

## Yellow With Black Stripes... Impossible!

By Alan McMurtrie

This year's biggest innovation was yellow with black stripes. Impossible you say! I would have thought so, but presto 05-GQ-4 opened for the first time and all of a sudden the impossible, was possible.

The next most interesting new hybrid was 06-AK-2, an amazing green on yellow, which opened coincidentally on Easter Sunday. You couldn't think of anything more lovely for Easter!

The colours seemed to pop. If your eyes were scanning the garden you couldn't miss the way it stood out. I was quite surprised at how electric it seemed when the sun hit it.



### **Background**

- Reticulata Iris is a world of blues and purples, along with the lemon-yellow Iris *danfordiae*
- Alan has opened up that world to a rainbow of colours, and is continuing to expand the realm of possibilities
- It is continuing to be an up hill battle to get his hybrids to you via the bulb fields of The Netherlands, with their good growing conditions and excellent distribution systems
- He is now taking the bull by the horns and trying to get it to go where he wants it to go. "Trying" is the operative word.

Another notable new hybrid was 05-EP-3. It continued on a theme started two years ago by its sibling 05-EP-2: wine-red on a yellow ground, with lighter yellow style lobes. Last year's addition to the group was 03-GQ-3.

When 05-EP-2 first bloomed I thought, "Wow, a new colour combination / pattern," however I didn't really like its shade of wine-red. Then, in 2012 when 03-GQ-3 bloomed I thought perfect! The ink-like wine-red seemed to sit like a thick layer on top of the fall.

This year's 05-EP-3 is a lovely solid wine-red with slightly gold style lobes. The wine-red is flat as opposed to 05-GQ-3's slightly more glossy appearance.





I was quite surprised when I first discovered 07-HA-1. My comment on Facebook when I posted its picture was:

Camouflage!

I hadn't noticed this one hiding in the straw until today

Then I got a bit of a shock a few days later when 03-GR-1 also bloomed for the first time: what a weird colour. I tend to like it a little bit better because it's slightly brighter. Unfortunately it hasn't done well! The main bulb is gone and there may just be one bulblet left. C'est la vie.

### Tips

- 1) Don't plant the bulbs too close together (unless you are willing to replant them every year or two)
- 2) Every so often move a few bulbs to another part of the garden
- 3) If you need to store the bulbs, dig them just after the leaves die down. Store them in a netted bag so they can breathe. Check them every couple of weeks.



05-HG-1 is a lovely bright blue and white combination, with distinctive yellow around its ridge.

05-CF-2 is a nice white with a bit of an orange glow around its orange ridge. Myself, I prefer 03-FQ-1 with a bit more orange on the fall, and it's purple and brown markings. It's currently under test in Holland, however Wim had flagged one of two plantings to be returned last fall (fortunately he didn't get around to returning it, and simply replanted it). This shows clearly Wim is not properly testing my hybrids. Either he likes it, or he rejects both batches. Wim promised to more carefully evaluate my hybrids this spring...



As far as I'm concerned Wim and Mark are on probation in terms of getting any of my new hybrids.



Often Wim will say my hybrids are too small (for the large-scale market), and he doesn't like that they don't tend to have proper standards. Mark has told me, "your hybrids are not complete."

I understand what he's trying to say. He's not trying to be mean. He's just voicing what he believes exporters will say. As a result I've initiated some expensive lab work to hopefully resolve at least some of the issue.

I know also Wim and Mark would say there is need for only one white with blue markings. I don't believe that. I think there should be several; ahhh, how about 10 or more. I might have previously said 3 or 4, but to be truthful it's probably at least 10.

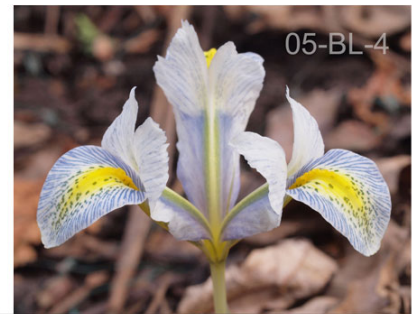
From Wim and Mark's point-of-view, they'd rather harvest a hectare of Avalanche, rather than ¼ of a hectare each of Avalanche, 98-YS-1, 05-BL-4, Snow and Sky, and 06-C-2. Yes, I've listed 5 varieties, because I think they'd ultimately be able to sell more.

Who knows, it might even be ⅓ or ½ of a hectare of Avalanche.

If someone buys one and they like it, a year or two later they'll possibly buy another variety. They wouldn't be interested in buying more of the same one that they already have.

06-C-2 continued to do well. In my mind it's a nice improvement over Starlight.

Oh darn, look at 06-DF-1, another white with blue markings. How terrible (terribly nice that is). I'm happy to be in the position I'm in: with too many nice things, rather than not enough.





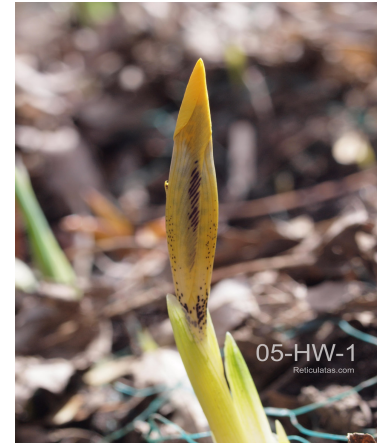
### The Highlight

05-HW-1 bloomed for the second time after missing last year because I sliced up the main bulb when I went to replant it for the first time in fall 2011. I consider it one of my best hybrids to-date. Why, because its an apricot butterfly.

It is amazing: in bud it is soft orange (apricot). When it opens you see amazing dark brown markings, unlike anything you could imagine.

The colour does fade as the flower ages. Is this a good thing, or a bad thing? You tell me.

Normally we want colours that are sun-fast, but sometimes colour change can be a nice, and give the plant character.



This year's bulb started off about 46mm in diameter, and then actually became smaller as the falls arched slightly downwards. By the 4th day it was only 40mm in diameter, but stayed there for the remainder of its 10-day bloom (protected by an upside down tin can).

The fall blade width was a respectable 12.5mm, increasing to 14mm by the 4<sup>th</sup> day.

I would of course love it if the overall colour was truly orange.

### 2013 A Strange Spring

I thought we were in for real trouble this year when on January 31 two buds of 05-EN-1 were up and showing colour. How can that be possible? That would have been in the middle of winter! Well by that point we had been through two significant freeze-thaw cycles where several inches of snow came and went, and then came and went again.

I had never seen anything like it before. I thought bloom might end up even earlier than last year. And last year was incredible with bloom coming on in full force in mid March, and finishing before the month was over. Normally that's just when the Reticulatas are just starting.



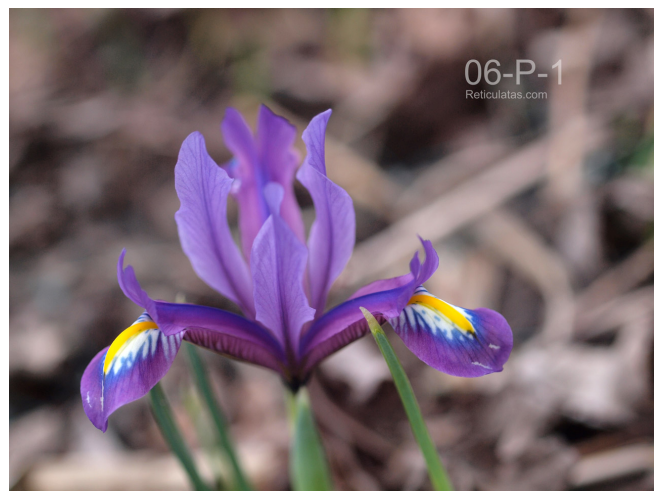


I covered the two 05-EN-1 buds with an upside down dishpan to protect them from the weather. As a result the flowers opened March 23, and lasted beyond March 29. The dishpan was protecting them as if they were still underground protected by their sheath

## 2n = 20 Hybrids

The hybrids above are all from *Iris danfordiae*. They are providing an amazing new range of colours. One of their characteristics is they bloom early. I have also done work with more typical *Iris reticulata* clones, some of which I collected in Turkey back in 1985, and 1986. They tend to bloom in the latter half of the season. The catch 22 is they tend to be blues and purples, and there are already lots of blues and purples in the market. So Dutch bulb growers aren't really that interested in them, even though some are quite nice.

What I have been able to do is, create some that are mixtures of blue and purple in a single flower, as well ones that include separate portions of both purple and blue.



I will try again to see if I can interest any growers in them. They are quite different from anything else in the market.

Naturally I do get some blues from my *danfordiae* hybridizing. Most aren't anything special, but occasionally I do get something very nice. One that I've liked from the day it first bloomed is 03-CV-4. I would like to see it in the large-scale market, but at the moment I'm thinking I may just put it into a smaller market. The reasoning being that I have so many others I should get into the large-scale market ahead of it.



### **Pièce de Résistance**

This is a bicolour hybrid from 2000. Its particular claim to fame is the flower is huge; not so much in diameter (it was triangular: 60 - 70 - 60mm), but its falls were initially 21 mm across, increasing to 23mm, and its standards were 13mm increasing to 14 as the flower aged. The fact its falls are so flat helps make the flower look super large.

I had noticed it back in 2011 and intended to send it to Holland for testing. I believe when I went to dig the bulb I couldn't find it. So I assumed it had simply died out. That sometimes happens, but when it does, the thing to keep in mind is it means the variety was not a strong one.



Turns out I had put the tag marking it on the wrong side of the bulb. Now I've doubly flagged it so I don't make that mistake again

When it might have bloomed for the first time in 2005 I didn't bother to take much note of the  $2n=20$  hybrids because the Dutch bulb grower really wasn't interested in them. I had moved it and a number of others in the fall of 2010. Unfortunately in its case the cross number was lost at that time.

### **The Smile**

So many lovely unique hybrids!

How can you pick just one or two? Yes, you could if you had to; like picking candy in a candy shop. But if you come back and pick another two, and then come back and pick another two. You'll come to find you like many of them for different reasons

It's frustrating not being able to get them into your hands sooner.

### **For More Information**

Visit [Reticulatas.com](http://Reticulatas.com) and in particular look at The Big Picture. You may want to also look at the three "Named" web pages. I will eventually update the website with 2013 bloom information.

You can also check out Reticulata Iris on Facebook. If you don't have a Facebook account, simply Google "Facebook Reticulata Iris"