

Breeding Louisiana Irises is still in its infancy. There is so much that could be accomplished that there is no end to the possible results. I find hybridizing to be a great challenge to create not only more beautiful flowers, but to develop new and interesting improvements in the plants themselves.

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LAPHAM'S METHOD IN RED BREEDING

Greig Lapham began to breed iris in the 1920's and has followed a program of his own ever since. His goal was to try to get, or see how close he could come to getting, a true red iris—one that would have not only color but show and garden value. Beginning with some brown breeders of that day such as TROOST, SEMINOLE, BRUNO and SHERBERT, he raised the first crop of seedlings, getting but one worth keeping out of the hundreds that bloomed. This he introduced into the Sass red strain through the use of RAMESSES and KING TUT and got several improved seedlings. These were intercrossed and outcrossed for several generations and his special strain established. He was on his way. Additional matings resulted in seedlings having greater variability, better size, more substance and the color improvement was noted.

After many generations of sibbing, outcrossing, etc., with his strain, he was struck with the value of the "method" he has followed from the first: always to have something of his own strain on one side of each cross and to follow the rule of putting the stronger variety onto the weaker wherever possible.

In the first years of his program, the cats and dogs appearing in the seedling rows made one wonder just what was his color objective. But, through rigid selection, careful observation, and a great deal of study, he found he was getting almost all red seedlings from each red cross made. No longer were they blue or purple or variegatas or even something with no color name. They were red to a degree. This is not to say they were then, nor are they even yet, a true red, but each generation brings him closer to his color objective.

When it seemed wise to go outside of his own strain to get something with more size or substance or branching, he did not hesitate to do so. But he has always kept his own strain on one side of each cross and will continue to do so.

Beginning in 1923 or 1924 with this objective, and continuing with his selected methods, he has developed a strain of reds that is not only fruitful but is sound as a dollar. (Reds breed reds, so cross reds with reds to get better red.) This strain shows advancement in every direction: size, height, form, substance, garden value, *and* color. Today his reds are something worth seeing and they can be seen in Oregon, Washington, New England, and the Presby Gardens in New Jersey. Here we see true red color—light, medium and dark. They are not ready for introduction, so he says; but rather, these are for more intensive breeding. When you hear there are no true reds yet, remember these notes and be on the watch for the Lapham irises. (Robin excerpt.)

—HAROLD HARNED, Oakland, Md.