

# Handbook For Judges and Show Officials

## Ch 16 Pacific Coast 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 peruse 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 16

### PACIFIC COAST IRIS

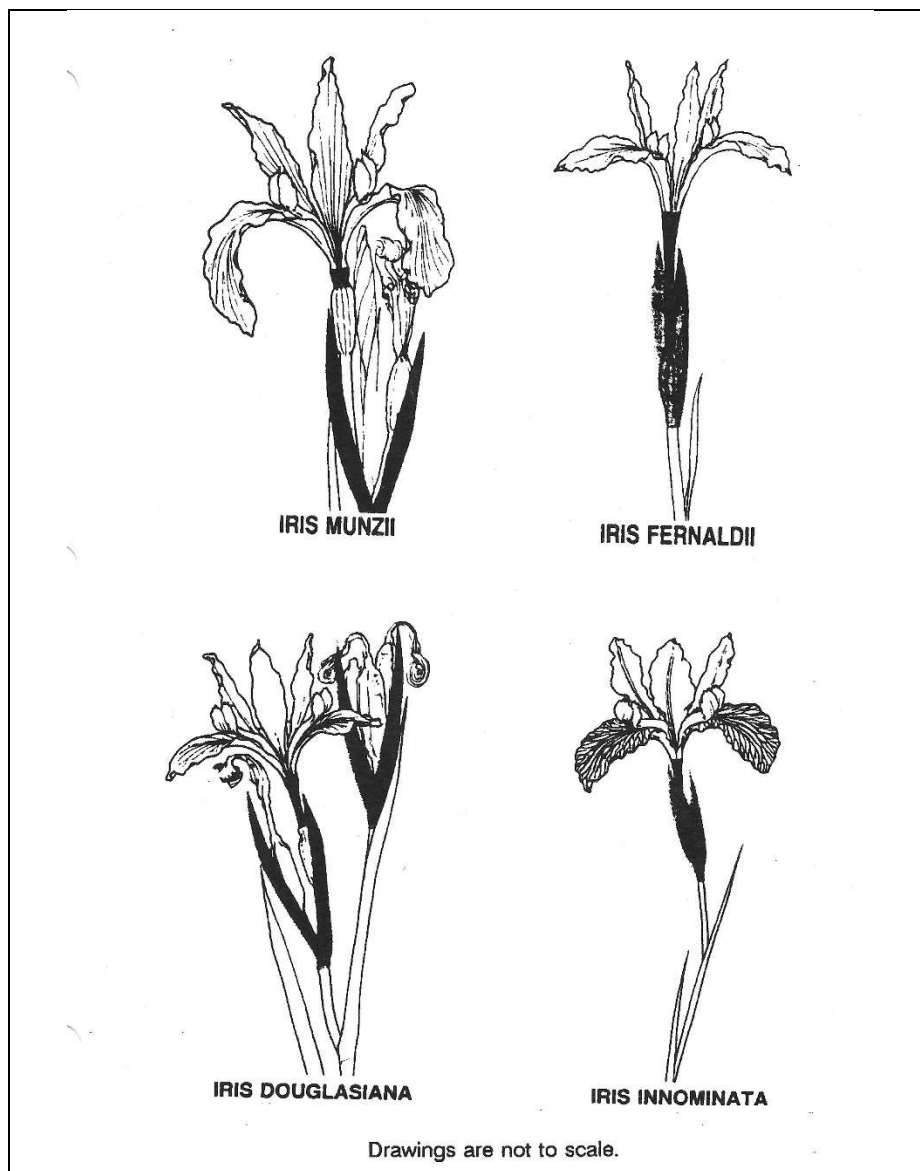
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Any assessment of the Pacific Coast Iris (PCI) must be made with an awareness of the characteristics of the primary species used in the development of the modern hybrids and of the improvements that have occurred in the group during recent years. Foliage which is attractive at all stages of growth is now common. Hybridizers working in this field have produced numerous hybrids which are improved garden plants.

The most common hybrids are derived primarily from *Iris douglasiana* and *Iris innominata*, however, other species such as *I. tenax*, *I. munzii*, and *I. fernaldii* can be found in the heritage of some PCIs. Continued breeding with these hybrids is creating other noteworthy colors and patterns as well as a more even distribution of color types within the range of clump size and height.

For example, the plicata pattern is now firmly established in the PCI. Hybridizers are producing colors that approach pink and orange. Tall yellows are now a reality. (Remember that early hybrids of the golden yellow *Iris innominata* were, almost always, of small stature.) There are diminutive purples and reds. Hybridizers are working towards producing petite blues. Colors are becoming clearer and cleaner and the range has expanded with darker tones reaching new intensities. Signals and eye spots have become more clearly and attractively defined or minimized or eliminated. Overall striping and veining, such as red-violet over a golden yellow base and purple veining over a white base, have been extended to additional colors of the spectrum.

The PCI appear in a never-ending variety of sizes and forms. Line drawings of the flower of six of the species have been included to illustrate the range of form and bud placement in the species. The goal is to retain the diverse characteristics and charm of the species while producing attractive and easy to grow garden plants.



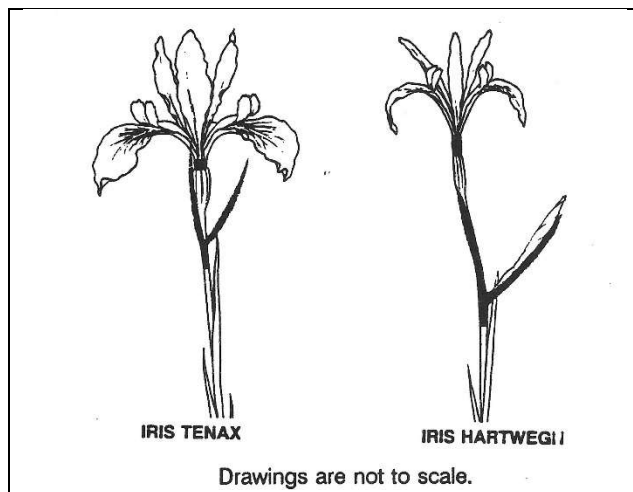
Two tactics are being used to extend the range over which the PCI can be grown.

1) Incorporating the genotype of some of the little used species into the gene pool of the modern hybrids such as the deciduous species *Iris tenax* for the purpose of increasing cold hardiness and *Iris macrosiphon* and *Iris munzii* for increasing the tolerance for hot summers.

2) Growing PCIs from hybrid seed in unfavorable climatic zones and using the survivors to produce hybrids adapted to the climate and soil conditions of that area.

It is the duty of the judge to reward advancements in this diverse group that produce especially attractive and garden-worthy plants. The judge is cautioned that no garden

award should be voted for a PCI on the basis of the performance of a clump in a single bloom season or year. In particular, the judge should remember that first year plants do not always perform in a manner typical for the variety. Some plants will be slow to establish or might have sparse or undersized first year bloom. The judge should evaluate only well-established clumps and over several seasons.



## GARDEN JUDGING

### Introduced Cultivars of PCI

The Society for Pacific Coast Native Iris adopted criteria for judging this group of iris but did not establish a point scale for garden judging.

**1. Plant.** The plant should be vigorous and hardy in the areas where the Pacific Coast Iris thrive. Plants which thrive beyond this normal growing area are especially desirable, provided they can produce an attractive garden effect. Plants should be resistant to diseases and to transplanting difficulties. It is a disservice to reward a plant that is a difficult garden subject. Once established, the plant should bloom reliably every year and should be able to withstand adverse weather conditions, including excessive heat, cold, wind and moisture.

**2. Foliage.** Except for the deciduous species and their hybrids, the foliage should remain attractive throughout the year, varying in size from extremely low and narrow (under six inches) to broad and tall (up to 3.5 feet tall). The foliage might be stiff and upright or gracefully arching. Foliage that is not uniform in appearance, is sparse, or

produces a twisted looking clump should be penalized. Dead foliage and spent bloom stalks should be easy to remove without damaging the still growing portions of the plant. Judges are encouraged to evaluate foliage both when the plant is in bloom and at other times of the year, particularly in late summer when the foliage has reached maximum growth for the season.

**3. Habit.** The plant should form a neat clump. Those with wandering tendencies or overly compact form should be faulted. The plant should be sturdy and floriferous, producing a few well-branched stems or many unbranched stems. Ideally, each bloom should be displayed such that the flower can be viewed without interference from its neighbors, yet the clump should present a pleasing mass of color when viewed from a distance in the garden. A long bloom period is preferred. A short, sparse bloom season should always be faulted. A good modern hybrid should give a minimum of two weeks of bloom each spring on established clumps. A shorter bloom period should disqualify the variety for consideration for AIS garden awards. In mild coastal climates, the variety should bloom readily under sunny conditions or in partial shade. In hot summer climates, the variety should bloom reliably when planted in partial or deciduous shade.

**4. Stem.** The size and length of the stem should be in pleasing proportion to the size of the flower it supports. Branching that creates a top-heavy, loose or relaxed appearance is heavily faulted as are snaking stems. Stems should always hold the flower away from the ground and at the top or above the foliage. Crowding of bloom stems or crowding of flowers on a branched stem is a serious fault. Ideally, each stem should bear a minimum of two buds. The exceptions are *Iris innominata* and *I. tenax*, which may often have one bud per stem, but display many stems per clump. Additional credit should be given if there are more buds or additional bloom stalks which open in sequence to extend the season.

**5. Flower.** The size of the flower should be in proportion to the foliage and stem. A small flower on a plant with large, broad foliage is to be faulted as is a large flower above narrow, grass-like foliage. The larger the flower, the more color it will project. However, width and size of flower parts is of little value unless other desirable traits are present. Large flowers, with wide floral parts can be just as appealing as smaller flowers with a dainty and graceful shape. Shape and color contribute to the aesthetic value more than size alone.

Standards may be erect or spreading toward the horizontal, but they should never flop. Substance in all flower parts is of utmost importance. Ruffling and the more tailored forms are both acceptable, but neither should alter the flower's basic form. The flower should endure harsh weather conditions without losing its form. The flower should open

fully under all normal weather conditions. Twisted or distorted flowers are to be faulted. Varieties whose flowers are distorted by not being able to clear the spathes or which need help coming out of the spathes should also be faulted.

Color may vary from almost pure selfs with no visible signal area to patterns with elaborate and intricate veining, contrasting style arms and eye spots or blazes. All are acceptable, if pleasing to the eye. Variety in color patterns is encouraged. Subtle coloring is as desirable as the vivid and vibrant. Streaking occurs occasionally and should not be penalized unless it detracts. Colors should not fade. Dirty or muddy coloring is a fault.

## GARDEN JUDGING

### PCI Seedlings

The judge should identify those seedlings which represent significant advances in color, color combinations, form, size, good growth and bloom habits. Therefore, the judge must be familiar with introduced varieties already available. The judge should be aware of what color patterns are common and what colors or color combinations and patterns represent an innovation or advancement. Special attention should be given to the overall effect of the clump and foliage as well as the form, substance, color, color pattern and size of the bloom. Distinctiveness is a plus. Large flowers are appealing if in proportion to the plant and stem. Equal consideration should also be given to the development of the dwarf types from *Iris innominata*. Only genuine and solid advances should be encouraged.

## EXHIBITION JUDGING Horticultural Entries of PCI

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 PCI

1. Cultural Perfection			75
	Flower & Stem		
2. Condition & Grooming			25
TOTAL			100

1. **Cultural Perfection** (75 points). To receive full points, the color, form, size and substance of the bloom or blooms should be typical for the variety. Special merit is not given to stems with multiple open flowers unless this is typical of the variety being judged. Conversely, varieties which typically branch should not receive a first-place award unless the full stalk, including the branches, is displayed. Stems of many varieties, particularly those from the edge of an established clump, may curve such that the terminal flower is displayed in a tilted position. If this is typical of the variety, it



should not be faulted on the show bench. Foliage should be present (not stripped from the stalk), typical for the variety and healthy in appearance. The vast majority of Pacific Coast Iris have deep green or blue green foliage, not yellow-green.

**2. Condition and Grooming (25 points).** The skills of the exhibitor are evaluated here. The specimen 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.

Foliage that has been neatly trimmed to eliminate the brown tips that commonly occur in areas of alkaline soil or water or to minimize the visual effect of rust, slug, snail or insect damage is acceptable so long as the natural leaf shape is maintained.

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

### PCI Species & Natural Hybrids

The judge should be familiar with various species, subspecies and the more common natural hybrids. Judges should review their general characteristics before judging commences. It should be noted that each cultivar may exhibit considerable variation, especially if unregistered.

## SCALE OF POINTS

### Exhibition Judging of PCI Species & Natural Hybrids

1. Cultural Perfection					75
	a. Flower			65	
		i. Color	20		
		ii. Form	20		
		iii. Substance	15		
		iv. Size	10		
	b. Stem			10	
2. Condition & Grooming					25
TOTAL					100

#### 1. Cultural Perfection – 75 points

**a. Flower** (65 points). The flower should display a pleasing color or combination of colors. Usually, a clear or strong color for a particular species should be rewarded. Form should be appealing and consistent with the species, although pleasing variations are acceptable. Substance and size should be typical of the variety and any improved hybrid is to be awarded.

**b. Stem** (10 points). The stem should be typical for the species and credit should be given for the best examples within species limits. Species which are normally stemless or nearly so, should not be penalized. Flowers held at an odd angle indicate a stem that leans or tends to snake and should be seriously faulted unless that characteristic is typical of the species or natural hybrid.

#### 2. Condition and Grooming – 25 points

The specimen should be fresh, clean and without blemish or damage. It should be well groomed and have no sign of insect infestation.

## EXHIBITION JUDGING PCI 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 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 in a calendar year at AIS approved shows. 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 PCI Seedlings

1. Flower			80
	a. Color	20	
	b. Form	20	
	c. Substance	20	
	d. Proportion	10	
	e. Distinctiveness	10	
2. Stem			20
TOTAL			100

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Notes for Ch 16 PCI