



(above) 'Black Gamecock' Louisiana iris
(F. Chowning 1980)

Sydney B. Mitchell Iris Society

Friday, March 26th, 2010

Jeanne Plank,
Region 14 RVP, will present
a slideshow on

*The Beardless Group of
Iris*

Friday, March 26th, 2010
is the date of our next meeting at
Lakeside Park Garden Center
666 Bellevue Avenue, Oakland
Doors open at 7:30 p.m.,
Meeting at 8:00 p.m. Program after
brief business. Meetings are free &
open to the public, all are eligible
for door prizes.

Program: Jeanne Plank will present
a slideshow on "**The Beardless
Group of Iris**". This group in-
cludes spurias, siberians, Japanese
iris, Louisianas, and Pacific Coast
iris.

Following the program, she
will discuss the encouragement of
growing irises in decorative pots as

a small garden, patio and deck land-
scaping tool. This is of increasing
importance to AIS in popularizing
iris to more people, as yard spaces
grow smaller. Jeanne will bring
three named cultivars -- all reason-
ably recent vintage medians planted
in decorative pots, to be given away
in tonight's door prize iris.

Refreshments: If you're able, please
bring refreshments to share!

**Correction to Region 14 Spring
Regional Date!**

Mary Lee writes that the Spring
Regional will be
APRIL 24-25-26, 2010 [not May]

DOOR PRIZE IRIS!



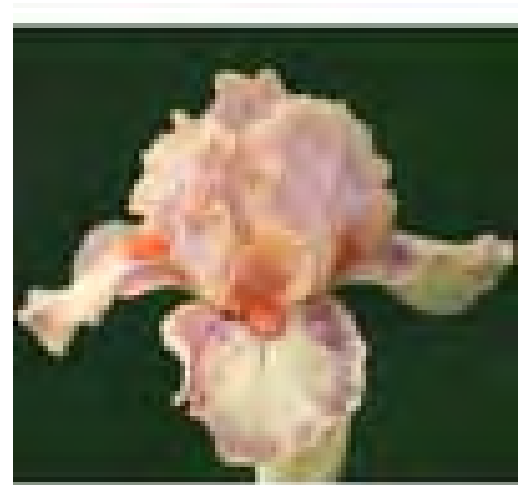
(above) **Bohemian Rhapsody** (Kerr 2009)
BB 26" M For those who like their irises a bit shorter and more wind resistant! A medium pink with a wide violet-blue band and tangerine orange beards. Good branching and bud count and a good increaser. Wonderful in a two year clump.

(right) **Head Games** (Lauer 2009)
TB S: white; F: white with violet lines inside yellow rims; B: yellow.

3 Recent medians in Pots!

Speaker Jeanne Plank will be bringing three named cultivars -- all reasonably recent vintage medians planted in decorative pots. These (in the pots) will be donated to the club for door prizes.

(below) **Callisto** (M. Smith '09)
IB, 24" (61cm) EM, 5 buds. An enchantress, like its namesake. Grecian rose-pink arched standards, green midribs. Rose bloom style arm crest and edges. Ruffled salmon tinted, green center fall ground with Grecian rose outer rim, irregular amethyst inner rim that's wider at center edges with darker violet dots. Vermilion red beards.



Potted Iris: East Coast – West Coast

by Laetitia Munro and Gesine Lohr

(this article appeared in Fall 2002 Roots in slightly different form)

The bearded iris is such an amenable creature; it will grow in good soil or poor soil; the rhizome can be frozen in the ground, or baked in the sun; but it's invariably considered a garden plant, to be placed into the ground and it's not thought of as a potted plant at all. Gesine Lohr from the West Coast and Laetitia Munro from the East, HIPS members and e-mail friends who are always swapping iris stories, have both been potting iris for years, and have decided that iris do indeed grow in pots, and like it too.

G & L got together to write this article, as we think that iris as a potted plant opens up a new world of possibilities for those who might not have thought cultivating iris in this way.

Gesine points out that even if you're disabled and have little time to garden, or have trouble weeding etc., you can grow iris in pots; these pots can be tended at table level, if someone has difficulty stooping or is wheelchair bound. If you do not have a large yard, or much dirt, you can still grow iris in pots, even a whole collection in a very small space. A garden doesn't have to be "perfect" to be a source of much enjoyment and joy. She points out that her neighbors walk by daily in bloom season just to see the historic blooming in pots all over her front stoop. Laetitia finds that it is a good way to expand her collection, and adds that she likes the "look" of pots all over her deck, as well as planted in the back yard -- even though her kids think she is kind of crazy for doing this.

But Gesine and Laetitia both came to grow iris this way for different reasons. Gesine says: In 1992 I started gardening iris in pots, when I saved some of my Ma's iris after my father died. I started out with many INDIAN CHIEFS (Ayes 1929) in 8", 10", and 14" plastic pots, on an apartment walkway. Laetitia just started about 2 years ago, because she was sick and tired of the borers getting all the "good ones", and pots were a safe haven for little snips of this and that.

Gesine uses 14" and 16" pots as the mainstay of her potted iris garden, with some 20" pots and many 12". All the pots she uses are plastic, with several drain holes in the bottom. She also has many tiny rhizomes in 8", 6" and 4" pots. Laetitia uses all kinds of pots, whatever is available: clay or plastic,

but concedes that the pots must have drainage holes. Gesine says: For the 14" and up, it's good for drainage if you get some bricks, and put 2 or 3 under a pot. They will do OK if you don't do this, but drainage improves if you raise the pot a bit. Laetitia uses saucers under pots, and is constantly dumping out standing rainwater but lately has been using no saucer at all with good results. Gesine also has several wine barrel halves, with at least 8, 1" holes drilled in bottom (easy with a regular household drill), and 4 caster-wheels screwed on.

One of the important aspects of successful potted iris is what kind of soil is used. Both G and L agree that ordinary garden dirt just does not work. It packs down and becomes like cement. Gesine says: I believe part of why people think "you can't grow iris in pots", is that they don't do as well if you grow them in pots with garden dirt. We use bagged potting soil (about \$6/2 cubic foot bag of SuperSoil), iris fertilizer, and sometimes have a bit of aged compost to blend in. The potting soil doesn't dry and cake up as garden dirt sometimes can. If you are getting a lot of dirt at once, it's cheaper if you go to a "soil specialist" kind of place (nursery people may be able to tell you where a local one is). The reason I started off using potting soil, is that I HAD no garden dirt! Laetitia experiments with different soil combinations: potting soil, beach sand, and wood chips, even cactus potting mix! She says sometimes she will even find an old log in the forest and take the rotted wood and mix it into the commercial potting mix, and the iris seem to like that a lot.

Another advantage of the potted iris, is that the moisture content can be regulated so that you never have to have beardeds standing in muck after a few days of rainstorms. Pots can also be turned in the sun, to get the best balance and exposure. Fewer weeds grow in pots, making for more pleasure and less work as well.

Laetitia adds: iris planted in the yard frequently get leaf spot and other insects can take up residence as well; not to mention the occasional cat, deer, or even bear who is prone to step on a prized iris. None of these things happen to the potted ones; it is not uncommon to see iris with perfect lush green leaves in the pots, but the ones in the ground are shrivelled and beat up looking. And of course, the iris borers have not figured out how to crawl from the ground onto the pots -- yet!

What are the disadvantages? For one, the plants have to be repotted frequently. Gesine in California finds that she must divide every two years and her iris have many increases, even to the point of bursting out of the pots. Laetitia, on the East Coast finds that she actually has less increase in pots; but still has to repot because the roots become quite extensive and start coming out the bottom. Repotting is pretty easy, however, as the root ball forms a ‘pancake’ right below the surface that can be lifted out, separated, and replanted, while preserving virtually the entire set of roots. Gesine tosses the old dirt onto the compost heap when replanting, but reuses it later; Laetitia tries to keep most of the old dirt around the newly planted iris, figuring the iris is used to it.

Another disadvantage is that you have to water the pots more often, as potted iris dry out quite a bit.

Gesine reports that the blooms on her potted iris are outstanding. She and housemate Jean won a number of ribbons in iris shows, including Best Historic of Show, when they started entering shows last year. Laetitia finds that very few iris expire when planted in pots. Pots are especially good for nursing small or feeble ‘special’ rhizomes that need a little extra care. Potting also comes in handy in Laetitia’s part of the country, if you happen to get a rhizome late in the season, and you do not think there will be enough time before frost for it to get established in the ground.

When it comes to the winter or dormant season, G and L have different approaches. In milder California, Gesine leaves her pots outdoors all year long. Laetitia in cold North Jersey puts hers in the garage for the winter months. While garden iris always seem have some mortality every year, the potted garage iris do not get winter rot. Laetitia has found that growing an iris in a pot thru the winter, then planting outdoors in the spring, usually produces a superior burst of growth and lots of new increase. Keeping an iris pot-bound till the pot is full of roots, then taking the whole thing out and putting it in the ground really stimulates the plant.

In closing, both G and L find that pots are an alternative for iris growers, that may work in situations where one is not able to grow them in a garden. We both hope, G and L say, that we can inspire more people to plant and enjoy iris growing in pots. //

SBMIS CALENDAR

March 26, 2010	Sydney B. Meeting, Jeanne Plank presents “The Beardless Group of Iris”.
April 17	Mt. Diablo Iris Show
April 30	show setup for Sydney B. Mitchell Iris Show
May 1, 2	Sydney B. Mitchell Iris Show
May 28	Meeting, Sydney B. Mitchell (program TBA)
June 25	Meeting, Sydney B. Mitchell (program TBA)
July 23	Sydney B. Mitchell Rhizome Auction & Sale
July 24	Sydney B. Mitchell sidewalk sale
August 27	Meeting, Sydney B. Mitchell (program TBA)
September TBA	Potluck, Sydney B. Mitchell (TBA)
October 29	Sydney B. Mitchell Beardless Auction & Sale

American Iris Society (AIS) Dues can be mailed

to Tom Gormley - AIS Membership Secretary

205 Catalonia Avenue / P.O. Box 177

DeLeon Springs, FL 32130

Phone and fax: 386-277-2057

E-mail: aismemsec@irises.org

\$25.00 single, \$30.00 dual.

See www.irises.org/

Check your AIS membership status: Need to know your membership expiration date? expiration date for club members or your Region's members for Affiliation? www.aislookup.org

Please pay your 2010 **SBMIS Membership Dues** ~ please give to Bonnie Petheram, or send checks made out to Sydney B. Mitchell Iris Society to Bonnie at 1226 High Street, Alameda, CA 94501. \$10 household.

Historic Iris Preservation Society (HIPS) dues

can be mailed to HIPS Membership: Judy Eckhoff,

7911 South Yoder Road, Haven, KS 67543

E-mail: judy@msinter.net

\$10.00 single annual, \$12.00 dual annual.

www.hips-roots.com

Directions to the Garden Center:

666 Bellevue Avenue, Oakland

From the north or west: take Highway 580 or 24 to 980; take the West 27th Street/Grand Avenue exit, turn left on 27th Street, go east to Grand Avenue, watch for Lake Merritt on the right, take a left on to Grand Ave., then a right at the stoplight into the park. Proceed on Bellevue to the Garden Center. **From the south or east:** take the Lakeside (Lake Merritt) or Grand Ave. exit in Oakland; follow around the lake on the north and west side to Grand Ave. and Bellevue, turn left into the park.

Proceed to the Garden Center, park on either side of the road. We hope you can come -- everyone is welcome!

[On weekends only -- Expect to pay \$5.00 at the toll booth to park. Show your parking stub for a \$2 rebate on your iris purchases]

AC Transit Bus -- AC Transit bus #12 runs on Grand near the entrance to the park -- check transit before planning, as routes do change.

<http://tripplanner.transit.511.org>

By phone -- Dial 511 and say, "AC Transit," to speak with a person about route info

List of SBM Officers:

President	Jean Richter	(510) 864-7962	richter@eecs.berkeley.edu
Vice-President	Gesine Lohr	(510) 864-7962	Gesine.Lohr@gmail.com
Secretary	Shirley Trio	(314) 605-5789	shirleytrio@clearwire.net
Treasurer	Bonnie Petheram	(510) 864-7962	bpetheram@gmail.com ~ <i>new</i>
Directors-At-Large	Marjorie Murray	(510) 525-3397	
<i>also Grand Poohbah</i>	Alan Robbins	(925) 939-1979	ADRsafetywpc@earthlink.net
Newsletter	Gesine Lohr	(510) 864-7962	Gesine.Lohr@gmail.com
Door Prize Chair	Marjorie Murray	(510) 525-3397	
Hospitality ~ <i>new!</i>	Shirley Trio	(314) 605-5789	shirleytrio@clearwire.net
Shows and Exhibits	Jean Richter	(510) 864-7962	richter@eecs.berkeley.edu
Program Chair	Gesine Lohr	(510) 864-7962	Gesine.Lohr@gmail.com
Library Chairpersons	Alice Dekker	(510) 525-6536	
Membership	t.b.a.		
Publicity	**need a volunteer!		
Historian/scrapbooker	Kat Boswell		
Immediate Past Pres.	Ray Vickers-Traft	(510) 839-9647	wndwsillorchids@aol.com
Once and Future President	Chuck Dekker		

If you see **old iris stuff which is about to be tossed**, please contact me (Gesine), so we can conserve these bits of history. I assure you, anything donated will be cherished.
(510) 864-7962

<http://historiciris.blogspot.com/>
has some very neat stuff!

2010 AIS Iris Calendars!
\$5 to members -- See Bonnie Petheram.

A Sydney B Tradition!
We have members who for various reasons find it difficult or impossible to come to meetings. One of the issues is transportation. This could become a nice SBM tradition -- inviting, and arranging to bring, members to our meetings. Makes everyone happy!



Global warming is here--you know what to do
SBMIS Newsletter -- Gesine Lohr
1226 High Street, Alameda, CA 94501
We miss you, Chuck