

Playing With Versicolors  
By Anita Moran

I never thought much about beardless iris since most of my iris lust was geared toward arils and arilbreds and toward that goal I was determined that I would grow them in the Mid-Atlantic state of Maryland. It was suggested to me that I try some seeds from SIGNA (Species Iris Group of North America) and so I did. I was surprised that extra seed packets were sent one included a packet of versicolor seeds labeled 02N207 "Between the Lines" probably selfed. Okay, what the heck I was planting seeds anyway. I was surprised that I saw my first arilbred seedling bloom a year before I saw a versicolor seedling bloom. I had not seen "Between The Lines" in person, or any other versicolor prior to seeing several of the seedlings bloom.



**Iris versicolor "Between The Lines"**  
Phot by Dennis Kramb



**Iris versicolor "Forest Hamaiti"**

The first to bloom was a white with green veining that I had never seen in an iris and that drove me to investigate. "Between the Lines" was also a white versicolor with blue violet lines and dots and a very small yellow signal that did not detract from the pure white of the flower. "Forest Hamaiti" as the green veined one would be named was dainty, white with a large bright canary yellow signal and green veining that turned to pale blue violet at the edges of the falls. It was so dainty that I immediately loved it.

The next several blooms were typical of versicolor in the wild other than slight color variations ranging from dark violet to pale lavender. Some seemed more robust than others but still maintained the dainty quality of its white siblings.



**Iris versicolor 02N207 Seedlings**



**Iris versicolor "Angel Of The Pond"**

Due to space concerns as they developed several of the seedlings were moved to a pond area. For some reason these bloomed a year later than the rest of the seedlings. I can only assume that it was because these were in pots. The first of these to bloom was also a white with pale lavender veins but unlike most of the versicolor this seedling had seedling, later named "Angel Of The Pond" received the Region 4 "Alice Bouldin award given to best seedling seen growing in a garden at the regional meeting. The flaring of the falls of this seedling actually got me interested in seeing if it could continue this effect in its seedling.



**"Angel Of The Pond Seedling "11AOPop01**

After playing with seeds most seedlings were typical of Iris versicolor and found their way to compost or wetland areas around the property but I was discouraged by the three year wait to see the results of seeds which were dried and then potted for winter. Two years ago on Facebook and Iris Talk people began to talk about planting green seeds. Green seeds are those taken from a ripened pod and placed directly into soil for germination. Versicolors were the first iris I tried using this method on and again used seeds from "Angel Of The Pond". Two years later I got bloom and was extremely pleased with the results. The first

seedling to open was again a white but with so much baby blue veining that the overall effect looked like the entire flower was baby blue. The two seedlings to bloom were sneaky as they bloomed in pots placed in a shade area awaiting a place in the garden. Unfortunately I was not expecting them to bloom and only saw them when the last blooms were on their last legs so I cannot include photos here. What was surprising was that one looked similar to its pod parent except that it was not flared but the other was red. Both of these have since been placed in more advantageous parts of the garden to see what happens.

Versicolors are a wonderful iris to start from seed either from dried or green. Even in their natural state they are elegant, and can withstand a wide variety of conditions. Mine started in regular garden soil and those in wetlands and ponds also did well. Other than maintaining the same or similar soil used for Siberians, Versicolors are a great addition to the garden.