

**WALTHAM GARDENERS' SOCIETY  
AND SURROUNDING VILLAGES**

**BEARDED IRISES  
THEIR CULTIVATION AND CARE**

**By Sue Marshall**

**Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> September 2019**

It was a pleasure to welcome back Sue Marshall from Iris of Sissinghurst to talk on bearded irises.

Iris of Sissinghurst provide irises for many shows including Malvern and Chelsea specialising in Irises with over 250 varieties bred in Kent.

There are three groups of Irises, Bearded, Non Bearded and Species. All bearded irises grow from a rhizome and have 3 upward petals, "standards" 3 downward petals "falls" and bearded irises have a beard on the falls.

There are four groups dependent on size:

Miniature 3" - 4" tall flowering in March, with one flower per stem very much a rockery iris.

Standard short bearded irises 9" maximum height flowering in April.

Intermediate bearded irises 24" maximum height these flower from side shoots thus providing a number of flowers per plant and pretty sturdy and lastly Talls 30" plus. All these varieties come in an amazing range of colours and colour combinations.

Bearded iris need well drained soil in full sun with the rhizome planted on the surface for the rhizome to get full sun. The short varieties will tolerate less sun.

Feed in early spring with general purpose fertilizer and then after flowering with Sulphate of Potash to encourage flowers the following year.

Divide the rhizomes in July/August every 3-4 years.

Irises are generally not prey to most pests, they can get leaf spot for which treat with a fungicide and rhizomes sometimes rot (soft rhizome) just cut out the soft bit and replant the rest.

Sue named a few of her favourites bred in Kent, White City a pure white bred in 1939, Kent Pride a maroon bred about 1960 and Dover Beach a pink which has falls more horizontal and much larger flowers bred in the 50's.

Breeding new irises takes patience as it takes about 10 years before it can be named.

As always Sue was happy to answer questions and provide tips.

Sue's talk brings to an end the talks for this year.

But a final reminder to members and non members for the **A.G.M. and Social on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> November at Waltham Village Hall** and enjoy refreshments at the conclusion of the formal business.

We look forward to welcoming you at 7.00 for 7.30 p.m. on **Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> November at Waltham Village Hall.**

You can check on all future events on the Society's website

[www.walthamgardeners.org.uk](http://www.walthamgardeners.org.uk)