

Willott Iris Garden Bloom Season 2020 Report
Submitted by Robert Pindell



*D*espite the closure of the Rockefeller Park Greenhouse and surrounding gardens due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Willott Iris Garden has had a great spring and early summer. Without the annual crowd of visitors the bloom season lacked its usual celebratory feel. Sadly, the great annual display of color was only seen by the city greenhouse employees, a few volunteers and a few members of the public who viewed the garden through the fence.

*N*o visitors meant that the Willott Iris Garden workers did not have to perform their usual docent duties giving more time for the care of the irises and other tasks. The extra time allowed for the photographing of every blooming clump of irises and making a “mug shot” of each cultivar that bloomed. With more time allowed for weeding and grooming we were also able to start digging, dividing and potting excess irises two weeks earlier than usual. So far, with the carry-over from last year, we have nearly 1,200 pots of irises from 54 varieties ready to sell when the time comes.

*W*ith the greenhouse and gardens closed, the spring plant sale was canceled. Without the spring plant sale the garden was very short of funds but thanks to some

generous gifts the garden will survive this year. When the gardens reopen to the public, as in past years, we will be able to sell the potted irises when ever an authorized volunteer is in the garden.

The Garden has added 12 Willott irises that we did not have and may be adding another 3 or 4 before the end of the season. Most of these new, to us, irises come to us from a collector in the State of Washington and the rest from local donors. The Willott Iris Garden is rapidly becoming the definitive collection of Willott iris introductions in the world.

Even with the gardens closed to the public the weeding and caring for the irises is ongoing. So there is always a need for volunteers at the Willott Iris Garden. With the present pandemic we need to meet all the masking and social distancing best practices to keep ourselves safe. But that is easy to do outside in a garden. To get detailed information on how to volunteer and get into the garden email or call the Rockefeller Park Greenhouse.

For more information about the Willott Iris Garden, visit the Rockefeller Park Greenhouse Website:

<https://rockefellerparkgreenhouse.org/willott-iris-garden>