

2003 Retic & Juno Bloom (draft)

By Alan McMurtrie P. Eng

Reticulatas (Iridodictyums)

visit www.Reticulatas.com

This year's bloom started on March 24. The first new hybrid to bloom was 94-HW-3. As the Dutch would say, it's "just blue." Indeed you might mistake it for an F1 hybrid. It must be a slow increaser to only be blooming now for the first time; though it could be from a seed that germinated a few years later than the rest. I had thought it was possibly 94-HW-2, but had kept it separate just in case it was something else. Of note is the fact its standards fold in half down their entire length. This gave the impression they were only 4 mm wide rather than the actual 8 mm.

The second new bloom was 98-OK-1 (91-FC-1 x *danfordiae*). This is the 6th "spotted light blue-green," though as such I wouldn't say it is spotted. When Lynda saw it she said it was "icy green." This led me to giving it the name 'Ice Green' ('Green Ice' rolls off the tongue a bit easier, but seems to give more emphasis to "green").

The most exciting hybrid of the first day turned out to be 98-MN-1. It is the first clear break from *danfordiae*'s yellow! Note that this was not a back cross onto *danfordiae*. It is from 89-Q-2 x 89-Q-7. 89-Q-7 was one of the few F1 sxd hybrids to have a bit of yellow. This suggests that there may be a second, more obscure parallel path to yellow than just the main recessive one I mentioned last year. Amazingly it is a bicolour (pale yellow and white). It is an F1 x F1 hybrid that doesn't fit the pattern of the past 4 years and 57 previous F2s.

98-OO-1 is to my eyes a lovely soft Apricot. Looking at a RHS colour chart the fall blade appears to be 15A. It would seem there is a more orange cast coming from a halo around the white area. Its colour isn't captured correctly by my digital camera. The halo does show by the time the flower has nearly finished (see photo on my web site). It is a small flower, only 40 mm tip to tip.

Another hybrid of particular note was 97-DZ-8. It bloomed in 97-DZ-1. The 1997 hybrids had all been replanted last fall. Presumably this hybrid and 97-DZ-1 were growing so close together that I thought they were one-and-the-same. This is a lovely white and green with some yellow. It has a wide fall blade, but the flower doesn't open wide; the falls and styles tend to be held upwards at high angle. The flower remained fresh for quite a number of days; much longer it seemed than others which started at the same time.

A week and a half of nasty weather cold started overnight March 31. Icy conditions, which caused numerous car accidents on April 1st, disappeared by afternoon as a result of +7°C temperatures. From that point on, below normal temperatures (-1 to -3°C at night; +1 to +3°C daytime) continued until April 9th. Normals for the period are low -1°C, high +9°C. During much of the time it was dull, so we were also missing the radiant heat from the sun.

On Thursday April 3rd ice pellets started to fall as I drove home from work. The roads quickly became coated with this icy-snow. The pellets continued to fall all night. By the next morning 6 to 8 cm had fallen. Fortunately because of the bad-weather warnings, arrangements had been made for employees to work from home. At least 2 cm more fell that day.

On April 9th things began to turn around. It got up to only 5°C, but it was a bright sunny day, and the sun's radiant heat made it feel much warmer. It wasn't until April 12 before the icy-snow was completely gone on the front beds, and April 14th when it was gone from the backyard.

On April 9th I dug out a couple of the dishpan protecting the plants. They had grown a bit, but in most case flowers and pollen had not opened significantly. Some of the flowers that had previously been open a couple of days prior to the cold spell were looking worse for wear. I tried crossing a few but doubt they will work. It had obviously been slightly moist under a number of the dishpans. Flowers that hadn't been open quite as long were looking much fresher (as if they had gone into suspended animation during the cold spell).

We had 5 gorgeous sunny days, cumulating on April 15 with 28°C. It felt like a warm summer day. I switched to shorts in order to feel comfortable. While many of the sxd hybrids at the front of the house were finishing, the same clones in beds in the backyard where snow had been the last to leave were just starting to open.

I took 3 days off work, which in combination with the weekend meant I spent all 5 days out in the garden taking pictures and hybridizing. On the first day I managed to snap 600 pictures. On other days the count was over 200. A number of these were at different angles, and with different exposures. In a few cases they also gave a record of how well the flower aged.

Of particular interest was the fact I spent some time taking measurements (see separate document). Years ago when I only had a few hybrids I had time to do this, and even make sketches of petal shapes. I haven't had time for that in recent years.

After last year's bloom I had a request for this type of information, but didn't have it. I know for example that some of my F2 sxd hybrids are small, but then everything's small in relation to *histrionoides* x *winogradowii* hybrids. Most are of typical Reticulata size. To-date I haven't really been all that concerned with size. You get what you get. *Danfordiae* is on the smaller side compared to typical Reticulatas. The form I collected is quite small (*danfordiae* ANM2325), whereas Ahmet Atilla's form is more "normal-size". I have always simply hybridized all of the flowers I had available (ones involving *sophenensis*, *danfordiae*, or Çat). Any that were missed was because of bad weather, or I simply ran out of time and couldn't get to them (not enough hours in the day).

98-OO-1 may be small, but I'm sure glad I created it. It's wonderful. As to what other people think, well that's up to them. In addition, the question is where will my hybridizing with it take me from here?

As you will see from the measurements, most of the sxd hybrids have standards that are hair-like. In some cases the hair is as short as 5 mm, whereas in others it is almost as long as a typical Reticulata standard. In the odd case they are about normal width: 94-HW-3, 98-NP-4, and 97-AM-1.

On the 16th temperatures fell from 12°C in the morning to 6°C in the afternoon with clouds and a moderate breeze. A few scattered showers fell in late afternoon. The 17th was a cold windy day. I was in at work on both of these days. The Easter weekend followed from the 18th to 21st. Forecasts had called for rain on several of the days, but happily there was only a heavy storm late on Sunday evening. I managed to get quite a lot of pictures taken and made quite a few crosses.

Reticulata bloom was coming towards a close with White Caucasus starting to bloom on the 20th, along with 87-BB-1. These are both lovely hybrids, and certainly a treat to see. At this point the earliest Reticulatas had finished, and life was draining out of many of the mid season blooms.

This year Reticulatas in the back corner of the backyard were just starting. These are ones that had been covered the longest with snow. They are particularly late blooming since they had only just unfrozen when the ice pellets hit at the beginning of the month. In effect they had a double delay to melt snow.

On Sunday I was hybridizing a multitude of blooms from several clones that had long since finished at the front of the house.

Tuesday the 22nd was a dull day with occasional rain in the afternoon. I took a walk around the garden while wearing my Winter coat. The strong breeze seemed to penetrate right through so I quickly went inside and organized the several hundred pictures from the previous few days.

Bloom at the front of the house essentially finished on the 28th. One straggler continued for another 2 days and would have lasted at least another day if heavy rains on May 1st hadn't battered it into submission. Bloom in the backyard lasted until April 30th, likewise being ended by the heavy rain.

Overview

There were 68 new F2 hybrids involving two or more of *danfordiae*, *sophenensis* and the Çat Reticulata. This brings the total of such hybrids to 125.

I am quite pleased with this year's results. Yes, many were what I expected, but there were more than a dozen that represent colour breaks. Previously I would have spoken about opening a door to a whole New World. This year I can say I am starting to step through that door. What I am seeing, is incredible!

Hopefully with the aid of Dutch Bulb Growers I will one day be able to share these wonderful things with you. In one sense I am getting too many nice things. There is just no way they can all be introduced. However this is a nice position to be in!

Commercial introduction of my hybrids is still a number of years away. I am glad to be able to report that Wim de Goede said " _____ "

March 27, 2003: "Darn, another white. How boring! Smile, whites are easy. I can laugh and say that now that I have them coming out my ears. People would give their right arm to have what I'm getting. A fair number of the F2s are "fitting the mold" that I had seen last year, but a number are "outside the box." In some cases I can see subtle differences, which I am hoping to exploit when I start hybridizing tomorrow."

As you will see, the 98-NP cross is amazing! All 10 hybrids are lovely. Their colour range is incredibly diverse. This is exactly what I had been hoping for.

97-CZ-1 is a nice yellow orange hybrid (more yellow than 98-OO-1).

97-CN-2 was quite intriguing.

-about 98-NP

don't have Çat look; perhaps in next generation

large (compared to *danfordiae*)

extreme colour range – not one bad one. Some colours similar to $2n = 20$ clones

Çat Retic is definitely proving to give extremely interesting results in combination with *danfordiae* and *sophenensis*.

I'm being absolutely amazed by what's blooming for the first time this year in terms of *sophenensis* x *danfordiae* hybrids. I thought after last year I had a pretty clear idea of what to expect. In fact, I expected to be a bit disappointed because the F2 expression wasn't opening up more. I believed I faced a big challenge in trying to make different crosses from the types made to date in order to open up the expression.

Now the trick is to understand why certain things are coming to light that didn't show up in the first 57 hybrids.

Show Report

Tim Loe reported on February 20th, "You will be pleased to know that I managed to get to The Royal Hort. Society Westminster Halls on Tuesday and showed two of your plants. 92-CS-3 and 89-F-4 to the RHS joint Iris Committee. Both were highly regarded and were awarded "A certificate of Preliminary Commendation" (subject to ratification). I'll let you know more soon but I think that this means you will have to name the plants and register them for the award to be ratified. Next year I will be able to get to London easier (this year was a nightmare - by car, by train, by subway and finally by foot!) and so I will be able to show your F2's with confidence. These, I am sure will really create a stir."

92-CS-3 is a *histroioides* x *winogradowii* hybrid which has done well here. I don't regard it as stunning, but it is nice and increases quite well. Klass de Geus (Maveridge) is now testing it (I sent him 6 bulbs last fall).

89-F-4 is a F1 *sophenensis* x *danfordiae* (sxd) hybrid; a nice blue.

I had provided four different varieties to Tim for showing. The most challenging aspect is to get the bulbs to bloom at just the right time for the show. Ideally they need to open right before the show starts so they the flowers are in pristine condition.

The plan is to provide Tim with a number of bulbs of 94-HW-1 for showing in 2004. I hope to have enough bulbs that he will be able to put together two pots of 3 to 4 bulbs. At this point the number of bloom-size bulbs is still quite limited.

John Dixon reported "I am pleased to say that I managed to show three of your sxd hybrids, (89-F-2, 89-Q-5, 91-FC-4), along with 87-BN-1 at the South Wales Show on 15th February. **Robert Rolf** and I had shared the bulbs you sent to try and make sure that at least one of us had something in flower. I think Robert's plants might have been over before the show, mine started opening quite early but then we had a spell of very cold (for us, you'd probably laugh at -6° Celsius) weather which stopped everything. On the Tuesday before the show I decided to bring anything in bud into the house and luckily those above made it to the show!

Bob and Rannveig Wallis, the show secretaries and bulb growers of some note (understatement) had a non-competitive bench which allowed me to show these, (because I have had them less than 6 months they couldn't go onto the competitive show), along with a few explanatory notes. I directed anyone interested towards your website and forthcoming article in the AGS Bulletin. There seemed to be a fair bit of interest, so it will be interesting to see if anyone contacts you as a result. On the plants themselves, I find the s x d hybrids fascinating - although it's a long time since I grew I. *sophenensis* it is interesting seeing what has been contributed from both parents. I particularly like the boldness of 89F2, and the delicacy of 89Q5. Your hybrid 87BN1 also drew much favourable comment - I see from your website this is being trialled in Holland and I look forward to seeing it in garden centres in a few years time!"

I plan to provide John and Robert with two bulbs each of 94-HW-1. This will hopefully ensure at least one of them is successfully in showing 94-HW-1. My goal is of course to start getting the general public interested in my hybrids, and in particular interested in 94-HW-1.

	<u>Blade Width</u>
<i>bakeriana</i>	9 to 11 mm
<i>danfordiae</i> (diploid)	8 to 15 mm
<i>histrioides</i> (typical)	16 to 17 mm
<i>histrioides</i> (large blade)	22 to 24 mm
<i>histrioides sopenensis</i>	10 to 14 mm
<i>pamphylica</i>	9 mm
<i>reticulata</i> (hort.)	10 mm
<i>reticulata</i> coll. forms	8 to 13 mm
Armenian Caucasus form	13 to 17 mm
'George'	12 mm
'Katharine Hodgkin'	19 to 26 mm

'White Caucasus'

On February 24th Wim registered 'White Caucasus' in my name. We'll have to see if this is the name we end up using commercially. At this point I don't have a better name. Since it is a collected clone I have always called it Iris *reticulata* Armenian Caucasus Alba, or Caucasus Alba for short. I asked Wim to register it as Caucasus Alba because I wanted people to realize it was a white form of a pure species. That name was rejected by the KAVB (Royal General Bulb Growers Association), so Wim used 'White Caucasus'.

Perhaps I will eventually name a Reticulata after my wife: 'Lynda' or 'Lynda McMurtrie'. If I do, I would want the variety to be one that will sell well. This variety should sell quite well, but it didn't feel right to use her name for it.

If it is decided we need a better name for selling commercially then we will pick one and use it. I would want to submit the name change to the KAVB. If they choose not to accept the change that's fine we'll just go ahead and use the new name. At the moment I'm not disappointed with the name 'White Caucasus'. I just hadn't been prepared for anything different than Iris *reticulata* Caucasus Alba.

-about legal issues with De Goede Bulbivaria

Dutch Bulb Grower Comments

Wim spoke of 97-AG-1 as bronze. I look upon it as yellow-blue, meaning a bit yellow here and olive tones there. When I saw 94-AT-2 in bloom it made me think of Wim's words, because he was right, the colouring is bronze.

Wim saw a number of F2 hybrids this year. His general comment was that they were small
 typical *reticulata*
histrioides
histrioides hybrids
 hist x wino hybrids

reported in 1991

	<u>Diameter</u>	<u>Fall To Fall</u>	<u>Blade Width</u>
Collected by author	3.5 - 4 cm	3 - 3.5 cm	8 - 11 mm
Second Turkish Site	4 - 5.2 cm	3.5 - 4.5 cm	11 - 15 mm
Triplod (commercial) form	5.5 - 6.5 cm	5.0 - 5.5 cm	15 - 18 mm

Table 3 Differences In *Danfordiae* Flower Sizes

Need fall blade to flare in order to give appearance of big flowers. If the blade curves back under it self the flower will appear smaller than it might otherwise. This happens with 96-DZ-1, but I love its pastel blue, and ever so delicate yellow on the fall blade.

Lab Work Results

This

Junos

Junos finished about May 27
 Wouter Bulk

visit www.Juno.ca

Potpourri

Web Sites

I am pleased with what I have accomplished over the past year given the time I have had available.

Hard disk failure after just 8 months