

# Mr. May to November

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There is a man in the AIS who in 30 years of breeding has received no awards (except for two H.M.s), little recognition, and little encouragement from commercial growers. He has persisted alone in a line of breeding that resulted last year in the introduction of a remontant that equals many of the June-blooming yellows on the market today. This man is Dr. George Percy Brown.

Dr. Brown, or "Doc Percy" as he is known in iris circles, is a quiet unassuming man of 70-plus years who retired in 1943 after having a school and home for the feeble-minded in Barre, Mass. for almost 30 years after he graduated from Harvard Medical School. Miss Grace Sturtevant had a summer place in Barre where she grew about an acre of iris and where he saw some rebloomers in 1929 and liked them so well he started on his long trail of improving them. He registered his first, Autumn Elf (Gertrude x Gracchus), in 1932 and since then has registered 22 remontants and 5 June-bloomers. After his retirement from the medical field, he was able to spend from May to November at his wife's ancestral home in Westport, Mass., where he has some iris bloom in his garden nearly every week of those six months. Some years there is bloom on seedling remontants in July—the actual fall-blooming season starts about August 15 and continues until heavy frost about November 1. Peak fall-bloom is usually October 10. His first color break came in 1943 with September Sparkler and another with Autumn Twilight in 1954. He has a dwarf rebloomer from Morning Splendor which he has never registered because the flower is poor, but which is a mass of purple in October. His latest introduction is September Sunshine (Fall Primrose x Double Date). It is a tall (36"), well-branched, clean clear yellow with good form and substance. When I saw it last October it had 4 branches with 18 buds and 2 fully opened flowers. The color carries well for yellow, for on closer inspection the falls seem to be brushed with gold dust. True, the older remontants were smoky, of small-sized flower, and intermediate in height—if the latter be a fault—but with this new line Doc Percy has high hopes of bringing remontants out of that class altogether.

His seed-bed technique is unique: he plants the seeds as they ripen in August in  $\frac{1}{2}$  compost and  $\frac{1}{2}$  garden soil in an open field with boxlike arrangements of 1"x2"x12" boards around them. Over this goes  $\frac{1}{2}$ " of old hay to prevent the seeds from heaving out in the spring thaws. In the spring he takes only the tallest and most vigorous seedlings from there to transplant into rows. If they haven't the vigor to come through the ground and get growing, he isn't interested in them, for while remontancy is definitely a recessive inherited tendency, he says they must also have vigor to be dependable fall-bloomers. He also has a

red raspberry that is loaded with larger, sweeter berries in October than "Indian Summer" growing next to it. (These were taste-compared by the writer last October.) His strawberry bed of "Red Rich" also had a heavy crop of large delicious berries last October. He would like to see ever-blooming iris find a place next to the ever-blooming rose which has found such popularity in these days of the "casual gardener." He thinks Chartreuse Chalice and September Sunshine are his super iris as of now.

Doc Percy says it is easier to fix a bed properly for ever-blooming iris than for roses as it only takes the one layer of manure or other good fertilizer in the bottom of the bed dug out a foot; the soil is then replaced and the iris planted about 10" apart with a little ground limestone and bone meal mixed in this top soil. Edwin Rundlett has had good results with this method and covered the subject well in AIS Bulletin #148. The same results were obtained by others in Maine and in the Northern Remontant Robin. They do need the extra feeding of well-balanced fertilizer and water after blooming season in dry years, but so do roses.

Doc Percy still goes on working so that there may one day be good iris bloom in July, August, September, and October in all parts of the country and in a large range of colors. This is a slow field at best, and if more growers would stock the twice-bloomers and more people would try them, breed them, and report on them it would be ample encouragement for the man who has given so many years to the improving of them.

Following is a list of all his registrations from the check-list by

<i>Year</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Color</i>	<i>Ht.</i>	<i>Season</i>
1933	Autumn Elf (H.M.)	St. Cream, F. Pale lav.	26"	Re
1939	August Waves	St. Blue lav., F. Deeper blue	22"	Re
1943	September Sparkler	Blue bitone	26"	Re
1948	Autumn Twilight	St. Yellow, F. Yellow and lav.	33"	Re
1950	Fall Velvet	Deep Purple self	15"	Re
	Harvest Blue	Deep blue violet self	18"	Re
	October Shadows	Lav. and grey	34"	Re
	Wesamequin	Brown bitone	36"	M
1951	Barre Beauty	Pale blue self	28"	Re
1952	Fairy Wings	Pale brown, lav. and cream	34"	VLa
	Fall Fairy	Lav. bitone	32"	Re
	Tinted Porcelain (H.M.)	Pale lav. self	34"	M
1953	Fall Primrose	Yellow self	26"	Re
	Fall Violet	Violet bitone	32"	Re
1954	Autumn Afternoon	Yellow and rose bitone	28"	Re
	Autumn Snowdrift	White self	30"	Re
	Green Dragon	Chartreuse blend	28"	Re
1955	Autumn Bronze	Brown bitone	34"	Re
	October Sunshine	Cream yellow self	36"	Re
	Summer Surprise	St. Ecrú, F. Lav. pink	36"	Re
1956	August Indian	St. Ecrú, F. Red purple	22"	Re
	September Contrast	St. Light blue, F. Deep pur.	27"	Re
	September Pastel	Lav. bitone	22"	Re
1957	Chartreuse Chalice	Chartreuse self	34"	M
	October Clouds	Blue bitone	28"	Re
	Sea Orchid	Lav. bitone	26"	La
	September Sunshine	Yellow self	36"	Re