

# Guardian Gardens Network FAQ

## How do I protect my privacy?

Every Guardian Gardener gets a code number, so a participant's identity and garden are secure. On the HIPS website, only the aggregate number of Guardian Gardens holding any variety will be revealed -- that's where you'll see when that iris is in five gardens and is considered safe.

Current GG members unanimously have wanted their identities to be known to the other GG members, so they can converse about the program. GG members are not made public, however. If you don't mind that people outside the program know you're a Guardian Gardener, you can participate in the Guardian Gardens section of the HIPS Forum, where we chat and swap info and ideas.

## This is kind of a grassroots program, isn't it?

We are crowd-sourcing rarities for everyone. No one gets anything out of doing this except the enjoyment of doing it, and no one will be told what they should save. We'll collectively target things that are about to disappear, and we trust all participants to take up what they can. Ggers get to know each other online or through emails. There is camaraderie and shared purpose. And there are moments — e.g., when one or more of us goes on a garden rescue with every GGer committing to new adoptions — when we are a frenzy of preservationist activity. This is the front edge of HIPS's activity; it is about to be the crossroads where other AIS sections and foreign iris societies and botanical gardens and National Collections will interact. This is where a difference is made.

## I'd like to join the GG Network. Whom do I contact?

Come aboard, we'd love to have you! Contact Doug Paschall, the Guardian Gardens administrator, at [gg@historicism.org](mailto:gg@historicism.org) and let him know you want to be a Guardian Gardener. And please, help us spread the word! We would like the Ggers to be HIPS members if possible, and a HIPS e-membership is only \$10 per year. You can make a difference, and together we can save these rare beauties before they are gone forever.

Find more information at [www.historicism.org](http://www.historicism.org)

## What is the Guardian Gardens network?

The Guardian Gardens network is a group of private gardens devoted to saving, growing for increase, and sharing rhizomes of rare irises in every class. These are the irises most in danger of becoming extinct.

We are also working to coordinate our efforts with botanical gardens who share the goal of saving plants. The goal is to have each cultivar growing in at least five locations (in addition to the botanical gardens) on any continent, preferably scattered across climatic zones and regions. We want a steady population, always at the ready to replenish individual losses before they compound into extinctions. Ultimately, we would like to see as many rare irises as possible available once again from commercial sources.

## How do you determine which irises belong in the GG network?

In a word, *rarity*. We determine this by the number of commercial sellers who offer an iris for sale, and the number of gardens we know the variety to be growing in. At this time, to qualify for Guardian Gardens, an iris cultivar has to be offered by no more than two sellers, and be growing in no more than four HIPS gardens. We're also on the hunt for irises growing in far fewer places. You'll see us referring to 0-0s, the irises that are held in no nurseries and no recorded gardens. Those are the ones we most fear are on the verge of disappearing, if they are not already gone.

These are imperfect measures. Nurseries don't always tell HIPS what they have, and only one-fifth of HIPS members are currently reporting their collections. So we work with the data we have: the HIPS Members' Databank and the Commercial Sources spreadsheet. We use the newest version of the Members Databank, and it will be updated yearly because of GG's needs. As more HIPS members share their iris lists with the Databank Chair, the GG network's efforts can be focused with increasing efficiency. In the meantime, if an iris is conserved that was not in the greatest danger of being lost, that's a small price to pay to save the thousands that are.

### **What do GG members do?**

Participants in the program agree to care for these rare irises, protect them in beds that are secure (beds that the public does not visit), make annual reports of the rarities in their care to the program's administrator (who compiles reports back to the membership so we all can see what's happening across the program), and share divisions of their treasures with GG members for the cost of postage. Once an iris is growing in five known gardens, it's considered relatively "safe".

### **Where do you get the GG irises?**

First, many HIPS members are growing rare irises in their gardens and might not even know it. We also search out rare irises. In the program's first two years of existence, focused purchases from commercial sources, rescues of several private gardens in danger, and exchanges with botanical institutions around the world have brought the number of cultivars adopted into the program to more than 1600 -- or a collection equal to or surpassing those of the Missouri Botanical Garden and the Presby Memorial Iris Garden, the two largest public collections in North America. Our collection is simply scattered across multiple locations.

### **Aren't the GG members just joining to hoard irises?**

NO. The entire purpose of the GG program comes down to three words: *protect and share*. Sure, the GG members have various iris collections, as do most HIPS members. But their reason for joining is to *share* those irises so they don't disappear. By doing it initially within the GG program, we know where those irises are; as their numbers increase to safe populations, the irises are re-introduced at no cost to botanical institutions and to the commercial trade for all to enjoy.

### **I don't have room for a lot of irises. Can I still join?**

One can be a Guardian Gardener with just a few rare irises in a little bed or in pots on a balcony. The number of GGers is growing, at a pace of about one new member every two weeks. This is good, as the number of irises in the program is also growing. Our goal is to have at least four healthy rhizomes of each cultivar in a single Guardian Garden, and for each cultivar to be growing in five gardens on any continent. We do our best to make sure our irises are correctly identified,

as this core of gardens is the last defense against an iris's disappearance.

### **Who gets the rhizomes when the irises are ready to divide?**

Once your garden has more than four big, healthy rhizomes of a cultivar, we ask that you make extras available to other GGers, with each *recipient* paying the postage costs for whatever he or she receives. Other than that postage cost, rhizomes are free within the program. Once the cultivar is growing in at least five Guardian Gardens, your increase can be shared with botanical gardens, the HIPS Rhizome Sale, and/or local iris societies. It's secure by that time, and we want to disseminate it more widely once we know it's safe.

GG network members can request to be put on the waiting list to adopt an increase once an iris is ready to be shared. Those requests are sent to the GGer who is growing the iris, and there is space on the record-keeping forms to note the names.

### **I don't have any rare irises, but I still want to help. What can I do?**

If you have experience growing irises and would like to join the GG network, please sign up! We have GG irises waiting to be adopted.

### **How do I track and report my GG irises?**

We have two record-keeping forms available for download on the HIPS website. Either or both may be used to track your irises. Many members prefer to keep their records on their computer. [Single Cultivar Form](#) – this is a record sheet that will stay with your rhizomes, one form per rhizome. The form can be printed and slipped into a notebook that can go into the garden with you. [GG Grid Form](#) – this is a simple grid that can hold up to eight cultivars per page. It also has room to log the ID, source(s) of the iris, waiting list for increase, etc.

A copy of either record-keeping form should be sent to Doug Paschall, the program administrator, in winter so he can log where any divisions have gone.

The only other reporting takes place in October, when Doug needs a simple list of what Guardian Gardens-qualifying irises you are growing, so he can update the census of what's in the program.