



MT. DIABLO IRIS SOCIETY NEWS

JULY 2026

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.

▶▶ **BEARDED IRIS AUCTION** ◀◀
▶▶ **Sunday, July 12, 12:15–4 pm** ◀◀
▶▶ **Auction Starts Promptly at 12:30 pm** ◀◀

▶▶ **Pleasant Hill Senior Center** ◀◀
233 Gregory Ln, Pleasant Hill

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Happy Summer Everyone,

Ok, you've had the month of June off to enjoy the coolish summer we're having and now we have one last stretch of fun coming up. Two events, 4 weeks. Then the season of iris society events slows down. Our next event is our annual auction. At the auction, you need to pick up your bag of doorprize irises you have been earning all year. Members have planted and the irises in their Dirt B&B beds for the last year. Linda orders the door prize irises and members grow them and hope for the most increases possible. Most of the irises are recent introductions and cost quite a bit if you were to order directly. Irises from Thomas Johnson, Howie Dash, Paul Black, Rick Tasco, Lynda Miller, Doug Kanarowski, Mike Sutton and Diana Ford are among the hybridizers she procures rhizomes from. To win them, you must attend the meetings. It's really a great way to get irises you may not otherwise ever

see or own. I have been pleasantly surprised by things I have received over the years.

Sometimes, these rhizomes don't increase as well as we planned for or they outright die. When this happens, Linda, who has rhizomes all over her living room floor, will substitute another desirable iris that is available. So, check your bag and have that list handy for the auction.

At the auction, the club auctions off the extra door prizes that weren't won during the year. They may be wonderful large rhizomes, mediums or mother rhizomes that have had the largest increases separated out for door prizes. Some of the mother rhizomes, although they can look pathetic, can grow wonderful plants with a little patience and TLC and the price is right. Extra rhizomes that don't get bid on either end up at Benicia or get a re-plant for next year. This is a huge, coordinated effort among many members to bring this all together, especially Linda. So, I wholeheartedly thank Linda for taking this on year after year so

we may enjoy new irises in our garden and at our show.

August 8th is our annual booth at the Benicia Peddlers Fair. Also, a full day of set up and offering irises to the public. It's our largest fundraiser of the year and it's really a lot of fun. If you have iris clumps that are too big and need thinning down, please consider donating 5-8 rhizomes of each to the event. More on that in a few weeks.

For now, Happy 4th of July on this historic 250th Anniversary of our country!

Sincerely,
Your MTB President
Jeff Bennett

PICS ON STICKS Return

Please return any unused PICS ON STIX to the July meeting. Nancy can re-use these next April. Thank you.

Bearded Iris AUCTION 12:30 – 3:30, Sunday July 12th

(Arrival 12:15, Depart 4:00)

The July meeting will be our auction and will be held at the Pleasant Hill Senior Center. July 12, 2026 at **12:15 PM**. Upon arrival:

- Pick up your sack of Door Prize rhizomes; note varieties in sack.
- Look for treasures on the Side Table. (If you take any rhizomes from Side Table, add them to your purchases on the back of Bidding Sheet.
- Get your bidding paddle – and bidding sheet, if you didn't bring one.
- Find a seat for a prompt auction start at 12:30.
- Bring a pen to record your purchases, a form of payment, and if you want, color printout of varieties to be auctioned

Prior to July 12th, Linda Woods will be sending out an *updated* auction sheet listing the names of the iris up for auction as well as pictures of the iris. If you want color pictures at the auction, please print this at home and bring it with you or save it to your iPhone or iPad and bring the pictures that way. The only bidding sheets that will be available at the auction will be without pictures. These bidding sheets will be for you to record your purchases and used by Sergey to assess the damages (i.e. your bill). Iris bidding will start at \$5 per rhizome. Unsold rhizomes will be taken to the Peddler's Faire in Benicia. Sergey will accept cash and credit cards. The initial bidding sheets may have iris listed for which there are not enough rhizomes to put up for auction. Those announcements will be made at the beginning of the auction. Pictures of the iris will be projected onto the wall during the bidding.

If you need more details about the auction, check out the previous newsletter. If you still have questions, feel free to email Linda.

Door Prize Iris Pickup

The Door Prize iris you have won this past season will be available for pickup. Look for your sack before you settle into your chair. **Note the varieties in your sack.** Sometimes it is necessary to make substitutions, so double check so you don't bid on them – unless you want more of that variety! **If you cannot attend the auction to get your DP's, you must make arrangements to get your DP's by Aug 31.** Unclaimed DP's will go back into the club inventory.

Rhizome Donations for Benicia Peddler's Fair

It's Dig Season! If you are digging soon and don't know what to do with the extra rhizomes, please consider donating them for selling at our Benicia Peddler's Fair fundraising event.

Healthy, fresh rhizomes **with photos** sell the best. Even if you haven't dug, please

send a list of the varieties you might dig to MtDiabloIris@gmail.com ASAP. Nancy, our much appreciate photo librarian, will see if we have a photo for your each of your varieties, and may have time to add one if we don't.

The rhizomes you donate need to be trimmed, rinsed, and labeled by writing its Variety Name on a leaf. You can trim roots to 3-4" and the fan to ~10". You can drop off your rhizomes at someone's house who is going to Benicia, or bring them yourself when you arrive. You can bring them yourself even if you don't arrive at 8am. We will be arranging and refilling the rhizomes all day, as needed.

Rhizomes that are totally viable, but not necessarily visually appealing, can be added to Grab Bags. Donate those also!

Benicia Peddler's Fair
Aug 8th, (7am setup) 8am – 5pm
~1st St & D St, Benicia, CA

The upcoming Benicia Peddler's Fair is one of our primary fundraising events where we sell bare root rhizomes. We'd love to have *2 or more hours* of your time to help at this event. And while you are there you can browse the 11 blocks of vendor booths. Yes, there are usually a couple other plant booths.

Our booth – well, actually our iris are so popular we have are 2 booths wide - is usually located at or near **1st Street and D Street**. Be sure and have Linda's or Jeff's phone number in case you have trouble locating our booth. Parking can be a bit challenging midday. I noticed a new perk this year is the SolTran bus service is providing free transportation during the event. There is a flyer at the bottom of webpage, but I haven't had time to research the route. www.beniciapeddlersfair.org

If you have helped in the past, you know how busy we are interacting with the public to answer iris questions. It is a fun day and a chance to get to know other club members better. We have many repeat customers who like to share their success stories, the novices who ask about our "orchids", and those

scouting for the perfect color to add to their collection. It is our time to promote our club and share our enthusiasm for irises!

Jan and Kathy usually help Jeff set up at O Dark Hundred but we need many hands to set out rhizomes alphabetically **before 8 AM** to start selling – and there are sometimes people waiting for that 8 AM bell! A 7am arrival would be great. With enough helpers throughout the day we can rotate and take coffee and lunch breaks. It can be cold in the morning and heat up by the afternoon so dress accordingly. Bring a camping chair if you wish to take a break during the day. We will have bottled water available and there are coffee shops and food trucks nearby. Come make a day of it!

CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2026

July 12	MDIS Auction, Pleasant Hill Senior Center, Pleasant Hill
Aug 8	Benicia Peddler's Fair
Sep 13	MDIS Meeting. Pleasant Hill Senior Center, Pleasant Hill, CA
Oct 11	MDIS Meeting. Pleasant Hill Senior Center, Pleasant Hill, CA
Nov 8	MDIS Meeting. Pleasant Hill Senior Center Pleasant Hill, CA
Dec	No Meeting

Monthly Finance Report

Financial Statement July 2026

- Cash + 30\$ membership 150 total
- Bank accounts are the same:
- Checking - 14,971.17 and Saving 6,449.97

Virtual Iris Shows is now INTERNATIONAL!

We For those of you who do not receive AIS News and Notes, MDIS had an article in the June edition. We have already heard back from the Italian Iris Society.

Mt. Diablo Iris Society Virtual Iris Show goes international

When Bob Pries first introduced virtual iris shows in 2014, he did so with the intention of offering international competition – encouraging iris growers from around the world to compete with each other. After seven years of virtual shows under our belt, we have expanded to include world competitors. Our virtual show for 2027 will begin September 1, 2026, and run through August 31, 2027, thus allowing iris growers around the world to participate regardless their growing season. Iris societies from Australia, Great Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, New Zealand, and South Africa have been invited to join. If you have an email address for the iris society of a country we missed, we would love to hear from you.



LADY IN GOLD IB William Aylett, 1941
New South Wales, Australia

Update on the 2026 MDIS Virtual Iris Show

We already have five exhibitors entered with 102 individual entries. This is way ahead of where we usually are at this time. We look forward to more entries from MDIS members before the August 31st deadline. You still have two and a half months left to get those

pictures entered. Since we had to cancel the judged show this spring, this is your only chance for ribbons and rosettes and medals this year from MDIS. If you have any questions email us at MDISVirtual@gmail.com

Well Wishes

We have two MDIS members recovering from surgery who both hope to be at the July 12 auction, and we as members want to wish them a speedy recovery and hopefully they will heal fast. Stan Morgan and Carl Meier are both long-time members who have contributed largely to our projects, meetings, and fund raisers over the years. We are thinking about you Stan and Carl!

Respectfully submitted by Marilyn Kaplan

Biochar Opportunity

Jeff Bennett mentioned that El Cerrito nursery has biochar for \$300/cubic yard. Perhaps the club should buy a cubic yard and divide it into bags and sell to our members, splitting the cost. [There are 27 cubic feet in a cubic yard. Linda is interested in 2-3 cubic feet.] The beauty of biochar is that it is a one time application and lasts for hundreds of years. No need to re-apply it. If you are interested, contact to MtDiabloIris@gmail.com If we can arrange this we will let you know the size (amount) and the cost.

MDIS Positions Open!

Just a reminder, we are looking for people to fill positions which enable our club to run smoothly without overworking others. We currently have no Vice President. Jan is *loyally* acting as our interim Secretary - because there are things that must be done. She would appreciate turning over the position as she donates so much of her time to other aspects of the club. Plus, we are looking for 1 or 2 people to train for the roles of Iris Show Chairs. (This is the show and fundraiser event at Alden Lane.) The positions and tasks are well

defined, and we would be happy to give you details, and assist in training and job shadowing. Think if you have the time and skills to help out.

Regional Gardens

Riley stayed a 2nd day at the Regional in Reno to tour the optional gardens. He noted “while we were in the Duncan Garden it was about 40F and the wind was blowing about 40mph. While we were in Alison's Wonderland Garden we had snow flurries.” Quite a change from the previous day!

The first 5 photos are from Alison's Wonderland Garden. The next 3 are from RVP Dan Williams Garden. The last 3 photos are from Susan Duncan's Owl Roost Garden.



Alison's Wonderland



Coos Bay (Schreiner2021)



Gotham (Schreiners 2022)



Summerzcool (Schreiner 2024)



Alison's Wonderland



View of Terraces at Williams Garden



Arizona Cave Painting (Kanarowski 2020)



Irresistible Charm (Tasco 2016)



Susan Duncan at Owl Roost Garden



Firefly Frenzy (Tasco 2017) AB



Cranfil's Gap (Burseen 2011)

Judges Training Promotes Contemplation

Riley gave a Judges' Training on judging iris in a garden at the Regional in Reno. A copy of his test is included in this newsletter. You might want to try assessing iris in your garden and ask Riley and Jeff for ideas if you have questions.

FOLLOWING are PAGES for

→ Garden Judging pg 6

→ June Meeting Minutes pg 7-9

Be sure to read as there is always information and details not included in other portions of the newsletter!

GARDEN JUDGING

At the Reno Region 14 Spring Regional, Riley Probst gave a Judges' Training on Garden Judging. Unlike judging at a bench or virtual show, this type of judging takes place IN the garden and judges how well a certain cultivar is thriving. This is useful information for determining whether to buy a certain variety or whether to consider growing it for show. As Riley explained, you look at the whole plant and determine how well all the parts coordinate and how well it blooms and how it increases. I asked Riley for a copy of his test for you to quiz yourself to see how much you understand about Garden Judging. Marilyn, Jeff, and Riley can all help you with the correct answers. It's a fun exercise.

GARDEN JUDGES' TRAINING

1. Judging tall bearded iris is based on performance in the garden only. T F
2. The ultimate objective for the judge is to cast votes for those varieties of exceptional quality on the show bench. T F
3. If you don't visit gardens or grow newer iris you cannot meet the qualifications for an accredited AIS judge. T F
4. Each leaf should be crisp, erect and of sufficient width. T F
5. Tall bearded iris should produce 3 or more increases per rhizome per year. T F
6. Touching or overlapping falls and standards are not acceptable. T F
7. A stalk must have at least two branches plus the terminal on the upper one half of the stalk. T F
8. A tall bearded iris should have a minimum of 7 buds. T F
9. Haft colorings are okay if they do not _____ from the flower. T F
10. To receive 10 distinctiveness points, the flower must exhibit unique qualities. T F



Mt. Diablo Iris Society Monthly Meeting Minutes June 14, 2026

Attendees included: Jeff Bennett, Jan Blaedel, Marilyn Kaplan, Sergey Melnikov, Fred Newlan, Gayla Peek, Roy Peek, Riley Probst, Corinna Wise,

Distant Members: Ken Ainslie and Becky, Elizabeth Rieniets, Barbara Whitely

Guests: Mikey Longo, CBRIS and MBIS

Quorum? No

The Mt. Diablo Iris Society monthly meeting was called to order by president, Jeff Bennett at 1 PM at Dry Creek Gardens. The minutes of the May, 2026 meeting were approved as revised. Motion was made by Sergey Melnikov and seconded by Corinna Wise. Motion passed unanimously.

Door Prize Iris Drawing for Club Members in attendance. We put the names of the iris on small strips of paper and people drew in order of their sign-in numbers. Riley brought three extra Rebloomers.

Can't Be Denied	Marilyn Kaplan
Century Mark SDB	Sergey Melnikov
Dig In	Gayla Peek
Family Pride	Gayla Peek
Heard a Rumor	Jan Blaedel
Irish Beauty	Sergey Melnikov
Long Game	Fred Newlan
Mocha Frappe	Jan Blaedel
Neverending Story	Corinna Wise
Noble Offspring	Riley Probst
Singularity	Fred Newland
Ukrainian Princess	Roy Peek
Aaron's Dream	Marilyn Kaplan
Fond Remembrance	Jeff Bennett
Love Street	Roy Peek

Announcements:

Be sure to put your volunteer hours next to your name on the sign-in sheet.

Old Business

Jan Blaedel told stories about the train trip to the Reno Regional in May and meeting the young man from Merced who was going to New York to sing in Carnegie Hall. We also discussed how we four put the lunch together at the Carson City garden did not think the regional was very well organized. We did all agree that the Saturday night dinner was exceptionally good.

Riley gave a Judges' Training on judging iris in the garden, just as Dan Williams did. Riley will send Jan a copy of his test to include in this newsletter. You might want to try assessing iris in your garden and ask Riley and Jeff for ideas if you have questions. Later in the meeting Riley told Jeff that Region 14 was looking for a club to do the 2028 Fall Regional. Jeff said that he was hoping to do the 2029 Spring Regional. Riley mentioned that Monterey Bay was doing the 2027 Spring Regional the second weekend in May in conjunction with their annual iris show. Something for us to consider in 2029. Needs more discussion. Tabled for the Board meeting and a future MDIS monthly meeting.

Jeff told about his first big train trip across the country when he was young. Fun memories.

Corinna told about her trip to Mid America Garden and Schreiner's Garden in May. She was overwhelmed by the numbers and colors of iris and the layout of the gardens. A worthwhile trip.

New Business

Jan Blaedel brought up revising the MDIS Timeline which Joe Balch created in 2002. There are many updates and corrections needed. Jan will tackle beginning this and send it to committee chairs and Board members to update and finalize at the July Board meeting.

Corinna Wise and Jeff Bennett discussed the need for volunteers for An Iris Affaire next spring. We should organize it as we do for Ruth Bancroft's Iris garden getting sign-ups and producing bookmarks and doing demonstrations on an advertised schedule. Perhaps Corinna would take the lead on this as she spent a good deal of time in the gardens this spring with Jeff. Hint, hint. Jeff suggested we might offer demonstrations on Sunday when a lot of people visit. He said over 4000 people came this spring – that's 4000 bookmarks! Jeff will ask EBRPD if they will produce a color brochure about the Iris Affaire. We can hand that out at Alden Lane and Ruth Bancroft. We might consider having items on the MtDiabloIris.org website and we could refer visitors through QR codes and handouts.

Some ideas:

Handouts

- Virtual Iris Show

- MDIS membership

- Online Sales

- Bookmarks with Benicia sale dates, meeting dates,

- Iris puzzles and coloring pages for young people

- IRIS CHALLENGE – A handout of finding certain iris by name or type, iris with seed pods, etc

- People to be present in the garden to answer questions

- People to do demonstrations on how to divide and plant iris

- Someone to offer artistic design demonstration(s) with iris

- Photography and painting contest giving rhizomes as prizes???

Youth involvement. One of the items missing from our repertoire is a Youth Program. Carolyn Hoover is the AIS Youth Program chair and she has an active program in the Yosemite area. Ken Ainslie, too, has an active youth program in Solvang. We will ask both of them for guidance. Gayla Peek mentioned the Palomares Elementary School near her which has five grades of students. We will pursue doing an iris program with one of those grade levels. Jan Blaedel and Gayla Peek will work out the details. Jan will contact Carolyn and Ken for suggestions and ideas to begin.

Jeff Bennett mentioned that El Cerrito nursery has biochar for \$300/cubic yard. Perhaps the club should buy a cubic yard and divide it into bags and sell to our members, splitting the cost. The beauty of biochar is that it is a one time application and lasts for hundreds of years. No need to re-apply it. If you are interested, contact to MtDiabloIris@gmail.com If we can arrange this we will let you know the size (amount) and the cost.

Marilyn Kaplan mentioned that she was embarrassed that MDIS did not have a basket at the Spring Regional, especially since the MDIS Board had made arrangements to buy a \$75 gift certificate from Fleur de Lis Gardens (Riley Probst) each regional. This just fell through the cracks this year. Sergey Melnikov, CFO, will cut Riley a check (or send Zelle) in March and July each year for the Spring and Fall Regionals. Marilyn will take charge of putting the Gift Certificate into some appropriate container to offer as a raffle item. We will also put this on the revised MDIS Timeline.

Fred Newlan brought a potted iris he purchased last year and it has multiplied and filled the pot. He wanted to know when to divide it as he would like to replant all the rhizomes in their own pots. Riley gave a very interesting breakdown of things to consider – and things NOT to worry about. Riley said that sometimes iris rhizomes did better when they were a little stressed rather than putting them directly into wet ground where they

might rot before being able to produce roots. He also said that some of the big, juicy rhizomes benefitted from drying out a bit. He said he has even waited until November to plant rhizomes he purchased in July. He discussed letting the rhizomes sit out to dry and then late in the fall, put them into shallow water, never covering the rhizome. He has left them like this for as long as a month. Then he plants them. Out of 200 iris he only lost ten. A very informative discussion.

Just a reminder, we are looking for someone to take over the position of secretary and for one or two people to train for the roles of Iris Show Chairs. Think if you have the time and skills to help out.

The July meeting will be our auction and will be held at the Pleasant Hill Senior Center. July 12, 2026 at **12:15** PM. Come help set up and bidding starts at **12:30** PM. Linda Woods will be sending out an auction sheet listing the names of the iris up for auction as well as pictures of the iris. If you want color pictures at the auction, please print this at home and bring it with you or save it to your iPhone or iPad and bring the pictures that way. The only bidding sheets that will be available at the auction will be without pictures. These bidding sheets will be for you to record your purchases and used by Sergey to assess the damages (i.e. your bill). Iris bidding will start at \$5 per rhizome. Unsold rhizomes will be taken to the Peddler's Faire in Benicia. Sergey will accept cash and credit cards. The initial bidding sheets may have iris listed for which there are not enough rhizomes to put up for auction. Those announcements will be made at the beginning of the auction. Pictures of the iris will be projected onto the wall during the bidding.

If you have any items for the MDIS Board to discuss in July, please submit them to MtDiabloIris@gmail.com

We missed Carl Meier at the meeting and hope he is recovering nicely after his surgery. Hope to see you in July, Carl.

Sergey and Corinna and Jan met briefly to work out the details of labeling Corinna's rhizome with barcodes for the online sales. This is a new endeavor and we need to work out the kinks. **If you will be digging rhizomes to offer for sale at the Peddler's Faire, please send your list to the MDIS secretary at MtDiabloIris@gmail.com by Monday, July 27th.** She will get the information to Jeff Bennett and Nancy Pahl and Sergey Melnikov to make the Peddler's Faire and the ONLINE Sales run smoothly. A lot of work must happen behind-the-scenes to make all these events run smoothly. Thank you for your cooperation. And while we are on the subject, your help is needed at Benicia for the Peddler's Faire. If you have helped in the past, you know how busy we are interacting with the public to answer iris questions. It is a fun day and a chance to get to know other club members better. Jan and Kathy usually help Jeff set up at O Dark Hundred but we need many hands to set out rhizomes alphabetically before 8 AM to start selling – and there are sometimes people waiting for that 8 AM bell! With enough helpers we can rotate and take coffee and lunch breaks. It can be cold in the morning and heat up by the afternoon so dress accordingly. Bring a camping chair if you wish to take a break during the day. We will have bottled water available and there are coffee shops and food trucks nearby. Come make a day of it!

Respectfully submitted, Jan Blaedel, Secretary
Submitted to the MDIS Newsletter Sunday, June 14, 2026

Approved: 2026

**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 –

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