

**Almanac:  
Society for  
Pacific Coast  
Native Iris**

**FALL 1985  
Volume XIV Number 1**



Cover: Diana Gregory

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### PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE

#### Seed Planting

*Almanac*, Volume VII, Number 1 (Fall 1980) contains several valuable articles on raising Pacific Coast native Irises from seed. Copies are available from the Editor for \$2.00 each, postage paid.

*A Guide to Pacific Coast Irises*, Victor A. Cohen; forward by E.B. Anderson. London: The British Iris Society, 1967. This 40-page booklet contains both colored and black-and-white photographs of selected species, line drawings and thumbnail descriptions of all species and major sub-species. There is general material on distribution and botanical affinities among the species, plus a map of western states showing distributions of the species in general. Copies are available from the Treasurer for \$3.50 each, postage paid.

## MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

The *Almanac* is published in the spring and fall; copy deadlines are February 1 and August 1, respectively. For information about availability of back issues, please address the Editor.

Membership Rate	Individual	Family
Annual	\$4.00	\$5.00
Triennial	\$10.00	\$12.00
Supporting Annual	\$6.00	
Life	\$50.00	\$65.00
Honorary Life	No Dues	

Please send membership-subscription monies to the SPCNI Treasurer.

The Society for Pacific Coast Native Iris is a section of the American Iris Society; membership in the latter organization is a prerequisite for *membership* in the SPCNI. If you wish only to receive the *Almanac* (two issues per year), the annual subscription is \$4.00.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The financial status of the SPCNI is very shaky at the moment, and if we are to remain a solvent organization we must develop new and innovative ways to support the growth and expansion of the SPCNI. Membership dues and proceeds for sale of publications and seeds are our sole source of funding. Neither of these methods remain constant since many members pay dues on a triennial basis and sales are erratic.

The major expense for the Society is the Almanac itself. Postage has risen significantly over the years as have typesetting, paste-up and printing. The philosophy of the SPCNI has been to publish a high quality Almanac as opposed to a typed and mimeographed newsletter. But to publish the Almanac in its present form will require more funds than we traditionally hold. To continue with the present format we will have to raise the funds necessary for publication. If we don't raise supplemental funds we must reconsider how the Almanac should be published.

Similarly, a group of devoted members are finishing a new Cumulative Check List of Pacific Coast Native Iris and their hybrids for which we will need funds.

If you have any ideas or suggestions on how to resolve these dilemmas, please write and let me hear your proposals. Membership's opinions are vital for formulating policy and decisions. Already, a couple of suggestions have

been submitted which I feel are viable and I will present them now. Please let me know how you feel about them.

First, advertising could help us. We could sell space in the pages of the Almanac to those who wish to reach us, a very specialized target market. In order to sell advertising space we must establish the cost for a full-page, half-page, and quarter-page ad.

Second, direct sales to the public is another way to raise more funds. Further on in this issue is an announcement concerning the plant sales where the society will have a sales booth. As we participate more in sales such as this, where many types of plants are sold, the public will become more educated in the PNCs and thus more willing to purchase them.

I hope to see many SPCNI members at the National Convention where we will be able to discuss all these issues at length and develop policy to deal with them. Also, we will have information, a display and a sales table at the Convention where we will sell issues of Cohen's booklet and other materials our members could donate.

Hope to see you all at the National.

Duane Meek

## PLANT SALE

The coffers of the SPCNI are very low at the moment. So low that unusual methods must be taken to bolster our dwindling supply of funds necessary to print and mail our newsletter and carry on our normal course of events. To help a potentially bad situation, the SPCNI will be holding a plant sale with proceeds going to the SPCNI Treasury.

The plant sale will be held at Maple Mall, Department of Community Service, City of San Pablo, #1 Alvarado Square, San Pablo, CA 94806. The dates of the sale are March 8 & 9, 1986, from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm. This sale will be part of The Wholesome Garden Exchange, an activity sponsored by the City of San Pablo to foster the sale and exchange of native California plants, as well as unusual or difficult-to-obtain garden material.

The SPCNI will have a booth at the sale

to raise funds. We will need as much plant material as possible, and anything you can contribute will be greatly appreciated. Seeds, seedlings, named varieties, and species will all be sold to the public, so if you have any material and a means of getting it to one of the members in the San Francisco Bay Area, we would greatly appreciate your donation and support. I would like to remind our members that any donation of cash or plant materials to SPCNI is considered a donation and can be deducted from your Federal Income Tax.

Too, many of you live in areas where it is either impossible or to inconvenient to participate in this plant sale, but there is nothing preventing you from doing something similar in your area. Spring time is a safe time to lift and transplant most PCNs and even a couple of pots sold will help the SPCNI very much.

# EIGHT NEW "VALLEY BANNERS"

George Gessert

Eugene, Oregon

The 1958 registration of the original Valley Banner contained this information:

VALLEY BANNER (Hardy, R. 1958) S. white with narrow purple midrib; F. white veined purple, styles red-purple. *I. tenax-chrysophylla* hybrid collected.

Each spring I go iris hunting. Usually I stay within an hour of my home in central Lane County, Oregon, but this spring I traveled farther, into western Douglas County, Oregon, near the southern range of *Iris tenax*.

Along a narrow road off Highway 42S near Kenyon Mountain, I came across a large and exceptionally fine group of very dark purple *Iris tenax*. They covered about an acre of partly cut Douglas fir forest. Rusting machine parts lay here and there, providing support for blackberry vines. Among the dark irises were scattered a few light forms of violet *I. tenax*, as well as some striking hybrids of *I. tenax-chrysophylla*, most with pinkish flowers up to four inches across. Some of the *I. tenax* were more than five inches across, but a few were miniatures. Several clumps had dark purple 1 1/2 inch wide flowers on one inch stems.

However, the most startling discovery was four "Valley Banner" type plants, each slightly different and all growing within about 100 yards of one another. The first of the "Valley Banners" I encountered I passed by, not recognizing it for what it was. It had very pale violet veins in the falls, and equally pallid violet style arms. I automatically dismissed it as just another form of light *I. tenax*, or perhaps an unexceptional hybrid of *I. tenax-chrysophylla*.

About fifty feet farther on, growing in gravel on the edge of the asphalt road, was a superb, four inch wide dark purple-veined "Valley Banner". This time there was no mistaking the pattern. I wouldn't have been more astonished if I had chanced upon a large diamond.

I examined the surrounding forest carefully, staying alert not only for unusual iris, but also for poison oak, which typically was

growing in association with the irises. I found two more "Valley Banner" type plants, each rather small flowered. They had a few feathers of veins on the tips of their white standards. I re-examined the pale iris. It had the large, widely-spaced style arm tips that I associate with *I. chrysophylla*, but otherwise it, and the three other plants, showed no obvious *I. chrysophylla* characteristics.

Driving back toward Eugene, I detoured onto the Reston-Sitkim Road. I stopped to examine a large *I. tenax-chrysophylla* hybrid swarm (with *I. chrysophylla*) predominating growing along a power line cut. There was one "Valley Banner" type plant in that location. It had formed a large clump. Freshly opened flowers had strong purple venation in the falls, lighter purple style arms, and pure white standards lacking even a purple midvein. Flowers that had been open for a while, however, faded to pale violet, so that the "Valley Banner" characteristics were muted. The flowers were small, and rather narrow-petaled, and the stems were short. In other respects the plant resembled *I. tenax* more than *I. chrysophylla*.

East of Eugene, Near Fall Creek Reservoir, in an area where *I. tenax-chrysophylla* hybrids are common, I found three more "Valley Banner" type plants. One was of classic "Valley Banner" appearance. Another was very pale, rather similar to the faded phase of the Sitkin Road plant. The last had dashed lines in the falls, and white standards tipped purple.

In addition to the three "Valley Banner" type plants at Fall Creek Reservoir, there were two plants that might be called "semi-Valley Banners." These had heavily veined falls becoming solid violet along the margins, white standards feathered with violet at the tips,

and white style arms with strong violet crests. Both of these plants were typical *I. tenax* in all obvious respects except color.

None of the plants I found provides conclusive proof that "Valley Banner" is of hybrid origin. However, I favor the hybrid origin theory for five reasons:

1. All eight "Valley Banner" type plants were found in areas where *I. tenax* and *chrysophylla* had extensively hybridized.

2. Six of the eight plants had characteristics that could have come from *I. chrysophylla*: small, narrow-petaled flowers, short stems, very pale flowers closer to white than purple in over-all effect, and/or large style crests. However, none had the elongated perianth tubes of *I. chrysophylla*.

3. One of the Fall Creek Reservoir plants was growing beside a large clump of *I. tenax-chrysophylla* hybrids unusual in that it was pure white, except for having pale violet venation completely covering the falls. This plant could have been a parent. Except for differences in flower color and in length of the perianth tube, the two plants were identical.



4. Ruth Hardy's original discovery of "Valley Banner" was at Dorena Dam in Lane County, Oregon, well within the area of overlap between *I. tenax* and *chrysophylla*.

5. Almost all the garden hybrids from "Valley Banner" have short stems, a characteristic possibly derived from *I. chrysophylla*. In addition, some garden hybrids of "Valley Banner" form loose, rambling clumps, a characteristic of most forms of the Lane County *I. chrysophylla* (but not all forms of the Douglas County *chrysophylla*.) *Iris tenax* almost always forms neat, circular clumps.

My guess is "Valley Banner" is one quarter or less *I. chrysophylla*. Conclusive proof for the hybrid origin theory could be provided by producing "Valley Banner" in the garden, beginning with pure *I. tenax* and *I. chrysophylla*.

Lenz reported *I. tenax-chrysophylla* hybrids as uncommon, noting only five localities in which such hybrids were definitely known. I have explored only an extremely small fraction of the area of overlap between the two species (an area that covers thousands of square miles) and yet I have found nine additional locations where hybridization is occurring, including four locations where there are extensive hybrid swarms (excluding the unique Noti hybrids). Consequently, I believe hybrids of *I. tenax* and *chrysophylla* are quite common.

Perhaps these hybrids used to be rare but only recently have become common as a result of accelerated human disturbance of the environment. If that is so, and if "Valley Banner" is of hybrid origin, we may be treated to more "Valley Banner" type iris as time goes by.

**VALLEY BANNER**, collected by Ruth Hardy, drawing by Jean G. Witt reprinted from the American Iris Society publication, *The World of Irises*.

# GROWING PACIFICAS INLAND

R. C. Richards

Courtesy of the Region 15 AIS Bulletin,  
Corrine Bromberger, Interim Editor

It is a fairly common myth that the Pacific Coast Native irises cannot be grown inland. It is a fairly common truth that they are not easy to grow inland. I have been successful for seven years in Corona, California, near Riverside, a very hot inland climate. I would like to relate the things I do and have learned.

One important consideration is location. I have been able to grow pacifica clones in up to a half day of sun, provided that it is morning sun. Afternoon sun seems too strong for them unless it is limited doses of around an hour, preferably near the end of the day. I have had much success in light shade, and surprisingly good results in rather heavy shade with just an hour or two of direct sunlight. Under deciduous trees seems to work well, giving the irises the gentler winter sun and protection from the murderous summer sun. When in doubt, err on the side of too much shade rather than too much sun.

Another consideration is soil preparation. After I have chosen a location, I scatter hand-fuls of soil sulfur onto the ground until it is yellow. I realize this technique lacks scientific sophistication, but it works. I also incorporate large quantities of both redwood compost and nitrohumus by dumping them on top of the sulfur. Then, after an hour or two of painful spading, the bed is ready. The pain is optional; thorough spading is not optional.

As far as I am concerned, there are only six to eight weeks in which planting and transplanting can be done, and this is early December until late January. After February 1, forget it, even if you have potted material. Many people claim that you can plant potted iris later than that, but I have never been successful at it, and I do not like to lose plants. Bare root stock from your own garden is best planted instantly after it is dug, and then watered thoroughly and kept moist until the end of spring. Bare root stock from elsewhere must be kept moist until planted.

Watering throughout summer is necessary. I water established stock about every three or

four days, but that is excessive. Every seven to ten days is sufficient. I water in the early evening so that there is maximum penetration of the soil and little moisture left by morning. A combination of heat and moisture breeds some forms of bacteria or viruses that tend to kill pacifica clones.

I believe there are some clones that are simply not going to survive in an inland garden. Perhaps it is because they were not tested in a rigorous climate before being introduced. Perhaps it is the very alkaline soil usually found inland. Whatever the explanation, some clones rarely survive in anyone's interior garden. If you want to know the clones that do thrive in the hot summer garden, ask those people in your area who are successful, or buy your plants from a nursery in a hot area.

It has also been my experience that after three or four years in one spot, and perhaps sooner, most clones profit from moving. I prefer to do this in stages. One year I lift half the clump, cutting it in half with a shovel while it is in the ground. I then take half out of the ground, smooth the soil back around the half left in the ground, break the half removed into subdivisions of two or three connected rhizomes, and put them into a new location. Re-planting the half without breaking it up often results in death of part or all of the removed and transplanted clump. I don't know why this is, but it is true a significant percentage of the time. This plan of partial transplanting means I usually have two clumps of a clone going, one that has been in the ground a relatively long time, and one that is just getting going. If for some reason I do lose half, I have the other half remaining. If you really want to keep pacificas, and you are especially fond of certain clones, you might find this method successful.

These are my secrets, entrusted up until now only to an elderly gypsy who returned to Bulgaria to grow rhubarb commercially. These methods do work for me, and I'll bet they will work for you also.

# THE STORY OF OJAI

*The members of the Southern California Iris Society were "bowled over" at the handful of PCN blooms which Marion Walker brought to a meeting some time in the early fifties. This is an excerpt from a letter written by him recently in answer to a request for information on his 1959 introduction which he named Ojai. (D-2-53)*

Way back in the forties or maybe before, Sydney B. Mitchell collected *I. innominata* seed in the wild and sent them to a grower, Danks by name, who lived in Australia. Danks grew the plants and crossed them with some material he had collected. Danks, in turn sent me some of his seed about 1950 and I planted them.

From that Danks seed came a beautiful broad petaled cream seedling which did not survive. That cream seedling was D-2-53. It did not set many seed but, as I recall, three plants came from that cross, all of which were

above average. Ojai was by far the best and the most vigorous. One of the three was white with the purple eye. I maintained it for about ten years and then it died out. Ojai has been going on forever. It got its vigor from Amiguita.

Of further interest to you might be the fact that Harold Fletcher and Harry Randall took some of my seed back to England and placed them in the Kew Gardens, and it is my understanding that the Kew Garden sent seed back to Danks in Australia. It is a small world.

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Continued on last page

# NOTES ON PACIFIC COAST IRISES

Dr. Mathew C. Riddle

Prominent in the story of Californicae species was Dr. Mathew C. Riddle of Oregon, who worked tirelessly to further their cultivation.

The following information was taken from an article from the AIS Bulletin dated April, 1950, after first appearing in the Seattle Iris Society Bulletin. The original article was entitled "Use of the Native Pacific Coast Irises in Northwest Gardens."

The states of Oregon and Washington have growing in the wild state a great variety of iris species which are adaptable to garden culture. Many of these are of exceptional beauty. The great iris authority, W. R. Dykes, chose one of them--*Iris tenax*--to illustrate his "Handbook of Garden Irises." This beautiful iris appears on the cover of his book. *Iris tenax* may be found growing by the roadside and in fields over the western parts of both Washington and Oregon. It is found in a wide variety of colors and patterns--blue, purple, and wine colors marked with veins and dots with a yellow or white signal patch. Rarely, beautiful albino forms can be found, white with a yellow or white signal patch. In a restricted area in the Willamete Valley a variant, *Iris gormani*, is found which is identical to *I. tenax*, but is a soft yellow color. *Iris tenax* may be readily transplanted when in bloom if care is taken to keep the roots damp. Like all wild plants, it resents moving and will sulk for a season after transplanting. As transplanting may be done while in bloom, selection for color and form of wild growing plants may be accomplished. *Iris tenax* is deciduous in habit, the leaves drying in winter to reappear early in March. Established clumps brighten the garden in April and May with dozens of bright flowers. This iris prefers lightly shaded or open exposure, slightly acid, rich, loose, loamy soil and a situation where it will be undisturbed year after year. It makes a fine plant for rock gardens, low borders and beds. The cool, moist climate of the Pacific Northwest to which it is naturally adapted is ideal for its garden use.

Another choice native species is *Iris innominata* which is generally regarded as the most beautiful of all low-growing beardless iris species. This exceptional iris is a rare one growing in a restricted area in wild, mountainous country in Southwest Oregon. Difficult to collect in its wild state, seeds and plants may be obtained from commercial growers, or from amateur growers and collectors. *Iris innominata* is a dwarf compact growing species about twelve inches in height with attractive, grasslike foliage which is evergreen. The typical plant has flowers of a beautiful bright golden yellow color, often attractively veined with fine brownish lines.

Besides the usual golden color, many other bright and beautiful colors are found including blue, azure, purple, pink, brown, and red. This unusual iris grows easily in Western Oregon and Washington in shaded or open situations. As a rock garden plant it is unexcelled as it enjoys well drained acid loam soil. It can be transplanted in the fall after the first rains or early in the spring when growth of new roots and leaves begin. Moving of plants can be done when the plant is in bloom, but at the sacrifice of further flowers that season.

*Iris douglasiana* is another Pacific Coast native adaptable to garden culture. Far more robust in growth with larger flowers, it requires more space in the garden. It is found naturally along the Pacific Ocean in Southern Oregon and Northern California. It also has a great variation in colors through the range white, shades of blue and yellow. The foliage is evergreen and grows to a height of eighteen inches





**IRIS TENAX**, a drawing by B. LeRoy Davidson, taken from a souvenir of the Portland, 1960 Convention.

to two feet. It blooms freely in suitable locations. Inasmuch as the rhizomes of *I. douglasiana* are larger than those of *I. innominata* or *I. tenax*, it can be moved from one location to another with less difficulty.

In addition to these species which are easily adaptable to the gardens of the Pacific Northwest there are other native species less easily grown in gardens.

There is a rare and dainty pale lavender *I. tenuis* which prefers shade; the interesting *I. chrysophylla* and *I. bracteata* which requires

well drained soil, and other less easily grown species.

The best and easiest way to obtain plants of these worth-while native iris species is to grow them from seed. The young plants transplant with ease and from seed, plants can be grown in great numbers. Seed is best sown in the fall in open, specifically prepared beds. Freezing often improves germination which begins in March or April. Seeds are planted about 1/4 inch deep in rows six inches apart. The seed bed should be kept free of weeds. Plants are transplanted best a year after germination in March or April.

## EDITOR'S COLUMN

The tardiness of this issue of the *Almanac* is my fault, and my fault alone. For this, I sincerely apologize. When I accepted the post of editor I had no idea I would be returning to school on what amounts to a full time schedule while holding a full time job. My interest in the genus *Iris*, especially the series *Californicae*, has grown to the point I want to formalize my education in Botany. Thus, I have begun classes to accomplish this goal. With such a full schedule, I neglected my duties as editor to concentrate on microbiology which demanded all my attention.

This issue would not be out yet were it not for the help, support, and justified nagging of Duane Meek, Teressa Rigby and Jean Erickson, who have contributed much time and energy by typing and pasting up and distributing this issue. To them I give thanks for not becoming thoroughly disgusted with my derelict of duty.

Too, I want to thank George Gessert for his wonderful article *Eight New "Valley Banners"*. George's article proves the importance of contributions to the understanding of the PCNs by someone armed with a keen eye, an inquisitive mind, and a love of PCNs. More important, though, is his willingness to share these observations with us through the *Almanac*, thereby enriching our understanding of the PCNs.

George's article makes me wonder how many others have made observations such as his but have not written them down for us all to learn by. Are you one of these people? If so, I encourage you to share these observations with us through the *Almanac*. Be a contributor to the body of information we all crave. I feel only through the sharing of information that synthesis and understanding of the true nature of the PCNs can be discovered.

Joe Grant

## ON JUDGING NATIVES...

Unlike previous editions of the Judge's Training Handbook, the new American Iris Society edition includes a section on Judging Pacific Coast Native Irises.

Great attention should be given to reading this section since it is our only official guide to judging PCNs, both in the garden and in the show.

## TREASURER'S REPORT

FEBRUARY 25, 1986

CASH ON HAND APRIL 30, 1985 \$620.45

### DUES AND RECEIPTS:

Dues collected	\$358.00	
Dues collected by AIS	181.00	
Sale of Cohens	68.50	
Sale of Almanacs	19.00	
Almanac cost-refund	75.00	
Donation--Region 14	50.00	
Planning & Development		751.50
		<u>\$1,371.95</u>

### DISBURSEMENTS

Postage-office	\$ 28.00	
Envelopes-Cohen	3.45	
Form letter	6.36	
Postage	10.00	
Engraving	9.00	

Spring Almanac	561.38	
Postage-Almanac	73.11	691.30

Balance on hand February 25, 1986 \$606.65

Dorothy E. Foster, Treasurer

# YOUR PACIFIC COAST NATIVE IRIS SEEDS

## How to Germinate Them and Care For the Seedlings

The Society for Pacific Coast Native Irises has been asked to supply a small packet of seeds for each registrant at the American Iris Society National Convention in San Jose, California next April 26 - 30, 1986.

The following is excerpted from the directions for germinating seed which the Society has mailed to persons requesting seeds from our seed selling project. Philip Edinger wrote these originally. We thought this issue of the Almanac would be a good place to reprint for those iris-arians who need the information.

If possible, plant the seeds in October, although you can plant them up to the year's end if necessary. Plant in plastic pots or flats, using a good potting soil (well drained but moisture retentive) having a slightly acid pH--6.5 to 7. Cover seeds with a thin layer (about a seed's thickness) of potting soil. You may plant seeds close together, but the resulting seedlings may be difficult to separate from one another without damaging the roots.

It is important to carefully watch moisture in the seed pots. Be sure that once the soil is moistened it is not allowed to dry out or remain saturated. To insure good drainage, use about one-third sand in the potting mixture.

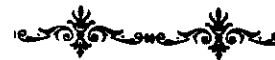
The seed usually take two months to germinate, and the young seedlings look like thin glades of grass.

When the seedlings are three to four inches high (March or April in the Pacific States), transplant them directly into the ground. For safety sake, we suggest planting half in the garden and half in larger pots. A good container size, for a year at least, is one-gallon. Locate the seedlings where they have morning sun and afternoon shade (high or filtered) such as beneath oak or pine trees, although afternoon shade from a fence or a building may prove satisfactory. Two to three years after germination plants should flower--March to May, depending on the climate.

From the time seed is planted up to the first bloom, moisture supply is critical. Except for a bit of drying off during the heat of summer, keep seedling plants fairly evenly moist--"regular garden watering." Grown plants will tolerate conditions that are **cool and wet** or **hot and dry** but generally fail when it is hot and they are kept wet.\*

The usual time to transplant, in the Pacific States, is in fall to winter--whenever weather cools down and normal rainy season begins. This is the time they begin their root growth. Check for new root growth, in mature plants, by carefully removing the soil at the end of a fan. When roots are at least one inch long, it is safe to transplant. Whatever the root length, it is important to keep from breaking roots or letting them dry out. Where winters are **cold**, greater transplant success occurs in early spring.

Since these seeds are mixed lots from many plants and gardens, you may find variations in growth and appearance.



\*Since the use of the fungicide *Subdue* has become more wide-spread, growers of PCNs are having less loss to fungi during hot and wet conditions.

Used carefully as a drench after planting and in accordance with directions, it **appears** to not only reduce fungal infections but produces better growth of plants.

This is not an endorsement for *Subdue*; please note the emphasis on **appears** in the above statement.

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## A NOTE OF INTEREST

The summer issue of *Pacific Horticulture* will have a detailed seminar on hybridizing the Pacific Coast Native Irises. Contributors will be Roy Davidson, Lewis Lawyer, Duane Meek, Jean Witt, and Joe Ghio.

The article will be illustrated with the high quality color photographs which we have come to expect from this publication.

Cost of single issues is \$3.50, plus \$1.00 for postage and handling, and may be secured from P. O. Box 485, Berkeley, CA 94701.

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Continued from page 7

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