

# Handbook For Judges and Show Officials

## Ch 11 SDB Iris



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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.

## Chapter 11

### STANDARD DWARF BEARDED IRIS

Approved by the AIS Board of Directors, February 9, 2021

**Definition:** Plants 8 to 16 inches (21 to 40 cm) in height; blooms up to, but not including, 4 inches (10 cm) wide; flowers with a combined width and height between 3.4 and 6.8 inches (8.6 and 17.2 cm); stems branched or unbranched, usually with two or more terminal buds; leaves essentially erect and no taller than the height of the bloom stalk; bloom season generally after the peak of the miniature dwarf bearded iris and before the peak of the intermediate bearded iris, but they can bloom earlier or later. There is no preference for time of bloom since the goal is to have the longest bloom season possible.



Width

Height

Minimum overall size: Width + Height = 3.4 inches (8.6 cm)

Maximum overall size: Width + Height = 6.8 inches (17.2 cm)

All measurements taken with the SDB flower in its natural position.

Traditional SDBs produce short clumps with flowers just above the foliage and three to four buds. These must be judged on their own merit and rewarded for their normal and usual performance.

Advancements in SDB breeding over the past 20 or so years have come partly from the use of intermediate bearded iris and more recently from *Iris aphylla*, *I. junonia*, and a few diploids. It is imperative to recognize the impact of this introduction on the class and to accept and reward that diversity. As an example, smaller flowered varieties on diminutive stalks should be evaluated

as equal to traditionally sized varieties. These advances mean that it is now possible to have stalks with two or three branches and eight to ten or more buds. While multiple open flowers on a traditional SDB stalk can cause crowding and a messy clump, newer SDB types can open multiple blooms to advantage because of the wider and better spaced branching. Foliage must remain short in order that all flowers are shown to advantage.

## GARDEN JUDGING Introduced Varieties & Seedlings of SDB Iris

Garden judging of standard dwarf bearded (SDB) iris must be done on two- or three-year clumps because first year plants are not likely to be representative of the variety. In the SDB class, considerable variations in flower form are acceptable and numerous stems per clump are expected. Flowers are smaller than those grown on intermediate, border or tall bearded iris and should be in proportion to their own stem height. SDBs should be very free-blooming and withstand adverse weather conditions better than most classes of iris. Because of their diverse parentage and the effects of weather in warmer and colder climates, some SDBs display unusual growth habits. For example, some have an initial bloom at under 8 inches with subsequent stems reaching 9 to 11 inches followed by blooms at 12 to 13 inches and a final wave of bloom at 14 to 15 inches. As this extends the bloom season, this characteristic should be rewarded. In this type of SDB the height for classification purposes should be determined at mid-season, when the clump is at peak bloom. In all phases of bloom, the flowers must remain above the foliage.

The following scale of points should be used only as a guideline in weighing the comparative importance of plant and flower characteristics. It can be a great help in acquiring judging skills and practice judging.

## SCALE OF POINTS

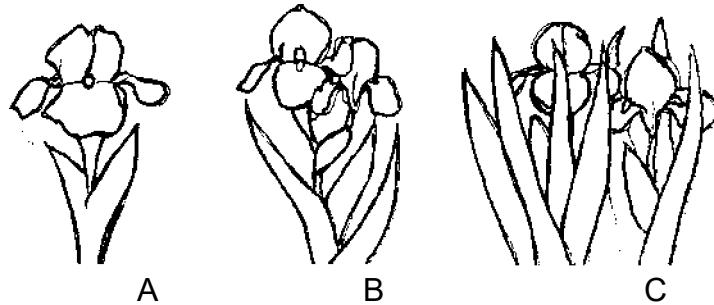
### Garden Judging of Introduced and Seedling SDB Iris

1. Proportion			20
2. Flower			40
	a. Color & Finish	15	
	b. Form	15	
	c. Substance & Durability	10	
3. Floriferousness			15
4. Foliage & Plant			10
5. Distinctiveness			15
TOTAL			100

#### 1. Proportion - 20 points

In judging the standard dwarf bearded (SDB) iris, the judge must consider the proportion of the plant at all times. Flower, stalk, foliage and clump must be evaluated together. Foliage should be no taller than the lowest flower on the stalk. The larger the entire plant, the more the flowers should rise above the foliage. Thick stalks are not appropriate on small plants. Foliage width and thickness should be proportional with its height. With the large variation permitted in both height of the stalk and width of the flower, it is essential that they be in proportion. While a 3.9-inch flower on an 8.3-inch stalk is definitely outsize, a 2-inch flower on a 15.75-inch stalk might be considered out of proportion. If enough smaller flowers are present to create an acceptable mass of color, then there should be no penalty. The rule-of-thumb is a stalk height should be 3.75 to 4 times the width of the flower. Thus a 2.5-inch wide bloom on a 9.5-inch stalk, a 3-inch wide bloom on an 11.5-inch stalk, or the maximum 3.9-inch bloom on a 15.75-inch stalk would be considered to have good proportion. Additionally, the size of the flowers should be in harmony with the size and type of foliage. A very dainty flower on a tall stem with thick foliage is as out of place as a large flower on a delicate stem with minute foliage.

Absence of good overall proportion should be severely penalized and precludes it from receiving any awards. Iris larger than the maximum limits are not to be considered for awards.



Three common faults in standard dwarf iris.

- A. Flowers too large for stem height.
- B. Crowding of flowers.
- C. Flowers obscured by foliage (stalks too short and/or foliage too tall).

## 2. Flower - 40 points

As with other classes, standard dwarf bearded iris are garden and landscape plants and should be viewed both close up and from a distance. They should be judged from both perspectives.

**a. Color** (15 points). The color and pattern are major components of the total impact of the iris. Both should be viewed from a distance for overall garden effect and from close up for clarity, color distribution and saturation, and pattern. Spot, halo, plicata markings, haft markings, beards, and style arm color should be considered and evaluated from both close up and far away. Patterns should be distinctive and contrasts well defined. Gradual blending from color to color is different from a pattern and can be attractive. Soft and pastel colors are needed, as well as bright primary colors. Markings on the hafts or shoulders should be harmonious. Coarse markings or unpleasant color contrasts detract from the total effect. Extraordinary beard color can add substantially to the distinctiveness of the SDB iris. Finish (texture) is a surface condition of the flower and contributes to the effect of color. Smooth, silky, velvety and waxy surfaces contribute.

**b. Form** (15 points). Standards may be open, arched or domed, provided they are displayed neatly and precisely. The midrib of the standard must be sufficiently strong to keep the standard in its position and not permit it to flop. Open or erect standards should not collapse. Flaring or horizontal or arched falls display the color and pattern of the SDB iris to advantage. The falls should be relatively wide, but variations are acceptable if the form is pleasing. Neither narrow hafts with long parallel sides nor pinched or tucked falls are acceptable forms. Ruffled and tailored forms are personal preferences, and neither should be overemphasized or disregarded, because either could be used as an excuse to overlook any basic faults of the flower. Overly flared or cupped falls are not acceptable since they distort the flower form and diminish the amount of color in the garden.

**c. Substance and Durability** (10 points). Since the standard dwarf iris can bloom early, the weather often is variable, with late frosts, rain, wind, and sun combining to provide a severe environment for the iris. Substance (tissue structure) in the standards and falls provides the crispness, stiffness and toughness to endure inclement weather beginning with the flower's opening bud to the completion of its bloom; and permitting it to fade out gracefully and not disintegrate into a shapeless blob. Thin, transparent or watery appearance is not acceptable for a good iris.

### 3. Floriferousness - 15 points

Because the standard dwarf iris traditionally has only three buds per bloom stalk, several stalks are necessary in a normal size clump to produce an acceptable garden effect. More stalks with fewer buds to each stem are acceptable if the buds bloom sequentially, giving an adequate period of bloom. Stems with only one or two blooms that quickly finish blooming should be penalized. Some varieties have more than two terminal buds and a bud on a branch or spur. If these flowers bloom sequentially, do not crowd other blooms and are not obscured by foliage, this should extend the length of bloom season and should be rewarded. An established (two- or three-year) clump should have a bloom period of at least 10 to 15 days. Individual blooms on newer varieties should last for three days. Allowances should be made in hot, windy climates that can substantially reduce this expected norm.

#### 4. Foliage and plant - 10 points

Foliage should be dense and in proportion to stems and flowers. Stalks should be sturdy but not coarse. The flowers should be at or above the tips of the leaves. Coarse, overwide or untidy growth detracts from the garden effect and is unacceptable. Good color and disease resistance are essential. At least a third and no more than two-thirds of fans should bloom, which leaves sufficient fans in the clump to ensure continuation of the plant. A tendency to bloom out is a serious fault.

#### 5. Distinctiveness - 15 points

Distinctiveness is one of the major features that attract attention. Poise, personality, proportion, charm, color and pattern combine with form to produce that distinctiveness. Color breaks, exotic patterns and new forms are distinctive and often desirable. However, they must never be rewarded at the expense of the basic qualities of beauty, grace and charm. Distinctiveness must not override the basic requirement of meeting the class specification.

## EXHIBITION JUDGING

### Horticultural Entries of SDB 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.

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 SDB Iris

1. Cultural Perfection					75
	a. Flower			55	
		i. Proportion	15		
		ii. Color & Finish	20		
		iii. Form	10		
		iv. Substance	10		
	b. Stalk			20	
		i. Proportion & Branching	10		
		ii. Number of Buds & Blooms	10		
2. Condition & Grooming					25
TOTAL					100

#### 1. Cultural Perfection - 75 points

**a. Flower** (55 points). The flower should show pleasing proportion of all component parts as well as proper size for the stalk. The color should be clear, clean and typical of the variety, although some variation may be noted because of soil conditions or weather. A judge should use great caution when considering a disqualification of what they perceive as a misnamed variety. Weather and soil conditions can cause marked shifts in the color of SDBs. Late frosts can cause much lighter than normal colors, particularly in the blue, purple and violet range. Plicata markings also can vary markedly, sometimes within the same clump. Some flowers might have few markings, while others are almost completely marked overall. Form should be the best possible for the variety. The flower should have a typical substance for the variety being judged.

**b. Stalk** (20 points). The stalk should be typical for the variety and may be branched or unbranched, but height should be proportionate to flower size. Unbranched specimens are best displayed with one open flower and a bud. Branched stalks may have one open flower plus a mature bud, or two or more open flowers, provided they are well spaced and not bunched or out of proportion.

## 2. Condition and grooming - 25 points

The specimen should be well grown with no evidence of disease, damage or insect infestation. The stalk should be clean with all old, fading or damaged blooms inconspicuously removed. Leaves on the stem and spathes should not be removed but may be neatly trimmed into their natural shape. The flowers should be fresh and fully open with no abnormalities, signs of aging or mechanical damage. Partially opened blooms should be penalized, because their true form, color and substance are not accurately represented.

## EXHIBITION JUDGING SDB Iris Seedlings

In judging seedling classes, judges should remember that they are not seeking a superior horticultural specimen. But rather 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 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.

**SCALE OF POINTS**  
**Exhibition Judging of SDB Iris Seedlings**

1. Flower			80
	a. Proportion	20	
	b. Color & Finish	20	
	c. Form	15	
	d. Substance	10	
	e. Distinctiveness	15	
2. Stalk			20
TOTAL			100

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