

# JAPANESE IRIS

Garden Judging | Exhibition Judging | Seedling Judging

Approved by the AIS Board of Directors, May 9th, 2021

Garden judging of iris is based totally on performance in the garden. A well-trained judge can immediately recognize a quality cultivar and should never reward varieties with glaring deficiencies. Japanese iris flowers are distinctly different from those of other iris classes. Japanese iris (JI) bloom at a later period than any of the other iris and they present a unique challenge to the judge.

One of the judge's responsibilities is to evaluate and encourage the work of hybridizers toward new goals. Cultivars and seedlings must exhibit healthy and vigorous plants for garden use, regardless of how beautiful the flower. No rigid rules should be allowed to limit future development. The added variations and improvements of the future can be brought about only by careful and impartial consideration in making judgments for awards.

## *Iris ensata*/Hanashobu



'Dancing Waves' (Payne 1964)

 Chad Harris



## SCALE OF POINTS

### Exhibition Judging of Introduced Japanese Iris

1. Plant				50
	a. Vigor		35	
		i. Foliage	30	
		ii. Versatility	5	
	b. Stalk		15	
		i. Proportion	5	
		ii. Branching & Bud Count	5	
		iii. Strength & Flower Support	5	
2. Flower				30
	a. Form, Substance & Proportion		20	
	b. Color, Pattern & Texture		5	
	c. Durability		5	
3. Distinctiveness				20
TOTAL				100

#### *1. Plant - 50 points*

**a. Vigor** (35 points). This is the single most important set of points in the scale. Regardless of size, a plant with commendable vigor will be a good grower, a reliable bloomer and produce many flowers. No iris should receive an award unless it has vigor.

i. Foliage (30 points). Japanese foliage can be blue-green or yellowish green. It can be upright or fountain-like, but each must be vigorous and in good proportion to the stalks, disease resistant, virus free and attractive through the growing seasons. In general, blue-green upright foliage will be the most trouble free.

ii. Versatility (5 points). Versatile iris will grow in many soil and climatic conditions.



'Carol Johnson (Mc Ewen 2005)

 Chad Harris

**b. Stalk (15 points).**

i. Proportion (5 points). As judge in the garden, height should be in good proportion to the size of the plant and flowers, with the flower carried above the foliage. The stalk should be neither too tall or too low to display the flower to best advantage, consistent with its size and particular form.

ii. Branching & Bud Count (5 points). The bud count for a clump depends both on branching and on the number of bloom stalks produced. It should not be judged on branching alone. Any branches present should be spaced so that the individual flowers are properly displayed. Preferably only one flower should open at a time.

iii. Strength & Flower Support (5 points). The stalk should be reasonably straight and sufficiently strong to keep the flower erect, regardless of size, during ordinary weather conditions. The flower should be held firmly attached in an upright position.

## *2. Flower - 30 points*

**a. Form, Substance & Proportion** (20 points). These qualities are grouped because they cannot be easily separated. The many different forms of flower parts must be harmonious, pleasing and in good proportion. Any unusual arrangement of flower parts must be attractive as well as distinctive. Single types and the various double forms are all equally desirable. At present there are (a) three-fall types or singles; (b) six-fall types; and (c) multiple petal types (nine-petal, twelve-petal, etc.). The style arms may be vertical or in graceful arches, or they may be fully converted to petals. The anthers may be conventional, may have petal-like extensions, or they may be converted to petals. There may also be extra petaloids. Standards may be large or small or converted into falls. They may be vertical or angled, plain or fancy. Whichever they are, the standards must be consistent. Falls may be tailored, ruffled or fluted. They may be wide and horizontal or arching downward. Falls must be graceful and in good proportion with the rest of the flower. Because the fall is the largest area of color, anything (such as narrow falls, recurved falls or prominent holes in the top of the flower) which limits the show of color should be penalized. Signals can be large or small, sharp or diffuse. Currently the size of a Japanese flower may vary from 3 to 10 inches (8 to 24 cm). All of these sizes are good if they are in good proportion with the plant. The substance, whether heavy or light, must hold the form.

**b. Color, Pattern & Texture** (5 points). All colors must be clear and pleasing. New colors should be encouraged whether they come from chromosome mutation or genetic engineering. As the flower grows, the color may lighten, but it must remain clear, pleasing and harmonious. Japanese iris have a wide variety of patterns, including selfs, veining, rays, bicolors, marbled, splashed, blends, shading, sanding, etc. All of these are encouraged but must be harmonious. Texture, a surface feature, is variable in Japanese iris, including velvety, satiny, creped and smooth. Texture may greatly enhance the color and richness of the flower. Signals are another source of color pattern and texture.

**c. Durability** (5 points). Flowers must have the ability to resist heat, rain and other stresses and to remain fresh at least two days. A flower that does not have durability when judged against other varieties in a garden should be penalized. The durability is a genetically determined factor. However, temperature, water and nutrient availability, as well as sunlight intensity, all affect the life expectancy of the flower. High temperatures may cut the flower life in half.

## *3. Distinctiveness - 20 points*

Distinctiveness is a combination of flower qualities that gives a flower charm and sets it apart from others. Distinctiveness may be a new color, a new pleasing pattern, a new harmonious combination of colors, a new graceful form, a new pleasing texture, a new size, more floriferousness, more durability, a different bloom season, a longer season, more flexible growing conditions, or more disease resistance. In any case, the distinctiveness must be an improvement.





## EXHIBITION JUDGING

---

### Horticultural Entries of Japanese Iris

---

Exhibition judging of iris is distinctly different from judging in the garden. On the show bench a judge is not trying to determine the qualities and attributes of a particular variety. Rather, the exhibition judge must pass judgement in two areas:

1. Cultural perfection - how well the specimen has been grown by comparing it to the maximum typical performance of the variety being judged.
2. Condition and grooming - how well the specimen was prepared for entry into the exhibition.

Exhibition judging evaluates the specimen as it is shown at the moment the judge sees it.



'Blushing Snowmaiden' (Chad Harris 2000)

 Chad Harris

Because of the height of Japanese iris, the show chair is encouraged to stage them on lower tables so they can be viewed more comfortably.

Point scales are used to encourage consistent evaluation of specimens on the show bench. Swift and quality performance is demanded of the exhibition judge, making it impractical to point score every entry. The point scale is useful to the student judge in learning the special requirements of the class. It is especially useful in selecting the best specimen of the show. Consistency must be observed in judging all classes.

## SCALE OF POINTS

---

### Exhibition Judging of Horticultural Japanese Iris

---

1. Cultural Perfection				75
	a. Flower		50	
		i. Form & Substance	35	
		ii. Color	15	
	b. Stalk		25	
		i. Proportion, Balance & Form	15	
		ii. Attachment of Flowers	10	
2. Condition & Grooming				25
TOTAL				100

### I. Cultural Perfection – 75 points

In Japanese iris the height, branching, flower size, etc., are greatly influenced by culture. Cultural perfection is growing the iris to its greatest potential.

#### a. Flower (50 points).

i. Form & Substance (35 points). Form is determined by a combination of the shapes of the flower parts, relative sizes of those parts to each other (proportion), and the position in which they are held in relation to each other. In a cultivar show the form should be characteristic for the particular cultivar.

Substance is the inner tissue structure which determines and sustains the form and color of the flower. Lack of substance causes degeneration of characteristic flower form as well as fading or streaking of color.

ii. Color (15 points). Color should be characteristic for the well-grown cultivar. It must be recognized that Japanese iris are unique in that as they mature they change in form and color. The color of a mature specimen, if characteristic, is to be considered as valid as the color of the first day bloom.

#### b. Stalk (25 points).

i. Proportion, Balance & Form (15 points). Proportion of the stalk to bloom is a characteristic of the cultivar. As the culture is improved, the stalk becomes taller and the flowers become larger and branching may increase. More than one open bloom should not be penalized so long as the blooms are displayed effectively and do not destroy the overall grace and balance of the stalk. The form of the stalk should be straight for most cultivars.

ii. Attachment of Flowers (10 points). Flowers must be firmly attached in an upright position.



---

## 2. Condition and Grooming – 25 points

---

The skills of the exhibitor are evaluated here. The exhibit should reflect visible improvement in the flower and stem resulting from the exhibitor's grooming. This includes neat removal of diseased or damaged foliage; cleanliness of the stem and flower; absence of insect infestations; firm upright positioning of the specimen; facing of the specimen; and a neat removal of spent blossoms, including the ovaries, with no damage to the spathes. The result should be a specimen being presented in its best possible appearance.

A judge may encounter trickery such as pinning or taping of flower parts, flower replacement from another stem, splicing of stems, unattached leaves or leaf spathes, cracking of stems to make them appear straighter, or hidden supports and wedges. If any such alterations are found, the entry is to be disqualified from competition.

## EXHIBITION JUDGING

---

### Japanese Iris Seedlings

---


In judging seedling classes, judges should remember that they are not seeking a superior horticultural specimen as defined in horticultural judging. Rather, they are judging a new cultivar which not only conforms to the guidelines for the class, but exhibits desirable qualities comprising improvement and/or innovation. Condition is not a factor in judging seedlings. In fact, it is preferable that the stalks are not groomed, so that the judge can more easily evaluate such features as branching and bud count. Spent flowers can be removed if done so that the ovary remains visible.

The Exhibition Certificate (EC) is awarded to the Best Seedling if one is chosen. The certificate is not a recommendation for introduction since on the show bench it is not possible to evaluate plant qualities. The Best Seedling Award should not be given if no entry is worthy. Exhibition Certificates are also awarded to seedlings that receive votes from at least five judges on special seedling ballots. Judges visiting a show are urged to review the seedling entries and use these ballots to reward excellence where they find it.





'Caprican Butterfly' (Marx by Rodgers 1985)

 Chad Harris

## SCALE OF POINTS

### Exhibition Judging of Japanese Iris Seedlings

1. Distinctiveness					25
2. Flower					50
	a. Form			30	
		i. Substance	10		
		ii. Proportion	20		
	b. Color, Pattern & Texture			20	
3. Stalk					25
	a. Proportion			5	
	b. Attachment of Flowers			5	
	c. Overall Grace & Balance			5	
	d. Branching & Bud Count			5	
	e. Strength			5	
TOTAL					100

### 1. Distinctiveness - 25 points

It is important to reward the hybridizer who is doing something to advance Japanese iris.

Distinctiveness is a combination of flower qualities that gives a particular flower charm and sets it apart from others. This could be a graceful new form, a new clear color, a new pattern, a pleasing texture or any combination that makes it distinct.

### 2. Flower - 50 points

Since the exhibition judge cannot see the plant, judging emphasis is placed more on the flower than in garden judging.

**a. Form** (30 points). Even though we have divided this into substance (10 points) and proportion (20 points) in the scale of points, it is impossible to separate them completely. Form is determined by a combination of the shapes of the flower parts, relative size of those parts to each other (proportion), and the position in which they are held in relation to each other. Substance is the inner tissue structure which supports the form. All forms must be pleasing, and any unusual arrangement of flower parts must be attractive as well as distinctive. Single types and the various double forms are all equally desirable.

**b. Color, Pattern & Texture** (20 points). All colors must be clear and pleasing. New colors should be encouraged. Japanese iris have the most diversity of pattern of any iris. All should be encouraged, but they must be harmonious. Textures are determined by the surface layer of cells of the flower. They include velvety, waxy, smooth, creped, etc. New textures should be encouraged, but they must be pleasing.

---

### 3. Stalk - 25 points

---

**a. Proportion** (5 points). The size of the flower needs to look as if it belongs to the stalk.

**b. Attachment of Flowers** (5 points). A seedling should be penalized if the flowers are not held upright.

**c. Overall Grace & Balance** (5 points).

**d. Branching & Bud Count** (5 points). Iris seedlings may extend the bloom season by more buds per stalk or more stalks per plant. But the seedlings can only be evaluated on the show bench for buds on the stalk. If the seedling is branched, the branches should be well spaced and pleasing in appearance.

**e. Strength** (5 points). The stalk must have enough strength to easily hold up the flowers.

# Handbook For Judges and Show Officials



## Edition 8.0

---

**Note:** This chapter and others from the *Handbook for Judges* are available online. It is recommended that judges and other readers check out the Introduction and Table of Contents in the full version of the *Handbook* in order to know the full list of available resources, e.g., Glossary, essays, Judge's Activity Record, etc.

---