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**Southwestern Michigan Iris Society
Will Host Japanese Iris Convention
*July 3-5, 2008***

Kalamazoo, MI – The Southwestern Michigan Iris Society (SWMIS) will host a Japanese Iris Convention in Kalamazoo Michigan, July 3-5, 2008. Convention attendees will be able to see the latest Japanese Iris (JI) varieties, and their hybrids, presented by sixteen hybridizers from around the world. These hybridizers have planted 129 “guest irises” in several area gardens for the enjoyment of convention participants.

Two days of garden tours are scheduled during the convention. Buses will transport attendees to four different gardens in the area, where a wide variety of Japanese Irises will be on display. The featured locations are:

- Ensata Gardens (Galesburg) – Owners John Coble and Bob Bauer are America’s largest growers of Japanese Irises. Having introduced over 35 JI’s to the market, they were just awarded the Hybridizer’s Medal by the American Iris Society (AIS).
- Jim & Jill Copeland’s Garden (Lawton) – This is a hybridizer’s garden with an acre of irises and a master planting. Jill has introduced over one dozen JI’s to the market.
- Dick & Eileen O’Melay’s Garden (Wyoming) – Landscaping award winners Dick and Eileen will demonstrate the process for incorporating Japanese Irises into your landscape.
- Jim & Bev Munson’s Garden (Texas Township) - This garden will be a cool oasis on a hot July day. Their well landscaped garden is in a woodland setting on a lake, with plenty of Japanese Irises to enjoy.

Japanese Irises have been in the United States for the last 100 years. There are many hybridizers in the U.S. and every three years they send their best and newest plants to be seen and evaluated in gardens. Kalamazoo was selected as the convention venue this year.

Japanese Irises are different from other irises, having large flowers with a flatter form, which bloom a month later – in July in the Kalamazoo area. These wonderful flowers can be as large as dinner plates and come in many colors (white, deep purple, pink, deep red-violet and all shades in between) and many patterns.

The Southwestern Michigan Iris Society was founded in Kalamazoo Michigan in 1950 and was instrumental in bringing the convention to Kalamazoo. For more information about the convention, please visit www.socji.org/convention.htm. For more information about the SWIS, please contact Chairman Jim Copeland via telephone at (269) 624-1968 or via e-mail at jandjcope@aol.com.

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