



# ILLINOIS IRISARIAN

[www.aisregion9.com](http://www.aisregion9.com)

Issue 2011-03

Fall (November) 2011

## Greetings from your RVP--Margaret Kelly



### Greetings to all!

Thanks to everyone who has helped make this a very enjoyable year for Region 9 which is made up of our affiliates - Northern Illinois Iris Society, Northshore Iris and Daylily Society, Prairie

Iris Society, Mid Illinois Iris Society, Sangamon Valley Iris Society, and South Illinois Society. You have all worked hard to promote irises and still enjoy each others friendship.

I hope you had the opportunity to attend our Region 9 Fall meeting in Springfield. Friday evening we had supper together at Baker's Square and then met back at the Hampton Inn to set up for the silent auction. Following that, we shared flower experiences by both discussion and pictures. Saturday morning we gathered for breakfast at the hotel. Events for the day were a short business meeting, a silent auction, and lunch. After lunch, we traveled to Washington Park Botanical Gardens where our annual public iris sale was held. Our sale was most successful. We all enjoyed helping customers choose irises for their gardens and educating them about irises in an informal manner.

By this time, we have prepared our iris beds for winter and all imagining how these gardens will appear in the spring. Speaking of spring – plan to attend our **Spring Region 9 Iris Meeting March 31, 2012 in Rochester, IL**. There will be a short business meeting in the morning, a perennial auction, and then a potluck lunch. We are planning a judges training session on exhibition gardening for the afternoon. Come and share your experiences.

### Coming events:

**American Iris Society National Convention "2012 Cali-Zona Gold" April 16-21 2012, Ontario, California. Register by Feb 1, 2012 –website: [www.region15ais.org/convention](http://www.region15ais.org/convention)**

**Local Iris Shows – see the affiliate's schedules on website: [www.aisregion9.com](http://www.aisregion9.com)**

**Louisiana Iris Judging Garden of Steve Poole, Eldorado, Ill with Jerry & Melody Wilhoit May 26, 2012. Further information can be found on the website: [www.aisregion9.com/](http://www.aisregion9.com/)**

**AIS Iris Encyclopedia turns two years old. If you haven't seen or used this tool, you should check this out. It's easy and fast to use. <http://wiki.irises.org/bin/view>**

May you have a blessed holiday season and a happy and healthy New Year.

**Margaret Kelly, Region 9 RVP**

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# ILLINOIS IRISARIAN *Region 9*

## REGION 9 Affiliate Calendar

### Dates for 2012

Region 9 Spring Membership Meeting  
March 31, 2012 in Rochester, IL

#### Mid-Illinois Iris Society

No input

#### Prairie Iris Society

Prairie Iris Society  
Calendar of Upcoming Events

#### April 14, 2012

Prairie Spring Meeting - Silvercreek Restaurant  
402 Race St. Urbana, IL

#### May 19, 2012

Annual Iris Show - Lincoln Square Village  
Setup & Entries 8am to 10am Judging starts at  
10:30

#### July 21, 2012

Iris Sale - Lincoln Square Village 9am to 12pm

#### August 22, 2012

Fall Meeting - place to be announced

#### Sangamon Valley Iris Society (SVIS)

#### February 17, 2012

#### March 23, 2012

#### April 27, 2012

#### May 12, 2012

Iris Show- Springfield Washington Park Botanical  
Gardens

#### July 21, 2012

Iris Auction for club members and Iris Sale for public  
- Springfield Washington Park Botanical Gardens

#### September 28, 2012

#### October 26, 2012

#### Southern Illinois Iris Society

No input

#### Northern Illinois Iris Society

No input

## JUDGES TRAINING

Ballots and reports are due as shown below:  
AIS Ballots are due July 1  
August 1 – AIS Activity reports for all judges  
must be to me!!  
Please mark your calendars.  
Becky Simon

## Garden Judging of Louisiana Irises May 26, 2012

Southern Illinois Iris Society (SIIS) will sponsor  
3 hours of garden judging training of Louisiana  
Irises.

Trainers: Jerry and Melody Wilhoit  
Location: El Dorado, Illinois  
Guest Iris Chair: Steve Poole

This will be the first such judges training session of  
Louisiana Irises by Region 9 AIS. Pre-registration  
will be needed to determine food quantities—more  
details at a later date.

**Following are the Region 9 top winners of the AIS 2011 Tall Bearded Iris Symposium:**

1. Dusky Challenger
2. Wintery Sky
3. Yaquina Blue
4. Conjunction
5. Silverado
6. Queen's Circle
7. Stairway to Heaven
8. Dorothy Davenport
9. Celebration Song
10. Vanity

**AMERICAN IRIS SOCIETY 2012 CONVENTION**

**AIS 2012 Convention: Everyone is now looking forward to the next AIS Convention in Ontario, California. The convention will take place April 16-21 2012 with visits to official iris tour gardens in the surrounding area.**

**As usual, all the details are conveniently provided on the AIS website for you to make your plans well ahead of time [www.region15ais.org/convention](http://www.region15ais.org/convention)  
AIS 2012 Convention information >>coming later autumn 2011**

**Online Registration for the 2012 Spring Convention - online registration for the 2012 AIS Convention in Ontario, CA is up and running.**

**Click on [2012 Convention Online Registration](#).**

**The online form will allow you to pay with your own PayPal account or with a VISA or Mastercard. It will also allow you to fill in the form, print it out, and mail it with a check to our Registrar, John Huffman.**

**Earlybird registration lasts until Feb 1, 2012 at \$299 for full registration. Any questions or problems contact Jill Bonino at [jillbon@earthlink.net](mailto:jillbon@earthlink.net) or Kathy Chilton at [ranchiris@aol.com](mailto:ranchiris@aol.com)**

# Pests and Diseases (contributions by Jim Morris-reprinted from AIS website)

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## Diseases

John Weiler, an iris hybridizer and long-time professor at Fresno State University in California, wrote in *The World of Irises*: "Irises are free of diseases and easy to grow!" "How many times [has] that statement been made by an enthusiastic writer in a magazine article, gardening book, or newspaper [?]".

In recent years, though, as more gardeners have developed iris plantings and collections have expanded, the prevalence of several iris diseases has become more obvious." Irises' susceptibility to various pests and diseases often depends on your geographic location and many diseases may or may not affect your irises. Keeping your garden clean from debris goes a long way toward avoiding the conditions conducive to both pests and diseases.

## Bacterial Leaf Blight (also called Bacterial Leaf Spot)

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Many iris types are affected by Bacterial Leaf Blight. The pathogen is *Xanthomonas tardicrescens*. Bacterial Leaf Blight causes large irregular spots that first appear near the margins on the leaf tips. At first, the spots are just small pale areas. The key to diagnosing bacterial infections is that the spots appear watery at first, then soon turn light brown. These brown spots become larger and develop whitish or grayish centers. The bacterial infection follows the leaf veins down the leaves and the splotches may run together. This bacterial disease is easily confused with fungal leaf spot disease. Both occur during foggy and rainy weather. Irises will get bacterial leaf spot most often during mild weather, while fungal leaf spot can occur anytime the temperature is above freezing.

Bacterial leaf spot splotches are larger and more irregular than fungal leaf spots. (see Fungal Leaf Spot below) Since there is no known cure, prevention is the only thing that will help control this disease. The bacterium is easily spread on garden tools as well as by water splashing on the plants, so beware of using any tools on healthy plants that have been used on infected plants. Wash your hands thoroughly after working on plants infected by bacterial leaf spot. Disinfect tools with a dilute solution (1 part bleach to 9 parts water) of 0.5 percent sodium hypochlorite (household bleach). Cultural measures to prevent bacterial leaf spot include removing old foliage from the garden in the fall and destroying it. This will minimize a number of potential iris problems. Since the bacteria do not infect the rhizome, transplanting can be helpful.

## Fungal Leaf Spot

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Fungal Leaf Spot presents as small circular to oval spots on the leaves, turning yellowish to brown and often developing a distinct red-brown border. The pathogen is *Didymellina macrospora*. It can affect all bearded irises, Siberians, *I. versicolor* and the *xiphiums*, known as Dutch irises.

The more rain you have the more prevalent it becomes. It is easy to control with the use of a fungicide and a sticker-spreader in your sprayer. Apply in the fall and early spring before infection. If infected, tip cut the affected leaves and apply again. Maneb have been proven effective. Check with your local authorities as to pesticide and fungicide use.



# ILLINOIS IRISARIAN *Region 9*



Fungal Leaf Spot - Photos by Russ Rodrigue

## Bacterial Soft Rot

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In some years this can be a major problem that can almost wipe out a planting if allowed to spread without remedial action. The pathogen is *Erwinia carotovora* (yes, it affects carrots) and affects all the bearded irises. It presents as a soft, foul-smelling rhizome rot followed by wilting and dying of the leaf fans. It is prevalent in wet springs with high temperatures. If you observe this and smell it, get busy cleaning it out! Use a spoon and scrape the infected tissue out. The wounds in the rhizomes need to be exposed to the sun. Then powder the wound with a chlorine based cleanser. Instead of the cleanser some people douse the rhizomes in place with Dial antibacterial soap (with triclosan).

## Fungal Crown Rot

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This can affect bearded irises, and rarely here Japanese, Siberian and Spuria irises. It presents as a gray or tan cottony mass over leaf bases and adjacent soil and rhizomes. The leaves turn yellow at the tip, rot at the base, and eventually fall over. Many times a secondary infection of bacterial soft rot will also occur. This fungus is most destructive during warm weather with moist soil. The pathogen is *Sclerotium rolfsii*, also known as mustard seed fungus, because it also presents as brown, spherical sclerotia, about the size and color of mustard seeds, when inactive. It is controlled by sanitary growing conditions, the cleaning out of infected tissue, exposure of the rhizomes to the sun, and at planting or transplanting time dipping the rhizomes in a fungicide or 10% Clorox solution.

## Pests

### Iris Borer

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This critter is the scourge of the East and Midwest. Garden sanitation is most important to avoiding this borer. Study its life cycle: *Macronoctua onusta* is a caterpillar, the larvae of a medium-sized, nondescript nocturnal brownish moth. In autumn the moths lay their eggs on old iris leaves and other nearby debris. The eggs survive the winter and hatch out with warm weather in the spring. The tiny white caterpillars search out fresh iris leaves, which are usually less than a foot tall at this time. Early damage is hard to detect but as they grow they begin to attack the edges of the center foliage making notches and leaving slimy frass. If you catch them early you can crush them in the foliage with your fingers. Iris borers are proven cannibals with only one surviving in each iris by the time they are half-grown. But they do significant damage as they proceed down the leaf sheaf or bloom stalk to the iris rhizome. The borer will



# ILLINOIS IRISARIAN *Region 9*

hollow out the rhizome and sometimes migrate to an adjacent rhizome and do the same. They have to be dug out at this point and have grown to between one and two inches, are pinkish in appearance with dark brown heads. Ugly! In late summer they leave the rhizome entering the soil and becoming dark brown pupae. This dormant stage allows the caterpillar to transform into a moth in the autumn, when they emerge, mate and lay their eggs to start the process over.

Most pesticides are not effective against the iris borer. Garden sanitation and visual inspection of your plants is most important. Two systemic insecticides with reportedly good effect are Merit and Cygon 2E. Read the labels and apply sparingly with a spreader-sticker in early spring (when irises are about 4-6 inches tall) at least three times every 7-10 days. Eggs hatch at different times so you may get different batches dependent on the microclimate in your garden.

**Stay vigilant!**

There have been no confirmed reports of the iris borer west of the Rocky Mountains.



Borer in a rhizome and a borer



Pupae and moth

## Aphids

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These small green or gray insects are sapsuckers. They appear on the iris leaves in clusters and proceed to suck out leaf sap. They also can spread disease between plants. They are easily controlled by physical removal or crushing with your fingers. Lady bugs like them too. Spraying with an insecticidal soap or liquid dish detergent is effective.



# ILLINOIS IRISARIAN *Region 9*



## Verbena Bud Moth

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This critter appears to only be a problem for iris hybridizers who have seed pods developing from their iris crosses. The *Endothenia hebesana*, bud moth attacks the seed in the pods. It has the same life cycle as the iris borer. Sanitation and cleaning up seed stalks and capsules is the only known control.

## Crickets

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There are hundreds of species of crickets in the U. S. Crickets feed on just about everything. They will eat seeds, dead insects, leather, paper, old clothes (cotton, wool and silk), and plants. This includes the rhizome of the iris plant. They will eat holes in the rhizomes which can later be a home for pill bugs and result in soft rot from the rhizome's injury. Adult crickets spend their days in shallow burrows beneath stones, wood or plants. They are most active in late evening and the night when males begin their serenading to attract female mates. A cricket's life begins as one of about 300 eggs a female lays in the soil during late summer and fall. Some species overwinter as nymphs or adults, others as eggs which hatch in the spring. A year-old cricket is a rarity. Crickets can be controlled by a general purpose insecticide.

## Woodlice (also known as Pill Bugs or Rollie-Pollies)

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The pill bug is the only crustacean that can spend its entire life on land. Their shells look like armor and they are known for their ability to roll into a ball. The common pill bug *Armadillidium vulgare* normally feeds on decaying vegetation but will burrow out holes begun by crickets in iris rhizomes. Called roly-polys in some areas, these little critters are found under stones, logs or any other space where moisture is found. When assuming a defensive posture, they curl up in a ball. They can be controlled by a general purpose insecticide.



## Moles

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This small brown burrowing mammal is in the *Talpidae* family. Its diet primarily consists of earthworms, grubs and other small invertebrates found in the soil. Their saliva contains a toxin that can paralyze earthworms. Because of this, moles are able to store their still living prey for later consumption. The problem they create for plants is the air space from their burrows causing plant stunting and non-bloom. Everyone has their own methods for trying to eliminate moles. The only sure way is to move to Ireland where they don't exist.



# ILLINOIS IRISARIAN *Region 9*



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## Voles

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This small rodent is blackish brown to grayish brown, 5-8 inches long resembling a mouse but with a stouter body, a shorter hairy tail, a slightly rounder head with pointy nose, and smaller ears and eyes. They live underground in burrows (often using a mole's) but travel aboveground through runways they make **by eating everything in their path**, be it grass, herbaceous plants, bulbs, tubers and even tree roots or tree bark at the ground level. They can be controlled by toxic baits, such as the anticoagulants brodifacoum and bromadiolone, and by trapping. An alternative is to use mouse traps with a piece of cheese placed right in their run. They seldom veer off these runs.

