

THE MEDIANITE

Quarterly Publication of the Median Iris Society

Rec

Volume 23, Number 3

Autumn, 1982

CONTENTS

Officers, Directors, and Nominating Committee 27
President's Letter, Editor's Comments, Pacific Northwest '84 . . . 28
Miniature Tall Bearded Section Jean Witt 29
Promising MTB Seedlings Mary Louise Dunderman . . . 33
MTB Irises W. Terry Varner 35
That Elusive Red Beard Myrtle Wolff 35
Border Bearded Section Carol Lankow 36
Borders or Better to Open Cacia (Cromwell) 40

THE MEDIAN IRIS SOCIETY

OFFICERS

President Wilbert G. Sindt, 14252 -15th St. So., Afton, Mn. 55001
1st Vice President Ms Jayne Ritchie, 1713 Camas Ave. NE, Renton, Wn. 98053
2nd Vice President Carl Boswell, 1821 Gross Lane, Concord, Ca. 94519
Secretary Mrs. Peter J. Baukus(Bihel), 10415 West Montana Pl. West Allis, Wi
Treasurer James J. Foreman, 1360 W. Micheals Rd., Tipp City, Oh. 45371
Medianite Editor Lee Eberhardt, P.O. Box 481, Springfield, Oh. 45501

DIRECTORS

Immediate Past President Lee Eberhardt, Springfield, Ohio 45501
Term Expires in 1983 Bennett Jones, 5635 SW Boundary St., Portland, Or. 97221
Mrs. B.B. Whitehouse, Plainville House 03, Town & Country Way
Plainville, Ma. 02762
Term Expires in 1984 Mrs. James W. Fry(Lucy) 2640 N. Bluff Rd., Wichita, Ks. 67220
Mrs. J. Daniel Freeman(Morita) 316 Whitney, Prescott, Az 86201
Terms Expires in 1985 Mrs. Florence Stout, 105 N. Main St., Lombard, Ill. 60418
Anthony Willott, 26231 Shaker Blvd., Beechwood, Oh. 44124

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Term Expires 1983 Mrs. Melvin(Lynn) Bausch, 11530 North Laguna Dr., 21 West,
Mequon, Wi. 53092
Term Expires 1984 Mrs. William F.(Roberta) Snell, Route 1, Box 183, Outlook, Wa.
Term Expires 1985 Mary Louise Dunderman, 480 White Pond Drive, Akron, Oh. 44320

SUBSECTION EDITORS

SDB: Dorothy Willott IB: Larry Harder
BB: Carol Lankow MTB: Jean Witt

MEMBERSHIP:

Mrs. Thomas A. Johnson, 1858 South Downing St., Denver, CO 80210

Published by:

MIS Press, 2 Warburton Lane, Westborough, MA 01581

Dear MIS Friends,

As your new MIS president, I find that I am starting some of my duties a bit early; it is September 15 and I don't officially take over until September 20. So - in actuality I still have two weeks of grace!

The outdoor gardening season is over for most of us so now we can start on the "paper work". May I suggest that as you re-live the beautiful spring through your slides, you select a few and send them to our slides chairperson. She will be very happy to receive them and for you hybridizers, it is a certain way to have your varieties seen.

Lee Eberhardt has very graciously consented to be our editor. Now he needs the help of each of us! His material is well nigh exhausted and I know an editor likes to have material for a couple of issues in advance. Why don't you all sit down right now(not tomorrow) and write a few comments about your garden, varieties you like, new varieties you saw, or ---. Write something and send it at once. It can be only a few lines or it can be a full page. Do that and I'm sure Lee will thank you and most certainly I will.

Plan ahead and we'll all get together in Boston! Save your pennies - no, dimes - because it will be expensive. I'll see you there!

Wilbert G. Sindt

#####

PACIFIC NW CONVENTION 84 - Comments by Carol Lankow

The convention is coming along more or less on schedule. I am continually surprised at what too few people can accomplish when their backs are against the wall. We have some real heroes in the group. As guest iris chairman, I have been aware that at least one or two future Dykes winners have gone through my hands. Wish I knew which ones they were. We've had great support from all over the region. Over 8,000 irises were contributed for sales to raise the up front money we needed. The Pierce County Society in Tacoma have become willing full partners in the project and have been real bricks. We are really excited about the two large gardens at the Ste. Michelle Winery and the Rhododendron Species Foundation Garden. Think they will be spectacular.

#####

Editor's Comment:

This issue of the Medianite is mainly on MTBs and BBs. There is a wealth of information, varietal comment, breeding, and even a little humor in the Cromwell piece.

Carol Lankow says in reference to the latter "The MEDIANITE could use a smile or two. It has been pretty negative and depressing the last couple of issues." The editor agrees and is chiefly responsible, but it had to be done since there is no solution to problems swept under the rug.

It is hoped MIS and the MEDIANITE are over "the hump" for the foreseeable future. If so we are more fortunate since the problems seem universal.

It is also hoped that the IB and SDB Median sections can come through with equal volume of good material for the Spring MEDIANITE edition.

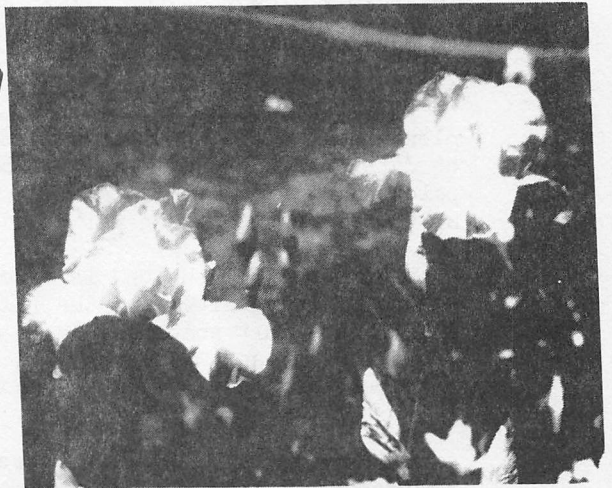
Lee Eberhardt

+++++

Miniature Tall Bearded Section
 Jean Witt



MTB Consumption
 (W. Welch)



MTB Chickee
 (Dunderman)

Dainty Bluebell by A. Brown

Total height of complete stem 19".
 This variety has one of the best proportioned
 and most graceful stems in the MTB class.

Sketch, comment, and photos by
 Jean Witt

MTB performing well at Denver were Carolyn Rose (Dunderman), orchid/white plicata; Blue Twinkle (Dunderman), blue self; and Concord Sprite (Boswell), white violet plicata with most of the color in the standards. The sun had been hard on orchid self Lavender Doll (Dunderman) and medium violet Violet Corsage (Dunderman). We liked Tinsel (Dunderman), a white ground stitched plicata.

Puppy Love (Hager) again was a delight in the garden - it really is a pink MTB! Others of the Hager guest seedlings that showed promise were #3275, a tailored greenish lemon with a yellow beard-flowers were 3" tip to tip, and the 19" stalk was properly thin; rain ruined the substance of #2972, an orange-pink on a slender 20" stem, but the bees set two fat pods. Dinky (Hager), is a short white that doesn't deserve to be saddled with that name; it also set a bee pod as did another white #2950, which has pleasingly ruffled flowers. This last has been introduced as Ting-a-ling, and we look forward to seeing it as a clump next year. Taken as a group we think these tetraploid MTB are impressive, and this line of breeding will be one to keep your eye on.

Parturient (Boushay) represents the MTB approach from the SDB side. Golden and light brown with a yellow beard, it blooms in IB season, thus extending the bloom period for MTB. I tried crossing it with my orange-bearded brown from Lilli-Richtone, and obtained a single seed. (my seedling is probably triploid, since the other parent is a diploid MTB). A number of crosses of yellow MTB on late blooming yellow SDB also gave a seed or two. Also in this department, Allen Harner of Morgan, Kansas reports a seedling of MTB size and configuration from Pagan Butterfly...17" tall, with three branches and two buds in the terminal. This one is of particular interest because it is June blooming. Color is in the yellow-gold orange range, increasing in intensity under the beard.

MTB in my planting outdid themselves-color was unusually good, and size a little above average for almost everything in the bed - was it that box of Mt. St. Helen's ash I spread around in there? (it isn't supposed to have any real value as fertilizer). Blues were especially good...Sallie Lightfoot (Witt) had the best color, Little Bluebeard (Vaughn) the nicest form, and Dainty Bluebell (A. Brown) the practically perfect MTB stem(see drawing). There were also two nice blues among the seedlings from Frank Williams, and a couple from my crosses using Pale Wings.

One very pleasing smooth lavender blue was tossed out-though its flowers are good, its well-branched stem gains in girth too rapidly as it descends, becoming positively clubby at the base. At the opposite end of the reasons why pretty MTB seedlings don't quite make the grade is the row of delightful little round-falled plicatas that are never going to have more than four flowers to a stem.

In yellows, Chickee (Dunderman) has the nicest form yet slightly ruffled, with plenty of flowers on slender stems. Spanish Coins (Witt) has the most intense color to date, but not quite as good form as Chickee. Canary Queen (Rawdon) is a tailored pale yellow with a white area on the falls; I prefer it to Two Tone Elegance (Welch) as the contrast between white and yellow is a bit better.

Consummation (Welch) is a very small, neat white and blue-violet amoena-the standards very white, and the falls very dark and velvety, with a narrow rim of white; performance left something to be desired. Rhizomes were treated with fungicide on transplanting and we'll see what happens next year. They seemed to have lost their live roots too early in the season.

Speaking of amoenas at Denver I had the distinct impression that among the TB, amoenas of the Whole Cloth type have completely taken over from the Wabash type of I. variegata ancestry, and that in the process much of the velvety texture has been lost. This would be a shame, as rich velvety falls are one of the charms of bicolors MTB appear to be in no danger of this - we have both velvety amoenas and pale non-velvety ones.

Of the seedlings that Kevin Vaughn left in my care, Real Jazzy, a yellow ground variegata brightly painted with wine red, and Tammie's Tutu, a blue/white plicata with a flat-out flare like a little girl's ballet skirt have been introduced. A blue bitone which pales toward amoena will probably introduce next year..this one left me cold on its initial bloom, but was highly ornamental this year. It has a bright orange beard and is a good fit for the class. The final seedling, W-1, a Widget derivative, is also a good fit for the class, but the petals are rather narrow and the amoena-plic pattern is very pale, so it will probably be kept for breeding only.

This year I was able to satisfy myself of something I have suspected for a number of years--White Canary (Hoberts) is an erratic plicata. The amount of pale blue markings varies from season to season, and petal to petal, and this year, even in the middle of a petal. This could make it a more-than-usually-interesting parent for plicatas, particularly since it has quite a bit of ruffle to the flowers. This variety has Kaleidoscope in its background, obviously the source of the erratic patterning.

Dorothy Guild, Spokane, WA. writes that she has registered two MTB for 1982--Here's Lucy (Nambu x bee) is a buff/violet combination; Sparkling Chablis is a cool white from Whispering Sprite X (Kinglet x bee seedling). She feels that, while both have flaws, as a clump each in its own way puts on a show. Dorothy comments that she has found it difficult to combine desirable traits from parents into a single plant in the progeny. She has had very little luck with sib crossing.

Two of her favorites from among her previous introductions are Fakir's Fire, a dark red from New Idea and 74DG60; and Fair Thee Well, a violet, from Polly's Purple x 70DGL.

Dorothy's MTB prospects from her 1982 seedlings include 82DG31, a ruffled white, well branched at 22" with violet color at base of foliage, and seed pods nearly purple. This comes from Tid Bit and 79DGL4 (Two for Tea x Daystar—one of the years when it gave pollen). No pollen on this seedling, but it pods very well.

82DG56, an orchid self--75DG6 (63ED3 x Dark Fairy) x bee) No pollen, sets pods readily; 2 branches with 2 buds per socket.

82DGL20, rose self from 70DGL (Desert Quail x Victory Pink) X 74DGL41 (AP61-119 x 72DG66) (Daystar sdlg #3 x Victory Pink) fertile both ways - in fact, pollen set on 21 other varieties and gave only 3 balloons. It had only 4 blooms per stalk, so she felt the number of pods set was remarkable.

"Both of these last two are from mixed genetic background, as is probable even with Two for Tea, Daystar, etc. The AP61-11H was a pink sdlg. that Adelaide Peterson sent me, say 12-15 years ago, to use in my pink efforts. 63EP3 was from a series of aphylla hybrids that Dr. Fred Judy gave me to try to work into MTB. And of course, Victory Pink was a chance sdlg. from the garden of Victor Runberg, here in Spokane."

~~~~~

Dorothy comments further:

"There has to be something in some seedlings which makes them so much more fertile than others, i.e. Candy Lane is as fertile as 82DGL20. Then there are others that never set a pod but have very productive pollen.

One such here is 79DG41 involving Brown Crown a Daystar seedling and one each of Mary Louise's and Bee's 65EG2 - it's a gorgeous butter yellow self but never set a pod. I used its pollen to advantage this year. I used Bee's 65EGL and 2 out of color class because I was getting no place white to white.

At least I finally do have a varied color patterns from out of class MTB crosses that I have made. NOW to hope for the required REFINEMENT in both bloom and foliage."

Ken Fisher, Bella Vista, Ark. reports best MTB performers for him(1981):  
Slim Jim, Consumation and White Canary.

Steve Varner suggests that So Chic and Marmalade Skies(BB) might be good to bring into MTB lines. Also his SDB Betty Wood could be of interest (as a pod parent only) in MTB breeding as it blooms so long, sending up stalks over a period of nearly a month. "It is Pearl Sheen X (Cretica x Cherie) F4.... I have pods from it with pollen from MDB thru TBs. The later it blooms the bigger the plant and blooms become." The pollen parent Cretica x Cherie F4 was a seedling of Wilma Greenlee and Steve wishes he could locate a piece of it.

\*\*\*\*\*

S.O.S.

This message is directed particularly to our younger members. Older members of the Median Iris Society have in their gardens many collected clones of bearded species which they propagate and care for. We need to find heirs for our collections, so that they will not be lost. Some of these species are probably not replaceable today, and while they are in general not great garden ornaments in themselves, we need to preserve them as a "gene pool" for the future. No one could have predicted the explosion of pattern that the Progenitor line from I. Reichenbachii brought us. Somewhere among these plants there may be other hidden patterns, added vigor, borer resistance--who knows. I hope that some of our younger members will help take up the job of seeing that our bearded species collections are cared for in perpetuity.

-----

Among this years newly set out seedlings are a group of Iris junonia, from seed collected in Turkey. according to Brian Mathew in The Iris, this plant is a better candidate than most of the germanica-like things now in cultivation for being truly wild. He describes it as being 50-65cm in height, with 4 branches. The flowers are described as being "similar in shape to those of I. germanica, ...smaller and very variable in colour from white to pale cream and deep yellow, and from pale blue to purple". Leaves are supposed to die down in winter. Somewhere I picked up a chromosome count of 48 for this species. Will it be something we can use in our MTB breeding program? First we must see how it fares during Seattle's soggy winter-slugs love it!

-----

Now it is time to broach a subject that's been bandied about a bit in our MTB robins. We are considering whether it would be feasible to lay aside our long-standing term Table Irises and adopt the more descriptive designation of Bouquet Irises. A word about this suggestion arose. One of our MTB fans in West Germany, Marlene Ahlberg, came up with this alternative last year when she tried to translate Table Iris into German and felt the results didn't really make the grade. The more I thought about her Bouquet Irises the more I wished we'd had that name from the beginning. Marlene's experience sends a clear message--in terms of aptly worded advertising, Bouquet Irises conveys a far more positive image of our class of Medians than Table Irises has ever done. We realise that this suggestion of change will probably meet with resistance, but we feel that any short-term confusion that results will be offset by the benefits of this better descriptive term in the long run. We'd like to hear what some of our officers and members think of this proposal.

Miniature Tall Bearded would remain our official designation.

Jean G. Witt, MTB Section Chm.

+++++

WANTED - ROBIN MEMBERS

In Terry Varner's comments interest is indicated in a new MTB Robin. The Robin's theme to be "other than diploid" approaches to MTB. Jean Witt has agreed to handle the Robin. Any prospective members please contact Jean Witt.

#####

PROMISING NEW MINIATURE TALL BEARDED IRIS SEEDLINGS

By Mary Louise Dunderman

1982 was supposed to be my year of decisions regarding many MTB seedlings. Decisions had to be postponed in 1980 and 1981 because of serious illnesses in the family. My first MTB iris introduction was "Clare Louise" in 1961. At that time the MTB color range was very limited. It was so pleasing this spring to look over the iris garden and see so many different colors and shades of colors. 1982 wasn't the greatest iris bloom season, but the MTB's always seem to come through, so enough promising seedling bloomed to renew my usual May enthusiasm.

The following are my admittedly prejudicial comments on the irises which bloomed in my garden:

Two guest seedlings bloomed. One was Terry Varners D-315. This is a lovely royal purple neglecta with a yellow beard. The falls are pure velvet. Another guest was Esther Terrill's Ginger Cookie. This is a different ginger color and is very floriferous.

My own recent introductions Chickee and Rosemary's Dream bloomed over a long period and did not disappoint me. Older seedlings, which are still being evaluated, are whites Y-370 and BB-1309. Y-370 is a ruffled, flaring white with excellent flower form. BB-1309 has a dainty 2" x 2" flower with a white beard. It isn't ruffled but has wide flower parts. It is hard to ignore this little fellow. Both of these whites, together with AA-295, a Blue Twinkle seedling, seem to be worthy of introduction.

The prettiest of the new 1982 seedlings was DD-656 which is a flesh or coral color with very wide standards and falls. However, a sister seedling, DD-653, was my favorite. It is a very floriferous salmon rose blend. Flower form is good but not as wide as DD-656.

Hadn't done any work with reds for five or six years, so was surprised to see a pretty, bright, clean red flower on seedling DD-233. This iris came from a bee pod on a bright rose seedling. Will be anxious to see and learn more about this one.

Had planned to make decisions about my orchid and orchid pink seedlings as to which ones to keep and which to discard. Postponed decisions again as new ones bloomed to confuse the issue. Two new ones are DD-560 and CC-634. DD-560 is a pale orchid pink with a deep orange beard. CC-634 is a mauve orchid with a beard the same color.

Although it isn't my favorite color in iris, I always seem to have new white seedlings each year. CC-705 caught my attention. It has a full, slightly ruffled flower with green veining at the hafts.

Another new color was DD-522 Brown. This is hard to describe but is about the color of a copper penny.

Also was pleased with a ruffled blue seedling. DD-539 seems to have a smoother color and heavier texture than existing light blues.

The last seedling to be mentioned has a flower that can be described as "sweet", its flower is small and is a peachy-rose blend with a deep orange beard. Seedling number is DD-577.

These new seedlings are 1982 favorites but I am sure we will find new ones in 1983. Hopefully, many new and exciting MTB's will be coming from other gardens and my garden in the coming years.

Editors Note: I have visited the Dunderman garden many times in the past 20 years and can confirm the overall improvement in garden color effect in MTB's. This garden is almost entirely devoted to MTB's. The seedling patch consists of clumps of hundreds of seedlings from which have come Mary Louise's many excellent introductions Her biggest problem is sorting out introductions from so many excellent seedlings.

Another problem is frost damage since the garden is in a low spot and surrounded by tall fir trees creating a frost trap. Many times bloom is saved only by heroic efforts.

%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%

The season began early with an extremely warm spell in late February and early March that caused everything to begin growing, but late March saw four days of bitter cold and freezing temperatures as well as a half inch of snow. As a consequence, many first year seedlings failed to bloom, which is unusual here, and some of the established clumps had their blooms damaged, some to the extent of sending up bloom-stalks without one flower. Otherwise, I had lots of bloom which awarded me with an enjoyable garden of color, many comments from the neighbors and several seed pods.

The Miniature Tall Bearded Iris that were outstanding this spring:

Puppy Love (Hager '80) - a lovely clear pink 48¢ from aphylla breeding. The falls curve and do not flare, this does not distract from the beautiful bloom. I had six bloomstalks on a one year plant. Its pollen is plentiful and potent.

Dinky (Hager '80) - a short white 48¢ from aphylla breeding. It is not as vigorous as Puppy Love but nice. Supposedly has a pale blue beard but I could not find it. Perhaps, a sleeper as a MINIMIZER in 48¢ work.

New Idea (Hager '70) - An old introduction that makes an outstanding clump year after year. It is a rosy mulberry with perfect show stalks. Also from 48¢ aphylla lines.

Little Bay Denoc (Williams '79) - A medium dark blue self that was filled with bloom over a long period of time; however, both the flower and the stalk were out of size for the class.

Joette (Williams '78) - An excellent lavender-blue self set off with a nice yellow beard.

Opal Imp (Dunderman '72) - A nice white that was very lovely between two blues. I have never been able to detect the dotting and veining it is sometimes suppose to have.

Lemon Flirt (Dunderman '80) - An extremely nice lightly ruffled lemon yellow with a light lemon yellow beard. The small white spot at the hafts enhance this iris.

Consummation (Welch '78) - An excellent iris with pure white standards and a dark blue spot on the falls. An outstanding amoena. Leaves, stalk, and bloom are all in proper proportion.

Carolyn Rose (Dunderman '71) - An excellent plicata of rose on white. Everything about this flower is in proportion. It is worthy of the coveted Williamson-White Award '74. I am finding this iris is a minimizer in my diploid work.

Cedar Wax Wing (Roberts '74) - Tan standards which have always been slightly open for me with rose-orchid falls. Nice in a clump.

Jill Welch (Welch '75) - A nice, small clear blue self in nice proportion and set off with a white beard.

Doll Ribbons (Dunderman '78) - A beautiful plicata of bright blue on white. Well proportioned.

Blue Twinkles (Dunderman '77) - An extremely vigorous iris which always is a mass of bloom. The flowers are a light blue-slate with nice wide hafts, topped with a yellow beard and the flowers are slightly ruffled. This iris threw a "sport" this year of off-white.

Bell Boy (Dunderman '75) - This is the best red table I have grown. The standards are a deep red-tan with red-black falls which are velvety. This iris never grows more than 15"-18" for me but it is a crowd stopper to the garden visitor.

Spanish Coins - (Witt '76) - A very nice deep yellow self that is the longest blooming iris in my garden.

White Canary (Roberts '73) - Always a nice flaring white but this year was one iris that suffered damage from our late freeze.



Purple Pepper (Terrill '81) - A different plicata for me. A light yellow ground covered with purple dots. I need another year to evaluate this unusual iris.

Ginger Cookie (Terrill '78) - A mass of bloom on slender stems. For me the color is ginger, which I like, but with brown stripes which I wish were not there.

Tidbit (Sturtevant '25) - An oldie but still a favorite with me and garden visitors. Beautiful blue self.

Some of my seedlings that did well this year: D-315 a small purple neglecta with velvety falls set off with a yellow beard; I-305 - a beautiful light blue self, wide hafts, white beard and slightly ruffled; J-322 - a plicata with greenish-yellow buds. Standards are closed in yellow ground with purple markings; falls are yellow overlaid with white and edged with purple markings. The tip of falls is light yellow. Beard is bronze tipped purple; K-347 - a light lemon yellow self with falls overlaid in light purple. Standards are tightly held and falls flare. Blooms for a long period and is a nice garden clump. Extremely vigorous; and K-350 - the standards are closed in a dusky purple; falls flare and are as standards with a darker spot. Beard yellow tipped blue.

I have not listed these in order of preference, but as some outstanding bloomers. The field of table iris have improved greatly over the years and I predict better things to come both from diploid and tetraploid breeding. It would be nice to see a tetraploid Table iris robin.

Editors Note: In this article MINIMIZER is used several times, i.e. Dinky and Carolyn Rose. A MINIMIZER is an iris that has the breeding quality of reducing an outside iris with large bloom and/or clubby stalk to MTB standards in the seedlings. For example, either of the above two minimizers could be used on Little Bay Denoc to bring the seedlings into the rigid MTB requirements for height, flexuous stems, and proportional sized flower.

THAT ELUSIVE RED BEARD

by Myrtle J. Wolff, Lexington, Nebraska

In the quest for a small white iris with a red beard the trail has been dotted with surprises and disappointments.

First, in 1963, I used Debbie Ann as the pod parent because I wanted her proportions of stalk and bloom and her blue-white color. The pollen parent chosen was Frost and Flame. There were some pretty things from this cross but nothing small enough.

In 1966 I had several seed pods from the 1963 generation X Ruby Lips. One of these, my 66-84-1, was a nice cool white, with bright orange-red beard, well branched, in good proportion, and a good multiplier but not small.

There were several small ones in this cross with hints of red beards but not one had any vigor so all were destroyed.

Using Marilyn C on 84-1 gave me several small, off-color whites with red beards but - you guessed it, no branching!

Since then I've used Christmas Time on some of the small ones from these crosses and - same story - if the progeny were small and had red beards they were frail children and either they failed to multiply or succumbed to disease.

Now I'm wondering - since Debbie Ann has the blood of both Sable and Black Forest in her veins - does the gene that carries the blue beard become lethal when out-numbered by red beard genes? Especially in small Irises?

My 66-84-1 has been sent to the Pennsylvania gardens for the 1973 Convention to see how it performs there. In the meantime the search still goes on for a tiny one with all of 84-1's virtues. Perhaps one great day it will appear, if I can persevere.

from a letter Feb., 1981

My small white with a red beard did come forth and was introduced in 1977 as Angela. The beard is not as prominent as I'd like.

Now, I do have Jamie Rae being introduced this spring by Hildenbrandt's Iris Gardens. It does have the bright prominent beard, is small and a good performer, but is not white. So I would still like to get a small white with a very prominent red beard.

BORDER BEARDED SECTION

by: Carol Lankow

Rejoice! A border bearded iris won the Dykes Medal. That says exciting things about the expanding interests and maturing tastes of iris fanciers. Now it seems like a good time to talk about them in the MEDIANITE again.

When asked to compile material for this issue, I brought out all my old MEDIANITES and found the reading fascinating. Then I conducted a very incomplete and informal poll of the breeders of some of the current varieties, and of people in the BB Robin. I wanted a sense of what interested folks were feeling about BBs these days.

Those who were good enough to respond were, Jack Boushay, Wa; C.A. Cromwell, OK; Joe Ghio, CA; Melba Hamblen, UT; Alva Hickerson, OK; Bennett Jones, OR; Keith Keppel, CA; O.D. Niswonger, MO; Les Peterson, UT; Fred Stephenson, VA; Melvina Suiter, OR; Bee Warburton, MA; and Myrtle Wolff, NB.

Why BBs? The median classification came into being primarily to help gardeners sort out all the smaller and earlier irises that suddenly became available after Mr. Cook and Mr. Douglas did their thing. It was obvious that there would be a deluge of high quality garden plants resulting from the pumila X TB crosses and from the other species X TB crosses that they inspired. Some kind of order was needed in a hurry.

I don't know, but I suspect there could have been some discussion about whether or not BBs should be defined as a separate class from the TBs and included among the medians. The majority are from the same conventional 48 chromosome breeding as TBs and they bloom at the same time. They share height limitations with the intermediates and miniature tall, but the IBs bloom earlier and are mostly 44 ch. hybrids, and the MTBs are mostly 24 ch. plants with very different standards for flower size and proportion.

Whatever the reasoning, I am glad they were included. It has always seemed obvious that smaller plants with the beauty of the TBs could fill an important place in the garden; in smaller gardens, and as companion plants to the tall. Traditionally, no matter how fine, the smaller TBs have been overlooked in competition with the tall. Establishing a class and an awards system for the BBs encourages their serious consideration and their development as separate and distinct from the tall.

Niswonger Usually the colors are more intense - flowers more compact. BBs are easier to handle for arrangements.

Keppel Actually, I neither like nor dislike the class. I think it is good that there is a place for the smaller things that are really too good to just throw out, but if I had my choice of producing a top-notch BB or a top-notch TB, there is no choice. My heart belongs to the tall.

Stephenson I like the ability to withstand winds without staking. To me it seems most BBs are more resistant to disease pest. There is not as much interest in BBs as in TB or SDBs possibly due to overlapping season with the TBs. Hybridizers are not concentrating on BBs as they appear to be less popular with the public who like "big and better".

Boushay I like a class to put my irises that are too short to be tall and too good to throw away.

Ghio I like the front of the border possibilities.

Wright April 1967 MEDIANITE "-the main reason for separate class for BBs is to help the buyer select the type of flower he wants." "If we are going to have a separate class for borders, let's see that the varieties in it are different from TBs."

Wright July 1968 MEDIANITE "If you must ask if a variety is a BB - it isn't."

## BORDER BEARDED MEDIANITE

What is a BB? The judges handbook says "Plants 41-70 cm (16"-27") in height; stalks branched, stiffly erect; leaves erect and shorter than the bloom stalk; blooms larger than those of the miniature tall bearded, but preferably (!) smaller than those of the typical tall bearded. (We can only hope that the new handbook deletes the implications of "preferably". There is no preferably about, if the flower isn't smaller than the typical TB, it isn't BB.)

The name Border Bearded was chosen by Geddes Douglas and seems a happy choice. Irises in the BB size range can be most useful in the perennial border where TBs can be overwhelming. With that objective in mind, we want irises that fit the class, that persist and bloom reliably, that are presentable even after the flowers have passed, and that will do all that for good average gardeners.

Somehow over the years "good garden variety" became short hand for "looks okay in the yard, but can't stand up to close inspection". Irises are supposed to be hardy perennials and "good garden Iris" should be high praise. BBs should be good garden irises.

In the beginning it must have seemed that, of all the median classes, the BBs would be the easiest to develop. We were not really sure how the SDBs and IBs would progress, but we already had BBs aplenty. To find out just how many, there was a lot of scurrying around as smaller TBs were measured and those that seemed to fit were reclassified. That was very helpful for gardeners making purchases when we remember that Green Spot and Yellow Dresden were both correctly classified as IB when they were introduced. Also it helped identify possible parents for those who began breeding specifically for BBs, and it encouraged breeders to register small varieties that previously would have been discarded. Those first five or six years saw the greatest number of annual BB registrations.

It didn't take long for problems to surface. The BBs have the advantage of blooming with the tall so they are seen by many judges in gardens and at shows. But those judges were most familiar with the TBs and they tended to vote awards for varieties which most nearly resembled the TBs. Also climate and cultural practices exert powerful influences on iris performance and there are great variations from garden to garden.

Something had to be done if the class was to be maintained distinct and separate from the tall. Median folks soon were writing reams and talking themselves hoarse about proportion. There was another round of measuring and efforts were made to quantify the "proper" ratio of stem thickness and height, leaf leight and width, and flower size. Actually a lot of that was good work and helped a lot of judges understand what constitutes BB proportion. But I think we intimidated and exasperated a lot of people because the number of annual BB registrations fell off rather sharply.

Suiter I believe more attention should be given to proportion in BBs as so many seem to be just short tall. This is my worst gripe.

Hamblen I have a feeling for BB's and personally think too many that are "TB runts" are introduced (was guilty of this myself, at one time - and maybe still am, since Blonde Angel is such a one). However, there are enough good BBs available now that hybridizers can be selective, and use good BBs as parents. My favorite of my own intros is Little Swinger (so petite!), and of others, probably Brown Lasso.

Ghio Too broad a flower loses proportion, but is what the public wants.

Hickerson I think too much is made of height. You hear little, if anything, of those 32-36" TBs which grow 40-48" and the huge floppy blooms. As hybridizers, we should try to attain the best BBs possible, knowing that in different regions and under different cultural conditions, the height might vary a little, but every other class does the same!

Wolff I like small leaves and blooms. Proportion is very important.

Keppel It is encouraging to see the wide range of colors/patterns available in borders these days. Theoretically, there is nothing in the tall that we can't have in the borders.

#### 4. Breeding

Suiter I have not worked for BB especially but I'm always on the watch for the little guys that appear in the TB rows.

Niswonger Just recently began making crosses with BB in mind. Most so far are by chance. My introductions to date have come from TB breeding with the species in the background. They are bound to occasionally throw a small one. I like nice round flowers. Most people breeding for TB overlook BBs because they are looking for big flowers, but "big" is not always "beautiful".

Keppel I have gotten enough smallish segregates from advanced generations of (Progenitor X plic) lines that I occasionally make a cross directed toward producing more little ones, but rarely get organized enough to make a concerted effort.

Hamblen For BB, I cross BB to BB; possibly BB X IB.

Stephenson I don't cross for BBs. I strive for short stalks, not necessarily border size. Don't feel there is wide enough range of color or patterns.

Ghio BB are a matter of selection from TB breeding. Possible BBs are then grown out to see if they hold. One of the balkana series gave consistent BBs and still does.

Cromwell I cross for BBs every chance I get - which isn't all that often. Am trying for IBs for use eventually in producing BBs. Dislike BB X BB because of low fertility, production, and largely disappointing proportion. The issue of crossing IB to BB is one that will be heard more and more frequently. I have bloomed several from such efforts and some at least of Melba's latest intros are of that ilk. As you may have noted at Tulsa, vigor was present, but so too was the overly tall stalk. The solution here is to aim for 20" to 22" and for the most part, superior culture will not push you out of class. My results have been interesting but not commercial in the least thus far.

Warburton Pollen fertility is almost unknown among the IBs. Much has been talked and written about using IBs for breeding BBs, but this has never proved as easy as it sounds. IB vigor makes such crosses promising as the slow growth of many BBs is well known. A cross of TB with 44c IB will segregate. I did a lot of this type of work at one time, actually breeding for late dwarfs, but what I ended up with were a whole string of plants with 5" flowers on 10" stems. I still believe theoretically in proportion, I mean if anybody does this kind of breeding I think he is obligated to consider the plant balance and all the rules of judging. It would certainly be a good thing to have some BBs that stayed in class and grew like intermediates. Anyway, it is time we got some grip on how to produce BBs that will stay in proportion. This looks to me like a good approach, anyway.

Hickerson I make crosses for BB. I like the height - less blow down, no staking, and their form when in proportion. Every effort should be made to attain pleasing color combinations and plant proportions, with a plus for fragrance!! Let us truly try to introduce only a better iris which shows improvements in some feature.

Wolff I cross for BB, IB, or dwarfs. Never for TB. I saved all the dwarf pollen I could store to use on BBs preferably, but IBs if no small ones were available, in hopes of getting small ones.

Peterson I think BBs can help give something good in TBs. Way back a BB seedling crossed to Charmaise gave me Main Event. Ardi Joy I think my best BB.

Keppel On the average, most borders increase as well as most tall beardeds here. There are exceptions. Off-hand I can't think of any BB with Christmas Time behind it that has prospered for me; however, many tall with this same parent also have been poor doers in our climate.

Wolff I never used TBs unless I couldn't find what I wanted in smaller ones, because it always gave me several TBs to throw away. When I went into the patch, I always threw away anything with large leaves even before they bloomed, (!) as I have only a small patch. (Talk about character)

It has been felt from the beginning that the best way to produce BBs is to breed for them. The first step is to collect as many BBs and well proportioned smaller TBs as possible for breeding stock. It is not a coincidence that a high percentage of BBs even today are pinks or from pink breeding. Nowadays we forget how measly pink TBs were a few years ago, and they produced quite a high percentage of small sized offspring.

Unfortunately, breeding small to small often means breeding weak to weak. In our garden we have had many varieties for years that we just manage to maintain. They seem to increase just a little faster than they rot. Such plants are of no use to a commercial grower who needs to increase stock to sell, and who dislikes selling a weak grower that will disappoint a customer. Not everyone has that complaint, but many people do.

Some hybridizers are incorporating 44ch. IBs into their BB lines to increase vigor and help stabilize size. The results have been mixed. For one thing, they tend to bloom smack in between. IB? BB? Flip a coin. Use of 48 ch. species has been tried to some extent. Crosses with *I. aphylla* have produced some fine BB and IB irises. *I. mellita* and *I. balkana* have contributed too, and more work needs to be done with them.

Breeding for BBs isn't exactly a wide open field. Much depends on persistence and a good eye for selection. When it is so difficult to produce plants in quantity that fit the class, it seems cruel and inhuman to ask for health, vigor, and adaptability, too.

I would hope there is a special reward in heaven for those hybridizers, such as Ben Hager and Myrtle Wolff, who take on the tough projects, stick with them, and never compromise their principles along the way.

Despite the number of pieces written about judging BBs, it is no more complicated (or less complicated) than judging any other sort of irises.

Great integrity is needed in garden judging because awards influence the sorts of irises that will be introduced in the future. When judging BBs, one must first determine if the inches and season fit the specifications. After that has been established, it gets down to exactly the same principles used in judging all other bearded irises. It is just as important to identify vigorous and disease resistant, and well proportioned TBs.

Things become a bit more arbitrary when facing BBs on the show table. An iris must be entered in a class according to the way it has been classified when registered. Therefore a perfect BB specimen registered TB must be shown as a TB where it won't win a thing. The "short tall" registered as BB must be shown with BBs, where it won't meet class specifications and must be penalized. Actually, this simplifies matters for judges and committees and puts the responsibility squarely on the shoulders of the hybridizer when he registers his new varieties.

#### JUDGING

Warburton July 1973 MEDIANITE "-disqualifying an iris from awards does not disqualify it from being grown and loved."

Virginia McClintock July 1973 MEDIANITE "In shows you are judging the growers. In garden judging we are not judging the growers, but the iris itself, and indirectly awarding honors to the hybridizers for giving us better irises."

Keppel My main gripe with the border iris class is the awards given to tall bearded! Granted, a hybridizer registers an iris on the basis of how it performs in his own garden, but if he has grown any number of true borders, he should be able to interpolate, by comparison of his seedling with the named varieties, how his baby will "size-up" elsewhere. I have grown certain nameless (named, but I shan't tell which!) Knowlton Medal winners higher than 36". Now an occasional stalk on just about any border may, with the right (or wrong) conditions, exceed the height limits, but... 36"??? It makes one wonder how many of the iris judges are voting for what they have studied, or just voting for what they think they have seen.

The time was when I enjoyed iris. Just enjoyed them. I strolled among them and admired them at leisure, and when preference or duty or nature called, I walked away.

That time was before the time I came by the knowledge that these selfsame iris supported societies for their own aggrandizement which were populated by human chattels. And further, that certain of these chattels, who by their proximity to these descendants presumptive of the legendary lotus, had lost all evidence of self control. These came to be known as Presidents, Editors, and Show Chairmen. Their life mission was to eliminate any possibility of the existence of time for enjoyment of irises due to repeated calls, admonitions, and reminders of meetings, copy deadlines, press times, and of show schedulings, mantelings, judgings, and dismantelings, and appurtenant ministrations thereunto.

At the time that was, it was my wont to admire especially a cultivar named Frippy Fringes - upon the occasion when it afforded me an opportunity, and Lemon Meringue, another variety which never failed of an opportunity. Frippy Fringes, as Tell cataloged it, was a large, lacy, creamy creation. For me it was a small, lacy, creamy creation - upon occasion. Upon other occasions this product of a pink x blue cross was on holiday. Lemon Meringue was from pinks also and was there every time I was. It had all good features except for open standards which I had not yet learned to abhor. Having withdrawn twice from a course in Heredity, I knew that the possibility existed that if crossed these two might produce a Frippy Fringes with habits like those of Lemon Meringue. Or maybe a pink, or a blue with a pink beard, or a pink with a blue beard, or - but you see how the undisciplined mind bubbles. The cross was made, and in time produced a seedling which in it's own time bloomed. It wasn't pink, blue or even cream. It was just plain ylo. It wasn't large, or even medium, it was small. Nor was it lacy, nor ruffled, nor even fluted. It was plainly tailored. This was a plain iris! It was, however, well proportioned with a short stalk and small reasonably thrifty plant. It's most redeeming factor tho was that it was blooming late, when the hybridizer's reserve is depleted, and frenzy enhances the virtues of any flower seen, if only thru sheer lack of competition. By the time the last 2 flowers were seconds old each style arm was bowed from the weight of an entire stamen load deposited on the stigmatic clip. The pollen donor was Rosie O'Tee. This would seem inspired, being a border bearded from a cross of Mary Randall selfed, but actually was probably the only other flower open in the yard. It would have been the same if the choice had been Alta California. The resultant pod which escaped cut worms, stem rot and verbena bud moth was eventually shelled and recorded as cross 6743. An auspicious number certainly, for this was the number John Hymphrey had assigned to his Angel's Art. Thank of course to John for sharing.

It was 3, possibly 4 years before some of the members of cross 6743 had sufficient enterprise to strike out on their own, but dare they did at last. There among a small pool of apricot and amber sibs with very much oversize blossoms on abbreviated stalks was a small, quite proportional pink with curiously angular branching offering 6 buds. Merci! And only 17". It wasn't quite what I'd hoped for as it had no lace, and there was but 2 increase, BUT it was mine and so I soon found it looking better and better. And then it survived a Minnesota winter which garnered a commendation from MayBelle Wright. And the Hansons were pointedly polite in the matter. When Melba Hamblen wrote that she couldn't bring herself to say anything bad about it, and the old master namer, Ron Mullin suggested "Like a Melody" for an appellation, I had had about all the encouragement I could stand. I borrowed \$3 for the registration from my wife, and Perry Parrish hustled around bending judgely arms in quest of an EC or DNC, I can't rember which now, and I was over the brink.

Glen and Zula had by now agreed to risk their reputations by co-introducing LAM with me. The possibility that Riverdale Gardens might just on form sell one, caused me to move part of the stock around under the drip line of the house in order to try to produce a rhizome that might cost more than 13¢ to mail. It was then that I discovered the other side of this LAM's fleece; she simply cannot be forced. If treated as a commercial item, the stalk will edge up around 2', still well within BB limits, but the falls seem to grow overly long or anyway something happens to the proportion to it's very definite detriment. Competing with a neighboring rose for support just seems to bring out the best in the scamps appearance, and even in a bad year such as this, it will not embarrass. Best of all, when some one shows up with one of those competition stalks and says "How come you to introduce THIS?" I can say "Don't you know? It pods easily and has produced up to 40 seed. I really did it for the hybridizers!" This one primarily.



AMERICAN IRIS SOCIETY  
MEDIAN IRIS SECTION--REGION ONE  
2 Warburton Lane  
WESTBOROUGH, MA 01581

---

NON-PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
WESTBOROUGH, MA 01581

---

Permit No. 60

---

MRS. ROBERT J.M. GANTZ, 12/B2,  
130 CLIFF ROAD,  
SOUTHERN PINES, NC 28387