



Garden Review Summary 2023



Ruby Slippers Bearded Iris

Willott Iris Garden Report
[Rockefeller Park Greenhouse](#)
750 E. 88th Street, Cleveland, OH 44108

Garden Highlights

- Rare Willott cultivars added to Garden
- Featured article in Plain Dealer
- Increased visitors and plant sales
- Garden database & maps updated
- 1,700 plants for sale by Labor Day

The 2023 bloom season started slowly and, except for the *iris reticulata* clumps, a little late. The miniature dwarf bearded (MDB) irises were slow to bloom and by the time they were underway, the standard dwarf bearded (SDB) irises were well into the height of their season. The Garden still had a good overlap of bloom going into the peak season for the tall bearded (TB) and miniature tall bearded (MTB) irises. The beardless irises bloomed on schedule. All in all, the garden had a good bloom season, albeit somewhat compressed early on.

The Willott Iris Garden had a significant increase in visitors this year, thanks in part to articles in the Plain Dealer, the Beachwood Buzz, and to cruise ship passengers who were bussed to the Greenhouse. With the increase in visitors, we also had a substantial increase in the sale of potted irises. In fact, we ended up selling all the potted irises we had available, about 900 pots, so that we had nothing to sell from early June until after Labor Day.

Beginning in late June after deadheading, we (staff and volunteers) divided our time between weeding and revising parts of the garden by digging and dividing selected clumps of bearded irises. We potted up the excess rhizomes. With the increase in demand, we needed to fill pots...and we did!

In addition to increased plant material from the Garden, we received a large collection of iris rhizomes from the North East Ohio Iris Society. Society members helped us pot these up to add to our sales area. All together we had about 1,700 pots of irises available for sale on Labor Day.

NEOIS donated rhizomes and labor

Between last year and this, the Garden added nearly a dozen Willott cultivars to the collection. Some of the added cultivars are very rare. As we dug and divided selected clumps of bearded irises in the Garden, we

removed a few duplicate clumps and reduced the size of others to make room for the new additions. Unfortunately, due to a shortage of volunteers, we did not get the necessary hours of weeding done. In contrast, the weeds had plenty of rain and sun to grow rapidly—and they did! We did not get the weeds back under control until late September.

Rare cultivars added to WIG

In addition to our regular Garden tasks, we are creating a Willott Iris Garden Database. From the end of September to the first snow fall, we updated the database and continued mapping the Garden. We also started a complete revision of the individual plant markers. Our goal is to integrate this data with an interactive map and related information that visitors can access on their smart devices as they move around the Garden.

Conclusion & Outlook

- In addition to plant sales, the generous donations of our supporters helped fund WIG operations in 2023.
- Volunteers are an ongoing concern. We need more volunteers to keep the Willott Iris Garden blooming.
- The WIG Database will be of immense help. It will allow visitors to use their smart devices to discover and learn about plants in the Garden. Equally important, it will allow staff to document and create a permanent record of holdings for posterity.

Willott Iris Garden Staff:
Ron Hartmiller, Sandra and Bob Pindell

