

Public Relations and Marketing Committee

Fall 2010-10-12

There are many areas in which we are moving but the most important are:

- The Iris Encyclopedia
- Electronic Membership

The Iris Encyclopedia is beginning to compete with other sites as the place to get iris information (*See Addendum 'How We Stack Up'). In short this addendum shows that with the placement of the Iris Encyclopedia on the website we now are coming close to the top plant society in traffic, and while the other sites show a normal seasonal decline in traffic, ours is accelerating still. I also have reports back that Google Searches, for particular irises, have now begun directing people to the Iris Encyclopedia.

We still have a long way to go. There are two missions of the wiki.

1. To provide the most comprehensive source of Iris information on the internet
2. To gain support and members for the AIS and all cooperating Iris societies and sections

1. On the first point progress has been good. We have added over 23,000 pages since the beginning of this year, and there are about 20,000 images. Since there are about 80,000 irises, we obviously have far to go. Comparing to Dave's Garden, we now exceed the number of Iris pages on Dave's Garden, but lag far behind on the number of images. If all the people that have promised to work this winter come through, I fully expect we could reach 50,000 pages by next summer with perhaps the same number of images.

Registered wiki users now exceed 200 (180 tallied). Irisarians from over 14 foreign countries, Latvia, Turkey, Israel, Australia, Sweden, New Zealand, etc. are now contributing.

The AIS website has on average about 850 pages viewed each day. The Wiki now has 5,500 viewed each day. The wiki is becoming useful and the number of views is escalating.

The website has begun the development of topic areas. So far Awards is the best example. Every major award is explained with its history and a gallery of pictures of the winners is linked to the cultivar pages. The Dykes Medal gallery is complete and most other medals are fairly far along with a few just beginning construction. Other topics in construction are Color Patterns, Botanical Classification, Culture, etc. If I can get the software, it may be possible in the future to answer three or four questions and have a species identified (Mobot Iris of China Website can do this for Chinese plants and the coordinator is a friend). Another possibility would be the displaying of genealogies of irises with pictures both forward and backward as done on Daffnet. Note that the subtitle for the Daffodil Society's website is "The United States Center for Daffodil Information". Such exclamations show they know what they are about---does the AIS?

2. On the second point, movement is awaiting the electronic memberships. It will be possible to have multiple links promoting electronic membership and print membership. Example: if the coupons to new members program is initiated, a small box

on the main page could read—ABOUT FREE IRIS—with a link that takes one to a page explaining how with a new membership you can get a coupon for free irises. This could then be linked to the membership join page.

In the references for a particular Iris topic one could note that an original reference is available on the electronic members' site. For example, a topic to be developed soon on the wiki is color patterns. This could not only provide wonderful galleries illustrating various color patterns, but could include a reference to the color classification paper by Nelson that could be available to view on the e-members site.

Ongoing agendas for the committee include maintaining communications with compatible plant societies, contacts with public gardens, and communications with garden writers. Our goal is to keep abreast of trends in the larger horticultural and botanical worlds and to relate the Iris Society to what is happening. Advertizing in journals/magazines is currently too expensive, but once our electronic organizational components are running and robust (probably next summer), we should consider advertizing in electronic media, extending links, and using other tools to increase our traffic. Until we have the mechanisms for people to join and buy stuff (shopping cart) and a new members program (Coupons) in place, it would probably be beneficial to wait on this promotion.

Other topics: With increased traffic we need a few more products to sell and I would like to reiterate the **motion** made for bulletin binders. When it was voted on online two directors who were in favor did not register the votes on vote, and it was one vote short of the two thirds majority of the board needed. It was not unanimous but most of the board was in favor. See Addendum 'Online Binder Discussion'

PR is responsible for membership packets and sending *Basic Iris Culture* to new members. Ann Violette does a great job with this. She informs me that she has enough B.I.Cs to last through February or longer if we need the time for a new printing. The present version has become dated, and does not represent the Iris Society as a vibrant organization. Personally, I would rather not send it as the first exposure of who we are until it is in color. Our color flyers look great, this promotional piece should also.

Continued on next page

How We Stack Up

All stats from Web Site Traffic Spy	Alexa Rank	Monthly Users	Monthly Page views
American Iris Society	772,100	1,763	7,757
Daylily Society	740,754	2,148	7,300
Orchid Society	810,418	1,891	6,996
Pacific Bulb Society	984,702	2,934	4,107
Rose Society	1,867,163	1,236	1,978
Int. Bulb Society	1,987,468	1,047	1,780
Hosta Society	11,901,038	107	107
N. Am. Rock Garden Society	2,264,948	896	1,1613
Alpine Garden Society	3,847,162	533	533
Scottish Rock Grdn. Society	531,370	2,308	13,384
Daffodil Society	2,711,761	1,065	1,491
Dave's Garden	14,332	598,256	2,482,761
Garden Web	3,426	4,180,107	7,273,386
Royal Horticultural Society	38,354	146,381	585,561
American Horticultural Soc.	666,250	3,388	7,453
Italian Iris Society	18,280,010	4	31
SIGNA	4,989,283	77	244
Soc. for Jap. Irises	6,112,141	80	198
Aril Soc. Intern.	7,301,440	16	46
Median Society	10,102,341	137	137
Siberian Society	11,992,261	66	92
PCNs	15,902,346	61	61
Tall-bearded Iris Soc.	15,996,850	61	61

Discussion below

The AIS website as of October is doing quite well compared to other organizations. Only The Daylily Society has a better Alexa rating, (lower is better).

It is interesting that Garden Web's site is now replacing Dave's Garden. This could be because it contains not just horticulture but home and building information. It has only 3,799 Iris pages, whereas Dave's Garden has over 18,000. These compare to now 23,000+ on the Iris Encyclopedia. Sadly, some contributors to the Encyclopedia also contribute to DG and now to Garden Web. While it may be a plus to have iris information scattered over the internet, it would be nice to think the Encyclopedia would be the primary love of the contributors.

The monthly views are those of individuals, not web-crawlers, and if you look at the ratio between visitors and views you can reach some tentative conclusions. If the ratio is one to one that is very bad. It means either the site has only one page or viewers going to it left when they saw the opening page. On the other hand if the ratio is high it can mean two things. Either the visitor found it difficult to find what they were looking for, or they so enjoyed what they saw, they continued looking. Other metrics are needed to sort that out. Our ratio is higher than most other sites.

Sadly, it is noted that no matter how great some of the sectional websites are, they have a minimal impact compared to the AIS website. I believe this is because the public does not know enough to search for different classifications of iris. I believe, as has been the case in the past, that the AIS exposes more people to the sections than the sections to AIS.

It is interesting that the traffic is accelerating for AIS. In August, the first month that the Encyclopedia appeared on the website, there were 76,558 pages viewed; in September there were 126,736, and the first part of October shows a rate of 160,000 per month. Historically, the fall shows a continued decline until January. All other plant sites surveyed show fall seasonal declines and ours is the exception.