

Arils of the Mid-Atlantic States

By Anita Moran

When I went to judges training in Richmond, the instructor was from an aril heavy area of the U.S. Nearly at the end of his presentation he showed some arils then noted “Well, you don’t have to worry about these here.” Well judges, we can grow them here as well. Arils and Arilbred have been known not to like the Mid-Atlantic states due to humidity, rain fall and other factors. Seeing “SYRIAN PRINCESS” had me hooked. The first time I saw this beautiful iris’ picture I was determined to find a way to grow them.

After success growing SIGNA Arilbred seeds, three of which are now registered and waiting for introduction. I decided to add to the number of arils I had. Remember I knew little about arils other than they disliked wet. Wet I could handle. Planting on an exaggerated slope, I added seven Arilbreds to my collection. PERSIAN PADISHAW (OGB+), SYRIAN PRINCESS (OGB+), DESERT DIAMOND (OGB), WALKER ROSS (OGB-), STRIPPED MOONBEAM (OGB) and others. I was disheartened when two died one of which was SYRIAN PRINCESS. I trudged on making a new bed thinking that just putting sand in my regular garden wasn’t enough to keep them.

Adding sand and pea gravel, leaf mulch, compost, with the regular garden soil (ok clay), on another slope in the yard, I transferred all but the original seven arils to this bed along with thirty more, one of which was a species *I. hoogiana* a regelia. Although I may make a garden bed to best help my special iris to survive, I just do not have the time to baby them. I knew that *I. hoogiana* needed dry summer dormancy but if it was going to survive in this bed in this area of the country, it needed to survive all that encompassed including the torrential summer thunder storms.



Figure 1: *I. hoogiana* growing in Maryland 2006, year three.



Figure 2: Lakeside Elf (Moran 2006) grown from SIGNA seeds in Maryland

I have now over 75 arils and Arilbreds and several aril crosses that hopefully will bloom this year all from the first of the SIGNA babies to be introduced LAKESIDE ELF.

Of the many arils I have introduced to my garden I began to notice that although I was losing arils, there was no pattern. Like many types of iris, there are some that just will not grow in certain areas and some not out of their local area or home garden. Of those that have not survived here, which included RC, OGB, OGB- and OGB+, I do not believe it was just because they were arils or Arilbreds

but rather that they could not adapt just like any other iris. There are still iris that I have tried several time, mostly tall bearded, that rot as soon as they realize they are in my garden, so I do not grow that particular variety and get something to take its place.

This year I became braver and have hopes from not only a PERSIAN PADISAW X DAUGHTER OF STARS cross, but for the first time I have planted aril species seeds from both SIGNA and the ASI seed exchanges to include *I. Hermona X I. Samariae* and *I. Susiana X I. Hermona*. The hope here is that, as with the first seedlings, if I can grow them until they bloom, there is a chance to get crosses that will increase their survivability here in the Mid-Atlantic. According to the judges' handbook, the hybridizing goals for arils should include greater adaptability. This is my chief goal. As the adaptability issue can be addressed it is my hope that the seedlings produced will also well represent the aril form, distinctiveness and patterns.



Although growing from seeds can be time consuming and nerve wracking, the rewards are tremendous. Growing Arils and Arilbreds adds a distinctive form and color variations and patterns that can only enhance a collection. No matter where you live, there is always the possibility that Arils can grow for you as well with just a little bit of work. Despite the failures you will surely have it is well worth the effort.

Figure 3: Ben's Huckman (Moran 2006) grown from SIGNA seeds