

Miniature Dwarf Bearded Gifts: Part 2

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In the previous article I talked about seeds I produced but other than from my own hybridizing efforts, I also get seeds from other sources. Loïc Tasquier from the Netherlands has sent me seeds over the years as he had extras. SIGNA (Species Iris Group of North America) is also a great source of seeds not only from introduced cultivars, but species as well. Getting seeds outside my own influence allows for a greater gene pool and the chance of some spectacular seedlings.



MDB seedling out of Loïc Tasquier seeds
C107 (Hoodlum x Negro Modelo) X B083
(Dark Vader x Devil Baby)



MDB seedling out of Loïc Tasquier seeds B38
(Hot x What Again) X Double Life

One of the crosses that most interested me were the seeds Loïc Tasquier offered C107 (Hoodlum x Negro Modelo) X B083 (Dark Vader x Devil Baby). Although 'Negro Modelo' (Sutton 1999) has no registered MDB seedlings, I knew that it produced a very tiny MDB seedling for Mr. Tasquier. 'Devil Baby' (Keppel 2005), which I have always loved, produced the MDB 'Bete Noire' (M. Smith 2009). 'Hoodlum' (Keppel 1996) produced 'Minute Angel' (Walker, R.2012) and 'Dark Vader' (Miller 1989) has five MDB offspring, including 'Applet' (Smith 2006), and 'Wee Noble' (Willott 1996). With all these MDBs behind this cross, it was the first set of seeds I really expected MDBs, and I was not disappointed. Of the nine seedlings that bloomed, seven were MDBs, all less than 6-inches and only one was a yellow. All these seedlings were kept, but one was spectacular. Although 5 1/2 ", it had a tiny flower, similar to the one Mr. Tasquier posted on line, three buds, great form and ruffles. The dark, red-violet standards and nearly black, red-violet falls with a velvety sheen was enough to keep this one. It also had great increases and this was the seedling I reselected. Several of the other seedlings were similar in coloration, but lighter. Some were shorter, but with just a bit larger flower and will require further evaluation.

Another cross from Mr. Tasquier was B38 (Hot x What Again) X Double Life. Looking for rebloom at the time, this one fit into what I planting in my own test rebloom seed pots. After the fact, I tried to look up parentage and 'Hot' was too difficult to determine if it had MDB seedlings, but 'What Again' (Ensminger 1991) had one. 'Wheety' (Tasquier R.2010) and 'Double Life' (Black 2006) had no registered MDB seedlings. This group of seedlings bloomed very early in the middle of a freeze, then a sharp warm up followed by another freeze. Even

seedling #2 was damaged, but having three buds I was able to see this little MDB with its unusual



MDB seedling out of Loïc Tasquier seeds
B30e (Lollipop x Volts) X Autumn
Tangerine



MDB seedling out of Loïc Tasquier seeds
A40D (Orange Tiger x Hot) X Autumn
Tangerine



MDB seedling out Mikey Likes It X bee
SIGNA 09DB454

coloring bloom with the third blossom. A 6-inch tall tan iris with red violet on the interior of the standards, bleeds through at the base was matched with tan falls with deep rose overlay, red veins and a white spray of the falls. The small flower size was a pleasant surprise as I could not determine much about the flower from the damaged bloom. There was a second seedling, also with three buds, that I saw bloom on last blossom. It was yellow with a rose overlay, white style arms and red at the base of the standards. Another with short stalks at 4 1/2" with a tiny bloom, light ruffling and diamond dusting was also kept. I am hoping to see the others in this cross next year.

Another rebloom possibility came with the cross B30e (Lollipop x "Volts) X Autumn Tangerine. Although 'Autumn Tangerine' (Spoon 2002) has no registered MDB offspring, it is out of 'Pele' (Aitken 1993) which has seven. 'Lollipop' (Hager 1977) has no MDB offspring registered, 'Volts' (Blyth 1993/94) has two offspring: 'Dresdener Herbst' (Landgraf R. 2002) and 'Moi' (Baumunk 2004). Only one seedling of this cross bloomed, and it bloomed early with those that were damaged by the freeze but like the others it had three buds and the second terminal bud bloomed undamaged. A peachy pink self with an orange beard, its tiny flower really stood out among the green. Although there was still some damage on this small flower I think it will bloom very well and perhaps have some ruffles.

Another 'Autumn Tangerine' cross with A40D (Orange Tiger x Hot) also had MDB possibilities since 'Orange Circus' (Jones 1958) produced seedlings such as 'Fission Chips' (Keppel 2004), 'African Wine' (Kasperek 1999) and 'Acute Coot' (Kasperek 2005) as MDB offspring. Two seedlings bloomed, both were MDBs, one purple and one orange. Again it matched the three bud count, and while the damage was less than others, it was still present. However, the very thick orange beards had me hooked as soon as I saw them.

SIGNA is a great place to get seeds if you are just starting out, or there is something unusual offered. At the time I planted the bee pod seeds from 'Artful Tradition' (Jones 2006) and 'Mikey Likes It' (Aitken 2003), I had neither one to use for crosses at the time and took a chance. The 'Mikey Likes It' seedling was the only one to survive from germination and move from pot to seedling bed. Although it only has two buds, this is the only one I have managed to keep until bloom. That it is an MDB is candy. More silver than white in color, with shoulders



MDB seedling out 'Artful Tradition' X
bee SIGNA 09DB450

more greenish brown than gold, it is still an attractive iris, but too close to others to ever register it.

The 'Artful Tradition' seedling was one of four that survived; two MDBs, one bloomed SDB and one did not bloom. The first MDB seedling to bloom had great pastel coloring of the parent, but much lighter. It was an enormous flower on a 6" stalk. I actually hope this one is an SDB damaged by freeze and will grow taller next year. The second seedling to bloom had an average MDB bloom size, only two buds, and though the pattern was the same as 'Artful Tradition', the coloring was vastly different. Where 'Artful Tradition' has a blue violet spot and gold shoulders, this seedling has a red violet spot and green shoulders. Both the 'Artful Tradition' and 'Mikey Likes It' seedlings were kept, but only for observation for now.



MDB Species Seedling *Iris*
Reichenbachii

Another plus to having a SIGNA membership is the availability of dwarf species occasionally being offered. *Iris pumila* (SIGNA 04A004) and *Iris reichenbachii* (SIGNA 06A004) were two that I germinated. Species seem to take longer to bloom than other cultivars for me. The *I. pumila* took four years and *I. reichenbachii* took three, but it is always worth the wait. Only one *I. pumila* made it to bloom and it bloomed one time, but not again. It is increasing and looks healthy so it stays. I tried *I. reichenbachii* because I wanted another miniature dwarf gene pool to tap into and knew that this species did well in Virginia, so I had a good chance it would do well here in Maryland. The lone survivor has a flower nearly the height of the 3-inch stalk, but barely an inch in width. I cannot wait to try this seedling on some of my Arilbreds and other MDBs. So many possibilities arise from these seedlings.

Despite the source of the seeds, it seems that use of many different SDBs can produce unique MDBs. With the MDBs making more inroads into gardens as edging for sidewalks and pathways, getting new colors and patterns or increasing the number of blooms can only add to the interest in these little irises. It will be interesting to see if these little guys continue and produce MDB seedlings or revert back to SDB parentage.