

Willott Iris Garden 2022 Growing Season Report

Submitted by Robert Pindell



The spring of 2022 was good for the irises. We had very little winter kill and had to only push back down a few irises that had been frost heaved out of the ground. Of course, the weather that was good for the irises was also good for the winter and spring weeds. So, the weeds got a head start!

Because the flowers and bloom stocks are rather fragile we try to stay out of the centers of the beds and work from walkways as much as possible during bloom season. So, many of the weeds that sprouted while the irises were in bloom got a reprieve until the end of May.

Although this bloom season was not as spectacular as that of 2021, it was still very good with about 80% of the established, 600 plus, clumps producing at least one bloom stock with flowers. Even a few of the newly potted irises put up bloom stocks. We were able to photograph nearly all the clumps that bloomed. The photos are a great help in making sure we know what irises we have, where they are in the garden and that our mapping is correct.

Depending on the weather, the most irises blooming at one time is around Mother's Day or a week after. The number and timing of reblooming irises varies from year to year. Some years we have had irises bloom in August and other years not until October. A couple of irises try to bloom in November and usually get frozen before they open.

Between the head start, the bloom season pause in weeding, the multiple other horticultural tasks necessary to maintain the irises, and the dearth of volunteers, the weeds were prevalent in some parts of the garden until the fall. Because the Willott Iris Garden is in a public park we cannot use the chemical aides in the same way that people do in their

Willott Iris Garden is 'museum' of Willott irises

home gardens. So hands on weeding is essential and thus volunteer weeders are essential to the upkeep of a beautiful garden.

We have continued the “accessioning” and “de-accessioning” of the holdings of the garden. We received several new, to the collection, irises in 2022. It will take another couple of years until they bloom and we will know for sure what we have is what the name tags say. Some of the de-accessioning was not planned, plants die. But the losses were few and non-essential to the mission of preserving the Willott cultivars.

Charities & schools received iris donations

Of course, irises grow and if given free rein the clumps will run into each other. So, the digging and dividing of the clumps of irises continued. The resulting divisions (rhizomes) were then potted and made available for sale to support the garden. Some of the divisions were also given to schools, civic and charitable organizations for their use.

Having visitors gives the lead volunteers the opportunity to add docent duties to the physical care of the irises. We talk to hundreds of people about irises and gardening in general. Approximately 3,000 visitors came to the iris garden in 2022.

The Willott Iris Garden is a museum of Willott irises and older irises of special interest. To the south of the Willott Iris Garden is an “Irises of the Future,” garden operated by the North East Ohio Iris Society. It is a “research and development,” garden for the evaluation of new cultivars. While the two gardens are separate entities, their co-location gives visitors an opportunity to note the changes that have been made by hybridizers over the years.

Approximately 3,000 visitors in 2022

The Willott Iris Garden always needs two things, volunteers and money. If you would like to help with either or both please see the information below.



Ways to help keep the Willott Iris Garden Blooming

- ❖ Donate— Please make checks payable to Friends of Greenhouse and note ‘Willott Iris Garden’ on the **memo** line.
- ❖ Buy a specially inscribed brick to be placed in the Iris Garden walkways -- [Download Purchase Form](#)
- ❖ Volunteer—Please call 216-664-3103 for details