

American Iris Society: Cook-Douglas Medal-SDB

History: History item written by Clarence Mahan

This medal is restricted to standard dwarf bearded (SDB) irises. It is named in honor of Paul Cook (1891-1963) and Geddes Douglas (1902-1993).

Paul Cook was born in Indiana in 1891, and began hybridizing small fruits and sweet peas when he was a teenager. He soon was attracted to iris hybridizing, but his work was interrupted by Army service in France in WW I. Cook was a highly literate man, unpretentious but brilliant. He worked as rural mail carrier, an occupation that allowed him to have his afternoons free to work in the garden. He collected as many iris species as he could obtain and made extensive crosses to learn about iris genetics. His first tall bearded iris introduction, 'E. B. Williamson,' won the Roman Gold Medal from the Concorso Internazionale in Rome in 1938.

Because of the popularity of tall bearded irises, Paul Cook is probably best known for his revolutionary breeding, of that class of irises, and particularly for his 'Progenitor' line that is behind all of our modern dominant amoena irises and the 'Emma Cook' pattern. Three of his irises won the Dykes Memorial Medal: 'Sable Night' (1955), 'Whole Cloth' (1962) and 'Allegiance' (1964).

Paul Cook's work with dwarf irises was truly pioneering. His early breeding of dwarf irises led to a series of *I. arenaria* hybrids, the most notable being 'Keepsake,' 'Tampa,' and 'Promise.' He was the first to use the true *I. pumila* in his breeding programs, and this resulted in the introduction of the first of the great stud irises in the standard dwarf class: 'Baria,' 'Fairy Flax,' and 'Green Spot.' When the British Iris Society awarded Cook the Foster Memorial Plaque in 1957, Dr. L. F. Randolph wrote of him: "...his major contributions have been in the improvement of dwarf irises and in the utilization of species to produce a wide range of color-variations, in heights and blooming-periods ranging from the very early miniature dwarfs through the medians to very late-blooming tails."

Geddes Douglas was born in Nashville, Tennessee in 1902. Douglas was a chemist and businessman. In the early 1950's, he founded the Geddes Douglas Garden Center in Nashville. He became 'a leader in the Tennessee Nurserymen's Association, and served a term as president of the Southern Nursery Association. He was widely known in Tennessee as the horticultural commentator on a Nashville television program from 1954 to 1969.

'Francesca,' his first iris introduction came in 1934, the year he joined AIS. Phil Edinger has written that its greatest distinction was as a grandparent to Douglas 'Titian Lady,' the first tangerine-bearded white tall bearded iris, introduced in 1941. Douglas later introduced many award-winning tall bearded irises, including 'Extravaganza,' 'Amadine,' and 'Pagan Princess.'

Douglas's historically most important hybridizing achievements were with dwarf irises. Working with stock from Paul Cook, Douglas's crosses of *I. pumila* with tall bearded irises created the race of irises that came to be known as 'lilliputs.' Some of his best known standard dwarf cultivars are 'Lilliput,' 'Helen's Child,' 'Happy Thought,' 'Pigmy Gold,' and 'Dark Star.'

Geddes Douglas served the AIS in many ways. He was Editor for many years: 1946-1948 and 1950-1959, a Director from 1943 to 1948 and Secretary from 1949 to 1956. He received the Distinguished Service Medal in 1956. Geddes Douglas also edited the book on garden irises published by AIS, *The Iris, An Ideal Hardy Perennial*.

Winners List: COOK-DOUGLAS MEDAL Standard Dwarf Bearded (SDB)

2012	Bluebeard's Ghost	Paul Black	Salem, OR
2011	Fires of Fiji	Paul Black	Salem, OR
2010	Ultimate	Tom Johnson	Salem, OR
2009	Puddy Tat	Paul Black	Salem, OR
2008	Cat's Eye	Paul Black	Salem, OR
2007	Music	Keith Keppel	Salem, OR
2006	Ruby Eruption	Chuck Chapman	Guelph, ON
2005	Marksman	Marky Smith	Yakima, WA
2004	Minidragon	Marky Smith	Yakima, WA
2003	Dot Com	Bennett Jones	Portland, OR
2002	Little Blue-Eyes	John Weiler	Fresno, CA
2001	Starbaby	Marky Smith	Yakima, WA
2000	Vavoom	Allan Ensminger	Lincoln, NE
1999	Pele	Terry Aitken	Vancouver, WA
1998	Little Showoff	Earl Hall	West Alexandria, OH
1997	Bedford Lilac	Bennett Jones	Portland, OR
1996	Pumpin' Iron	Paul Black	Salem, OR
1995	Serenity Prayer	Perry Dyer	Blanchard, OK
1994	Orange Tiger	Bennett Jones	Portland, OR
1993	Dark Vader	Lynda Miller	Noblesville, IN
1992	Sun Doll	Bennett Jones	Portland, OR
1991	Chubby Cheeks	Paul Black	Salem, OR
1990	No award		
1989	Baby Blessed	Lloyd Zurbrigg	Radford, VA
1988	Raspberry Jam	Dave Niswonger	Cape Girardeau, MO
1987	Little Black Belt	Dave Niswonger	Cape Girardeau, MO
1986	Rain Dance	Bennett Jones	Portland, OR
1985	Michael Paul	Bill Jones	Oklahoma City, OK
1984	Sapphire Jewel	Melba Hamblen	Roy, UT
1983	Sapphire Gem	Hazel Schmelzer	Walla Walla, WA
1982	Starry Eyed	Joe Gatty	Stockton, CA
1981	Hocus Pocus	Ben Hager	Stockton, CA
1980	Mrs. Nate Rudolph	Harley Briscoe	White Hall, IL
1979	Kentucky Bluegrass	Bennett Jones	Portland, OR
1978	Amazon Princess	Hooker Nichols	Dallas, TX
1977	Stockholm	Bee Warburton	Westboro, MA
1976	Laced Lemonade	Bee Warburton	Westboro, MA
1975	Cotton Blossom	Bennett Jones	Portland, OR
1974	Gingerbread Man	Bennett Jones	Portland, OR
1973	Regards	Ben Hager	Stockton, CA
1972	Cherry Garden	Bennett Jones	Portland, OR
1971	Grace Note	Melba Hamblen	Roy, UT
1970	Knotty Pine	John Goett	Monroe, CT
1969-M	Brassie	Bee Warburton	Westboro, MA
1968-M	Green Spot	Paul Cook	Bluffton, IN
1967	Blueberry Muffins	Bee Warburton	Westboro, MA
1966-M	Blue Denim	Bee Warburton	Westboro, MA
1965	Easter Holiday	Jack Durrance	Denver, CO
1964	Lilli-White	Walter Welch	Middlebury, IN

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1963-A	Blue Denim	Bee Warburton	Westboro, MA
1962-A	Brassie	Bee Warburton	Westboro, MA
1961	Fairy Flax	Paul Cook	Bluffton, IN
1960	Tinkerbell	Geddes Douglas	Nashville, TN
1959-A	Green Spot	Paul Cook	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.