

ABOUT THE COLLECTOR

Stan Gray has been raising iris for more than 50 years, primarily on his family property in northern New Jersey, but also at several other locations in the eastern United States. Having moved to Savannah, GA in November 2005, he carries on the legacy of raising iris from his parents, who began their New Jersey garden in 1928. Gray's Iris Garden became well known throughout the Mid-Atlantic States over the years for the quality and extent of the display, and for its impeccable maintenance standards. It was twice (1961 and 1966) designated as a host garden for the national convention of the American Iris Society; and, in 1996, it was showcased on the New York edition of the Today show in a piece by Matt Lauer entitled "When Iris Eyes Are Smiling".

In 1999, while living in Virginia, Stan, with the help of his family, completely overhauled the New Jersey garden and began to construct a collection of the most prized recent award winning varieties of tall-bearded iris. From 2000 –2007, the gardens attained prominent notice throughout the greater New York metropolitan area, annually visited by several thousand people, as Stan opened up his family grounds to the public during the bloom. It was regularly the subject of feature articles in all the major New York newspapers and several magazines. Since Stan did not live in New Jersey at the time, the gardens were maintained throughout the year during his absence primarily by his longtime friend Sandy Tyler of Tyler Gardens.

In September 2007, Stan, Sandy, and several other friends dug up his entire collection in New Jersey, wherein he transported it to Savannah for incorporation into the floral display at the Bamboo Farm & Coastal Gardens under a research agreement with the University of Georgia. He has been assisted with the development of this display by a small team of volunteers and particularly by his son Jordan, who has combined his knowledge of iris with the lessons learned from his Biology degree from Armstrong Atlantic State University to the research project. Stan wishes to dedicate his display to the citizens of Savannah and the low country.

Stan is a 1972 graduate of the United States Military Academy, and served a career in the U.S. Army, both with the Corps of Engineers and as a specialist in Chinese language and politico-military affairs. After having retired from the military, he worked for The Nature Conservancy and NatureServe, in Arlington, Virginia, directing those organizations' training programs and conferences for eleven years. More recently, he was Circulation Manager for The South magazine, based in Savannah, and is very active among the Savannah birding community. He has been a member of or affiliated with the American Iris Society for more than 40 years, and is well known as an iris grower to some of the nation's leading hybridizers of tall-bearded iris. Stan currently serves on the Board of Directors of the Friends of Coastal Gardens. In addition, in 2010, he was appointed chief advisor to the Superintendent for the modern hybrid collection at The Presby Memorial Iris Gardens in Upper Montclair, New Jersey. Presby is the most extensive public display of bearded iris in the world today.

In September 2009, Stan and Sandy joined forces to create Tyler Gray Gardens, LLC. Their horticultural enterprise continues to maintain select New Jersey accounts of the 20-year old Tyler Gardens, with an eye towards refocusing their efforts at Savannah and coastal Georgia in the near future.