

From the President

As I'm writing this the full grip of a Southern winter is upon us, cold and crisp. Still, as cool as it is here, the thoughts of dealing with the snow and ice of a TRUE winter are something I've long since left behind during my days as a Yankee. At least I can walk around the garden every day and SOMETHING seems to be blooming regardless of the weather. Right now, several clumps of tazetta daffodils, the first brave hellebore, a persistent geranium and my Border Bearded iris 'Preppy' are all blooming nicely. Several of the ivies have assumed new winter coloration, with the startling *Hedera hibernica* 'Ebony' nearly black in leaf at this point. This is the taste of spring that we as gardeners so need in this otherwise bleak time of year.

The other thing that keeps one going as a gardener in the winter is the trickle of catalogs coming in that will soon become a flood. My catalogs are soon marked up and the pages dog-eared from this maniac gardener who

finds virtually every plant an opportunity to tweak with a little hybridization. In the north with a real winter, this is how we kept ourselves SANE—sitting by the fire with our minds full of thoughts of spring. When the iris catalogs come, make sure to patronize nurseries owned by our members. You really do NEED more irises in your yard!

In this *Newsletter* you will find details of the Societies' Dallas convention. This is a first for SLI in the state of Texas—and we are SO excited about getting to see Marie Caillet's famous garden (probably the MOST photographed Louisiana iris bed ever) as well as several others featured in the recent AIS convention there. Bonnie and Hooker Nichols have a wonderful collection of garden tours and activities for us to make a convention that is distinctly Texan as well as lots of fun. Y'all come.

Kevin Vaughn



From the Editor

One of the nice benefits that comes with being SLI Newsletter editor is the opportunity to get to know people from around the world. Indeed, the Louisiana iris has become a flower for the world, made most readily apparent by the fact that in recent years a majority of new LA iris hybrids are originating in Australia. LA irises are also widely grown in New Zealand. The Iris Society of South Africa sends me their quarterly journal. Guess what flower graced their latest journal? Yes, an LA iris by Heather Pryor of Australia, 'Sorrento Moon' (97), which brings the lavish good looks of a debutant to their magazine cover. Inside the magazine we learn that another of Heather's irises, 'Peaches in Wine' (97), was judged

best Louisiana iris specimen in the South African national show.

All of this is to say the modern Louisiana iris, a complex of hybrids from five native species of the American south, has been accepted warmly into the bosom of international gardeners. Just two weeks ago I received an email from a nurseryman in Ireland, Mr. Patrick Fitzgerald, who wanted to investigate the Louisiana iris for its potential as a garden plant for the emerald isle. He said he would accept our invitation to become a member of SLI.

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SOCIETY FOR LOUISIANA IRISES

Founded 1941

MEMBERSHIP. To join or renew membership, send dues along with your name, address, telephone number and email address (if any) to *Richard Sloan, Treasurer, 118 E. Walnut, Alma, AR 72921*. Make checks payable to the Society for Louisiana Irises. Memberships are staggered beginning with the quarter in which dues are paid.

DUES. Rates for membership are:

USA

Individual: Yearly, \$10.00; Triennial, \$25; Life, \$125.

Family: Yearly, \$12; Triennial, \$34

INTERNATIONAL

Individual: Yearly, \$15; Triennial, \$40; Life, \$125

Family: Yearly, \$18; Triennial, \$40

AIS. SLI is a cooperating society of the American Iris Society. However, membership in the AIS is not automatic with membership in SLI. Individual AIS dues are: Single Annual, \$20; Dual Annual, \$25. Dues can be sent to: Mary Brown, Membership Secretary, P.O. Box 2968, Baltimore, MD 21229; aismemsec@earthlink.net. Rates for overseas or extended memberships can be obtained from the Membership Secretary. The information is also on the Internet at:

<http://www.irises.org/>

MEMORIALS. Memorial Gifts in the name of a deceased person, and gifts in honor of living persons, are accepted with gratitude by the Society. Please send Memorial Gifts to Richard Sloan at the above address, and enclose a note indicating for whom the contribution is made. A gift will be acknowledged in the *Newsletter* unless expressly requested otherwise.



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The editorship also keeps me in touch with other friends within SLI. The Wolfords, Donna and Harry, from Palm Bay, Florida, are wonderful people whom I enjoy being with. It turns out (why am I surprised) that they are both excellent writers. Take a look inside at two articles by the Wolfords on their recent trip to Australia during iris bloom season-and their participation in the Iris Society of Australia annual meeting and show in Perth. I would be amiss if I did not note that Harry is a darn good photographer, as the pictures illustrating their articles demonstrate.

I am especially glad to welcome Mr. Ron Killingsworth to the *Newsletter*. His experiences in assisting his sister, Bobbie Hutchins, in establishing a commercial nursery near Shreveport, LA is told in humorous detail within this issue. Also, remember that Bobbie and Ron invite everyone attending the SLI convention in Dallas in April to take time to visit their new nursery, Plantation Point Nursery, where you will be treated to "20-30 thousand Louisianas in bloom." The nursery is located near Mooringsport, north of Shreveport, and visitors are asked to call prior to visiting, phone (318) 996-7222.

Just today I received a large set of slides from the prominent LA iris hybridizer Richard Morgan, formerly of Hot Springs but now living in Greenbrier, Ark. I am so pleased that Richard heeded our call for everyone to send images of LA varieties to the Society for archiving. I plan on sharing this set of slides with everyone at the convention in Dallas. Please send any slides you might have of identified LA irises. Every slide in Richard's package was thoroughly labeled by name, and by parentage of the cultivar.

One of the nicest letters I've ever received came recently from Mr. Gary Babin of Baton Rouge, La. Gary grew up near a swamp and while exploring there as a child came across a stand of *Iris brevicaulis* in flower. Their beauty captivated him, and he soon transplanted a few specimens to parent's home. Gary inherited the family home in recent years and reports that the original plants are still blooming beautifully these 40 years later.

Gary is the kind of new member who warms the cockles of an editor's heart. He eagerly reads our SLI publications, and he is on the way to having a good reference library on these native American irises. Gary also proudly reported that he had bloom in November on plants he had planted on Sept. 8, 2003-only three months earlier! Part of the explanation for that bloom is, in all honesty, due to the warm autumn and early winter in the Baton Rouge area. But, this bloom is vivid testimony to the abiding quest that Louisiana irises have to survive and flower.

I cannot close without urging every single member of SLI to write something for publication in our *Newsletter*.

I hope to see you in Dallas in April for our convention.

Tom W. Dillard

Possibilities: Iris Hybridizing Breakthrough?



This picture vividly illustrates some of the amazing breaks occurring in Australian hybridizing. Heather Pryor comments about this amazing seedling: "Is this an atypical feathered fancy or the start of something new? Every now and then Mother Nature decides to send us a curve ball, and how lucky for us all that this one has turned into a home run!" This unusual seedling has been blooming in the Pryor's seedling patch in Sydney, Australia for several years now. It is about to be registered for us all to ultimately enjoy in years to come. The eclectic parentage of the seedling gives little sign of where such an unusual "feathered" effect to the petals could have come from directly, but a clue could be 'Heather Pryor' (J. Taylor 93), which has been an active parent in both this seedling and in a recently released and equally "feathered" cultivar, 'Wings of Mercury' (Pryor 99). Hybridizers everywhere-why not get your own tweezers out and see what you can create!"

Photo by Heather Pryor