



Everette Lineberger has been a mainstay in the garden world in Spartanburg. He fell in love with bearded irises years ago and has grown them for years. (BETTY MONTGOMERY)

Irises personify beauty in the garden



Betty Montgomery

Mythology of the iris dates back to ancient Greece — the goddess Iris, who personified the rainbow, acted as the link between heaven and earth.

When talking about irises, Everette Lineberger is a name that many people associate with this lovely flower. A retired Lutheran minister, Everette has a passion for irises, and the bearded iris in particular. Upon seeing his first bearded iris, he fell in love with the graceful, delicate bloom and has been growing them ever since.

As a young minister, Everette moved into a parish home and inherited a flower bed. In that bed was bearded irises, which he had never seen before. He admired the steel blue bloom. This led to not only growing some, but developing irises that are ranked among some of the loveliest ones available today.

He began propagating irises in his home in Rock Hill in 1955. When he moved to Charleston, he was told it was too hot to grow irises there. He decided to try anyway and when he left Charleston in 1963 to move to Spartanburg, he was successfully growing around 100 iris plants. Everette continued to grow irises in Spartanburg. After about 10 years, he decided to move to the country to get back to his roots and to have more room to grow his beloved irises. Growing up on a farm in Gaston County, N.C., his upbringing has stayed with him. One of five boys, his four brothers have all had careers in horticulture. Everette's hobby has served to be his horticultural experience.

His home in the country has a magnificent view of the mountains and is an ideal place to grow irises, and he welcomes visitors to see them. On a pretty day when the irises were in bloom, Everette would welcome visitors from all over to his garden to enjoy the beauty of the irises and the countryside where he resides. One of his greatest joys was sharing irises with others.

At one time, Everette had more than 700 varieties of irises (there are approximately 2,000 registered varieties). There are several that he has developed and named. One of the loveliest irises he has developed, is named



This iris is named Deb Sunshine. Everette Lineberger named it after his daughter. The flower is a rebloomer and was registered with the American Iris Society in 2000.



Everette Lineberger had this iris registered with the American Iris Society in 1988.

"Anne," after his wife of 55 years. It is a lovely, pure white with ruffled edges and lovely folds falling by the side. He says it is a miracle how a tiny seed can become this lovely plant.

Everette has been a mainstay in the garden world in Spartanburg since his move to the area. He also has been a main leader in the local chapter as well as being a master gardener. He has even taught classes in master gardening.

Everette says that irises are beautiful, colorful, and easy to grow. They like perfect drainage and a hillside or slope is ideal. Irises require at least a half-day (six to eight hours) of direct sunlight. Some afternoon shade is beneficial in extremely hot climates, but in general irises do best in full sun. Good air circulation is essential, water should not stand in the beds and it is best not to mulch the rhizomes.

You can find the traditional iris that bloom in late spring or you can find ones that are "rebloomers," meaning they will give you a second bloom in the fall. Bearded irises are named for the fuzzy section that grows from the base of the "falls," or downward-facing petals. These falls are often a contrasting

color. They are deer resistant which is a real plus in certain areas.

The local Iris Society will have its annual show from 1 to 4 p.m. Saturday, at the Cowpens Library, 181 School St. The show is free. Anyone who grows irises may exhibit in the show. All paper work has to be complete and flowers in place before 10 a.m. Saturday when the judges start their work. The American Iris Society sets the judging standards.

Years ago, I entered an iris at a show in Spartanburg. I was a new bride and I thought my iris was outstanding. I was overcome by the beauty of some of the flowers when I went to see how mine did during judging. I did get a ribbon, but not a blue one and rightly so. I learned then what beauty an iris can have. Visit the show on Saturday and you will see the array of colors, the beauty of each flower and the iridescent colors that some exhibit. They truly are a flower of great beauty.

Betty Montgomery is a master gardener and author of "Hydrangeas: How To Grow, Cultivate & Enjoy," and "A Four-Season Southern Garden." She can be reached at bmontgomery40@gmail.com.