



# Fleur de Lis

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*'Louise Nelson Ewin'*

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# From The President

## Mark Schexnayder

### Welcome!

As some of you know, this new role is not something I had on my dance card for 2023, but here we are. During the hurried transition, the Board and I have done everything we could to keep our organization together and moving in a positive direction. While mistakes were likely made, we played the hand dealt, and our Board members and I are excited for what this Spring in Lafayette will bring. I am especially grateful to Billy Welsh for his work coordinating with the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, and Ron Betzer, Gordon Rabalais, and Jim Leonard, who are again opening their gardens for informal tours.

We are making a concerted effort to re-engage with our Acadian friends, both old and new. And we look forward to forging new partnerships with garden clubs, NGO's and agencies for conservation, and to light a fire in Lafayette so bright it will be seen from Buenos Aires, Melbourne, and all places in between!

We are still working on our media and outreach strategy, and it should be an organic process to evolve with the times. But even the best-looking website structure or Facebook page becomes stale without fresh content. One simple way for any member to help is by interacting with our media accounts. For instance, we would love to see more folks from all over share their garden stories and pictures on our Facebook page. If you aren't into social media, you can email them to use, and we can post them. But talk to us!

If anyone reading this wants to help with media, conservation, or HIPS, we are all ears. The inside front cover of the *Fleur* lists my email and that of Board members. Please reach out and let us know what you would like to see SLI do.

We are also reinstating the Committee system as a mechanism for folks wanting to get involved and to get tasks done. I'm already starting to sound like a broken record, but this is your organization, and we are only driving the bus.

I am hoping that we can make SLI participation in the Festival des Fleurs in Lafayette an annual thing, even when the Convention is in another city, just like the Greater New Orleans Iris Society has yearly activities around the demonstration gardens and Island Iris Nursery in New Orleans City Park. I believe Jim Leonard's vision of a similar yearly event around the Moncus Park iris gardens is something that will happen soon.

Our affiliation with AIS puts Louisiana irises on the map,



PHOTO BY AVA SCHEXNAYDER

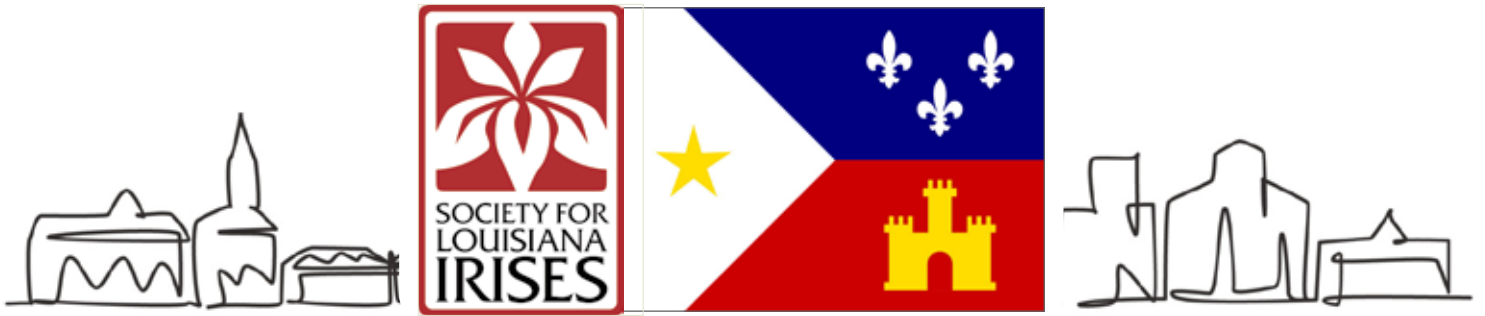
and it is our best connection to the rest of the iris universe. It also allows us to be under their insurance umbrella, and without that coverage, we could not even meet or have garden tours. So please make an effort to support AIS when you can.

As an organization, we must constantly evaluate what we are about and mold our actions around that. For example, will we have yearly conventions and shows ten years from now? If so, what will they look like, and if not, what will SLI look like by then?

We are all anxious to see how 2023 goes. We will be in Dallas next year for a joint meeting with the Spuria Iris Society. It is encouraging to see a few dedicated SLI members rebuilding a strong Texas contingent, We have Board members there now and new nurseries, so let's keep the ball rolling. We know everyone cannot travel, but for those that can, please update your calendars for this spring and make plans to join us next year. And to our out-of-state and international members who cannot join us in person, pick up your pens or keyboards and let me and the Board know what more we can do to publicize your efforts and successes.

And as we do all of this, we also need to start thinking and talking about what the Spring of 2025 will hold. Traditionally, members have shared irises to be planted in "guest gardens" in the host cities, where future Louisiana Iris lovers will see them and get hooked. But to really be successful, plants need to be sent to guest gardens year and a half out. To do that, we need to know where SLI will meet in 2025, and if a convention is on our dance cards at all! We have a lot of thinking and work to do.

-Mark



# SLI Iris Spring 2023 in Lafayette

SLI's spring plans do not include the usual convention members may be accustomed to. While we came out of COVID and held an excellent meeting in Lafayette last year, planning for 2023 presented significant obstacles that have pushed us to experiment with a different sort of get-together, one not based on the familiar convention model. As a result, we are planning for "SLI Iris Spring 2023" in Lafayette, a low-key event that nonetheless will offer an opportunity for an excellent Louisiana iris experience.

Since it will not be a hotel-based event, everyone is free to stay where they wish. With one exception, meals will be "on your own." **Here's the plan** (with additional details to be provided on the SLI website, via email, and after registration):

## Friday, April 14, 4pm till 8pm Rendezvous at Cypress Lake

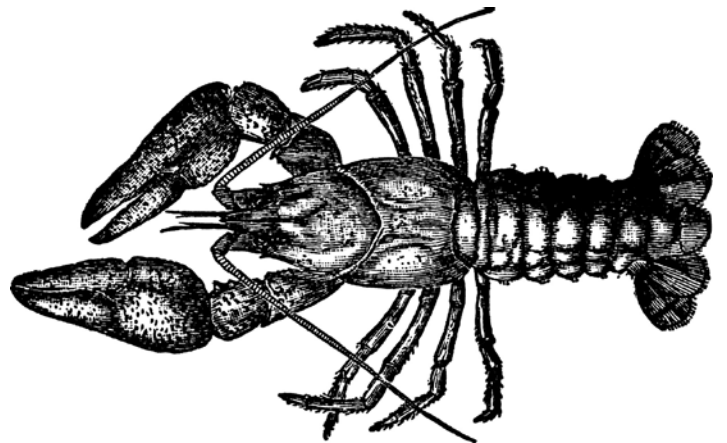
Casual dinner, informal program, social hour, and membership meeting around the famous Cypress Lake on the campus of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. We'll gather on the veranda of the Student Union, which overlooks the Lake.

We are organizing a panel on the **endangered irises in the Abbeville Swamp, *Iris nelsonii***, once called the "Abbeville Reds." Cypress Lake is a perfect once-and-future site to display and help preserve these irises. The relative proximity of the endangered, wild *I. nelsonii* to Lafayette makes them a particular concern for iris and native plant enthusiasts in the area.

A brief meeting will be held after the dinner to elect SLI officers and conduct a few other items of business. It will constitute the General Membership Meeting of the organization for 2023. The meeting will begin at 6 PM followed immediately by the panel on the Abbeville Reds.

Registration for the event will be \$25 and will include the meal.

You can expect door prizes consisting of the rarely offered *Iris nelsonii*, other species, and recent Louisiana iris introductions.



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**Saturday, April 15**  
**Festival des Fleurs, Blackham**  
**Coliseum, 2330 Johnston St.,**  
**Lafayette. Admission \$5**



SLI will again participate in the Festival des Fleurs. We will not have a sanctioned AIS show this year, but we will be set up with bottles and stands for members to bring irises to display for the several thousand attendees at this premier garden event. We will also have a booth at which we will sell rhizomes to raise funds for the Society, answer questions, and distribute information about the irises and organization.

Eileen Hollander of New Orleans will conduct a one-hour **Show Judging** session at 2 PM during the Festival. There is no charge, and anyone who registers may attend. After the Festival ends at 4 PM, Eileen will add an hour of training on **Garden Judging** at the Ira Nelson Horticulture Center (next door to the Blackham Coliseum). Judges Training is a great way to learn about the best attributes of Louisiana irises, and an intent to become an iris judge is not necessary to participate.

The Festival itself is an outstanding event with a wide range of vendors offering plants and garden-related items.

SLI needs volunteers to help in our booth and with the display irises. An hour (or a few) during the Festival will be a huge help. If you are available, please email Monica Martens , and let her know the approximate times: [monicalmartens@yahoo.com](mailto:monicalmartens@yahoo.com)

### **Garden Access**

Garden tours are the highlight of conventions for many. While we will not have buses and formal garden tours, arrangements are being made for times that visitors can see several outstanding Louisiana iris gardens and public plantings. Transportation is on-your-own, but we will carpool to the extent possible.

### **Jim and Kathy Leonard's Louisiana Iris Farms, Lafayette**

**506 Chelsea Dr., Lafayette, LA. Park at the barn – boots may be needed.**

Jim has extended an invitation to visitors to **SLI Iris Spring 2023** to browse at Louisiana Iris Farms during the days of the event. (Friday - Sunday). It will not be a formal gathering; just come and look at the incredible irises.

No commercial nursery offers a larger collection of irises than Louisiana Iris Farms. Unless the weather conspires to complete the bloom season before we meet, this will be great iris viewing opportunity.

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## Ron and Eugenie Betzer Garden, Lafayette

120 Adair Lane, Lafayette

Ron's Garden will be open on Sunday, April 16 from 8 AM till Noon, and at other times during Friday and Saturday by appointment.

Ron Betzer is an outstanding hybridizer with a beautiful garden in a unique setting overlooking the Vermilion River. His garden has been on tour for conventions in the past, and it is always a hit. You can expect to see Ron's introductions as well as a wide range of beautiful cultivars from other hybridizers.

Ron's garden was on tour for the 2022 SLI convention, and the guest beds for that event are still intact. Last year the very late bloom season robbed many attendees of the opportunity to see these irises, and with a little cooperation from the weather, visitors will get a second bite of the apple.

## Gordon Rabalais Garden, Arnaudville

**Directions will be provided upon registration.**

Gordon Rabalais's diverse and beautiful garden in Arnaudville, about fifteen miles east of Lafayette, will be open on Friday, April 14 from 9 AM till 2 PM, ahead of the evening events around Cypress Lake.

## Moncus Park – Open every day

Moncus Park in Lafayette had just opened ahead of the 2022 SLI convention, and it was not on tour. The Park contains significant plantings of Louisiana irises contributed by SLI and initiated by Jim Leonard. Visitors can go to the Park on their own schedule. It is located within walking distance of the Blackham Coliseum and open seven days a week, 5 AM till 10 PM. Currently, there is a fee for parking but none for admission.



Moncus Park



Lafayette Visitors Center

## Lafayette Visitors Center Gateway to Lafayette

1400 North Evangeline Thruway

This Visitors Center is a treat. Beautifully landscaped and with boardwalks over a series of ponds planted with Louisiana irises some years ago. A fun stop for far more than coffee, a map, and the rest room. To take a look at a short video from Facebook, browse for "gateway to lafayette tourist info center."

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## Carpooling

Although everyone is responsible for arranging their transportation to gardens, when we get closer to the event and know who is coming, we will try to arrange carpooling, as mentioned. You can expect maps and other assistance if you register for SLI Iris Spring 2023

## Hotels

With no convention, there is no convention hotel. We will send a list of hotels to consider to those who register or inquire. Because of the Festival des Fleurs and the many vendors it attracts, it is strongly recommended that hotel reservations in Lafayette be made early.

## Registration

The registrar for SLI Iris Spring 2023 will be Ron Killingsworth, 10329 Caddo Lake Road, Mooring-sport, LA 71060, [retmiagt@gmail.com](mailto:retmiagt@gmail.com)

To register, copy and complete the brief registration form below, and mail it to Ron. Send a check payable to SLI or request an invoice from Paypal. You may also request to get on a mailing list for updates and additional information.

### Registration Form

Check enclosed     Please send Paypal invoice

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address:

Street \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Name of others who will attend \_\_\_\_\_

Total number registered @ \$25 each. \_\_\_\_\_



# Track Down, Grow, & Share

## *A Recipe for Preserving Historic Cultivar Irises for Future Generations*

By Monica Martens

Last year as the holidays approached, SLI President Mark Schexnayder and I chatted with two people who lead programs for the Historic Iris Preservation Society (HIPS)—Nancy McDonald, who manages the Guardian Gardens program, and Cathy Egerer, immediate past president. HIPS was founded in 1984 with the explicit mission of saving historic irises.

Bearded irises, the most commonly grown iris in the country, naturally receive plenty of attention from HIPS members. However, the organization welcomes efforts on behalf of all irises. This is beneficial to the preservation of Louisiana cultivars since some HIPS members live in areas conducive to growing them. Furthermore, the well-conceived programs of HIPS might serve as a model for SLI to develop efforts within its own organization.

Like the HIPS community, valuable work to preserve old irises has been done over the years by SLI members, commercial breeders, and those who manage public and private gardens. However, the work has been systematic and coordinated only with the wild Louisiana iris species. Unfortunately, while dedicated growers and gardens have preserved many historic cultivars, many of these flowers have been lost, also. We know that we can locate some older cultivars, but a complete picture of the extent of preservation at this time does not exist. And we do not have any systematic process to prevent the future loss of old irises.

To further protect historic Louisiana iris cultivars, it is helpful to understand how HIPS manages its programs. SLI should consider using or adapting the HIPS model to our circumstances.



### HIPS Approach

According to Cathy, saving irises boils down to three things: track down, grow, and share. Guardian Gardens is the flagship program for people with experience growing irises; however, there are many ways for HIPS members to get involved at different levels of knowledge and commitment capacity.

### Focusing Down

I asked Cathy and Nancy, how do you decide what is historic and worth saving? The answer is three-fold.

**1. Pick a cut-off point.** HIPS focuses on irises introduced 30 or more years ago. This is influenced by historical factors, including how far back iris cultivation goes—in their case, more than 100 years for their broad audience of

*Mission accomplished? These oldies are still around, but need to be secured.*

*From top: 'Aurora Borealis' (MacMillan, 1945); 'Edith Dupre' (Arceneaux, 1945) and 'Louise Austin' (Arceneaux, 1945); 'Cherry Bounce' (Nelson, 1946); and 'Tarnished Brass' (Chowning, 1961).*



growers of all iris species.

2. *Consider how many places the cultivar is being grown.* HIPS considers an iris in danger if it meets two conditions: it must be growing in two or fewer commercial gardens, and it must be growing in four or fewer HIPS members' gardens. They use an annual survey of their membership and commercial catalogs to help them determine what is endangered.

3. *Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.* If someone loves an iris, it's worth making sure it's being grown somewhere. This recognizes that people can be sentimental about historic irises, and opinions vary.

### A Program For Everyone

With the definition of what is historic established, HIPS designs programs that support its overall preservation efforts in different ways and allows for every member to be involved. Once a year, HIPS contacts its members by email and requests information about which historic irises they grow. The organization sends a spreadsheet to facilitate and then collates the data for use by HIPS members. According to Nancy and Cathy, it's a snapshot since it's voluntary but helpful nonetheless. This is called "Who Grows What." I tried this out in January and found it to be very easy. When I input some names of Louisiana irises, the spreadsheet populated information such as if a cultivar that I have is in the Guardian Gardens program.

Two programs seem ideal for the iris gardener inclined toward independent work but committed to communicating about it. These are the Breeder Collections program and the Display Gardens program. Both programs would work for home gardeners and those who manage gardens for the public (e.g., museums, master gardener demonstration gardens, or botanical gardens). In the Breeder Collection program, the member actively works to collect irises from a hybridizer and particular time-frame and reports back to HIPS. Not all of the irises in the collection have to be



*Some target cultivars? Perhaps. These irises are not ancient and may be found. Top row from left: 'Grape Fluff' (R1962), an early Joe Mertzweiller hybrid, and 'Rosy Moon', a Marvin Granger iris (1978) that showed distinctive veining, a precursor of things to come. Middle: 'Dean Lee' (1971), a golden brown from the prolific Charles Army, and 'Gulf Surf' (1962), a pretty late-blooming light blue, also from Army. And bottom, Army's 'Deneb' (1969), considered the best pink in its day, and 'F.A.C. McCulla' (1973), a widely grown Army red. All except 'Grape Fluff', never introduced, were popular in the 1970s.*

“historic”; if even one is 30 years old or more, that is sufficient to be in the program. In addition, these gardeners are encouraged and supported to share rhizomes now and then. Breeder Collections is a newer HIPS program that began in 2018.

For the Display Gardens program, members can participate if they have at least 15 named and labeled historic irises in their garden (the garden, in-

cluding home gardens, can be of any size), and they agree to open their gardens to the public once a year. It is clear that some iris-growing experience is necessary for both of these programs, but expert knowledge is not required.

As mentioned, the Guardian Gardens (GG) Network is HIPS' flagship program, established in 2014. This program is for iris growers with experience since endangered historic irises

are entrusted to individuals to grow, multiply, share, and distribute. Owing to a philosophy of flexibility, the size of a member's garden is not a factor for participation; some GG members grow irises in patio gardens, for instance. But participants must abide by rules to promote success and equal effort. The ultimate goal is that an historic iris could go back into commercial production if it is proven to grow in a variety of climates successfully.

Finally, HIPS facilitates iris exchanges and share-outs within its membership. On their website are forums for members with irises to exchange, sell, or otherwise distribute. HIPS hosts a sale of historic irises every summer. Ultimately, within the Breeder Collections program, HIPS would love to see at least two people holding each collection, so there is always a backup. Holders of Breeder Collections are encouraged to share with one another. The GG program has within it an exchange program designed to distribute endangered cultivars among first its own members, then to HIPS members, and eventually to potential commercial vendors and the public. A guiding light of the HIPS philosophy is that the way to save an iris is to share it. SLI ought to do this, also. It would help us make great strides in preservation of historic irises, provide a value-added benefit to our membership (individuals and managers of public gardens alike), and bring our mission full circle and show members that their work is paying off.

### **What is on the horizon for SLI and maintaining a supply of historic cultivars?**

Against the backdrop of the work already being done within SLI and the ideas represented by HIPS, several ways exist to extend the preservation efforts for historic Louisiana iris cultivars. The first is to nurture the relationship we are developing between our two organizations to learn about each other's processes and methods. The flexibility among the HIPS programs—enabling iris enthusiasts of all

experience levels to get involved and define what is treasured—is very special and mirrors some of the values discussed informally within SLI.

The second is establishing a list of cultivars to target for supply permanency. Because the structure of the Louisiana iris world is historically unique—fewer hybridizers, fewer commercial and public gardens, fewer growers, and a shorter history—we will need to brainstorm the best strategies to build our list and select the target plants. We need to be aware of what has worked for HIPS but keep an eye on the Louisiana iris world.

The third is to enlist the participation of all Louisiana iris enthusiasts. This includes our members who grow Louisiana irises for personal enjoyment and those who manage commercial nurseries and display gardens. It also includes those retired from these endeavors.

Finally, the fourth extension of our work should be to consider the impact of formal programs like Guardian Gardens and Breeder Collections. Guardian Gardens focuses more on networking efforts to increase stock to share, and a Breeder Collections effort may direct preservation work into individually manageable and meaningful chunks that will excite our membership and help take preservation to the next level.

We will be discussing these ideas during 2023 and finding easy ways to start small to help sustain the supply of historic Louisiana iris cultivars, both within our own group and in concert with HIPS. And we welcome your ideas. Our preservation effort will only work if we develop a corps of interested volunteers who can communicate their ideas and learn from others. Fortunately, today's technology permits a level of communication and interaction that is a big step up from the past.

If you are interested, please contact me to join in the conversation. And take a look at the HIPS website for more information. It is an outstanding site both in design and content.

## Iris Terms

**ROOTS**, the publication of HIPS, has an upcoming article about the terms used to describe irises. Here is a snapshot of that information (thank you, Nancy):

### *Wild Species:*

Stable wild populations of a plant that breed true; no human intervention in the breeding.

### *Natural Hybrids:*

A natural occurrence in the wild without human intervention.

### *Selections from Species:*

Someone finds an unusual version of a wild species (e.g., color or size), collects it, names it, and registers and/or introduces it. An oddball plant in a wild population may be a chimera, subspecies, variety, or form.

### *Named Cultivars:*

Deliberate human-made crosses or named selections from species.

### *Registered Names:*

Since 1920, the American Iris Society has been the official world registrar for names of all except the true bulbous irises, which are registered by a Dutch organization. Some historic irises never were registered, although they were introduced to commerce under a name. The AIS has retroactively registered the very old bearded irises.

SLI's Checklist contains information on some old irises that is not available from AIS sources.

### *Variety:*

Often used in common speech to mean "cultivar," although the term has a different meaning in botany.

# Detective Work

By Patrick O'Connor

A significant part of the work to preserve historic irises potentially involves getting dirt under one's fingernails, but not all of it by any means. A large element of detective work is also involved. Plus, we must first assess which "missing-in-action" irises are the highest priority targets. Time is important. Many irises will be truly lost and gone without a preservation effort that begins soon and with thought, research, and planning.

I've been looking back through lists of Louisiana irises organized by year of registration. If you have the SLI Checklist (see the Storefront at the end of this issue), you can export it all into Microsoft Excel and then sort the several thousand cultivars by year or in many other ways. I started growing irises in the mid-1970s, and the list of irises that were new in the 1960s and 1970s contains many I grew in my first several years and many that I heard about or saw in convention gardens. Sadly, most of these plants, long gone for me and others, include those we will need to look for now.

As I look at the list of new irises from that time, I also see many listed that I have never heard of. Some irises don't get distributed, do not become popular, and quickly become obscure. On the other hand, I can make a list of cultivars that, in my experience, were noteworthy at the time. Other growers active in the old days no doubt can do the same, but they may have a somewhat different list. One early task in our HIPS project should be to tap into the experience and memories of the iris elderly, such as myself.

If we can't find anyone who grew an iris or even remembers it, that one would be a poor candidate for our project, at least at the beginning. I think we should look for irises that were popular and preserve those first. Votes in Popularity Polls as well as the recollections of oldsters would be good information to sift through. So would AIS award lists.

I have long thought that we could find old cultivars by contacting the families of hybridizers past. Some descendants may still grow a few irises that a famous hybridizer relative produced. They may also have slides and documents that would provide valuable information about the irises.

Time's a wasting, and there are good opportunities for a little detective work to begin. A SLI member could carve out a little slice of work that would not be overwhelming but might enable us to save a few historic irises sure to be lost otherwise.

Those already committed to the HIPS project can work to assemble documents and other resources that volunteers can use. Cultivar lists, popularity polls, hybridizer names, and other materials. Our project leader Monica Martens has outlined several ways the members can participate, and I hope a significant portion of our members will respond to her invitation in the accompanying article.

The HIPS project is a great chance for a collaborative effort. SLI members have scant opportunity to work together, and at best meet each other at conventions. HIPS offers a wonderful occasion to get acquainted. The payoff may well extend beyond saving some old irises.

## **JUMPSTART THE PROJECT**

**Impatient? Ready to Roll? Lend us a Hand!**

While we are developing a Who-Grows-What survey, you can help jumpstart our HIPS project by letting us know you want to help, and especially, by suggesting historic irises you feel are worthy of preservation.

**Contact Monica Martens now.**

**Phone 832-270-7077** (leave a message if it goes to voicemail).

**[monicalmartens@yahoo.com](mailto:monicalmartens@yahoo.com)**



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# Two Historic Irises

## Old Irises, New Registrations

By Patrick Fett

My best friend's grandmother, Mim Leatherman of Pineville, LA, introduced me to Louisiana irises at eight years old. She instilled in me a love of the irises and all living things. Mim was a very close friend of one of our founding SLI members, Caroline Dormon, whom I had the privilege of meeting on several occasions as a child.

The pair made many treks together, collecting irises in the wild. Mim had a fourteen-acre garden with roughly three acres of creek bottom covered with native Louisiana irises that they had collected. Unfortunately, her collection of Louisiana irises was destroyed in 1963 when flash floods washed 18 inches of red clay from the construction of the Pineville expressway over the entire creek bottom. One *Iris brevicaulis* and six *Iris virginica* color variations remain of the iris species from Mim's garden. After inheriting his grandmother's garden, my friend and I have been working to replant the irises.

Having learned that they can disappear in a flash, I've realized I need to document my collection of historic Louisiana irises. During this process, I found through American Iris Society Registrar/Recorder Janis Shackelford that two historic irises I own had never been registered with AIS. One was a blue iris long known in Louisiana iris circles as "Catahoula Blue." The other was a tall mauve-pink that can be traced back to Dr. John K. Small's work in the days of Louisiana iris discovery and collecting in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Janis was very helpful in finding notes on a new "species" Dr. Small documented in 1931 that he called "Iris vinicolor." My mauve-pink iris clearly matches Small's species description.



The cards from the American Iris Society showing that 'Catahoula Blue' and 'Avery Island Boathouse' are officially registered.

I decided that registration with AIS should be completed to document these plants. On June 6, 2022, I received the official registration for No. 22-0443 'Avery Island Boathouse' and No. 22-0444 'Catahoula Blue'. These irises tell fascinating stories for people interested in the Louisiana irises' history, development, and preservation.

### 'Avery Island Boathouse'

In 1973, while on a field trip with my college professor and members of my horticulture class, I collected a single rhizome floating down the creek from the back of the large boathouse on Avery Island, near New Iberia, Louisiana. It came from a large patch that, at the time, was roughly 10' X 18'. I planted the single rhizome at my parents' home in Pineville, LA, where it grew for 25 years. I later moved the entire clump to my 144-acre farm that I pur-



The painting by Mary Eaton depicting "Iris vinicolor," as named by Dr. John Small.



A large clump of 'Avery Island Boathouse', a vinicolor-type that characteristically has very tall, vigorous stalks and a profusion of relatively small, mauve pink or wine flowers.



The famous 'Catahoula Blue', long known but only registered recently by Patrick Fett. Registration of irises does not guarantee their preservation, but it greatly improves the chances that they will not be lost over time.



'Avery Island Boathouse'

chased in 1997 in Grant Parish, LA.

Knowing this iris to be a historic specimen and wanting to register it, I contacted Dr. Garrie Landry, a retired professor of Botany at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. Dr. Landry is contracted by the heirs of E.A. McIlhenny to document the existing plant flora in the Jungle Gardens at Avery Island (my dream job). I told Dr. Landry

about the specimen I had multiplied and let him know that I was interested in getting permission to name the iris in honor of the Island and Dr. John Small.

Dr. Small was friends with McIlhenny, visited him on several occasions, gave him plants, and eventually donated a major portion of his own collection at the New York Botanical Garden to Avery Island. McIlhenny's Island in South Louisiana is home to the vast Jungle Gardens, and some may recognize McIlhenny as the producer of the world-famous Tabasco hot sauce brand. Extensive notes by Mr. McIlhenny in the estate library on the Island document most of Dr. Small's visits and donations. Dr. Landry reached out to the McIlhenny family, which approved the iris registration.

'Avery Island Boathouse' undoubtedly was among Small's donations, although it is not known if it was the "type specimen" that was the basis of

"*Iris vinicolor*". Dr. Small based the designation on irises collected in the swamps surrounding New Orleans in the late 1920s.

Small was well-known as the Curator of the New York Botanical Garden and the leading authority on the flora of the Southeastern states. While traveling through New Orleans on his way from Florida to Texas in 1925, he was amazed by acres of blooming wild irises. He made multiple trips back to collect many variations growing wild in the wetlands in and near New Orleans. "*Iris vinicolor*" was later determined to be a natural hybrid, probably between *I. fulva* and *I. giganticaerulea*, not a true species.

After a search of the gardens, Dr. Landry determined that 'Avery Island Boathouse' no longer existed on the Island. Unfortunately, the ditch behind the boathouse was washed out over the years, destroying any traces of this plant. Nor were other irises from the Small-McIlhenny collaboration found. On a tour with Dr. Landry, we were able to locate many mass plantings of species *giganticaerulea* variants along with numerous *Iris pseudacorus* and several plantings of light blue *Iris virginica*.

While attending the 2022 Annual Society for Louisiana Irises convention, I delivered a large vat of over twenty-five 'Avery Island Boathouse' rhizomes" to Dr. Landry. He later reported that the iris had been placed back in its original spot where it was planted nearly one hundred years ago.

### 'Catahoula Blue'

After sending in my registration information, I found an article in a 2007 SLI Special Publication that described a blue iris collected from Catahoula Lake by Sidney Conger many years ago. Conger hybridized with this blue iris even though he never registered it or any of its offspring. He called it a *hexagona*, an East Coast species once thought to occur also in Louisiana.

I hope to genetically test 'Catahoula

Blue' to determine if it is the species *hexagona*. A match would verify it as the only *hexagona* ever confirmed to be native to Louisiana.

'Catahoula Blue' is an iris found growing wild on the western side of Catahoula Lake near Jena, LA, in the early 1950s. In 1980, I moved back to my roots in Central Louisiana. For the next 40 years, I worked in the medical industry, calling on hospitals, pharmacies, and doctors' offices in a one-hundred-mile radius of Alexandria. I would often spend time scouring the areas surrounding my territory to admire anything blooming or growing along the way. I met a lady in her mid-80s about three miles from Catahoula Lake with a sign in her yard that read "Plants for Sale (You Dig - 1 Dollar)." She hybridized diploid day-lilies, which I purchased on multiple visits. In the spring of 1981, I noticed two large clumps of a beautiful corn-flower blue Louisiana iris on each corner of her garden. I asked her what it was, and she said it was an iris that had grown on the Jena side of Catahoula Lake. Her husband was an avid duck hunter, and when the lake water was low in the springtime, he worked on his duck blind. Along the banks, he found countless stands of this iris in bloom. He surprised her with two small clumps. Thirty years later, I bought five dollars worth and planted them in buckets, where they grew until I bought my farm.

Forty years ago, I knew of at least 10 locations of this blue iris growing in peoples' yards or ditches and assumed it was a common iris growing everywhere. For many years, thereafter, I searched for the iris growing in my area, but to my dismay, I have only found one other clump in a ditch near Catahoula Lake. I stopped to visit with the property owner, and all she knew was that it was a wild iris that grew on the Lake years ago.



*'Catahoula Blue' resembles I. giganteaerulea but not in height. A clump shows why it has been said to be Iris hexagona, a species now not thought to occur in Louisiana. Genetic tests may provide the answer.*



*Blues are hard colors to capture and reproduce accurately, but 'Catahoula Blue' appears to be a clearer, deep blue than many wild irises.*

In 1958, the Army Corp. of Engineers completed the Diversion Canal that would control the flooding problems between Catahoula Lake and Saline Lake. Unfortunately, it changed an ecosystem created over thousands of years and killed all the wild irises growing on the lake. I have spent many days searching the banks looking for wild stands of this iris and have concluded that it is now extinct on

Catahoula Lake.

This past summer, I met with Patrick O'Connor at the GNOIS island nursery in New Orleans and delivered these two newly registered historic wild irises - 'Catahoula Blue' and 'Avery Island Boathouse' -- in large vats to donate to the Louisiana Iris Species Preservation Project. Hopefully, these historic irises can be preserved through the efforts of the Society.

# Standards & Falls Iris



Standards And Falls Iris was formerly Cindy's Louisiana Iris. Under new owners, the garden moved to the Houston, TX area IN 2022. We are committed to continuously providing high quality rhizomes.

*Louis Jamail, Carol Price & Melinda Nickens*

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Browse the 2023 online catalog for our complete inventory as well as the new introductions. Featuring the Introductions of Cynthia Dufrene, Patrick O'Connor, Joe Musacchia, Ron Betzer and Keith Pendergraft.

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# 2023 SLI Photo Contest!

The first SLI Photo Contest was a success and an excellent beginning for a regular activity. We received some beautiful photos, as seen in the previous issue. We started small with few categories because we were not certain how many participants we would have. With few entrants (and we had only seven in our first year), too many categories would be unworkable.

So, with a year under our belts and more publicity planned for the event, we will expand the categories to a modest degree. As the event grows, more might be added later. With the bloom season coming up soon, please plan to fire up your cameras and aim them at some Louisiana irises.

**This year's Contest will run from May 1 through July 31, 2022.** It's free and open to everyone except contest judges and the contest coordinator. Non-members are welcome to participate, so feel free to encourage your gardening friends.

**THE CONTEST IS LIMITED TO HIGH-RESOLUTION DIGITAL PHOTOS.** They must be pictures that will print well in the Fleur de Lis. No prints or low-resolution digital photos can be accepted. (See the technical specs below).

The winning photo in each category will be published in an issue of the Fleur de Lis during the following year and on the SLI website. Winners will also receive a recent Louisiana iris introduction shipped to any location within the USA and a one-year extension of their SLI membership. Winners submitting photos used as a cover of the Fleur will receive an additional new Louisiana iris introduction.



## HOW TO ENTER

1. There are nine categories in which you can submit entries and an example of each, are:

	Wild Irises	Cultivars	Wildlife
<b>LANDSCAPE</b> Wide garden or naturalistic scenes in which irises are prominent among a range of other plants.	1	2	9
<b>CLUMP</b> One or two varieties in a garden or natural setting; shots that emphasize a limited number of irises in groupings that show all or most of the plants and demonstrates the irises' growth habit.	3	4	Any category with an emphasis on wildlife. Insects, bees, birds and so forth.
<b>MULTIPLE FLOWERS</b> Images that show several individual blooming flowers.	5	6	
<b>SINGLE FLOWER</b> A "glamour" shot of an individual Louisiana iris flower.	7	8	

**IMAGES MAY BE OF EITHER CULTIVAR OR SPECIES LOUISIANA IRISES.** You may submit up to nine photos total for this contest. They may be all entered in one category or separate categories.

2. **Adjust camera settings to obtain high-resolution images.**

Compared to computer monitors, phones, and tablets, printed images must be larger to reproduce well. An image can be beautiful on a screen at 72 pixels/inch, but **our minimum requirement for printing in the Fleur is 300 pixels/inch.**

Select the **highest quality** ("Fine") and **largest size** settings that your camera offers. Different cameras may use other terms for these options. The resulting pictures generally will meet the technical requirements for printing in the Fleur. Depending on your camera, the largest print-size picture possible may vary, but that's okay. Just select Highest Quality and Largest Size for your camera. This applies whether you are using a DSLR camera, a phone camera, or other device. Feel free to crop images to your best advantage. Images shot in raw mode cannot be accepted.



**3. Pictures submitted should be jpg files with a file name format like the examples below:**

Save your pictures giving them a three-part file name divided by periods. Use this format: "category number and title.your picture name or subject.your name"

3Clump-Cultivar.CajunSunrise.JaneDoe.jpg

1Landscape-Wild.RoadsideFulvas.JohnDoe.jpg

## EXAMPLES IN EACH CATEGORY



**1** Landscape Wild



**2** Landscape Cultivars



**3** Clump Wild



**4** Clump Cultivar



**5** Multiple Wild



**6** Multiple Cultivar



**7** Single Wild



**8** Single Cultivar



**9** Wildlife

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# What Do My Irises Need Now?

## Enjoy!

Your principal task during bloom season is enjoying your garden and irises. Undoubtedly, winter weather significantly reduced visible weeds, and most will stay in obedience until later in the spring. Hopefully, this means a maximum of enjoyment and a minimum of upkeep during iris bloom season.

Visitors will enjoy your plants, also, so you might plan to invite a few over. Opportunities for gardeners to see the irises are too few and too fleeting in many cases.

Early spring before the bloom is an excellent time to refresh your mulch. The irises will appreciate it in the long run, and a nice, even spread of pine bark or some other material will help suppress weeds and provide a consistent, finished look to the beds. A little goes a long way toward making your garden feel visitor-ready.

### Rust

The early part of the season is the time to look for developing rust on your iris foliage. Rust is one of the relatively few problems to confront irises. If you see a little, the best response is to remove infected foliage immediately and banish it to your garbage can, not your compost heap. You also can spray with a fungicide. Fungicides are mainly preventive but may be curative also. Rust spores will have difficulty taking hold with the leaves coated with a fungicide. For this preventive treatment, spray earlier rather than later after too much rust is evident. When rust starts, it moves fast. If you were able to cut out old yellowed foliage last fall and did a thorough garden clean-up, you may have little or no rust trouble this spring.

The *Fleur* ran an article on rust a few issues back, and you can find it online. The Home and Iris Culture pages of the Greater New Orleans Iris Society website provide the link. [www.LouisianaIrisGNOIS.com](http://www.LouisianaIrisGNOIS.com)

### Make a Cross

If you think you might try your hand at hybridizing, this is a great time to plan and think about good parents. Of course, you can always play a spur-of-the-moment hunch, but it's fun to think about the attributes of your irises and what might make them a good parent. What characteristics do you want to transmit to the offspring? A color or variation? More flowers on a stalk or better spacing that displays the flowers more cleanly and gracefully? Do you want fancy, ruffled creations or a more tra-

ditional look? It's your choice, although there is no guarantee that you will get what you hope for. Sometimes, however, the surprises common in hybridizing are very pleasant ones. Not knowing what you will get is part of the fun.

Hybridizing is not for everyone, but it is easy to experiment, and you can do as little or as much as you want. The price is right, too. Moving a little pollen from one flower to another costs nothing. You must be willing to plant and tend to the seedlings and accept deferred gratification since you will not see a bloom on a new iris for two years. But you will have plenty of other garden tasks to keep you occupied until you see the wonders your seeds produce.

If you need help with the mechanics of making a cross, take a look at a video on bearded irises. Have your browser search for "Iris Breeding at Stout Gardens." Bearded iris structure is slightly different than Louisianas, but there is no essential difference in the reproductive parts, and the video is a clear explanation of a simple process. For a discussion of how to go from seed pod to seedlings, check out this page: <https://tinyurl.com/4xvns893>

### Observation

For many, spring is a hectic season, and getting caught up in other activities is easy. But make an effort to look closely at your irises. The big picture is beautiful, but there is a lot to be learned by close inspection. In part, careful observation supports good hybridizing decisions, but even if that enterprise does not appeal to you, it leads to a better appreciation of the characteristics that distinguish the best Louisiana irises. It will enable you to evaluate what you have and what you want to add to your garden.

One way to approach it is to think like an iris judge, particularly one engaged in Garden Judging. Many iris events, such as conventions and regional meetings, offer formal training classes for garden judging and exhibition (show) judging. You don't have to intend to become an accredited iris judge to attend one of these training classes, and they are highly recommended if the opportunity presents itself. The topics covered include all the attributes judges look for in evaluating irises. The classes also offer a chance to interact with accredited judges and other growers who want to learn.

It's not that a judge can tell you what's beautiful or what you should like, but they do know about features that you may not think to look for in your garden. For example, how many blooming positions on a stalk does a particular cultivar have? Just three? Or five or even six? And are there one or two flowers at each bloom position? Plus, is the shape of the stalk configured so that the flowers open cleanly, or are they obstructed? Do the flower parts have good substance or are they thin, flimsy, and likely to fold up more quickly? These are things that, together, affect the number and duration of iris blooms in



your garden. With good culture and plant selection, you can have more flowers to enjoy each year in the same space. It's all food for thought, and a dip into the standards used by judges can sharpen your eye in the garden.

You might want to look at the manual on Louisiana iris judging from the American Iris Society. It contains the standards the judges should use to assess the irises. You can download a copy for free. Here's the least complicated link we could find. <https://tinyurl.com/yyk-pb7wv> It comes with a manual for judging irises in shows also, which involves a somewhat different set of standards than garden judging. But that's a story for another time.

### Get Out

While we are being pushy and shoveling out advice in big chunks, add the suggestion that you seek other places to see irises in bloom. Friends' gardens, public plantings, in the wild. Whatever opportunities you can find. The window of bloom season is too brief, and this opportunity has to be seized while it is there. It's too easy to wait until the downside of the bloom season and then tell yourself it's too late and not worth the effort.

The main thing is to enjoy some irises this spring. It will be summer soon enough.

## Our Authors

*Thanks to our authors in this issue.*

**Patrick Fett**, from Pollock in Central Louisiana, introduced himself in his piece. We hope Patrick will write for the *Fleur* again. He has a long-standing interest in Louisiana irises.

**Monica Martens**, from League City, TX is an SLI Board member and the lead for our HIPS project. She wrote for the previous issue, and we expect more from Monica as our quest to preserve historic irises picks up steam.

## Welcome New Members

Rebecca Frost  
*Pearlington, MS*

Scott Hall,  
*Germantown, TN*

Lana Corll  
*New Orleans, LA*

Lorene Robinson  
*Jackson, TN*

## Donations

### In Memory of Paul Gossett

Robert Treadway  
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**We thank you all!**

## Give A Membership We'll Provide A Gift Certificate!



Send your payment for a membership to the treasurer, along with contact information for the recipient. SLI will provide a printed or digital Gift Certificate for you to send, or we'll send it for you.

**See page 22 for membership rates and other.**



## **The SLI Louisiana Iris Checklist on a Flash Drive. \$15 for delivery in the U.S.**

The new SLI Checklist is illustrated with photos of many of the cultivars from the 1920s - 2021. It is searchable by cultivar attributes such as name, date of introduction, hybridizer, parentage and more. The Checklist contains descriptions of the irises provided at registration.

Although the SLI Checklist is in PC format only, the flash drive contains an additional file that enables free download of File-maker Pro Go from the App Store, which allows use of the Checklist on an iPhone or iPad.

**Order from the SLI Treasurer Ron Killingsworth, 10329 Caddo Lake Road, Mooringsport, LA 71060.**

## **TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS**

### **Has Your Address Changed?**

Please notify the Treasurer, Ron Killingsworth. The U. S. Postal Service will not forward your copy. Address on page 2.

### **Is It Time To Renew Your Membership?**

It is if you received a notice with your *Fleur* or a postcard later. The membership rates and instructions are on page 27.

# Commercial Directory

## Aitken's Salmon Creek Garden

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[flowerfantasy.net](http://flowerfantasy.net)

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from the website.

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Primm Springs, TN 38476

## Louisiana Iris Farms

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[louisianairis.com](http://louisianairis.com)

Wholesale & Retail  
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*Featuring introductions  
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Lafayette, LA 70598

## Redbud Lane Iris Garden

*Louisiana &  
Bearded Irises*

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wilhoit142@yahoo.com

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Kansas, IL 61933

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square.site](http://diversity-acres.square.site)

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Woodbridge, VA 22191

## Blue Monday Louisiana Iris

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Irises for sale this fall will  
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## Three Shovels Farm

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St. Matthews, SC 29135

**AMERICAN IRIS SOCIETY**

SLI has elected to participate as a Section within the American Iris Society. Sections generally deal with the other types of irises, Spurias, Siberian, Japanese, & so forth.

SLI members are not automatically members of AIS, and a relatively few choose to join that organization. AIS membership is well worth considering, however. The organization publishes a beautiful quarterly Bulletin, IRISES, that covers all types of irises. While a small percentage of the pages deal directly with Louisiana's, there is much to be learned by an appreciation of the Genus of which they are a part.

There are many benefits of AIS membership that you can discover by exploring their website: [www.irises.org](http://www.irises.org) Membership information is there, including an electronic membership at a lower price, \$15. Regular individual AIS dues are: Single Annual, \$30; Dual Annual, \$35. Dues can be paid online via credit or debit card. Checks can be mailed to: Pam Messer, AIS Membership Secretary, P.O. Box 6, Huxley, IA 50124 USA. E-mail: [aismemsec@irises.org](mailto:aismemsec@irises.org)



**Membership Information**

Society for Louisiana Irises

Founded 1941

**MEMBERSHIP**

To join or renew membership, send dues along with your name, address, telephone number and e-mail address (if any) to Ron Killingsworth, SLI Treasurer, 10329 Caddo Lake Road, Mooringsport, LA 71060. Make checks payable to the Society for Louisiana Irises.

Membership begins the month your application is received. If you are renewing, the renewal will extend your membership by the number of years you chose to renew. If your current expiration date is 09/\*\* and you renew for three years in July (07), your new membership will be 09/\*\*+ three years. You do not lose any months by renewing your membership early. If you are late in renewing, the renewal will be applied to the month in which your membership expired.

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**Society for Louisiana Irises Membership Form**



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 Mooringsport, LA 71060

# Society for Louisiana Irises Storefront

## ***The Louisiana Iris: The Taming Of An American Wildflower*      \$30.00**

*Contributing Editors: Marie Caillet, J. Farron Campbell, Kevin C. Vaughn, and Dennis Vercher*

*Details: 254 pp, 111 color photos, 5 watercolors, 21 b/w photos, 14 line drawings, 11 tables, hardcover.*

This authoritative treatment by The Society for Louisiana Irises is based on the first edition published by the Society in 1988, but it is considerably expanded. It covers every aspect of the history, botany, and development of these distinctive irises, with particular emphasis on the newest hybrids, hybridizing techniques, and cultural practices, and also includes suggestions for their use in the landscape and in floral arrangements. It should serve to introduce a wider gardening public to these colorful and versatile flowers.



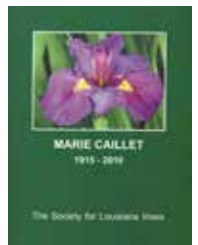
## ***Special Publication of the Society for Louisiana Irises - The History of Hybridizing (2007)*      \$5.00 plus \$2.00 for shipping within U.S.**

This Special Publication of the Society for Louisiana Irises is a 100-page summary of how the "ditch irises" of Louisiana have been tamed and introduced into American gardens. Contents include informative articles on such early pioneers as Mary Swords DeBallion, Caroline Dormon, and Percy Viosca; the Shreveport and Lake Charles groups, the California hybridizers, and a wide variety of other contributors to the development of the Louisiana iris. Includes 30 color photographs of outstanding cultivars. Paperbound.



## ***Special Publication of the Society for Louisiana Irises honoring Marie Caillet (1915-2010)*      \$10 plus \$3 shipping within US**

This is a very high quality publication that pays tribute to Marie Caillet, a charter member of SLI, longtime editor of the SLI newsletter, and the "grandmother" of SLI for many of us. This is a 52 page 8.5 x 10 publication in full color with many pictures of Marie, species Louisiana irises, Marie Caillet Cup Winners with pictures, a listing of SLI Distinguished Merit Award winners from 1989 to 2010, and memories of Marie written by several members of SLI.



## ***Louisiana Iris Hybridizers 1985-2010*      \$5 plus \$2 shipping within US**

This is a paper bound booklet consisting of 99 pages of color pictures, the Marie Caillet Cup Winners from 2001 to 2010 with color pictures, the Mary Swords Debaillon Medal winners from 1986 to 2010 with color pictures and many articles written by the hybridizers during the period 1985 to 2010. This is a companion book for the Special Publication of 2007, which contains information on the hybridizers from the beginning to 1984.



## ***Special Publication of the Society for Louisiana Irises 1995*      \$5 plus \$2 shipping within US**

This paper bound special publication, edited by Marie Caillet and Joseph Mertzweiler, consist of 86 pages and contains "a half-century of progress", information on hybridizers, the development of the tetraploid LA irises, information on LA irises in Australia, culture of LA irises and many beautiful pictures of LA irises. There is a limited supply of this publication remaining so get them while they last.

## ***The SLI Louisiana Iris Checklist on a Flash Drive. \$15 for delivery in the U.S.***

The 2021 SLI Checklist is illustrated with photos of many of the cultivars. It permits searches by cultivar attributes such as name, date of introduction, hybridizer, parentage and much more. The Checklist contains names, descriptions, breeder/introducer and parentage of iris cultivars from the 1920's through the present.

Although the SLI Checklist is in PC format only, the flash drive contains an additional file that enables the free download of Filemaker Pro Go from the App Store, which in turn allows use of the Checklist on an iPhone or iPad.



*Any of these products & other Iris materials can be ordered from the SLI Treasurer Ron Killingsworth.  
For shipment outside US please contact Ron Killingsworth directly for pricing*



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