

# The Rose Garden

by Dorothy Stiefel, New York

LOIS ROSE'S GARDEN WAS VIEWED UNDER CONDITIONS CONSISTENT with weather previously experienced during the convention: cool and damp with rain threatening. Her 50 acres in Partlow, VA, are surrounded by pasture and hayfields, which provide a verdant and soothing environment. Large trees shade the brick house built by Lois and her husband. A beautiful bush of mountain laurel graces one front corner, and a rhododendron softens the outline of the other.

The guest irises were planted in island beds in a former vegetable garden. The tall bearded irises were at peak bloom, and there was much to view in a short time. The irises were well grown, although there was evidence of the soft rot that is a frequent consequence of cool, rainy spring weather.

In a grouping of Ghio irises, PUCCINI (1999) and STARRING (2000) first drew my attention. STARRING was attempting to repeat the "star" role it played at the 2002 AIS National convention. The white, barely-lavender tinted standards were a bit more open than I would prefer, but the style-arms, lightly edged with brown-yellow, as if lightly toasted, were enchanting to view. The plum purple falls were pure velvet. The beard "hairs" were white at the fall surface, shading to plum, then to tangerine. It is truly a flower that rewards close study, although with a maximum of six flowers per stalk to study.

IMPULSIVE (Ghio 2001) is a showy peach bitone with yellow hints and a stronger yellow infusion of color at the hafts. The beard is orange from the pink side. Great color, and a very pretty iris. This beauty was sporting seven buds.

Walter Moores' VIOLET SHIMMER (1998) was putting on the show I am accustomed to seeing from it. Healthy, vigorous, and up to 11 buds per stalk were presenting on this white ground *plicata* marked with blue violet.

SLOVAK PRINCE (Mego 2003) again stopped me in my tracks, as it did at the York Convention in 2001 under seedling no. 93-0038-

MA. It is an intriguing flower. The standards are a ruffled, barely violet white, edged in light yellow. The falls are plush, red-toned purple. Bud count was low, with only five in evidence.

Don Spoon's MY GINNY (2000), which would win the President's Cup for favorite In-Region iris, was showing why it is a favorite. It is a vigorous pink and rose confection, the epitome of "femininity."

Blyth's MASTERY (2001) could hardly be missed, as it was opening three flowers per stalk simultaneously. It has butterscotch yellow standards and cranberry/brick red falls. A wide yellow/tan rim around each fall gradually blends back into the cranberry/brick color. Very colorful and distinctive!

PASSING CLOUDS (Hager 2001) did indeed remind me of puffy clouds passing 'way up in the sky at sunrise. The colors are difficult to describe, with the standards a very pale violet-blue and the falls a pale buff pink. Really a very light "sky-blue-pink!"

There were quite a number of historic irises in the Rose garden, as well as a Dykes Medal collection. FAIR ELAINE (Mitchell 1938) was a bright and floriferous beacon of dandelion yellow with a white "wash" area on the falls. JUNGLE SHADOWS (BB - Sass/Graham 1960) was present; it's brown/gray/mahogany color unmistakable. BLUE SHIMMER (J. Sass 1941) and HELEN COLLINGWOOD (K. Smith 1949) were giving performances that proved their enduring popularity is deserved.

Among the MTBs, guests OH SO COOL (Wulf 2001) and PREFERENCE (Fisher 2001) were standouts, presenting large, floriferous clumps. OH SO COOL is violet, with the falls shading into white with violet veining at the hafts. PREFERENCE is a cream/yellow ground plicata with tan and violet markings.

The Siberian guests did not look at home, and probably could have used another year to grow to advantage. All were short, and the best beardless performances were being given by non-guest reliables SHAKER'S PRAYER (Warner 1990), SUMMER SKY (Cleveland 1935), and CAESAR'S BROTHER (Morgan 1932).

Near the end of our visit, the sun suddenly emerged from behind the clouds, and the humidity increased quickly. Cool drinks and the shade of the large oak trees were welcome.

Although at least one conventioneer initially wondered why we were visiting a "rose garden" on an iris tour, the visit itself answered all doubts. My question is: "How can a professional working woman with a 160-mile round trip daily commute keep up with all this?" Thank you, Lois Rose, however you manage, for sharing it with us! 