

# Bayou and Marsh

No. 28

News from the Greater New Orleans Iris Society

November 2015

## Benny Trahan To Give Famous Talk On His Louisiana Iris Adventures

*Benny has been in great demand with garden clubs and will present his program to GNOIS*

**B**enny Trahan has a unique experience with Louisiana irises. He comes at irises not from the perspective of modern hybrids and show irises, but from the point of view of someone who has tracked them down in the wild. More than anyone since the 1920s and 1930s, the renowned collecting days following the modern “discovery” of these plants, Benny has systematically searched to see what can still be found in the wetlands and other places that Louisiana irises inhabit.

This adventure has endured for over fifteen years. Anyone fortunate enough to have seen Benny’s garden has been treated to a concentration of colors and forms of wild irises that has been assembled in no other place. It is a unique experience.

As the habitat destruction noted by Dr. John Small in the 1930s continues steadily onward, Benny’s contribution to preservation of the

rich variety of these irises becomes increasingly clear. Benny takes samples to preserve and not to exploit. If not for the efforts of such individuals, going back to and including the days of Dr. Small, the inevitable path of development would have obliterated this portion of our natural heritage with little trace.

Benny’s exploration has been an adventure and it makes for a good tale. Searching wetlands for irises is not like shopping online or at the mall. There is as much to hear and learn about the irises’ habitat as about the plants them-



**MEETING  
SATURDAY  
NOVEMBER 14  
AT LONGUE VUE  
9 AM**

The meeting will again feature our new schedule: from 9 to 10 am, refreshments and demonstrations, followed by a brief business meeting beginning at 10 am. The program by Benny Trahan will follow the business meeting.

As usual, the meeting will be an opportunity to enlarge your iris collection. Everyone can expect to go home with at least one rhizome.

selves. Benny is uniquely able to tell this story.

Benny’s interest in the Louisiana species is infectious. He also has told the story of some his iris adventures in two articles that are available online. Click these links to take a look:

<http://www.zydecoirises.com/Species/Summer2007a.pdf>

<http://www.zydecoirises.com/Species/TrahanFindOfALifetime>

*Benny Trahan, center, in the Black Swamp at the Burden Museum and Gardens after the planting of over 200 rhizomes of Louisiana iris species that he donated. Benny had the help of Tyrone Foreman, left, and Patrick O'Connor, right. Jane Paccamonti, Curator of Windrush Gardens, also participated in the planting.*



# 2015 Iris Sale!



*The iris sale this year was a great success. Not only were a record number of plants sold, but increased participation by our members was most welcome. Great job, and it was fun! Thanks to you all! Above, from left: Roland Guidry helping a customer; Linda Trahan and Monique Fury; Treasurer Fred Noggerath managing check out. Bottom: the entire crew. Thanks to Eileen Hollander for the group picture and Linda Trahan for the rest.*





*MORE SALE SCENES: Top, from left: Calvin Lopes helping customers, Pat Mocklin, Gary Salathe and Harry Dufrene. Middle: Cindy Dufrene, Tyrone Foreman. Bottom: Lorri Brown helping Dorothy Smith select plants.*

## **Bayou *and* Marsh**

NEWSLETTER OF THE  
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## **GNOIS On The Web**

[www.louisianairisgnois.com](http://www.louisianairisgnois.com)

[www.facebook.com/GreaterNewOrleansIrisSociety](https://www.facebook.com/GreaterNewOrleansIrisSociety)

[www.zydecoirises.com](http://www.zydecoirises.com)



# WILD IRISES BY RICHARD DROUANT



*GNOIS member Richard Drouant's principal interest is photography, and he has been taking iris pictures for twenty years. These pictures of I. giganteaerulea were taken along the Palmetto Trail in the Jean Lafitte National Park, Barataria Preserve.*





# FEELING THE BLUES

BY PATRICK O'CONNOR

If you are bored with blue, you might want to move on to greener, or more psychedelic, pastures. This is just about the pursuit of pale blue tones in Louisiana iris hybrids. Kevin Vaughn calls them “icy” blue, and the color has intrigued several hybridizers.

In a way it is odd that it would be necessary to hustle after pale blue Louisiana hybrids since the color is found within the natural range of the blue species, *I. giganteaerulea*, *I. brevicaulis*, and, possibly, *I. hexagona*. There are rare white forms of each, of course, and the intensity of the predominant blue color sometimes shades gradually toward white.



Above, top: *A brevicaulis* from Gary Babin's Baton Rouge yard. Below: a *giganticaerulea* in a wetland at LaPlace.



'Eolian', a popular Charles Arny hybrid registered in 1967.

I don't know much about the East Coast *I. hexagona*, but I have seen native stands of *brevicaulis* in Louisiana that exhibit a considerable range of blue hues within a short distance. A case in point is a light blue in Gary Babin's yard in Baton Rouge. Gary has maintained an extensive planting of *brevicaulis* in many shades that originated with collections from a nearby wetland many years ago. Almost all flowers are considerably darker, some a fairly deep blue-purple.

Several *I. giganteaeruleas* or related specimens are another example. One, found in LaPlace, Louisiana, is the palest blue, nearly white. Most *giganticaeruleas* are a darker blue, blue-purple or blue-lavender.

When I started with Louisiana irises in the late 1970s, Charles Arny's '**Eolian**' was the iris held up as the lightest of blues. It's still grown and sometimes wins shows, but '**Eolian**', while lighter than most blue Louisianas, really is not the icy blue that has obsessed some of us.

Three examples of icy blues emerged in the 1980s: '**Delta Dove**' (Dunn, R1984); '**Ice Angel**' (Faggard, 1988); and '**South-downs**' (O'Connor, registered in 1992 but first bloomed in 1980). All these irises approached or met the color requirement, and they also offered a larger, fuller flower than '**Eolian**'. I can't speak from much experience about '**Delta Dove**' and '**Ice Angel**', having only seen them sporadically, but '**South-downs**' is mine and I am well acquainted with its characteristics.

Some people say that it lacks substance. I say, however, that it is a gossamer thing of ephemeral beauty – that lacks substance. So



Above, top: '**Delta Dove**', by Mary Dunn, registered in 1984. Below: '**Ice Angel**', by Albert Faggard, registered in 1988.





Nothing is known about the parentage of **'Ice Angel'**, and **'Southdowns'** came from a bee pod on **'Cajun Caper'** in the first year I fiddled with seeds. (I am sure that the other parent was the blue **'Mac's Blue Heaven'** but I did not make the cross. **'Cajun Caper'** is a red-violet blend

they are held, some blossoms may appear a bit open.

**'Faubourg Marigny'** is an even lighter blue. In fact, it opens a pale, pastel blue over a white ground, and it does fade to near white. Those icy genes clearly are there, however.

**'Sarah Faith'** got by me. I have only seen a picture sent by Robert Treadway, who told me about the iris. It is a beautiful, ruffled

what if you can almost see through a petal? Isn't everything supposed to be "transparent" these days? Does the judges handbook suggest that poor substance is a fault? Afraid so, but it is a great grower and a fine garden iris that looks especially nice at dusk and in a little shade. **'Southdowns'** may not be covered by the Second Amendment, but no one is going to take it away from me.

Another attribute of **'Southdowns'**, if you look closely, is that it really is not blue. The color upon opening consists of fine purple veins over a white ground. With time the purple lightens, and even at first and from a distance, the eye sees it as pale blue. Newer icy blue hybrids are actually icy blue.

These early light blues did not seem to come from a disciplined pursuit of that color. Dunn's **'Delta Dove'** might have, in that one parent was a seedling from two whites, **'Ila Nunn'** and a white *giganticaerulea* (**'Her Highness'**). The cross was a wide one, however, with the other parent being the famous red **'Ann Chowning'**. It was a roll of the dice for blues, but they produced a winner.

with a strong orange suffusion).

Later hybridizing has been more systematic. There are five irises I would cite as modern examples of work leading to icy blue Louisiana irises. Three are mine: **'Bywater'** (R2005, Southdowns x Lake Sylvia); **'Faubourg Marigny'** (R2011, Bywater x Beale Street); and **'Estelle Egan'** (R2013, Bywater x Sinfonietta). The fourth is **'Sarah Faith'** (R2008, Dural Bluebird x Jeri) by the late M.D. Faith. The last and most recent is Kevin Vaughn's **'Aqua Velva'**, (R2014, Beale Street x Dural White Butterfly).

**'Bywater'** is actually blue, and like **'Southdowns'**, a very good grower. The flower form is nearly overlapping, but depending how



Top left: *'Southdowns'*. Middle: *'Sarah Faith'*; Right, from top: *'Bywater'*, *'Faubourg Marigny'*, and *'Estelle Egan'*





pale blue. Robert says the iris has a nice stalk, too, so everything considered, it was a real loss not to

have grown this one, so far. Judging from just the picture, it is right similar to the next iris.

**‘Estelle Egan’** probably is my best pale blue. It has the color right and adds both ruffling and improved substance. The iris grows well and forms a nice clump.

I have only seen Kevin’s new **‘Aqua Velva’** one time in a garden, but it looks like a fine addition. It certainly has a good pedigree, and what a perfect name!

I am excited about a new iris that popped up in the pursuit of light blues. **‘House of Blues’**, currently in process of registration, comes from a cross of the pastel blue **‘Faubourg Marigny’** and the pastel pink **‘Birthday Suit’**. **‘House of Blues’** may not qualify as icy,

but it definitely is cool.

If anyone else is intrigued by icy blues, the groundwork done should support real progress. A good strategy might be to work with strong whites and blues as well as with the existing icy hybrids. It should be possible to develop pale blue irises with many of the good attributes of modern Louisianas.



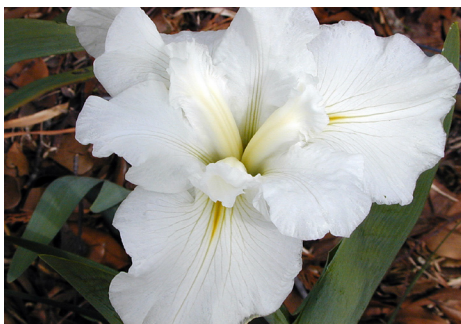
*Top left: A clump of ‘Estelle Egan’ in Eileen Hollander’s garden. ‘Estelle’ was named for Eileen’s mother. Bottom, from left: Kevin Vaughn’s new ‘Aqua Velva’, ‘House of Blues’. Above, right: ‘Birthday Suit’, one of the parents of ‘House of Blues’.*



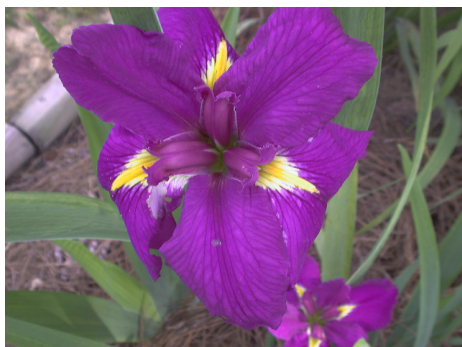


# REGISTRATIONS OF RUSTY AND BUD MCSPARRIN

Rusty and Bud McSparrin are perhaps best known as owners of Bois D'Arc Iris Garden in Chacahoula. The four acre garden has been on iris tours several times, and Rusty and Bud have always been open for visitors at bloom time. They also have registered and introduced a number of notable irises. Of the following, 'Lockport', a collected fulva, and 'Aline Arceneaux' were registered by Bud; the rest are Rusty's.



**MIRANDA LEIGH**



**CHACAHOULA CHA CHA**



**CHACAHOULA FIRE**



**DONNER**



**DOCTOR ED**



**ETHYL SARAH**



**LOCKPORT**



**ALINE ARCENEUX**



**ROBERTA G**



**LUTA R**



**CARDINAL FLIGHT**



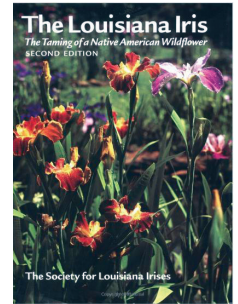
# Society for Louisiana Irises Storefront

## ***THE LOUISIANA IRIS: THE TAMING OF AN AMERICAN WILDFLOWER***

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. - \$30.00



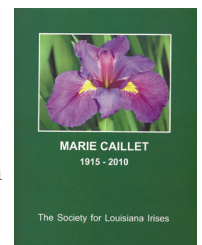
## ***Special Publication of the Society for Louisiana Irises - The History of Hybridizing (2007)***

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 Dorman, 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. - \$5.00 plus \$2.00 shipping within U.S.



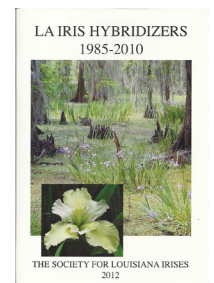
## ***Special Publication of the Society for Louisiana Irises honoring Marie Caillet (1915-2010)***

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. - \$10 plus \$3 shipping within US



## ***Louisiana Iris Hybridizers 1985-2010***

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. - \$5 plus \$2 shipping within US



## ***Special Publication of the Society for Louisiana Irises 1995***

This paper bound special publication, edited by Marie Caillet and Joseph Mertzweiller, 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 of this publication remaining so get them while they last. - \$5 plus \$2 shipping within US

## ***The SLI Louisiana Iris Checklist CD!***

The CD checklist is illustrated with photos of many of the cultivars and it can be displayed in three formats. It has a powerful search feature that allows you to search the checklist by cultivar attributes such as name, date of introduction, hybridizer, parentage and much more. The checklist lists names, descriptions, breeder/introducer and parentage of iris cultivars from the 1920's through the present. The iris are grouped by year of registration and/or introduction. The CD will cost \$10 for delivery to the United States,



***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***

10329 Caddo Lake Road, Mooringsport, LA 71060 318-996-9969 retmiagt@gmail.com





Greater New Orleans Iris Society

## TO JOIN OR REJOIN GNOIS

2015 Dues \$5 - Please make checks payable to Greater New Orleans Iris Society, or GNOIS.

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(This newsletter is distributed primarily by email, so please give an email address if possible)

**Mail to: Fred Noggerath, GNOIS Treasurer, 4537 Ithaca St., Metairie, LA 70006.**



## SOCIETY FOR LOUISIANA IRISES



SLI is an international organization established in 1941 to promote Louisiana irises. Members receive its quarterly magazine **Fleur de Lis** and occasional special publications. Membership is \$13 annually for an individual or \$32 triennial. Family is \$16 and \$44 respectively.

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