

NATIONAL COLLECTIONS 2019

In 2019 NC continued to focus on building MDB & MTB Core Class Collections, Legacy Collections dedicated to the introductions of Ben Hager, The Willotts, Bee Warburton and Bennett & Evelyn Jones. Assistance was lent to The President James Madison Estate at Montpelier in Orange, VA to build historic beardless and Siberian collections (also assisting with an historic daylily collection). NC also facilitated the further assembly of two SDB collections that show promise of becoming National Collections (both host some 600 varieties) and contributed to JI and Siberian Collections that will likely become National Collections.

NC is also apprised of a McEwen Collection being assembled in Maine that is a candidate for the program.

Just recently NC & DIS rescued a note worthy collection of MDB & SDB with many rare varieties that are being distributed to numerous collections.

It is increasingly clear that the general lack of interest in iris conservancy among executive bodies of the various iris societies and their narrowly defined mission statements are serious challenges to preserving the classes of iris to which those societies are dedicated. The AIS is well positioned to address this concern if it's own BOD can utilize it's bully pulpit to press the issue with associated societies. Ideally every iris society should be overseeing the preservation of it's respective class and AIS NC could certify collections. DIS is taking steps to initiate a conservancy program and engage it's membership and Display Garden hosts in said mission.

It is unrealistic to rely on NC (which is a one man show), HIPS Hybridizer Program or the army of backyard gardeners in the Guardian Gardens Program to assemble and sustain all of the cultivars of the various classes. These programs with limited volunteer advocates face challenging administrative circumstances as collections grow and the significance of multi iris society engagement is evident.

If one considers that most of the best iris that will ever be bred may already have been bred the merit of preservation becomes clear.

Lastly, the near dissolution of DIS in 2018 should have been a red flag for all iris societies. Iris conservancy is inseparable, at this moment, from iris societies. Declining memberships in numerous societies, due mostly to an aging membership but also due to absence of a mission (like preservation.... See increased membership at HIPS) to more fully engage members as well as poor quality annual and bi-annual publications (which are little more than a cure for insomnia), lack of vision and leadership and lackluster administration, place iris societies themselves in danger of extinction. AIS would be well advised to consider plans for re-integration of various societies when and if dissolution becomes necessary. This is not a matter to be left until an emergency arises. There are many issues to be addressed in such a scenario. DIS in it's new bylaws attempted to address some of these issues.

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