

A New Script for Rebloom

By Mike Lockett, AIS Region 4 Reblooming Iris Chairman

A major surprise from the reblooming iris bed at J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College Ornamental Horticulture Department's display garden in Goochland County, VA awaited my arrival on Sunday afternoon, May 20th. I found a number of median and tall bearded rebloomers back in flower. Amazing!!

The college planting is a new effort to obtain a more representative sample of rebloom results in Region 4. Until this year, I used reporting from the Rose Garden in Northern VA as a check against data obtained from my remontant plantings in Powhatan, VA. This baseline allowed me to highlight information received from other micro-climates in Region 4. The JSRCC plantings feature 53 varieties. I have also succeeded in placing bearded remontants in public display beds at Maymont Park in metro Richmond and the Williamsburg Botanical Garden in James City County, VA.



Purple Joy (Spoon 2007)



Midsummer Night's Dream (Baumunk 1999)

The Botanical Garden bed was installed in August 2011. Good spring bloom occurred on the median varieties and seedlings planted there. Half the size of the JSRCC display, only a handful of the tall bearded managed bloom-stalks. During my last maintenance visit there on May 12th, I discovered developing stalks on SDB "Purple Joy" (D. Spoon, 2007), IB "Midsummer Night's Dream" (Baumunk, 1999), and TB "Over & Over" (Innerst, 2000).

The Maymont Park rebloom planting features twenty-six tall bearded rebloomers. Peggy Singlemann, Maymont's Director of Horticulture reported five selections in bloom during April after being installed in February. Plants were growing in two quart pots prior to planting.

I donate my time and materials to maintain the Williamsburg Botanical Garden and J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College plantings. Maymont Park is caring for the remontants there. As long as I am physically able and possess sufficient free time, I am confident any old or new bearded rebloom release can receive a fair evaluation in these public spaces stretched over two hardiness zones.

Another benefit for finally having some distinct public display areas is promoting rebloom's garden value to a larger audience. Surveys done last year indicate respondents are still largely unaware bearded irises can bloom twice in the same growing season. Seeing is believing. Real time or hands-on gardening experiences make a stronger argument for reblooming bearded iris in the home landscape. If current weather conditions remain in place, outstanding rebloom is possible this summer and fall.

The AIS National Convention was held in California this spring. It afforded Eastern rebloom breeders an opportunity to trial seedlings and named varieties for bloom performance in near perfect growing conditions. It was gratifying for my Kentucky colleague Betty Wilkerson and yours truly to receive mention for some of our remontant children in the Winter and Spring editions of the Reblooming Iris Society's Rebloom Recorder.