

CULTIVAR PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

REPORT for the YEAR 2015

The year has been a busy one, with the public announcement of the Guardian Gardens program in ROOTS setting a tone for pro-active progress.

Gathering records of the holdings of the world's botanical institutions – a third leg, with the HIPS Gardens and Commercial Sources spreadsheets, of the tripod of determining where we stand with respect to iris preservation – has continued, until almost all of the major institutions worldwide have been inventoried.

The Cultivar Preservation Chairman, with regional directors, iris authorities, and the Guardian Gardens program, in 2015 assisted three historic properties, in Tennessee, Illinois, and Virginia, to establish, identify, and interpret period-appropriate gardens of irises for their visitors.

Garden “rescues” continue apace, most notably with the excavation of the Lankow Family garden in Seattle, a project headed by Charlie Carver that dispersed hundreds of rare irises – with strengths in species, early bearded varieties, and Pacific Northwest hybridizers – to the Guardian Gardens program and other HIPS members. Another project, to cull rarities of the 1960s to 1980s from a local North Carolina iris farm, affectionately termed the Thelma Project, saw its first annual installment take place under the leadership of Shaub Dunkley and Laetitia Munro. With Denise Stewart's retirement from the nursery trade in historic irises, Guardian Gardeners teamed to acquire all varieties she had that fit their program's criteria for adoption. And one rescue, planned for the Doris Rebert collection, was called off only when her entire collection was acquired by a HIPS-friendly purchaser who will verify the identities of the irises and share them with HIPS in years to come.

The Guardian Gardens program more than doubled its membership, to twenty-five participants at year end. The number of iris varieties the program has adopted grew by more than 600 cultivars, to a total of more than 1650 irises. The program also named Phil Edinger and Catherine Adam as Research Curators, to assist the programs to find and verify irises in need of critical preservation efforts.

The year closed with efforts to connect to other sections of the American Iris Society and cooperating societies: the leaderships of the Society of Japanese Irises, the Society of Louisiana Irises, and the Aril Society International were contacted to re-establish that HIPS is a section that embraces historic varieties of all classes of iris.

W. Douglass Paschall

Cultivar Preservation Chair