



Society for Pacific Coast Native Iris

Welcome Letter and Cultural Information

We are pleased to welcome you as a member of the Society for Pacific Coast Native Iris (SPCNI), which is a Section of the American Iris Society (AIS), and as a subscriber to our publication, the *Almanac*. Our newsletter was named the *Almanac* by its first Editor in 1973. He hoped the definition of an almanac, which was "a miscellany of useful information, including entertaining remarks, pithy and scientific observations, together with remedies for sundry ailments, both grave and trivia" to be a good description of what he hoped the publication would achieve. We fulfill this in two issues per year, spring and the fall, dispensing information on species and hybrids derived from the *Californicae*, or "Pacificas", as they are commonly called: how to grow them, where to see them in the wild, and other pertinent subject matter. In the fall issue we offer a seed exchange, of species and garden varieties. Publications and CDs are offered for sale year round.

Another Society feature is a field trip every other year, which we call a "Trek," to see the species in their native habitats, in California, Oregon, or Washington. We are working on a southern Oregon Trek for the Spring of '10.

Happy gardening,

Kathleen Sayce
Society for Pacific Coast Native Iris
Secretary/Treasurer
ksayce@willapabay.org
360-665-5292

Cultural Information

The Pacific Coast Native Iris are members of the Series Californicae, and are commonly known as the Pacific Coast Natives (PCN's), Pacific Coast Iris (PCI's), or Pacificas. They are native to the western coast of North America, ranging north from the San Bernardino Mountains near Los Angeles to the central coast of Washington, and from the shores of the Pacific Ocean to the western slopes of the Sierra Nevada in California and the Cascades in Oregon and Washington. Pacificas are generally small and compact plants with slender, wiry rhizomes, and narrow grass-like leaves. Heights range mostly from 6 to 24 inches with some *I. munzii*-derived plants reaching to 36 inches. Most are evergreen. Some grow in full sun along the coast, but most grow naturally in lightly wooded areas and on sloping ground that is gritty, well-drained, neutral to slightly acidic, and with considerable humus. Most of the moisture these irises receive comes during the winter months either as rain or as snow, depending on the elevation. They thrive where summers are normally long and dry, but may receive significant amounts of moisture during this period in the form of drip from dew.

The most important factor in their cultivation is drainage. They do not tolerate soils in which water stagnates. Stagnation leads to root damage and various diseases from which the plants cannot recover. Even though the species grow in a wide range of soils, the garden hybrids which we grow tend to do best in soil to which considerable peat or humus has been added and which is slightly to moderately acid (pH 5.5 to 6.5). Along the coast, PCI's tolerate full sun, but inland it is best to plant them in a part of the garden where they receive moderate shade during the hottest part of the day. In most areas, some summer watering is required to keep the plant alive. **DO NOT WATER IN THE HEAT OF THE DAY!**

Transplanting is most successful when the roots are plump, white, and actively growing. This is best done in the late fall. To tell if your plants are ready for lifting, scratch away some soil from around the base of the plants and search for new white roots. After lifting and dividing, it is vital to keep the roots moist at all times until they are put back into the ground. Once in the ground they should be watered immediately and kept moist until they are well established. In colder climates it is best to keep fall transplants in pots over winter, moving them into your garden only after all danger of frozen soil is over. Once established in your garden, they can withstand considerable freezing, but mulching is desirable under severe conditions. Unlike bearded irises, the Pacificas resent being divided yearly and it is best to let them grow undisturbed for a few years. Feeding may be done in the spring with a camellia/azalea food, balanced slow release pellets, or a sprayed liquid.

Bloom season varies according to locality. In the coastal regions of California, it extends from January to mid-May, with maximum garden impact through March and April, with peak bloom in April. In Oregon, peak bloom is about a month later. In most areas peak bloom is about 20 days ahead of the tall bearded types.