

Flags



Flags, Issue #3 October, 2011

### In This Issue:

- Cover: 'Spreckles', photo by Don McQueen
- From the Webmaster pg. 2
- Looking Back: Quality Gardens 1936 pg. 3-4
- The Digital Messenger: pg. 5
- History Reflected: The Boy King & a Royal Iris Legacy, by Mike Unser pg. 6-7
- The Iris Photography of Don McQueen pg. 8-10
- Know... 'Vert-Galant' by Laetitia Munro pg. 11-13
- Varietal Spotlight: Belvi Queen pg. 14
- Photo Essay: A Plethora of Plics pg. 15
- Bluffton Memorial Preservation Report 16-18
- Looking for more? pg. 19
- In the Next Issue pg. 19
- Last shot: Burgundy Brown, photo by Don McQueen

### From the Webmaster:

Cooler temps are a welcome relief here in the PNW. We're thankful to have a short break after summer's iris dividing & replanting demands, & before preparatons for winter need to be seen to. In this issue I am so pleased to showcase photographs by Don McQueen. I'm one of the thankful folks on his seasonal iris photo mailing list – you should be too. Details later in this issue. Thanks to all of our contributors & supporters. As always, your comments, contributions & contructive criticisms are welcome.

*Mike Unser*



Above: Mary Williamson receiving the Dykes Medal award for her iris '**Wabash**'. From photo donated to Bluffton's historical museum by Iris City Gardens. Read more about Mary & the progress being made to honor her memory & that of her fellow hybridizers at the Bluffton Memorial Iris Garden on page 16.

**In Memory:** Dr. John Weiler passed away Sept. 19, 2011. A renowned hybridizer and irisarian, he will be fondly remembered by all who knew him.

### Welcome!

HIPS is happy to welcome Judy Keisling as our new Treasurer. Judy also currently serves as the President of the American Iris Society. Many thanks to Judy for taking on this important position for HIPS. Thanks as well to Sondra Tillou for filling in as acting Tresurer.



# Looking Back: Quality Gardens 1936

QUALITY  
GARDENS

1936

IRIS  
HEMEROCALLIS



## From Quality Iris Gardens catalog for 1936:

Descriptions of the varieties pictured above, clockwise from the cover:

**President Pilkington** M. 46". Very large flower and a glorious blend. S. pale buff with faint blue suffusion. F. wide and flaring lavender-blue with yellow buff at margin and yellow throat. A magnificent iris, vigorous and sturdy and outstanding as to color.

**Burning Bronze** (Ayres 1934) M. 40". This has proved to be one of the most popular introductions which we have ever grown. A cool, stately dark red self of excellent form and smooth glossy finish. A superbly beautiful variety which we recommend highly. The stems have a grace and dignity quite different from most other varieties. Dark reds are apt to give a somber garden effect, but an intense bronze suffusion gives this a color value rarely vital and alive.

**Depute Nomblot** (Cayeux 1929) M. 48". A really magnificent iris of great beauty of coloring, form and carriage. The flowers are large, well proportioned, the stems tall and widely branched. S. copper red, flushed golden bronze; F. wide and spreading of a rich shade of claret crimson. The flower seems highly dusted with a fine golden powder which sparkles in the sunlight. Cayeux's finest achievement. [Fr.] Dykes Medal 1930

**Ministre Fernand David** (Cayeux 1930) A massive flower of superb form and texture. S. silky red purple; F. velvety glowing dark red. A much improved Germain Perthuis, of richer coloring and larger. C.M. N.S.H.F., 1930

**W.R. Dykes** The crowning achievement of the late W.R. Dykes. It is a very large self, of perfect shape and heavy texture. The standards are tall, dome shaped and frilled. The falls of great thickness and the surface of the flower is crinkled, giving it an effect of much richness. Some seasons the flowers are lightly flecked violet, which does not detract from its beauty. Should be protected in the open garden. The pollen is fertile and it is parent of some of our best new yellows.

**Chromylla** (Loomis 1931) E. 40". A very fine medium toned yellow. The flowers are large and beautifully shaped and of a uniform shade of lemon chrome. The flower has a smoothness of texture and finish that we have not seen equalled in a yellow iris. It has the finish and texture of a magnolia petal. The blooms are well distributed on the strong stem and hold their pure color well.

*In their gowns of crinkled silk,  
Golden banded, ranked in order,  
Brilliant as the sunset fire is,  
Black as bulls' blood, white as milk,  
Stand within our garden border  
Troops of Iris.*

Susan O. Moberly



# The Digital Messenger

Iris News from around the Internet

**The World of Irises**, the AIS Blog, continues to surprise and delight with a great stable of writers (yours truly included!). Bob Hollingworth and Debbie Strauss are our newest contributors. Please check it out at:

<http://theamericanirissociety.blogspot.com/>

Irises have been used in perfumery since ancient times. **+Q Perfume Blog** has a rundown of current fragrances utilizing our favorite flower. You can read all about it at:

<http://maisqueperfume.blogspot.com/2011/06/iris-fragrances.html>

**Jean Potuchek** blogs about her love of Siberian Irises and how it was sparked by a visit to the garden of the preeminent hybridizer Currier McEwen. Click this link to read of one gardeners passion for these lovely irises. Great photos too!

<http://jeansgarden.wordpress.com/2010/06/18/in-praise-of-siberian-irises/>

Blogger **Sweetbay** shares beautiful photos of her Passalong Historic irises at:

<http://tinyurl.com/Passalong1> and also at:  
<http://tinyurl.com/Passalong2>



As winter's cold approaches here in the northern hemisphere we'll be wanting some colorful blooms to get us thru to spring. Check out Presby's Flickr photo sharing pool for loads of stunning photos of our favorite flower. Find it at:

<http://www.flickr.com/groups/presbyirisdgarden/pool/>

And did you know Presby has bee hives on site? So fun! Even if they do occasionally cause a bit of alarm. Read all about it at: <http://tinyurl.com/Presbees>

**Got a link to share? Drop me a line at:**  
[garden.of.mu@gmail.com](mailto:garden.of.mu@gmail.com)

# The Boy King & a Royal Iris Legacy

By Mike Unser

In the opening decades of the 20th Century large parts of the western world were gripped with a mania for all things Egyptian. With the discovery of King Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922 the craze reached its zenith and became even more pronounced as news of the fabulous treasures swept the world. That year Sid Grauman opened the soon-to-be famous Egyptian Theater in Hollywood, California, and ten years later the craze was still going strong when *The Mummy* starring Boris Karloff was released to audiences hungry for exotic thrills. In the year's between an iris was created that had a lasting impact on iris history by begetting some of the biggest award winners ever.

The discovery of King Tut's tomb by Howard Carter set off a new wave of interest in Egyptology and Egyptian motifs, and made this minor king the most well known of all the Pharaohs. He was called 'the boy king' because he took the throne at age nine and only reigned for ten years, dying at 19. While his significance in Egyptian history is negligible, the same cannot be said for the burial treasures from his tomb which are said to be the most well preserved ever discovered. The artifacts that remained, even after theft and vandalism over the ages, astounded scholars and the public alike with their sheer beauty and magnificent craftsmanship. Nothing like it had ever been seen in such abundance before, and many of the images have since become cultural icons instantly recognizable around the world. Most notably the gold mask for his mummy [pictured at right]. Exhibitions of the treasures always draw huge crowds and have set records for museum attendance.







In 1926 a Nebraska hybridizer named H.P. Sass introduced a new creation and took advantage of the public's interest when he chose the name. 'King Tut' [pictured at left] is a fine red-brown tall bearded iris that unlike its namesake is little known today. The product of two unnamed seedlings, it became the basis for much further hybridizing for Mr. Sass and many others. In her 1931 Quality Gardens catalog, Mrs. Douglas Pattison described it thusly: "*M. 34*". *Large flowers of a striking color. S. brown with a strong reddish infusion. F. velvety glowing red. The general effect in the garden is of a rich bright red. This has been universally admired and is becoming a very popular Iris.*"

The legacy of this variety has certainly been a royal one. Its impact on iris development cannot be understated. It was the basis for many advances in the red color class, and contributed to advances in yellows and blends as well. You'll find its genetic heritage in such luminaries as 'Christabel', 'Red Gleam', 'Garden Flame', 'Midwest Gem', 'Clara Noyes' and many, many others. But its real claim to fame are the top award winners on which its legacy is bestowed. The 1932 Dyke's Medal winner 'Rameses' is the product of 'King Tut' crossed with

'Baldwin'. Thru its children it appears in the heritage of DM winners 'Prairie Sunset' (1943), 'Ola Kala' (1948), and 'Argus Pheasant' (1952), each of which went on to become notable parents of DM winners in their own right. Quite a royal line indeed!

Tutankhamun was a little known young king whose greatest legacy was his contribution to the world's cultural heritage in our own recent history. The little known iris 'King Tut' has left a quieter, but no less rich, legacy of its own in the flowers we have enjoyed over the decades that came from its use in hybridizing. Generations to come will continue to marvel over the treasures of Tut's tomb and iris lovers can see a bit of that history reflected in the iris royalty in our gardens.



*I. pallida*



*The Iris Photography of Don McQueen*





*Gallant Moment*



*Jungle Shadows*



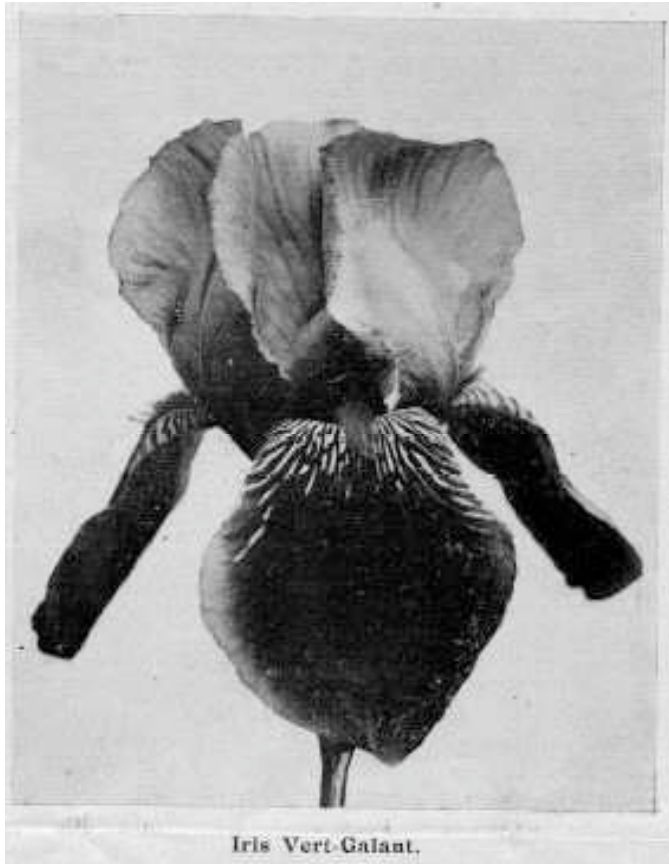
*Mme. Chereau*      *Great Lakes*  
*Moon Sundae*





# Know... 'Vert-Galant'

By Laetitia Munro



'Vert-Galant' was a product of the famous Cayeux et LeClerc hybridizers which produced 11 straight French Dykes Medal winners. It was bred to be a winner, having the famous 'Asia' and 'Bruno' for parents. Introduced in 1929 it vied for the Dykes Medal with its Cayeux half sibling, 'Député Nomblot' (Francheville x Bruno) and was introduced the same year. 'Vert-Galant' (sometimes spelled with a hyphen such as in Cayeux' catalog, and sometimes not, as in the AIS checklist) won that year, raising eyebrows amongst the iris community, as many considered 'Député Nomblot' a finer iris, dwarfing Galant in color and height. Pilkington writes in the AIS journal that he was "Frankly disappointed...a fine iris, the height and branching of the stem ...are perfect, but the flowers lack brilliance" and much preferred Nomblot. *[Left: from Cayeux et LeClerc catalog for 1931.]*

The AIS writer Sherman Duffy was relentless in his criticism and questioned the wisdom and subjectivity of the Dykes Medal judges, insisting it was by no means as fine as other Cayeux creations. He particularly disliked its veining on a white background extending down the falls (which is clearly evident in the photo above). Once again Duffy dismisses Galant in the AIS October, 1931 edition, begrudgingly admitting it was "less disappointing than last year", but the wounds were still fresh, remarking "it is inexplicable how it could have won the Dykes Medal over

Nomblot" in 1929. He suggested that Galant "looked better" growing "not near" Nomblot and this perhaps made it more palatable. Duffy went on in 1932 to produce a list of the 100 most popular iris, qualifying his choices as being "made by judges", and 'Vert-Galant' was noticeably missing. It didn't even make Duffy's list of 'near misses'. 'Député Nomblot' was awarded the French Dykes Medal the following year, 1930, which I am sure made many irisarians feel sweet vindication.

'Vert-Galant' was sold in the US by a number of growers. Schreiner's featured it in their early catalogs until 1938 and was kinder to the iris than others. He described it in 1931 as having two remarkable qualities: 1) "the stands of



the loveliest and smoothest tone and texture of brownish bronze I had ever seen” and 2) “fine oval falls had the best example of sharp clear edging about them of the same color as the stands, a most distinct effect”. But even Schreiner’s, which at first praised its beauty, downgraded their description of Galant in its later catalogs (1935-38) calling it “a giant red brown with considerable haft venation”. And then it was gone.

At the end of the 1930’s people had little interest in Nomblot vs. Galant, having moved on to newer cultivars to criticize. Even Cayeux, which surprisingly after the war managed to produce a modest catalog in 1946, did not even offer their Dykes Medal winner ‘Vert-Galant’ anymore!

But this is only half the story. The other half is: is the real ‘Vert-Galant’ among the missing? ‘Député Nomblot’ can be found, hale and hearty in a number of gardens. I have usually seen it named correctly and it is distinctive and beautiful enough to hold its own 80 years after winning its Dykes Medal honor. But Galant is a different story. The iris which beat out its bigger and flashier half-brother for the honor in 1929 has been horribly misidentified, sold and passed along under the wrong name, particularly in the United States.

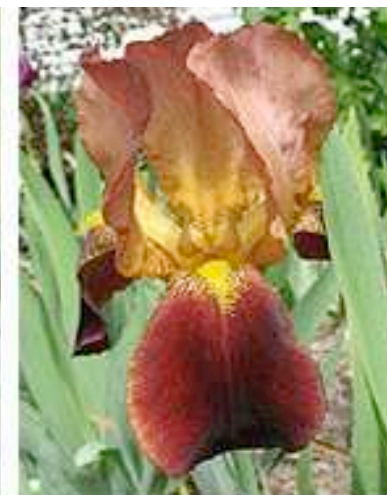
Strangely, what is being grown and sold as VG in this country could not possibly be VG if one stops to analyze what the real ‘Vert-Galant’ looks like. It neither meets the verbal or photographic description that we still have of it. There is more than one impostor about, and pictured below are a few of the usual suspects. Unfortunately they are all noids as of this writing.

These few suspicious characters were found growing in various historic iris collections under the name ‘Vert-Galant’, but they all are way too red with little or no haft venation, and none have the telltale bronze rim around the falls which is not only quite evident from the black and white photo above, but was described by irisarians during its heyday.

So of course we have to ask: does ANYONE out there grow the REAL ‘Vert-Galant’? As of this writing I know of no one...for sure. Perhaps you do grow it, and we would love to hear from you. I would particularly like to hear from those outside the US, to see if they have the true VG growing in Europe or other places.

This year, HIPS was able to acquire a few rhizomes of what is purportedly the real VG and a few of our gardeners are growing them, so there is hope that this controversial Dykes Medal winner can reenter historic iris gardens under its rightful name. The picture of the true ‘Vert Galant’ below does NOT come from HIPS gardeners, but is verified as correct by ID Chairman, Phil Edinger, and hopefully match the rhizomes we are growing as such.





At left:  
The true 'Vert-Galant'

At right:  
a selection of common VG  
imposters passed around  
in the US



*[Catalog photo, at lower left, from Quailty Gardens catalog for 1931.]*

Comments on this article are always welcome. Information for this article, particularly the historical background on 'Vert-Galant', was obtained courtesy of the Presby Memorial Iris Garden archives and library of iris literature.

From Cayeux et Le Clerc catalog for 1930: "The photo figured in this catalogue do not convey a fair idea of the perfect beauty, the perfection, the amplitude, nor the opulence of colourings of 'Vert-Galant' which has been recommended by the Irises Comission of the Société Nationale d'Horticulture for the W.R. Dykes Memorial medal as the finest new Iris of the year (May 28th, 1929). Strong much branched stems over 4 feet tall bearing well poised flowers. Standards coppery-fawn suffused lilac, falls round vivid garnet-red edged bronze. Wide yellow throat reticulated brown. Beard yellow."



## Varietal Spotlight:

### ‘BELVI QUEEN’

(C. Jensen, R. 1975) TB 43" E & RE, Standards cinnamon, edged darker; Falls white blaze on yellow inlay, maroon stitching around edge; gold beard. (Summer Fantasy X Villa Gold)

‘**Belvi Queen**’ is an excellent fall bloomer and has been widely reported to do so from zones 4-6 and in dozens of states and varieties of climates. Its rich rusty-red and gold tones really compliment the autumn garden and look beautiful with other late bloomers such as rubeckias or the new orange, gold and red toned echinaceas.





Native Chief

A Plethora of  
**Plicatas!**

Siva Siva



by Jim Gibson



Heather Hawk



Flashing gem



Radiant Apogee



Island Holiday



# Bluffton Memorial Iris Garden

A Preservation Report By Jerry Oswalt

I, like most people in Bluffton, thought of The Longfield Iris Farm simply as a business selling iris. Nobody I've talked to ever knew of the hybridizing, the awards won, and the amazing history that took place there. I didn't find about E.B. Williamson, the history of the iris fields nor Paul and Emma Cook until Mary Williamson had passed away in June of 1987 and I found her written history of E.B. and Longfield, along with that of Paul Cook, in two boxes of junk mail and magazines I'd boughten at her estate sale. I felt Mary had to have been at that sale that day and guided me to the two boxes of trash paper that nobody else wanted.



Mary was beautiful with blond hair, sparkling light blue eyes and she was very soft spoken. A real lady. Took very little effort to get a warm smile out of her. Upon reading the history she'd written of Longfield, and of her father and Paul Cook, I felt the history had to be preserved. It was a very proud history that had taken place in this little town, and I couldn't let it slip away.

I contacted Linda Miller who with her husband Roger had an iris field north of Bluffton. As a young man Roger had helped Emma Cook at her iris field after the death of Paul. Linda went into Mary's yard with me and we tried to find all the Cook and Williamson iris that Mary had preserved. We found many fresh holes where the neighbor, a friend of Mary's, had beat us to the iris. She had dug them and taken them home without the name tags. One was the iris 'Mary Williamson' from 1921, and another one which her father had thought so unique he'd wanted to patent it, but didn't. Mary had mentioned it was black. We found around 7 or so iris.





These iris, along with the history Mary had written, started me on my quest to preserve not only the history but to start looking for their iris to construct a memorial garden. Upon contacting the Williamson family they sent two boxes of photos, clippings, and some of the awards won by E.B. and Mary. About 18 years later I found a niece of Emma Cook's living in Paul and Emma's former home. They gave me Emma's scrapbook and a frame of some of Paul's medals. Included were his three Dykes Medals. These were all put into a vertical case we had built at the local Historical Museum, along with pictures of some of their irises and some of the history I'd collected.

The main concern now is getting the Cook-Williamson Memorial Iris Garden finished and ready for the public. The Bluffton Master Gardeners initially came on board to assist with the construction of the iris garden. We leveled, amended, tilled and shaped the ground where the iris beds were to be. Then in August of 2008 we planted 60 rhizomes encompassing 26 varieties. My initial 'pie in the sky' goal was to find 60 varieties. I had no idea how many still existed. Six years ago, I began writing to anyone listed as having iris for sale. Writing over 500 letters and post cards, becoming almost a nuisance to anyone listed in the AIS Bulletin, I began my search for their iris. Two years ago this old dinosaur got a

computer and gained another 15 varieties, going from 25 to 40 varieties. Very few iris came from individuals having them in their gardens, most came from commercial growers. As of this year I had found 50 and thought it would be another year or two before I came close to my goal. Then out of the blue Mike Unser came through with 5 varieties, Phil Edinger with 9, and Presby with 'Pink Bountiful' which I'd been looking for. I couldn't believe I'd made an arbitrary goal of 60 and had found my 60 within 6 years. We're now in the process of putting the iris back into the beds, with more than double the varieties than the first planting. We have some landscaping to finish, and a paver walk to build, but with the iris in we are on our way.

I would like to thank everyone who has helped in locating and making the historic iris available for the garden. Hopefully once established, we can then be a source for Cook and Williamson Iris to others wanting these beautiful



historics. The Cook-Williamson iris are now back in Bluffton, Indiana, where they were originally hybridized and registered from 1918 thru 1968. The local citizens, upon learning of the history, have now taken interest in the garden and seem to enjoy watching it develop. The garden itself is a small garden but once established it will be a treat to the eyes of any iris lover, historic or not. I would put these iris up against alot of the newer iris of today as far as beauty. As historics they have a story to tell and a proud history to give us.





## Looking for more on Historic Irises??

If you're looking for more information about older irises check out these suggestions:

Nancy J. Ondra's blog **Hayefield** has a great article about classic iris 'Gerald Darby'. Including numerous photos and information about this great iris, along with suggestions for using it in the garden. Check it out at: <http://tinyurl.com/geralddarby>

Thomas Jefferson's home at Monticello is the site of Tufton Farm and the **Center for Historic Plants**, which includes a collection of historic irises. You can read about them and find a list of the varieties along with great descriptions here: <http://www.monticello.org/site/house-and-gardens/bearded-iris-collection-tufton-farm>

If you are planning to visit **Bluffton**, IN, this spring to see the **Memorial Iris Garden** be sure to stop by the historical museum at 420 W. Market St., right across the street from E.B. Williamson's home (tho Jerry tells me it has been extensively remodeled from EB's day). Many treasures from the history of these renowned hybridizers is on display. <http://wchs-museum.org/>

Want more of **Don McQueen**'s iris photos? Get on the list! Drop Don a line: <mailto:ddmcqueen@rogers.com> and let him know you'd like to see his photos next spring.

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Please send your questions, comments, suggestions, corrections or any thing else you'd care to share with us to: [garden.of.mu@gmail.com](mailto:garden.of.mu@gmail.com)

**Please feel free to share this file!**

## In the next issue:

Exploring Iris History Online

Photo Essay: The classic varieties of G&K

Grace Sturtevant: A Family Remembers

... and much more!





Fade flowers, Fade; Nature will have it so

'Tis but what we must in our autumn do!

- Edmund Waller

