturation in the falls. Styles closely match in color. The signal is a bright yellow, distinctly defined and somewhat jagged arrowhead shape. *Kelley's Choice x Metairie Ridge.* This iris does not have a fancy, ruffled flower, but the simple form seems to emphasize the beautiful clear color.



RIGOLETS. R2004, Patrick O'Connor. Sdlg. 01-11. 36-38". Mid season. Falls and medium yellow and standards a bit lighter. Deep orange thumbprint signal, lighter orange near outer edge. Greenish styles. Lightly ruffled. (*Hurricane Colin x Irish Bayou*) X *Our Parris.* Vigorous yellow with great form.. The name is pronounced "rig'-o-lees."

RIVER ROAD. R1992, Patrick O'Connor. Medium blue. Yellow line signal on white ground. Medium blue styles with white marking. Slightly ruffled. *Southdowns x Clyde Redmond.* 36", M. Older, but still a nice mid-blue with an excellent stalk, often with branching. Vigorous, and blooms from small rhizomes.



SCARLET LADY. R1980, Joseph Mertzweiller. 39-47, ML. Registered as an iridescent brick red. Yellow line signal. *Unknown parentage*. Good red iris but not much grown today.



SECOND LINE. R2013, Patrick O'Connor. 34-36", M. Mid purple standards and falls. Wide and prominent styles; base color reddish purple with wide off-white border and even longer tips. Style flare upward from the flower at about 45 degrees. Yellow arrowhead signal. The prominent styles are the distinguishing feature of this vigorous iris. *Nottoway x My Friend Dick*.



SHIZUOKA SUNRISE. R2001, Patrick O'Connor. Sdlg. 90-1. Falls red with large yellow arrowhead signal. Standards have orange buff base overlaid with deeper red-orange veining. *Ann Chowning x President Hedley*. 37", M. Flaring form; standards held upright. Great increaser.



SINFONIETTA. R1986, Robert Raabe. A saturated mid-blue with blue styles with a cream rib. One of the clearest, brightest of the few true blue irises. Vigorous. Grows 33 inches and blooms midseason. *Bethany Douglas x (Clara Goula x Gatewood Princess)*.



SOUTHDOWNS. R1992, Patrick O'Connor. Sdlg. 80-6. Upon opening, the petals are a web of fine purple veins over a white suffusion. Quickly fades to what appears to be ice blue. Styles creamy white. Orange spear signal. *Cajun Caper x unknown*. 38", E. This is a vigorous garden iris, one of the few icy blues available. Looks great in the light of early evening. Pollen parent is almost surely Mac's Blue Heaven, although a bee did the work.



STORYVILLE. R2005, Patrick O'Connor. Sdlg. 02-04B. 28". Red falls with a purple underlay near edges and an orange suffusion near center. Falls a lighter red. Reverse side of petals is yellow, creating pretty buds with a red and yellow contrast. Bright yellow spear signal. *Kelley's Choice X Prytania*. Named for an historically interesting and famous early-1900s red light district in New Orleans.



SUNSHINE BRIDGE. R2001, Patrick O'Connor. 38-40', EM. Falls rose wine on lower half, with large veined rose and bright yellow-cream signal area dominating upper half. Standards a blend of rose-orange and cream. Styles cream with some rose-orange marking. *Charlie's Michele x Beausoleil*. Flaring form offers a grace reminiscent of the species. Great in the garden and also for shows. Vigorous.



TCHOUPITOULAS. R2002, Patrick O'Connor. Sdlg. 95-8. Flat colored light purple self. Unusual red-violet signal markings on all petals with matching color on the styles. *Ice Magic x River Road.* 36", L. Unusual color combination that has proven an excellent parent. Late bloom extends the season. Unique.



THANKSGIVING FEST. R1998, Mary Dunn. 38", M. Registered as a "cranberry self," which hardly seems like enough to say about the deep, beautiful color. Very vigorous and an excellent garden iris. Petals are a bit fluted. If the color is not unique, it is close to it. *Rich and Famous x Natural Wonder.*



TWELVE MILE BRIDGE . R2007, Patrick O'Connor. 36", ML. Medium rose with falls lightly edged white. The standards are slightly lighter. Styles are green-cream washed with rose. Yellow thumbprint signal with steeple tip and some rusty lines extending a short distance into the falls. (94-1: *Hurricane Colin x Irish Bayou*) x *Our Parris.*



TWISTED SISTER. R2003, Patrick O'Connor. Sdlg. 96-7. Frosted rose self with white suffusion. Yellow orange spear signal. *Beausoleil x Irish Bayou.* 36", ML. The form of this iris is unique. The petals are very upright and stay that way. All the petals are a bit twisted or fluted. Unique.



UNDER RADAR. R2011. 22", M. Sdlg. 03-07. Bicolor with yellow standards and amber falls. A short plant and smallish flower. Styles green tipped yellow with wine at the base. Signal consists of a green dagger surrounded by a yellow blotch that sometimes is outlined in reddish veins. (*Mudbug x ((Harland K. Riley x Gold Reserve)) x Flame On*) X *Lemon Zest.*



VELVET MEMORY. R1994, Richard Morgan. 28", M. Dark red-violet. Tan halo on falls. Medium green-yellow steeple signal, Lightly ruffled. *Treasured Memories X (L203-A: (Melon Time x Chowning 77-6: (Mockers Song x Ann Chowning))* A wonderful iris from a great hybridizer. Virtually nothing else comes close to the color.



VICTORIA INN. R2002, Patrick O'Connor. 37", M. Red-violet near self. Styles a combination of green, cream and red violet. Yellow crown signal. *False River x Irish Bayou.* A beautiful iris that multiplies well. Rich color and nice contrast in the styles.



WHEN PIGS FLY. R2013, Patrick O'Connor. ML, 30-32". . Standards pale amber on opening, fading to pearl white; pale violet lines in center. Falls pale amber on opening, fading to pearl white. Bright yellow dagger signal on falls outlined in bright violet that radiates out about half the width and length of the falls. Styles cream white. Sdlg. 10-34 *Percolator x Bellocq.* **2013 INTRODUCTION**



WHEREYAT. R2003, Patrick O'Connor. 36", M. Deep purple self. Deeper purple veining around yellow lance signal. Styles greenish tipped purple. *Unknown parentage.* Very good grower and bloomer.



ZYDECO. R1999. Sdlg. 95-11. Burnt orange self. Yellow styles outlined with deeper burnt orange. 28-30", M. Excellent bud count and stalk. Lots of flowers in a great color. *Shizuoka Sunrise x High Rank.*



[A - C](#)

[D - L](#)

[M - Q](#)

[R - Z](#)

[Species and Found Irises](#)

[INTRODUCTIONS](#) | [CATALOG](#) | [GROWING TIPS](#) | [INSPIRATION](#) | [THE SPECIES](#) | [IMPOSTERS](#) | [BLOG](#)

[Organization](#) | [Katrina](#) | [Contact](#) | [About Zydeco](#) | [Home](#) | [Site Map](#)



Louisiana Iris Gallery 2013

Explanation of Abbreviations

[A - C](#)

[D - L](#)

[M - Q](#)

[R - Z](#)

Species and Found Irises

Species



I. brevicaulis. Rafinesque, 1817. The shortest of the five Louisiana iris species. A medium blue flower blooming on zig-zag stalks that often do not rise above the foliage. They grow around 18-20 inches high, and the flowers usually bloom down among the often arching blades. Not as spectacular as some of the giants among the Louisianas, but a charming plant and exceedingly important in hybridizing. Also a late bloomer that will extend the season.



I. fulva. Ker Gawler, 1812. A wild red iris? This is it. Who would have thought there was such a wildflower? But here it is.



EDITH DUPRE. George Arceneaux, 1945. 27", E. The registration description: "Canary yellow with orange-red overcast; canary yellow style arms; small yellow crest. I. fulva type." A hybrid but apparently between red and yellow collected forms of I. fulva, making it essentially a species form. Great color contrast between the styles and petals. *Bazeti X Maringouin fulva (yellow)*



I. giganteaerulea - blue. (Small, 1929). The giant blue of the Central Gulf Coast. Concentrated in Louisiana, but also occurs in Texas and Mississippi. Found in open fresh water marshes and in open wooded swamps. Can grow to six feet under some conditions, but in a garden setting reaches around four feet. Definitely a water lover that produces long rhizomes.



I. giganteaerulea - rose purple. A collected plant of I. giganteaerulea form found among typical blue giganteaeruleas. It probably is a natural hybrid that shows the red influence of I. fulva, although no fulvas are seen in the immediate area at present. The flower form and height and the habitat in which it was found (a cypress swamp) are typical of giganteaerulea.

Found Irises



Baton Rouge Passalong. This iris resembles *I. giganticaerulea* but is considerably shorter (32") and much later blooming. It is found in yards all around Baton Rouge and probably elsewhere, but no one knows its precise identity. It closely resembles the East Coast species *I. hexagona*, which is no longer thought to occur naturally in Louisiana. It has an open species form, is a nice mid blue and a good grower.



"I. vinicolor." "Vinicolor" was one of many species name once given to collected irises that turned out to be natural hybrids. "I. vinicolor" apparently is a first generation hybrid between red *I. fulva* and blue *I. giganticaerulea*. A first generation cross between the two produces a wine colored iris, tall like *I. giganticaerulea* but with the clear color influence of *I. fulva*. These irises are often found in yards in New Orleans, Baton Rouge, and undoubtedly other cities and towns in Louisiana. They are tall and will grow to around four feet in the garden, taller if in water. **LIMITED SUPPLY**

[A - C](#)

[D - L](#)

[M - Q](#)

[R - Z](#)

**Species and
Found Irises**

[INTRODUCTIONS](#) | [CATALOG](#) | [GROWING TIPS](#) | [INSPIRATION](#) | [THE SPECIES](#) | [IMPOSTERS](#) | [BLOG](#)

[Organization](#) | [Katrina](#) | [Contact](#) | [About Zydeco](#) | [Home](#) | [Site Map](#)

Iris Doctor

By M. D. Faith

Fall & Winter:

Most of the Louisiana iris grown here in Arkansas and Oklahoma are cold hardy iris, and can stand the winter without damage. This is due in part to the work of our own Arkansas hybridizers, Frank Chowning, Henry Rowlan, and Richard Morgan. They used *iris brevicaulis* and *iris fulva* derived hybrids in their breeding programs to add cold hardiness to their seedlings. *Iris brevicaulis* is native to the rivers, swamplands, and streams ranging to the northern borders of the United States and even into Canada. *Iris fulva* occupies the same habitat ranging as far north as Missouri and Ohio. So most of the cultivars grown locally are cold hardy hybrids. They even survive in North Dakota and Minnesota with heavy mulching in the winter.

Louisiana iris hybrids out of *iris giganticaerulea* are more sensitive to severe winter cold. This species native habitat is along the warm southern gulf coast with the heaviest concentration on the Louisiana gulf coast. Thus hybrids with this specie in their background are subject to being damaged or killed in winter in our area. Bloom stalk damage is usually the most likely thing, resulting in no bloom or scant bloom.

We normally use mulch of two to four inches on Louisiana iris to protect the rhizomes from the summer sun and conserve moisture. Just leave that in place, or possibly add a new layer on top to take care of that which has decomposed, and they should go through the winter without any loss due to the cold.

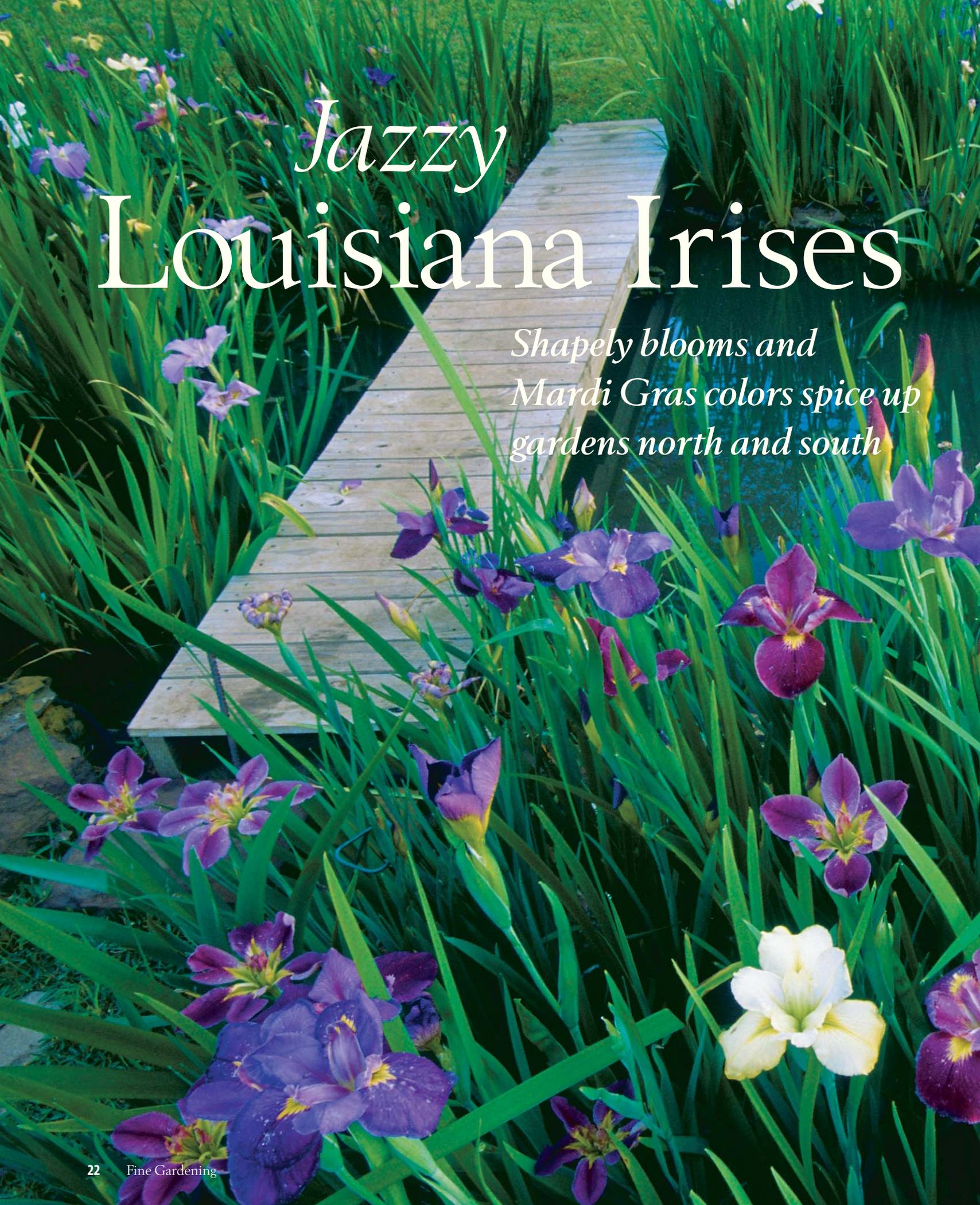
Container plants are another thing, because the whole plant is above ground and subject to the full force of winter cold. If possible they should be moved to a southern exposure on the south side of a building or other structure, which will give them protection from cold north wind.

As you move and bunch the plants, you should pack leaves, straw, or other insulating material around and between the containers, putting three or four inches around the fans and on top of the containers, also. Those that were or are in pans of water should be limited to pans that are no taller than one-fifth the height of the container. (2" for height of 10").

Growing conditions should change, somewhat, for the winter months for two reasons. Early fall and early winter comprise the first half of the Louisiana iris's prime growing season. In fact, the time to set new Louisiana iris beds is in late September and October. They will grow rapidly during this period, if given proper care, until we start getting repeated hard freezes. This generally does not occur until late December or early January. The foliage may winter kill during the hard cold winter months of January and early February, but will put up and resume growth during it's second growth period, prior to bloom, in late winter and early spring, starting approximately mid-February. Rapid and robust growth will be achieved by the last of March into April. The bloom season will begin in late April and continue through the first 15 to 20 days of May. Some late blooming cultivars may extend the season another 15 days.

Best wishes for the 2008 bloom season,

M. D. Faith



Jazzy Louisiana Irises

*Shapely blooms and
Mardi Gras colors spice up
gardens north and south*



by Marie Caillet

As a child I grew up alongside the bearded irises and wildflowers my mother raised each year. They were almost like family. Then, about the time of my 25th birthday, I moved from hot, dry Dallas to steamy, southern Louisiana. When the damp, humid climate of my new home proved intolerable for my beloved bearded irises, I had to make a dire decision. I could either head back to Texas, or I could try my hand with a beautiful wildflower native to the Gulf Coast—the Louisiana iris. Luckily, I chose the iris.

I liked Louisianas right away for their vivid yellows, bright blues and rich brick reds; for the fact that they were natives; and, finally, because they seemed so neglected. Gardeners paid them so little attention that it was as if the flowers needed somebody to help them along. That's where I came in.

I recognized their potential. They are easy to breed, easy to grow (they thrive as far north as Canada) and, of course, they are beautiful. We got along famously.

AN IRIS AT HOME ALMOST EVERYWHERE IN THE GARDEN

I grow most of my Louisiana irises with annuals and other perennials in regular flower beds, along borders, and in with my vegeta-

A wonder in water gardens, Louisiana irises are naturally a water or bog plant. The author showcases yellow 'Professor Barbara,' red 'Professor Neil' and rose 'Professor Marta Marie' in her own pond planting.





Louisiana irises command attention even in an informal setting. White Shasta daisies and pink phlox help create a bright backdrop (above).

Create a memorable composition with Western spider lilies and a splash of 'Colorific' Louisiana irises (near left). In the background, bursts of Penstemon break through thickets of swordlike iris foliage.

Like bright jolts of electricity, streams of white emanate from the center of a 'Violet Ray' (far left). The ray pattern of colors is typical of many water-loving irises.

bles. My most dramatic plantings are at the edges of a small pond that was once an overgrown mess (photo, p. 22).

I have a very informal garden that is often compared to English cottage gardens. The iris beds are also filled with larkspurs, *Coreopsis*, *Penstemon*, periwinkles and spider lilies (bottom right photo, facing page). To add to the informal look, I allow annuals such as old-fashioned petunias, annual poppies and Johnny jump-ups to reseed throughout (photo, left). Most bloom about the same time as the Louisiana irises. Perennials like daisies, phlox and daylilies add to the color and extend the bloom into summer. Daylilies are especially desirable since their bloom begins just as the irises finish.

LOUISIANA IRISES COME IN SCORES OF SHAPES, SIZES AND COLORS

Louisiana iris is the collective name for five iris species native to boggy coastal areas from the southern Atlantic states into Central Texas. They interbreed easily, and their many hybrid offspring—whether the work of botanists or of nature—are also known as Louisiana irises.

The common name comes courtesy of naturalist and wildlife artist John James Audubon, who painted the brick-red *Iris fulva* into the background of a portrait of the Parula warbler (illustration, above right). He identified the bloom as a Louisiana iris. The name stuck.

Each of the five original Louisiana iris species contributes a special quality to the hundreds of hybrids now on the market. The tallest *I. giganticaerulea*, grows up to 5 feet. It is an early bloomer with white to blue-purple flowers. *I. brevicaulis*, also white to blue, is a very late bloomer and grows under 2 feet tall. Another late bloomer, the slightly taller *I. hexagona*, has flowers in the same color range. The species of *I. fulva* and *I. nelsonii* contribute the brilliant reds and yellows for which Louisiana irises have become known. No other native iris started with this intense red color. With blooms in the primary colors of red, yellow



LOUISIANA IRIS

(*Iris fulva*, *I. giganticaerulea*, *I. brevicaulis*, *I. hexagona*, *I. nelsonii* and their hybrids)

- ◆ Herbaceous perennial hardy to USDA Hardiness Zone 4 (–30°F)
- ◆ Excellent in water or bog gardens
- ◆ In beds, prefers neutral to acid soil, and thrives with a half day or more of sun
- ◆ Use mulch to keep soil moist and protect rhizomes from sunburn
- ◆ Plants spread quickly from rhizome

and blue plus the native whites, Louisiana irises can be crossbred to make almost any color. There are blends such as 'Just Helene', bi-tones such as 'Kristi G' and near bi-colors like 'Colorific'. A signal patch marking—a colored swatch found on nearly all water-type irises—adds a splash of yellow or orange to the falls, the outer part of the flower, and sometimes to both the falls and the standards, the flower's inner petals (bottom left photo, facing page).

There is also extensive variety in flower forms. Some have upright standards and flaring falls like bearded irises. One of them, 'Kristi G', has a flaring form I call a



A namesake for four cultivars of Louisiana iris, author Marie Caillet was attracted to these Gulf Coast natives long before they became popular garden plants. Here, she stands by a clump of pink 'Kristi G'.

“butterfly” (photo, above). Others, such as ‘Delta Star’, have flower parts flat as cartwheels. Still others resemble Japanese irises, with the standards and falls hanging like a pendant.

A few cultivars have extra petals or petaloids, giving a double effect—‘Double Talk’ is a prime example. Others, such as ‘Bayou Fountain’, are ruffled or have lacy edges. The size of flowers ranges from about 4 inches across to the 7-inch-across ‘Aunt Shirley’, named for my sister.

The variations are endless. Characteristics such as height, color, markings and flower form are limited only by the imagination of modern hybridizers. About 500 different cultivars are currently available, but more than 1,000 have been registered.

LOUISIANA IRISES ARE EASY TO PLEASE

These so-called “Southern State Irises” adapt to garden situations from Canada to Arizona. The rhizomes and foliage

are almost disease-free if given good culture. Louisiana irises are hardy to USDA Hardiness Zone 4, with some record of success in even colder areas. They are grown on every continent save Antarctica, and have become one of the most popular irises in Australia.

Cultural requirements for Louisiana irises are simple: at least a half day of sun, a neutral or acidic soil, and plenty of fertilizer and water. They will grow almost anywhere, but very sandy or heavy clay soils should be amended with humus, such as peat moss, compost, bark mulch or rotted hay. Since Louisiana irises are naturally a water or bog plant, they excel in water gardens. The constant moisture keeps the rhizomes cool and prevents them from drying out when the plant’s growth slows during hot Texas summers. If the rhizomes do dry out, the plant’s growth suffers in fall and it may not bloom the next spring.

Late summer and early fall are the best times to plant or transplant Louisianas, but

planting is also possible right after bloom. New growth appears in fall, and in mild winters the foliage remains erect and green.

Most gardeners purchase Louisiana irises through mail order. Rhizomes are usually shipped moist and are wrapped in a plastic bag. On arrival, you should remove them from the bag and place them in water to rehydrate overnight. Never allow the rhizomes to dry out.

Louisiana iris rhizomes should be planted at least 1 inch under the soil, then topped off with 2 to 4 inches of compost or other mulching material. I like to use pine needles because they do not pack down or wash away with heavy rains. Once in the ground, new plants should be well watered until new roots begin to grow.

Mulch helps hold moisture and keeps the sun from scalding the rhizomes. I keep six compost bins full of oak leaves, pine needles, old flowers and even weeds, and use the compost to enrich beds prior to fall planting or as a mulch during the summer. Growers in colder climates will need to mulch during the winter.

Louisiana irises do not form compact clumps like Japanese and Siberian irises. Instead, they spread out as they increase, moving away from the initial rhizome. To keep cultivars separate for easier identification, space plants 2 to 3 feet apart. For an instant garden effect, group several different cultivars more closely.

Irises need fertilizing about four to six weeks before bloom to ensure sturdy stalks and good flowers. Established plants that are not being transplanted also need to be fertilized in late summer or early fall. I recommend a regular balanced garden fertilizer or an acid type sold for camellias and azaleas. I also like some of the water-soluble acid-type spray fertilizers on the market.

TURNING A SWAMPY, OVERGROWN EYESORE INTO A SHOWCASE FOR IRISES

My real showstopping display of Louisiana irises came about almost by accident.

Thirty-five years after discovering the wildflower, I retired and moved back to north

A treasury of garden-worthy Louisiana irises

It's hard to pinpoint what makes some Louisiana iris cultivars more appealing than others, but most of those listed below have been in my garden for a long time. Some I've used to create whole landscapes. Others just seem to grow exceptionally well in my north Texas garden. Any list like this might change from year to year, but last season, these flowers caught my eye:

♦ **'Cajun Sunrise'**—The most photographed Louisiana iris in my garden, this breakthrough

in color features brownish-red flower parts edged in yellow.

♦ **'Colorific'**—Lavender falls, nearly white standards and a green throat make this excellent grower a standout.

♦ **'Crisp Lime'**—This ruffled white flower has a green throat.

♦ **'Delta Star'**—This cartwheel-shaped flower is dark purple, with narrow yellow signals. It grows especially well in water.

♦ **'Dixie Deb'**—This old cultivar makes an excellent garden flower. It's tall but well proportioned, with medium-sized yellow blooms. It increases well and grows under almost all conditions.

♦ **'Dural White Butterfly'**—Ruffled white blooms open in a clump atop this medium-height iris.

♦ **'Felician Hills' and 'Aunt Shirley'**—These medium-height and tall (respectively) cultivars are grown for their large, showy pink flowers. They increase well.

♦ **'Grace Duhon'**—As one of the darkest purples in the garden, the blooms of this cultivar provide an excellent contrast to lighter-colored flowers.

♦ **'Kristi G'**—This late bloomer has large, pinkish-lavender flowers; an excellent grower in bogs

and regular flower beds.

♦ **'Marie Caillet'**—This old cultivar, named after me, grows and blooms under almost any conditions. Its blue-purple flowers appear on tall, branching stalks.

♦ **'Marie Dolores'**—This excellent grower is beautifully branched. Its flower is white with a yellow-orange signal.

♦ **'Mrs. Ira Nelson'**—Slightly ruffled, flaring lavender flowers characterize this old cultivar.

♦ **'President Hedley'**—One of the few gold-colored Louisianas, this excellent grower has a Japanese-type pendant form.

♦ **'Professor Fritchie'**—Blooms of this tall and stately iris tower as much as 5 feet above the pond. It is one of the hardiest of the tetraploid varieties.

♦ **'Professor Ike' and 'Professor Claude'**—These large reddish-purple blooms with yellow signals were the first Louisiana-iris tetraploids.

♦ **'Professor Neil'**—Excellent color is the hallmark of this reddest of red Louisianas. Its flower is marked by a bright yellow signal.

♦ **'Rose Cartwheel'**—This desirable garden flower has narrow fronds of foliage and flat, rose-red blossoms. —M.C.



As the reddest of the Louisiana irises, 'Professor Neil' is something of a curiosity. This cultivar is one of the recently developed tetraploids, genetic treasures that hybridizers hope to use in the development of even more abundant diversity among Louisiana irises.



The 'Delta Star' shines bright. This tall, cartwheel-shaped variety stands nearly 4 feet off the ground.



At nearly 7 inches across, 'Aunt Shirley' offers an eye-ful of color. This tall vivid flower is named for the author's sister, Shirley Welch.

SOURCES

BAY VIEW GARDENS
1201 Bay St., Santa Cruz, CA
95060. Catalog, \$1.50.

BOIS D'ARC GARDENS
1831 Bull Run Rd.,
Schriever, LA 70395; 504-
446-2329. Catalog, \$1.

CONTEMPORARY GARDENS
Box 534, Blanchard, OK
70310; 405-485-3302.
Catalog, \$1.

LONE STAR IRIS GARDENS
5637 Saddleback Rd.,
Garland, TX 75043; 214-
240-4016. Catalog, \$2.

LOUISIANA NURSERY
Rte. 7, Box 43, Opelousas,
LA 70570; 318-948-3696.
Catalog, \$4.

REDBUD LANE IRIS GARDEN
Rte. L, Box 141, Kansas, IL
61933; 217-948-5478.
Catalog, \$1.

Extend the season of bloom by planting different iris species together. Another water-loving iris, yellow flag (*Iris pseudacorus* 'Roy Davidson') blooms earlier than the Louisiana irises, but its flowers linger long enough to complement a selection of bright Louisianas.

Texas to settle in a weekend cottage on some old family property, near a lake. The grounds had never been “groomed,” were overgrown with cedars, wildflowers and weeds, and overrun with foxes and coyotes, raccoons and armadillos, and snakes—including copperheads and water moccasins. If I planned to live here permanently, I had to civilize this place.

So I set to work making gardens, and soon it was decision-making time again: I could either go back to bearded irises, or I could try to grow the Louisianas in a climate that was hot and dry during summer, and cold in winter—very different from their natural habitat. Despite the scant encouragement I got from other iris growers, I wasn't going to give up easily. By this time I had a consuming interest in Louisianas, and was growing them and promoting them to other gardeners. I began interplanting a few with other irises—bearded varieties, spuria, Japanese and Siberian—and soon found that the Louisianas grew and bloomed just as well as the others.

As I continued civilizing my landscape, the biggest challenge was an old, abandoned holding pond for minnows. Its edges were thick with weeds and grasses, seedling shrubs and native cedars. Passing fishermen had left trash behind, and a rock retaining wall along one side had crumbled into the pond. I decided to clean up the mess and turn the pond into a showcase for my Louisiana irises; I knew they would thrive in water.

Once cleaned and cleared, the pond was about 15 feet wide and 40 feet long. When it is full of water, the deepest part is about 3 feet. Each end slopes up to ground level, where there are boglike beds. On the side of the pond nearest the house, I built a nar-



row planting shelf. The irises planted on the shelf and in the bogs gradually spread, moving toward the deeper water in such a hurry that their rhizomes actually grew over rocks. In fact, they multiply so rapidly that I have to thin them a little very other year. And every four or five years, I have to remove almost everything and start over.

I've probably given away as many as 15,000 rhizomes since starting the pond planting in 1980. At bloom time, in late April and early May, the pond becomes a riot of color.

A few water-loving plants have been added to extend the bloom season. *Iris virginica* and *I. pseudacorus* begin blooming earlier than the Louisianas (photo, above).



Japanese irises planted above water on the pond's edge bloom about a month after the other irises have flowered, but their foliage forms a nice green background to the Louisiana iris blooms. Spider lilies, native to Louisiana and Texas, bloom with the Louisianas and require identical culture. Visually, there is nothing to compare with

the sea of flowers—whites and yellows and reds and pinks and lavenders and purples and blues—blooming in and on the edge of the water. The irises, although growing more than 400 miles from their native habitats, seem completely at home, and the pond has become a real showcase. It's a treasure rescued from the trash.

My pond makes a pretty picture, and it is the most photographed spot in my garden. People ask what's in the pond, and I'm proud to tell them—after all, the Louisianas are now part of the family too. ♡

Marie Caillet has been growing Louisiana irises for more than 50 years.















































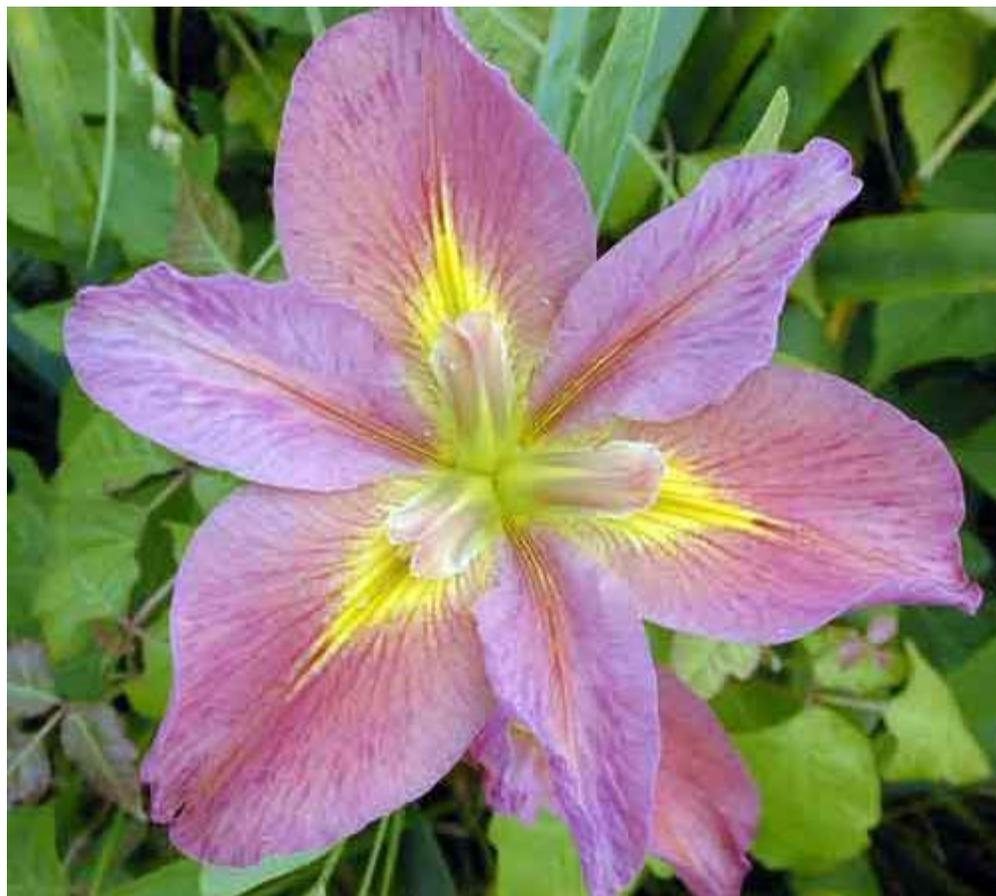
































































THE IRIS FRIENDSHIP GARDEN IN BLOOM
HIGHLAND PARK
ROCHESTER NEW YORK



From top left: 'Black Gamecock (Chowning), 'Friends' Song' (Haymon), 'Easter Tide' (Army), and 'Ann Chowning' (Chowning). Left: A clump of 'Heavenly Glow' (Morgan). Above, from top:

*'Colorific' and 'Cajun Sunrise' (both
Mertzweiller).*

Photos by Gene Lupinetti

[Back to Iris Friendship Garden Main Page](#) **More:** [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#)



HIGHLAND PARK ROCHESTER, NY

Highland Park was designed by Frederick Law Olmstead, often called the "father of landscape architecture." In the late 1800s, Olmstead designed many well know parks, including Central Park in New York and the Biltmore Estate gardens in Asheville.

Highland Park was designed as an arboretum, and although many features have been added over the years, the Olmstead core is preserved to serve its original purpose. The Monroe County web site points to "over 1200 lilac shrubs ..., a

Japanese Maple collection, 35 varieties of sweet-smelling magnolias, a barberry collection, a rock garden with dwarf evergreens, 700 varieties of rhododendron, azaleas, mountain laurel and andromeda, horse chestnuts, spring bulbs and wildflowers and a large number of trees." The Park also hosts an annual Lilac Festival.

The Iris Friendship Garden is located in the original section of the Park and extends and embellishes the mission of displaying a wide variety of plants.



Photos by Gene Lupinetti

[Back to Iris Friendship Garden Main Page](#)

[Highland Park Page Two](#)

From Airport to Botanic Garden

How Louisiana Irises Landed in Baton Rouge's Independence Park



Until 1975, what is now Independence Park in Baton Rouge was part of the city's Downtown Airport, devoted to small planes rather than large commercial aircraft. After the airport was relocated from the mainly residential area, portions of the 200 acre site were designated by the City-Parish Council for a public park to be run by the Recreation and Parks Commission, BREC.

The Park was dedicated in 1976, but the Botanic Garden did not take shape until the late 80s. In 1988, Baton Rouge Green raised funds for a revised Master Plan for the Park, and that Plan included fifteen acres for a Botanic Garden.

Naturally, a former airport presented a blank slate for plants. No stately oaks or interesting stands of natives, only the opportunity to imagine a beautiful future, to plan and create it. Working with sponsoring community groups and interested gardeners, BREC has developed a Garden featuring sections dedicated to particular types of plants.

These include Rose, Camellia, Crape Myrtle Gardens, as well as a Butterfly Garden and a Sensory Garden devoted to herbs. A fine collection of daylilies has been interspersed in recent years on berms among the Louisiana irises.

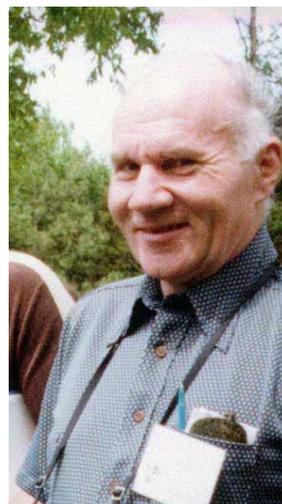
The Louisiana Iris Garden was the last dedicated, in April 2000, two years after Joe Mertzweiller's death at age 76. Joe was very active on the front end of the development and had been instrumental in creating an earlier version of the Louisiana Iris Garden. Working with Joe, BREC in 1994 scooped out an area about 75 feet in diameter, creating bog-like conditions for the

water loving irises. Joe donated plants from his garden and collected others from such Louisiana iris experts as Marie Caillet of Little Elm, TX. And the first Louisiana Iris Garden was born in the shallow pond..

The original planting proved difficult to maintain and access, however. A visitor could walk around the perimeter, but only those irises near the edge could be closely viewed without venturing into the bog. And weed control proved very problematic.

Eventually it was decided that the iris garden should be more formally designed and allow visitors to walk through on paved paths that put them in the midst of the irises. With funding by BREC and Freeport McMoran, a new plan was developed and a redesigned Louisiana Iris Garden was dedicated on April 16, 2000. The pictures on these pages show the bounty of this garden over the years.

Two articles in the journal of the Society for Louisiana Irises, available as pdf files cover in more detail the [development of the Louisiana Iris Garden \(500k\)](#) and the [dedication event \(300k\)](#).



Joseph K. Mertzweiler



Helene Mertzweiler cuts the ribbon at the Louisiana Iris Garden dedication.



The dedication program.

Getting It Done, Keeping It Going

The design, construction, funding, and maintenance of the Louisiana Iris Garden have involved many people and organizations as well as individuals with a particular interest in irises. The Baton Rouge Botanic Garden represents a successful example of public-private partnership.

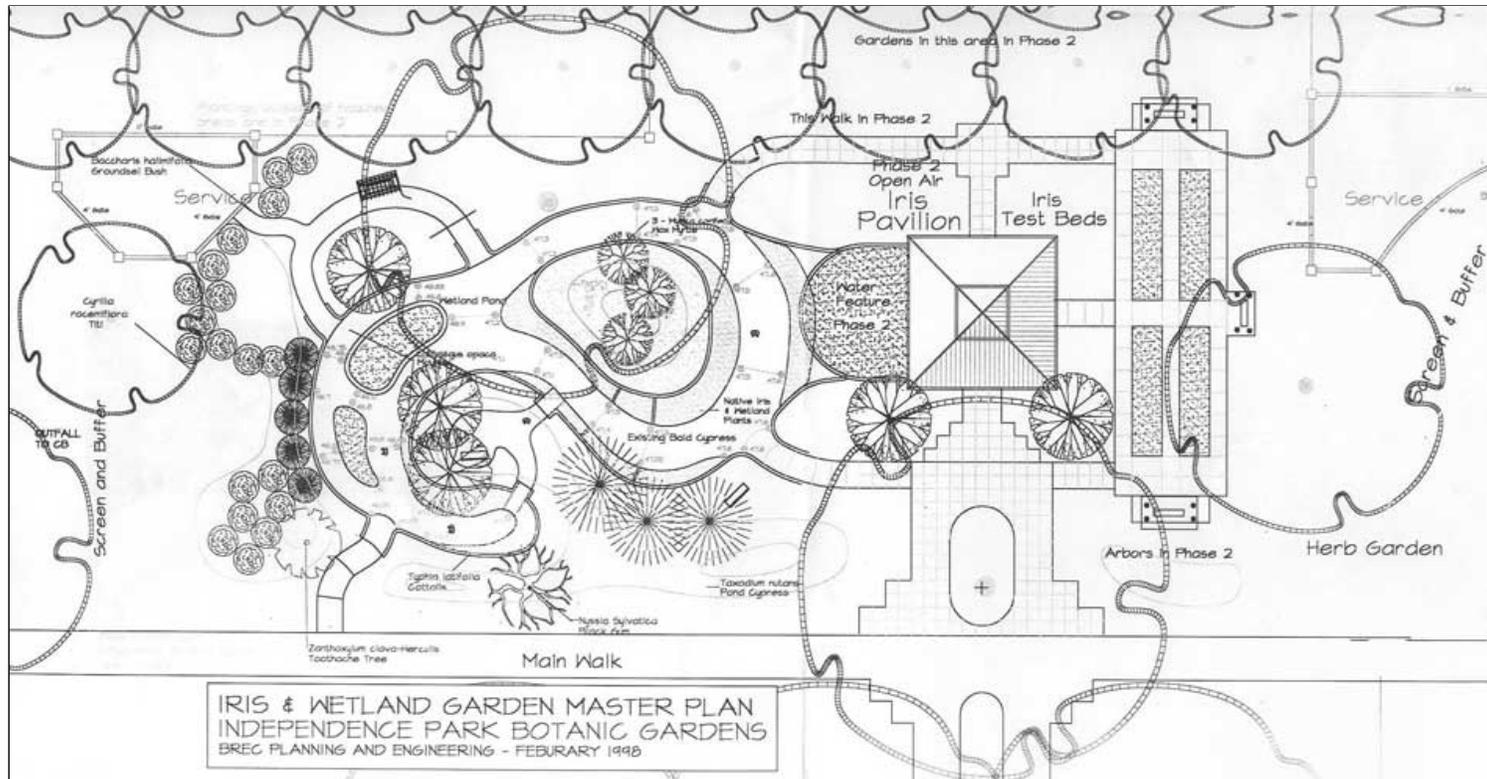
Ownership and primary responsibility for the Botanic Garden rests with the Baton Rouge Recreation and Parks Commission, BREC. The Master Plan,

approved by BREC and the Botanic Garden Foundation, is in implementation by phases as funding is available. Private donations have been made, and a Friends group regularly raises money for the Botanic Garden through plant sales. BREC funds and provides general maintenance through a landscape crew that works in cooperation with volunteers.



In the Louisiana Iris Garden in recent years, the face most likely seen is that of Claire Fontenot, a Master Gardener who has coordinated volunteer work. She organizes the activities of other volunteers, pots plants for Friends' sales and has attacked the herculean task of identifying and preserving particular cultivars that, left alone, grow into each other's space. Without such diligence, the most robust growers encroach upon less vigorous but unique irises, and the diversity of forms and colors is diminished. Part of the charm of the Garden is the free-flowing mix of colors, but the work of the volunteers is essential to ensure that the wide variety of irises will endure.

The Master Plan for the Louisiana Iris Garden envisions expansion in later phases, but plans, while critical, are mainly about infrastructure. The Plan is in black and white, but people provide the color. The future of the Garden as a beautiful, educational spot in large measure depends on the kind of voluntary efforts that bring life and order to hard structure: Joe Mertzweiller's early contributions, the subsequent work of Art Landry and James Jeansonne, and the continuing efforts of volunteers such as Claire Fontenot and others. The future of the Louisiana Iris Garden will depend upon both BREC and the community of gardeners willing to help.



Scenes from BRBG

How This Garden Came To Be

[1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#)

[Back to Zydeco Louisiana Iris Garden](#)



**LOUISIANA IRIS GARDEN
BATON ROUGE BOTANIC GARDEN
INDEPENDENCE PARK**



A Handsome Setting for Beautiful Irises

TOP LEFT: 'Felician Hills' (O'Connor), 'C'est Si Bon' (Taylor), 'Rose Cartwheel' (Granger), 'Honey Star' (Hutchinson), 'Exquisite Lady' (Owen), 'Mister Joe' (Merztweiller). "Mister Joe" was a seedling of Joe Mertzweiller's donated to the Botanic Garden that was registered by the Garden after Joe's death. LEFT: A clump of the deep blue and vigorous 'Delta Star' (Granger). BELOW, from left: 'Faubourg-St. John' (O'Connor), 'Delta Dove' (Dunn), followed by two unidentified irises.



Scenes from BRBG

[1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#)

[How This Garden Came To Be](#)

[Back to Zydeco Louisiana Iris Garden](#)



**LOUISIANA IRIS GARDEN
BATON ROUGE BOTANIC GARDEN
INDEPENDENCE PARK**



The Louisiana Iris Garden is home to numerous iris cultivars registered with the American Iris Society. Many of these are Joe Mertzweiller's registrations, but the work of other hybridizers is also represented.

Perhaps surprisingly, there is a large contingent of beautiful but unidentified irises. One reason for this is simply that the original core of plants in the Garden were provided by Joe Mertzweiller, who operated a major hybridizing program. At the time of the donation, many of Joe's plants were seedlings under evaluation. Some might have been registered eventually and most have the look of irises of a quality one might expect of named cultivars.

Some older registered irises are hard to identify simply because they are not familiar to people today. On two occasions, the Garden was toured by visitors attending a convention of the Society for Louisiana Irises (see left). Even this hard core group of iris enthusiasts could not connect a name with the many unidentified plants.

ABOVE, center: Mertzweiller's famous bi-color 'Colorific'. LEFT, from top: an unidentified blue-lavender and a very nice rose-pink with distinct white edging, also unidentified. ABOVE, right, from top: two more no-name irises, a deep, velvety maroon and a vibrant yellow. RIGHT: The old, famous 'Wheelhorse' (Dormon), which is in the ancestry of many modern irises and still a graceful, attractive garden plant; the outstanding white 'Marie Dolores' (Haymon), and an unidentified red.

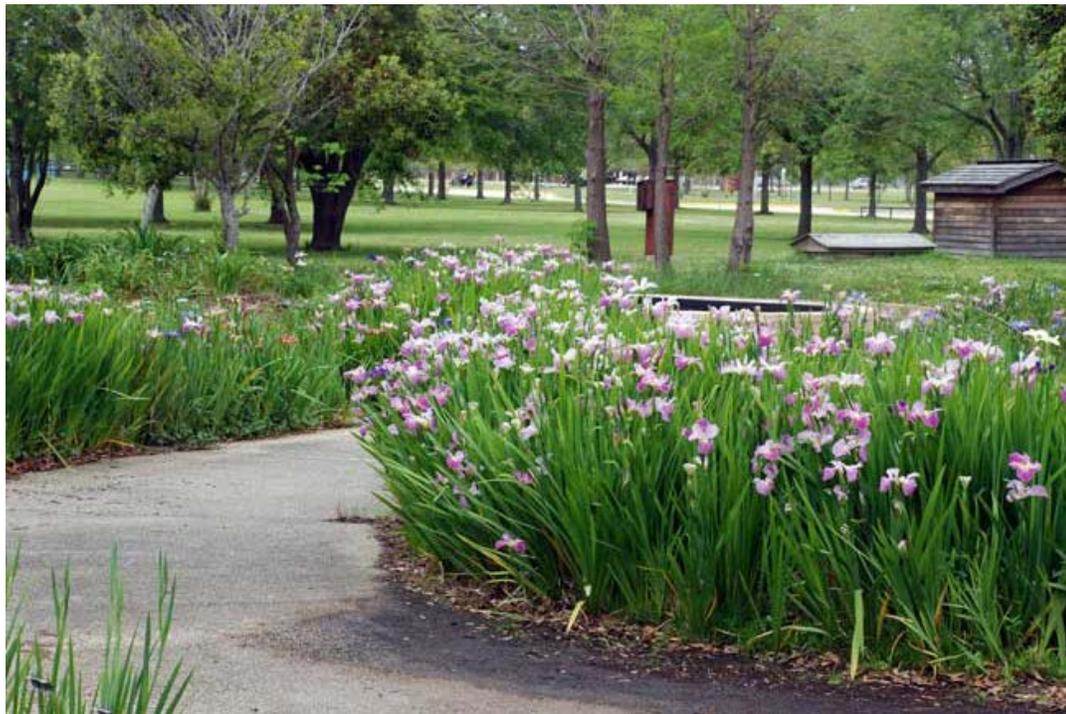


Scenes from BRBG

[How This Garden Came To Be](#)

[1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#)

[Back to Zydeco Louisiana Iris Garden](#)



ABOVE AND LEFT: Mertzweiller's 'Kristi G', an amazingly vigorous iris that one day might take over the entire garden if left to its own devices. A great plant for a show in the landscape.



ABOVE AND RIGHT: Joe Mertzweiller's deep red and veined 'Freddie Boy', registered in 1974 and still popular; the beautiful white 'Good Doctor', named by Joe to commemorate Dr. John K. Small who searched the swamps looking for new Louisiana iris forms in the 1920s. 'Good Doctor' is one of the first of the modern, full-formed whites and still an excellent garden plant. BELOW, from left: 'Apollo's Song' (Taylor), 'Acadian Miss' (Army), 'Sinfonietta' (Raabe), and 'Swamp Flame' (Mertzweiller).

**LOUISIANA IRIS GARDEN
BATON ROUGE BOTANIC GARDEN
INDEPENDENCE PARK**



Scenes from BRBG

[1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#)

[How This Garden Came To Be](#)

[Back to Zydeco Louisiana Iris Garden](#)



**LOUISIANA IRIS GARDEN
BATON ROUGE BOTANIC GARDEN
INDEPENDENCE PARK**



Joe Mertzweiller's hybridizing program was unique. A chemist by training, Joe developed an interest in the development of tetraploid irises, which involves the doubling of the sets of chromosomes in the plant from two to four. Some plant groups are naturally tetraploid, but in others (daylilies, for example) this characteristic has been induced, as Joe succeeded in doing in Louisiana irises, by application of the chemical colchizine. The rationale for producing tetraploid plants rests on the creation of heavier substance in foliage and flowers and on increased possibilities of genetic variation in offspring.

Joe Mertzweiller wrote the book on the development of tetraploid Louisiana irises. Each individual picture on this page represents one of Joe's tetraploids growing in the Louisiana Iris Garden. The future of tetraploid Louisianas is unclear, and most hybridizers still work with plants in their natural diploid state.



TOP, right: Another clump of the vigorous 'Delta Star' (Granger) the only picture on the page that is not a Mertzweiller tetraploid, and offering a marked contrast to the full flowered tets. Left, from top: 'Professor Neil', 'Professor Ike'; 'Professor Fritchie'; 'Professor Marta Marie'; 'Professor Jim'; an unknown probable tet seedling; and, to the right, 'Professor Claude', and finally another unknown seedling, possibly a tet. ABOVE, mid-page right: 'Cloudy Day', not a registered iris but possibly a planned name never used.

[1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#)

[Back to Zydeco Louisiana Iris Garden](#)



Iris Brevicaulis in the Garden

Iris brevicaulis is not as imposing as other species. It does not appear as masses of blue in picturesque cypress swamps. Brevicaulis is neither a jaw-dropping red color nor a giant that stands above other plants. Sometimes it is plentiful in low wet areas and along sloughs and other drainage areas, but flowers that open down in low growing foliage are not likely to be iris poster kids. Nonetheless, the species is interesting if not spectacular in the garden. And because of its form, brevicaulis is quite nice as cut a flower and in flower arrangements.



A clump of Iris brevicaulis photographed by Robert Turley in Central Louisiana. Typically, the foliage is not entirely upright, the stalks lean, and the uppermost flowers open low on the stalk and down in the foliage instead of above it.



The rare white form of brevicaulis.



Iris brevicaulis found in Tennessee.

[Back](#)

[INTRODUCTIONS](#) | [CATALOG](#) | [GROWING TIPS](#) | [INSPIRATION](#) | [THE SPECIES](#) | [IMPOSTERS](#) | [BLOG](#)

[Organization](#) | [Katrina](#) | [Contact](#) | [About Zydeco](#) | [Home](#) | [Site Map](#)

Rodney Barton's Brevicaulis Page

Rodney Barton's Brevicaulis Page previously was part of his **North American Native Iris** site, which is no longer active. Rodney generously permitted a move of the Louisiana iris species pages to the Zydeco species section. Rodney lives and grows irises in Hickory Creek, TX, near Dallas.

Iris brevicaulis Rafinesque (Short stemmed iris)



Photo by Mark Bulger



Probable *I. brevicaulis* from Texas. [Additional photos](#) in habitat.



Lavender form (Click photo for a larger view.)



I. brevicaulis 'Trail of Tears'.



Photo showing "zig-zag" stalk.



Photo by RAB

Habitat: Damp meadows and ditches.

Bloom: Early to mid May in Zone 7/8. Latest of the No. Am. natives except for *I. tridentata*.

Description:

- **Flowers:** d 10 cm, falls reflexed, standards held at an angle, white to intense blue (typical), yellow median ridge
- **Stem:** h 25-30 cm, zig-zag, recumbant (lays on the ground) or angled up slightly, flowers facing up, stem leaves overtop flowers, flowers in axils
- **Leaves:** h 30-40 cm, w 2-5 cm, drooping tips, glossy translucent
- **Rhizome:** w 2 cm, oval in cross section, greenish, bare, 12 cm annual growth
- **Capsule/Seeds:** w 3 cm, l 5 cm, green at maturity / corky, "D" shaped seed
- **2n** = 42,44
- **Comments:** Never lays over in my garden

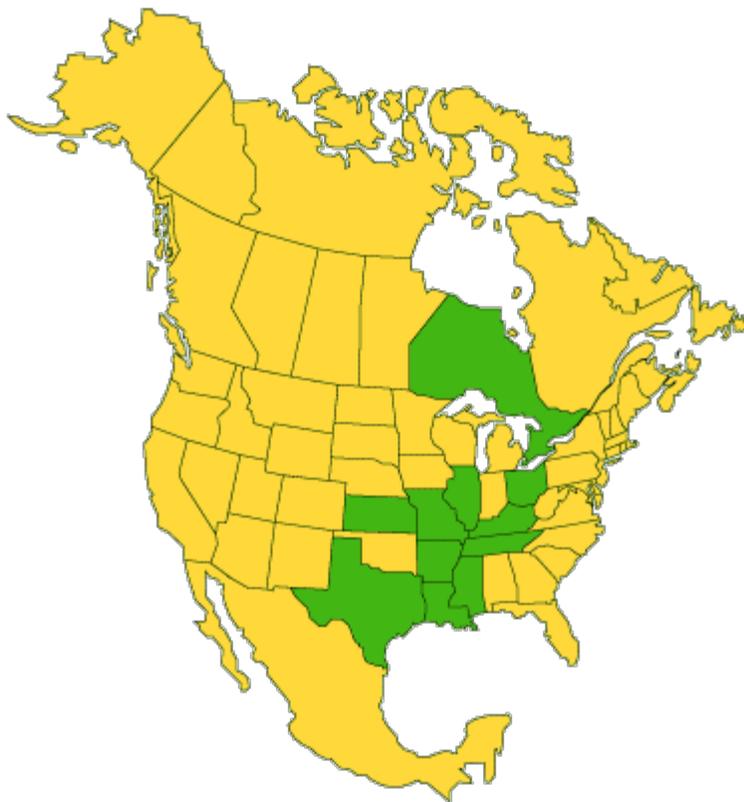
Cultivation:

- **Sun:** Full but will tolerate some shade. Afternoon shade in warmer climes.
- **Soil type:** Neutral to acid, lots of humus.
- **Soil moisture:** Moist but not wet. Mulch to retain moisture and protect rhizomes from sun burn.
- **Feeding:** Feed at onset of growth in spring.
- **Hardiness:** possibly to zone 4

- **Transplant:** Easy in fall or spring after bloom.
 - **Seed germination:** ? Other members of the series are best planted before the seeds dry.
 - **Comments:** Generally easy. Will grow in "border garden" conditions with additional water. Grows fair but is a shy bloomer for me. Goes dormant in the summer here and often doesn't put on fall growth like the rest of the series. Never lays over in my garden.
-

Distribution of *I. brevicaulis*:

Green indicates presence of *I. brevicaulis* within the state or province.



Last modified 10/04

[Back](#)







Scenes of Iris Fulva In The Wild

Along a Louisiana Roadside



These fulvas are in full sun in a roadside slough. It is a drainage area that typically would be wet-to-damp but which could dry out periodically. Fulva is often found among Spider Lilies (*Hymenocallis caroliniana*), especially in open, sunny areas.



Except after a heavy rain, the irises would not be in much more water than this. They are not found in a cypress swamp, as *Iris giganticaerulea* often is.



This is a wide view of the roadside habitat of the fulvas shown above.



These fulvas are also growing in a roadside slough but in a much more shaded area across the River from New Orleans. There are trees on both sides of the slough but light comes in through the break in the canopy. The irises grow well along such wooded waterways, but not as densely as in the open areas shown above. They are better protected, however, from their natural enemy, the Highway Department.

[Back](#)

[INTRODUCTIONS](#) | [CATALOG](#) | [GROWING TIPS](#) | [INSPIRATION](#) | [THE SPECIES](#) | [IMPOSTERS](#) | [BLOG](#)

[Organization](#) | [Katrina](#) | [Contact](#) | [About Zydeco](#) | [Home](#) | [Site Map](#)

Rodney Barton's Fulva Page

Rodney Barton's Fulva Page previously was part of his **North American Native Iris** site, which is no longer active. Rodney generously permitted a move of the Louisiana iris species pages to the Zydeco species section. He lives and grows irises near Dallas.

Iris fulva Ker-Gawl (Copper iris)



Photo by Rodney Barton



A direct scan of *I. fulva*. (Click on image for a largerview.)



Photos by Rodney Barton



Photo by Colin Rigby.



Photo by [Dennis Kramb](#).



I. fulva "Marvell Gold". Photo by [Dennis Kramb](#).



I. fulva "Bayou Bandit". Photo by RAB.



A mass planting of *I. fulva* at the Dallas Arboretum. Photo by Zonnie Cross.

Habitat: Moist areas in wetlands and along bayous.

Bloom: Mid April in Zone 7/8.

Description:

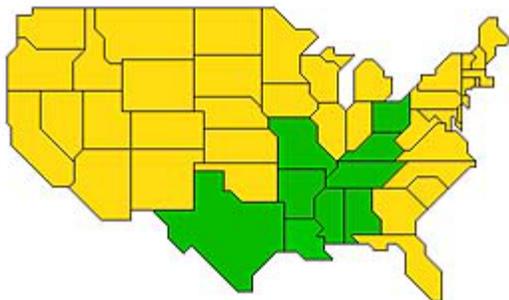
- **Flowers:** d 10 cm, drooping (pendant), typically orange-red variegated darker also yellow and violet
- **Stem:** h 50-90 cm, erect, nearly straight, flowers in axils
- **Leaves:** h 45-80 cm, w 1.5-2.5, drooping tips
- **Rhizome:** w 2 cm, greenish, bare, 12 cm annual growth
- **Capsule/Seeds:** w 2.75, l 5 cm, green at maturity / seeds corky
- **2n** = 42
- **Comments:**

Cultivation:

- **Sun:** Full but will tolerate some shade, afternoon shade in warmer climates
- **Soil type:** Neutral to acid, lots of humus
- **Soil moisture:** Moist but not wet. Mulch to retain moisture and protect rhizomes from sun burn.
- **Feeding:** Heavy feeder, feed at onset of growth in fall and spring.

- **Hardiness:** hardy
 - **Seed germination:** Plant seeds before they are allowed dry.
 - **Transplant:** Easy in fall or spring after bloom
 - **Comments:** Generally easy. Will grow in "border garden" conditions with additional water. Grows well for me in NC Texas eventhough the soil isa bit alkaline. Color forms other than typical are harder (for me).
-

Distribution of *I. fulva*:



Green indicates the persence of *I. fulva* within the state.

Last modified 5/18/01.

[Back](#)

Rodney Barton's Hexagona Page

Rodney Barton's Hexagona Page previously was part of his **North American Native Iris** site, which is no longer active. Rodney generously permitted a move of the Louisiana iris species pages to the Zydeco species section. Rodney lives and grows irises in Hickory Creek, TX, near Dallas.

Iris hexagona Walter (Dixie Iris)



I. hexagona from Rainbow River Florida. Photo by Mark Cook.



Direct scan of *I. hexagona*. (Click image for a larger view.)



Direct scan as a herbarium sheet.



Other photos by RAB.

Habitat: Wet areas in Southeast US.

Bloom: Late April in Zone 7/8

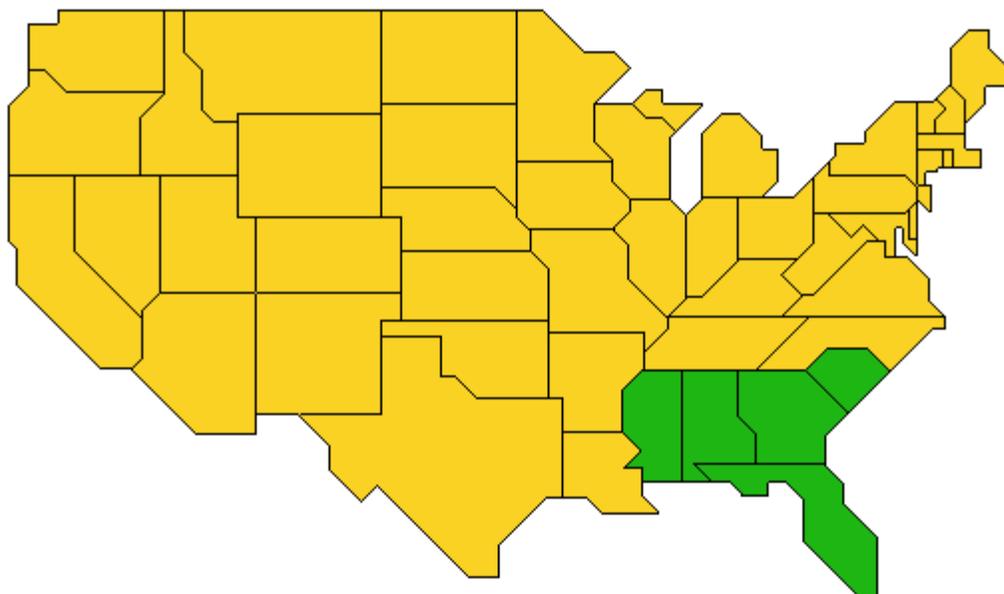
Description:

- **Flowers:** d 10-12 cm, erect standards, typical is blue or blue purple
- **Stem:** h 30-90 cm, straight or zig-zaged, 2 flowers at apex, singles in axils
- **Leaves:** h to 90 cm, w 2.5 cm
- **Rhizome:** w 2 cm or more, nearly bare, greenish
- **Capsule/Seeds:** l 4-6 cm, hexagonal, green at maturity /corky, "D" shaped seed
- **2n** = 44
- **Comments:** Very similar to *I. giganticerulea* only smaller.

Cultivation:

- **Sun:** Full sun (6 hr min.), afternoon shade if any.
- **Soil type:** Neutral to acid, lots of humus.
- **Soil moisture:** Moist to wet. Mulch to retain moisture and protect rhizomes from sun burn.
- **Feeding:** Feed at onset of growth in spring and fall.
- **Hardiness:** ?
- **Transplant:** Easy in fall or spring after bloom.
- **Seed germination:** Plant seeds before they dry.
- **Comments:** Generally easy. Will grow in "border garden" conditions with additional water. Needs lots of room. Grows and blooms well for me.

Distribution of *I. hexagona*:



Green indicates the presence of *I. hexagona* within the state.

Reports of *I. hexagona* in Texas and Louisiana are likely *I. giganticerulea*, considered by some to be a form of *I. hexagona*.

Last modified 8/04.

[Back](#)



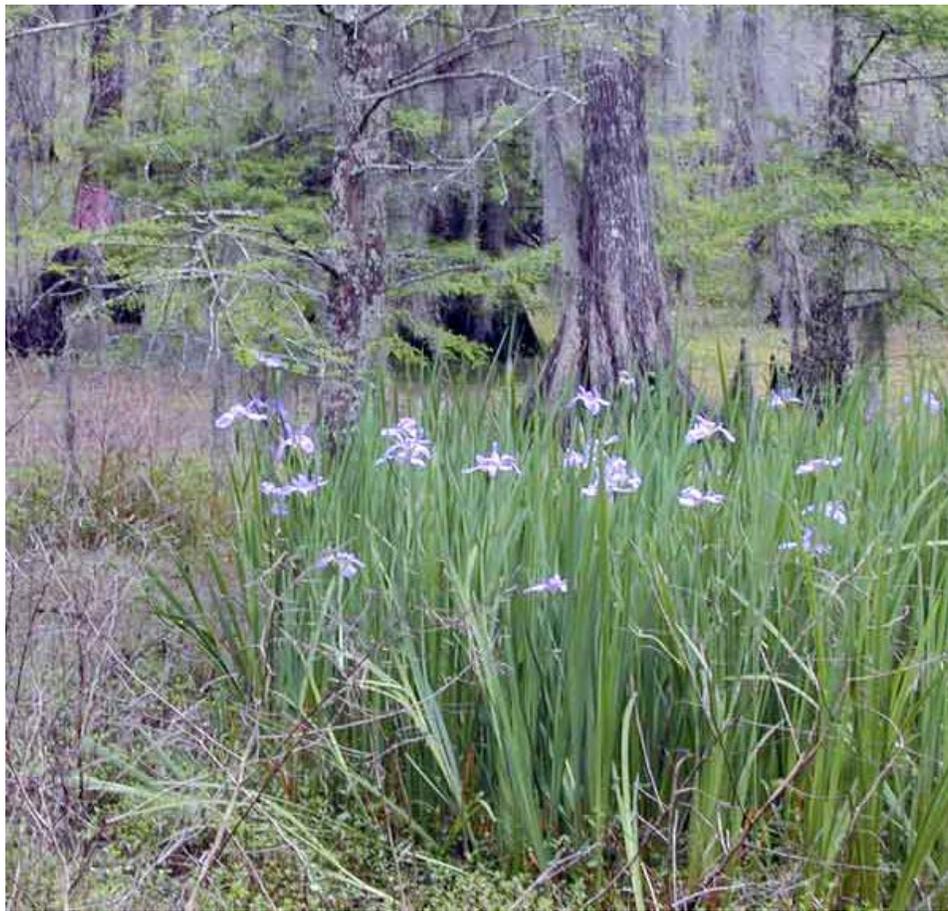
Scenes of Giganticaerulea

More Jean Lafitte Pictures

In a Cypress Swamp in the Town of Jean Lafitte, South of New Orleans



The Town of Jean Lafitte is about 20 miles South of New Orleans. It is surrounded by water. The dry land in the area is narrow, following both sides of Bayou Barataria as it flows toward the Gulf. About six miles South of the Town center, the road ends at the marsh. This picture was taken in the Town a few hundred yards from the main road. Several years ago, a boardwalk was constructed that takes visitors on a long loop through the swamp.



A view from the boardwalk in Jean Lafitte



A view from behind a small pond looking toward the main house at the former **Victoria Inn and Gardens**, a

wonderful bed and breakfast in Lower Lafitte that unfortunately is no longer in operation. The Lafitte community sponsors an annual **Celebration of the Louisiana Iris** in early April that features garden tours, swamp walks, lectures and crafts. The irises can also be seen in profusion in the **Jean Lafitte National Park and Preserve** a short distance from the Town of Jean Lafitte.



Another view of giganticaeruleas at Victoria Inn.

[Back to the Giganticaerulea Page](#)

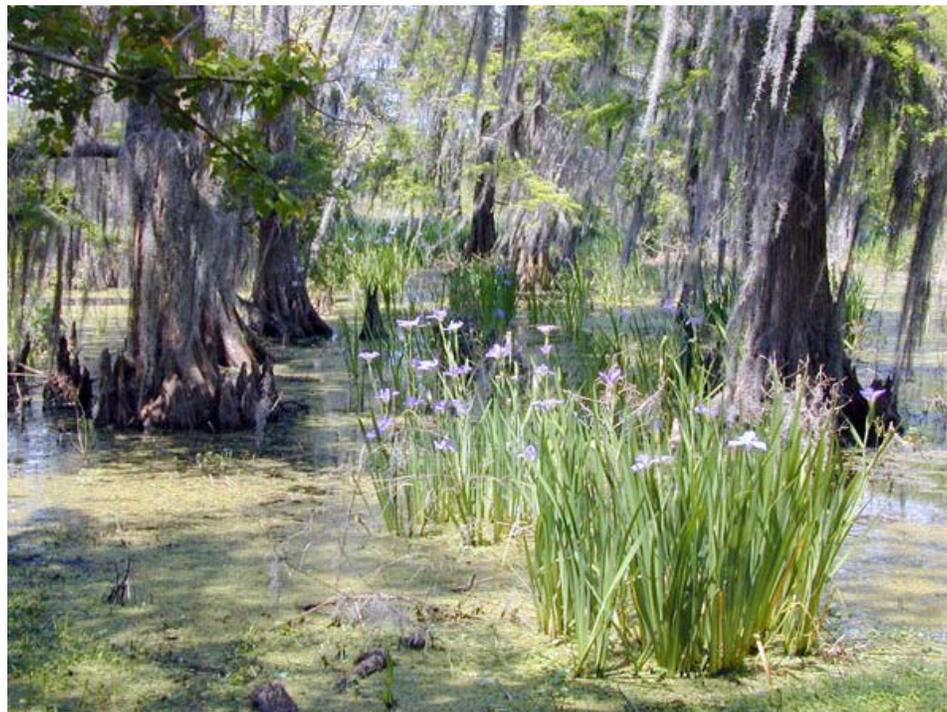
[INTRODUCTIONS](#) | [CATALOG](#) | [GROWING TIPS](#) | [INSPIRATION](#) | [THE SPECIES](#) | [IMPOSTERS](#) | [BLOG](#)

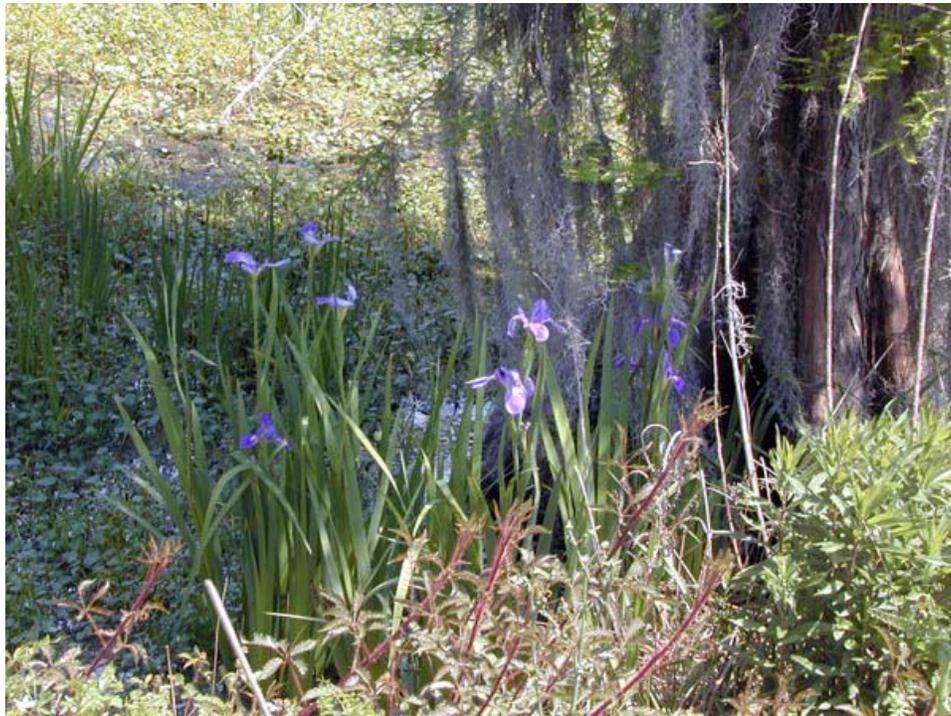
[Organization](#) | [Katrina](#) | [Contact](#) | [About Zydeco](#) | [Home](#) | [Site Map](#)



Scenes of Iris Giganticaerulea

More Scenes from Jean Lafitte, Louisiana







[Back to Giganticaerulea Page](#)

[INTRODUCTIONS](#) | [CATALOG](#) | [GROWING TIPS](#) | [INSPIRATION](#) | [THE SPECIES](#) | [IMPOSTERS](#) | [BLOG](#)

[Organization](#) | [Katrina](#) | [Contact](#) | [About Zydeco](#) | [Home](#) | [Site Map](#)



Iris Giganticaerulea



The giant blue **Louisiana irises** of the Gulf Coast are among the best recognized native plants. Louisiana's freshwater marshes and wooded wetlands historically provided the most extensive conditions suitable for this iris, and they grow in profusion where their habitat has been maintained. It is an April tradition to trek from New Orleans a few miles South to the Jean Lafitte area to see the masses of blue in the swamp. Across the southern part of the state, there is wide appreciation that the iris bloom is a special thing.

What is now in the City of New Orleans once consisted of fields of wild blue irises, as well as some fulvas. Development has left them without a hospitable environment save on the outskirts. In Louisiana, beyond a line 20 or 30 miles north of New Orleans, only a few vestiges of this species are found in local wetland areas. Outside Louisiana, giganticaeruleas are found in coastal Texas and Mississippi.

Iris Giganticaeruleas in the Town of Jean Lafitte, South of New Orleans



In a Cypress swamp in the Town of Jean Lafitte.

More Giganticaerulea Pictures:

[Natural and garden settings in Jean Lafitte, Louisiana](#)

[More Jean Lafitte pictures](#)

[Wild Louisianas in La Place, Louisiana](#)

For additional information and pictures:

[Rodney Barton's Iris Giganticaerulea Page](#)

[Dennis Kramb's Iris Giganticaerulea Page](#)

[Flora of North America](#)

[LSU Herbarium](#)

[Margaret Stones' Watercolor](#)

Attakapas Swamp Tours. This not an iris site, but it has great pictures of the swamp in the vicinity of Lake Verret, a system of waterways west of Napoleonville and about half way between Lafayette and New Orleans. Lake Verret is a shallow lake with stands of beautiful cypress trees along its shoreline. Iris giganticaerulea is abundant. The swamp pictures on the site are excellent, and a couple of the iris pictures are exceptional. Browse the site, or go directly to the iris pictures: [iris one](#) (this is a "wow" picture, [iris two](#) (even better), and [iris three](#). These are large pictures for a web site but worth the download time.

[INTRODUCTIONS](#) | [CATALOG](#) | [GROWING TIPS](#) | [INSPIRATION](#) | [THE SPECIES](#) | [IMPOSTERS](#) | [BLOG](#)

[Organization](#) | [Katrina](#) | [Contact](#) | [About Zydeco](#) | [Home](#) | [Site Map](#)

Rodney Barton's Giganticaerulea Page

Rodney Barton's Giganticaerulea Page previously was part of his **North American Native Iris** site, which is no longer active. Rodney generously permitted a move of the Louisiana iris species pages to the Zydeco species section. Rodney lives and grows irises in Hickory Creek, TX, near Dallas.

Iris giganticaerulea Small (Giant blue iris)



Direct scans of *I. giganticaerulea*.



Photo by Robert Turley



Photo by Harry Wolford taken on Avery Island just south of Lafayette, LA.



"Alba" form. Photos by Scott Caliva.

Habitat: Bayous and other wet area along the Gulf coast of Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi.

Bloom: Late April in Zone 7/8

Description:

- **Flowers:** d 13-15 cm, erect standards, typical is blue or blue purple, also lighter shades and white, raised mid-rib on falls of orange or yellow
- **Stem:** h 95-116 cm or taller, nearly straight, 2 flowers at apex, singles in axils
- **Leaves:** h to 90 cm, w 2.5 cm
- **Rhizome:** w 3-4 cm, bare, 20-30 cm annual growth
- **Capsule/Seeds:** w 3.5 cm, l 10 cm, green at maturity / large, corky, "D" shaped seed
- **2n** = 44
- **Comments:** Largest of the NA natives. Very similar to *I. hexagona* except larger. Has been classified as a form of *I. hexagona*.

Cultivation:

- **Sun:** Full sun (6 hr min.), afternoon shade if any.
- **Soil type:** Neutral to acid, lots of humus.
- **Soil moisture:** Moist to wet. Mulch to retain moisture and protect rhizomes from sun burn.
- **Feeding:** Feed at onset of growth in spring and fall.
- **Hardiness:** Zone 7 maybe 6. Least hardy of the series. Winter mulch above 8.

- **Transplant:** Easy in fall or spring after bloom.
 - **Seed germination:** Plant seeds before they dry.
 - **Comments:** Generally easy. Will grow in "border garden" conditions with additional water. Needs lots of room. Grows and blooms well for me, but doesn't reach it's potential height. I lost an unprotected clump to a hard freeze here on the 7/8 border.
-

Distribution of *I. giganticaerulea*:



Green indicates the presence of *I. giganticaerulea* within the state.

Last modified 11/04

[Back](#)

Rodney Barton's Nelsonii Page

Rodney Barton's Nelsonii Page previously was part of his **North American Native Iris** site, which is no longer active. Rodney generously permitted a move of the Louisiana iris species pages to the Zydeco species section. Rodney lives and grows irises in Hickory Creek, TX, near Dallas.

Iris nelsonii Randolph (Abbeville red iris)



Photosby RAB





Yellow form, photo by Colin Rigby



_Seed pod

Habitat: Shady areas in standing water in bayous south of Abbeville, LA.

Bloom: Mid to late April in Zone 7/8

Description:

- **Flowers:** d 12 cm, pendant (drooping), typical is purple-red, also yellow
- **Stem:** h 80-105 cm (shorter in cultivation?), 4-6 branches with 2 flowers each
- **Leaves:** h 80-90 cm, w 2.5cm, drooping tips, pale green
- **Rhizome:** w 2-3 cm, bare, 10-15 cm annual growth
- **Capsule/Seeds:** w 2 cm, l 5 cm, green at maturity / corky, "D" shaped seed
- **2n** = 42
- **Comments:** Resembles a robust *I. fulva*. Is thought to be a stable hybrid of *I. fulva*, *I. gigantea* and perhaps also *I. brevicaulis* (see "Other Information").

Cultivation:

- **Sun:** Usually grown in full sun to light shade. May do well in deep shade in standing water as in its habitat..
- **Soil type:** Neutral to acid, lots of humus.
- **Soil moisture:** Moist to wet. Mulch to retain moisture and protect rhizomes from sun burn.
- **Feeding:** Feed at onset of growth in spring and fall.
- **Hardiness:** ?
- **Transplant:** Easy in fall or spring after bloom.
- **Seed germination:** Plant seeds before they dry.
- **Comments:** Generally easy. Will grow in "border garden" conditions with additional water. Grows and blooms well for me, if a bit small (possibly due to restricted water).

Other Information:

Micheal L. Arnold, Ph.D., Department of Genetics at the University of Georgia, has studied *I. nelsonii* as model for the formation of species via hybridization (introgression). Check out his web page for a list of interesting publications using molecular genetics techniques to study the irises of the series Hexagona.

Distribution of *I. nelsonii*:



I. nelsonii's range is limited to the area south of Abbeville Louisiana.

Last modified 8/04.

[Back](#)



Red and yellow Abbeville iris (*I. nelsonii*)

Note: the irises pictured may not be *I. nelsonii*, but probably are natural hybrids involving *nelsonii*.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ABBEVILLES C. W. Arny, Jr¹

Bulletin of the American Iris Society, #150, July 1958

Webmaster's note: This historic article was written by Charles Arny, one of the premier Louisiana iris hybridizers of the 20th century. Arny outlines the importance of the recently discovered "Abbeville Iris" to the early hybridizers of Louisiana iris. Eight years after this article was written, the Abbeville Iris were shown to be stabilized hybrid species and named Iris nelsonii by Professor L. F. Randolph.

The most important factor resulting in the development of fine present day Louisiana iris has been the use of the giant fulva type, commonly referred to as the Abbeville, as breeding material.

Those giants were discovered by Mr. W. B. MacMillan in a swampy area south of Abbeville, Louisiana about 1940.

The Abbevilles vary in height of growth about two feet to possibly four feet. The flowers of this group of iris have thick leathery almost overlapping petals and sepals of varying size and shape. The color of these iris ranges from yellow to crimson.

Style-arms are short with the tips of the anthers sometimes extending beyond the ends of these arms. The signals are usually a yellow line. Many times no crest is found at all.

The foliage is yellowish green with leaves that have a tendency to droop near their ends.

Flower stems are straight to slightly curved and taller than the leaves of the plant. It is not uncommon to find branched stems. Flower buds are found in pairs at the nodes.

Examination of early registrations indicate that relatively few registered Louisiana iris were anything but collected species or their hybrids. In other words, breeding of Louisiana iris had not really made a start prior to the times these Abbevilles were found.

Evidence of the significance of this group of iris can be obtained from the study of the pedigrees since the discovery of the Abbevilles.

A list of recent favorites, might include the following of which pedigrees are available and printed below. The pollen parent is listed in the top section of all the brackets, the pod parent below.

Iris that are **believed** to have a Abbeville background appear in red.

Varieties

Peggy Mac



Unknown

Haile Selassie: collected probably an Abbeville x *I. brevicaulis* cross

Ella B. Davis

Royal Velour



Sara Gladney

Roses and Wine



Caroline Dormon

Contrast, a collected, non-Abbeville bicolor hybrid

Peggy Mac



Unknown

Haile Selassie

Bayou Glory



Bayou Sunset



Unknown

Believed to have Abbeville Red as one parent.

The Kahn



Cardinalis, a collected Abbeville red

Haile Selassie: collected probably an Abbeville X I. brevicaulis cross

Violet Ray



Old Coral, collected Abbeville red.

Large Purple, collected giganticaerulia type believed to be an Abbeville red X I. giganticaerulia

Rose of Abbeville



Peggy Mac

Old Coral, collected Abbeville red.

Wheelhorse { **Violet Ray**
Rose of Abbeville

Seedling { **Swamp Giant,**
G.C x Abbeville Red
Plum Good, unknown

Charjoy {
Peggy Mac { **Unknown**
Haile Selassie

Chuck { **Signal,** unregistered { **Bayou Sunset**
Peggy Mac
Butter Brickle { **Believed to be Signal**
Peggy Mac

Dora Day { **Blue G.C. Seedling (Holley Blue?, collected G.C.)**
Bayou Sunset

Puttytat **Dora Day**



Dora Day

Cherry Bounce



B-4-12 Abbeville red

Contrast (Not Abbeville type, collected bicolor)

Dixie Deb



Maringouin Fulva (Maringouinn yellow fulva) x I. brevicaulis

Lockett's Luck, collected non-Abbeville hybrid with fairly wide segments.

Delta Country



Dixie Deb

Maringouin Fulva (Maringouin yellow fulva) x Kramer yellow (probably fulva x gianticaerulia in an advanced stage)

From examination of this data, a number of interesting and important suggestions are noted. **Peggy Mac** is the most important single iris in the development of these fine Louisiana iris. If **Haile Selassie** is truly a parent of **Peggy Mac**, then this honor goes to **Haile Selassie**. We cannot be sure that **Haile Selassie** is a parent of **Peggy Mac**. Second, there is a predominance of the so-called Abbeville blood in most of the iris listed.

All of the following varieties have the Abbeville form to the extent that their flowers tend to be flat and have wide floral parts carrying width well to the base of each floral segment. The following iris all have collected Abbevilles in their pedigrees:

Haile Selassie

Peggy Mac

Bayou Sunset

Bayou Glory

Puttytat

Signal

Plum Good

Old Coral

Rose of Abbeville

Charjoy

Butter Brickle

Chuck

In conclusion, it appears that it was the Abbevilles that gave the real start to the breeding and improvement in our Louisiana iris.

Further, the presence of the flat flower form, branching, flower substance, rich velvety flower texture, and increased flower size can be attributed to a considerable extent to the Abbevilles.

It might be noted that in practically all those iris that tend to have large, flat flower form, Abbeville breeding is involved, while those without the Abbeville blood maybe be large but do not possess the flat full form or flowers with the wide floral segments throughout.

¹The author gratefully acknowledges the contribution of Mr. Ira Nelson, Professor of Horticulture, Southwestern Louisiana Institute. Iris nelsonii was named in honor of Professor Nelson.

[SLI Site Index](#)

Top to Index

To Next Page

Web Site Design by [Pam Ingle](#)

© 2004 SLI All rights reserved.







Please enter your username or e-mail address. You will receive a new password via e-mail.

Username or E-mail:



[Log in](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Acadian'

R1956, Sidney Conger. 24", M. Standards light rose, splashed violet-rose; falls deeper rose red splashed violet-rose. A unique, velvety red combination. Older iris, but still great. *Caroginia x Rose of Abbeville*.

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Andouille'

R1999. Cherry red, narrowly rimmed white. Styles also outlined in white, with white tips. Inconspicuous yellow spear signal. 32", ML. *Irish Bayou* x *R. Morgan seedling L-113-B*. A vigorous red that is distinguished by its edging. Pronounced "ahn-doo'-ee" and named for a Cajun sausage.

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Ann Chowning'

R1976, Frank Chowning. 36", E. Current red self. Brilliant gold signal. *Miss Arkansas* x *W. B. MacMillan*. At one time considered the finest red Louisiana produced and the winner of the Mary Swords Debaillon Award, the highest given to a Louisiana iris. A beautiful iris.

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Atchafaylaya'

R1998, Farron Campbell. 34-35", EM. Velvety, very dark red violet, slight silver halo. Yellow signal and green crest on all petals. Style arms red violet. Lightly ruffled cartwheel form. Very vigorous grower. Some stalks lean, creating a rounded clump. *John's Lucifer x Jeri*

[Back](#)

[In The Garden](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Barataria'

R2002, Patrick O'Connor. Sdlg. 97-4. Bright rose-pink with cream styles tipped rose. Inconspicuous yellow line signal in a field of cream veined rose. 34", M. *Buxom* x *Beausoleil*. A remarkably saturated, day-glo color.

[Back](#)

[In The Garden](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Bayou Fountain'

R1992, Patrick O'Connor. Sdlg. 81-1. Blue-purple with a yellow signal on a white ground. Some white veining near signal. Dark red-purple styles. 36", EM. *Unknown parentage*. A good, vigorous garden iris. Loves to grow in water, but does not require it.

[Back](#)

[In The Garden](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Beale Street'

R1996, Kevin Vaughn. 40-44", EML. Ruffled intense dark blue, falls veined deeper. Pale primrose yellow signal outlined black. *Bellevue Coquette* x *Marie Dolores*. An imposing iris and one of the best blues.

[Back](#)



Louisiana Iris - 'Beausoleil'

R1999, Patrick O'Connor. Sdlg. 82-11. Tall, pale pink with a white suffusion. Style arms cream with darker pink band along midrib. Yellow line signal. 40-42", M. *Cajun Caper* x *unknown*. Delicate pastel colors on a tall, robust plant.

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Bera'

R1996, Joseph Mertzweiller. 30-34", M. Standards medium purple, narrow silvery white edge; style arms purple; falls slightly darker purple, veined, narrow triangular yellow signal. *Acadian Miss* x *Easter Tide*.

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Betty See'

R2008, Wayland Rudkin. 31", EM. Standards lavender violet fading to edge, deepest color in center; style arms lavender violet. Falls same as standards but deeper. Signal gold steeple around raised gold line. Ruffled. (*Dominique selfed x Bayou Mystique*) X seedling.

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Big Charity'

R2005, Patrick O'Connor. 32", M. Falls appear pink but consist of rose-plum and white veining. Standards are whiter, and the rose-plum veining is less pronounced. Signal is a bright gold line surrounded by a thumbprint of white veined gold. All petals are edged white, more noticeable in pictures than to the naked eye. *Sunshine Bridge x Kristi G.*

[Back](#)

[In The Garden](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Birthday Suit'

R2010, Patrick O'Connor. Sdlg. 06-25. 36", EM. Falls white with very pale overlay of pink. Standards near white with some very pale pink toward edges. Styles cream with deeper, fleshy pink in alongside a lighter midrib. Signals are a loosely defined series of yellow lines, darker toward the middle; a few yellow lines repeated on standards. Slightly ruffled petals. *Honey Star* x *Nottoway*. The amount of pink coloring seems variable with the season; in 2009 it was near white but it has been more distinctly pink before. Growers in some areas of the country also have reported that the iris appears essentially white.

[Back](#)

[In The Garden](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Black Gamecock'

R1978, Frank Chowning. 24", L. A blue-black self with a narrow gold line signal. Performs well in cold and warm climates and possibly is the most widely grown Louisiana iris in the country. Undoubtedly comes from an *I. brevicaulis* background. Increases rapidly. Unknown parentage.

[Back](#)

[In The Garden](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Blue Splatter'

R2008, Wayland Rudkin. 31". E. Standards and recurved falls purple infused blue, scattered yellow veining. Style arms light yellow tinged red on back. Signal raised gold line on yellow ground. Ruffled. *Dominique selfed, x Bayou Mystique) X Hush Money.*

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Byron Bay'

R1983, Robert Raabe. 39", E. The super terse registration describes this iris simply as "Gentian blue." It is a nice iris that deserves a few superlatives. It's an excellent, slightly ruffled mid-blue that benefits from a nice yellow, arrowhead signal. A favorite garden iris. *Clara Goula* x (*Clara Goula* x *Gateway Princess*)

[Back](#)



Louisiana Iris - 'Buff Dancer'

R1985, Frank Chowning. Golden buff with orange line signal bordered brown; cinnamon crest and style arms. Another shorter iris, growing to 31 inches on well formed stalks. *G. W. Holleyman x Little Miss Leighly*.

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Bywater'

R2005, Patrick O'Connor. 26", M. Pale blue standards and falls. White styles. Narrow line signal on falls, repeated less conspicuously on standards. Lightly ruffled. Really light blue. "The Bywater" is a old neighborhood in New Orleans down river from the French Quarter. It did not flood during Katrina. *Southdowns* x *Lake Sylvia*.

[Back](#)

[In The Garden](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Cajundome'

R1988, Charles Arny. 36",M. Large, rounded, beet red falls and purplish red standards. Very large yellow thumbprint signal. Styles red with yellow rib at base.
Ann Chowning x Charles Arny III

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Chef Menteur Pass'

R2005, Patrick O'Connor. 36", M. Medium purple falls and standards. Showy thumbprint signal coarsely veined cream and purple, with yellow line in center. Lower half of styles cream, upper half red-purple. Loosely ruffled. *False River* x *Shizuoka Sunrise*. Originally registered as 'Chef Menteur' in 2003 but it was discovered that the name had been used in 1933. "Chef Menteur" literally means "chief liar" and is also the name given to a channel east of New Orleans that connects Lake Pontchartrain with Lake Borgne and the Gulf.

[Back](#)

[In The Garden](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Cherry Cup'

R1988, Richard Morgan. 26-28", M. Full red with yellow wire rim on falls. Yellow line signal. *F. A. C. McCulla X Little Miss Sims*. HM 1993, AM 1996. One of the most brilliant reds available. A somewhat open and graceful flower form that makes an outstanding garden show. **LIMITED SUPPLY**

[Back](#)

[In The Garden](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Chief Of Chiefs'

R2008, Patrick O'Connor. 34", M. Rosy-orange falls with a orange thumbprint signal marked by rose-orange veins and a gold line signal. Standards broadly edge rosy-orange with a broad center band of pale yellow and darker center veins. Styles cream washed rose at edges and on style tips. *Lemon Zest x Bellocq.*

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



City of Ruins

[Back](#) [In The Garden](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Chuck Begnaud

[Back](#) [In The Garden](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Chocolate City'

R2011. 36", M. Sdlg. 08-05. Light brownish beige with undertones of rose, especially when just opened. Styles cream with hint of gold that partially hide the yellow arrowhead signal.. Very good stalks and form, plus nice foliage.
Princess Leia X Thanksgiving Fest.

[Back](#)



Louisiana Iris - 'Clyde Redmond'

R1970, Charles Arny. 30", M. Registered as a cornflower blue self with a yellow signal. This is a relatively short and remarkably vigorous blue. The deep color and garden performance has made it very popular over the years. *Puttytat* x *Snow Pearl*.

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Cocodrie'

R2013. M, 26-30". Sdlg. 07-13. Standards and falls light orange, deeper toward tips and edges. Yellow starburst signal outlined deep rust-orange. Styles cream with hint of green, tipped light orange and with a deep orange ridge forming a distinct star. Falls light orange. Graceful, flaring flower form that shows up from a distance. *Lemon Zest x Frenchmen Street*.

Cocodrie is the name of a fishing village very near the Gulf, and there also is a Bayou Cocodrie. "Cocodrie" in Cajun French means alligator.

[Back](#)

[Another View](#) [In The Garden](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Cool Nite'

R2000, Richard Morgan. 24", EM. Stands and style arms medium blue violet; falls dark blue violet, small yellow steeple signal. *Sea Night X Lake Sylvia*

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Creole Rhapsody'

R1998, Joseph Mertzweiller. 30-34", M. Falls deep wine red to rose red. Standards creamy white, wine red mid-rib and veining. Style arms green base, yellow green midrib, wine red tips and edges. Large yellow signal; lightly ruffled. *Colorific X Tetraploid seedling*

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Deja Voodoo'

R2011, Patrick O'Connor. 32", M. Ruffled deep purple self, including styles. Bright yellow arrowhead signal, consisting of a series of segments outlined by purple. Signals are a loosely defined series of yellow lines, darker toward the middle; a few yellow lines repeated on standards. Slightly ruffled petals.
German Coast X Henry Rowlan.

[Back](#)

[In The Garden](#)



Louisiana Iris - 'Delta Star'

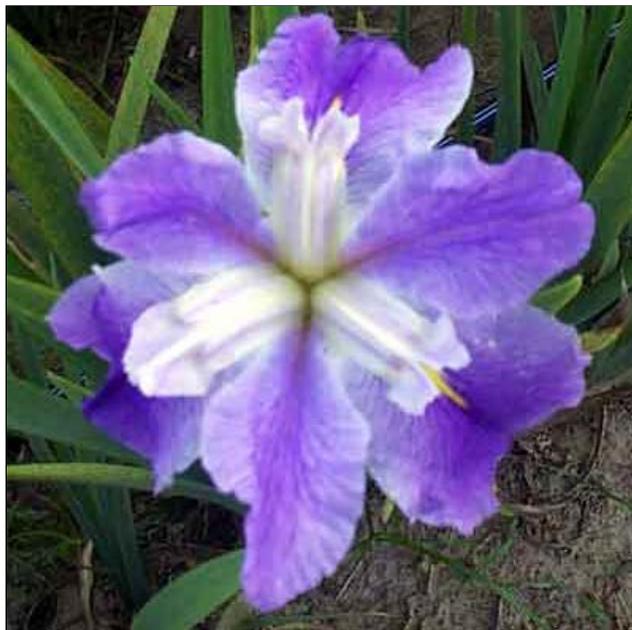
R1966, Marvin Granger. 32-38", M. Deep purple self; six-petal led with signal patch on all falls. *Creole Can-Can X (Creole Can-Can x The Kahn)*. Vigorous.

[Back](#)

[In The Garden](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Dixie Country'

R1993, Kirk Strawn. 28", L. Standards and falls violet-blue. Styles arms slightly lighter violet-blue. Inconspicuous yellow spear signal. A good grower that is one of the few hybrids of *I. hexagona* origin. *Lafitte's Retreat* x collected *I. hexagona*, Cross City, FL.

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Dixie Deb'

R1950, Frank Chowning. 38", E. An older iris, long popular and with a terse registration description: "Sulphur yellow self; gold spot." The form of the iris shows its age, but it remains a graceful flower and a remarkably vigorous grower. It can dominate a planting, so give it space. *Lockett's Luck X Louise Austin*.

[Back](#)

[In The Garden](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Duck Lady'

R2009, Patrick O'Connor. 36", M. Salmon self. Loosely defined yellow signal area on all petals, with darker salmon veining especially on falls and becoming olive green near center; falls have greenish spear signal in center. Styles salmon in center edged greenish yellow. Flower form flat to slightly cupped. *Frenchmen Street x Kelley's Choice*.

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Early On'

R2005, Patrick O'Connor. 36", E. Medium orchid falls suffused white near center and white standards veined medium orchid, especially near outer edges. Style arms are cream with a distinct green cast and orchid on either side of the midrib. Yellow thumbprint signal with an orange center line becoming wine red and extending almost to outer edge of falls. Irregularly ruffled flower. An early bloomer. (*Shizuoka Sunrise x False River*) X *Bubble Gum Ballerina*.

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Edith Dupre'

R1945, George Arceneaux. 27", E. The registration description: "Canary yellow with orange-red overcast; canary yellow style arms; small yellow crest. I. fulva type." A hybrid but apparently between red and yellow collected forms of I. fulva, making it essentially a species form. Great color contrast between the styles and petals. *Bazeti X Maringouin fulva (yellow)*.

[Back](#)

[In The Garden](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'English Turn'

R2012, Patrick O'Connor. 34", M. Medium rose falls and slightly lighter standards. Rounded flower form with overlapping lightly ruffled petals. Styles rose with distinct and frilly beige tips. Small yellow arrowhead signal. A handsome flower and very good increaser. *German Coast x Chuck Begnaud*.

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Edmond Riggs'

R2002, Richard Sloan. 38", M. Falls pastel lilac veined deeper, with yellow edge and reverse. Standards pastel lilac pink with yellow reverse. Style arms cream green. Signals yellow and extending to near end of petal, less intense on standards; edges serrated. Unknown parentage.

[Back](#)



Louisiana Iris - 'Emory Smith'

R1999, Patrick O'Connor. 36", M. Blue-lavender self with cream styles tipped blue-lavender. Small white thumbprint signal with yellow center line. *Noble Moment* x *Sea Consul*. Excellent in the garden with lots of soft blue-lavender and contrasting creamy styles.

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'False River'

R1992, Patrick O'Connor. 36", M. Deep red with showy thumbprint signal of yellow, veined red. Styles have a cream and green cast, tipped red. *Mocker's Song* x *Harland K. Riley*. An overlooked red with excellent substance.

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Faubourg Marigny'

R2011. Sdlg. 08-10. 38", EM. Pale blue over a white ground. Falls recurve a bit. Styles white. Lightly ruffled. Orange dagger signal.. *Bywater X Beale Street*. Very vigorous. Named for an old New Orleans neighborhood that adjoins the French Quarter downriver. "Faubourg" is an old French word meaning roughly "suburb."

[Back](#)

[In The Garden](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Felician Hills'

R1987, Patrick O'Connor. 34", M. Pink self, yellow dagger signal tipped with a spear of deep pink. Styles deeper pink. One of the best clear pinks available and a good grower. Wide foliage. *Deneb x unknown*.

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Fiesta Gal'

R1987, Charles Arny. 36", M. Registered as having blood red standards and falls, and a large bright irregular signal. Not sure about that exact color, but it is a nice red and a good, reliable iris. *Valera x Charlie's Ginny*.

[Back](#)



Louisiana Iris - 'Flame On'

R1985, Henry Rowlan. 38", EM. Standards cardinal red. Falls lighter. Very large bright yellow arrowhead signal that is wider and longer than the deep red styles. Deep red signals red (53B) crest and styles with green throat at base of styles. *Roll Call x Tarnished Brass*. The contrast between the deep red styles and the exceptional signals is the main feature of this older iris.

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Flareout

[Back](#) [In The Garden](#)



Louisiana Iris - 'Frenchmen Street'

R2002, Patrick O'Connor. 38", E. Light buff-orange self. Orange spear signal outlined in salmon with a streak extending to the tip of the falls. (*Shizuoka Sunrise x False*) x *Emory Smith*. Robust plants with large rhizomes and thick stalks which sometimes produce offsets like a daylily. Interesting color and pattern.

[Back](#)



Louisiana Iris - 'Gentilly'

R2003, Patrick O'Connor. 36", M. Peach-beige self. Yellow dagger signal surrounded with red-orange. Uniquely marked styles, green at center with cream and wine markings, and wine tips. *Hurricane Colin x Tchoupitoulas*. Average increase on a unique iris.

[Back](#)

[In The Garden](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'German Coast'

R2007, Patrick O'Connor. *Faubourg-St. John x self*. 40", M. The purple, crepey flower is similar to Faubourg-St. John but on a much taller, very well branched stalk. The signal is a bright yellow arrowhead. The styles are purple wine, with purple frilly tips, a yellow-cream ridge, and greenish as the base. Has been a good parent.

[Back](#)



Louisiana Iris - 'Ginny's Choice'

R2003, Wayland Rudkin. 26", M. Standards and falls blue violet, Yellow steeple signal with greenish crest. Ruffled and recurved. *Cotton Plantation X Bayou Mystique*. HM 2008, AM 2010. Very nice flower and a prolific grower.

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Graceland'

R1979, Mary Dunn. 32-34, M. Bright deep blue self, blended deeper in center of falls; no signal with a slight reddish cast to style arms. Vigorous. *Clyde Redmond x New Offering*.

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Grand Coteau'

R2009, Patrick O'Connor. 36", M. Light salmon standards and falls. Falls have deep salmon streak from tip of yellow arrowhead signal. Styles cream. (94-1: Hurricane Colin x Irish Bayou) X Sharon Juliette. Nice stalks and a pretty flower.

[Back](#)

[In The Garden](#)



Louisiana Iris - 'Great White Hope'

R1999, Dorman Haymon. 51", EM. Stands dark blue violet; style arms near black, edged cream; falls very dark purplish violet; ruffled, flared. A big, imposing iris growing to 51 inches. Stands out. It's difficult to capture the color in pictures. *Jeri x Easter Tide*.

[Back](#)

[In The Garden](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Gris Gris'

R2011, Patrick O'Connor. 34", M. Sdlg. 08-38. Deep red self, approaching maroon. Styles slightly darker. Yellow dagger signal outlined in wine. *Andouille x Cherry Cup*.

[Back](#)

[In The Garden](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Gulf Moon Glow'

R1994, Albert Faggard. 40", EM. Standards light lavender blue, edged yellow. Style arms green, yellow edge and claws. Falls yellow green, heavily veined green, hint of lavender around edge, darkening toward center, long yellow green signal. *Easter Tide X Old South*.

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Harland K. Riley'

R1970, W. B. MacMillan. 40", M. Yellow with brown veining on falls. Greenish styles. Unknown parentage. An old favorite that does not look that old.

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Heavenly Glow'

R1988, Richard Morgan. 36-42, E. An orange-coral. Peach might be a good description. The green styles make this iris stand out. The yellow signal is narrowly outlined rust. A good garden performer and a distinctive flower. Generally grows shorter than the registered height of 36+ inches. (*Missey Reveley x Ila Nunn*) x *Gold Reserve*.

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Henry Rowlan'

R2000, M. D. Faith. 43", EM. Standards and style arms blue purple; falls slightly darker. Bold golden yellow signal. This is a gorgeous iris. A smooth purple set off by the striking contrast with the yellow signal. Great stalks and a good grower. Winner of the Mary Swords Debaillon Award. *Voodoo Song* x *unknown*.

[Back](#)

[In The Garden](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Highland Road'

R2005, Patrick O'Connor. 30", M. Falls red with slight blue-purple suffusion. Standards are a light purplish pink. Style arms are cream, washed and tipped red-purple. Bright yellow crown signal. *False River X Prytania*. Named for the picturesque road in Baton Rouge that hugs the natural banks of the Mississippi.

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Honey Galore'

R1999, Ron Betzer. 32", M. Falls dark honey, veined and overlaid bright amber, orange buff edge. Standards orange buff. Lime green steeple signal. Style arms orange buff, infused black and green toward base. Lightly ruffled. *Louisiana Teddy Bear x Gladiator's Gift*. Nice iris and an unusual color.

[Back](#)

[In The Garden](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Honey Star'

R1991, Janet Hutchinson. 34", M. Standards. cream, veined buff wine, giving pale apricot effect. Falls cream, blushed and veined buff wine. Rich yellow signal. *Margaret Hunter X unknown*. A very vigorous plant from an Australian hybridizer.

[Back](#)



Louisiana Iris - 'Hurricane Party'

R1986, Dorman Haymon, . 39", M. Lightly ruffled full red violet, slightly darker around large triangular yellow gold signal and down center of falls. Cream styles shading to full dark red violet; slight fragrance. *Blue Duke X Ann Chowning*. Excellent plant on a husky zigzag stalk. Heavy substance that resembles a tetraploid.

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Hush Money'

R1998, Mary Dunn. 36", M. Standards cream with a blue cast. Falls cream toward center, light blue cast toward edges. Orange steeple signal on a cream-yellow ground. Styles greenish becoming cream at the tips. Ruffled. A very distinctive icy blue with contrasting orange and green markings. Unusual and pretty. (*Clara Goula* x *Clara Goula*) x (*Monument* x *Handmaiden*).

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Irish Bayou'

R2002, Patrick O'Connor. Deep rose pink with rose veining over a powdery pink suffusion. Yellow arrowhead signal. Lightly fluted and flaring. Contrasting cream styles. *Deneb x Mac's Blue Heaven*. 36", M. This has been a good parent and grower.

[Back](#)

[In The Garden](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Katrina Dog'

R2009, Patrick O'Connor. 36", EM. Falls peachy tan and slightly recurved. Standards lighter, near white. Ruffled. Styles cream with green overlay toward center. Yellow arrowhead signal with green veining and a green center spear. *Ann Hordern x Irish Channel.*

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Kay Nelson'

R1986, Marvin Granger. 20-22, M. Medium to deep lavender pink falls, with light greenish yellow signal. Standards light lavender pink. Ruffled. Winner of Mary Swords Debaillon Award, 1995. *Lafitte's Retreat* x *Charlie's Michele*.

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'King Louis'

R2002, Mary Dunn. 24", VE-E. Medium blue, with lighter style arms cream tinged green. Narrow white serrated edging. *Good Vibes* x *Good Vibes*.

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Lafitte Celebration'

R2002, Patrick O'Connor. 36", M. Warm coral pink with matching styles. Yellow arrowhead signal. *Feliciana Hills* x (*Dr. Dormon* x *Ann Chowning*). The color is the main deal about this iris. Not many quite like it.

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Lake Sylvania'

Richard Morgan, R1991. 24", M. Medium blue, orange yellow signal. *Everett Caradine x Clyde Redmond) X Trail of Tears*. This short iris may be the most brilliant, saturated blue available. The color is hard to capture and it is less purple than shown. An open form and charming garden display.

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Lakeview'

R2007, Patrick O'Connor. 36", ML. A violet red iris with contrasting greenish-cream styles. Opens with a flaring form but flattens. The falls are a richer violet red than the standards and are marked with deeper line red markings from the tip of the inconspicuous yellow crown signal extending most of the length of the falls. *Kristi G x Whereyat*.

[Back](#)

[In The Garden](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Laura Louise'

R1990, Joseph Mertzweiller by Rusty Ostheimer) 28", ML. Yellow orange, signal yellow orange (17A). Parentage record lost, but it involved 'President Hedley', Mertzwiller's excellent yellow. 'Laura Louise' is an excellent, reliable garden iris.

[Back](#)



Louisiana Iris - 'Lillie Edwards'

R2002, Patrick O'Connor. 42", ML. Falls lavender violet with white rim, white suffused area with lavender violet veining near styles. Standards light lavender pink, white suffusion; style arms lavender pink; yellow lance signal; very broad, slightly recurved form. *Clara Goula x Mudbug*.

[Back](#)

[In The Garden](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Little Woods'

R2004, Patrick O'Connor. 20-22", M. Rosy pink. Falls have light wine line markings outlining a yellow-green line signal and then extending down the center of the petals. Styles light green becoming wine red toward center of the flower. (*Tchoupitoulas* x *Emory Smith*) X *Heavenly Glow*. An interesting shorter iris that multiplies very well.

[Back](#)

[In The Garden](#)



Louisiana Iris - 'Longue Vue'

R1999, Dorman, Haymon. 38", M. A large, ruffled white of excellent form. Some olive veining, aging white. *Easter Tide x Dural White Butterfly*.

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Louis Armstrong'

R2012, Patrick O'Connor. 36", M. Ruffled reddish purple near-self. Falls a slightly deeper color. Flaring, somewhat fluted flower form that shows well from a distance. Reddish purple styles have a light yellow margin and yellow midrib near the base. *Tchoupitoulas x Mister Joe*. Reliable bloomer and increaser.

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Low And Inside'

R2013, Patrick O'Connor. M, 24". Sdlg. 09-06 . Standards medium yellow. Falls medium yellow with darker rust-rose veins over lower two-thirds of the petals. Styles medium yellow with a deep rose wash on the lower third. Orange line signal. 03-67 X Highland Road. 03-67: 94-20 x Prytania 94-20: (Harland K. Riley x Gold Reserve) x Flame On.

[Back](#) [In the Garden](#)



Louisiana Iris - 'Lower Nine'

R2008, Patrick O'Connor. 36-38", EM. A smooth-colored, lightly ruffled pale yellow. The signal area is loosely defined and consists of a line of orange surrounded by greenish veins and a yellow orange ground that provides a richer contrast to the remainder of the pale yellow falls. The standards are pale yellow with inconspicuous greenish-yellow center lines. The styles are pale yellow. *Southdowns X (Felician Hills x Natural Wonder)*.

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Lucky Dog'

R2010, Patrick O'Connor. 28-30", L. Deep rose pink self. Styles are distinctly green at base becoming nearer cream and marked with very deep rose tips and center ridge. Signal is a wide yellow line that does not extend much beyond the styles. The outstanding feature of the iris is late bloom and rapid multiplication. There won't be many clumps still in full bloom when this iris is at its peak. The numerous stalks create a floriferous look, although the iris does not produce many double sockets. *Twelve Mile Bridge x Mister Joe.*

[Back](#)

[In The Garden](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Magnetic'

R1996. John C. Taylor. 47", ML. Registration description indicates cream standards edged pink with a darker central rib; buff falls with a rose pink spray pattern darker toward edge; buff styles and a yellow signal. To my eye, there is a rich brown tone that darkens the rose pink, and a glowing gold around the signal. *Desert Jewel x Dural Dreamtime*.

[Back](#)

[In The Garden](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Marie Caillet'

R1963, Sidney Conger. 38", ML. A blue-violet self and an excellent garden iris that has remained popular. It does not hurt that it is named for a founder of the Society for Louisiana irises (in 1941) and probably the best known person associated with Louisiana irises. *Acadian* x *W. B. MacMillan*

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Marie Dolores'

Dorman Haymon, R1986. 40", E. Ruffled white, veined orange. Orange signal. Cream styles. *Acadian White X Ila Nunn*. Very vigorous and excellent form.

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Metairie Ridge'

R2003, Patrick O'Connor. 40", M. Falls medium rose, standards lighter. Styles deep rose. *Hurricane Colin* x *Zydeco*. Outstanding form, bud count and performance. Proving to be an excellent garden iris.

[Back](#)

[In The Garden](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Mister Joe'

R2005, Joseph Mertzweiller, registered by the Baton Rouge Botanic Garden. 30", M. Falls red with brownish undertones. Standards red-brown over a whitish suffusion, narrow yellow line on some petals. Style arms cream, light coral wash near tips. Yellow steeple signal. *President Hedley x Koorawatha.*

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Monkey Hill'

R2005, Patrick O'Connor. 24", M. Falls red orange and standards salmon with light red-orange veins. Very large yellow arrowhead signal. *Tickfaw and Prytania*. Named for a mound of dirt at Audubon Park in New Orleans created for children to play on; the closest thing to a mountain in the city.

[Back](#)

[In The Garden](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Mothership'

R2010, Patrick O'Connor. 36", M. Falls bright red with a slight hint of orange. Standards lighter. Bright, loosely defined yellow-orange signal with streaks of yellow-orange standards radiating out on the bottom half of the falls. Styles red orange with yellow midrib. (00-17: *Hurricane Colin* x *Tchoupitoulas*) x *Mister Joe*.

[Back](#)

[In The Garden](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Mudbug'

R1999, Patrick O'Connor. 28", M. Medium purple. Styles red purple. Signal is a yellow orange line centered in a large white thumbprint area; darker streak at tip. *Dr. Dormon x I. brevicaulis*. The brevicaulis background shows in the excellent zigzag stalks. Up to 5-6 positions on a short iris. Good garden show.

[Back](#)

[In The Garden](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'My Friend Dick'

Richard Butler, by M. D. Faith, R1998. 35", M. Currant red, bold golden yellow signal. *Ann Chowning X self*. Large flower and good garden performer.

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'New Basin Canal'

R2009, Patrick O'Connor. 34", M. Sdlg. 05-23. Falls reddish brown. Standards slightly lighter. Prominent yellow arrowhead signal with light green veins, outlined in deep maroon. Styles reddish brown with a yellow-green ridge and edges. Lightly ruffled. *Gentilly X Heavenly Glow*.

[Back](#)



Louisiana Iris - 'Noble Moment'

Richard Morgan, R1985. A gorgeous blue-lavender iris with rich ivory styles and a yellow signal in a white blaze. Excellent grower and bloomer. A favorite for many years. The color contrast between petals and styles is wonderful. *Winter's Veil x Tru-Glo*.

[Back](#)



Louisiana Iris - 'Nottoway'

R2005, Patrick O'Connor. 32", M. Falls and standards are white. All petals have gold veins and falls. Falls have a deep gold center line surrounded by lighter gold veins. Style arms cream. Lightly ruffled. (*Hurricane Colin x Irish Bayou*) X *Sharon Juliet*. Named for a large plantation house up-river from New Orleans.

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Now And Forever'

R1997, Heather Pryor. 35", M. Standards soft lavender, purple veining, white reverse. Falls soft lavender, purple veining, white rim and blush near lime green steeple signal. Style arms soft lime green, lavender tip. Lightly ruffled.
Cammeray X Classical Note.

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Our Sassy'

R2006, Wayland Rudkin. 36", M. Standards and falls dark red-maroon. Style arms maroon with lighter edges. Yellow steeple signal. Ruffled. (*Dominique x self*) X *Bayou Mystique*.

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Persistent Cuss'

R2004, Patrick O'Connor. 36", M. Rose pink falls with some white veining around signal. Standards a lighter shade with a white suffusion. Very long, showy cream style arms. (*Deneb* x *unknown*) x *Irish Bayou*. This iris has grown very well for a number of people and wouldn't go away without a name. Vigorous.

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Pink Poetry

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Plum Good'

R2001, Ira Nelson, deceased, by Barbara Nelson) 30", ML. This is an old iris that was in commerce for many years before it was registered. Deep red, almost maroon, with an open form. Exceptionally bright and prominent signal. Styles reddish with yellow ridge and center. An example of an older iris that holds its own next to newer plants. *Unknown parentage.*

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Point Aux Chenes'

POINT AUX CHENES. R2005, Joe Musacchia. 34-38", M. Golden peach self, darker around signal; signal dark yellow. A nice warm color and good increaser.
Red Echo x Chuck

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Pontchartrain Beach'

R2011. 34", M. Medium rose over a lighter ground and with conspicuous darker rose veining, especially on the falls. Styles are cream streaked rose with hint of green at the base.. Yellow arrowhead signal. *Victoria Inn X Frosted Moonbeam*. Pontchartrain Beach was a famous amusement park on the Lakefront in New Orleans, now gone.

[Back](#)

[Another View](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Poverty Point'

R1999, Patrick O'Connor. Medium rose suffused white. Ages to powdery pink. Falls distinctly darker around edges. Large yellow arrow signal. Medium rose styles. *Ann Chowning x unknown*. 36", M. Very vigorous, wide foliage.

[Back](#)

[In The Garden](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Praline Festival'

Dorman Haymon, 1992. 34", M. Cream, heavily veined and dusted rose-tan, yellow-gold signal streaked green full length of falls; ruffled; rose-tan style arms, edged cream. *Valera X President Hedley*

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'President Hedley'

R1979, Joseph Mertzweiller. 32-34", E. Dark yellow self with slight brown shading on the front edge of the falls. Darker yellow-orange line signal and yellow style arms. *G. W. Holleyman* x ((*seedling* x *Upstart* x *Belle Lou*)). One of the first of the modern yellows, with a full, overlapping form.

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Professor Neil'

R1990, Joseph Mertzweiller. Tetraploid. Falls dark, velvety red. Standards dark red. Large brilliant yellow thumbprint signal. 30 inches. Midseason. *Complex parentage: [C-76-4: (Professor Ike x Wheelhorse, colchicine treated)] x [C-76-88E: (66-G-Z, colchicine treated chimera x Professor Ike)]*

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Prytania'

R2001, Patrick O'Connor. 28-30", EM. Deep yellow self. Orange line signal. *President Hedley* x *Hurricane Colin*. This shorter iris is a relatively sun fast yellow with double sockets on a zigzag stalk. Has produced interesting seedlings.

[Back](#)

[In The Garden](#)



Louisiana Iris - 'Queen Jeanne'



QUEEN JEANNE. Heather Pryor, R2002. 41", ML. Deep blue violet, lilac rim and reverse, falls with golden steeple signal overlaid on yellow blotch; style arms white blushed violet, lemon midrib; heavily ruffled. *Alicia Claire* x *9/934-B*: (*Sinfonietta* x *16/90-1*: (*Koorawatha* x *Alluvial Gold*))

[Back](#)



Louisiana Iris - 'Red Beans'

R2007, Patrick O'Connor. 32", M. A medium height rich, rusty red iris with a bright yellow steeple signal. The signal is outlined in deep red rust. Close to a perfect self with rusty red styles and standards only a shade less lustrous than the falls. This iris has an excellent stalk with double sockets at most sites. A vigorous, floriferous iris that makes an excellent garden plant. *Tickfaw X Prytania*.

[Back](#)

[In The Garden](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Red Dazzler'

R1969, Hale. 20-28, M. Short and bright. Grows 20 inches tall or a bit more and is a vivid red self with a velvet sheen on the falls. No visible signal.

Breeding involves Dorothea K. Williamson and fulva over three generations. This is another old, open and short iris that will contrast with modern hybrids. The color has not been surpassed.

[Back](#)

[In The Garden](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Red Echo'

R1983, Henry Rowlan. Scarlet red. Grayed purple line signal. Scarlet red style arms and crest. 36 inches. A relatively small, open flower reminiscent of the species, but with a brilliant color. *Tarnished Brass* x *Terra cotta I. fulva*.

[Back](#)

[In The Garden](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Remoulade'

R2012, Patrick O'Connor. 34-36", M. . A clear reddish orange, about the color of a remoulade sauce. Falls and standards the same color but with a bit more saturation in the falls. Styles closely match in color. The signal is a bright yellow, distinctly defined and somewhat jagged arrowhead shape. *Kelley's Choice* x *Metairie Ridge*. This iris does not have a fancy, ruffled flower, but the simple form seems to emphasize the beautiful clear color.

[Back](#)



Louisiana Iris - 'Rigolets'

R2004, Patrick O'Connor. Sdlg. 01-11. 36-38". Mid season. Falls and medium yellow and standards a bit lighter. Deep orange thumbprint signal, lighter orange near outer edge. Greenish styles. Lightly ruffled. (*Hurricane Colin x Irish Bayou*) X *Our Parris*. Vigorous yellow with great form.. The name is pronounced "rig'-o-les."

[Back](#)

[In The Garden](#)



Louisiana Iris - 'River Road'

R1992, Patrick O'Connor. Medium blue. Yellow line signal on white ground. Medium blue styles with white marking. Slightly ruffled. *Southdowns* x *Clyde Redmond*. 36", M. Older, but still a nice mid-blue with an excellent stalk, often with branching. Vigorous, and blooms from small rhizomes.

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Scarlet Lady'

R1980, Joseph Mertzweiller. 39-47, ML. Registered as an iridescent brick red. Yellow line signal. *Unknown parentage*. Good red iris but not much grown today.

[Back](#)



Louisiana Iris - 'Second Line'

R2012. Sdlg. 08-37. 34-36", M. Mid purple standards and falls. Wide and prominent styles; base color reddish purple with wide off-white border and even longer tips. Style flare upward from the flower at about 45 degrees. Yellow arrowhead signal. The prominent styles are the distinguishing feature of this vigorous iris. *Nottoway x My Friend Dick*.

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Shizuoka Sunrise'

R2001, Patrick O'Connor. Sdlg. 90-1. Falls red with large yellow arrowhead signal. Standards have orange buff base overlaid with deeper red-orange veining. *Ann Chowning* x *President Hedley*. 37", M. Flaring form; standards held upright. Great increaser.

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Sinfonietta'

R1986, Robert Raabe. A saturated mid-blue with blue styles with a cream rib. One of the clearest, brightest of the few true blue irises. Vigorous. Grows 33 inches and blooms midseason. *Bethany Douglas* x (*Clara Goula* x *Gatewood Princess*).

[Back](#)



Louisiana Iris - 'Southdowns'

R1992, Patrick O'Connor. Sdlg. 80-6. Upon opening, the petals are a web of fine purple veins over a white suffusion. Quickly fades to what appears to be ice blue. Styles creamy white. Orange spear signal. *Cajun Caper x unknown*. 38", E. This is a vigorous garden iris, one of the few icy blues available. Looks great in the light of early evening. Pollen parent is almost surely Mac's Blue Heaven, although a bee did the work.

[Back](#)



Louisiana Iris - 'Storyville'

R2005, Patrick O'Connor. Sdlg. 02-04B. 28". Red falls with a purple underlay near edges and an orange suffusion near center. Falls a lighter red. Reverse side of petals is yellow, creating pretty buds with a red and yellow contrast. Bright yellow spear signal. *Kelley's Choice X Prytania*. Named for an historically interesting and famous early-1900s red light district in New Orleans.

[Back](#)

[In The Garden](#)



Louisiana Iris - 'Sunshine Bridge'

R2001, Patrick O'Connor. 38-40', EM. Falls rose wine on lower half, with large veined rose and bright yellow-cream signal area dominating upper half. Standards a blend of rose-orange and cream. Styles cream with some rose-orange marking. *Charlie's Michele x Beausoleil*. Flaring form offers a grace reminiscent of the species. Great in the garden and also for shows. Vigorous.

[Back](#)

[In The Garden and Show](#)



Louisiana Iris - 'Tchoupitoulas'

R2002, Patrick O'Connor. Sdlg. 95-8. Flat colored light purple self. Unusual red-violet signal markings on all petals with matching color on the styles. *Ice Magic* x *River Road*. 36", L. Unusual color combination that has proven an excellent parent. Late bloom extends the season. Unique.

[Back](#)

[In The Garden](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Thanksgiving Fest'

R1998, Mary Dunn. 38", M. Registered as a "cranberry self," which hardly seems like enough to say about the deep, beautiful color. Very vigorous and an excellent garden iris. Petals are a bit fluted. If the color is not unique, it is close to it. *Rich and Famous* x *Natural Wonder*.

[Back](#)

[In The Garden](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Twelve Mile Bridge'

R2007, Patrick O'Connor. 36", ML. Medium rose with falls lightly edged white. The standards are slightly lighter. Styles are green-cream washed with rose. Yellow thumbprint signal with steeple tip and some rusty lines extending a short distance into the falls. (94-1: *Hurricane Colin* x *Irish Bayou*) x *Our Parris*.

[Back](#)

[In The Garden](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Twisted Sister'

R2003, Patrick O'Connor. Sdlg. 96-7. Frosted rose self with white suffusion. Yellow orange spear signal. *Beausoleil* x *Irish Bayou*. 36", ML. The form of this iris is unique. The petals are very upright and stay that way. All the petals are a bit twisted or fluted. Unique.

[Back](#)

[In The Garden](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Under Radar'

R2011, Patrick O'Connor. 22", M. Sdlg. 03-07. Bicolor with yellow standards and amber falls. A short plant and smallish flower. Styles green tipped yellow with wine at the base. Signal consists of a green dagger surrounded by a yellow blotch that sometimes is outlined in reddish veins. (*Mudbug* x ((*Harland K. Riley* x *Gold Reserve*)) x *Flame On*) X *Lemon Zest*.

[Back](#)



Louisiana Iris - 'Velvet Memory'

R1994, Richard Morgan. 28", M. Dark red-violet. Tan halo on falls. Medium green-yellow steeple signal, Lightly ruffled. *Treasured Memories X (L203-A: (Melon Time x Chowning 77-6: (Mockers Song x Ann Chowning))* A wonderful iris from a great hybridizer. Virtually nothing else comes close to the color.

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



S

Louisiana Iris - 'Victoria Inn'

R2002, Patrick O'Connor. 37", M. Red-violet near self. Styles a combination of green, cream and red violet. Yellow crown signal. *False River x Irish Bayou*. A beautiful iris that multiplies well. Rich color and nice contrast in the styles.

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'When Pigs Fly'

R2013, Patrick O'Connor. ML, 30-32". Standards pale amber on opening, fading to pearl white; pale violet lines in center. Falls pale amber on opening, fading to pearl white. Bright yellow dagger signal on falls outlined in bright violet that radiates out about half the width and length of the falls. Styles cream white. Sdlg. 10-34 *Percolator* x *Bellocq*.

[Back](#) [In the Garden](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Whereyat'

R2003, Patrick O'Connor. 36", M. Deep purple self. Deeper purple veining around yellow lance signal. Styles greenish tipped purple. *Unknown parentage*. Very good grower and bloomer.

[Back](#)



Louisiana Iris Species - Brevicaulis

Rafinesque, 1817. The shortest of the five Louisiana iris species. A medium blue flower blooming on zig-zag stalks that often do not rise above the foliage. They grow around 18-20 inches high, and the flowers usually bloom down among the often arching blades. Not as spectacular as some of the giants among the Louisianas, but a charming plant and exceedingly important in hybridizing. Also a late bloomer that will extend the season.

[Back](#)

[In The Wild](#)



Louisiana Iris Species - Fulva

Ker Gawler, 1812. A wild red iris? This is it. Who would have thought there was such a wildflower? But here it is.

[Back](#)

[In The Wild](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Edith Dupre'

R1945, George Arceneaux. 27", E. The registration description: "Canary yellow with orange-red overcast; canary yellow style arms; small yellow crest. I. fulva type." A hybrid but apparently between red and yellow collected forms of I. fulva, making it essentially a species form. Great color contrast between the styles and petals. *Bazeti X Maringouin fulva (yellow)*.

[Back](#)

[In The Garden](#)



Louisiana Iris Species - 'Giganticaerulea'

(Small, 1929). The giant blue of the Central Gulf Coast. Concentrated in Louisiana, but also occurs in Texas and Mississippi. Found in open fresh water marshes and in open wooded swamps. Can grow to six feet under some conditions, but in a garden setting reaches around four feet. Definitely a water lover that produces long rhizomes.

[Back](#)

[In The Wild](#)



Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - Baton Rouge Passalong

This iris resembles *I. giganteaerulea* but is considerably shorter (32") and much later blooming. It is found in yards all around Baton Rouge and probably elsewhere, but no one knows its precise identity. It closely resembles the East Coast species *I. hexagona*, which is no longer thought to occur naturally in Louisiana. It has an open species form, is a nice mid blue and a good grower.

[Back](#)

[In The Garden](#)



Louisiana Iris - "I. vinicolor"

"Vinicolor" was one of many species name once given to collected irises that turned out to be natural hybrids. "I. vinicolor" apparently is a first generation hybrid between red *I. fulva* and blue *I. giganticaerulea*. A first generation cross between the two produces a wine colored iris, tall like *giganticaerulea* but with the clear color influence of *fulva*. These irises are often found in yards in New Orleans, Baton Rouge, and undoubtedly other cities and towns in Louisiana. They are tall and will grow to around four feet in the garden, taller if in water.

[Back](#)



Louisiana Irises Show A Remarkable Range Of Color And Form

Top right: 'Professor Neil' (Mertzweiller), 'Creole Can-Can' (Granger), and 'Dixie Deb' (Chowning). Left: 'Marie Caillet' (Conger). Below left, top: 'Lake Hamana' (Pryor), 'Our Parris' (Carroll). Below: 'Sinfonietta' (Rabbe).



Photos by Gene Lupinetti

[Back to Iris Friendship Garden Main Page](#) More: [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#)



Louisianas Make A Home Far From Southern Swamps

Top, right: 'Felician Hills' (O'Connor), 'Lake Sylvia' (Morgan). Above, from left: 'Renee Flemming', (H. Pryor), 'Eastman Winds' (B. Pryor). Below: 'Pure Water' (Musacchia).



Photos by Gene Lupinetti

[Back to Iris Friendship Garden Main Page](#) More: [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#)



**Louisiana Irises, Beautiful
Up Close And In The
Landscape**

*Top, left: 'Cherry Cup' (Morgan), 'Finders Keepers' (Chowning), 'Edna Claunch' (Wolford), 'Frederick Douglas' (Haymon).
Left: 'Wood Violet' (C. Dormon). Lower left, from top: 'Susan B. Anthony' (B. Pryor), 'Sinfonietta' (Raabe).*



Photos by Gene Lupinetti

[Back to Iris Friendship Garden Main Page](#) More: [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#)



Great Companions In The Garden

Middle left: 'Exquisite Lady' (Owens), and, right "Heavenly Glow" (Morgan). Bottom left, 'Bayou Bandit', a fulva form collected by Jeff Weeks, and right 'Prytania' (O'Connor)



Photos by Gene Lupinetti

[Back to Iris Friendship Garden Main Page](#) More: [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#)



Variety in form and color, from opening bud to fading flower

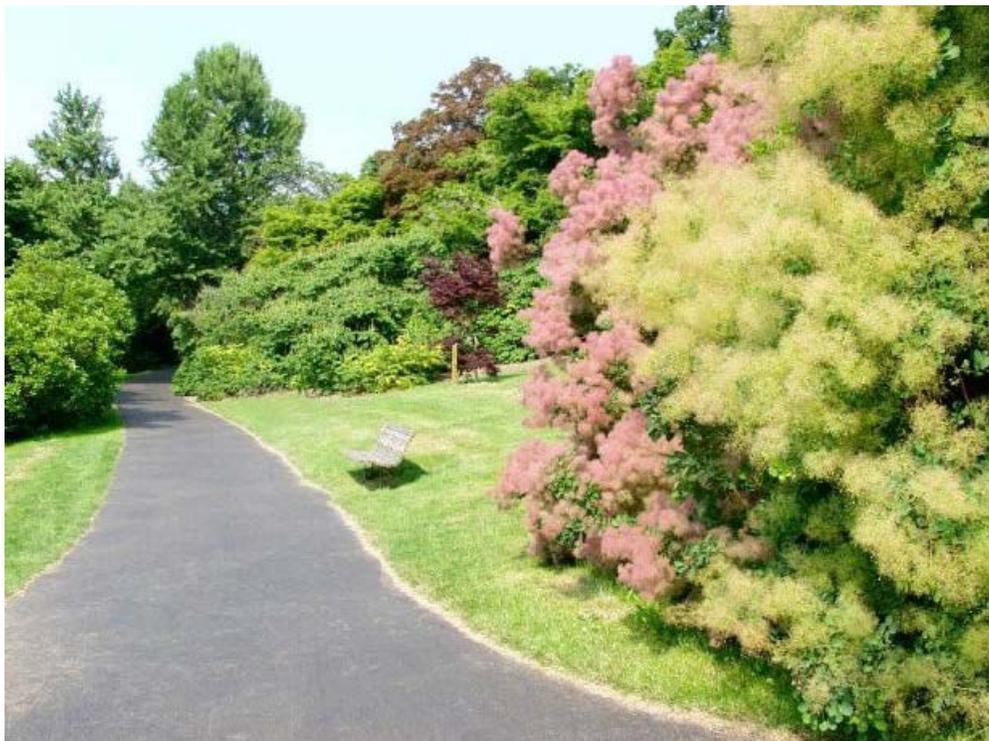
Upper left: The pink 'Felician Hills' (O'Connor) about to open. Above: 'Marie Caillet' (Conger) in the foreground with 'My Friend Dick' (Faith) behind. Below, first row from left. 'Sunshine Bridge' (O'Connor), 'Rochester Lilacs' (H. Pryor), and the species-like 'Red Echo' (Rowlan). Bottom right: 'Rocket Launch' (Betts) and 'My Friend Dick' up close.





Photos by Gene Lupinetti

[Back to Iris Friendship Garden Main Page](#) More: [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#)



HIGHLAND PARK ROCHESTER, NY



Photos by Gene Lupinetti

More Information on Highland Park: [The Monroe County Website](#)

[Back to Iris Friendship Garden Main Page](#)

[Highland Park Page One](#)

Baton Rouge Botanic Garden

The Iris and Wetland Garden, an enduring contribution of Joe Mertzweiller

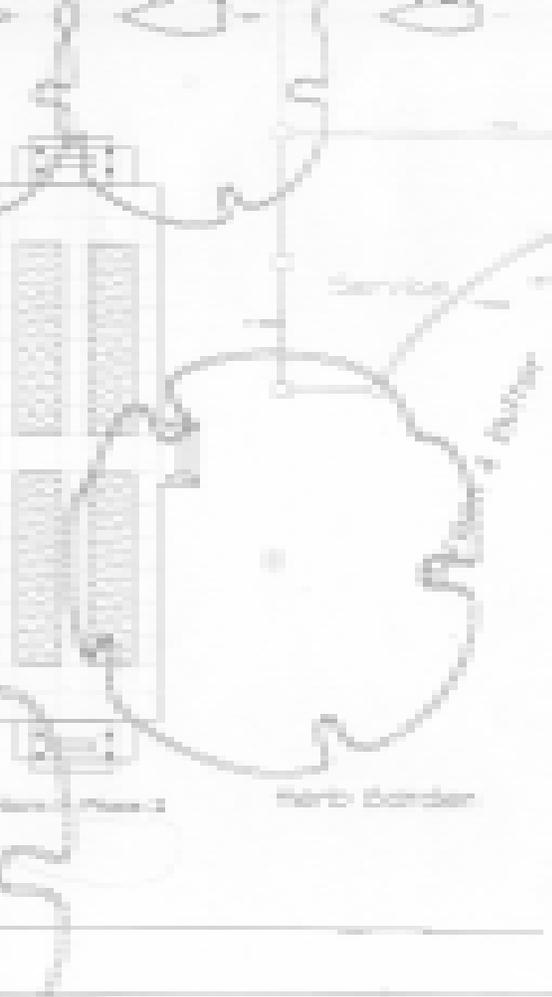
The gorgeous and growing public garden in the city's Independence Park is the site of a major public display of Louisiana irises, and the fitting location of Joe Mertzweiller's introductions.



Joseph K. Mertzweiller

Public display gardens featuring Louisiana irises are all too rare, and, until the late Joe Mertzweiller got involved, South Louisiana was missing from the list entirely. Now, thanks to the support of the Baton Rouge Recreation and Parks Commission (BREC), to Joe's vision and energy, and to the continuing help of his friends, that omission has been remedied, and in fine style. The newly developed Iris and Wetland Garden at the BREC Independence Park Botanic Garden displays Louisiana irises in a fashion that would make Joe Mertzweiller, and the entire Society, proud indeed.

BREC does not formally name sections of its 14-acre Botanic



construction in Phase One was complete, the irises put on a show! Beautiful bloom on healthy plants in a pretty and wholly accessible setting.

The Development of the Iris Garden

The Iris and Wetland Garden did not spring up overnight. Joe Mertzweiller was involved in the Botanic Garden from the beginning as a representative of SLI, but its present state of development came only after several years of effort and initial steps that did not work out as planned. The original concept was to grow the irises in a natural-appearing pond to be created on the site. That pond was dug and planted in early 1994 with an estimated 1,000 rhizomes, many of which were donated by Marie Caillet from her garden in Little Elm, Texas. Joe supervised that planting, which was completed with the help of high school students, and he later wrote in the first issue of the Botanic Garden's newsletter that the irises "will be mostly advanced generation hybrids." He added that in future plantings which would bring the total to at least 3,000 irises, the "species and early hybrids will be represented as well."

Art Landry, an avid camellia grower and the current Treasurer and a past-President of the Friends of the Botanic Garden, said that the original pond planting did not work well for a number of reasons. Control of the weeds, both along the banks and in the water itself was a constant problem. Art wrote in the Friends' newsletter that the "water level varied with the rainfalls and dry periods, and did not control the weeds. The irises planted in the pond bloomed fine for us the two years they were there, but could only be seen from the bank and only if you walked up to the pond."

New Approach

It was decided to replace the unworkable pond with a series of beds designed for ease of access and maintenance, as well as an attractive display of the irises. By this time Joe Mertzweiller was ill, but he participated in the planning of the redesigned garden. Ted Jack, then a landscape architect for BREC, created the current Master Plan, drawing in part upon Joe's ideas and upon the work of Rebecca Deubler, who, while a student at LSU in Landscape Architecture, did her final design project on the Louisiana iris

Garden, but in the Spring, hopefully on the weekend of the SLI meeting in Lafayette, plans call for the dedication of the Iris Garden to Joe and the placement of a sign or plaque noting that it is the site of the Joe Mertzweiller iris collection. At present, the Garden grows Joe's irises predominantly, although over time the cultivars of other hybridizers will be added to provide a display of the wide range of irises that he envisioned.

A master plan for the development of the Iris and Wetland Garden is in Phase One of implementation. The current configuration consists of paved walks through a lowered area, berms for transitional plants, a pond feature, benches, and lots of Louisiana irises planted in curving beds. A short distance away, across an open space to be developed in Phase Two, "experimental beds" are laid out in rows. A watering system is in place, and beds are not so wide that maintenance is excessively difficult. And, in spring of 1999, the first bloom season after



Recessed iris beds, a raised pond and paved walkways replaced the old pond, which required excessive maintenance.



Art Landry and James Jeansonne, mainstays in the effort to develop the Iris and Wetland Garden.

garden.

Construction of the Iris Garden in accordance with Phase One of the new Master Plan began in March 1998, with funding provided in part by a generous grant from Freeport-McMoran. BREC oversaw the construction. Norris Petrie, a construction supervisor for BREC who was especially enthusiastic and helpful, has become an iris grower himself.

The first step was the creation of four experimental beds which permitted the testing of different soil mixes and which provided transitional space needed to move the irises from the old pond. The pond was converted to sunken beds with paved walkways. According to a description of the plan, the design of this area is based on “the meandering land



A bed of mixed irises taken from the original pond planting developed by Joe Mertzweiller.

forms of sloughs in South Louisiana. The bottom of the slough will serve as both a walkway and beds for wetland plants. The highland areas above the sloughs will feature vegetation typical of natural levees....”

The test beds were completed in April 1998 and the original irises were moved from the pond in late April

and early May. The sunken beds were planted in Fall 1998 with irises from Joe’s garden that were donated by Helene Mertzweiller.

Phase Two

The Iris and Wetland Garden already is an excellent place to see Louisiana irises, but the second phase will result in significant additional development. The Master Plan calls for an open air pavilion, additional paved walkways, fencing, and about half of the anticipated total planting space. Art Landry wrote of the design that the “pavilion will serve as a focal point to view and enjoy the garden as well as a gathering place and outdoor classroom for groups of children or gardening society members.”

Phase Two of the Iris and Wetland Garden will result both in significant expansion in area and the addition of features that will magnify the versatility and functionality of the site for the public.

Efforts have begun to raise the needed funding for Phase Two, but, with a \$150,000 price tag, it is a major project. The

Botanic Garden generates some funds through plant sales, and BREC provides significant in-kind support and other valuable assistance. However, the magnitude of Phase Two will require outside support from a corporation or other major donor.

The plant sales will continue, however, both to raise funds and to make Louisiana irises more widely available in the community. James Jeansonne and Mark Hofmeyer have made crosses and

“The LA Irises are coming into full bloom and are really a sight to behold! James Jeansonne, with the help of Wilson Beard and others, has done an outstanding job in planting, fertilizing, mulching, and weeding the irises this spring. The plants have responded with a riot of color from whites, yellows, blues, lavenders, reds, purples and all shades in-between....”

-Botanic Garden Newsletter

produced seedlings for the sale, much as Joe did earlier, both for the Botanic Garden and for SLI auctions. At the Spring 1998 sale nearly 400 hundred available seedlings sold out in 45 minutes. Another sale was scheduled for the Fall, and eventually named cultivars will be available.

The Long Haul

Aside from new development, the major task facing the Iris and Wetland Garden is the maintenance, organization and expansion of the iris plantings. That is no small challenge. To date, the Garden has been blessed with several dedicated volunteers who were friends that Joe Mertzweiller had interested in Louisiana irises.



Gazebos in the Rose Garden, viewed from beyond an "experimental bed" in the Iris and Wetland Garden.

James Jeansonne, who is also an orchid grower and hybridizer, has taken the lead in working with the irises and attempting to identify the various cultivars. The plants that Joe had placed in the old pond had become mixed, and there was no clear record of what was in the original planting. The irises donated by Helene were marked in her yard with coded tags, and that has enabled James to decipher the identity some, but by no means all, of the plants.

In 1999, James took a raft of pictures which he organized into books with the



Two beautiful irises that may be identified in time.

hope of later identifying the cultivars. Because a large proportion of the original plants probably were seedlings that varied only marginally from others and from the parents, this is a difficult process. Many undoubtedly will never be identified, although there are lovely

flowers among them, some probably worthy of registration and introduction.

At the present time, several cultivars donated by Frank Zachariah are labeled and more will be tagged by the next bloom season as the result of James' work. Eventually, it is hoped that all of Joe Mertzweiller's registered irises will be represented in clearly identified plantings. Art Landry wrote, "We will try to obtain plants of all of Joe's introductions from other growers throughout the South so that his tremendous contributions to Louisiana irises can be remembered in the years to come."

Looking Ahead

Louisiana iris enthusiasts have been aware of the growing popularity of their favorite flower, and the feeling is widely shared that we are on the threshold of another major advance. Public plantings such those at the Iris and Wetland Garden in Baton Rouge may well serve as a catalyst for the next surge into public awareness. Visitors who dropped by the garden on October 4th would have seen some of the reasons: James Jeansonne, Art Landry, Mark Hofmeyer and Wilson Beard in the process of digging and replanting the experimental beds and surrounded by masses of huge Louisiana iris rhizomes, many over a foot long. Visitors to the Iris and Wetland Garden in the spring are bound to see a gorgeous display produced by the replanted irises, the result of good breeding, good culture and goodwill.

Joe Mertzweiller did not live to see the construction of the new Iris and Wetland Garden, but the vision was his. Today, the result of Joe's work, both in the irises and the garden itself, is there for the entire community to see and appreciate.

Independence Park Botanic Garden

Independence Park originally was the Parish Airport but has been transformed since the late 1970s into a multi-use recreation area by the East Baton Rouge Parish Recreation and Park Commission, BREC. The last plane flew out of the airport in 1974. The site now serves as a home to the Parish Library, a Louisiana Department of Public Safety Complex and a public recreation facility, including numerous soccer fields. A



Garden Center Building is a main resource of the Park, a place where city garden clubs, horticultural organizations and interested citizens meet, hold flower shows and conduct special garden events.

The iris display is the fourth major garden area within the Botanic Garden. The others are the Rose, Crape Myrtle, and Sensory Gardens. The Sensory Garden contains herbs, culinary and other plants. A Camellia Garden is planned, and detailed design is underway.



Above: unidentified deep yellow; top: blue with nicely marked, frilly styles; Right, bottom: short peach-rose seedling; top: fluted pink with distinctive styles.

Botanic Garden Mysteries



Above: full red with striking signals; top: rusty peach with ruffles, good form and no known pedigree.

HELP NEEDED

Volunteers

SLI members and others in the Baton Rouge area are invited to volunteer to help with the Iris and Wetland Garden at Independence Park. In the long run, the success of the Garden in the community will depend upon a healthy volunteer cadre to supplement the support of BREC.

Volunteers are needed to participate in cleaning, weeding, replanting, and plant sales to raise funds for construction in Phase Two of the Master Plan.

Hopefully, as interest in Louisiana irises inevitably grows, a Baton Rouge chapter of SLI can be formed to provide support for the Iris and Wetland Garden, as well as to engage in other activities involving the enjoyment and promotion of Louisiana irises. Other designated areas of the Botanic Garden, such as the Herb and Rose Gardens, are supported by local groups that focus on a particular type of plants, and in the long run a similar organization will be needed for the iris garden to thrive and endure.

Joe Mertzweiller's Introductions

The Iris and Wetland Garden grows many of Joe Mertzweiller's introductions, but some are either missing or unidentified in mixed plantings. The Garden would like to obtain those introductions of Joe's that it does not now grow or cannot identify with certainty. Contributions of the following cultivars would be most welcome: AUNT SHIRLEY, BAYOU ORCHID, BELLE HELENE, BELLE LOU, COUNTER-POISE, CRESCENT CITY, FREDDIE BOY, GOOD DOCTOR, GRAPE FLUFF, MARSHA SUE, PRESS RELEASE, PROFESSOR CLAUDE, PROFESSOR ELLIS, PROFESSOR FRITCHIE, PROFESSOR JIM, PROFESSOR PAUL, PROFESSOR SIGMUND, SCARLET LADY, and SWAMP FLAME.

Those wishing to contribute time or plants should contact James Jeansonne, 16433 Caesar Ave., Baton Rouge, LA 70816, (225) 275-8103.

Iris and Wetland Garden Dedicated in Memory of Joseph Mertzweiller

In an April 16 ribbon cutting ceremony, the Baton Rouge Recreation and Parks Commission's Iris and Wetland Garden in the Independence Park Botanic Garden was dedicated to the memory of Joseph K. Mertzweiller, who conceived of the garden and was a driving force in its creation. The garden displays many of Joe's registered irises and numerous seedlings, as well as the irises of other hybridizers. It is a beautifully conceived facility that will support an exemplary display of Louisiana irises for years to come.



Helene Mertzweiller cuts the ribbon formally opening the Iris and Wetland Garden in Baton Rouge.



Remarks at the Dedication on Behalf of the Society

BY PATRICK O'CONNOR

It is an honor to be here today and to represent the Society for Louisiana Irises at this dedication. This beautiful iris garden is an enduring gift to the community, and thanks are due. We should appreciate the City, through BREC; the individuals who supported and worked on the project to create this setting; the contributors, especially Freeport McMoran; and the volunteers who have provided the labor of love to turn this spot into a beautiful garden.

Our greatest debt of gratitude is owed to Joe Mertzweiller. This place was his vision. He conceived of the Louisiana Iris garden and was a driving force behind its creation. Joe Mertzweiller grew, and actually developed through his hybridizing, most of the Louisiana irises that you see here. Joe's contribution to the Baton Rouge community through the creation of the Iris and Wetland Garden was huge.

That contribution did not end with this garden, however. Those of you who have been involved in the Society for Louisiana Irises are fully aware of this. I want to cite just a couple of examples.

First, by way of context, the Society for Louisiana Irises is an organization, founded in 1941, that has been dedicated to preserving, developing and promoting these native plants. Louisiana irises do not grow exclusively in Louisiana, but Louisiana is unique in the variety and concentration of species, colors and forms. As they diminish in the wild in the face of development (and this was a great concern of Joe's), it has been the mission of the Society to preserve this part of our natural heritage and to extend its potential by encouraging hybridizing to create the beauties you see here.

Due to the work of many, we have been remarkably successful in this mission. Louisiana irises are no longer just a wildflower appreciated by a relatively few, but have become plants widely recognized by the gardening public. And not just here, but all around the country.

Several individuals stand out have made critical contributions to our success, but Joe Mertzweiller ranks with the founders and early figures in the Society. And it is good company:

Caroline Dorman, the naturalist and writer who wrote about the early Louisianas and other native plants; Dr. John Small, the head of the NY Botanical Garden, whose collecting expeditions in the 1930s represent the modern "discovery" of these irises. And host of early collectors

from the 1930, 40s and 50s, who brought the species and natural hybrids in from the swamps and assured the preservation of the variety of colors and forms for future generations.

Joe Mertzweiller's contributions occurred in the second generation but they were easily of the same order of importance.

First, Joe was a leader, in energy, in dedication and in intellect. From the 1960s into the 1990s, Joe, along with Marie Caillet, were responsible for an outstanding series of publications, culminating in the definitive book on Louisiana irises. These publications have done more to promote Louisiana irises than any other single thing, aside from the beauty of the flowers themselves.

Joe's own hybridizing program was simply outstanding. He has left us with many gorgeous, named irises that we otherwise never would have seen, and the evidence of that is only a few feet away.

Joe's interests as a scientist led him to a singular achievement, the development of tetraploid Louisiana irises, which have a doubled set of chromosomes. Tetraploids, already achieved in other plant groups such as daylilies, proved more technically challenging for Louisiana irises, and took years of dedication and persistence. Their creation, however, has left us with the potential for the development of better, more varied and more vigorous irises.

I asked Kevin Vaughn, the new president of the Society, a friend of Joe's, and a fellow scientist (Kevin is a plant geneticist) what he might observe about Joe had he been able to be here. (Kevin had to represent the Society today at the American Iris Society meeting in Dallas, or he would have been with us). He said people should recognize that Joe accomplished in his backyard Baton Rouge garden, on a normal size lot, what plant scientists with acres of space and grant money would have been hard pressed to achieve.

Our Society owes as much to Joe Mertzweiller as the Baton Rouge community, which is the beneficiary of this beautiful place. We just completed our 59th annual convention in Lafayette this weekend, and I can assure you that Joe's irises, his ideas and his memory were very much alive there.

Thank you.



Iris brevicaulis

These photos of a probable *I. brevicaulis* and habitat were taken near College Station, Texas
Click on the thumbnail to see a larger version.







[Return to *I. brevicaulis* page](#)

Last modified 10/04





















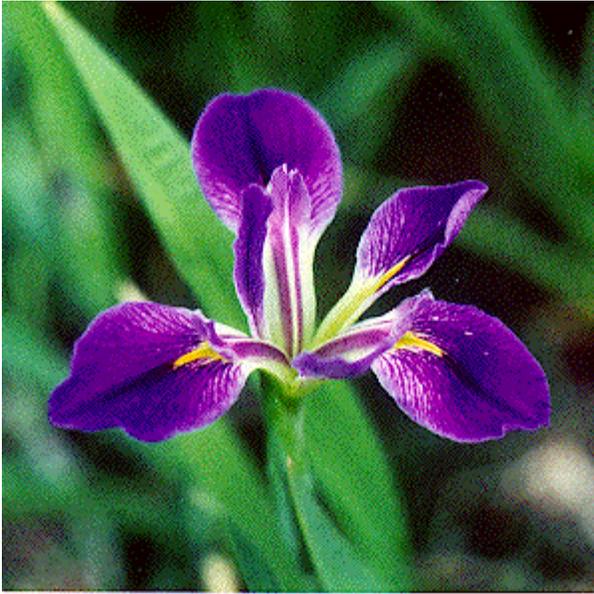












I_hex2.gif %d×%d pixels

















I_nelsY2.jpeg %d×%d pixels







Username

Password

Remember Me



[Lost your password?](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Atchafalaya' - In The Garden

[Back](#)



Louisiana Iris - 'Barataria' - In The Garden

[Back](#)

[INTRODUCTIONS](#) | [CATALOG](#) | [GROWING TIPS](#) | [INSPIRATION](#) | [THE SPECIES](#) | [IMPOSTERS](#) | [BLOG](#)

[Organization](#) | [Katrina](#) | [Contact](#) | [About Zydeco](#) | [Home](#) | [Site Map](#)

Zydeco
Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Bayou Fountain'

[Back](#)

[INTRODUCTIONS](#) | [CATALOG](#) | [GROWING TIPS](#) | [INSPIRATION](#) | [THE SPECIES](#) | [IMPOSTERS](#) | [BLOG](#)

[Organization](#) | [Katrina](#) | [Contact](#) | [About Zydeco](#) | [Home](#) | [Site Map](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Big Charity' - In The Garden

[Back](#)



Louisiana Iris - 'Birthday Suit' - In The Garden

[Back](#)



Louisiana Iris - 'Black Gamecock'

[Back](#)



Louisiana Iris - 'Bywater' - In The Garden

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Chef Menteur Pass' - In The Garden

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Cherry Cup' - In The Garden

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



City of Ruins

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Chuck Begnaud

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Cocodrie'

R2013. M, 26-30". Sdlg. 07-13. Standards and falls light orange, deeper toward tips and edges. Yellow starburst signal outlined deep rust-orange. Styles cream with hint of green, tipped light orange and with a deep orange ridge forming a distinct star. Falls light orange. Graceful, flaring flower form that shows up from a distance. *Lemon Zest x Frenchmen Street*.

Cocodrie is the name of a fishing village very near the Gulf, and there also is a Bayou Cocodrie. "Cocodrie" in Cajun French means alligator.

[Back](#)

[Another View](#) [In The Garden](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Cocodrie'

R2013. M, 26-30". Sdlg. 07-13. Standards and falls light orange, deeper toward tips and edges. Yellow starburst signal outlined deep rust-orange. Styles cream with hint of green, tipped light orange and with a deep orange ridge forming a distinct star. Falls light orange. Graceful, flaring flower form that shows up from a distance. *Lemon Zest x Frenchmen Street*.

Cocodrie is the name of a fishing villiage very near the Gulf, and there also is a Bayou Cocodrie. "Cocodrie" in Cajun French means alligator.

[Back](#)

[Another View](#) In The Garden

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Deja Voodoo' - In The Garden

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Delta Star' - In The Garden

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Dixie Deb' - In The Garden

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Edith Dupre' - In The Garden

[Back](#)



Louisiana Iris - 'Faubourg Marigny' - In The Garden

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Flareout

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Gentilly' - In The Garden

[Back](#)

[INTRODUCTIONS](#) | [CATALOG](#) | [GROWING TIPS](#) | [INSPIRATION](#) | [THE SPECIES](#) | [IMPOSTERS](#) | [BLOG](#)

[Organization](#) | [Katrina](#) | [Contact](#) | [About Zydeco](#) | [Home](#) | [Site Map](#)

Zydeco
Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Grand Coteau' - In The Garden

[Back](#)

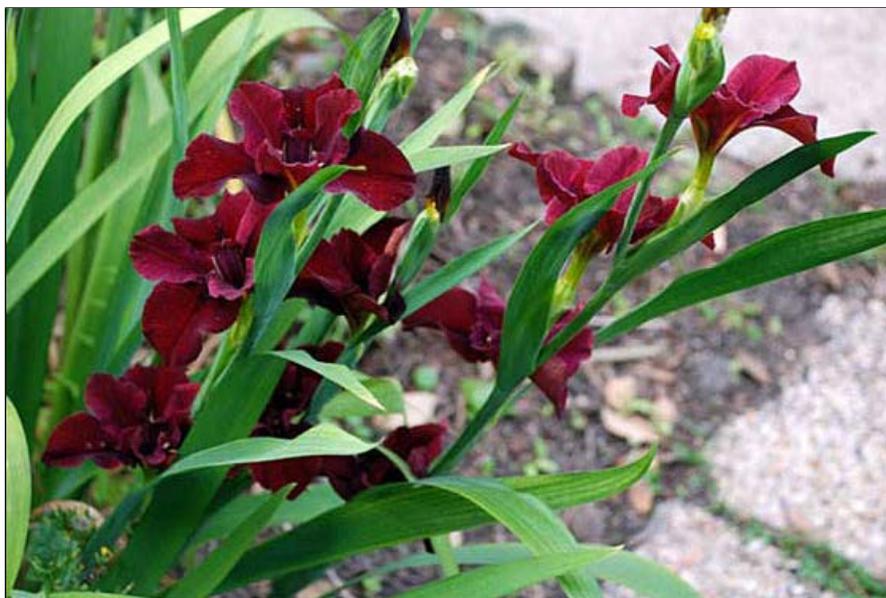
[INTRODUCTIONS](#) | [CATALOG](#) | [GROWING TIPS](#) | [INSPIRATION](#) | [THE SPECIES](#) | [IMPOSTERS](#) | [BLOG](#)

[Organization](#) | [Katrina](#) | [Contact](#) | [About Zydeco](#) | [Home](#) | [Site Map](#)



Louisiana Iris - 'Great White Hope' - In The Garden

[Back](#)



Louisiana Iris - 'Gris Gris' - In The Garden

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Henry Rowlan' - In The Garden

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Honey Galore' - In The Garden

[Back](#)

[INTRODUCTIONS](#) | [CATALOG](#) | [GROWING TIPS](#) | [INSPIRATION](#) | [THE SPECIES](#) | [IMPOSTERS](#) | [BLOG](#)

[Organization](#) | [Katrina](#) | [Contact](#) | [About Zydeco](#) | [Home](#) | [Site Map](#)

Zydeco
Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Irish Bayou' - In The Garden

[Back](#)

[INTRODUCTIONS](#) | [CATALOG](#) | [GROWING TIPS](#) | [INSPIRATION](#) | [THE SPECIES](#) | [IMPOSTERS](#) | [BLOG](#)

[Organization](#) | [Katrina](#) | [Contact](#) | [About Zydeco](#) | [Home](#) | [Site Map](#)

[INTRODUCTIONS](#) | [CATALOG](#) | [GROWING TIPS](#) | [INSPIRATION](#) | [THE SPECIES](#) | [IMPOSTERS](#) | [BLOG](#)

[Organization](#) | [Katrina](#) | [Contact](#) | [About Zydeco](#) | [Home](#) | [Site Map](#)

Zydeco
Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Lakeview' - In The Garden

[Back](#)

[INTRODUCTIONS](#) | [CATALOG](#) | [GROWING TIPS](#) | [INSPIRATION](#) | [THE SPECIES](#) | [IMPOSTERS](#) | [BLOG](#)

[Organization](#) | [Katrina](#) | [Contact](#) | [About Zydeco](#) | [Home](#) | [Site Map](#)

[INTRODUCTIONS](#) | [CATALOG](#) | [GROWING TIPS](#) | [INSPIRATION](#) | [THE SPECIES](#) | [IMPOSTERS](#) | [BLOG](#)

[Organization](#) | [Katrina](#) | [Contact](#) | [About Zydeco](#) | [Home](#) | [Site Map](#)

Zydeco
Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Lillie Edwards' - In The Garden

[Back](#)

[INTRODUCTIONS](#) | [CATALOG](#) | [GROWING TIPS](#) | [INSPIRATION](#) | [THE SPECIES](#) | [IMPOSTERS](#) | [BLOG](#)

[Organization](#) | [Katrina](#) | [Contact](#) | [About Zydeco](#) | [Home](#) | [Site Map](#)



Louisiana Iris - 'Little Woods' - In The Garden

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Low And Inside'

R2013, Patrick O'Connor. M, 24". Sdlg. 09-06 . Standards medium yellow. Falls medium yellow with darker rust-rose veins over lower two-thirds of the petals. Styles medium yellow with a deep rose wash on the lower third. Orange line signal. 03-67 X Highland Road. 03-67: 94-20 x Prytania 94-20: (Harland K. Riley x Gold Reserve) x Flame On.

[Back](#) [In the Garden](#)



Louisiana Iris - 'Lucky Dog' - In The Garden

[Back](#)



Louisiana Iris - 'Magnetic' - In The Garden

[Back](#)



Louisiana Iris - 'Metairie Ridge' - In The Garden

[Back](#)

Directory /Imposters

- [..](#)
- [390Dietes_bicolor_2.jpg](#)
- [390Dietes_grandiflora.jpg](#)
- [I.-pseudacorus.blossom.2x.jpg](#)
- [Imposters.htm](#)
- [Imposters.html](#)
- [Neomarica-gracilis.jpg](#)
- [Neomarica_longifolia.jpg](#)
- [ivirginicaorchid.2.jpg](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Monkey Hill' - In The Garden

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Mothership' - In The Garden

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Mudbug' - In The Garden

[Back](#)

Zydeco
Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Pontchartrain Beach'

[Back](#)

[INTRODUCTIONS](#) | [CATALOG](#) | [GROWING TIPS](#) | [INSPIRATION](#) | [THE SPECIES](#) | [IMPOSTERS](#) | [BLOG](#)

[Organization](#) | [Katrina](#) | [Contact](#) | [About Zydeco](#) | [Home](#) | [Site Map](#)

Zydeco
Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Poverty Point' - In The Garden

[Back](#)

[INTRODUCTIONS](#) | [CATALOG](#) | [GROWING TIPS](#) | [INSPIRATION](#) | [THE SPECIES](#) | [IMPOSTERS](#) | [BLOG](#)

[Organization](#) | [Katrina](#) | [Contact](#) | [About Zydeco](#) | [Home](#) | [Site Map](#)

[INTRODUCTIONS](#) | [CATALOG](#) | [GROWING TIPS](#) | [INSPIRATION](#) | [THE SPECIES](#) | [IMPOSTERS](#) | [BLOG](#)

[Organization](#) | [Katrina](#) | [Contact](#) | [About Zydeco](#) | [Home](#) | [Site Map](#)

Zydeco
Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Prytania' - In The Garden

[Back](#)

[INTRODUCTIONS](#) | [CATALOG](#) | [GROWING TIPS](#) | [INSPIRATION](#) | [THE SPECIES](#) | [IMPOSTERS](#) | [BLOG](#)

[Organization](#) | [Katrina](#) | [Contact](#) | [About Zydeco](#) | [Home](#) | [Site Map](#)



Louisiana Iris - 'Red Beans' - In The Garden

[Back](#)



Louisiana Iris - 'Red Dazzler' - In The Garden

[Back](#)



Louisiana Iris - 'Red Echo' - In The Garden

[Back](#)

[INTRODUCTIONS](#) | [CATALOG](#) | [GROWING TIPS](#) | [INSPIRATION](#) | [THE SPECIES](#) | [IMPOSTERS](#) | [BLOG](#)

[Organization](#) | [Katrina](#) | [Contact](#) | [About Zydeco](#) | [Home](#) | [Site Map](#)

Zydeco
Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Rigolets' - In The Garden

[Back](#)

[INTRODUCTIONS](#) | [CATALOG](#) | [GROWING TIPS](#) | [INSPIRATION](#) | [THE SPECIES](#) | [IMPOSTERS](#) | [BLOG](#)

[Organization](#) | [Katrina](#) | [Contact](#) | [About Zydeco](#) | [Home](#) | [Site Map](#)



Louisiana Iris - 'Storyville' - In The Garden

[Back](#)



Louisiana Iris - 'Sunshine Bridge' - In The Garden and Show

[Back](#)



Louisiana Iris - 'Tchoupitoulas' - In The Garden

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'Thanksgiving Fest' In The Garden

[Back](#)



Louisiana Iris - 'Twelve Mile Bridge' - In The Garden

[Back](#)



Louisiana Iris - 'Twisted Sister' - In The Garden

[Back](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris - 'When Pigs Fly'

Note the difference in color between a freshly opened flower (upper left) and one that has been open about a day. The color lightens quickly and attractively.

R2013, Patrick O'Connor. ML, 30-32". Standards pale amber on opening, fading to pearl white; pale violet lines in center. Falls pale amber on opening, fading to pearl white. Bright yellow dagger signal on falls outlined in bright violet that radiates out about half the width and length of the falls. Styles cream white. Sdlg. 10-34 *Percolator* x *Bellocq*.

[Back](#)



Louisiana Iris Species - Brevicaulis - In The Wild

[Back](#)

[INTRODUCTIONS](#) | [CATALOG](#) | [GROWING TIPS](#) | [INSPIRATION](#) | [THE SPECIES](#) | [IMPOSTERS](#) | [BLOG](#)

[Organization](#) | [Katrina](#) | [Contact](#) | [About Zydeco](#) | [Home](#) | [Site Map](#)

Zydeco
Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris Species - Fulva - In The Wild

[Back](#)

[INTRODUCTIONS](#) | [CATALOG](#) | [GROWING TIPS](#) | [INSPIRATION](#) | [THE SPECIES](#) | [IMPOSTERS](#) | [BLOG](#)

[Organization](#) | [Katrina](#) | [Contact](#) | [About Zydeco](#) | [Home](#) | [Site Map](#)

Zydeco

Louisiana Iris Garden



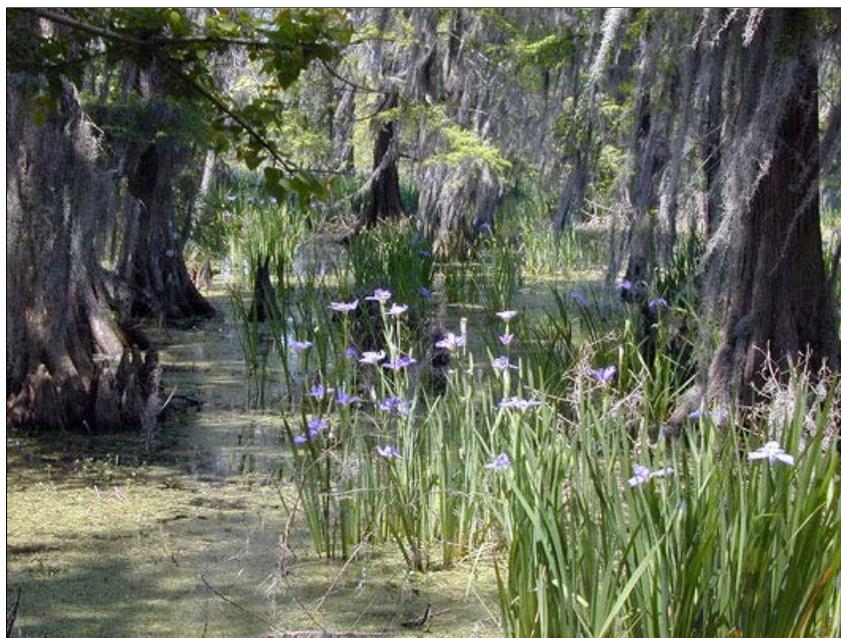
Louisiana Iris - 'Edith Dupre' - In The Garden

[Back](#)

[INTRODUCTIONS](#) | [CATALOG](#) | [GROWING TIPS](#) | [INSPIRATION](#) | [THE SPECIES](#) | [IMPOSTERS](#) | [BLOG](#)

[Organization](#) | [Katrina](#) | [Contact](#) | [About Zydeco](#) | [Home](#) | [Site Map](#)

Zydeco
Louisiana Iris Garden



Louisiana Iris Species - 'Giganticaerulea' - In The Wild

[Back](#)

[INTRODUCTIONS](#) | [CATALOG](#) | [GROWING TIPS](#) | [INSPIRATION](#) | [THE SPECIES](#) | [IMPOSTERS](#) | [BLOG](#)

[Organization](#) | [Katrina](#) | [Contact](#) | [About Zydeco](#) | [Home](#) | [Site Map](#)



Louisiana Iris - Baton Rouge Passalong - In The Garden

[Back](#)







































I. pseudacorus







I. virginica