

# THE REVIEW

## OF THE SOCIETY FOR JAPANESE IRISES

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## INTERNATIONAL SHOW AWARDS FOR W. A. PAYNE

In competition with 175 varieties from Japanese growers as well as many other entries at the International Horticultural Show in Hamburg, Germany, three varieties of the American race of Japanese irises developed by W. A. Payne of Terre Haute, Indiana were awarded honors.

The variety, Blue Nocturne, was awarded a gold medal. Fashion Model received a silver medal and Orchid Majesty was awarded a bronze medal.

### FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

At its inception this organization bestowed upon me the high honor of being your first president. This honor I fully appreciate and shall do my best to fulfill the obligations that attach. I do feel that this honor should have been bestowed upon one of those who "carried the ball" before I became active in the interest of Japanese irises.

There are many problems that beset the new organization, not the least of which is the problem of properly instructing the judges as to what constitutes a good Japanese iris as many, if not most of them, have not had the privilege of seeing them at bloom time.

A schedule has been prepared to be used in judging both show and garden specimens. It is being submitted to the Executive Committee for approval. As soon as this approval is had it will be submitted to the Chairman of Judges' Training for his approval and use.

Committees are being appointed as fast as the need arises. There are those who say that they are not qualified. You gain qualification by working on a job just the same as you qualify as a judge. These and other qualifications are seldom gifts, they are the result of study, work and practice. I would greatly appreciate the cooperation of the members that are asked to take a place on any committee as we are not too many and all should help to carry our Section to success.

Our membership, while not as large as it should be, is growing along with interest in the Japs. Additional requests for a place in a Robin continue to arrive and it would be to the best interest of all if every member were in one. It would aid in the dissemination of information and discussion of same at a faster rate and aid all in promoting a better understanding of our various problems.

The AIS has been requested to grant us the right to register the same number of introductions at the minimum rate that is given to the TB hybridizers.\* A request was also made that a change be made in the method of issuing ballots to the judges as the present system requires that the ballots be mailed before the Japanese irises are in bloom in many localities. We should have some help on this from the Reblooming group as they face the same problem on the fall judging.

\*Since the above was written the AIS Board of Directors has granted our request.

Let each of us endeavor to secure one or more members. We all know several who Oh! and Ah! at our blossoms. Perhaps they could be convinced that they, too, could grow them. That is how I started.

Let me say, in closing, that ALL suggestions offered by members will be given due consideration, all questions will be answered to the best of our ability to find an answer and all possible help will be given the novice to the end that she or he may become not only a grower but also a hybridizer.

C.A. Swearengen

## JAPANESE IRIS - GARDEN OR HOUSE PLANT?

C.A. Swearengen

*Iris kaempferi*, better known as the Japanese iris, is grown differently in the United States than is the practice of some of the growers in Japan. As a result we have a longer period of bloom during a normal season.

In Japan, pot culture is used by many to the end that, at bloom time, the plants can be brought into the house and arranged in a formal manner there, that the "work" or "act" of the blossom, as it opens, may be better and more conveniently observed.

The branches, if any, are removed and as the terminal bud starts to swell the second terminal bud is killed with a knife or other instrument so that the one terminal bud, obtaining all of the available nutrients, grows much larger. It is also more delicate and this, I am told, assists the flower in giving its "act" or, as it is sometimes called, the "work". This is, I am informed, a very striking performance and is enjoyed, by those watching it, as much or perhaps more than is the beauty of the open blossom.

This blossom, as was stated before, is larger and more delicate and would not be able to "stand the weather" of the outdoors. Of course not all are potted. Some are grown in a manner similar to our own practice. Some plantings, where natural hot water is available, are forced for the early market. The spikes are harvested in a manner similar to that of gladioli and sold in the flower shops and stalls as we would do here.

In the United States plants are grown in rows or beds as may suit the convenience or pleasure of the grower. In the northern part of the country they are generally planted where they will receive sunlight throughout the entire day, while in the south central and southern parts of the country partial shade, particularly in the afternoon, has been found desirable as the darker colors are adversely affected by the heat of the afternoon sun when it hits them directly.

Provided that good, well branched plants have been set and that they have been well watered for a period of three weeks before bloom time, we can expect to enjoy our garden for a period of from three to twelve weeks. This will depend upon the weather, number and kind of plants, age of plants and whether watering has been continued until bloom is past.

We also may sit and watch the slow motion opening of the blossoms over a period of hours if we have the time. Then we may come back to them from day to day to continue our appreciation of their beauty, as the continuing bloom of each plant gives us much more time to see all of the minor variations and peculiar aspects that we may have missed on the first blossom.

This is not a prohibition to the growing of plants in pots if one so desires, as a few, so grown, would look well on a sunny porch or in a well lighted breezeway. That is for each grower to decide.

Most varieties withstand the weather rather well. This is largely because the breeding stock of the hybridizers of good repute has been selected on a basis of vigor, branching and weather resistance, along with other desirable characteristics. Several varieties now exist that have two branches which give two buds each in addition to the terminal two and sometimes three buds. This lengthens the period of bloom of each plant and as the three-petaled or single type blooms first, followed in from a week to ten days by the six petaled or doubles, and they, in turn, followed by the nine and twelve petaled or peony type, this is the type of planting that gives the extended bloom season. In anything like a normal season, with watering continued through the bloom period, there is no other iris that can equal this for length of season.

With all these facts before us I think that we must arrive at the conclusion that, while in Japan pot culture seems a desirable method to be followed, due to the aesthetic approach to appreciation, we in the United States should continue to grow ours as garden plants.

### FIRST JAPANESE IRIS SHOW

Arthur H. Hazzard, Show Chairman

The first AIS sponsored Japanese Iris Show was held on July 6, 1963, at the Kalamazoo Civic Auditorium in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Too much credit cannot be given to Mr. J. Arthur Nelson, Exhibition Chairman for the AIS, for when we first contacted him regarding our desire to stage a 100% Japanese Iris Show, he voluntarily waived all restrictions and without this consideration there would have been no recognized show. Most of the Japanese irises grown in this area consist of numbered seedlings and named varieties sold in collections without being identified, therefore it was essential to accept them for competition if we wanted a reasonable number of entries. There was no lowering of standards for specimens or arrangements and the show was judged by the rules which we expect will be approved at the next session of the Directors of the Society for Japanese Irises. The Queen and her Court were of good quality, though nameless, except for Rose Anna. Riley Lynch of Bangor, Michigan, placed the Queen and four members of her Court and Douglas Allen of Oshtemo, Michigan, the other two.

In promoting this show, we worked closely with the local Chamber of Commerce and Mr. F. Joseph Buckley, Executive Vice President, opened many avenues of approach which proved invaluable. As a result, the affair was brought to the attention of the City Commission at a regular meeting, the Parks Department made a respectable planting on the Mall and Mayor Morrison and entourage, including Mr. Buckley, presented our formal greetings to our contemporaries in



Numazu, Japan, our "sister" city, which they visited the week of the show. The Kalamazoo Gazette was very cooperative, giving us news space on May 14, June 23, June 30, July 7 and July 8, publishing also the pictures of the Queen and the best arrangement in Show with the exhibitor, Mrs. Jack Gray, Richland, Michigan. All in all, the affair took on more of the aspects of a community project than we had at first anticipated.

WKZO provided us with free time on TV where Mrs. Walter J. Temple, Chairman of our arrangement sections, demonstrated arranging after the Japanese manner and I had the privilege of chatting a little about Japanese irises and exhibited a few specimens.

There were 13 exhibitors, 108 entries in the specimen classes and 18 arrangements. Over 400 people attended, 58 from 22 other Michigan places and 15 from out-state. Among the latter were Dr. Shuichi Hirao of Tokyo, Japan, and Mr. Orville Fay of Northbrook, Illinois, who came unannounced with Mr. C. J. Blocher, RVP of AIS Region 9 from Wheaton, Illinois. Other SJI members who favored us were Mr. Louis A. Kamps and family, Northbrook, Illinois, Mr. Ford L. Grant, Davenport, Iowa and Mr. and Mrs. Cloyd F. Sensenbach, White Haven, Pennsylvania. Fourteen persons attended the Judges' Luncheon, 11:30 A.M. at the Kalamazoo Inn.

To further accent the Japanese theme, Mrs Charles W. Whitmore appeared in Japanese dress and Mrs. W.R. Stribley provided a sizeable display of authentic bonsai subjects and methods. There was a continuous showing of Japanese Iris slides which proved fortunate as we were able to make a comparison of Japanese irises as grown by Mr. W.A. Payne, Terre Haute, Indiana, and Dr. Hirao. Both were exceedingly attractive.

The Southwestern Michigan Iris Society is a small group of iris lovers, about 25 families, well experienced in staging TB shows and they work with a minimum of organization but the results are most satisfactory. I commend their courage and ability to attempt and accomplish something which, so far as we know, has not been done heretofore. There is some talk of making the show an annual event but without the novelty feature, now gone, we might find later shows more difficult to promote. However, if they take it on, I am sure it will be well done from the entrance sign painted by Bob Bailey to the iced tea and macaroons dispensed by our host and hostess, Dr. and Mrs. Jack Gray, and with a timely date will include a broader selection of types and registered varieties.

This report would not be complete without mentioning the valuable assistance received from C.A. Swearingen, President of the Society for Japanese Irises, and our Dean of Hybridizers, W.A. Payne. They furnished most of our excellent award material and slides of Japanese irises, and it would be a long step forward if someone would sponsor a show in Terre Haute, Indiana. They have the irises to make it outstanding.

# CLASSIFICATION OF JAPANESE IRISES

Dr. Shuichi Hirao

For the benefit of those who may not be familiar with them, I wish to give a rough outline on the current classification of Japanese irises here in Japan.

Higo (Kumamoto) Iris: Higo or Kumamoto is the name of a small district in southern Japan, the taste of flower fanciers in which district was very outstandingly different from those in other districts. According to their viewpoint the center of the flower, i.e. the styles in the case of a six petaled iris, the styles and standards in the case of a three petaled iris, stamens in the case of peony type, etc., was rather more important for the beauty than the petals.

Introducing parent plants from Edo (old name for Tokyo city) in 1841, they started breeding to their aim. They never wanted to grow them in the earth but always in pots, to be admired arranged in a room. Plant is grown always in pot, single or double plant in each pot. Branching is rather undesirable. Second or third bud appearing on bloomstalk is removed as soon as possible to give more nourishment to the terminal buds, moreover, the second bud at the terminal was often killed by sticking with a knife from the outside to transfer to the remaining flower all of the plant's energy. Consequently the blooming period of a plant was only three days, more correctly only a few hours as far as the climax is concerned. But you will not say that a few hours of bloom each year is too short to enjoy, because the flower of a Higo grown in this way is so marvelous and the almost mysterious "act" or "move" of the flower will attract you so intensely that you cannot go away until the bloom is over.

As a garden plant Higo is also wonderful. As Higo has been developed for indoor arrangement, some varieties have a flower that is too heavy to stand wind and rain outside. Height of Higo plant is generally not too tall. Flower is generally 7 1/2 to 9 1/2 inches, sometimes more, but naturally the size is not everything.

Ise Iris: Ise was another district in which the flower fanciers had a quite different opinion of flowers. They liked long, hanging falls. They believed that an iris should always have three falls and three standards. No other form was accepted as Ise. Lighter substance was more welcome, which added a delicate elegant beauty to the flower when arranged in a room. Delicate color tone was encouraged. The "act" of the flower is generally more conspicuous than in the Higos. In other words, the form of a flower may be found to be quite different the next day. Standards should not be too small, and should stand open obliquely. Difference in color between standards and falls should generally be encouraged. Because of the preponderance of Higos, the Ise is admired within a rather restricted group. Though the petals are thin, Ise flowers stand up rather well in the wind and rain.

Edo (Tokyo) Iris: This group name does not mean flowers with a definite form, but consists of miscellaneous varieties other than Higo and Ise. It can be divided into some smaller groups:

Parents of Higo: resemble Higo but simpler, naturally, as they were the real

parents. Introduced mainly before 1940.

Large, three or six petaled flower with colored veins: this color pattern is seen frequently in Edo Iris. As Higo people did not consider this pattern elegant these varieties were not adopted as parents.

Receiving or vessel form: falls do not, at least in the earlier stage, hang down but remain in the form of a dish. I am hoping to produce some day a big white porcelain dish-like flower with a very clear outline without any frill or wave on the edges.

Upward tubelike falls: a few varieties exist now. The falls form a tube by curving inside and stand upward. May not be beautiful but I believe worth trying to produce some newer forms.

Pentapetaled: two varieties exist, both are believed introductions of nearly two hundred years ago. Five petals, looking like an electric fan. Sometimes four petals, and three petals on branch. I think these are worth trying though they have been long neglected.

Reverse three petals: small falls, big standards. If worked on this line, something similar to tall bearded could result.

Double clematislike flower: Tennyokan is an exceptional variety with unusual flat opening twelve petals. Nobody has worked on this variety but I think that a new form break will come from it. Peony type and monstrosa type double (flore pleno) were introduced before 1840. This was the year that Sho-oh Matsudaira wrote his monograph on Japanese Iris with descriptions of his numerous introductions. I like this form and have introduced some twenty varieties.

Regarding color patterns, I do not think that any progress has been made since the death of Sho-oh in 1856. Color patterns of today's varieties are but small modifications of his introductions. An approach to true red should be encouraged.

## TETRAPLOIDS

Orville Fay

In regard to the kaempferi iris, American growing conditions and uses of these irises are quite different from the Japanese ways, so the plants will have to be changed to fit our environment. Plants developed in Japan for growing in pots seem to me to have an inadequate root system, which makes them difficult to transplant. I would like a more vigorous plant, with darker green leaves and a stronger root system. I look upon kaempferi as a landscape plant to be grown in a garden rather than in a flower pot. Some of these plants have flowers too large for the rather slender stems to carry through some of the violent storms with high winds and rain which we often get during June.

Tetraploidy should give a more vigorous and larger plant with darker green leaves. The stem probably will be shortened by some six inches, from a diploid 40 inch stem to about 34 inches, and almost doubled in cross-section area. The flowers may be larger in diameter, but probably will not; the petals will more than likely be doubled in thickness.

Many of the hemerocallis tetraploids produced by colchicine appeared as complete tetraploids from their first growth, but many appeared as chimeras, which were divided into small sections, rowed out and then segregated when in bloom and replanted in two rows, one diploid and the other tetraploid from the same embryo. This had to be done for three consecutive years before we had pure tetraploid plants.

This gives us an idea of what to expect in kaempferi, as iris and hemerocallis plants are quite similar. The nice thing about all this is that those who love kaempferi in the diploid state and want no change may continue to grow and breed them just as they now are. Those who would like to experiment with something new in the tetraploid state, with the possibility of something better, are free to do so.

A scientific paper on colchicine induced tetraploid hemerocallis by Griesbach, Fay and Horsfall was published in the Yearbook of the American Hemerocallis Society for 1963. It took ten years to gather all the information for this paper.

## GROWING AND SHOWING JAPANESE IRISES IN THE NORTH

A. H. Hazzard

"North", as here used, is a relative term for we seldom have more than a week or ten days when the temperature registers - 10 degrees. At that time we usually have a snow blanket of 12 or more inches and in 35 years I have not had a loss which could be definitely traced to severe weather. With plenty of snow or a satisfactory mulch, Japanese irises should perform well in much colder areas.

It is well, I believe, to keep cultural methods as simple as possible so while I would prefer organic fertilizer, I use only commercial as it is easier to obtain and less troublesome to handle. It is not a good plan to mix balanced fertilizers with the soil when planting. Wait until the plants are established, cultivate and water it into the soil but keep it off the foliage and avoid direct contact with the roots. Some watering is essential if dry spells occur but that Japanese irises require a bog condition is a myth and I doubt if they are as sensitive to pH as some would have us believe. True, they may have a preference for 5.8 pH, or thereabout, but it is not an absolute requirement. I have for many years, in different locations, had good success without using acidifiers of any kind and in the perennial border, without special attention, they have been very satisfactory in soil producing excellent tall bearded. Summer or fall planting I consider a matter of choice as both are successful if followed by liberal watering in summer and mulching in fall. My preference is summer as the resulting root growth makes it easier to avoid frost damage from heaving and I begin as soon after the bloom period as I can arrange it. This year I was delayed and an oat straw mulch will be used freely. Frequent cultivation or a summer mulch controls weeds and conserves moisture. I follow the former as it best suits my growth program and finances.

When growing Japanese irises for sale as blooming plants, it is necessary to keep the height to 36 inches or less to facilitate handling and transportation. It also helps in staging a show for specimen tables make a nicer appearance than



than placing entries on the floor which would be required to bring the bloom in the range of vision for most people when stems are three feet or over in length. One alternative would be to limit the stem length in the show program but this is objectionable to some growers. For me, limiting the nitrogen content in spring feeding to six or seven percent and zero thereafter has proved very satisfactory but unless a special planting is maintained for demonstration purposes, the varieties are not shown at their very best. However, the blooms do not appear to suffer in size, quantity or quality and the plants respond to the conditions they find in their new homes. One gardener reports that such a plant, receiving liberal balanced fertilizing along with the rest of the perennial border, "practically scared visitors out of the place", for it reached a height of six feet but the bloom was free and beautiful.

Soil analysis is useful but one can usually get some idea of existing conditions by reviewing the growth produced in the plot the previous year. Crop rotation, green fertilizer (soy beans, etc., plowed under), and the use of cottonseed meal give excellent results where conditions will permit their employment.

For showing, a sponsoring organization is desirable and if it is experienced in staging flower shows, so much the better. However, any well organized group can handle it as assistance is easily obtained from garden clubs, Chambers of Commerce, etc. Blooms may be refrigerated for several days and no special treatment or conditioning seems necessary. Split stems, seared stems or hot water give me no better results than a diagonal cut and cold water, but care must be used to cut only relatively fresh blooms. At the Kalamazoo show they stood up very well in arrangements with some help from air-conditioning which was only partially effective because of an open entrance from two to nine P. M. As blooms grow from three to five days under favorable conditions, very few entries will not survive a two-day show. They transport readily and do not damage as easily as tall bearded blooms. Because of the high temperature in early July, the blooms for use in the arrangements to be entered in the show on July 6 were cut at 5:00 AM of the show day and placed in 12 quart pails of cold water and about 40 ice-cubes. It is difficult to time the shows with the peak of bloom but with Japanese irises, bloom may be delayed for about one week by copious watering for a week or two before show time.

My conclusion is that Japanese irises can be shown as readily as other irises if there are adequate plantings in the area and the growers can be interested in making entries. To improve the situation we should popularize the growing of them and not miss an opportunity to correct two common fallacies: that they need a bog condition and highly acid soil. For the first, my own limited experiments show poorer root action on plants with "wet feet" than those without and for the second, any good garden soil not strongly alkaline will prove satisfactory. It is highly probable that most failures are due to lack of water before plants are established, and in the midwest we need a nursery which can supply clones of registered introductions at popular prices. With a reasonable amount of effort, we should be able to return this wonderful flower to the extensive popularity it enjoyed in the 1920's when among others Charles Lewis Childs operated a 20-acre planting at Flowerfield, Long Island, New York, and introduced many of the varieties now on the market or appearing in the parentage of more recent introductions.



## THE NEW LOOK IN JAPANESE IRISES

Eleanor Westmeyer

Exciting "breaks" reported recently offer challenging new fields for exploration to breeders of Japanese irises. Arlie Payne is concentrating on the development of new colors, patterns and forms and has reported new brownish shades and a delightful cupped form. It is hoped that candelabra branching will reappear in the progeny of his lost wonder of several seasons ago. Bob Swearengen believes that he has seedlings with some fragrance. Max Steiger grows lime-tolerant varieties and there are many reports of miniature, dwarf and many-petaled seedlings. Peony-flowered types are not uncommon, but a really well formed one is rare. Laura Gayer has the most beautiful white one I have ever seen. Shu Hirao has written in the International Robin about visiting Dr. Bungo Miyazawa's garden and discovering his very early blooming varieties of Japanese irises. Shu is using pollen from these to develop improved flowers with earlier bloom. Late blooming blues to add to the hemerocallis garden are my aim.

Also of interest are other types of irises with the Japanese look. Several very fine Siberian irises that open flat have been introduced. Mrs. Scheffy's Blue Moon is perhaps the most familiar of these. Steve Varner's Tealwood is a new, beautifully formed dark one. Caesar's Brother seems to be a repeated parent of this type. Lloyd Austin popularized the Japanese form in tall bearded irises by collecting and offering the best of these in his catalog. Mrs. Wolf's White Parasol is a pleasing example of these and is an interesting garden subject.

No one yet knows what line-breeding of tetraploid Japanese irises will produce, but it is interesting to ponder the possibilities. A wider range of colors including spectrum red, yellow and blue would be desirable. The development of fragrance would make Japanese irises doubly desirable in the garden. The introduction of miniature flowers on wiry stems would please flower arrangers everywhere. Improvement of bitones and development of new color combinations would add to their garden appeal. There has been much improvement in branching, but many plants are still too tall and floppy to be good landscape subjects. This might be corrected through further breeding. Ruffling has appeared and adds great charm, but "lacy" edges are unknown. Heavier substance is needed to withstand rugged weather. Picture the spectacular corsage just one of these glamorous irises of the future would make - and join in the fun of helping to develop new Japanese irises.

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### ATTENTION JUDGES

The Society for Japanese Irises wishes to call your attention to the following display gardens of Japanese irises. Bloom begins approximately two weeks after the tall bearded iris season in each area and continues for about one month. You are urged to become familiar with named varieties and include worthy varieties in your voting.

New York Botanical Garden, New York City  
Brooklyn Botanical Garden, Brooklyn, New York  
Presby Memorial Gardens, Montclair, New Jersey  
Mrs. Troy Westmeyer, 60 Gary Road, Stamford, Conn.  
Kingwood Center, Mansfield, Ohio  
Mr. W.A. Payne, 7001 Dixie Bee Road, Terre Haute, Ind.  
Mr. C.A. Swearengen, R. 3, Box 136, Terre Haute, Ind.  
The Walter Marx Gardens, Boring, Oregon

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#### SLIDES AVAILABLE

A very fine collection of slides of Japanese irises as well as varieties of Dutch, Siberian, Louisiana, Douglasiana and Spuria irises may be rented from the American Iris Society. The set includes 100 slides, 35 mm size. A list of the varieties included accompanies the set. Request for rental should be made 30 days or more in advance. The rental fee is \$5.00 payable in advance. Make check payable to the American Iris Society and mail with your request to:

Robert Schreiner, Chairman, Slides Committee  
Route 2, Box 301, Salem, Oregon

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#### WANTED: SOURCES OF JAPANESE IRIS PLANTS

Many requests are received each year for names of nurseries offering Japanese iris plants and seeds.

If you know of such sources, in your own area, of named varieties, write to the Editor. A list will be supplied in the next issue of THE REVIEW.

## MEMBERSHIP LIST

Adams, Mrs. Charlotte M., 7620 Machrea St., Tujunga, Calif.  
 Allen, Dr. R.C., Director, Kingwood Center, P.O. Box 1186, Mansfield, Ohio  
 Alpahr Gardens, 5080 Allison St., Arvada, Colo.  
 Appel, Mrs. Alayne, 19 Tarn Drive, Morris Plains, N.J.  
 Bahret, Mrs. C.A., 16 Germantown Road, Danbury, Conn.  
 Brandrith, 5162 - 12th Ave., R.R. 2, Ladner, B.C.  
 Cambron, Mrs. Thelma Glover, 814 Woodland Ave., S.E., Atlanta 16, Ga.  
 Cammer Iris Gardens, 311 Cottage Ave., Williamsport, Pa.  
 Connecticut Iris Society, 38 Antonio Ave., Meriden, Conn.  
 Crist, Mr. and Mrs. J.A., R. #5, Box 45, Franklin, Ind.  
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#### CONVENTION

Plan now to get acquainted with other Japanese iris fans at the American Iris Society Convention now scheduled for Chicago, June 4 through June 6. See your AIS Bulletin for details.

