



Fleur de Lis

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From The President

Mark Schexnayder

Welcome!

First, a bit to introduce myself.

The Society for Louisiana Irises was formed amidst a great concern for the future of the Louisiana irises in the wild, particularly the newly discovered Abbeville Red, *Iris nelsonii*. My major Professor, Andrew “Andy” Friedrichs, was from the line of Tulane-trained naturalists, including Percy Viosca (SLI Charter member) and George Beyers, among others. “Mr. Andy” worked with Viosca during his time with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF). My professional career included being the Director of the LDWF Marine Laboratory on Grand Terre Island, which they were both a major part of getting built. Over time the Lab was damaged by storms and moved to Grand Isle.

Inspired by my readings of Viosca and Caroline Dormon, I started seeking out some of the named, collected varieties from these two historical figures. Rusty McSparrin wrote me a very nice note explaining that many of these varieties, like ‘Cardinalis’ (MacMillan, 1943) and ‘Ice Angel’ (Faggard, 1991), are long gone. She did send ‘Her Highness’, ‘Dixie Deb’, and others, and I was hooked!

Preservation of older cultivars and the unique collected clones of species is an area where SLI should focus our actions. Programs such as the Species Preservation Project are essential to understanding and preserving genetic diversity. While efforts were started over ten years ago on *Iris nelsonii* habitat preservation, there has not been much done in the last ten years to move this forward. Working with UL Lafayette

and the appropriate conservation agencies, SLI should lead a rekindled effort to preserve and protect the Abbeville swamp and the only plant found uniquely in Louisiana, *Iris nelsonii*!

The created cultivars are incredible and give gardeners a wide pallet of forms and colors that survive better in garden settings. On the cultivar side, the growing interest in HIPS, the Historic Iris Preservation Society, is an encouraging sign, and board member Monica Martens is taking a lead role on behalf of SLI.

In addition, the long overdue interest in stormwater management has created a new niche for our beloved species: bioswales and rain gardens! The Greater New Orleans Iris Society has donated and planted approximately 4,000 Louisiana irises this year into such projects and is not finished. This trend bodes well for the exciting development of small, regional Louisiana iris nurseries and larger, established ones, which will serve the interests of our members who grow all types of Louisiana irises, new and old.

During my tenure, I will work with the board and our members to rekindle our 80-plus-year relationship with the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, other universities, conservation agencies, and groups. Using the UL Ira Nelson Horticulture Center as a base, we should advocate for and proactively work toward habitat conservation and restoration of the Abbeville swamps where *Iris nelsonii* is found. We are lucky to have the full support of UL Lafayette and the Nelson Horticulture Center available to us. Our focus will be to work to rebuild the UL Lafayette/SLI connection, continue to improve public education and outreach about Louisiana irises and assist commercial growers to thrive.

-Mark



Mark in the Abbeville Swamp, home of the Abbeville Reds, *I. nelsonii*.

NOTICE

Effective October 19, 2022, Daphne Sawyer resigned as SLI President. The constitution of the Society (Article IV, Section 7) provides that "a vacancy in the office of the president shall be filled by the vice-president..."

Accordingly, Vice President Mark Schexnayder becomes the new President of the Society for Louisiana Irises.

Stephanie Rice Introduces Herself

Welcome to SLI's new board member from Inman, SC

My name is Stephanie Rice and I am the granddaughter of Everette Lineberger. I was born in Johnson City, Tennessee in October 1988. I've lived in Tennessee, Virginia, Kentucky, South Carolina, Florida, and North Carolina (where I met my husband, Chris) and finally back to my home, Inman, South Carolina.

We moved around quite a bit while growing up because my father was a traveling salesman. It worked out well because my mother was a teacher and had the summers off with us, so we were able to travel. Wherever we lived, we always spent summers in Inman with my grandmother and granddaddy. I remember running from the back of the house to the smell of blueberry pancakes and bacon like it was yesterday. Now my two children, Jillian – 9, and Everette – 4 get to experience what my childhood was like, and nowadays not everyone has 30 acres that they can let their children “free range” on.

When I was around my daughter's age, I started helping outside with my granddaddy. Despite being a chubby girl who hated the southern heat, my work ethic never swayed. I think I worked for \$5 a day once I got into my pre-teen years. It was always a family effort working with irises, my grandmother, mother, and I would all write names on the irises that were being prepped by my granddaddy. Sometimes writing what felt like 200 of the same name, over, and over again. It is still a family effort to this day. My granddaddy kept only 40 cultivars when he downsized to make it easier on upkeep. Before downsizing, he had 700 cultivars of all different types of irises, 500 cultivars of daylilies, and 20 cultivars of peonies. He retired in 1990 at 62 years old and decided he needed to stay busy. 1988 was his first catalog, which conveniently enough was the same year as my birth. During that time he was very active in

selling irises he shipped some to Alaska and even Europe.

A little over 4 years ago, I took over the reins and started building back up the number of irises in hopes to bring it back to its glory years. I have been gifted so many irises just to help me get started. Bill and Marsha Jolly are the culprits for my love of both Louisiana irises and chickens. Irises and chickens, best gift ever, right? Stan Gray also gifted me over 75 LAs to plant, and they took off this year! Louisiana irises are my absolute favorite (and not just because I am a die-hard LSU fan) but because my first experience getting to name an iris was naming an LA after my daughter, Jillian.

The wonderful thing about having a “famous” granddaddy, especially in the iris world, is that he has taught me everything I know in regard to all things that grow. I often refer to him as my “Gardening Yoda”. I cannot wait to see what the future holds for this property and everything I get to grow on it. I am hoping to not only bring us into a commercial business but to also start hybridizing some irises of my own. It is my honor to continue the Lineberger Legacy here at Quail Hill Gardens. 🌿



Stephanie Rice

A DEEPER DIVE INTO *I. HEXAGONA*

While *I. hexagona* has been ignored in relative terms, Brian Shamblin's article in this issue puts it on the front burner. Several interesting treatments of the species are available online. Go to the Greater New Orleans Iris Society's "Hexagona Page." <http://www.louisianairisg-nois.com/Species/Hexagona/>

Frank Chowning, a towering figure in SLI's past, argues that *I. hexagona* historically occurred in Louisiana and he explains why. This is a minority view today. And Joseph Mertzweiller, another historic leader, presents a direct comparison of the performance of *I. hexagona* and *I. giganticaerulea* in Baton Rouge. Look for a future article by Brian Shamblin and Charles Perilloux on the rescue of numerous clones of *I. hexagona* in the Vic Lambou collection in Tallahassee.

Think Lafayette in April

Planning is underway for a "mini-convention" organized around the Festival des Fleurs on the UL Lafayette campus on April 14-15, 2023. Save the date and watch for details.

The main features in planning include:

- Plant sales at the Festival to support the Society in lieu of auctions
- No formal show, but an exhibit of cultivars and species at the Festival brought by members
- Open gardens, including the new Moncus Park
- A General Membership Meeting to conduct Society business, including elections. May be zoomed to those unable to attend
- No formal banquets, but we will be working on a get-together at a restaurant or a garden picnic, possibly around Cypress Lake on the UL Lafayette campus
- Hotel reservations "on your own" but we will look for a hotel that will give a group rate
- Transportation to be arranged depending on attendance

Expect more information via email and on the SLI website before the first of the year.

www.louisianas.org



In Memorium

Paul W. Gossett, 1944 - 2022

Paul W. Gossett, a former president of SLI and activist in the American Iris Society passed away on August 23, 2022, in his hometown of Tulsa.

Paul was deeply involved in his community and served as a member of many organizations, including the Tulsa Iris Society (of which he was president for multiple terms) and the Tulsa Council of Federated Gardens Club. He also held various positions in his church throughout the years.

The American Iris Society selected Paul W. Gossett as the recipient of the AIS Gold Medal in 2014. The Gold Medal is the highest honorary award given by AIS in recognition of extraordinary, continuous, and dedicated service to the society. Paul's Gold Medal was only the 18th awarded by AIS since the organization was formed in 1920. Marie Caillet was the 13th recipient of the Gold Medal in 2004. SLI President Gossett presented her medal at a reception in her garden in Little Elm, TX, in the summer of 2005.

Paul's seemingly tireless work included serving as a Director on the AIS Board for 14 years and Convention Liaison beginning in 1998 and lasting until a few years ago. As Convention Liaison, he handled the often-complex work of coordinating with hotels and local host societies, ensuring spring conventions and fall AIS board meetings ran smoothly. Paul also was co-chair of the joint AIS-SLI convention in New Orleans in 2018.

In addition to heading the Society for Louisiana Irises, Paul served as President of the Historic Iris Preservation Society (HIPS). He was a Regional Vice President of AIS Region 22.

Paul was preceded in death by his parents, father, Wayne Lee Gossett, mother, Naomi Ruth Gossett (Davidson), and his six siblings, sisters, Lorraine, Anna, Gloria, Linda, Marie, and brother, Gary. Paul is survived by a total of 64 nieces, nephews, and cousins, as well as many loving friends.



Paul Wayne Gossett

Hunting Hexagona

Elusive Iris hexagona and its rediscovery in Georgia

By Brian Shamblin

Iris *hexagona* has a complicated story. It was the first of the Louisiana iris species to be formally described by Thomas Walter in 1788 based upon South Carolina plants. Despite this early history, the species is perhaps the least known of the Louisiana iris series.

Disagreement over taxonomy presents a major challenge for putting historical data in context. John K. Small argued that there was sufficient diversity to recognize multiple species among these plants: *hexagona*, *rivularis*, *kimballiae*, *savannarum*, and *giganticaerulea*. However, many subsequent botanists have treated all these as a single species: *hexagona*.

Other authorities, including Robert Foster in 1937, have proposed a middle path. Under this scenario, all Florida and Atlantic coastal plain plants are *hexagona*, but with two varieties: variety *hexagona* in South Carolina, Georgia, and Dixie and Taylor counties in the Big Bend region of Florida, and variety *savannarum* in the remainder of the Florida peninsula. In 1924, Small noted:

“*Iris hexagona* is confined to the southern Atlantic and Gulf coast strip, but its exact range is not yet known; from the coasts of South Carolina and Georgia it passes diagonally across northeastern Florida to near the angle of the Gulf Coast, whence it extends westward.”

Recognition of species depends on how distinct plants are ecologically (their habitats and niches) and genetically. A recent ecological and genetic analysis led by Dr. Evgeny Mavrodiev of the University of Florida reaffirmed Small’s treatment of this species complex through inclusion of *hexagona* from Dixie County, Florida, but no plants rep-



Top, the 1924 Addisonia plate depicting the Mary Eaton painting of *Iris hexagona* commissioned by Dr. John K. Small, New York Botanical Garden. Below, a photograph of a South Carolina *I. hexagona*, numbered H04 in the SLI Species Preservation Project collection.

resenting the South Carolina type locality were included because none could be located. Adding appropriate genetic and ecological data for these “northern” *hexagona* is critical to understanding where they fit relative to the other *hexagona*-types.

Hexagona in South Carolina

SLI currently grows two specimens of South Carolina *hexagona* in the Species Preservation Project collection. The first, H04, was sent to Joseph Mertzweiler by John Wood. It was collected from the roadside in the low country north of Charleston sometime in the mid 1960s.

The second, H09, was purchased from Daniel Payne’s native plant nursery, Naturescapes of Beaufort, in 2021. Daniel rescued the plants from a natural swampy area prior to development on Hilton Head Island in the 1990s. We haven’t yet had the opportunity to bloom these two accessions side by side or perform any genetic testing, so we’re unsure if they are distinct clones.

The distribution and status of *hexagona* north of Florida is uncertain. Many herbarium records are unverified and often don’t contain accompanying specimen photographs. Several with photographs appear to be misidentified *virginica* imposters. For the species account in the Flora of North America, Norlan Henderson states: “*Iris hexagona* is one of the rarest of all our native irises. We had seen herbarium specimens from seven localities in five counties in South Carolina. In searching for living plants at each site, we found that six of the seven are now under the water of Lake Moultrie.” Lake Moultrie is the third largest lake in South Carolina and was created by damming of the Cooper River in the 1940s. During the same period, damming of the Santee River created Lake Marion, South Carolina’s largest lake. These impoundments drowned over 100,000 acres of riparian and marsh habitats. Extensive subsequent searches in the South Carolina coastal plain by



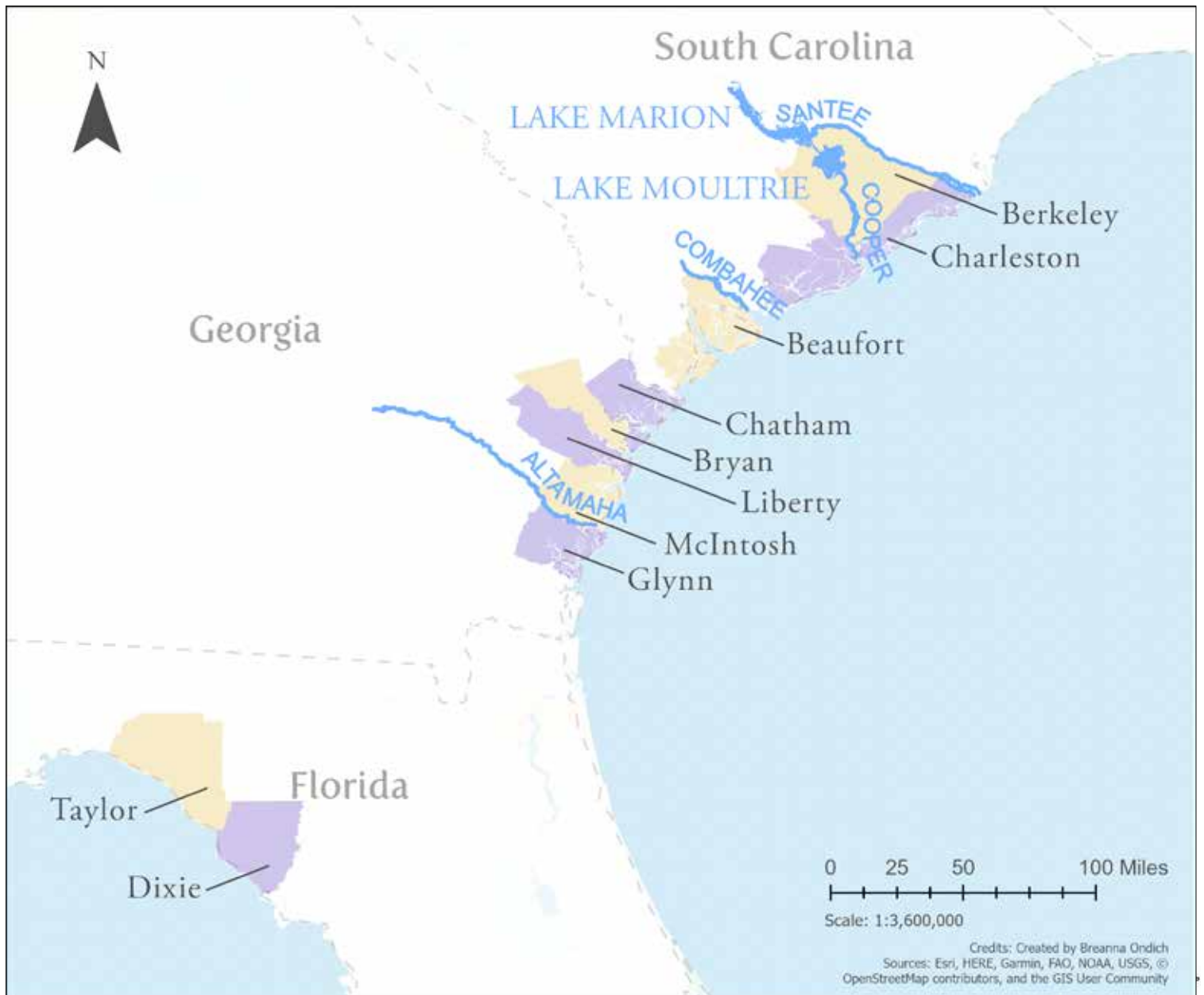
Iris hexagona found in a Georgia swamp in McIntosh County, South of Savannah.
 PHOTO BY MAGGIE VAN CANTFORT

several botanists and interested lay people, including Norlan Henderson, failed to locate any remaining *Iris hexagona* in the wild. The neotype specimen for *hexagona* was collected from Hampton Plantation, Charleston County, South Carolina in 1993. The species is considered of conservation concern in S.C., so precise locality data are withheld from herbarium records to protect population integrity.

I picked up the trail for *Iris hexagona* in South Carolina in April 2018. I searched along Wambaw Creek at Hampton Plantation State Historic Site. I saw large swathes of *Iris virginica* along the edges of the creek, but I didn't find *hexagona*

anywhere. I left wondering if I was looking in the wrong places.

In 2020, I reached out to Dr. John Nelson, Curator Emeritus of the A.C. Moore Herbarium at the University of South Carolina, who in turn connected me with Keith Bradley, the state botanist for South Carolina Department of Natural Resources. Together, we have revisited South Carolina herbarium records. Most of the herbarium specimens that have been verified as *hexagona* are from areas that are now underwater or otherwise developed. One exception is a site where it was collected in the 1950s in Beaufort County. As most of this property is private land, I was limited to scanning from





of *Iris virginica*, but only a single Louisiana iris. This clump occurred at a site under restoration, and based on where they were growing, I suspected they had been planted. Georgia Department of Natural Resources confirmed my suspicion, and the paper trail ultimately led to plants of Florida origin. It was a disappointing dead end.

Georgia native plants Facebook group to put out the inquiry. A few Louisiana iris appeared, but they always led to dead ends. One plant turned out to be cultivated, purchased from Daniel Payne at a native plant sale. A few others were plants people had dug in Florida and transplanted to their gardens in Georgia.

Beyond searching, I also joined a

As I was scrolling on April 19, 2022... Eureka! Maggie Van Cantfort, who

the roadsides in April 2022. Patches of *virginica* were abundant, but no *hexagona* was apparent anywhere. I also revisited Hampton Plantation during this trip, including hiking all available trails in the vicinity of the creek and cypress swamp. Once again, I found *virginica* in abundance but no *hexagona*.

Hexagona In Georgia

The existence of *hexagona* in the Georgia coastal plain has been assumed by some investigators given its reported presence in South Carolina and north-west Florida, but records are sparse. During an extensive review of herbarium specimens in eastern U.S. university herbaria, Henderson located a few records in southwestern Georgia but none from the Atlantic coast of Georgia. While digging through digitized records, I ran across a University of South Florida herbarium specimen collected as *hexagona* by John Bright, May 23, 1930 “in bogs north of Darien” in McIntosh County, Georgia. Oddly, it was reclassified as *savannarum*. This accession looked like the real deal. I visited this area and other cypress swamps in Chatham, Glynn, Bryan, and McIntosh counties each spring from 2018 through 2022. These were all public lands that were accessible via roads or hiking trails. I saw thousands of clumps



Cypress knees and arrowhead (*Sagittaria* spp.) testify to the wetland habitat of *Iris hexagona*.
PHOTOS IN THE WILD AND AT UPPER LEFT BY MAGGIE VAN CANTFORT.



Iris hexagona growing among spider lilies at water's edge in McIntosh County, GA.



PHOTO BY CAITLIN O'NEAL

works for Altamaha Riverkeeper and is based on the Georgia coast, had posted images of two irises she had photographed in the wild, asking if they were really distinct. Caitlin O'Neal, an Altamaha Riverkeeper volunteer with Maggie had noticed that two separate species seemed to be represented. I was able to confirm that one was *virginica* but the other looked like *hexagona*. I reached out to Maggie, and she and Caitlin returned to the site the following day to take more photos and collect some material.

A few days later, I made the five-hour trek back down to the coast to meet

Maggie and collect a few plants. Small described the habitats for *hexagona* as: “permanently wet ditches, in swamps, and in shallow slow-flowing streams. It is equally at home in the full sunlight or in the half shade of shrubs and trees.” As you can see from the photos, these plants were all growing in slow-moving water along creek edges in cypress swamp and peripheral habitats. They are growing in several inches of water, much wetter portions of the habitat than where I had been searching. The plants in this population occur in small, isolated patches. Based on slight variations in flower color and pattern, it seems plausible that each of these patches represents a unique genet, a clonal colony made up of genetically identical individuals. Later in the summer, Maggie took a trip back out via kayak to collect seed pods. We think some *virginica* pods made it into the mix, but between us, we are growing out about 60 seedlings for further evaluation. Getting Georgia *hexagona* into the hands of the Species Preservation Project stewards, particularly Stan Gray’s collection at the Coastal Georgia Botanical Gardens, is a top priority.

Now that we have a better idea of where to look, more targeted drone and kayak-based surveys are on the agenda for 2023. I have reached back out to the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources to share our preliminary findings from Georgia. We’re also in contact with land managers in Beaufort County, South Carolina, and I am hopeful that we can get permission from conservation-minded landowners for surveys in the spring. Survey goals will include documenting distribution, collecting leaf samples for genetic analyses of clonality and population structure, and, if feasible, collecting a small number of rhizomes and/or seed pods to add clones to the Species Preservation Project collection.

After considerable fruitless searches by numerous investigators over decades, many feared this species may be lost in South Carolina and Georgia. I am now more hopeful than ever that *hexagona* persists but has been hiding in plain sight. 🦋

About the Author



Brian Shamblin is a research scientist studying conservation genetics. He has grown

Louisiana iris for about 20 years. He maintains one of the Species Preservation Project steward collections as well as growing and hybridizing garden cultivars. Brian is a board member of SLI

SEE PAGE 4 FOR LINKS TO PREVIOUS ARTICLES ON I. HEXAGONA.

In Styles

Panache Among the Louisiana Irises

By Monica Martens



A blooming bearded iris emasculated to reveal its style arms.

Kristi G, an outstanding garden iris on a rainy day.

When my husband and I moved from the Rocky Mountains region to the Gulf Coast of Texas, our iris growing experience was limited to tall-bearded irises. However, we had tended an extensive collection, knew the local and regional growers, and gathered with friends annually for an iris-viewing day. After moving from plant zone 5b to the wetter and hotter coastal climate of zone 9a, we became acquainted with the Louisiana iris, the primary type for this region. Had we not embraced this new-to-us flower, we might never have become aware of the set of flower parts or segments called the “style arms,” or “styles,” and the beauty they contribute to cultivars.

People shopping for irises – tall bearded, Louisiana, and otherwise – look at the color combinations of the standards and falls. These outer and inner petals are the focus of plant descriptions in catalogs and are the primary considerations of gardeners seeking enhanced color variety in their collections. However, three little reproductive parts in the center of the iris, the style arms, also lend a hand in making cultivars distinct from each other. But I rarely hear people

talking about choosing irises because of their styles.

In fact, as a tall-bearded iris gardener, I was not even aware of the style arms because the standards always covered them up. Recently I visited friends in the northeast, just as a tall-bearded iris was blooming. I carefully peeled open the ruffled purple standards that reached to the sky to reveal striking light orange style arms with a bold purple line through the center. Without my prodding, this part of the flower would have remained unseen by my friends, who, like me, had never looked inside. The style arms are always visible with Louisiana irises because the standards do not close around them so tightly. The standards usually fan or flare outward, have an open dinner plate form, or even droop.

As I gained more experience tending Louisiana irises, I noticed unique aspects of style arms, and I began considering why I valued this part of the flower. The following characteristics represent a few ways in which styles can contribute to the overall distinction of a cultivar: (a) they can be strikingly bright compared to the standards and falls; (b) they can

add a complimentary tone; (c) they can offer a contrasting dimension of color; or (d) they can be uniquely striped or exhibit another color pattern. Here are some examples.

Brightness: A Flashlight in the Daytime

‘Kristi G’ (Mertzweiller, 1987) is a reliable bloomer that I depend upon to add a pink dimension to my Louisiana iris beds. Pink and red cultivars are perhaps my favorites. But when I look at this flower, my eyes are always drawn to the bright style arms with a yellow/green hue. Collectively, these little parts are like a flashlight shining upwards towards the sky.

Style arms can be even brighter, as in this example, a surprise iris found in the Louisiana beds that I tend for the Discovery Garden of the Galveston County Master Gardeners. Its cultivar name is unknown, but I affectionately call it “Pop of Style.” It reminds me of sunlight for its color and popcorn for its assertiveness. Arguably the deep purple color of the standards and falls contributes to the feeling that the style arms are taking center stage.

'Heavenly Glow' (Morgan, 1988) has received accolades for its style arms. In this notable case, the rich green styles starkly contrast with the orange standards and falls. 'Friends' Song' (Haymon, 2004) is similar. Its green style arms are especially striking against shades of deep pink in the petals.

Complementary Tone

Some cultivars have standards and falls that are ever so slightly different shades of the same color. If the contrast is pronounced, they are classified as bitones. Consider an example photographed during the 2022 SLI convention at Louisiana Iris Farms. The style arms of 'Sweet Miriam' (Hutchinson, 1998) remind me of a light-colored peach nestled within petals with discernible pink, peach, yellow, and cream hues. In cultivars like this one, the three layers – styles, standards, and falls – contrast and blend tones and colors as a team to produce a beautiful overall effect.

Complementary Dimension

In addition to pink and red cultivars, I gravitate toward pale blues, so I was happy to witness the appearance in my garden of a pale lavender/cream iris with ruffled flowers. I noticed especially the flat buttercream color of the style arms set against the veining of the standards and falls. The color quality of the styles reminded me of the thick tone of a tall-bearded iris I grew years ago, aptly named 'Got Milk' (Aitken, 2004). Furthermore, this Louisiana iris demonstrates alternating colors – pale lavender standards sandwiched between buttercream in the style arms and falls. It's almost as if the outer and inner parts are meant to match.

Stripes

Although a small element of an iris flower, striped styles can have a bold effect. 'Rings of Romeo' (Betzer, 2020) offers an example, also photographed at Louisiana Iris Farms this spring. The style arms showcase red stripes on a yellow background, echoing a similar contrast in the petals themselves.

Another stripe combination in several cultivars combines yellow, purple, and green. 'Exquisite Lady' (Owen, 1986) is



Above from top: "Pop of Style", a nicknamed cultivar with styles that seem to reach out; the long and deservedly popular Richard Morgan iris 'Heavenly Glow'; and the unique 'Friends' Song' by Dorman Haymon, with green styles you can't miss.

Above from top: 'Sweet Miriam' at Jim Leonard's Louisiana Iris Farms shows a pleasing blend of color tones; a lightly veined, very pale lavender with contrasting buttercream styles; and Ron Betzer's bold 'Rings Of Romeo' with reddish striping on a yellow background.



one example. The style arms have a yellow center line offset by purple stripes with a green edge. The styles of ‘Cedar Bayou’ (Strawn, 1993) also have a striped appearance, effectively using pink and purple.

In some cases, a striped pattern extends just across the middle portion of the style, bordered by a solid color on either side. ‘Gentilly’ (O’Connor, 2004) offers a fine example. The striped effect fades into darker pink at the tips and green at the flower’s center.

Finding Cultivars With Interesting Style Arms

Adding cultivars with unique styles is as simple as noticing this part of the flower and considering what dimension it can add to your collection of Louisiana irises. Style arms come in various sizes and shapes, from long to short and wide to narrow. Some style arms are frilly at the tips. In some cases, they are darker than the flower parts, opposite the flash-light effect.

If styles are mentioned in a catalog description, it likely signals a unique color, particular form, or a feature that distinguishes the iris from similar cultivars. I certainly pay attention to the style arms when inventorying my blooms each year to ensure I correctly describe my collection. If you are looking for a place to begin, simply notice the brightness, contrasting shades, complementary tones, and patterns of striping found in style arms. Perhaps you will discover something new and unique to add to your collection.



About the Author

Monica Martens, Ed.D., is an iris enthusiast, Board Member of SLI, and Galveston County Master Gardener. She enjoys sharing knowledge about Louisiana irises with others, hearing people's stories about the irises they grow and share with others, and learning about the history of iris cultivation.

From top, Owen’s ‘Exquisite Lady’, one of the first edged cultivars; Kirk Strawn’s ‘Cedar Bayou’; and Patrick O’Connor’s ‘Gentilly’.

'Welcome' To Our New Members

Kenneth Fuchs
Temple TX

Brython Cox,
Denham Springs LA

Linda Inabinette,
Holly Hill SC

Joseph Coco
Destrehan LA

Jessica Hilburn
Destrehan LA

John Owalt
Shreveport LA

Rima Duhon
Lafayette LA

Cynthia Rowell
Shreveport LA

Connie Pothier
San Leon TX

We're glad to have you!



Monica Martens

What Do My Irises Need Now?

Waiting Game?

Most of the heavy work is done, right? You've finished your fall dividing, the irises are fertilized, and mulch is in place. Time to sit back and wait until spring?

Well, not entirely, but the pace definitely is slower. First, you have to remember to keep those Louisianas moist. They will thank you for the fall feeding, but aside from adequate fertilizer, their most significant requirement for good bloom is CONSISTENT MOISTURE. Never has a reliance on Mother Nature been more suspect than this season in much of the country, which has experienced unprecedented drought. But the irises expect a drink, and they will make you pay if they don't get it.

Timers

Timers on a hose with a sprinkler are one option. On a small scale, a mechanical timer you can set and forget is a good choice, although you can find battery-operated ones in most areas that will start and stop watering on a schedule you dial in. It all depends on the space you need to cover and how much you wish to spend. For around fifty dollars, you can get a battery-operated timer that will accommodate four hoses from one faucet.

Pre-emergent Herbicides

You can look forward to the burst of foliage growth that precedes bloom in late winter or early spring. You can also look forward to a burst weed seed germination. Consider using a pre-emergent herbicide such as Preen or Snapshot applied according to directions. Often gardeners apply such products when the beds are remade and mulched but forget that they require supplemental applications about every month. So, their potency is gone or greatly diminished when they are needed most. Don't forget to reapply.

Some of us have wondered how to apply a pre-emergent correctly. For example, let's say you have remade a bed and are getting ready to apply mulch. Should you spread, say, Preen before adding the mulch or wait until it is in place and come over it with the herbicide. The Preen website says the latter. Preen works by creating a barrier in the top inch or so of soil that inhibits weed seed germination. That starts from the top, so add the Preen last. It may seem counterintuitive, but that's what the manufacturer says.

Another Dose of Fertilizer

The fall application of fertilizer is critical in most of the country, but Louisiana irises need another dose in late winter. That means just before the plants come out of cold weather, and spring growth begins. The irises will welcome available nutrients when they are getting ready to take off. So, another round of whatever you used in the fall is a good idea just before rapid spring growth starts in your area.

Definitive recommendations of what fertilizer to use and its N-P-K composition vary widely. It is easy to shop for recommendations that follow your preconceived notions, which probably are not far wrong. In the 1970s, SLI publications recommended a safe, balanced granular fertilizer: a pound of 8-8-8 per 10 square feet of irises. That seemed to work fine. In recent years, some advocate for more nitrogen in the fall but less in the spring when additional phosphorus is thought to encourage bloom. It is impossible to say that is wrong, but it is fair to say that controlled experiments on Louisiana irises specifically have not been conducted.

If you are willing to read a couple of pages and consider altering your approach, look at Robert Treadway's article from a past issue of the *Fleur*. You can find it on the culture page of the Greater New Orleans Iris Society website or just search in your browser for "Robert Treadway on N-P-K." You'll find a thoughtful discussion of fertilizer composition and good suggestions for incorporating organic materials when you remake your beds. This is the single best article on the subject of Louisiana iris cultural practices.

The one sure thing is that bloom and plant vigor will suffer if you fail to fertilize. So use your best judgment regarding the mix of nutrients, but if you fail to fertilize with something, you will likely be disappointed in your irises. Get that bag out of the shed and use the stuff.

Plan Ahead and Search the Web

Winter is a good time to think through your future plans and read some cultural material available in books, articles, and online. The SLI book *The Louisiana Iris: The Taming of An American Wildflower*, 2nd ed. (2000), is showing its age but is still comprehensive and valuable. If you live in a cold climate, search out the article by MJ Urist, "Yankee Louisianas." It's on the SLI website, but the easiest way to get there is through a browser search. MJ provides accurate advice that we southerners only pretend to know about.

You can search for "Louisiana iris culture" online and a treasure trove of articles that deal with different approaches and regions will appear. Watch out for the ads on Google, though. There are dealers there who will offer to sell you Louisiana iris "bulbs." You have to wonder if their cultural recommendations, if any, can be believed.



Return to Thistlewood

A Pleasant-Surprise Visit to the Richard Goula Estate

By Jim Leonard

In the last issue of the *Fleur de Lis*, I wrote about my April 22, 2022, visit to Ron Betzer's and Gordon Rabalais's gardens. Gordon's place is in Arnaudville, which is about ten miles east of Richard Goula's iris-growing fields. Richard passed away in 2017, but his Estate off the service road on 1-49 has kept up his gardens, and the caretaker has paid particular attention to the iris beds.

I pulled up and parked on Richard's side lot, which is on Choctaw St. I was hoping to find a few late-blooming irises, but much to my surprise, Richard's roadside iris and rose plantings were in full bloom. From the pictures, you can see the big white blooming iris 'Clara Goula', which he named after his mother. The blooms were full and magnificent. The roadside bed, which is about ten feet wide and fifty feet long, also had full bloom stalks of 'Professor Neil' and 'Jeri'.

Seeing the street iris bloom, I was full of excitement that the beds along the house and in the back fields would also be in full bloom. I was not to be disappointed. As I approached Richard's house, the grounds were silent. The caretaker's work was evident, and the grass was cut and neat. The iris bed in front of the entrance wall was in full bloom. The bed is a testament to Richard's love of Louisiana irises, for he could have planted any number of perennial plants for constant spring and summer bloom, and he selected his favorite plant species. The wall bed is a testament to his concept of beauty: heritage, friendship, and appreciation of the plant world.

There is a two-hundred-foot camellia trail along the southeast side of the house, which leads to a five-acre field. Before Richard died, he had planted almost an acre in irises, and in part of that acre, he planted his seedlings in four plots of about 70' x 50' each. As you can see from the pictures, the plots were in full bloom and a marvel to observe. For all of Dick's professional accomplishments, he found special pride in his work with his seedlings.

Richard's Estate is still the owner of the property. Once the Estate is closed, it is obligated to transfer all of the assets to a Foundation to accept and manage his assets. The Foundation is known as Thistlewood. After some delays, it has been organized into a group that can make future decisions on how to carry out Richard's intentions for the distribution of income and assets.

Hopefully in the not-too-far future, the Foundation Board will address Richard's collection of Louisiana irises.

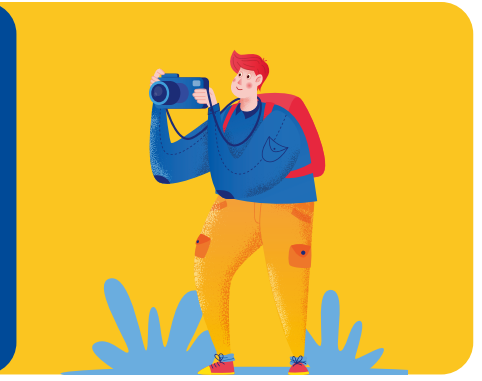


Long under construction and the product of Dick Goula's imagination and deep interest in botany, art, and music, Thistlewood is eclectic and fascinating.



The expansive beds of Louisiana iris cultivars and seedlings from Dick Goula's hybridizing program have been beautifully maintained. The gardens feature intriguing architectural details throughout the property.

The First Photo Contest Produced Stunning Images



Best Clump

Patrick Fett
Pollock, LA
'Catahoula Blue'



2nd Place (tie)

◀ Michael Glaspell,
Lockport, LA
Blue and White
Giganticaeruleas

Patrick Fett ▶
'Brazos Gold'
seedlings





Best Individual Iris

Michael Glaspell
Lockport, LA
Iris fulva



2nd Place (tie)

◀ Michael Glaspell, Lockport, LA
Hummingbird and *I. giganteaerulea*

Michael Glaspell, Lockport, LA ▶
Carpenter bee on *I. giganteaerulea*

Third Place - See page 19





Best Landscape

Patrick Fett
Pollock, LA
Mixed Cultivars



2nd Place

Patrick Fett, Seedlings
and Cultivars



3rd Place

Michael Glaspell,
Giganticaerulea in
the Wild

Hooker Nichols' 'Watermelon Wizard' Wins 2022 Mary Swords Debaillon Medal



3rd Place - Individual Iris

Linda Bell, Little Rock, AR, 'Watermelon Wizard'

In a happy coincidence, Linda Bell of Little Rock submitted a beautiful picture of 'Watermelon Wizard' in the Individual Iris category of the Photo Contest that won 3rd Place honors. At the same time, that iris won the 2022 Mary Swords Debaillon Medal.

THANKS TO OUR PHOTO CONTEST JUDGES!

Eileen Hollander, New Orleans
Bayli Quick, Briarwood, Saline, LA
Carol Price, Houston
Joe Musacchia, Gray, LA
Roland Guidry, Hammond, LA

And special thanks to those who submitted photographs. We hope you and others will enter the next contest.



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 Filemaker 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.



I didn't think they were ever going to let me write a column again. The last one was over twenty years ago, but gators live thirty or even fifty years, so I just waited them out. But, fair warning, I'm getting a little cranky, and my memory is not as good as it once was.

I have my own perspective on these iris people. They come out into my neighborhood digging around and thinking they are doing God's work saving this or that pretty flower. Some of them even want to plant new ones on my turf. They can't let well enough alone. Someday one of them is going to get a bit too close, digging out plants or shoving their alien rhizomes into the muck, and then ... lunchtime!

I hope they are careful not to mix cultivars with species. They need to keep those hybrid abominations in their silly shows, stuck in bottles, festooned with ribbons, and people crowding around oohing and ahing like they were out in nature looking at something natural. It makes me sick. Just stick to salvias or petunias or African violets, for God's sake. Give me a break. I want my home to look real, not like a bunch of flowers that that Andy Warhol guy dreamed up while he was smoking something.

Now they want to rejuvenate the lake on the campus of that so-called higher education school in Lafayette. Put in the tall red irises that grow in my Abbeville Swamp. I have cousins that live in that little campus lake, and I will admit, restoring it to look wild is a good idea. The guy who planted the first yellow flag iris there ruined the place. He should be fed to the ... well, let's just say severely punished. But it looks like the una-ver-sity has the right idea. It almost makes me happy. They had better follow through, though, because I have my eyes on that place and friends in the area.

It all depends on a human organization, which is a scary thought. I hope they can keep it together. That SLI has

been around, but their world ain't what it used be. Mine could be if they would just let it alone and stop spraying those herbicides along the roads and digging oil and gas canals that they abandon to let the saltwater push in. If you wanted to paint a picture of stupidity, there's your model.

I don't know if we can depend on this SLI thing. Full of good people with good intentions. Is the follow-through there? The stick-to-it-ness? Remains to be seen. They've had a long run, since 1941, but even a long train can run out of fuel. This one has been sputtering lately.

A few months back, they ran a survey in their expensive, slick magazine asking folks about all sorts of things. Do they like this? Do they want that? About ten replies came in. Count-em. Ten out of 300-plus. I can't count any higher, but I can get that far, and it was enough to tell me there's a problem. What do you make of that?

I'll tell you, and don't bother to argue. Their members are not on the same page. Some are hot to save the world, and others just want to grow pretty flowers. As for the organization itself? Ho hum.

But they all more or less agree if they think about things, which they obviously don't, and the new leadership's challenge is to figure out how to bring all this together.

Whoever thought I would be a strategic thinker and visionary? Don't kid yourself. I would eat your ass if I had half a chance.

**Give A Membership
We'll Provide A Gift Certificate**



Send your payment for a membership to the Treasurer, a long 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

Commercial Directory

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BlueMondayLouisianaIris
@yahoo.com

Limited sales this fall.
Website and full catalog in
early 2023.

Irises for sale this fall will be
posted on Facebook, or contact
us via email for a sales list.

[www.facebook.com/
BlueMonday
LouisianaIris](http://www.facebook.com/BlueMondayLouisianaIris)

Two nice entries in the Photo
Contest: Peter Jackson's 'We
Are Sailing' submitted by
Antoinette Moriarity, and Pete
Rudkin's 'Blue Splatter' from
Daphne Cole.



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 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



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.

RATES FOR MEMBERSHIP ARE AS FOLLOWS:

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- Life \$1,000 • Youth \$5

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Society for Louisiana Irises Membership Form



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 10329 Caddo Lake Road
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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.



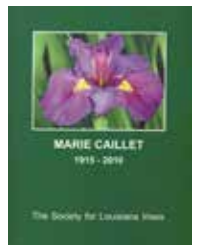
***Special Publication of the Society for Louisiana Irises - The History of Hybridizing (2007)* \$5.00 plus \$2.00 for shipping within U.S.**

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*



Fleur de Lis is a Publication of the
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