

Gardens Committee Report, Fall 2018

Progress

There was little progress made this year due to various personal factors. Yet one interesting document was revealed. John Wisters History of AIS the First 15 Years. It can be viewed under AIS Publications in the online library or type in

<http://wiki.irises.org/Hist/Info1935TheFirst15YearsOfAIS>

This history has a special report on Test Gardens And Display Gardens. It shows the amazing progress that was made even within the first year of formation of the society. It tells of the difficulties and the successes. I am sure any student of history would say Display Gardens and Test Gardens were well worth the effort because they gave much of the data used by our sections today, especially HIPS, The Louisiana Iris and Japanese Sections. So much was accomplished with cooperation of several botanical gardens, and only 800 to 1200 members in AIS.

The Challenge:

We have lost most of what was established in the first 15 years of AIS but there are still Display gardens of Iris in botanical gardens. AIS has simply turned inward and lost touch with the greater horticultural community. Local clubs have sustained some of these gardens but there has been very little help from the national organization. These are of course admissions of my failings as committee chair. I would recommend my replacement with anyone who could be more dynamic.

Goals:

Wister in 1935 mentioned the goal of having display gardens in every AIS Region and noted they were getting close to meeting that goal. There was a goal of having Test Gardens in all the various climatic regions of the country. These are still viable goals. We have twice the membership as at that time. I do suspect the median age of Iris members has increased. Wister was only 33 years old in 1920.

A few years back Mike Unser, the HIPS webmaster created a listing of all of its display gardens and posted them on its website with descriptions and important information like handicap accessible etc. I had hoped to create a similar area in the Iris Encyclopedia listing ALL Iris displays in the USA and internationally and referenced so that no matter where you were you could find the closest displays. I hope that someone would pursue this goal.

There is only one test garden, The Loomis Garden in Colorado Springs. Reports seem to be issued sporadically. Given the huge amount of information that was collected in the first fifteen years and that has benefited HIPS it is sad to say that we are not creating these records today. Whether in official test gardens or unofficially AIS members could act like citizen scientists and record observations that someone could collate. I feel I have let the society down in not moving it forward on these tasks.

Respectfully submitted Robert Pries