PUBLIC RELATIONS AND MARKETING COMMITTEE REPORT – APRIL 2018

Competition!

For years I have been trying to make the AIS the number one source of Iris information on the Worldwide Web. We have had serious completion but now there is a new iteration of an old player that maybe not only our match but surpass us. But I would like to think we do it better.

"All Things Plants" has changed its name to "The National Gardening Association Plant Database" https://garden.org/plants/ it is the handiwork of Dave from "Dave's Garden". It has an enormous database of Iris and Iris images. While the AIS Encyclopedia still has much more, I was amazed at what I saw. The Iris area seems to be led by Kent Pfeifer, a very early contributor to the wiki who abandoned the wiki for "All Things Plants". I realize it is a lot to read but I would like you to read their opening statements it makes for Irises under "Using this Database".

"Using the Iris Database"
"Many sources for information about Iris varieties are available online. But, once you understand a few aspects to how the search engine works, you will find that the Iris Database here at All Things Plants stands above the crowd.

The first step to unlocking its potential is clicking on "Search by characteristics" on the front page of the Iris Database which takes you to this page: http://garden.org/plants/group...

You will see a list of fields (Cultivar name, Hybridizer, etc.), all of which can be searched, either alone or in combination. There are over 50 fields, but the ones of most interest when searching the Iris Database are the first 19 ("Cultivar name" through "Awards") plus "Parentage", which is at the very end. This section, the "Data specific to Irises," was built from information taken directly (with a couple of exceptions we'll get to later) from the American Iris Society's Checklist, which serves as the International Cultivar Registration Authority for all non-bulbous varieties of Iris. There's an entry in the ATP Iris Database for every iris variety listed on AIS's online Checklist.

This information has always been publicly available, but until Dave worked his magic with the Iris Database, it often wasn't very easy to access. Let's say, for example, you wanted to know which irises were awarded Honorable Mention by AIS in 1990. That information could be found, IF you had access to the Bulletin of the American Iris Society no. 279 from October 1990, but it took a lot of digging to find it (don't ask me how I know lol). Now, with the Iris Database, it's merely a couple of key strokes away. Just go to http://garden.org/plants/group..., check the box next to Honorable Mention in the Awards field, type 1990 in the write box that appears, click Search, and voila! There they are:

http://garden.org/plants/group...

Here's another example. What if you want to see all of the irises Keith Keppel has registered? Search by Keith Keppel in the Hybridizer field and there they all are:

http://garden.org/plants/group...

Keith is famous for producing irises in the plicata pattern, so let's say you just want to see his plicatas. Search by Keith Keppel in the Hybridizer field again, but also check the box for Plicata in the Flower Patterns field and you'll get a list of his irises, but limited to his plicatas:

http://garden.org/plants/group...

What if you just want to see which of Keith's plicatas have won the Award of Merit? Do the same search as above, but also check the box for Award of Merit in the Awards field:

http://garden.org/plants/group...

Maybe you want to see which of Keith's plicatas have won the Award of Merit, but limited to those that have won it since the turn of the century. Do the same search as above, but when you check the Award of Merit box, type 20 in the write box that appears and there they are:

http://garden.org/plants/group...

The possibilities with these types of searches are almost endless!
However, there are a couple of caveats about searching the database.

1. The one piece of information we weren't able to import from the AIS Checklist was the descriptions of the flowers. Consequently, the Bloom Color Description field (along with the Beard Color and Style Arm Color fields, if applicable) had to be filled in manually. As of summer, I'd guess we are about 2/3 done, so searching on those fields may not show everything you'd expect.

2. We added five fields to the Iris Database for information that is not, or at least not consistently, listed in the Checklist. They are the Rebloom by Zone, Flower Form, Bloom Color Classification, Flower Patterns, and the Foliage fields. We added these fields because they make nice search aids, but there is a lot of room for interpretation around some of the included terms. This is particularly true for the Flower Form and Flower Pattern fields. I can't tell you, for example, where the line is between a "ruffled" iris and a "bubble ruffled" iris. But, if you like irises with really ruffled flowers (or the luminata flower pattern, or purple-based foliage, etc.), being able to search for that trait is a nice feature, so long as you understand it can be somewhat subjective.

One last note: You might wonder why there are two fields for the description of flower color, the Bloom Color Description field and the Bloom Color Classification field. The Bloom Color Description field represents the color of an iris flower as the hybridizer described it. We may make some minor edits, such as writing out "standards" and "falls" instead of using the abbreviations "S." and "F." But, for the most part, the information in this field is exactly as the flower was described when it was registered.

Searching this field can be problematic, though. For example, if you search for a yellow iris, but the hybridizer described her flower as "lemon" or one of the many other synonyms for yellow, it won't show up in your search.

That's one of the reasons we added the Bloom Color Classification field. It takes all of the potential colors in the rainbow and condenses them down to 22 classes, which is infinitely easier to search by (although with an obvious loss of precision). To put it simply, you can search for yellow irises by checking the box for Yellow in the Bloom Color Classification field and find all of the yellow irises, including the ones described as lemon, goldenrod, etc.

The other reason for the Bloom Color Classification field is that, prior to 1950, hybridizers rarely described the color of their irises. At the time AIS had a color classification system and hybridizers simply noted the appropriate code (e.g. Y4D was the code for a dark yellow self). So if we wanted to be able to search for pre-1950 irises by color, we were faced with either making up our own descriptions of the flowers (an idea I loathe) or adding the Bloom Color Classification field, which is what we did.

If you love irises, give the Iris Database a look. I think you will be amazed at the information it contains and how easy it is to use."

First, I wish to note that this database has been quickly effective in attracting contributors. Because it covers ALL plants, not just Iris, it has a much larger garden community associated with it. Therefore, we will always be at a disadvantage. Obviously, Dave has been trying to do all that the wiki tries to do. Is the wiki redundant? Does AIS no longer serve as the primary information resource? I believe that in many ways our product is superior to Dave's because of the knowledge of our membership and the willingness of our wiki workers to put in hours of effort each week. But if we are to succeed we need the commitment of the Board and all elements of the Iris Society. We need your ideas on how to make it even better, and your commitment to maintaining our position as the primary information resource.

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History of the Wiki:

<TEN Year Birthday of the Wiki?>

The Iris Encyclopedia began creation in the beginning of August 2009. That was 2 years after it had been approved by the Board of Directors. So August of 2019, will mark the tenth anniversary of when work began. But the idea began actually 2 years earlier. But it was not until I found Catherine Button who suggested the Twiki program and Chris Lindsey who loaded the program that work could actually begin. Catherine trained in the basics of creating pages within the program and how to set up various functions and without her guidance the wiki would not have existed. I often refer to her as the mother of the wiki.

 Although many people understood it as an image reference bank, the title Iris Encyclopedia should have made it clear that I always envisioned it as a comprehensive source of Iris information. It is modeled after Wikipedia and the other wiki known as Dave's Garden. A Wiki is a collaboration program. Without the scores of collaborators it could not exist. It is a tribute to the Iris Society that

this magnificent reference exists and I have hear from members of other plant societies that this Iris reference surpasses what other plant societies have done. But that does not mean the course has been easy and there have been those that tried to limit in various ways the quality of the wiki. But our membership depends on it more and more, and sees this as one of the great contributions of the AIS to the Iris world. After ten years of effort, with the help of many wiki workers, it is worth looking at what we have already achieved and what is yet to be accomplished.

<THE most Comprehensive Source of Iris Information>

The heart of the wiki is a listing of ALL Iris names, each with its, definition or description and hopefully images. We have achieved a near complete list. The major group of names missing is those names which were determined to be obsolete in 1939. But we have been adding many of those names because some have turned out to be currently extant and other simply cause confusion when reading old literature if their existence is not acknowledged and explained.

A major component of each listing is the images. Among some groups we now have images for 60% or more of the Irises. Thanks to our Image Manager, Terry Laurin, thousands of images are added each year and that is supplemented by scores of members who also add images. The prospect of images with registrations should increase the percentage significantly and we look forward to Neil Houghton's help.

<Not just a Checklist>

The Encyclopedia is more than just a checklist. It takes a number of topics and builds collages of information around a certain topic, for example: Biographies of hybridizers, Lists of awards, or Compilations of history for different time periods. All these are tied back to the various cultivar pages of the checklist. In many cases these topics are also linked to references in the online library which is another elemental heart of the Encyclopedia. Although roughly 68,000 pages of the Encyclopedia represent the checklist, roughly 2,300 pages represent references in the Library. Of these we now have 1,550 catalogs. I estimate that to cover all available literature for the library it would amount to 10,000 more accessions.

The catalogs are used to fortify the information about each cultivar. Quotes from several catalogs often appear under the heading "References" on each cultivar page giving several opinions as to how an iris looks. This collection of additional information is a huge task but certainly enhances early registrations that may have only provided a color code.

<Image Galleries, a visual essay>

By collecting images of a certain group of Irises we are creating visual essays from which the reader can make comparisons. The latest has been galleries of images of MTBs by year which shows the progress and diversity of those irises over the last century. Much like galleries of Award winners, they show progress in a discriminated way. But galleries could also be created for the work of a hybridizer, or for irises of a certain color.

<Identification—A Holy Grail>

By assembling a gallery of images for a class of iris, of a certain time period and a certain color it is possible to demonstrate the potential identification of an unknown Iris. Identification is a goal that

many people coming to the wiki seek. Whether this is truly possible is open to question. But perhaps with additional information some irises may be identified. Cultivar identification may be impossible for all but the most distinctive cultivars, but species identification should be an important tool.

<Genealogy>

Perhaps the last front to be addressed in the wiki is genealogy. It is possible to click on the cultivars listed in the parentage and move backward generation by generation. But seeing the ancestry, or for that matter the progeny, of a cultivar is still being worked out. The American Daffodil Society has a great way of displaying a genealogy and showing images of the parents. See "Daffseek" and the cultivar 'King Alfred' http://daffseek.org/detail-page/?cultivar=King%20Alfred&lastpage=1&which=hist2&lang=en-US If some programmer out there could help us develop something similar we could use your help. Two other wiki workers not already mentioned are Betsy Higgins, John Black, and Wayne Messer. Together with Terry Laurin and myself the 5 of us probably account for 90% of all work done on the wiki in recent years. But that should not diminish the contributions of others who we have helped add to the wiki.

<In Conclusion>

In conclusion how should we celebrate our 10th Anniversary? Does the board approve of the decade we have spent creating the wiki? Where would the board like to see us go next? How would the board like to participate?

The American Iris Society   News & Notes - Spring 2018

The AIS monthly electronic newsletter **News & Notes** has continued to be published on a monthly basis with Special Editions announcing the AIS Medal Awards. The latter continues to be the most popular issue; both in the number of members who read it and in the number who follow links for further information.

Our statistics continue to do well compared to the averages Constant Contacts reports. For example, the most recent issue currently has a 42% open rate and a 28% click-through rate. Some of the most popular links since the Fall Board Meeting report are: 2016 New Registrations (the only topic to be more popular than the corresponding standard jigsaw), Show Calendar by Date (twice), World of Irises - New Color Combinations in Plicatas, MTB Gallery by Year, 2018 Convention, Cafe Press AIS Items, and A Tale of White Iris (Presby newsletter item about Mike Lockatell identifying their white iris).

Topic selection is an area I would appreciate some feedback on. What do you think about the topic choices?

We have prepared a slide about News & Notes that can be included in presentations. That slide, in various formats, can be found on this page.

http://wiki.irises.org/bin/view/Main/InfoNewsNotes

Again, **please let us know when you have topics that should be included and what else you would like to see in News & Notes**.

Wayne Messer, News & Notes Editor