



Art in Bloom, SB, Photo: Ted Baker



The Rainbow Goddess

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President's Message and Some Favourite Irises: Summer 2022

Richard Hebda

Our main iris season is passing here on south Vancouver Island. My Siberians are mostly done and a few Tall bearded varieties notably "Stairway to Heaven" are still blooming at the end of June. This variety has produced flowers for nearly four weeks and tons of them.

We had our in-person Annual General Meeting at the Horticultural Centre of the Pacific after two years of zooming on June 5. The group was small but people were very pleased with the get-together enjoying a presentation from BCIS Director Penny Santosham about the history and irises of the Summerland Ornamental Gardens and images of



A small patch of "Stairway to Heaven" in Richard Hebda's driveway bed. Photo - June 8, 2022.

some of my iris favourites. There were a few potted irises and huge bouquets of Tall Bearded and Siberian irises on display, and everyone walked away with a door prize. We enjoyed a pleasant tour of the BCIS display beds, noting the extensive leaf spot damage on our SDBs and IBs. Several of the TBs and especially the Siberians put on a great show. We also looked at some irises in other groups' display beds.



AGM attendees looking at the Horticulture of the Pacific display beds, June 5, 2022. Photo - Richard Hebda.

In this issue of the Rainbow Goddess, there is a wide range of material to read and look at. We have two new contributors too. Dorothy Buckle a new member describes and illustrates some of the irises in her garden. John Veillette, a long-time member, raises questions about the identification of a historic iris in a previous issue of Rainbow Goddess. In a separate contribution, he shares pictures with notes about some of the irises in his garden. Ted Baker and Bill Dumont share their experiences from garden tours on Saltspring and Denman Islands. Malcolm Ho You writes about peonies. I dive into the question of native irises in BC and their relationship to our BCIS logo. We bid a sad farewell to a long-time BCIS member Sandy Gibb who worked tirelessly to promote iris gardening and maintain the beds at Government House.

And now for a couple more of my choices and both are hot!

I like white irises with style and Hot Flash has that. The bright orange beard gives this Tall bearded iris punch! I have grown it for several years. At first, it struggled a bit in a cedar box planter with a couple of other varieties. After about three years I noticed that the other varieties

had dwindled so I planted the rhizomes into my driveway bed. It turned out that all that had survived in the box was Hot Flash and the plants in the bed prospered and bloomed. This slow iris year, Hot Flash was there from the start in several clumps, clean and showy and strong, blooming for 3-4 weeks.

Hot Flash was bred by Loleta Powell of Powell's Gardens and registered in 1988. It was noted to have an extended blooming season even then. Although described as growing to 97cm (38") tall my plants tend



Strong growing and early-blooming Tall Bearded iris "Hot Flash". Photo - Richard Hebda, June 8, 2022, Saanich, BC.

to reach about 80cm (32") generally shorter than many typical TBs. I could not find any awards for Hot Flash but as far as I am concerned, it grows strongly, increases well and just keeps on blooming. I recommend it for the easy-care iris garden.



Hot Fudge is an Intermediate Bearded Iris (IB) bred by Ben Hager and registered in 1982. It blooms midseason as

"Hot Fudge" Intermediate Bearded Iris. Photo - Richard Hebda, May 25, 2022, Saanich, BC.

the earliest TBs begin. I like its striking colour pattern and in particular the lilac-tipped beards. It increases modestly in my garden. Hot Fudge received the AIS Award of Merit in 1988 and the Sass Medal in 1992 for best IB iris. I have included a close-up photo of the inside of the flower showing the style arms. Style arms in combination with the base of the standards often display amazing colours, just as beautiful as the entire flower.



*Inside the bloom of Hot Fudge, Intermediate Bearded iris.
Photo - Richard Hebda, May 25, 2022, Saanich BC.*

Denman Island Home and Garden Tour - June 2022

Article and photos by Bill Dumont, BCIS Secretary/Treasurer



This unique and inspiring Tour has long been considered one of BC's top horticultural events. Every two years this tranquil island throws open its garden gates, inviting the public for a rare up-close look at the creativity, skill and passion Denman residents pour into their homes. This year's tour featured 13 properties ranging from the relatively new Corlan vineyard to the funky Des and Sandy Kennedy garden and an interesting organic commercial farm along with many residential gardens and properties spread throughout this small island.

The tour is sponsored by the

Denman Conservancy Association, a Registered Charity which, with the support of these Tours, has protected over 325 hectares (800 acres) of Denman Island and now more than 25% of the island is in protected

status. The island is just 10 minutes by cable ferry from Buckley Bay on Vancouver Island, south of Courtenay and 5100 hectares in size (about 20 square miles) with about 1200 inhabitants.

Brenda Burch and I arrived for the 9 am ferry after a two-hour drive from Cobble Hill. Our first stop on Denman was the Community Hall to pick up our Passport Tickets purchased online.

We had previously visited Des Kennedy's home about 15 years ago on another tour. It has matured significantly since then



*Brenda Burch and Des Kennedy
in his Denman Island garden.*

with extensive rockwork and well established and deer-protected garden around their whimsical home. Always quirky and trendy, respected gardening author Des and his wife present interesting and enjoyable collages including a dress



made of old cigarette lighters and tea service for 10 on the house hedge. Des has a small collection of irises and many other interesting plants. A small pond and waterfall are central features. The greenhouse, large vegetable

garden and fruit trees provide year-round organic produce - it's a 1970s "back to the land" classic garden and home.



Denman is a Gulf Island also having water problems with climate change. Many homes appear to collect rainwater to supplement whatever they can pump from wells. The other ever-present gardening challenge on Denman is deer and without fencing, nothing is safe from these prolific 4-footed pests. Irises would be an excellent species for this drought-stricken island and its dry sites.



The McMillan/Boucher home on Keith Wagner Way in central Denman has an impressive large Victorian-style house overlooking nearby Hornby Island with a palette of deer-resistant, drought tolerant plants intermixed with lavender. Extensive gravel gardens keep down weeding and include an interesting bed of grasses as well as a wide selection of euphorbias, alliums and hellebores and a few nice TB irises.



In operation since 2016, Two Roads Farm is a small-scale family market garden growing mixed vegetables on 2.5 acres of owned and leased land using sustainable

farming practices. The farm includes 6 tunnels chosen thoughtfully based on the Canadian Organic Standard, and education and research in sustainable agriculture and forestry. Sam and Emily market their produce, farm-made goods and canned vegetables on-site and through the only store on the island. They also grow many heritage tomato starters a couple of which were snapped up for my Cobble Hill garden raised beds.



Corlan Vineyard on McFarlane Road was developed by Selwyn Jones, a former owner of a large tree seedling nursery in Black Creek. Since buying this property more





than a decade ago Selwyn and Pat have produced some excellent Gold and Silver medal-winning organic wines. On our tour, they provided a great wine tasting experience that resulted in several wine purchases. Their attractive octagon-shaped home was built with wood milled on the property as were most of their trellises and outbuildings. Selwyn is expanding his farm to produce thornless blackberries for port and other flavoured wines.

At Barb and John Mills' property on Greenhill Road, their developing garden has an accompanying pottery, sculpture studio and complete woodworking shop to go with their handsome West Coast home which they designed and built themselves. In addition to an eclectic garden of veggies, rhodos and fragrant rises they have planted over 50 drought-tolerant trees to maintain habitat for all the critters that live and thrive there including snags to keep the resident woodpeckers happy.



The Susan Tait and Stuart MacRury legacy property on Scott Road was originally purchased and cleared by Susan's parents in 1978. The decorative trees and ornamental shrubs have matured over decades, and the progeny of



this garden's perennials appear on properties across the island. Since 2017 Susan and Stuart have been re-establishing the garden, maintaining family treasures - like the Cornelian Cherry (*Cornus mas*) - while updating it and adapting it to match their own needs and preferences, such as an expanded veggie garden. Some things never change - an abundance of fragrant roses, climbers and perennials continue to frame the meandering pathways through dappled shade, with a view of the Beaufort Mountains in the distance.

It takes more than 100 volunteers to manage this special Garden event - 10% of Denman Island's population! A common local bumper sticker is "Keep Denman weird" and "Make Denman weirder". This is an island worth visiting especially for the bonus to acquire some fresh Fanny Bay oysters at Buckley Bay.



A Saltspring Island Garden Visit

Article and photos by Ted Baker, Past President



Pacific Coast iris. Photo - June 4, 2022.

A few members of the Iris and Peony Group of the Saltspring Island Garden Club toured Pat Spiers' and Ted

Pacific Coast iris. Photo - June 4, 2022.



Barefoot Boy, Siberian. Photo - June 4, 2022.



Pacific Coast iris. Photo - June 4, 2022.

Baker's gardens on June 3rd. Because of the cool spring, some bloom was a bit late but there was still a good show.

At Pat's place, her Pacific Coast irises [PCIs] were stunning with masses of bloom in raised beds and scattered throughout her garden. The colours and form varied widely to add to the beauty and interest. Most of the irises were planted from seeds collected by Ray, Pat's late husband. Ray had started hybridizing and was



Juniper Leigh, Siberian. Photo - June 4, 2022.



All Gothed Up, Siberian. Photo - June 4, 2022.

producing some interesting cultivars. Pat has continued to look after the collection and has supplied PCIs to many gardens including Government House and also to our plant sale.

At Ted's place, we saw a wide collection of bearded and non-bearded irises. Because of the wet, cool weather leaf spot was evident on the bearded irises,

especially the smaller, dense plants of the Standard Dwarf Bearded type. There were buds on the Japanese and Spuria irises which should be in bloom in a couple of weeks. However, there was a good showing of all types of bearded irises including Intermediate Bearded, Tall Bearded, and Beardless irises including Siberians and Species crosses. We discussed transplanting, deadheading and the general care of various types of irises.

Graptizer, Tall Bearded. Photo - May 28, 2022.



Grecian Skies, Tall Bearded. Photo - May 28, 2022.

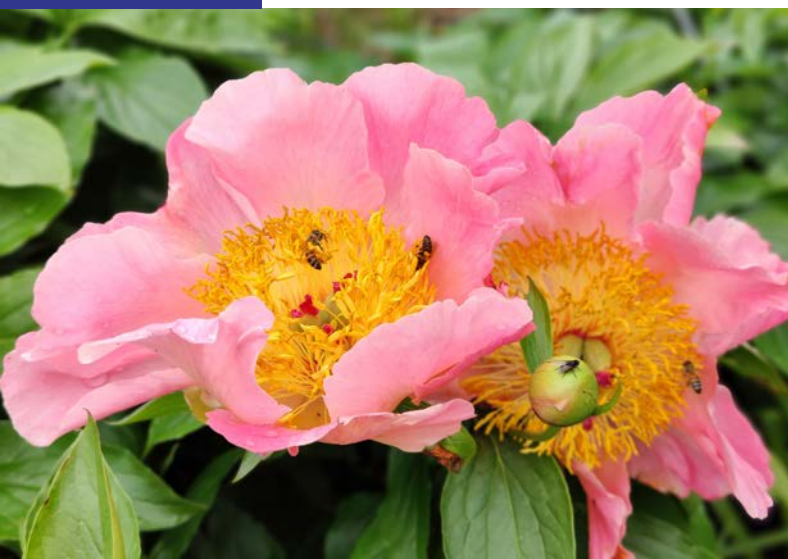




Honey Chic, Siberian. Photo - June 4, 2022.

While the peonies were just opening the ones in bloom included Sugar n' Spice, a lovely large, single pink with a central cluster of bright yellow stamens; the stunning Red Charm, a perfect red bomb type which is the most popular peony of all time; the elegant and unique Pastelegance which is a soft cream champagne colour on strong stems, and First Arrival, an Itoh or Intersectional with a mass of soft lavender-pink, semi-double blooms. We discussed peony types, the main ones being Herbaceous, Tree and Itoh. The

Sugar n' Spice.



Red Charm.

Itoh is a cross between the Herbaceous and Tree and are wonderful plants in that they do not need to be staked, have lovely cut leaves and are disease resistant. You cut them back each fall as with the Herbaceous type. Peonies are transplanted in late September in our climate.

(Reprinted from the June 2022 Grapevine – A Newsletter of the Saltspring Island Garden Club)

Pastelegance.



Saanichton Garden Highlights Irises

Dorothy Buckle, new BCIS member

One of our newest members, Dorothy Buckle, has shared her passion and garden in Saanichton for this issue of the Rainbow Goddess.

This is an Iris called "Silver Edge". It was given to me last year by a neighbour of mine who always likes to get his hands on plants that you won't find in most gardens.



Silver Edge, Siberian Iris. Photo - Dorothy Buckle, 2022.

Newbie is the word that comes to mind when I think of myself in regards to gardening, but over the last few years, I have developed another addiction. Tagging along with friend and master gardener Joanna Drewry, and attending all the meetings of various clubs have gotten me hooked. I have thoroughly enjoyed the many people I have met and it helps to have so many brains to pick. A number of my siblings were great gardeners so maybe in the long run



I have come by it honestly. Recently I heard Richard Hebda speak at the Victoria Lily Club and thoroughly enjoyed it.



It all started in 2013 when I asked Joanna what I could do to fix the existing landscape of my front yard. It had absolutely no curb appeal, but I was at a loss as to how to fix it. She told me what it needed. Since then, I have re-edged it 3 times enlarging it each time and making my husband very nervous. I have never really considered myself a gardener, but not being afraid of a little grunt work, this is the result.

I never even knew that the colour of an Iris generally determined its name; I just thought an Iris was an Iris and one would ask for a certain colour. Along with the Bearded, I have several Siberian Irises that are royal blue and white with yellow centers. There are peonies, lilies, some grasses, and Leucojum, to name a few in my Saanichton Garden.



BC Iris Society's Logo and British Columbia's Native Irises

Richard Hebda, President BC Iris Society

Recently we reviewed some new logo versions for the BC Iris Society. My foggy recollection was that the original iris image was based on a BC native iris species, so I went on a virtual botanical adventure to learn more about what our native wild species is or are.

At first, I thought we have only one possible native species, western blue iris (*Iris missouriensis*); it is exceedingly rare in the province. There are several other irises you can find but they are invaders and one of them the yellow flag (*Iris pseudacorus*) is a real ecological problem to be avoided and eradicated.

Western blue iris (Iris missouriensis), light coloured variant. Note the erect standards. Photo - Ken Marr, near Boulder, Colorado.



Let's return to the western blue iris also known as Rocky Mountain iris. It grows as a perennial herb from thick rhizomes to a height of 20-50 cm (8-20"). It has narrow pointed grass-like leaves with pointed tips. The flower stem is usually

unbranched. One to four showy flowers occur on thick 4-6cm (1.5-2.5")-long stalks.

The flowers are beardless but otherwise have the familiar iris form of tall erect standards and somewhat droopy falls. Overall, the flowers appear light to deep blue. Standards are erect, narrow and purplish-blue. The wider falls are strongly marked with purplish blue lines and a yellow flash at the centre. The style arms are prominent and also purplish-blue. Bracts vary from green to reddish and are not papery at bloom time.

Royal BC Museum herbarium specimen of Iris missouriensis collected in 1959 southeast of Smithers BC. This specimen is not included in the Electronic Atlas of the Flora of British Columbia's map for the species. Note the thick rhizome and relatively large flower. Scanned by Heidi Guest, Royal BC Museum.



At this time there are only four mapped sites of Western Blue iris in BC according to the Electronic Atlas of the Flora of British Columbia (E-flora BC). Two are in the extreme northwest and I wondered whether they were correctly identified. The other two sites are in the southern interior near the US border and the Rocky Mountain Trench north of Cranbrook. These few sites make Western Blue Iris one of our rarest plants. There is or was also the site near Smithers illustrated by the herbarium specimen at the Royal BC Museum. Such a dispersed pattern is difficult to explain biologically. The Illustrated Flora of BC suggests that the species has been introduced as proposed in a short scientific note by B.de Vries in the Canadian Field Naturalist in 1966. If all the populations of this iris were introduced, then we may not have any native species in the province. Outside of the province, western blue iris occurs widely in the western United States including just across the international border in Washington State. This distribution suggests to me our two southern BC localities are natural range extensions from the adjacent US.

This iris is highly suitable for gardens based on some sources, best grown in open sites varying from wet to dry and on the slightly acid side. Suitable sites include beds and borders and against foundation walls. Propagation is by root divisions in late summer to fall.

And now onto our old logo; it was apparently based on the bristle-pointed iris or beach-head iris (*Iris*



Bristle-pointed iris (Iris setosa) clump growing with common horsetail in a moist site on the Haines Highway in Alaska just south of northwest BC's border. Photo - Ken Marr.

Bristle-pointed iris (Iris setosa) flower. Note the near absence of standards which are reduced to tiny structures between the style arms. Photo - Ken Marr.



setosa) according to Ted Baker, our past president. This is the iris I would expect to find growing wild in BC, yet the current version of E-flora BC does not include it. This beardless species looks generally similar to the western blue iris. It grows in dense clumps and its stalks reach anywhere from 15-90cm (6-30"). The leaves are narrow, purplish at the base and ribbed. Flowers are large up to 8cm (3") across and dark blue-violet to reddish purple. Their structure differs clearly from what we expect in a bearded iris flower because there are no obvious standards. They are instead narrow and short being buried amongst the bases of the falls. As implied by one of the common names, they end in short bristles. The colourful style arms are prominent. The falls droop, their widest part marked in dark veins. The lower half is strongly lined in purplish veins on a white to pale yellow background.

The bristle-pointed iris is the hardiest of all irises growing into arctic regions from northwest North America westward into eastern



Brightly coloured version of bristle-pointed iris (Iris setosa) from Kamchatka Peninsula. Photo - Denis Anisimov, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=57593826>

Siberia and as far south as Japan. It is widespread in Alaska as far south as the panhandle. And according to the Flora of North America, which I consider the current authority, it grows in BC just in the northwest corner of the province. On this basis, *Iris setosa* is also a native BC iris.

I have seen this iris for sale in garden centres and it has received an Award of Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. It is very hardy and suited to sunny to partially shaded sites, moderate to wet, and neutral to slightly acid soils.

My native iris adventures lead me to conclude that we likely have two native iris species, each extremely rare. You may never see them in the wild in our province, but both are certainly suitable for your garden.

Many thanks to Ken Marr, Royal BC Museum for colour images and help with the article and to Heidi Guest for the scan of the herbarium specimen.

Peonies and Iris are Malcolm's Favourites

A long-time BCIS member and director, Malcolm Ho You lives in Saltair and has an impressive working garden that grows peonies and irises for show and sale. Malcolm has been growing, grafting and dividing peonies for over 50 years as a hobby. Here are some of his beautiful peonies in full flower this year.

Walter Mains. Photo - Malcolm Ho You



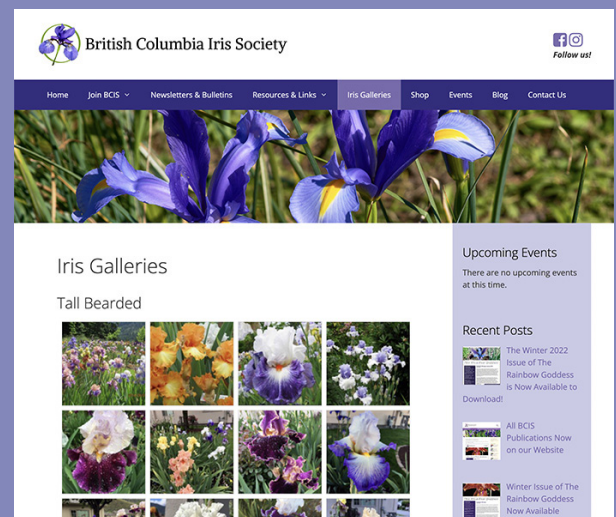
Raspberry Charm. Photo - Malcolm Ho You

Hawaiian Coral. Photo - Malcolm Ho You



BCIS Website Photo Gallery – Worth a Visit

We are building a nice collection of iris pictures on our BC Iris Society website for everyone to enjoy at <https://www.bcirissociety.com/iris-galleries/>. These images have been provided by a few of our dedicated members and we welcome your own contributions to the photo gallery with the names of your favourites. If you see a labelling error and know the correct name, please let Bill Dumont know at wedumont@hotmail.com. You can also send him your suggestions and contributions for the gallery.



Will the Real Crimson King Please Stand Up!

John Veillette, long-time BCIS member from Victoria

Looking through the past issues of the Rainbow Goddess, I noticed on page 4 of the Summer 2020 edition the discussion of the Crystal Court Motel (Victoria) iris. Not Crimson King I think. In my opinion, the illustration is of plain species *Iris germanica**. In my garden, it is the first of the larger irises to bloom. Patches of it grow all over Victoria. The colour of the image in the newsletter may be slightly off. *Iris germanica* is more purple than burgundy. I have seen it in Europe at the Trafalgar cemetery in Gibraltar and also at the Alcazar garden in Granada Spain.

In my garden Crimson King is not early, it is blooming now on the 16th of June. The falls of my Crimson King are not floppy as they are in *Iris germanica*. *Iris germanica* has been in gardens since



John Veillette's Crimson King from an old garden in Savona, BC. Photo - John Veillette.

Richard Hebda's Crimson King from Victoria's Crystal Court Motel. Note how floppy it is. Photo - Richard Hebda.



about 1600 AD so it is widely distributed, not so much for Crimson King, though I did see it during an American Iris Society tour in Dallas, Texas. My Crimson King came from an old garden in Savona, BC, where I grew up and where I took the photograph used to illustrate this note. Mike Unser of the Historic Iris Preservation Society identified my Crimson King.

*Note from Richard Hebda: **Iris germanica* is widely used as a botanical name for tall bearded irises. In this case, John uses it for the "wild" form of it from Europe.

The Crystal Court Iris was identified as Crimson King by another Historic Iris Preservation Society expert, Phil Edinger. The irises are clearly different as John has described, so who really is the Crimson King?

John Veillette's Irises

BCIS member John Veillette has grown historic irises for decades in Victoria. Here he shares some of his beauties with notes. All the photographs are by John.

Originally classified as a Tall Bearded (TB) Iris "Edina" was introduced by Lemon in 1840 and now would fall into the Miniature Tall Bearded MTB category. John got his plant through the Historical Iris Preservation Society (HIPS).



Iris pumila from Savona cemetery in the southern interior of BC. The plants came originally from Deadman's Creek cemetery and now grow in Savona



Cemetery. This species of iris grows low and blooms very early in the spring after which the leaves die down completely. It is thought to have been introduced to BC by French missionaries. This form of *Iris pumila* also grows in Alberta.

Savona cemetery, the source of John Veillette's tiny *Iris pumila*.



Iris versicolor (northern blue flag) collected from Georgian Bay, Ontario.



Look for more of John Veillette's irises in the next issue of the Rainbow Goddess.

Northern Garden Irises: Request for information

Richard Hebda, President BC Iris Society



Large Siberian Iris clump, Saanich Peninsula. Photo - Richard Hebda, June 17, 2022.

Several species of iris are very hardy. For example, Siberians will apparently grow in north central BC and in parts of the Peace Region (plant hardiness zone 3). *Iris setosa* known as beach-head or bristle-pointed iris grows widely in cold parts of Alaska, Yukon and even in northwest BC in hardiness zone 0 as I describe in my article in this issue on BC native irises. *Iris versicolor* (northern blue flag) and its varieties should also be hardy in parts of the north and into the Yukon.

"Miss Apple" modern Siberian Iris, "Lucy Locket" in background, Saanich Peninsula. Photo - Richard Hebda, June 17, 2022.



The BC Iris Society is compiling articles from our newsletters and bulletins and writing new material for a handbook on growing irises in our province. We aim to have this first-ever authoritative resource available for early June 2025 when we will be hosting the American Iris Society Region 13 convention in Victoria.



"Cape Cod Boys" modern Siberian Iris, Saanich Peninsula. Photo - Richard Hebda, June 17, 2022.

Much of the experience of BCIS members is on the coast and in the southern interior. We, however, want to include information on growing irises in central and northern BC. I am sure there are folks growing some sort of iris around Prince George, in the southern Peace Region and nearby Alberta. If you have grown or know someone who has grown irises in the colder parts of BC, we would love to hear from you and learn how you do it. Our plan is to compile the information into a chapter that explores growing northern irises: what kinds, where and what sites, and what techniques. Illustrations

would be much appreciated too. All the information you provide would be attributed to the folks who provided it. Our goal is to encourage iris growing all over BC and share key information on how to do it.

Anyone with experience or information please contact me, Richard Hebda at hebda@shaw.ca. Please send any information you wish to share. Maybe you already know of articles or notes about northern irises. I may ask to call you and talk about your experiences before I start compiling your knowledge and writing our book chapter on northern irises.

I look forward to your valuable knowledge, and if you are so inclined, please share this request with friends outside of our membership.

"Happenstance" modern Tall Bearded Iris, Saanich Peninsula. Photo - Richard Hebda, June 17, 2022.



BCIS Executive 2022-2023

Position	Name	Email/Contact
President	Richard Hebda	hebda@shaw.ca
Secretary/Treasurer Newsletter	Bill Dumont	wedumont@hotmail.com
Past President	Ted Baker	tedebaker41@gmail.com
Membership	Diane Whitehead	ldiane.whitehead@gmail.com
Director	Malcolm Ho You	ho-you@telus.net
Director	Richard Cypher	cypher.rl@gmail.com
Director	Penny Santosham	pennysantosham@gmail.com
Director	Darlene Li	darleneli@shaw.ca

Presenting the BC Iris Society's new logo!

Thanks to the good work of **Blue Pixel Design**, we now have a new and updated logo we can be proud to present to the world! You'll start seeing it soon in the Rainbow Goddess, on our Facebook page, on our website, and hopefully even on swag like shirts and totes!

Look for the announcement on our Facebook page and let us know what you think!



British Columbia Iris Society

BC Iris Society Financial Statements

January 1 to December 31, 2021

Unaudited

Total Deposits – ISCU – January 1, 2021 **17831.68**

REGULAR CHEQUING **Opening Balance 2530.73**

Expenditures

Postage	8.87	
Membership Friends of Govt House	50.00	
SOG Expenses	81.17	
BC Council Garden Clubs Insurance/Fees	147.88	
Website (2 years hosting & updates)	240.11	
BC Filing Fees	40.00	
Rainbow Goddess Newsletter	991.12	
Teleconference	68.40	
HCP Garden Supplies	39.76	
Scanning Old Publications	420.00	
Group Purchase Expenses	684.76	2934.43

Revenue

Memberships	1646.37	
Group Iris Purchase	684.76	2331.13

Closing Balance 1927.43

BUSINESS ACCOUNT **Balance 45.00**

TERM DEPOSIT **No. 4 - April 2022 - 1.8%** **15524.86**

MEMBERSHIP SHARES **5.72**

Total Deposits – ISCU – December 31, 2021 **17503.01**

W. Dumont, Treasurer, 250-743-9882

Vancouver Island Iris Breeder's Awards Return Home

Richard J. Hebda and Bill Dumont



In the Winter 2019 issue of the Rainbow Goddess, the late Ian Efford described the contributions of Duncan resident, E. W. Neel, to Iris breeding in the 1930s. He had a beautiful iris garden and nursery in Glenora on Miller Road just outside of the town during the interval

between the two world wars. Tall Bearded iris, *Shah Jehan*, was his most widely distributed variety and remains a popular historic iris today. There is even a Neel Road off of Riverside Road in Cowichan Station.

Ian's article led to a remarkable connection. We received an inquiry from Myrtle Neel of Montreal who had discovered Ian's article through an internet search. Myrtle Neel was born in England and is the daughter

of Laurence William Neel, E. W. Neel's eldest child who grew up on Vancouver Island but emigrated to England in 1934. Her mother

E.W. Neel of Duncan, BC, hybridizer of TB iris Shah Jehan, date of photo unknown. Copy generously provided by Myrtle Neel, his granddaughter.



was Winnifred Murrell, daughter of Percy Murrell who founded the famed British Orpington Nursery. They were major iris growers and sellers and Olive Murrell, Percy's second wife was a renowned iris breeder. We will have more to say about the Orpington-Vancouver Island connection in a future article in the Rainbow Goddess.



Myrtle was sorting through some of her parents' papers and found amazing material relating to *Shah Jehan* and a poppy. These included original award certificates and a medal from the UK Royal Horticultural Society!

Thanks to Myrtle's incredible generosity, these certificates have been sent to the BC Iris Society and we have donated them to Cowichan Valley Museum Archives in downtown Duncan where they will eventually be displayed as part of Duncan history.

Myrtle Neel has told us other fascinating facts about her family and her grandfather and this important part of BC Iris history and we will be sharing her recollections and knowledge.



Sandy Gibb: Farewell to an Iris Friend

Ted Baker, Past President

Long-time BCIS member Sandy Gibb passed away earlier this year. Sandy did not want a fuss made about her, but our members felt strongly that we should acknowledge her contribution to BCIS and the promotion of irises in general.

Sandy loved irises and Tall Bearded were her favourites; she was particularly fond of the blue ones. Over the years she collected and maintained a beautiful collection at Government House for the enjoyment of many. She spent countless hours removing every weed from amongst the vigorous clumps. Carol Dancer, another Government House volunteer, told

me a few years ago that the iris garden while in bloom drew more visitors and was more popular than the rose garden. By doing this Sandy promoted irises to the general public in a significant way. When asked where people could see a great iris display in Victoria, we would send them to Government House.

In 2011, BCIS hosted the American Iris Society National Convention, but preparation started long before then. We had four Host Gardens, with Hatley



Park in Colwood being the largest. Beardless guest irises were sent to our convention organizers for growing to display size, three years in advance for beardless varieties and two years before for bearded. Once established, the clumps

of these brand new varieties could be observed and judged by attendees. It was a lot of work to maintain the beds and Sandy took responsibility for keeping the extensive plantings in Hatley Park in good shape. This meant she was there every week weeding and deadheading in season. Her work was heroic, and I don't know what we would have done without her dedicated contribution to maintaining those irises.

Even last fall Sandy participated in our fall clean-up and plantings at the iris display garden at the Horticultural Center of the Pacific. She did not just talk the talk, but she definitely walked the walk.

Thank you, Sandy. You are missed.



Ted Baker and Sandy Gibb after weeding and cleaning up the Horticulture Centre of the Pacific BCIS display beds in November 2021. Photo - Richard Hebda.

AIS Region 13 2025 Convention: Request for Beardless Guest Irises



Red Warlord, Spuria. Photo - Bob Pries, AIS Iris Encyclopedia.

The British Columbia Iris Society will be holding the Region 13 Spring Convention and Garden Tour in early June 2025 on southern Vancouver Island. We are requesting guest plants of Siberian irises, mid-season Species, mid-season Interspecies, and

other mid-season beardless irises. These may be either rhizomes of recent (2017 to present) introductions or seedlings under consideration for introduction.

Please observe the following guidelines when sending guest plants as only officially submitted rhizomes will appear in the Convention booklet. Up to 3 rhizomes of each variety will be accepted from September 12, 2022, to September 21, 2022. The name of the variety or seedling number should be clearly marked on each plant. Please include a separate packing list with your plants. The packing list should include the following information: 1) Hybridizer's name and address, 2) Variety name or seedling number, 3) Class of iris, 4) Height, colour, a photo is helpful, 5) Year of introduction, if applicable and 6) Quantity.

For Canadian hybridizers, please ship to Richard Hebda, 90 Durrance Rd, Victoria, British Columbia V9E 2G5 Canada. Email hebda@shaw.ca in advance, please.

For U.S. hybridizers, please ship to Aitken's Salmon Creek Garden, 608 NW 119th St, Vancouver, WA 98685. Attention Barbara Aitken. Phone 1 360-573-4472. To notify Barbara or to ask questions please email aitken@flowerfantasy.net.

Expect to be contacted in early 2025 to determine: 1) if any of the seedlings have been named and introduced in the intervening 2 and ½ years and 2) what disposition method you want the club to use. The choices are usually for seedlings to be returned (at the hybridizer's expense) or destroyed. Named varieties are typically given out one to each guest garden owner and the rest are used for a Region 13 "re-distribution". You need to instruct the Convention Committee in a timely fashion in early 2025 if you want all or some of your named varieties returned to you; again at your expense.

The Convention Committee and the owners of the individual host gardens will strictly adhere to the Code of Ethics as contained in the AIS Convention Handbook. The Convention Committee and garden owners will not be responsible for losses beyond their control.

Rays of Twilight, Spuria. Photo - Jean Claude Jacob, AIS Iris Encyclopedia

Are you following us on Facebook?

We add news about plant sales, garden tours, special iris talks, etc., plus photos and information about irises to our page, so be sure to like us at:

 [britishcolumbiairissociety](https://www.facebook.com/britishcolumbiairissociety)

Be sure to check out our website as well where you'll find upcoming events, newsletters, and our photo gallery full of beautiful iris photos:

bcirisociety.com



*This newsletter was produced by Bill Dumont with graphic design by Raielene Langdon of **Blue Pixel Design**. Thanks to all who contributed articles, photos and other information. Please send contributions for our next 2023 newsletter by December 15 to wedumont@hotmail.com.*