

The Guardian Gardener's Handbook: Rescues, Swaps, Facilitated Sales, & Other Acquisition Techniques

How do we find endangered historic irises to place in the program? They do turn up in people's gardens occasionally, people who had no idea their iris is even rare. For instance, Bennett Jones's charming 1970 SDB 'Cotton Blossom' was donated to the HIPS sale one year. It turned out to be from the garden of a HIPS board member, who didn't even know it was rare. "Grows like a weed for me," he said. What a wonderful find!

Mostly, though, we acquire rare irises via *rescues*, *swaps*, and *facilitated sales*, which are explained below. In all three cases, we post a list of available irises that Ggers can choose from—if we can—and ship the rhizomes directly. Postage reimbursement is always required; sometimes there's an additional small fee per rhizome as well. **Every event has its own rules** and each is a little different. In addition to these, sometimes a collector will arrange to donate rhizomes privately to another collector or small group.

The original owner of the irises may decide to make them available to all HIPS members, to GG members only, to a small group, or to a single person. That decision is entirely up to the owner and should never be cause for resentment. Luckily, those irises should become available over the next few years as the clumps grow and are divided.

A rescue or a facilitated sale can really make a gardener feel better if they have to give up a beloved collection. They know it's going into good hands, to people who are genuinely interested in the irises.

Iris Rescues

Sometimes an iris collector can no longer care for a cherished collection, often due to age, illness, or the need to move away. Whatever the reason, if the person is not able to arrange a share-out of some other kind, HIPS or GG may be asked for help. In that case, with the owner's full permission, we arrange a rescue.

HIPS and GG keep a list of people who say they might be willing to help with a rescue in their geographic area. (If you're interested in that, let us know now.) When the need occurs, we notify the nearby people and see who is available. One or more of them step forward to lead the rescue effort. We have a list of things to consider when mounting a rescue; those who have led or participated in rescues continue to add advice and suggestions to this document.

Every rescue is different, and all are exciting. The owner calls the shots, of course. Sometimes we are allowed to take entire clumps, sometimes just one or two rhizomes from each. Sometimes the irises are well labeled and mapped. Other times the state of the garden has gotten way beyond that and is near chaos. Usually it's somewhere in between.

Swaps & Exchanges

What's the difference? An exchange is a swap with a necktie on. When we work with a botanic garden or other institution, we use the term "exchange," as a rule; swaps are informal and usually between individuals. In private swaps, gardeners find one another via the HIPS forum, the GG forum, or some other iris venue. (There are several; see "Contacts & Useful Links" elsewhere in this handbook.) The key feature is that no

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money changes hands, except possible postage reimbursement.

People can swap under any conditions they arrange, of course, and it's no one else's business. Typically, if the number of rhizomes swapped is about the same, each party pays for shipping and it's considered even.

Exchanges organized by HIPS or GG with botanic gardens or other institutions may be fairly informal or may have strict rules that the governing body of the institution has laid down. Sometimes there must be an agreement not to sell iris increase for a given number of years. Sometimes the increase can never be sold, but may be swapped or shared freely (postage reimbursement wouldn't count as a sale).

Occasionally we are lucky enough to arrange an exchange with iris growers overseas. Again, those typically have very strict rules, and can get expensive, as phytosanitary certificates are not cheap. Often only one rhizome can be shipped, so it will be placed in the garden of an experienced GGer to increase for sharing later. Despite the delays, we've gotten some amazing irises this way.

For details on how GG iris share-outs are run, see "Guardian Garden Share-Outs" elsewhere in this handbook.

Facilitated Sales

Sometimes a nursery is going out of business, or moving their irises to a new growing field, or is a roadside nursery that doesn't ship irises at all. However, the owner still needs to make money. In that case, a HIPS or GG member may choose to organize a *facilitated sale*: that is, we post a list of rare historic irises for members to buy, and the organizer makes the actual purchase and handles the shipping to the other GG members.

Everybody wins in this situation. The nursery owner makes better money than if the irises were offered at wholesale prices to another business. HIPS and GG members benefit by being made aware of iris availability at prices usually lower than typical retail.

A facilitated sale may be combined with a rescue, in which HIPS members help with the digging and shipping, yet the iris vendor still makes a little money. As with other acquisition methods, every situation is different. Advice and suggestions are available from organizers of past sales.

We report stories about these HIPS and GG acquisition events in *ROOTS* whenever we can; you will find articles about them in the back issues. Here are just a few you could read about:

- Spring 2006, p. 16 - Lorraine Miller's irises
- Spring 2008, p. 8 - Rose Garcia's irises
- Spring 2015, p. 16 & Fall 2015 (28-2), p. 33 - Patty Del Negro's irises
- Spring 2016, p. 27 - the Lankow irises
- Fall 2016, p. 35 & Spring 2018, p. 6- Wanda Rezac's irises
- Fall 2017, p. 12 - Winterberry irises
- Fall 2018, p. 8 - Jerry Oswalt's irises