Bayou and Marsh

No. 29 | News from the Greater New Orleans Iris Society | January 2016

MEETING SATURDAY JANUARY 16 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 Eileen Hollander will follow the business meeting.

Eileen's program, including a PowerPoint presentation, will be on "Nutrient Management: How to Fertilize to Meet Plant Needs." She is currently GNOIS president, a Master Gardener in both Louisiana and Mississippi, and president of the Pearl River County Master Gardeners.

Prior to the meeting, Eileen will demonstrate how to take a soil sample and distribute LSU Ag Center Soil Test Kits.

As usual, the meeting will provide members with the opportunity to enlarge iris collections. Everyone can expect to go home with at least one rhizome, generally from among recent cultivars from the GNOIS plantings in City Park.

Ready Or Not, It's A New Year

And a new Spring is coming with lots to see and do. Here's a schedule of some upcoming events.

Saturday, Jan 16, 9 AM - Noon	GNOIS Meeting	Longue Vue in the Playhouse
Saturday, Mar 26, 9 AM - Noon	GNOIS Meeting	Longue Vue in the Playhouse
Thursday, March 31, 4 - 6 PM	Louisiana Iris Day	Longue Vue in the Wild Garden
Saturday, Apr 2 and Sunday, Apr 3	Spring Garden Show	N. O. Botanical Garden
Sunday, Apr 10, Noon - 4PM	Louisiana Iris Rainbow Festival and Iris Show	Sydney and Walda Besthoff Sculpture Garden
Thursday, Apr 21 - Saturday Apr 23	Society for Louisiana Irises Annual Convention and Show	Hilton Garden Inn, Bossier City

For details on the SLI convention, go to **www.louisianas.org** Additional information on other event will be provided in the March *Bayou and Marsh,* on the GNOIS website **www.louisianairisgnois.com** and on the GNOIS page on Facebook.

DUES

It's time for our annual membership renewals. Dues have increased to $10 per year, still a great deal to support our work and the information we provide. Please send your check to:

Fred Noggerath, Treasurer
4537 Ithaca St. Metairie, LA 70006

Road Trip!

There are great places to see Louisiana irises around New Orleans, but it is also fun to get out and about. There are still wild irises in South Louisiana, but the natives are increasingly rare if not extinct in urban areas.

One destination well worth a spring visit is Baton Rouge, where three very different gardens offer not only irises but a wide variety of plants. The three wonderful sites are: the Baton Rouge Botanic Garden, Burden Museum and Gardens and LSU Hilltop Arboretum

Future issues of *Bayou and Marsh* will provide more detailed reviews of the attractions of each garden, but you can always go online and get a headstart.

GNOIS has recently contributed irises to each of these gardens. Benny Trahan donated and helped plant 200 rhizomes of I. giganti-caerulea, I. fulva and I. nelsonii in the Black Swamp at Burden. Patrick O'Connor did the same at Hilltop, adding I. brevicaulis; and the club made a contribution of around 60 newer cultivars to the BR Botanic Garden this past fall. It will be fun to watch these irises multiply, and we probably will add more in the coming few years.

At this early date, there is no bloom to show, but the pictures here will provide a hint what will follow soon. Just apply some imagination for now, and consider a road trip in the spring.

And on the way up I-10, take the Highway 641 exit at the halfway mark. Don't go left across the Interstate, but instead just follow the arc back onto the I-10. This will take you through the edge of a cypress swamp where you can expect to see blooming stands of I. giganticaerulea. The shoulder is wide enough to stop and look closely. Be on the lookout for rose colored forms, probably the result of some fulva genes in the mix.

The Black Swamp at Burden

The muted winter colors of the Black Swamp showcase the vivid green of the rapidly growing Louisiana iris foliage. Even before spring bloom, the irises are a star in the wild or the garden. The native species were planted in the Swamp at the height of the summer drought this year, and when the heavy rains finally came, many of the plants were covered so deeply that only about forty percent survived. Those remaining are doing well and should provide a great show in this and ensuing springs.

More Scenes from the Black Swamp at Burden

Bayou and Marsh

NEWSLETTER OF THE GREATER NEW ORLEANS IRIS SOCIETY

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LSU Hilltop Arboretum

11855 Highland Road

Baton Rouge

Hilltop Arboretum was a gift in 1981 to LSU and the community by Emory Smith, who purchased the 14 acre tract in 1929. Emory and his wife Annette bought the property as a summer place and farm. A native plant enthusiast, Emory collected and sold plants at the place at one time, and he continued to live there until his death at Hilltop at age 96 in 1988.

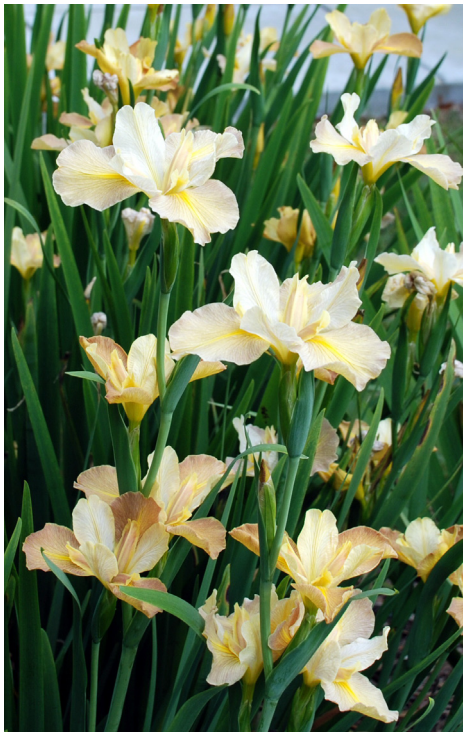
The Arboretum sits on the ridge above the natural floodplain of the River, and the front of the property is marked by deep ravines unique in the area. The back is flat. Thanks to the efforts of the Friends of Hilltop, there is now a pond, one of Emory's wishes for the place, and beautifully designed buildings for education and community meetings. Plans are drawn for further development with native plants and walking paths.

Hilltop is a must on any botanical visit to Baton Rouge. For more information click: *http://tinyurl.com/j38c7lv* http://tinyurl.com/j38c7lv

Baton Rouge Botanic Garden

7950 Independence Blvd.

The iris plantings were initially a project of the late Joe Mertzweiller of Baton Rouge. His iris collection formed the initial core of the collection. Considerable effort has gone into the maintenance and development of the iris garden. The construction of the Iris Pavilion was the latest addition.



For more information on BRBG, click here:

http://tinyurl.com/jsnsjzu

Garden Culture of Louisiana Irises

A Basic Guide to Recommended Cultural Practices

By J. Farron Campbell

The Louisiana iris is a relative newcomer to general garden culture. Fifty years ago only a handful of specialists were really aware of this native iris. One of the biggest hindrances for the widespread use of Louisiana irises in gardens has been a misunderstanding of their cultural requirements. No, you do not need a pond or bog to grow them. This is just another example of their adaptability, and that is what makes a great garden subject—adaptability.

The species of the Hexagonae series grow in Georgia and the Carolinas, from Florida to Texas along the Gulf of Mexico, and up the Mississippi valley into Arkansas, Missouri, Ohio, and Indiana. The geographic regions represented are quite varied in temperature, annual rainfall, and soil conditions. The range of the modern garden hybrids has encompassed the globe. Louisianas are being grown successfully from Canada to Australia, from Japan to Germany.

Site and Soil

The site chosen should be as sunny as possible, unless you live in an area where summers tend to be long, hot, and dry. In this case, some afternoon shade may be beneficial. Areas of deciduous shade are acceptable, but avoid areas of heavy shade. The irises will grow, but bloom will be reduced greatly.

Fertility and organic content are very important in growing Louisianas, for they are very heavy feeders. It is doubtful that there can be too much organic matter in the soil.

The soil must be the grower's first consideration. A thorough soil test should be performed before you add amendments. Take the samples from several locations in the area chosen for planting to insure a true representation. Consult your Agricultural Extension Service for testing facilities, or buy a home test kit for the simpler tests. The things you'll want to test for are pH (acidity or alkalinity), soluble mineral salts, nutrient content (nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium), and organic matter content.

The pH scale ranges from 0 to 14 with 7.0 being neutral. Any value below pH 7.0 is acidic, and any value above pH 7.0 is alkaline. The numbers make up a proportional scale. In other words, the lower the number (below 7.0), the more acidic the soil; the higher the number (above 7.0), the more alkaline the soil. Louisiana irises prefer an acidic soil and are native to regions of the country where acidic soils predominate. But Louisianas do appear to tolerate slightly alkaline conditions, especially if kept constantly moist.

The pH affects the way in which plants grow because certain nutrients become unavailable chemically in overly acidic or alkaline soils. One example of this is iron deficiency (chlorosis). In acidic soils iron is readily available, but in alkaline soils it becomes chemically "locked up" — iron is present in the soil, but only in a form which plants cannot absorb.

There are a number of ways in which pH can be lowered. The most economical probably is the addition of organic matter, but the addition of organic matter alone affects soil pH only very gradually. Chemical alternatives are available through the use of sulphur-based compounds or acidifiers such as aluminum nitrate. Raising the pH, on rare occasions when that step appears advisable, will require the incorporation of agricultural lime. A pH increase of 1.0 will

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EDITOR'S NOTE: *This article originally appeared in the SLI Newsletter in September 1992. Farron Campbell is a past president of the Society for Louisiana Irises and was owner of Lone Star Iris Gardens near Dallas. Much of his emphasis on soil pH was dictated by conditions around Dallas. In South Louisiana, fortunately, there is only rarely any need amend soils to create an appropriate acid/alkaline balance. Still Campbell's article provides a comprehensive overview of Louisiana iris culture, most of which is applicable here. Perhaps some of our members can suggest amendments to Campbell approach that can be included in a future issue. The original article was lightly edited for* Bayou and Marsh.

require from 50 to 75 pounds per 1,000 square feet. Read and follow label instructions when applying commercial amendments.

Soil nutrients come in two basic categories, primary elements and trace elements. The primary elements are nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P), and potassium (K). Each plays a vital role in the overall health and performance of plants. Nitrogen promotes leafy growth and overall vigor; phosphorus stimulates root growth, flowering, and fruiting; and potassium regulates a plant's response to heat and cold and promotes overall hardiness. These elements can be purchased in various strengths and mixtures and are represented by the numbers found on fertilizers, in the order of N, P, K. Trace elements most commonly concerning gardeners are iron (Fe), sulphur (S), and zinc (Zn).

Fertility and organic content are very important in growing Louisianas, for they are very heavy feeders. It is doubtful that there can be too much organic matter in the soil. Adding organic matter is always a good idea, but be careful what you use. The most desirable sources are finished compost, brown Canadian peat moss, leaves, or shredded bark. Grass clippings can be used, but have some drawbacks. Green clippings will rapidly deplete nitrogen from the soil due to its rapid decomposition. Adding Nitrogen at the time the green matter is incorporated helps offset the problem. Avoid fresh manures, fresh sawdust or wood chips, and domestic black peat moss from the Northern U.S.

The beds for Louisianas should not be allowed to go dry, but they do not need to be kept wet. The soil should be kept as evenly moist as is possible.

The addition of organic matter will help to loosen heavy clay soils (although heavier soils, especially if kept moist and fertile, are not a problem for Louisianas), improve moisture and nutrient retention in loose soils, increase acidity, make the soil more friable, and allow the soil to warm faster in the Spring due to increased air movement through the soil. Till the soil to a depth of 12 inches before adding the organic matter. A four-inch layer of compost or peat moss prior to tilling is a good rule of thumb.

My favorite source of organic matter is leaves. They are easily obtained in the fall, since most people have no use for them and will rake and bag them for garbage collection. Shredding leaves will allow for faster decomposition. If you do not have a shredder, a lawn mower can be used. Whenever possible, I start preparing a bed a year in advance. This allows me to keep adding organic matter at monthly intervals.

The goal in preparing soil for Louisiana irises is to end up with a soil that is on the acidic side. This is an interesting point of study for growers. In water culture, pH does not seem as important. I know of one site where a pond was excavated in pure caliche rock and the surrounding soil was not amended, yet the plants show no ill effects from the high pH. (Admittedly, the irises have been growing in this environment only a couple of seasons, so some ill effects may yet be observed.)

In southern Cameron Parish, Louisiana, there are large colonies of I. giganticaerulea growing in beds of Oyster shells and water, and once again the plants show no signs of a pH problem. Due to the alkaline nature of the water supply (8.5-10.) in the Dallas area, it is almost impossible to maintain an acid bed. My beds test somewhat alkaline, but growth, flowering and multiplication does not appear to be depressed as a result.

To combat this creeping alkalinity, it is recommended that soil acidifiers be added both Spring and Fall, and that your fertilization program make generous use of "acid-forming" fertilizers (often labeled "Azalia-Camellia-Gardenia Fertilizer"). Water-soluble fertilizers applied with a hose-end sprayer are the easiest types to apply to already-established beds. The acidifier will be absorbed through the leaves for quick results, and through the roots for longer-lasting effects.

Watering

Watering questions are the most frequently asked. The beds for Louisianas should not be allowed to go dry, but they do not need to be kept wet. The soil should be kept as evenly moist as is possible. Mulching is the best aid in this quest, and will be discussed in a moment. The prime growth time for irises is in the Fall and Spring, the normal wet times of the year. In my area I rarely have to water once the Fall rains

set in. If there is an extended period of no rain, I water.

Watering is just as critical in the Winter as it is in the Summer. Allowing the plants to endure a long, dry cold snap will set them back. When watering is required, at least one inch of water is recommended. This is the same amount as is recommended for watering the lawn. A good deep watering is always preferable to shallow watering. The only exception I make to the rule of keeping beds evenly moist is when plants are being put in. For roughly one month after planting, or until appreciable new growth has begun, I try to keep the beds pretty wet.

The easiest way to keep soil evenly moist all the way up to the surface is to mulch.

Mulching

In my opinion, mulching is important when growing Louisiana irises in beds (as opposed to water culture). The easiest way to keep soil evenly moist all the way up to the surface is to mulch. Mulching also regulates the fluctuations in soil temperatures and will greatly enhance water conservation. The rhizomes of Louisiana irises are subject to sun scald, which leads to rot and, ultimately, to death of the plant. It is the tendency of the rhizomes to grow at ground level. The foliage will shade them to an extent, but mulching is the answer. Especially across the South, gardeners with beds located in full sun areas must be very careful to protect against scald. Phosphorus absorption is enhanced in alkaline soils as the mulch decomposes, but more about this later.

Mulching is also good for weed control. With properly mulched beds you will have very few weeds to pull, and within a year can break the weed seed cycle in the soil. In my opinion, pine needles make the best mulch. Pine needles, or Pine straw, will not blow away or mat down, lasts for several years, and is attractive as well as aromatic in the landscape. Pine needles can be purchased in bales, but finding a supplier may prove a challenge. Hay can be used, but often contains huge quantities of weed seeds.

Thrashed wheat and rice stalks make an excellent mulch, but are hard to locate, and are usually fairly expensive. Leaves should be shredded to keep them from matting down too much. The only drawback with leaves is the difficulty keeping them in place in a wind. Shredded Pine bark can be used with good results and is readily available at most garden centers. Grass clippings should be considered as a mulch material only after a thorough drying out. Green clippings act like a nitrogen vacuum and will literally rob it from the soil — although the nitrogen eventually will be returned as the clippings decay into humus.

Planting and Transplanting

Planting and transplanting the rhizomes are best accomplished in the Fall, at least 3 weeks prior to the average first freeze date for the area. Rhizomes should not be allowed to dry out, ever. If ordering from a commercial nursery, remove any wrappings from the rhizomes as soon as they arrive and keep them in pans of water at least overnight, or until planting. They can be held in water for some time without fear. If it is necessary to hold them for planting for several weeks, embedding the rhizomes in wet vermiculite should be considered. The addition of a root stimulator to the water has worked well for me. Since my water is so alkaline (pH 8.5 on the average), I add an acidifier when the plants will be held in water for any period of time before planting.

Fertilization Schedule

A regular fertilization schedule should be maintained for both Spring and Fall. The hose end sprayer is a quick and easy way to accomplish the task. Digging in the fertilizer around plants is a laborious job and can damage roots and rhizomes. I take to heart that these irises are heavy feeders, and I tend to fertilize more frequently than most growers. Spring applications should commence 4 to 6 weeks prior to the anticipated emergence of the flowering stalks. Louisianas normally start blooming about 2 weeks after the Tall Bearded irises. The fertilizer should stipulate that it is for blooming plants, such as Super Bloom. Acidic fertilizers are available and are generally marked as

A regular fertilization schedule should be maintained for both Spring and Fall.

Rose and Camellia fertilizers. Applications at two week intervals prior to bloom works well for me. Fall fertilization should be based on the average first freeze date for your area. As with planting, fertilization should cease 3 to 4 weeks prior to this date. Two or three applications by hose-end application, or good side dressing should yield the desired results. New plantings can be lightly fertilized once, after appreciable new growth has begun.

A word of caution about the use of super-phosphates. These compounds are highly alkaline and can build up in the soil. Moreover, if soil pH is too high or low the addition of phosphorus will not help plants, even if the plants are suffering from phosphorus deficiency! Phosphorus is particularly sensitive to both high and low pH readings. At a pH of 6.0 it begins to become less available to plants, and at a pH of 5.0 the phosphorus present in the soil cannot be used by plants. On the alkaline side of the scale the same things occurs between 6.9 and 7.8 pH. Applications of lime and phosphate should be separated by at least 2 weeks.

Pests and Diseases

Louisiana irises are amazingly immune to most pest and disease problems. The biggest problems for me are slugs (controlled with baits) and grasshoppers (controlled with Sevin). Rust is not a problem in areas of low summer humidity, but responds to treatments with maneb or a similar fungicide. Leaf miners are not a problem except in areas with too heavy a shade.

Iris borers and leaf spot are possible. These problems have been reported in Northern States and California.

Something To Look Forward To

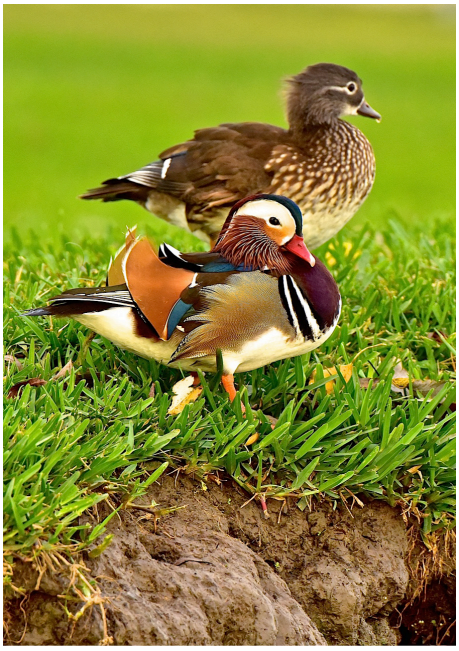
Spring Bloom and Show in the Besthoff Sculpture Garden

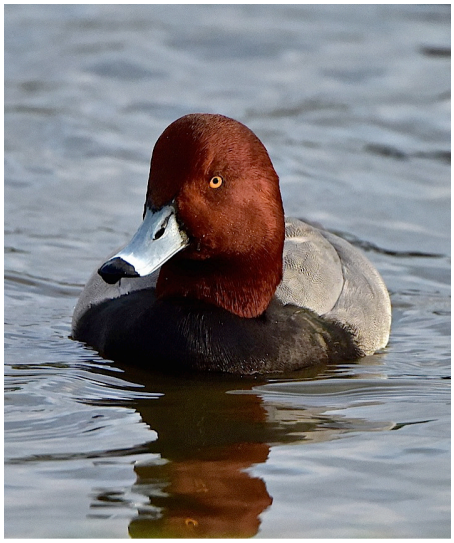
Getting to Longue Vue

Longue Vue is easy to find. From I-10, exit at City Park/Metairie Road and take Metairie Road in the direction away from the Park. There will be a golf course on the left and Metairie Lawn Cemetery on the right. Within a half mile, as soon as it becomes residential, look for Bamboo Road on the left. It is a narrow little street that is easy to miss. If you come to the bridge over a canal, you've just missed it. Once on Bamboo Rd., Longue Vue is on the left after a block or so.

When you enter Longue Vue, you will wind to a courtyard with a drive to the left leading directly to the house. Take that drive and then circle left around the house to a parking area in back. The Playhouse, and the GNOIS meeting, is just off the parking area.

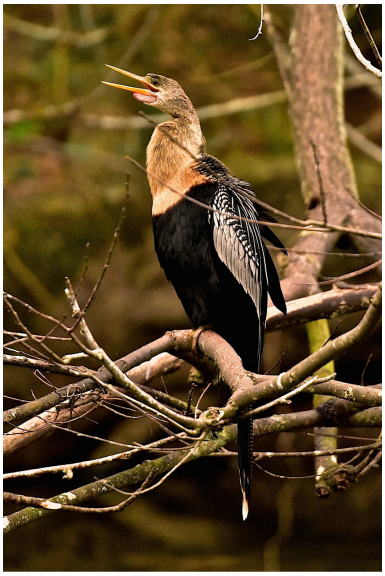
Nature Photography by Richard Drouant





GNOIS member Richard Drouant's principal interest is photography, and we enjoyed his iris pictures in the last two issues. Richard also takes gorgeous pictures of birds and other flowers.

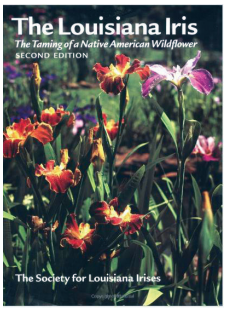
TOP AND MIDDLE: The large white American Pelicans float on the water and fill the sky. A Brown Pelican sits on a post, middle left. The Common Gallinule is to the immediate left. At the far left, the brown headed duck is a female Scaup. The colorful Mandarin Ducks at the upper right are cousins of the North American Wood Duck.



TOP LEFT: Roseate Spoonbill. Middle, from left: Cattle Egrets, White Ibis. Bottom left: Osprey. Upper right: Anhinga.

Society for Louisiana Irises Storefront

THE LOUISIANA IRIS: THE TAMING OF AN AMERICAN WILDFLOWER



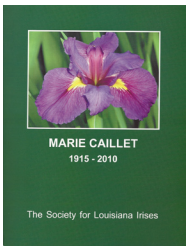
Contributing Editors: Marie Caillet, J. Farron Campbell, Kevin C. Vaughn, and Dennis Vercher
Details: 254 pp, 111 color photos, 5 watercolors, 21 b/w photos, 14 line drawings, 11 tables, hardcover.

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)

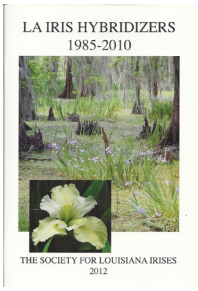
This Special Publication of the Society for Louisiana Irises is a 100-page summary of how the "ditch irises" of Louisiana have been tamed and introduced into American gardens. Contents include informative articles on such early pioneers as Mary Swords DeBallion, Caroline Dorman, and Percy Viosca; the 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

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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