

THE  
REBLOOMING  
IRIS RECORDER

FALL 2003 VOLUME 62



MARIPOSA AUTUMN (Tasco 99)

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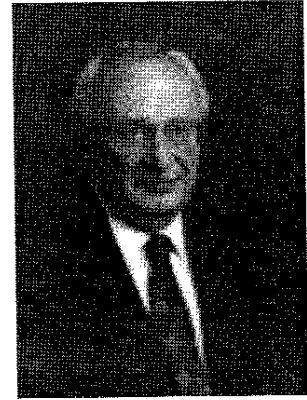
COVER: Mariposa Autumn (Tasco 99) 2003 Award of Merit winner  
Photo provided by Superstion Iris Gardens

## President's Message

I had thought that this year's rainy spring and summer would bring good rebloom this autumn. The poor growth and sad condition of my bearded irises, remontant as well as non-remontant, clearly show that unusually heavy rainfall can be detrimental to what the French call the *beau genre Iris*. Only the white intermediate I BLESS has had exceptional performance, blooming almost continuously from late August to mid-October, and still sending up new stalks. VIOLET RETURNS has had a few stalks, as has old BELVI QUEEN and GOLDEN ENCORE. Suddenly, in mid-October stalks started emerging on many different cultivars.

When I mention I BLESS blooming "almost continuously" this summer and fall, I note that this cultivar does not always perform this way. It reblooms for me almost every year, but some years it gives only one or two stalks, and occasionally there is no autumn bloom at all. This brings me to an issue about which I think members of our society should give some thought.

When I first grew reblooming irises and had irises bloom in my garden in fall, I became tireless in my efforts to "sell" them to others. I was not reluctant to use hyperbole, trope, metaphor and simile in extolling their virtues, which is probably why for several years I was the RIS publicity director.



Apparently, however, I waxed too eloquently, or to be more precise, too effusively. The late Ben Hager took me aside and told me to "cool it." His wise words remain with me still. He told me that there was probably nothing that could do more damage to the reputation of reblooming irises than to promise more than rebloomers could deliver. He warned that if people bought reblooming iris cultivars without realizing which cultivars were best suited to their climates, or if they bought rebloomers and expected "continuous" rebloom, they would be disappointed. This would soon lead to reblooming irises getting a bad name with the gardening public. Wise words!

This brings me to the matter of Chapter 14, "Reblooming or Remontant Irises" in the American Iris Society *Handbook for Judges and Show Officials*. This chapter states that RIS has attempted to classify reblooming irises according to behavior pattern, and lists four "distinguishable behavior patterns." There is no debate about three of the behavior patterns: cyclic rebloomers, repeaters and occasional rebloomers. It is the behavior pattern called "continuous or everblooming [sic]" that is the problem.

The statement in the "Judges' Handbook" that there is a class of reblooming iris behavior that can accurately be described as "continuous or ever blooming" is fallacious. "Continuous" means without stop. "Ever blooming" means, or at least implies that the bloom never ceases. The definition of the pattern called "continuous" in the "Judges' Handbook" is not of "continuous" but rather of bloom that is "often but irregular."

If irises are listed in catalogues or written about in articles as "continuous" or "ever" bloomers, it seems to me that the public is being misled. The "continuous" blooming iris is at present a fantasy, and it is likely to remain so at least in the immediate future. When the RIS Board of Directors and Officers meets at next year's convention, I will propose that we act to change the "Judges' Handbook" to delete all reference to "continuous or everblooming [sic] irises." If you have an opinion about this, please let your RIS director and the RIS officers know your opinion.

Sincerely,

Clarence Mahan

## Editor's Message

As I write this, I am excited to find more and more bloom stalks appearing in my garden. We have had an especially warm fall here, the warmest that I can remember in many years. I am especially happy that the rebloomers at my home have decided to cooperate because the reblooming bed I planted for our club is really taking off. I was feeling a little left out to have all of that bloom out there and almost none at home. I even tried setting some pods on ROSALIE FIGGE when she burst into bloom, and have a pod developing. I'm hoping that I can get that rhizome moved in doors when it does turn cold so that it can continue to mature.

I was fortunate to be able to attend the national convention in Falls Church, VA this spring. It was wonderful to see so many of my new friends that I had made the year before in Memphis. Our president Clarence Mahan, and many others are to be commended for putting together such a lovely experience for all of us.

If you haven't been to a convention you don't know what you are missing. The people are just fantastic, everyone goes out of their way to be helpful. This year's gardens in Fredricksburg were spectacular. I will never forget getting off the bus and seeing the Loving garden from a distance. It was a sea of colors. We caught the garden at peak, nearly every cultivar was in bloom. The Siberians wanted in on the excitement and were strutting their stuff too.

The gardens were diverse and quite enjoyable. Reblooming enthusiasts were treated to two days at Don and Ginny Spoon's Winterberry Garden. The Spoons really worked very hard for the convention, having planted and cared for no less than three guest gardens. Being at a higher elevation, the bloom at Winterberry was well before peak, but since rebloomers are often early, there was plenty to enjoy. There were many new cultivars open the second day, so it was a treat to walk through again. We had an opportunity to see many of the Spoon's seedlings. It looks as though they have many rebloomers coming our way in the near future.

Next year's convention will be in Fresno, CA April 19-24. Both Sutton's and Superstition will be on the tour, so again, we are in for a real treat. George Sutton said that there were over 1000 guest seedlings that have been sent in from all over the country. The medians and SDB's are being planted at Superstition because their season is a little behind the other gardens and this should give everyone a chance to see a wide spectrum of bloom.

The Fresno area is near some of California's most beautiful sites. A bus tour is being offered to Yosemite National park on Tuesday. A trip to the convention makes a fine vacation all on its own, but if you can stay awhile longer there is much to enjoy. The cost to attend is so reasonable when you consider that it includes two banquets, lunches on the tour dates, buses, etc... and then there's the opportunity to see all of those lovely guest irises! Many of the RIS members attend the Geek Banquet too. It is tremendous fun and the auction is for a worthy cause- the computerization of AIS records. And don't worry, non-geeks are welcome too!

I hope to see you all in Fresno. They may have to drag me back to the bus this year!!

We would like to start a Youth section for future Recorders. Please encourage any Youth members that you know to submit drawings, poems, stories, or any other item of interest. If there is interest, we could have a contest to name the column. And finally, make sure to send in your rebloom reports to your Director and symposium votes to Ken Roberts!

Happy Holidays!

Robin Shadlow



**Minutes of the Board Meeting  
Falls Church, Virginia 13<sup>th</sup> May 2003**

Our meeting was called to order by President, Clarence Mahan. All initially present included Rosalie Figge, Mary Brown, Nancy Price, Claire Honkanen, George Sutton, Margaret Sutton, Joanne Prass-Jones, Shirley Trio, and Dave Niswonger.

Minutes as printed in the Fall 2002 *Recorder* were reviewed and approved.

Margaret Sutton gave the Treasurer's report. Expenses were low as costs weren't in for the *Recorder* yet. There was some discussion about the interest received in the bank accounts and consensus was to leave the money where it was due to convenience and low-risk factors. Further discussion involved setting a cost to rent slides. Consensus was that \$10 to rent slides and instructions on sending them back priority mail will prevail. Margaret commented that the President's allowance for a convention fee was passed and not used. Clarence commented on the President's allowance saying he did not want to accept the fee and felt that the President of any society should be attending the AIS convention. However, we should not short change anyone who would need help meeting convention costs. The Treasurer's report was accepted and noted as excellent

Clarence talked about having a Reblooming Iris Society website and thought Nancy Price would be a good candidate as web designer. All those present agreed. An amended motion was made for Nancy to be web designer and choose the URL at her discretion.

Joanne Prass-Jones will handle membership signups for the general meeting on Wednesday, May 14, 2003. Clarence will offer free AIS 2003 calendars to the first nine new memberships. Discussion was made about the flow of checks from the Membership Chair to the Treasurer. All present thought everyone should have a membership list. The topic of AIS discouraging payment of dues to AIS and sections at the same time was discussed. Consequently, people don't pay without a reminder. RIS doesn't send out reminders and Clarence will ask Charlie Brown to do this for RIS renewals.

By-laws: Sections are independent entities. If one is a board member of a section, they must be an AIS member also. Clarence said by laws should be posted on the RIS web page. Margaret made the motion to have the secretary hold the by-laws and give them out to each new board member when elected the first time. Shirley Trio suggested the secretary maintain a copy of the RIS by laws and AIS by-laws. Margaret amended the motion by saying the secretary shall have both AIS and RIS by-laws to hand out. Rosalie seconded. We can get the AIS by-laws from Jill Bonino. Rosalie read the policy on accepting dues and simultaneously paid dues (AIS and section dues paid at the same time) from the spring '02 *Recorder*.

Clarence talked about recognizing accomplishments in rebloomers with a distinguished international service award. The first one was given to Eduardo Nogano. George Sutton made the motion that this recognition for remontan irises be given to Freda Cook for promotion of remontan irises in Great Britain and establishing a remontan iris group there. Rosalie seconded and all approved. Clarence will work with Rosalie on certificates. Rosalie said Charlie Brown is a great membership chairman and proposed we give him the distinguished award, which is for North Americans and Canadians, Region 16 of RIS.

A report on Directors terms of service and renewals followed. General consensus felt that Directors needed

to encourage people to send in their reports. Membership lists including others regions would be helpful. Eastern Director, Joan Roberts wants to continue which includes Regions 3, 4, 7, and 9. Northeastern Director, Larry Douchette needs to be replaced. The nominating committee will to ask Sandy or Emily Ives to serve. Southern Director, Everette Lineberger's term expired last year and he continues to give reports. Claire Honkanen suggested nominating someone else. Southwestern Director, George Sutton, includes regions 14, 15, and 22, the term expiring in '03. Tim Stanek's term as Mid Western Director expires in '04. Northwestern Director is Florence Wheat, whose term expires in '04. Clarence will talk to Robin Shadlow on getting terms.

New policy by consensus: Starting in '03, all Director's rebloom reports go to Ken Roberts, who will conduct the symposium, by February 1<sup>st</sup> (Tim Stanek currently does it). Members will fill out the form, as seen in the Fall *Recorder*, and submit it to Directors by December 31<sup>st</sup>.

Rosalie reported that Charlie Brown has 70 Checklists left. 12 more were sold last year. She also said that she has kept an email record of rebloom reports and is working on updating all hard copies of information. Clarence said a good target date to get the new checklist would be the same time as the '04 AIS convention. The last checklist was done 6 years ago.

Clarence reappointed Rosalie as Chairman of the Nominating Committee for next year and named Nancy Price and Dave Niswonger to serve with her. Clarence asked Dave to consider replacing Tim Stanek as Director.

Rosalie asked about potted irises that rebloom. There was an article in the "Newscast" about the Spoons doing this, the same year as Joan Roberts. No ribbon is given for potted irises. Rosalie wanted to know about the pots for the Checklist. George Sutton said he doesn't consider them because they receive special treatment and recommends we do not put them in Checklists or rebloom reports either. George made the motion not to consider potted irises in the reblooming checklist and Claire Honkanen seconded with all in favor.

Clarence thanked all who attended. George will make the presentation at the General Meeting on Wednesday, May 14, 2003.

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted  
Joanne Prass-Jones

We would like to start a Youth Corner for the Recorder.

Youth members-- send us your drawings, poems, stories, photos,  
and other items of interest

GENERAL MEETING OF THE  
REBLOOMING IRIS SOCIETY  
MAY 14, 2003 AT FALLS CHURCH, VA

Clarence Mahan, President, called the annual meeting to order and introduced the new Officers: Claire Honkanen, Vice-President; Joanne Prass-Jones, Secretary; and Margaret Sutton, Treasurer. The Editor, Robin Shadlow, announced that the Recorder was at the printer and invites everyone to contribute articles on gardening and hybridizing.

Three Directors were elected: Joan Roberts will continue with the Eastern region; Everette Lineburger will continue in the Southern region, and Emily Ives will be the new Director for the Northeastern division, which makes her the youngest Director in the American Iris Society. All was approved by acclamation. The time period has been revised for reporting rebloom; December 31<sup>st</sup> for members to Directors and February 1<sup>st</sup> for Directors to Ken Roberts, who has agreed to take over the symposium.

Clarence told the story of how he became President of the Reblooming Iris Society. Six years after promising Rosalie Figge to help with anything she approached Clarence last year about becoming President. He agreed and now it is her turn to return the favor. Clarence joked about Rosalie giving him too many jobs as she is in charge of the nominating committee.

RIS will have a new web designer. Clarence approached Nancy Price and she accepted. The web page will be entirely new, including by-laws, minutes, no pop-ups, or advertising.

Joanne Prass-Jones invited all present to sign up as a new member or renew their present membership after the meeting. To further entice new membership, George Sutton offered \$10 towards an order for all signups.

Freda Cook donated a special cup, called the Famecheck Cup, to be awarded annually to the best remontant seen in a garden. Dave Niswonger's "Prince of Burgundy" won this year in Great Britain.

George Sutton presented the program including a slide presentation on current trends in rebloomers in his garden. He concentrates on space agers as they contain remontant genes. George emphasized four steps in his program: 1. Cross reliable rebloomers with reliable old rebloomers; 2. Cross modern rebloomers with old rebloomers; 3. Cross old rebloomers with 3<sup>rd</sup> generation crosses to modern ones; and 4. Cross modern rebloomers to "oncners" (those irises that don't rebloom). The slides showed results of these steps.

The meeting was then adjourned until next year in Fresno, California in April 2004.

Respectfully submitted by: Joanne Prass-Jones, Secretary



## New Northeastern Director- Emily Ives

We are very excited to announce that Emily Ives has agreed to accept the position as the Northeastern Director. Rebloom reports for that region should be sent to Emily.

Emily will bring a fresh new perspective to the RIS. She is the daughter of Sandy Ives and Maureen Mark of Ottawa, Canada. She is 13 years old, making her the youngest Director in any section in the AIS. She attends Junior High and is in the eighth grade. Besides irises, Emily's other hobbies include reading, soccer and badminton. She also enjoys creative writing.

She first remembers noticing irises when she was about 8 years old. Emily has her own area in the garden where she grows iris and daylilies. She plans to remove some of the daylilies to make room for more iris. She has made some crosses, just for fun. Emily hasn't decided whether she plans to hybridize when she is older. She has helped her father make crosses with SERGEANT PRESTON, and was very excited to report that 4 seedlings out of 21 had variegated foliage.

Emily, and her brother Roger, age 9 will both be attending the national convention with their parents in Fresno in 2004. When asked what she enjoyed most about the national convention, Emily said she enjoyed the bus tours the most. She is looking forward to being a Director because that means her parents have to bring her to the conventions so she can attend the board meetings.

Welcome Emily!

### Membership Information

Single Annual	\$7.00
Single Triennial	\$18.00
Family Annual	\$8.00
Family Triennial	\$21.00
Single Life	\$120.00
Dual Life	\$150.00

### Advertising Rates

Full Page	\$50.00
Half Page	\$30.00
Quarter Page	\$15.00
Eighth	\$10.00
Inside Cover	\$75.00
<i>limit 1 full page/issue</i>	

You can check to see when your membership expires by looking at your mailing label.

The first number on the right is the year, then the month.

The label shown here would be January 2003.

\*\*\* Remember the first two numbers designate the year\*\*\*

James Doe  
4566 Somewhere Dr  
Anywhere

03/01  
("YEAR)

## Tornados In the Brain

By Bill Burleson

"We share. We share plants and we share information. We are not required to understand why."-B. Burleson, spring 2003 issue The Reblooming Iris Recorder

In our last issue I alluded to the flower people phenomena of sharing. Our sharin' of plants and information coupled with the lack of an understanding of why we do so, how we just do it. Most times I personally prefer readin' stuff that is more technical and presents useful information related to improved plant performance. Still I retain more than a modicum of a loved lazy component of introspective contemplation of the curious and must always seek answers to the question. Why?

There are of course the obvious reasons many plants are shared. Hybridizers may want to test grow in different areas or desire wider distribution of plants in a chase for accolades. Or maybe just help each other's efforts. Some say maybe even to influence votes. Gardeners may want help identifying a beautiful but unidentified variety. Growers may hope to tease a new buyer into future orders. And, of course there is always the ego satisfaction thing, etc., etc. All these reasons are both legitimate and healthy but account for only a minuscule portion of the plants that are goin' from person to person in a garden to garden trek. There must be other components to these common phenomena that are occurring among us.

Understand we are not the powers that be though some of the powers that be qualify to be one of us. We are "we the people". We the people are the force and the backbone of the flower world. We are diverse beyond measure. We run the gamut: from rich to poor, from high strung to sedate, from brilliant to somewhat slow, from young to old. Like irises we even go from beautiful to somewhat plain. We suffer all other human frailties outside and in between good and bad.

Regardless of how we measure on the human scale, there is a common thread that connects us beyond a love of irises. You have experienced the tug of this thread. You felt it when someone visited and you sent a plant home with 'em. You felt it when you dug one, then another, then another to send to a friend, feelin' these are just not enough. You felt the tug again when you visited an acquaintance and they sent you home with plants. Never again were they an acquaintance. They gained a cherished title. Now you called them "my friend". It didn't just tug; it yanked when you discovered the plant you had nonchalantly tossed in your car trunk for the trip home after a visit turned out to be a recent or rare introduction, valuable and difficult to acquire.

Even as I pen these words, breezes of memories grow into tornados of the mind. I want to digress into personal experiences of flowers shared and where such sharing led. I find myself wanting to name names and pat "we the peoples" on the back and give the really, really special ones big, big hugs. I want to laugh and have us all laugh at the foolishness we've seen. I want to tell you about a girl in a blue silk dress that started the sharing process here. I want to tell you about the first flowerbed named for a person and beds in progress to be named for others if the lazy proprietor gets around to it. I want to talk about my two current rebloomin' iris favorites, one shared from long ago, a name never to be found, and another hopefully soon to acquire a name. I want to tell you about irises exchanged with friends I never met. I want to tell you about hero hybridizers and growers that helped my iris efforts. I truly want to tell you about some really special, sharing people. But, for now I shall refrain and stick to the question at hand- Why?

Our common thread is an obsession, a compulsion, and insatiable need. We must share! We the people do! Sometimes just a little. Always wishin' we did more. Always knowin' great good comes from our doing so. And, when we are quiet in a reflective moment and think, we know what we are saying when we do. We are either saying or being said to, "You're important." "You make a difference." "I care." "You are part of my world."

## Thoughts on an Iris Species

Clarence Mahan

There is one iris species that reblooms with some regularity in its native habitat: *Iris subbiflora*. Avelar Brotero in his *Flora Lusitanica*, published in 1804, gave this species its current name. This iris was, however, known to botanists long before Brotero accurately described it. Clusius observed it blooming in November in Portugal in 1576. Clusius gave it the name *Iris lusitanica seu biflora*.

The chromosome count for *I. subbiflora*,  $2n=40$ , is an indication that it is a species of hybrid origin and relatively young in evolutionary terms. The environmental niche it has claimed as its own in Portugal and southwestern Spain is among sparse grass and light shrub or in open rocky places. It needs a hot summer sun to ripen the rhizomes.

I have never grown *I. subbiflora*; indeed, I do not recall ever seeing it in any garden, public or private. If you are growing it, I invite you to write an article for the *Recorder* on your experience and the extent to which it has rebloomed in your garden. Such an article should be of considerable interest to our members inasmuch as this iris is the only known species to exhibit extensive rebloom.

My thoughts on *I. subbiflora* were stimulated by a book I recently read: *Frogs, Flies and Dandelions* by Menno Schilthuizen (Oxford University Press, 2001). This interesting book is a popular summary of the latest research findings on speciation, i.e. the origin of new species. One thing is now apparent about speciation that was believed impossible a generation ago. It does not take millions, thousands or even hundreds of years for a new species of plant or animal to evolve. New species can develop rather rapidly in new environments even in the absence of geographical isolation.

The tendency to rebloom is not necessarily an advantage in nature. The needed pollinating insects may not be around during fall bloom. There may not be sufficient time for seed to ripen before winter sets in, and the seed may rot. Seed eating birds and rodents may devour the seeds. Perhaps this is the reason that only one iris species is known to have a persistent reblooming tendency.

Reblooming iris hybridizers are creating a new race of irises. Our modern reblooming hybrid irises are exceptionally vigorous plants. The best cultivars can be grown in many different types of geography, soil, and climate in the Northern Hemisphere. Most of the tall bearded cultivars that rebloom in cold climate regions have a genealogical heritage from the two hardiest 48-chromosome near-species irises, namely *I. trojana* and *Amas*. They tend to be rot resistant and vigorous in their vegetative increase. Nonetheless, it is the garden environment in which these beautiful irises thrive.

It is doubtful that our modern reblooming irises would long survive without the care and attention of *Homo sapiens hortulanus*. I somehow find it reassuring that natural evolution still has the upper hand. And I marvel that small but tough reblooming *I. subbiflora* has found its environmental niche on the Iberian Peninsula.

## CONSTANT COMPANION- A Note from the Hybridizer's Family

Adapted from a letter from Barbara Marsh

My friend, Opal Wulf kindly sent me her copy of the Spring 2003 Reblooming Iris Recorder. What a surprise to see my husband's CONSTANT COMPANION iris gracing the cover!

We used to belong to the Reblooming section, but since my husband's death, my health has limited my activities. My son helped me care for Connell for nearly eight years and now he is giving me the same dedicated attention.

A year ago last November, during the first week, we found several stalks of CONSTANT COMPANION standing in full bloom above the clump after we had cleared and clipped the foliage to about a 4" height. We cut four or five and took them in to Connell in his bed. The rest of the unopened stalks froze that night.

My son, Ric, and I try to keep the garden, Iristocrat Acres, productive and share it with whoever wants to see the many beds in bloom. We have dwarfs, reblooming, tall, border, Siberian and spurias, as well as many of Connell and my seedlings and ones that were registered.

We learned to hybridize from our friend Allan Ensminger. It was at our house on one of Allan's visits, years ago that he, Connell and I talked about gathering interested people into a group and the Lincoln Iris Society was born.

You might want to know that it was late in October, ten or more years ago that Ric and I found CONSTANT COMPANION in bloom in the seedling patch. We had been digging potatoes and looked over and saw the blooms.

*Editors note: I enjoyed a lovely call to Mrs. Marsh. She told me that her first year she began hybridizing, she got 159 pods, wow! She also shared a lovely story. She remembered when she was a little girl, her family was going to be away while the irises were blooming. She hated to leave the irises so much, that she picked a bloom and took it with her. Not wanting to be caught with the flower, she decided to eat the evidence. I asked if it made her sick, and she said it gave her a terribly sore throat. She's truly a living example once you get irises under your skin, it's hard to get them out of your system.*

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## CORRECTIONS

We are most pleased to report that an error was made in the Spring 2003 issue of the Recorder. Charles Applegate denies that he is dead. In fact, he is only 72 and is working full time as a gardener in Mansfield, Ohio at Kingswood Center. Charles is hybridizing for pink reblooming daylilies for cold climates.



Autumn Evening (C. Applegate 72)  
taken October 2003 zone 5

Additionally we failed to credit Rosalie Figge for her efforts in putting together the list of past presidents and editors. Thanks Rosalie!

## Rebloomers in Zone 4 Opinions and Observations

By Le Roy Meininger

I live near the small town of Mitchell, NE in the panhandle of western Nebraska, 17 miles from the Wyoming border along the North Platte River. The elevation is around 4000 feet. I have a sandy soil which means lots of watering. Our last average spring frost is May 15, although we had a killing freeze of 22 F on the night of May 20<sup>th</sup> this year. It was still 30 F at 9:00 A.M. the following morning with frost still on the lawn in the shaded areas. You always wonder what effect a hard freeze will have on the reblooming iris later in the fall when it's reblooming time in the garden. I know that the late freeze had a devastating effect on the early and mid-season iris bloom season. A note of interest, the frost had little effect on the bloom season of the AB's. Our average first frost is around September 21<sup>st</sup>, followed by a month of usually warm weather. If we can get through the last 8-10 days of September without a hard freeze, we usually will have a decent rebloom season. We have been running about 60% of normal precipitation with hot, dry summers and mild winters. These are the conditions my rebloomers have had to deal with throughout the year.

I get asked the following questions quite often: "Do you have rebloomers that consistently rebloom in zone 4?" or "What iris REALLY rebloom in zone 4?" Now I can tell them what iris will rebloom in zone 4, but what iris will consistently rebloom in zone 4 is another tale with a lot of variables, some you can control and some you have no control over. To begin with, a zone 4 in western Nebraska has a cold dry winter with little snow cover and usually extreme weather fluctuations with hot, dry summers. Would these weather conditions be the same for a zone 4 in Idaho or southern Wisconsin? Probably not.

Due to past experiences and talking with others interested in rebloomers, I am beginning to believe that each area of the country, due to its own climatic conditions, will have its own set of reliable rebloomers. A small number of rebloomers will do well in many parts of the country, but not all.

Every gardener has their own methods of raising plants. It's very hard to find two gardeners in the same locality taking care of their irises the same way. This, along with different soil conditions and weather patterns, will affect rebloom. For instance, I have several iris that will rebloom for me, but not for my friend 10 miles away and visa versa during the same year. A close friend of mine pampered this one rebloomer for several years and nothing happened, got discouraged and gave it to her neighbor. You guessed it, rebloomed the first fall with no extra care. All I can suggest is to check the catalogs for iris that rebloom in zone 4 or 5, buy some and see if they like your area and gardening habits and give you some rebloom. If they don't, get some different ones and try again. Believe me, the results will be worth it.

Water and fertilizer: Iris in our area need good watering during the growing season. Try not to let the soil get too dry for a long period of time. I try to water (a good soaking) at least every ten days. I will water into the first part of November if they are dry. I fertilize three times a year. Due to my sandy soil, I use a fertilizer with a 16% Nitrogen content that is high in iron and sulfur. A good natural fertilizer is year old horse manure. Spread it about 3" deep around the iris- no closer than 6" to the rhizome. Let it lay there during the winter and then work it into the soil in the spring with great results.

Shelter: Most rebloomers will be more consistent when planted in a sheltered area or along the south side of a building. Living in the open country, I have better luck with my rebloomers if I plant them close to my pine trees or along the east side of my hedges. Anything to break the wind.

Temperature: In the past, I had a small group of rebloomers that bloomed in a set order. BEST BET would send up it bloom stalks in the last week of July followed by BONUS MAMA, then CHAMPAGNE ELEGANCE, PEACH JAM and finally, LICHEN in the middle of September. Now, since we've had had these warm winters the past few years, BEST BET and PEACH JAM have not rebloomed, along with several others. So the question arises, do some zone 4 or 5 rebloomers require a cold winter trigger a rebloom cycle?

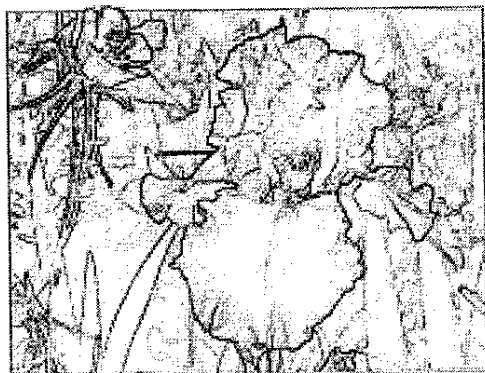
My neighbor told me that he doesn't listen to the weather reports to know when the first killing freeze is coming. Whenever he drives by and sees me pounding stakes into the ground to help cover up rebloom stalks—he knows it's going to be cold for awhile.

Vigor and rebloom: The past two years has seen some great rebloom in some of the larger clumps with numerous stalks. Now we are wondering (due to our short growing season) how much, if any, effect this will have on our spring bloom season. An example of this is SUMMER RADIANCE. It has 5 fans and each fan sent up a rebloom stalk. What will this small clump look like come next April?

Stalk: It has always amazed me how fast a rebloomer can send up a stalk. One day nothing is there and the next, there's a stalk. Most stalks are on the short side, with some never reaching above the height of the foliage. Roughly 70% of the stalks come up from the side and are curved, more so if the clumps are large. Some years we will have the bouquet effect with many of the buds all clumped together at the top of the stalk. Some varieties will have too many buds, most of which will never open due to summer heat or cold temperatures of fall. I personally like the stalks with 5-6 well placed buds that have room to bloom and the plant has the energy to open them all up. Luckily, due to the greater interest in rebloomers by the public, many of the newer varieties have modified or eliminated many of these unwanted characteristics. But there is still work to be done.

The word space ( and I don't mean the final frontier) was mentioned to me as a prerequisite for growing rebloomers. Due to the extra water and nutrients needed, they should not be crowded with other iris or plants that will take away water and nutrients needed by the rebloomers. In other words, give them some space by themselves with little competition.

In conclusion, if you live in the colder areas of the country, obtain iris that are known rebloomers for zone 4 and 5 and give it a try. You never know what surprises are waiting for you in the fall iris patch. Having a rebloomer send up a straight stalk with around 6 well spaced buds during the month of September is worth all the effort you have given to this task.



Mystery Blush



(Editor's note- I had the privilege of visiting the Jedlickas this spring. Can they ever grow iris! Their field was immaculate thanks to Ronstar G and some good ol' elbow grease. If you ever get out to Western Nebraska in early June, it is worth the short detour off I-80 to visit Leonard and Kathie.)

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## Excerpts from Triple R Reblooming Robin

*Rick Tasco, who is Director of the Triple R Reblooming Robin added an enclosure to that robin called A History of the Triple R Reblooming Robin. That background story precedes excerpts from the latest round of the robin.*

### A History of the Triple R Reblooming Robin

In 1950, Edwin Rundlett of Staten Island wrote in the American Iris Society (AIS) *Bulletin* asking for people to join a Reblooming Robin. Twelve people responded including the famous hybridizer Doc Percy Brown. One of the original "charter members," Bonnie Haney, just retired from the Robin after its last round. After a while, more people asked to join the robin and Edwin decided to start another flight. He asked the twelve original members to choose a name for their robin as another one was to be formed. A member from Falls Church Virginia named Ellen Crouch chose the name "Triple R" which stood for Reblooming Round Robin. Our name was born!

Edwin died September 12, 1982. He was instrumental in organizing the Reblooming Iris Society (RIS), which became a section of AIS in 1962. He was also the first editor of the Reblooming Recorder then known as the Reblooming Bulletin. He received the Distinguished Service Medal (DSM) of AIS in 1969.

Mike Lockatell (Richmond, VA): I have had okay seed germination from crosses made last spring, considering the abnormally cold temperatures and overcast days. I counted five hundred plus seedlings out of sixteen hundred seeds planted. Germination commenced on March 30. I used pollen from one of Lloyd's seedlings for rebloom, and it figured in three successful crosses. Early results are quite exciting germination-wise. The parentage of Lloyd's seedling is ('Sunny Disposition' x 'Mesmerizer') X ('Renown' x 'Mesmerizer').

Richard Richards, La Mesa, CA: I am now adding to my breeding goals. I came into the tall bearded iris world with an interest in native plants and particularly California native iris. That interest is now manifesting itself in a decision to hybridize for a reblooming, very hardy Pacific Coast Iris (PCI). There are a few such PCIs available, and I have one of them, with the hope of soon acquiring others. I have already set seed on 'Orchid Re-Sprite,' which rebloomed last July for me. 'Orchid Re-Sprite' is older than the hills, but very tough, and rebloomed in November for someone else in Banning, California, which is pretty close to Palm Springs, which is desert. So 'Orchid Re-Sprite' has to be pretty tough.

Rick Tasco (Cathey's Valley, CA): I don't usually feed rebloomers in the field after spring bloom because my soil is so fertile already and all that can rebloom do so. However, I have a few clumps of rebloomers landscaped around the house and these I do feed through the summer. I use Miracle Gro and feed per label (1 tablespoon per gallon) every two weeks or so. This works well for me. I saw a picture on the web of your [writing to Dana Brown] beds being solarized. I know it is a lot of work but doesn't it make all the difference, especially for the arilbreds!

John Jones (Fremont, CA): [Writing on June 16] I guess the only thing I can say is in rebloom is 'Lightening Bolt' and it is listed as EML in the *Check List* so I don't think it really qualifies as reblooming. It is still early for my rebloom, and the late spring weather has been unusually cool. I am going to concentrate on keeping things well watered this year to see if I can get a good rebloom season....

Virginia Davis (Wolfforth, TX): I enjoyed your letters again. Glad to hear from everyone.

Dana Brown (Lubbock TX): ...for the first time that I can remember we have July rebloom!!! Blooming now are 'Champagne Elegance,' 'Fast Forward' and....Snickerdoodle (an MTB). Not only am I surprised to have rebloom in July but to have an MTB (other than 'Lady Emma') reblooming! As far as I know 'Snickerdoodle' is not listed as a rebloomer but it bloomed at its normal time in the spring and it is blooming today [July 12]. We have also had rebloom on 'Firebeard.' It rebloomed in late June and I probably would have counted it as late bloom if it hadn't already bloomed several stalks in May.

Tim Stanek (Glenwood, IA): The bloom this spring was great. Branching and bud count were up, and the color was exceptional. It seems that the drought has left us this spring, but now it is getting dry again. I did manage to get a few planned crosses this year to take. Along with a couple of backcrosses and a few self-crosses just to see what their hidden traits are. A yellow seedling has bloomed in late June and today [July 19] a pink seedling will open on a rebloom stalk.

Betty Wilkerson (Bowling Green, KY): The picture of 'Vanishing Act' [enclosed in the robin] was taken this past weekend [July 29], just before the rhizome sale. This qualifies as July bloom, and I'd like to say I've a whole row of it in bloom, but there is only one stalk! Still, it proves it CAN bloom before October.... The name 'Vanishing Act' was chosen because this is a plicata with pale blue standard and fall rings. In the heat, they totally disappear. [The parentage is ('Laced Cotton' x 'Autumn Encore') X 'Renown'.... I like the height, branching and vigor so I've only used it as a pod parent.] It is very pod fertile. Have seed this year crossed with 'Double Dribble.'

Lloyd Zurbrigg (Durham, NC): Our climate here in the East has turned similar to that of the former Belgian Congo. All records for precipitation have been broken. Last year it was exactly the opposite! This really tests the hardiness of the iris varieties, but it can be heart breaking, too. We have not been quite as bad off as those living farther north.

I was able to get to Michael's [Lockatell] and see the garden over several days! The rain held off rather remarkably, which was a blessing. One of my seedlings really did well—a luminata with both yellow and blue decorating the central white. This one I had given to a friend in Roxboro, but got it back in part and gave it to Michael. We both thought it truly remarkable. Now to see if it will rebloom, for it has two remontant parents: 'Matrix' and 'Clarence.'

Clarence Mahan (McLean, VA): I will suggest a PCI for your [Richard Richards's] breeding program. I used to send Joe Ghio a small check each year, and he would send me a collection of a dozen of his newest PCI introductions. They would, by spring, all be dead. And then the new shipment would arrive, and live until winter. Then in the spring they would be dead. And so on and so on. I tried different locations, putting stones underneath the beds, sunny sites, semi-shady sites, etc. Nothing seemed to make a difference.

Then a miracle happened. One PCI lived. And it grew and increased. And it bloomed. And in its second bloom season was glorious. It was 'Big Money.' I even won a Best in Section at an iris show with it. When I took a stalk up and entered it in the York PA iris show, old George Bush came up and kissed my cheek. (George would introduce himself as "George Bush the Democrat.") George said that seeing a PCI in a Pennsylvania iris show was an experience that made growing irises truly worth all the work. 'Big Money' died the third year, but I replaced it and my second 'Big Money' lived and bloomed for three years too. It was the only one that did this out of about a hundred tries. I think 'Big Money' has something special.

## Adventures in Digging

Robin Shadlow

Now this should be a surprise, I had managed to put off digging for the club sale until the last minute. I wanted them to be nice and fresh for the sale right? Too many things going tomorrow night, I had to get out there tonight. So I headed out to the farm as soon as I got everybody fed. By this time it was already getting pretty late.

I climbed over the three gates, and slipped by the stallion and his mares. They followed me, nosing my stuff, all curious about why I was carrying a bucket that looked just like their feed bucket and had the nerve not to feed them! Finally I made it through the last gate and into the field.

Way in the back of the field, past all those darn weeds, I could see the four wheeler. I walked back to check it before I got started. We had dug it out there in the theory that it would be entertaining for the girls to ride while I worked. The chorus of "Mom, I'm hot, can we go home," coupled with the fact that it had suddenly stopped running a few weeks earlier had ended any hopes that it might actually be useful. So much for taking the trouble to get it through the pasture in nearly knee deep mud just a few months ago. I thought, what do I have to lose? Why not try and start it. It would be nice to have it be useful for once so I didn't have to lug all of the irises the three blocks back to my car. No luck. Well, I thought, I'll just load it up into the truck after I'm through.

I dug and dug as fast as I could. I tried to select as many rebloomers as I could because they do well at the club sale. I really thought I heard something that sounded like thunder, but the sun was still hot on my back. I quit digging just long enough to notice that those darn grasshoppers had thoroughly and completely enjoyed the stalk that QUEEN DOROTHY had sent up. By this time it was starting to get dark and I could hear thunder rumbling in the background. The humidity was almost staggering. Just a few more I thought, I knew I still had a big clump of I BLESS that was ready to divide.

Now it was really starting to get dark. I could barely make out the markers. I couldn't very well keep going if I wasn't sure about what I was digging. Those markers really hurt your shins too, not to mention that no iris really enjoys being stomped. And there was that four wheeler I still needed to get out, that was thunder I was hearing for sure.

I decided I'd try and start it one more time. Still no luck. So I lugged the first box up to the car. At least only one of the mares really enjoys stealing irises from my box. I chased her down and retrieved the rhizome. The mare didn't really care that irises just might be toxic, she was going to get this human to run and yell and act all crazy before she dropped it.

It was starting to rain now, just drops, but lightning was providing strobe lighting for my trips out. Back over the three fences and through the last gate, I loaded the last box onto the four wheeler's rack. There was no choice but to push it now.

I got it rolling and pushed it into the pasture, balancing the box as I steered through the gullies in the center of the path. The box only fell once, and I quickly packed all of the irises back in as the rain started falling more rapidly.

Now for the challenge, the muck at the gate was only a foot deep right now, but I was alone this time. (Last

time mom helped and we were both covered from head to toe with mud by the time we got the spinning wheels on solid ground.) I pushed it right up to the last dry spot, and ran to get the gate open while making sure that none of the horses got loose. That stallion would love nothing more than to check out the mares in the next pasture over. I ran back to the four wheeler, whooping at the mares to leave that box alone, and shoved as fast as I could. I got it going, and after bogging down a little, I made it through the gate, slamming it shut behind me. No escapees thankfully.

Now it was really pouring. I still had two gates to go through, but they were dry. Piece of cake. The place that I was going to load it was all the way up another long hill. I tried to push it, but it got away from me once and almost rolled back over me. The lightning was still cooperating, giving me eerie light. I decided the only thing to do was to tie it to the truck and drag it up to the top of the hill to the loading ramp in the neighbor's driveway.

By this time, it was raining so hard that I could barely see to drive. I got the rope attached and managed to pull it out, though I wondered if the rope would hold on the way up. When I stopped at the stop of the hill, I heard the reassuring bump of the four wheeler running into truck.

Much to my dismay, I discovered that the neighbor had had the nerve to park a car right where I planned to load the beast. Back out into the rain, I trudged through knee deep grass to see if it was safe to push the four wheeler farther along the top of the wall. I caught a break and there were no holes or junk hidden in the grass.

Finally the four wheeler was loaded. I was soaked clear through, but the irises were safe in their boxes. All through this I just kept telling myself- I really love irises!

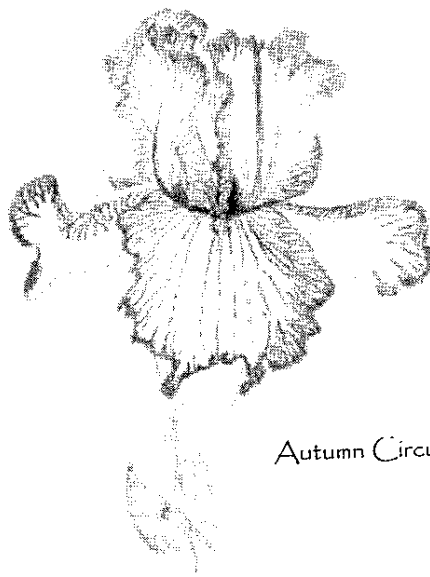
Our club sale went really well, and sure enough the four wheeler's running again. My husband knew exactly what the problem was. Like I'm supposed to know that there was an engine cut off switch.

Check out the new  
RIS webpage

[www.rebloomngiris.com](http://www.rebloomngiris.com)

There is a gallery, rebloom reports, a  
list of the officers, cultural information  
and much, much more!

Many thanks to our wonderful  
webmaster-Nancy Price. She has  
done a terrific job!



Autumn Circus

## Rebloom News from France

by Jerome Boulon

I have many rebloomers (Americans and Australians varieties) and many rebloom here in the center of France (USDA equivalent Z 7-8).

In the last 3 years, CLARENCE, JEAN GUYMER, PAGAN DANCE, PEACH JAM, DOUBLE SHOT, SAXON, HAND PAINTED, CANTINA, BLUE MOONLIGHT, LOW HO SILVER, NORTHWARD HO, BABY BLESSED, BUCKWHEAT, CABARET ROYAL, CORN HARVEST, ICELAND, LOVELY AGAIN, RENOWN, ROSALIE FIGGE, SUMMER HOLIDAYS, SUNNY DISPOSITION, and WINTERLAND have rebloomed in August to November.

I grow about 250 varieties of TB s, rebloomers, SAs and spurias (American, Australian, Italian and French varieties). I started collecting and growing iris in 1998 and I joined the AIS and RIS in 1999. I m a member and board member of the SFIB (French society for iris and bulbs), I judged last spring at IRIADES (French competition for French TB s.) It was the first time for me, a really exciting experience!

I crossed my first TB s in 2000. I have used rebloomers and non-rebloomers, but for the moment none of my seedlings rebloom! I think it s too early for a result, just shots in the dark the first year!

In France, the commercial growers offer more and more reblooming iris, which the landscapers use and prefer. I think, in the future, iris will follow the way of roses in the last century.

I like to play with the iris genetics and it s easy! (the cross... not the results). I hope for a pink rebloomer with a modern form, many ruffles, horizontal falls, good grower, saturate color, best branching and good reblooming qualities in all climates! I dream...

The Boulon Family  
in their garden  
2003



Jerome's pink seedling  
(JEAN GUYMER X ABOUT TOWN)



## REBLOOMERS in the AWARDS

The 2003 AIS awards found many rebloomers gaining notice. Congratulations to the hybridizers of the winning irises!

**CLARENCE** (Zurbrigg 91) was second runner up for the Dykes medal

### Award of Merit (AM)

**MARIPOSA AUTUMN** (Tasco 99)  
**MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM IB** (Baumunk 99)

### Honorable Mention (HM)

**DAUGHTER OF STARS** (Spoon 01)  
**CHRISTIANE ELIZABETH** (Mahan 01)  
**AUTUMN JOY** (Spoon 01)  
**DOUBLE VISION** (Ghio 98)  
**DOUBLE CLICK** (Ghio 01)



Coming  
Spring  
2004

The new RIS Checklist will be available in 2004.

If you're curious about what may rebloom in your area, the checklist is a must have!

## Practical Information on Seed Pod Harvest

Taken from postings on Iris-Talk

*Discussion on Iris-Talk is usually lively, and many of the people who frequent the site are interested in rebloom. There is a great deal of information posted and you can get help and suggestions for almost any problem or question. The archives can be seen at: [www.hort.net/lists/iris-talk/](http://www.hort.net/lists/iris-talk/). These excerpts were taken from postings over several months regarding seed pods.*

Christian Foster I was looking at one of my pods this afternoon and the darned thing popped off in my hand! When I turned it over (what else are you going to do when something comes off in your hand like that?) I noticed a hole in the bottom of the pod about the size of the tip of a Bic pen. There is no stem to speak of so putting it in water or a potato or whatever to continue ripening is out of the question. It is fully seven weeks old (yesterday) but the seeds are still white. Do I shuck it now or put it somewhere hoping it will ripen more and hoping I don't forget where I put it?

Betty Wilkerson I had one pop off yesterday too. I backed into it while working in the garden. Mine had about 2 inches of good stalk attached so I've stuck it in with one of my potted iris. One very wet and humid year, I had over a dozen pods rotting in various stages. That was the year I learned that most pods will produce viable seed IF they've been set for a month before breaking. I had pods on stalks stuck in the ground and pods without stalks lining nearly every windowsill. As the stalks in the ground rotted more I'd cut them off and stick them back in another spot. If the pod is solid with no rot, put some kind of identifying number or mark on it with a Sharpie. Put it on a shelf or some place where there is good airflow. Write yourself a note and place the paper under the pod?

Chuck Chapman In addition to the water what helps is a little bit of ginger ale or similar pop. The sugar and carbon give food to the pod. Some advice I received from a commercial flower wholesaler, a help to keep flowers (and seed pods) healthy for a long time.

Dave Ferguson I like the Ginger-ale suggestion. I'll remember that one. I stuck some broken stalks with unripe pods into a dry vase, and most matured OK that way, but some just shrivelled up.

Robin Shadlow My pods are all ripening (about time after all that watched pot never boils stuff) and I've been going through them. I've been squishing those nasty verbena moth larvae and wondered if I should have picked the pods with the holes sooner to kill them before they had too many of my seeds for a snack. I was wondering what the general consensus was about how long the pods should remain on the plant to still produce viable seeds. I've had some laying around, and more in vases for a few weeks that managed to break off. I'd hate to shell a pod trying to save it from the verbena moths only to lose all of the seeds because I got too anxious. (Of course, maybe the real solution would be to set so many pods that I don't have time to line all of the seedlings out anyway.) So far where practical, I have been leaving them on the stalk until they start to crack open. Any recommendations?

Linda Mann I don't know the type of little moth larvae that get in pods here, but I do surgery on the pods as soon as I see a hole in a pod. Use a fresh blade Exacto type knife. They sell very inexpensive little ones (\$1 each) at the hardware store with a plastic case and a segmented retractable blade, where you break off the old blade segment when it gets dull or icky. I slice a very small section of the pod open, right around the hole in the pod, just enough to reach in with curved forceps and drag the little villain out. I harvest pods when they start to turn color and bring them indoors to finish ripening. They usually start to turn at 8 to 10 weeks, getting a sort of whiteish or bleached look. They also start to feel a little spongy - not soft & squishy, but like they are drying a bit & have some air in the pod. I put them on a bright window sill (no direct sun) to finish ripening. I started bringing them indoors to finish ripening because so many of the stalks were rotting as the pods ripened, it was easier to keep track of them. Poor ripening conditions may be another factor contributing to low germination rates here, but the early harvested seeds seem to do as well as the ones dried and split on the plant. Long answer to your question...Short answer is 8 weeks. Some have said 6 is the bare minimum they need attached to the plant, but the pods I've tried to salvage that young have rotted.

Randy Squires Last time I saw one of them holes, I sprayed Raid inside the hole. I'm sure it killed any larvae inside or those little caterpillars that were eating my seeds like a corn borer eats an ear of corn. >I have been leaving them on the stalk until they start to crack > open. This is how long I leave them, at least you know for sure that they are mature. Picking early, then you have to wonder, did they fully develop?

Dave Ferguson I've never had larvae in my Iris pods, but I get assorted borers in my cacti all the time. The symptoms are similar (though they are usually in stem tissue - no seeds). I've tried a lot of methods to get at them. Sometimes cutting is the only way, but often I can use a fine but strong jet of water to wash them (and their gunk) right out of the hole. Of course the water can potentially allow for rot too. Also, I've used a syringe, minus the needle, to inject a solution of powdered Malathion or Sevin into the hole. That works quite well, but leaves all the gunk and the dead body(ies) inside (more potential rot). I've tried other chemicals too, but most of the liquid pesticides have things like petroleum based carriers in them, and these have a nasty habit of killing part or even the whole plant. Sometimes if you're lucky, you'll see the little beastie pushing it's garbage out the hole, and then you can just grab him (if you're quick). Some larvae don't come to the exit often though, just leaving their garbage in a side room within their diggings.

## WANTED

Wilma Valette's book: *Iris Culture and Hybridizing for Everyone*

If you have a copy available contact : Linda Mann  
1295 Laurel Bluff Rd  
Kingston, TN 37763  
lmann@volfirst.net



## Reblooming Iris

### RESOURCE LIST

#### AMBERWAY GARDENS

(Ken & Susan Kremer)  
5803 Amberway  
St. Louis, MO 63128

#### BLOOMING FIELDS FARM

(Jim Puckett)  
P.O. Box 8416  
Riverside, CA 92515

#### SUPERSTITION GARDENS

(Rick Tasco)  
2536 Old Highway  
Cathey's Valley, CA 95306-9708  
(catalog \$1.50, refunded with Order)

#### BLUE IRIS GARDENS

(Rob & Molly Cromwell)  
20791 Woodbury Drive  
Grass Valley, CA 95949

#### SUTTON'S IRIS GARDENS

(George & Margaret Sutton)  
16592 Road 208  
Porterville, CA 93257

#### WALTER A. MOORES

Rt. 5 Box 189 B  
Starkville, MS 39759

#### COLLIER'S GARDEN

(Tom Collier)  
P.O. Box 32  
Lawson, MO 64062-0032  
(913) 764-0586

#### FRIENDSHIP GARDENS

(Joan & Ken Roberts)  
341 Schwartz Rd.  
Gettysburg, PA 17325-8622

#### WILD PRAIRIE FARM & MARKET

(Renee & Wes Ramsey)  
148 Travis Rd.  
Decatur, TX 76234-4942

#### HILLCREST GARDENS

(Hooker & Bonnie Nichols)  
3365 Northaven Blvd.  
Dallas, TX 75229

#### WINTERBERRY GARDENS

(Don & Ginny Spoon)  
1225 Reynolds Rd.  
Cross Junction, VA 22625  
(504) 888-4447  
(catalog \$2.00)

Reblooming Iris Society  
Robin Shadlow  
16124 Shirley St.  
Omaha, Ne. 68130

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