

The Garden of Gina and Jim Schroetter

by Paul Black, Oregon

AS WE MADE OUR WAY FROM THE SPLENDOR OF WINTERBERRY Garden to the serenely peaceful Schroetter garden, I was amazed at how little the bustling cities had encroached upon these rural areas. The trip along wooded areas and farms complete with cows was readying us for the wooded wonderland that Gina and Jim Schroetter have lovingly developed. The newly completed log house was a charming backdrop for the manicured iris beds, which I am told were created before the house was built. A small iris bed located just in front of the house gave it a warmth and old world charm that made us feel right at home. For more pictures of this beautiful garden, please refer to page 86 of the January 2003 *AIS Bulletin*.

Because of the high shade provided by beautiful, mature trees, bloom was slightly later than other gardens and we missed peak bloom by about a week. There was still plenty to see. We were disappointed that few of Jim's seedlings were in bloom. I can see it is going to be a challenge for this new and upcoming hybridizer to find enough sunny area to grow his seedlings.

As it was in most of the other tour gardens, Don Spoon's MASLON was a star. This cheery MTB has yellow standards and rich purple falls banded in white. Bright yellow beards were just the right accompaniment. VOODOO CHILD (TB - Schreiner '02) was growing vigorously. Strong, well-branched stalks carried eerily colored flowers with buff tan standards and violet falls blended to a tannish brown band. LET'S BE FRIENDS (TB - Christopherson '02) was showing off with super show stalks carrying 9 buds. Lilac standards are widely banded old gold. Buff falls were sanded overall with red violet.

SARGENT PRESTON (TB - Chapman '02) was one of the best-branched and budded varieties seen in this garden. It may be too subtle for some, but I thought it a very appealing combination. Palest violet-white standards are prominently veined and rimmed in old gold. Medium blue-violet falls are narrowly banded with tan. Blue beards, ruffles and a bit of lace are perfect finishing touches. VIBRANT (TB - Black '99) was making its own bit of sunshine in this semi-shaded bed.

Bright, eye-popping golden yellow blooms are carried on show stalks with plenty of buds. **H. Nichols seedling 2159A** was one I liked because of the smaller, daintier, precisely ruffled flowers and well-branched stalks. Flowers are white with yellow central area in standards along with narrow gold bands. Falls have large yellow hafts and yellow veins incised over the remainder. This got my vote for best clump – if there had been a vote.

Another MTB was giving MASLON some competition: **T. Varner's MTB seedling #R302** had cream standards with violet plicata marks, and white falls were etched with violet lines. MILLENNIUM SUNRISE (TB – Schreiner '00) was the most colorful clump on my list. An abundance of stalks provided an abundance of rich orange flowers with a yellow influence; beards, of course, are orange. HIGHLAND GAMES (TB – Aitken '00) was putting on a nice show of unusually colored flowers. Standards are a rose lavender blend as is the narrow band around buffy orange falls. Orange beards score well.

An amoena that I like very much in my own garden as well as here is CONNECTION (TB – Ghio '00). The contrast between the white standards and black purple falls isn't as startling as STARRING, but the growth is stronger and branching and buds are also better. The same dark red orange beards make it blaze. For our space age connoisseurs, **Larry Hughes' seedling #96-11A** was looking good. Standards are brassy gold and well-formed violet flounces accent violet falls. I have seen SWEET MEI (Fan '00) at two conventions and in my own garden and have liked it very much each time. Heavily ruffled, dark violet blooms are brushed dark garnet over the hafts and accented with gold beards. Superb show stalks and strong, vigorous growth make this a top-notch variety.

I'll end this review with a variety that wasn't in this garden but that I think was one of the best things I saw at National this year. It was giving a strong performance in every garden where I saw it: LADY LAREE (Barrows '02) is NOT just another violet and white plicata. The characteristic that sets it apart are the very blue beards that I haven't seen before on this type of plicata. White standards are sanded and widely banded with medium violet plicata marks. Expansive, ruffled, white falls are narrowly plicata banded in violet. Very blue beards are nestled in a V patch of violet. This violet V patch makes the beards appear even bluer. Growth is very strong and each stalk was worth taking to a show.

The gardens at this convention each had their own distinct character and each one was a reflection of the love its owner gives it. Thanks to all the people that made this convention such a resounding success. 