

MARKETING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE REPORT

SPRING 2014

ENCYCLOPEDIA ADOLESCENCE

Adolescence is that awkward age when we are not really mature but expected to be. I would say the Encyclopedia has reached that stage. Initially the first task was to get pages up so that people could add pictures. In the haste to get up the pages they were often not carefully edited or formatted and desirable data was often not included. I would liken it to a huge first draft. Topics that did not help identify plants were given less attention than those cultivar's pages; of course, work still continues on the basic page for cultivar/species. We do not know what the actual number of cultivars is! We say we are 93% complete. We do not have pages for many superseded names nor for some synonyms, and little effort was made to include names with no information attached. However, we have created new sections and webs for better understanding irises. These include "Re-blooming Irises", "Novelty Irises", "Bulbous Irises", "Irids"; and "Gardens" and of course "The Virtual Iris Show". Because these areas are in their infancy they have only begun to develop. It makes me feel sad that the wiki is seldom complete and polished in any one area and that so many areas are seen in their formative condition. Hopefully, this should inspire others to help in the evolution of making it better and better.

Nature abhors a vacuum. The American Iris Society is still challenged to create the resources that today's society expects from a great plant society. Each year those expectations grow and others try to replace AIS as the prime Iris resource. Much of the information out on the web has originated with AIS but no acknowledgement is given. AIS has the potential to create even better information. Projects known today as "Citizen Scientists" could enrich our knowledge base and provide a way for meaningful participation.

The Encyclopedia today is used primarily to verify an Iris identity. Presently each month on average 10,000 individuals have in total 45,000 visits to the wiki. A marketing term, "hits", is often used to measure websites. The wiki is averaging 20,000,000 hits each year and growing. The mission of the Encyclopedia is not only to create the ultimate Iris information archive but to celebrate the creativity of its users. Here are some of its goals:

1. Once a cultivar page is adequately populated with images, we would request that hybridizers choose an image that best represents their plant and it could be featured in a larger size to the right of its description.
2. Links added that can add information such as each hybridizer's name would link to their page giving a biography and list of introductions. Links to parents of an iris could allow for exploring the genealogy of the plant.
3. Videos of amenable topics could be added. Examples; "How to plant a TB seed", "How to divide Spuria". The list could be extensive.
4. Promotional slide shows could be created, such as "A tour through the crested Irises"

The Encyclopedia can and should be an exciting place to visit, create, learn, and interact. Thanks to all the wiki workers who have gotten it this far.

VOUCHER PROGRAM

We continue to publicize the Voucher Program in IRISES, on the AIS website, and in material for affiliates. One of the original voucher nurseries has chosen to drop the program, and one nursery had to drop out this season because of poor growth in his gardens. We have added Nola's Iris Garden in San Jose, CA just recently to the listing of Voucher Nurseries, making a total of 12 nurseries currently participating. Efforts will continue to add more nurseries to the program. An accounting of numbers of vouchers sent out and used will be made at the Fall Board Meeting.

Each nursery listed may use the phrase, "AIS Voucher Nursery", in any printed material or ads they produce. This will serve to identify them as a cooperating part of the Voucher Program.

SOCIAL MEDIA

FACEBOOK

AIS BLOG, WORLD OF IRISES

The AIS Blog is very popular among AIS member and non-members alike. The featured articles have lots of followers. As time passes, some of our contributing bloggers have a hard time coming up with ideas for blogging, and/or don't have as much time to do so. Two current bloggers retiring: Mike Unser and Ron Killingsworth; and two new bloggers have been recruited: Heather Pryor from New Zealand, and Kathleen Sayce from Washington State.

Current readership: 228,746 Page Views to Date since its inception March of 2011. Over 250 page/views daily.

GOOGLE PLUS

Current followers: 4687

Posts here are links to our blog, plus re-shares from others who share their iris photos online. Engagement is low to moderate but this is a newer social media medium.

The American Iris Society

News & Notes

The AIS monthly electronic newsletter **News & Notes** begun last year, and has since sent nine regular issues plus the Special Edition announcing the AIS Medal Awards. Member enthusiasm continues to be high as measured by our statistics compared to various industry averages; members continue to update their email addresses with Tom Gormley, and also to give feedback on topics in N&N. Affiliate and Region Newsletters have also been enthusiastically promoting News & Notes.

Each monthly edition has included 6 to 10 topics with short action oriented descriptions and one or more links to more details. Most of the links are to the AIS website, the Iris Encyclopedia, World of Irises (the AIS Blog), and Section, Region, or Affiliate websites. Examples include:

- Links to **World of Irises** items either as the main items or as supplemental information. In an item about the **Presentation Slides and Digital Programs** that AIS has available, we also included a World of Irises link announcing **New Digital Programs for LA and Spuria Lovers**.
- Notices of Seed Exchanges and deadlines, either for donating seeds or for ordering seeds.
- Upcoming Convention deadlines with links both to the AIS website Convention information and the Iris Society of Dallas Convention information and registration form. We did send this one a couple of days early because of a February 1st deadline.
- New documents or forms on the AIS website. The **Fall BOD Minutes** and the **Proposed 2014 AIS Awards Ballot** are the most recent ones cited.

- Reminders that the **Irises Bulletin** is now or will be shortly available. This includes both the electronic edition, where we can link to the EMembers login area, and the printed Bulletin. Depending on timing there may be a link to the World of Irises description of it as well.
- New topics in the **Iris Encyclopedia** such as the **Virtual Iris Show** and the **AIS Display Gardens** program.
- Some topics where we created original content included collecting links to AIS Affiliate Newsletters and preparing a list of Fall Regional Meetings. Both of these were prepared as Iris Encyclopedia pages.
- More lighthearted items include Irises Named for Holidays and Identifying Noids in Jigsaw Puzzles.