

Public Relations Committee Report Spring 2008

The committee has the following items on its agenda;

1. Advertising
2. AIS screen rental
3. New Member Packets
4. Toolbox for AIS Website
5. Posters
6. AIS Wiki
7. AIS Coffee table book.

1. **ADVERTISING**; Our Budget for advertising forfeited last fall so that the AIS budget could come close to balancing. I hope that in the future we may restore advertising to a higher priority. The Ad-words Campaign continues and is being paid for by the PR Chairman.

LANDING PADS; The Ad-words advertising continues to run and sends hundreds of people to the AIS website each month. The toolbox occupied our time and we have only just begun to create landing pads. When they are complete we will send out the URL for board approval. Time constraints indicate it will be after the convention that these will go into effect..

SEMI-FREE ADVERTIZING; is being worked out through exchanges of bulletin ads with other societies. So far the International Bulb Society has approved an exchange and it is likely that the North American Rock Garden Society, and the Ivy Society will also. By the time of convention we may also have agreements with the Hosta, Hemerocallis, and Daffodil Societies.

2. **AIS SCREEN RENTALS**. Screen rentals are down slightly. Ernie Henson and Will Plotner continue to provide the AIS screen for those that request it and are willing to pay the shipping back.

3. **NEW MEMBERS PACKET**. Thanks to Ann Violette this work gets done. Postal increases have increased costs by about \$100 from last year. Flyers from various sections are stuffed into the packets as available. Only the Aril Society International and SIGNA are not presently supplying flyers. A large portion of our membership still comes via mail but more and more comes through the internet. We would like to explore saving postage for those digital members who join online and perhaps provide more of the membership packet digitally for those members.

4. **TOOLBOX**

There were several motions made and passed at the fall meeting by this committee. One was to create a Public Exhibits Toolbox for the website by February. I am happy to announce this has been achieved on time and is a resounding success. In the first month the toolbox has been up it has received 5000 hits, the most active single area of the website. I have had many e-mails asking questions and It seems the toolbox has already helped at least one new show-chairman create a new Iris show. Several contributions have been contributed and will be added to the toolbox when it is possible for the

webmaster to get to it. Thanks again to Mile Unser for his work on the HTTP Code. Special thanks to Jean Morris and Rita Gormley for content photos and articles.

5. POSTERS

It was intended that most items would be able to be downloaded from the Toolbox directly. Unfortunately the AIS posters were such large files that it is necessary for clubs to request a disc. Many requests have come in.

The first reports were that posters of this size could cost as much as \$90 apiece to have printed in California. I worked out a deal with the local Office Max to print and laminate posters for \$30 apiece. I may be able to secure this price through convention. Shipping for one poster priority mail is \$7. So far at least 25 posters have been ordered and some requests are for 6 different posters. Additional poster formats have been created and by convention I expect to have nine posters available. See poster page as separate pdf, file. Posters discs will be available in the lobby and clubs may order printed and laminated posters for \$30 each, plus shipping.

I encourage others to create posters for various purposes and offer them on the toolbox. Posters for the AIS tall-bearded forum were created and some extras made for souvenirs for this convention. They are available while they last at \$5 each.

6. AIS Wiki, A working group is being established for the AIS Wiki and persons interested should contact the PR chairman. Issues that need to be discussed are;

- A. The technical support of the Wiki
- B. The format or appearance of the Wiki
- C. The monitoring of the Wiki
- D. Policy on what may be placed on the Wiki.
- E. Barn-raising

Point A: John assures me that our provider offers a wiki with unlimited dimensions. It would be useful to see examples of wikis that have been created using the service providers templates and if any of these could be modified for our uses.

Point B: Creating a wiki that offers appealing graphic design is important. The wiki should not only be pleasing, but easy to use.

Point C.; Even Wiki-pedia which is considered by some as totally unregulated, has some monitoring. Without this it would be possible for porn photos to appear instead of Iris photos. Although they may be taken down as soon as they are reported it would be better to review additions before they are placed in view for everyone. This may reduce some immediacy but should reassure many who would encourage its use.

Point D. Some policies on what information can be placed on the wiki seems vital. If a contributor puts up a cultivar and proceeds to trash it, or the hybridizer, the wiki could easily become a place that hybridizers would avoid and scorn. If were not for past experiences with Iris-L and such I would not be so cynical about the potential for a big positive becoming a big negative. As a general rule I think only positive information should be encouraged. A nationally famous plantsman, Tony Avent, says in his catalogs and lectures, “that until I have killed something five times I never say I can’t grow it”. I agree. Many times I have had an iris die in one location and succeed in another in the same garden. The weak and petty data that is transmitted by negatives should not be part of our wiki and has no scientific or statistical rigor. Besides it is more important to celebrate that which does grow. I would offer this compromise that if something has been in commerce for ten years and is not in the award system, comments can be unregulated. Still I would prefer something like “It demands full sun” rather than saying “It won’t grow in the shade”.

E. After all the conditions, formats and technical problems are solved, the last thing to consider is what is called in Wiki-talk, Barn-raising. A wiki without information in it will not attract contributors. It is therefore necessary to solicit photos for at least a couple of hundred cultivars, so that a couple hundred pages can be created, BEFORE the wiki is opened to the public.

My committee has already begun creating the working groups to complete these tasks. We are not an exclusive group and would welcome anyone who would like to participate and work at a task. As progress occurs the board will be advised and approached for consensus.

COFFEE TABLE BOOK; Progress has started off slow but individuals have been contacted for a working group. Once we arrive at a suggested size we will need to check on overseas publication rates and Terry Aitken as part of our group will check into that. Kelly Norris is excited about working on editing as part of our group and I have two graphic designers that have agreed to work on parts. I am still in need of someone who would towards the end solicit advertising. The plan is to have a publication similar in format to ‘Fine Gardening’ magazine. We will be working closely with Maureen Mark and the Publications Committee. If individuals are interested in participating in this efforts please contact me with ideas on how you would like to contribute.

I apologize for not being able to present this report at the meeting as everyone knows I hope to be in NC shortly and the move has disrupted my normal functioning.