

MT. DIABLO IRIS SOCIETY NEWS

NOVEMBER 2025



The Mt. Diablo Iris Society exists for the purpose of stimulating and fostering interest in the propagation, culture and hybridizing of the genus Iris. As well the scientific and horticultural education of all those interested in learning about any phase of the genus Iris, and in the protection of these plants in their native habit.

▶▶ **MDIS Meeting** ◀◀
▶▶ **Sunday, November 9th, 1-3 pm** ◀◀
▶▶ **Pleasant Hill Senior Center** ◀◀
233 Gregory Ln, Pleasant Hill

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hello to everyone,

I hope the even cooler days along with the early rains are finding you out in your gardens either tidying up or renovating tired beds. Luckily, we are able to continue to do this throughout the winter except for the wettest times.

At our October meeting, Jeff(me) talked about hybridizing irises and planting iris seeds. I don't recall that we have ever spoken about this at one of our meetings in my 12+ years as a member. I described where to find the pollen, where to put it and how long to wait for seed to be ripe. Then we moved on to seed preparation, stratification, and waiting for the first sprouts. The final phase of planting out your new seedlings and then waiting until the second spring to possibly see what you produced. I hope there was inspiration to make some of your own seeds. Many national societies have seed sales so you may also

seek out new things that way too. We need more hybridizers and you're only 6 months away from pollen dabbing time.

We have now reached the end of this leadership cycle. Our nominating committee has been put to the task of filling the leadership roles that are expiring at the end of this year. We are not a large group and many existing members have had roles over the years. It's truly a rewarding experience to work together as a team, trying new things and continuing old traditions. We have had some fun times at our shows and sales. It's a lot of work, a bit of glory and we are just the current keepers of the society and region at large. This society has a 65 year history and many legends have been a part of this society. Add your name to the books and take on a role in the leadership, large or small. We will be presented with a slate of new officers up for election at the November meeting.

Lastly, if you have topics or speakers you would like to see at one of our six regular

monthly meetings, please let us know. It doesn't have to be completely iris related either.

See you at the meeting,
Jeff Bennett

November Meeting

We will be holding our Nov 9th meeting from 1-3pm at Pleasanton Hill Senior Center, 233 Gregory Ln, Pleasant Hill, CA

Riley will be giving a presentation about reblooming iris. I'm looking forward to soaking in his wealth of information and to hearing about new trends with rebloomers.

Social Lunch Prior To Meeting

Some of us plan to have lunch before the meeting at 11:30. Feel free to join us. We will be at:

JACK'S CANTINA, 40 Crescent Dr Suite C
Pleasant Hill, CA 94523

CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2025

Nov 9	MDIS Meeting, Pleasant Hill
Dec	No meeting.
Jan 12	MDIS Meeting, San Ramon
Feb 9	MDIS Meeting, San Ramon
Mar 9	MDIS Meeting, San Ramon
Apr 24	MDIS Meeting & Alden Lane Setup, Livermore
Apr 25-26	Alden Lane Show & Fundraiser

Upcoming AIS Events 2026

May 15-17 Region 14 Spring Regional
Reno, CA

May 19-26 National Convention
Newark, NJ

An interview with one of our newest MDIS members: Gayla Peek

Questioned by Marilyn Kaplan

To learn a bit about Gayla, please read her informative interview which is included near the end of this newsletter.

Welcome Gayla and thank you Marilyn!



2025 MDIS Virtual Iris Show Awards at October Meeting

Jan Blaedel handed out Virtual Awards to MDIS members. Sergey Melnikov and Riley Probst won them all. This was Riley's first time to enter the MDIS Virtual Iris Show and he won Best Specimen of Show with LUNAR RING.

Congratulations to both Sergey and Riley!



Riley and Jan



Sergey and Jan



Sergey, Jan, and Riley

FOLLOWING PAGES for

→ **November DOOR PRIZE IRIS** pg 4-5

→ **Interview with Gayla Peek** pg 6-7

→ **October Meeting Minutes** pg 8-9

MDIS Door Prizes – NOV 2025

(Iris photos and descriptions are courtesy of commercial hybridizers and wiki.irises.org.)



SAND AND SURF (Van Liere 2024) TB, 34", M-L. Standards sandy yellow; falls white, light purple irregular margin, yellow and red-purple hafts; beards golden yellow



SODALICIOUS (Johnson 2025) IB, 26", M. Standards mustard yellow; falls deep maroon to black, with a lighter band; beards orange.



GOLD JEWELRY (Black 2025) BB, 27", M-L. Standards mid saffron gold; falls mid saffron gold; mid amber washed hafts; beards dark marigold; slight sweet fragrance



IRIDESCENT (Shadlow 2024) TB, 36", E-M. Standards marigold; violet at midrib; falls iridescent violet, rimmed 1/2" orange, white haft marks next to beard; beards marigold throat, marigold middle, white end



LOVE ME FOREVER (Tasco 2023) TB, 38", M. Standards pink; style arms salmon; falls cream, banded magenta; beards orange.



OLD SPORT (Schreiner 2025) TB, 34", M-L. Standards violet, some with white stripes; style arms white; falls violet, with lighter stripes; **flattie**; beards yellow base, white tips.



OREGON BOUND (Schreiner 2025) TB, 36", L.
Standards silver top and light purple base, which fades to pure white; falls silver and purple base; beards yellow throat, yellow-white middle, white end; pronounced spicy fragrance



FALCON HEART (Johnson 2025) TB, 36", M.
Standards light yellow, with deep canary yellow center; falls light yellow ground, deep red center in the shape of phoenix, lavender wash, that then becomes clean light yellow; beards yellow; slight sweet fragrance.



SWORD OF THE JEDI (Dash 2025) TB, SA, 32", M. Standards pale blue; falls pale blue, brown veining at halts, followed by blue-violet flush at shoulders; beards orange with purple flounces; slight fragrance.



INK AND PINK (Kanarowski 2025) TB, 40", M.
Standards salmon pink; falls deep inky black-violet, eighth-inch precise salmon pink rim, white and black veined spray pattern across entire shoulder; beards very deep red-orange; slight sweet fragrance



JOINT SESSION (Keppel 2025) TB, 38", L.
Standards creamy peach; falls foxglove to columbine blue, darkest toward midline and paling toward edge; beards rusty coral throat, rusty coral middle, rusty coral with columbine blue at base end.



BORN TO PARTY (Johnson 2023) TB, 36", M.
Standards brilliant yellow; falls deep mahogany hafts and below beard that blends into a lavender wash, gold rim; beards old mustard; sweet fragrance.

An interview with one of our newest MDIS members

Gayla Peek

questioned by Marilyn Kaplan

How did you become interested in the iris world?

I grew up with tall bearded iris. My mother was an avid gardener and we grew iris, dahlias, and asters in abundance. As a second grader, I remember my mom harvesting many of her iris to use as corsages for the parents who came to our “grocery store launch” at school. I particularly remember the unique smell of iris.

What would you like to learn by joining the iris society?

In my years of collecting iris, my interests have evolved and changed from collecting the newest, prize-winning iris, to the nearest black iris, to the most unique and odd colored iris, to hybridizers I like. I think hanging out with folks who love and appreciate all of those aspects of iris culture would have a lot to offer. I also have an interest in history—local and family history. My husband’s family lived for several generations in Mt. Eden, CA, home also of William Mohr and his father, Cornelius. Cornelius’ home still stands adjacent to Chabot College. My husband’s family would likely have been familiar with William Mohr’s tragic accident and the history of his family. My relative, Ruth Okey, was a professor at CAL in the 20s at about the time when Sidney B. Mitchell would have been the school’s Librarian. I own a copy of his book, *From a Sunset Garden*, published in 1932. I have followed the career of Joe Ghio because of the year he spent teaching at Mt. Eden HS.

What are your favorite iris varieties, and do you prefer bearded or beardless iris?

Nearly all of my irises are tall bearded, with a few little dwarves that haven’t been consumed by rodents. My current rear yard also features some Pacific Coast iris that came with the property and in the front yard, 20-25 OLD purple tall bearded iris that are likely to have come from my husband’s parents’ yard near the San Mateo Bridge.

Tell me a little bit about where you grew up, your childhood, your family, your children, your favorite vacation spots.

I had a typical 50’s childhood, the youngest of my parents’ three daughters. My family came from Des Moines, Iowa long before I was born, looking for a new start and for work in the burgeoning economy of California. My mom was a stay-at-home mom for most of my childhood. From her I learned to love being outside in the garden and the art of sewing.

I graduated with a B.A. in English from CSUEB (then CSCH). Early on, I worked for the Alameda County Library in various capacities as they modernized by digitizing their catalog and entering the internet age in the late 1970s. My family grew to include two children and a few years later, I went back to Cal State for an Elementary Teaching Credential. I taught mostly fifth grade in Castro Valley.

My two adult children now have moved out of the Bay Area. My husband and I are thrilled to have two adorable grandchildren.

Of course, we visit Utah often to visit with our son's family. We also make time for trips to Sutter Creek, Jackson, and Mokelumne Hill, California, where several generations of my husband's family have lived and worked. My husband currently volunteers for the Knight Foundry, an historical site, the oldest water powered iron foundry in the country. He is helping to digitize their collection of old technical drawings.

--Gayla Peek

MDIS Meeting Minutes October 2025



Mt. Diablo Iris Society Monthly Meeting Minutes **October 12, 2025**

Attendees included: Jeff Bennett, Jan Blaedel, Marilyn Kaplan, Joelle Medina, Sergey Melnikov, Carl Meier, Stan and Pat Morgan, Gayla Peek, Riley Probst, Corinna Wise

Quorum(10) ? Yes 11

The Mt. Diablo Iris Society monthly meeting was called to order by president, Jeff Bennett at 1:08 PM at the Pleasant Hill Senior Center. A reminder to write your volunteer hours next to your name on the Sign-In Sheet. If you do not wish to receive a Door Prize rhizome, please sign your name **BELOW** the numbers.

The minutes of the **September 2025** were approved/revise. Motion was made by Riley Probst and seconded by Sergey Melnikov. Motion passed unanimously.

Door Prize iris drawing:

Calypso Joe- Sergey Melnikov
Caramel Craving-Sergey Melnikov
Ecstatic-Jan Blaedel
Ember in the Dark-Riley Probst
Gatsby-Pat Morgan
Just Between Us-Marilyn Kaplan
Matinee Queen-Mary Sindicic
Oh So Different-Corinna Wise
Regal Fantasy-Jeff Bennett
Soft Sell-Riley Probst
Sunday's Best Dress-Gayla Peek
Upscale-Gayla Peek
Riley donated six Rebloomers
Joy Returns – Carl Meier
Champion – Corinna Wise
Cloudless Sunrise – Pat Morgan
Chartered Course – Carl Meier
Cha Cha Cha – Stan Morgan
???-???

Marilyn Kaplan mentioned that having a Judges' Training for Virtual Iris Shows was discussed at the Fall Regional. Marilyn will get that information and comments to Jan to put into the Newsletter and send it on to Gary White to try to encourage a training webinar.

Virtual Awards Assembly – Jan Blaedel handed out Awards Certificates to Sergey Melnikov and Riley Probst for Best of Show, Best of Sections, and Sweepstakes. Congratulations to two fine irisarians. Your work is stunning.

Program – Seedlings and Planting Seeds

For those of you who missed the meeting.....<https://youtu.be/6b6JjP0sIW0>

Moles – try poisonous worms, look like gummi bears

Voles – put mouse traps next to hole

Gophers – gopher traps

Jeff uses liners to dissuade ground squirrels, voles, moles, and gophers

HYBRIDIZING IRISES AND SPROUTING SEEDS

Collect pollen and freeze it if the iris you cross pollinate do not bloom at the same time.

Plan ahead or just wing it? You don't know what is going to bloom and when?

Timing of pollination-don't use after rain – 2nd or 3rd day to get dry pollen, and you have to beat the bees

Tag your crosses and keep records

Harvest and plant seeds

Now flowers are big and bees are small, comparatively Put pollen on stigmatic lip. This is the “pollen parent” or male parent and the “pod parent” is the mother.

Beard has nothing to do with hybridizing – landing strip for bees

Use price string tags to identify the exact flower you pollinated

Jeff pollinates all three style arms-stigmatic lips – cover with organza bags to protect seeds from escaping when pod opens.

Paul Black removes standards and falls and just pollinates the style arms

Use pencil on plastic tags – Cross male X female (Pollen X Pod) and date

Seed pods can have 1 – 70 seeds

Allow the green pods to ripen – about 8 weeks-and collect just as pods begin to open – and put seeds in dry place to finish drying – store in small paper envelopes or open containers. Don't seal in plastic bags. But if they do mold, plant them anyway.

Bees pollinate to make seed pods also – Because it was cooler this year, fewer pollinations

RESULTRA by Essig is very fertile. CONQUISTADOR is very fertile.

Use desiccants from medicine bottles to keep seeds from molding

Plant in fall – Oct-Nov

Soak the seeds for three days – change water each day

Plant seeds at 1/4” in Miracle Grow- Keep constantly moist through winter, Jeff has planted as late as mid-January. If you can't get them planted, store in refrigerated in potting soil. Take them out, wait eight weeks, and put them in pots. Iris seeds need a cold spell to sprout- warm spell, followed by cold spell, followed by warm spell – called **stratification** –

Keep pots in full sun – put in trays and keep trays wet

Look up pH needed by certain iris and match pH of fertilizer

Seedlings stay in pots until Jeff has time to plant.

If seeds are in pots more than 5 months, fertilize with Osmocote

Plant in ground 6 inches apart. Some grow faster than others. Leaves are different from each other as well. Grow two winters until first flowers appear.

20 different seeds will produce 20 different flowers

Be picky. Count buds; evaluate flowers, leaves, and the stalk

Send promising seedlings to regional and national iris conventions

Don't give away seedlings. Don't rush to register.

First flowers are fun. Take photos. Get opinions about flower/greens from others

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=38QqU43BZH4> More science about pollination

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lzEP5ShdFC8> Stout Gardens breeding program

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qPusi_3cFyo&t=2s Schreiners Hybridizing

New Business- Marilyn Kaplan will take charge of future donations to Spring and Fall Regionals. Sergey suggested that the Board vote \$150 into the budget and each regional we buy a \$75 gift certificate from Riley, Fleur de Lis.

Share Table – Linda Woods has donated many IBs and SDBs. Please take them. There are MISfortune cookies to celebrate Halloween. Please help yourselves.

Jan Blaedel moved to adjourn Stan Morgan seconded. Passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted, Jan Blaedel, Secretary

Approved: 2025

**MT. DIABLO IRIS SOCIETY IS AN AFFILIATE OF THE AMERICAN IRIS SOCIETY
AND REGION 14. VISIT THE REGION WEBSITE: WWW.AISREGION14.ORG**

Dues are \$12.50 annual or \$30.00 tri-annual, Please send payment to club treasurer.

American Iris Society dues – \$30 print only, \$45 print and Emembership. Dual and multiple year pricing available. Visit: <https://www.irises.org/ais-memberships-emember/>

YOUR CURRENT BOARD:

President – Jeff Bennett, e-mail: jeff13bennett@gmail.com

Vice-President – Kathy Oldham

Treasurer – Sergey Melnikov

Secretary – Jan Blaedel, Secretary: mtdiabloiris@gmail.com

Newsletter Editor - Linda Woods, e-mail: linda.woods@comcast.net

Directors – Jan Blaedel, Carl Meier

Past President – Kathy Oldham