

Public_Relations_Committee_

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Summary'

1. AIS website sets new records
2. Iris Encyclopedia suffers setback
3. AIS positioned on the Internet for E-membership
 1. Facebook approaches 2,000 friends
 2. New social media manager
 3. Creation of Twitter, and Blog
4. Letter to Hybridizers
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AIS Website Sets New record: According to Website Traffic Spy and Compete.com the AIS website has continued to grow in users over the last year. Traffic is up 36%. While the new design to the website has helped, the Iris Encyclopedia has not been able to realize its full potential due to structural problems that had to be addressed. The overall rank of the site has been dropping lately and will continue until the Encyclopedia issues have been fully reconciled. If we had not encountered these problems I would have expected the website to be more like 75% ahead of last year. Since the Daylily Society is similar in many ways to the Iris Society, I like to use them to compare performance. Last year in April we had one visitor to our website for their 7; this year it is more like 1 visitor compared to 2.5 visitors to theirs. I think it is possible for us to actually pass their performance but they have been much better at adapting to the 21st century than AIS. It is important to note that the AIS plays a role as leader in the Iris community. Web traffic for AIS is usually 50-100 times any commercial Iris Nursery, Iris Section, Cooperating Society, AIS affiliate or other Iris organization. It is to their benefit to work with us in developing Iris interest, and we in turn have a responsibility to help those that work with us.

Iris Encyclopedia suffers setback: The Encyclopedia was making phenomenal progress until January. Suddenly it was discovered that there was a 32,000 file limit that was part of the file system of the host server. The problem is being resolved by breaking the Encyclopedia up into 20 webs, 5 for tall bearded and one for each of the other groups. Searches can still be done across all webs simultaneously, but the person searching must specify "search all public webs". Otherwise, only the web that one is in will be searched. This is the only drawback. When finished, the Encyclopedia should run more quickly and seamlessly. Sadly the only way we have been able to accomplish this restructuring is one cultivar at a time, renaming it to the new web. We are almost finished with all the groups other than TBs, about 17,000 files. Restoring links has also been a major task. This has taken thousands of hours of work, but we expect it to be completely restructured in the next few months.

Special thanks is due to the following people who have been helping move large numbers of pages to new webs; Betsy Higgins, Jan Lauritzen, Adam Coordes, El Hutchinson, Kent Pfeifer, Doug Chyz, and Rodney Barton. Many others have helped also.

The Encyclopedia continues to attract more helpers and we now have 250 registered users adding images. I expect within a year we may be able to have all irises listed. At that point we might celebrate with invitations to Garden Writers, Botanical Gardens, etc. to come visit the most complete Iris reference on the internet. Sadly we still have lots of competition from Dave's Garden and other sites for that mantle, but I believe the AIS should be the premier resource for Iris info and if we keep at it we can earn that position.

AIS positioned on the Internet for E-membership: Now that e-membership is overwhelmingly approved, we are ready to promote it on social media.

- By the time I finish this message the AIS Facebook will have over 2,200 friends. Perhaps less than 200 of those are current AIS Members. It is likely that many of the other 2,000 could join with our encouragement. I thought the agreement was that it was going to be ready to go last October in the form of E-services. Whenever it gets there we will do our part.
- I have hired Andi Rivarola as Social Media Manager at twice my pay. He is worth more than the expense. (\$0.00). He has been doing a fantastic job with Facebook, Twitter, and the AIS blog. I will leave it to him to talk about it.

Letter to Hybridizers: In February 2011 a letter was emailed to 69 nurseries and hybridizers outlining the opportunities AIS is now providing for using social networks to attract more potential customers. We asked for input from those contacted concerning working together on mutually beneficial projects. The concept of a voucher program for new AIS members was mentioned as a possible way to increase exposure for the nursery and hybridizer. Our new Facebook and Twitter manager, Andi Rivarola, was introduced and his help was offered in posting special events or activities on the AIS Facebook page. The response was not as broad as we had hoped, but it was positive, especially concerning the Iris Encyclopedia. We plan to stay in contact with the nurseries and hybridizers, who are so essential to the success of the AIS.

AIS Facebook: The blog currently has over 2,200 members. As Bob pointed out, the majority are not AIS members, which means a great potential for adding new members in the near future. The top countries represented in order of larger amount of members are: United States, Argentina, Italy, Romania, Mexico, Turkey, Canada, Taiwan, Macedonia, Croatia, Greece, Bulgaria, France, Portugal, Georgia, Chile, Australia, New Zealand and Poland. 73% are women. 27% are men. The five largest viewing contributors to our Facebook Page come from: wiki.irises.org, irises.org, theamericanirissociety.blogspot.com, google.com, and sanfernandovalleyirissociety.org. Core participants in the Facebook Page are very involved. Then there are some that come and go. I feel that the Facebook Page has evolved in a very positive way since my involvement starting November 2010.

The AIS Blog, World of Irises: The official AIS Blog started in April. I manage a team of great contributors: Kelly Norris, Anita Moran, Jim Hedgecock, Jim Murrain, Patrick O'Connor, Mike Unser and Renee Fraser. The idea from the beginning has been to have

representatives from the entire iris spectrum, from all corners of the U.S., plus those that relate more to specific iris types, such as Louisiana, Spuria, Tall Bearded, medians and ABs. The postings so far have been inspiring and have received lots of positive feedback. The Blog posting compliments the AIS Facebook Page and Irises, the AIS Bulletin.

The AIS Twitter account: The AIS Twitter account @TweetAIS currently has 164 followers. To say that a large portion of the garden world is tweeting is an understatement. There's so much going on with Twitter, and I'm glad we also have a presence there. Most tweets I do on this account are to bring attention and focus to our Blog and Facebook accounts. It all works very seamlessly.

The Future: If the board continues to make good decisions the potential for AIS is enormous. But opportunities come suddenly and today's world demands we react quickly. Indeed the world moves so fast we need to be proactive.

Facebook recently added a page for Gardening as a topic. It already has 2,000,000 friends. Even if we could only attract 1%, that would give us 20,000 members. Although we have 2,200 friends already, we have had as many as 3,300 viewing our Facebook page on a monthly basis. The Horticultural world has been slow to react to changes in the world. We can congratulate ourselves and Andi because we are one of the leading plant organizations of Facebook. Most Botanical gardens do not have the large following we do on Facebook, but Botanical Gardens who are very successful, like Missouri Botanical gardens, have as many as 36,000+ friends. The Royal Horticultural Society has 4,400+. Each of these is still growing rapidly. As soon as it is possible to join with e-membership I would expect 500-1,000 members and given two years I think we could build that to equal the current 4,000+ print memberships. Note: E-membership would be a real bargain for overseas members and a huge savings on postage for AIS.

The PR committee has added a new member, Eileen Secrest, who is a professional marketer and Iris enthusiast. We have talked about planning for the short term and long term (our hundredth Anniversary). Some possibilities include a National Iris Day, a postage stamp for our Anniversary, and Iris in the White House garden. We have discussed working with local governments and Iris festivals. Eileen promises to add much to our present committee. If there are members with ideas that could help the society, I hope they will contact us, even if they would not consider joining in our work.

Respectively submitted

Bob Pries, Susan Grigg, Andi Rivarola, and Eileen Secrest.

Note Chart that follows

<i>Plant Society</i>	<i>Facebook 3-31-11</i>	<i>Facebook 4-13-11</i>	<i>Website</i>	<i>Rank 3-31-11</i>	<i>Users</i>
AIS	1500	2222	Iris.es.org	685,707	1720
American Horticultural Society	1007	1158	Ahs.org	618,226	4,200
American Rose Society	1314	1453	Ars.org	1,420,489	1383
American Peony Society	95	117	AmericanPeonySociety.org	3,170,756	436
American Daffodil Society	402	440	Daffodilusa.com Daffseek.org	1,621,143	1445
American Penstemon Society	65	75	Apsdev.org	21,349,143	16
American Orchid Society	254	307	Aos.org	825,221	2766
American Camelia Society 301	301	319	Americancamellias.org	8,621,370	69
North American Rock Garden Society	330	340	Nargs.org	2,063,034	1014
American Hemerocallis Society	320	323	Daylilies.org	435,147	4514
Cactus And Succulent Society of Am.	1419	1536	Cssainc.org	2,184,258	651
Begonia International Carnivorous Plant Society	N/A	8	Begonias.org Carnivorousplants.org	2,430,650	609
Perennial plant Assoc. Ca. Native Plant Society	1398	1498	Perennialplant.org	1,161,664	2,377
Royal Horticultural Society	965	1048	Cnps.org	2,593,929	1141
	2130	2290	Rhs.org.uk	856,194	2336
	3429	4149		64,382	158,346

dahlias			Dahlias.net	1,328,681	1389
DavesGarden	1880	2229	DavesGarden.com	16,826	547,658

<i>American Iris Society</i>	<i>Facebook 3-31-11</i>	<i>Facebook 4-13-11</i>	<i>website</i>	<i>rank</i>	<i>users</i>
Schreiners	1285	1601	Schreinersgardens.com	1,545,584	650
Stout Gardens	1911	1996	Stoutgardens.com	4,825,610	345
Comanche Acres	1630	1773	Comancheacresiris.com	N/L	N/L
Rainbow Iris Farm	840	878	Rainbowfarms.net	8,563,423	53
Bayview Iris Gardens	114	124	N/A	N/L	N/L
Nola's Iris Garden	84	142	Walking-p-bar.com		
His Iris Garden	212	222	Hisirisgarden.com		
Iris4U Iris garden	187	203	Iris4u.com		
Snowpeak Iris Aitken's	91 N/A	101	Snowpeakiris.com Flowerfantasy.net	N/L 5,516,591	82
Salmon Creek Bridge in Time Iris Patch	4	4	Bridgeintime.co		
Painted Acres Farm	79	84	Paintedacresfarm.com		
Malevil Gardens	150	160	Malevil-iris.com	N/L	
Cooley's Gardens	N/A	N/A			
Siberian Iris Gardens	47	51	Siberianirisgardens.com		
Echo Iris Garden	83	88	Echoiris.com		
Appalachian Iris Garden	123	129	Appalachianirisgarden.com		
Zydeco Louisiana Iris Garden	60	63	Zydecoirises.com		
Hildenbrandt's Iris garden	82	86	Hildenbrandtsirisgarden.com		
Horton Iris Garden and Pumpkin	70	N/A	Hortonirisgarden.com		

Patch Stanton Iris garden	7	N/A	Stantonirisgardens.com
Hanks Iris garden	23	26	Hanksirisgarden
Pleasants Valley Iris garden	721	1451	Irisfarmer.com
Missouri Botanical Garden		36,515	
Gardening Horticulture Magazine		2,241,553	Wikipedia topic
Fine Gardening		7,166	Magazine
		5611	Magazine

Note: The only plant Societies doing better than AIS are California native Plants and Royal Horticultural Society. Dave's Garden is neck and neck with us on Facebook. Remember as of 4-9-11 Dave's Garden had **1,900** new members signed up during the last week, bringing our total number of members to 573,075. They have **5,999** paid subscribers.