

13th Annual Porterville Iris Festival to Promote Community on Saturday, April 16th

The purple iris was declared the official flower of Porterville in January 1963. Couple that with our community being home to the world's largest distributor of re-blooming iris - Sutton's Iris Gardens, and you can't help but want to celebrate the iris! Over 25,000 residents and visitors are expected to do just that on April 16th with the offering of the 2011 Porterville Iris Festival, presented by the Chamber and major sponsors, Eagle Mountain Casino and the Tule River Tribal Council. In 'lucky' year number 13 of the event, we will collaborate with the Sesquicentennial Committee to commemorate this as the 48th anniversary of the naming of the iris as Porterville's flower. The event also undergoes some changes which will expand on existing partnerships and offering. The Chamber and the organizing committee have seen the Iris Festival grow from a small local event with 30 vendors its first year, to one of the County's premier gatherings with 200 vendors and welcoming visitors from throughout California, the United States, and several foreign countries.

Happening on Saturday, April 16th in downtown and out at Sutton's, the 13th Annual Iris Festival happens from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Main Street and features activities for the entire family. 200 crafter, food, vendor and information booths; free entertainment at the Centennial Park and Mill Street stages; community organization corner; business promotion alley; and, special merchant promotions will await festival attendees. The Sierra View District Hospital Children's Fun Area will include amusements, chalk art, face painting, and more. Children in grades K-3 can color an iris drawing and turn it in for a free gift. Iris pictures for coloring are available at the Chamber office beginning April 9th and may also be obtained through the local school districts and in The Recorder.

The Imagine Community Art Center and Porterville Art Association have teamed to offer and enhanced downtown Art Walk, providing individuals the opportunity to take a leisurely, self-guided tour of artwork located in various businesses throughout downtown Porterville.

Down at the south end of the festival, attendees will find the annual showing of some very awesome cars, motorcycles and bicycles at the COOL Rides Exhibition. In addition to the official judging, there will again be the opportunity to vote for the People's Choice Award entry.

A visit to Sutton's Iris Garden will of course be a highlight for many. Free shuttle service will be provided from downtown (behind the former JC Penney parking lot) out to the acres of iris on Avenue 208. Individuals will be able to take self-guided tours through the iris garden.

Back for its second year is the Porterville Chili Cook-off which has moved to a new location – Main Street between Harrison and Morton. Families, friends, and businesses will form teams and put their coveted chili recipes to the test. Celebrity judges will join a handful of citizen judges in naming the chili making honorees.

A very big change for the 13th Iris Festival is the inclusion of Porterville Celebrates Reading - the Margaret J Slattery Literacy Fair as part of the event in the downtown area. This activity is relocating to Thurman Street, between Main and Hockett. The new locale provides easy access for youth to come into the Porterville City Library to get their free books (after visiting the reading stations outside) and sign-up for a library card. Friends of the Library is also conveniently located around the corner for easy access.

The final new component is the Fire Department's planning of an Open House event at Fire Station #1 on Cleveland. Station tours, public information materials for adults and youth, and chats for firefighting personnel are on tap for this event.

The 2011 Iris Festival is being presented by the Porterville Chamber of Commerce and major sponsors Eagle Mountain Casino and the Tule River Tribal Council. Other event sponsors supporting the Iris Festival are: Galaxy 9 Theatre, Walmart Distribution Center, Sierra View District Hospital, KTIP Radio, The Porterville Recorder, and Westcoast Broadcasting. There is no charge to attend the Iris Festival in Downtown Porterville and at Sutton's Iris Gardens, so bring the entire family and enjoy this spring celebration and "Porterville in Bloom." For more information, or to sign up for a food, craft booth, business promotion, or community information booth, please contact the Chamber at 784-7502. Ask about the member discount program.