

Hybridizing For Brown Medians

Anita Moran



“Dobbie’s Truffle” (Moran R. 2010) 03SSop02



SDB Seedling 03SStm09

I have always liked the little ones (SDBs, MDBs) but I really liked the color brown and though there have been irises that are registered as brown in their name, they are usually yellowed or tan. Luckily I had a place to start with a set of seedlings from a bee pod on “Sunstrip” (Weiler 1986) which produced “Dobbie’s Truffle” (Moran R. 2010)

It seems strange sometimes that what you hope will come out of a particular cross, even if it is an experimental cross can exceed your expectations. I have a Standard Dwarf Bearded (SDB) seedling that I kept only because it often has five buds and I had really started to get into hybridizing. 03SStm09 (STM9) is out of “Sunstrip” X “Touch of Mink”, the same cross that gave me “Voldy’s Mink”. I was not surprised that it was just a plain yellow with a red spot of which we have so many but it’s stalks kept it around. I use it to increase bud count on many crosses but finally got what Dr. Don Spoon had been telling me, yellow X purple makes brown. While I love brown irises, but have seen very few that are truly milk chocolate brown, real brown and not the yellow brown or red brown of many of the brown irises. This cross also produced a brown Miniature Dwarf Bearded (MDB) seedling that made it to bloom then perished so I have to assume that it was “Sunstrip” that was giving off the brown and not “Touch of Mink” (Black 2000).

The form of this seedling was alright but not spectacular so if I was going to get good seedlings I needed a pod parent with good form. One of the best purples I have is “Panther” (Smith 2004). It had form, dark rick coloring, and tremendous beards, however, it seldom showed more than two buds. It was open and I was ecstatic and made the

cross. I had so many seeds from this cross that only half were put into pots for germination the first year and another set the next year.



SDB 11SSTM9p01

This past spring the seedlings that germinated finally bloomed. Fifteen out of 25 seedlings bloomed but only five were kept while the rest were composted. The major reason for composting was color (yellow and red, or purple) the second reason was lack of buds. Two were kept despite that one was yellow and the other was purple with poor form. The yellow one (No. 1) had great form 3 buds and tiger stripes. The purple (No.5) was first to bloom just after a freeze which caused a lot of damage to many seedlings. All seedlings damaged by the freeze were given a second year to make an impression. A dingy pink one

was also kept (No.3) did not have the greatest form but the color, tiger stripes and 4 buds along with the deep violet center caused me to keep it for nothing else than as a hybridizing tool. This seedling was also 13-inches the same as the yellow seedling which allow the buds to open in sequence without interference.



SDB 11SSTM9p03

By the time the fifth seedling bloomed (another yellow and red) I was sure that I would not get what I hoped to get. A miniature dwarf bearded (MDB) seedling finally bloomed (No.06) bloomed with exactly the color I was hoping for. A rich milk chocolate with a white beard and a hint of red tiger striping previous seedlings had shown. With three buds on a 6-inch stalk, with a wonderfully full beard I could not place a reselect flag quickly enough. It was not until the last seedling bloomed (No. 8) that I got a second brown iris. This seedling was a more reddish brown with yellow highlights beard was a little thin but it had four buds on a 10-inch stalk.



MDB 11SSTM9p06

Although I only got two browns they both had properties I was looking for and provided a great start for more browns. “Panther” gave me better form in most cases and some great beards while STM9 gave me stalks. The combinations of these two produced surprises and I cannot wait for the next set to bloom.



SDB 11SSTM9p08

I do have to thank Don Spoon for taking me under his wing and imparting so much hybridizing information it will take me a long time playing to see what special things I can get. Although I had a loose plan for this cross most of the time I cross because I can and that looks cool. Clarence Mahan told me once to have a plan, but where is the fun in that. Playing with medians is so much fun and due to the demure size I can get a greater number of seedlings in a patch that would only hold a few tall bearded and the range of colors are greater meaning there is a greater chance of getting something unusual and special.

You can never really know what you are going to get when you do any cross and that is the whole fun of hybridizing. I hope this little article will inspire other median growers to put pollen on another iris just to see what they get. You might be surprised and pleased with the results.