



American Iris Society Hans and Jacob Sass Medal history + winners

History by Clarence Mahan

This medal is restricted to intermediate bearded (IB) irises. It is named in honor of Hans Sass (1868-1949) and Jacob Sass (1872-1945).

Hans and Jacob Sass were born in Alt Duvenstedt, Germany and immigrated to the United States with their parents in 1884. They settled on a farm in Nebraska, and were interested in breeding garden flowers at an early age. They bred irises, peonies, daylilies, lilacs, gladiolus, lilies and other garden plants. When they became charter members of the AIS, they had been breeding irises for more than a decade. Their irises were famous for being strong growers because they used 'Amas' and I. trojana as tetraploid stud irises instead of the tender I. mesopotamia and I. cypriana.

The two brothers were very close and shared ideas on hybridizing as well as seedling pollen. When someone complimented Jacob on one of his seedlings, he would say: "Wait until you see what Hans has!" If you praised one of Hans's seedlings, he would say: "Wait until you see what Jake has!" They each introduced scores of irises, and what irises! Two of Hans Sass's irises won the Dykes Medal: 'Rameses' in 1932, and 'Prairie Sunset' in 1943. Likewise, two of Jacob Sass's irises won the Dykes Medal: 'The Red Douglas' in 1941, and 'Ola Kala' in 1948. Hans was the first to introduce true reblooming cultivars, the tall bearded 'Autumn King' and the intermediate bearded 'Autumn Queen,' in 1926.

Both of the Sass brothers bred all types of irises that would grow in Nebraska, but their early fame as hybridizers came for their work producing intermediate bearded irises. Crossing dwarf irises with tall bearded irises, they were the first American breeders to develop many new colors and forms in the intermediate class. They saw the great advantage of intermediate bearded irises on the windy prairie, and the value of a type of iris that filled out the bloom season between the early dwarf irises and the later tall bearded irises.

The Sass brothers were two of the world's greatest plant breeders. Their irises won many awards and are to be found throughout the pedigrees of nearly all the modern tall bearded irises in our gardens. A number of their peony introductions are still considered outstanding cultivars, including Jacob's 'Nebraska' and Hans's 'Elsa Sass,' 'Hans P. Sass,' and 'Sea Shell.'

HANS AND JACOB SASS MEDAL Intermediate Bearded (IB)

2009	DEVIL MAY CARE (Paul Black)		
2008	MING (Marky Smith)		
2007	Delirium	Marky Smith	Yakima, WA
2006	Midsummer Night's Dream	Lowell Baumunk	Littleton, CO
2005	Starwoman	Marky Smith	Yakima, WA
2004	Gnu Rayz	Brad Kasperek	Elwood, UT
2003	Bottled Sunshine	Hooker Nichols	Dallas, TX
2002	Protocol	Keith Keppel	Salem, OR
2001	Maui Gold	Terry Aitken	Vancouver, WA
2000	Dark Waters	Terry Aitken	Vancouver, WA
1999	Prince of Burgundy	Dave Niswonger	Cape Girardeau, MO
1998	Cee Jay	Carol Lankow by Terry Aitken	Kirkland, WA Vancouver, WA
1997	Hot Spice	Terry Aitken	Vancouver, WA
1996	Lemon Pop	Larry Lauer	Wilton, CA
1995	Blue Eyed Blond	Allan Ensminger	Lincoln, NE
1994	Ask Alma	Carol Lankow	Kirkland, WA
1993	Maui Moonlight	Terry Aitken	Vancouver, WA
1992	Hot Fudge	Ben Hager	Stockton, CA
1991	Butter Pecan	Ben Hager	Stockton, CA
1990	Hellcat	Terry Aitken	Vancouver, WA
1989	Honey Glazed	Dave Niswonger	Cape Girardeau, MO
1988	Oklahoma Bandit	Hooker Nichols	Dallas, TX
1987	Az Ap	Allan Ensminger	Lincoln, NE
1986	Rare Edition	Joe Gatty	Stockton, CA
1985	Silent Strings	Perry Dyer	Blanchard, OK
1984	Shampoo	Virginia Messick	Walnut Creek, CA
1983	Peachy Face	Bennett Jones	Portland, OR
1982	Pink Kitten	Vernon Wood	Pinole, CA
1981	Raspberry Blush	Melba Hamblen	Roy, UT
1980	Appleblossom Pink	Jack Boushay	Cashmere, WA
1979	Swizzle	Ben Hager	Stockton, CA
1978	Voila	Joe Gatty	Stockton, CA
1977	Vamp	Joe Gatty	Stockton, CA
1976	Sea Patrol	Cleo Palmer	Geary, OK
1975	Butterscotch Frills	Melba Hamblen	Roy, UT
1974	Little Bit Blue	Gordon Plough	Wenatchee, WA
1973	Lemon Flurry	Tell Muhlestein	Orem, UT
1972	June Prom	Alta Brown	Kirkland, WA
1971	Sing Again	Gordon Plough	Wenatchee, WA
1970	Drummer Boy	Schreiner	Salem, OR
1969	Lime Ripples	Alta Brown	Kirkland, WA
1968-M	Moonchild	Tom Craig	Escondido, CA
1967-M	Lillipinkput	Geddes Douglas	Nashville, TN
1966-M	Kiss Me Kate	Paul Cook	Bluffton, IN
1965	Cutie	Schreiner	Salem, OR
1964-A	Lillipinkput	Geddes Douglas	Nashville, TN
1963	Cloud Fluff	Wilma Greenlee	Chrisman, IL
1962	Blue Asterisk	Wilma Greenlee	Chrisman, IL

1961-A Moonchild
1960-A Kiss Me Kate

Tom Craig
Paul Cook

Escondido,CA
Bluffton, IN

The Median Iris Society sponsors the annual awarding of four medals by AIS to medians in each of the recognized classifications: SDB, IB, MTB, and BB. Note that most classifications within the AIS Awards System began with Award of Merit (AM) equivalent Awards, later elevated to Medal status. At this transition, previous Award winners from a specified period of time re-competed for the higher Medal honors. Thus there are some duplicate entries. They are designated with an "A" beside the date on which they won the AM-equivalent, and an "M" on Medal status. "T" designates a tie. Any year omitted is a year in which no award was made.