

Handbook For Judges and Show Officials

Ch 6 Organizing the Iris Show



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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 view 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 6

AN IRIS SHOW: Organizing & Presenting

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

An iris show has its beginning when a group of interested people decides to sponsor a show under the auspices of the American Iris Society (AIS). There are no requirements concerning the identity of such a group or organization. It may be a region, a local society, a garden club, or an informal group of interested persons. The important qualification is that they are willing to be governed by the official show rules and regulations of the American Iris Society (refer to “Rules and Regulations of an Iris Show,” Chapter 4.)

The first item of business for the sponsoring group is to set the date and to select the location for the proposed show. The group should also project anticipated expenses and make arrangements for necessary financing. It is also the responsibility of this group to select a general show chair or two co-chairs. The general chair could be selected first in order to work closely with the sponsoring group in making the initial decisions.

The remainder of this chapter is a discussion of the major areas of responsibility involved in planning, organizing, and presenting an iris show. It should be kept in mind that show size varies greatly from location to location, as does the number of willing workers available for the various assignments. These items will affect the manner in which the major responsibilities are grouped and assigned to committees.

The number of committees may be consolidated or expanded to fit the circumstances peculiar to any given show. However, in order to stage a smoothly running, successful show, it is necessary to determine if one person will cover a single function or if it is to be divided among several people. The American Iris Society has not set rigid rules for governing the organization of a show or the assignment of various responsibilities. However, the following guidelines have proven successful over many years. Show Committees should feel free to adapt them to the needs and requirements of their local group.

SHOW CHAIR

The show chair has the ultimate responsibility for the success of all phases of the show from inception to cleanup. Major areas of responsibility are delegation, supervision, and coordination. The chair also has the responsibility for staffing the show committees with capable and willing workers and furnishing clear and concise descriptions of the tasks assigned to the respective committees. The show chair monitors progress on a continuing basis, offering advice, instruction and assistance when needed. On the day of the show, the chair is responsible for keeping the activities moving on a planned schedule and is available during setup, entries and judging for consultation on any problems that might arise. It is also the responsibility of the show chair or person appointed by the chair to complete and file the show report. The show chair has the final authority, within the limits set by the AIS and the show schedule, in all matters pertaining to the show.

SCHEDULE

The Schedule Committee is responsible for writing the schedule of the show. The “Rules and Regulations of an Iris Show” should be studied carefully before drafting the schedule. The final draft must be sent to the AIS exhibition schedules chair at least two months prior to the date of the show. Once approved by the AIS exhibition schedules chair, the show schedule must be distributed to the show judges and should be made available to committee chairs, the general membership, potential exhibitors and local garden clubs.

SECRETARY and AWARDS

The secretary/awards chair keeps the records of the show and handles all necessary correspondence. This person also is responsible for ordering and dispensing all exhibition supplies and awards, including the Exhibition Certificate (EC) ballots for the seedlings. Care should be taken to see that all judges (those judging the show and any judges who might be visiting the show) have access to these ballots. When judging has been completed, the secretary/awards chair is responsible for making necessary tallies to determine the winners of the Silver and Bronze Medals and other awards that require a tally. A copy of the final

show schedule and all EC ballots (regardless of the number of votes received by any one seedling) must be included with the show report submitted to the AIS exhibition reports chair.

The secretary/awards chair is responsible for any publicity releases planned by the Show Committee or publicity chair.

STAGING

The major function of the Staging Committee is to display the entries and exhibits in the most attractive manner possible. The arrangement of the display area should be carefully planned to provide an overall impression of order and beauty.

A floor plan prepared in advance will save time when setting up the show. Tables should be arranged in a way that provides easy access for judges and a smooth flow of visitors. Aisles should be wide so that a person stopping to study an exhibit does not block the passage of others. Dead-end aisles should be avoided if at all possible.

Division of space should be balanced between the anticipated number of horticultural and artistic entries. In general, the artistic design division should occupy less than half of the exhibition space. Horticultural specimens should be displayed in uniform containers. Sections and groups should be arranged in the same order as listed in the schedule. The Best Specimen of Show and major winning exhibits should be separately displayed in a prominent location.

An area at the show should be set up to display and distribute free literature about the AIS and be staffed by someone who can provide further AIS information and membership applications. Affiliate, section and regional information and membership applications also should be available. Other iris culture information may also be available.

PROPERTIES

The Properties and Staging Committees must work closely together. For a small show the Properties and Staging Committees could be consolidated. Major responsibilities include:

1. Securing all properties and materials necessary for staging the show.

2. Transporting the properties from the storage location prior to the show.
3. Dismantling, packing, inventorying and returning properties to the storage location after the show.
4. Making any required construction or decorations for the show.

ENTRY AND PLACEMENT

The Entry and Placement Committee receives all qualified entries and assures that they are properly placed on the show bench. Careful and proper placement is of vital importance to the exhibitors and the judges. In the Horticulture Division, entries should be placed by a member of the committee. Each variety is placed by name in alphabetical order. In the artistic design division, exhibitors should place their own entries in the designated space.

Entry tags should be checked for correctness and completeness, then folded to conceal the identity of the exhibitor. For horticultural entries, tags are fastened to the container by the exhibitor to indicate the direction of placement on the bench. For artistic entries, tags are placed by the exhibitor next to the entry.

This Committee may designate an entry clerk who is responsible for recording entries in the method adopted for the show as well as making certain that limitations imposed by the schedule are followed by the exhibitors.

CLASSIFICATION

The responsibilities of the Classification Committee fall into two areas: horticultural and artistic.

1. The Horticultural Classification Committee members should be able to recognize many types and varieties of iris and make sure each iris has been entered in the correct class. However, the Committee is not obligated to identify unnamed or incorrectly named specimens.
2. The Artistic Classification Committee is responsible for making certain each entry fulfills the requirements of the show schedule as to type of exhibit, plant and accessory materials used, etc.

JUDGES

The Judges Committee is responsible for securing, assigning, instructing and hosting the judges of the show. A list of accredited judges is published annually by the American Iris Society. While judges should not expect to be paid a fee for judging a show, the judges committee chair should be clear when inviting a judge to judge a show exactly what expenses will be covered such as mileage, over-night expenses, etc.

Judging panels for the horticulture division must consist of a majority of AIS accredited judges. A retired judge may serve as a show judge as long as they serve on a panel with at least one fully accredited judge. Only one retired judge may serve on a panel. The artistic panel should be qualified to judge in this highly specialized field. There are AIS judges who also have training and expertise in this area. See Chapter 27 Artistic Design for more information about the composition of the judging panel for the artistic division.

Judges committee chair should instruct the judges prior to judging of any special problems, changes or circumstances that would affect the quality of the show.

CLERKS

The chair of the clerks selects, instructs and supervises the clerking staff. Usually, two or three clerks are assigned to each panel of judges.

The clerks should be familiar with the show area and know the location and size of the groups of iris assigned to their panel of judges. Each panel of clerks should be supplied with a hand punch for marking entry tags, a supply of ribbons and writing materials for the judges to use. (It is acceptable for the judges to punch the tags if they wish.)

As judges complete a group of iris, a clerk should carry those specimens designated by the judges to a prearranged table. A clerk should always be available to perform other needed services for the judge, for example to summon a show official, rearrange specimens in a group to permit better viewing by the judges, etc.

When judging has been completed and winners of major awards have been selected, the chair of clerks (or clerks appointed by him/her) is responsible for

opening entry tags and removing the lower portion of the tags. These are delivered to the secretary/award chair, who tallies them to determine the winners.

Clerks should be instructed on the proper etiquette of observation during judging. They must keep a comfortable distance from the judges and not engage in conversation with the judges or question the judges' decisions. In addition, they must be careful not to expose the name of an exhibitor on the entry tag until judging has been completed and the top winners are selected. Clerks should speak only in response to questions from a member of the panel or Show Committee. A clerk should never greet a judge's decision with visible delight or dismay. It is unethical for a clerk to repeat any comments or deliberations overheard during the judging process.

HOSPITALITY

The Hospitality Committee acts as gracious hosts to those visiting the show and makes certain that the local society and the American Iris Society are presented in the best possible light.

A schedule should be prepared for members of the Hospitality Committee, assigning specific hours of duty. Shifts should run for two to three hours and there should be at least two persons on duty at all times. A larger number is recommended whenever possible, particularly for large shows or those spread over large areas. Those on duty should be prepared to welcome visitors, answer questions, discuss exhibits and supply other information of interest about the local society and the American Iris Society. Other functions of this group are to guard the property of exhibitors and assure that exhibits and awards are not removed until the appointed time. The Hospitality Committee might also provide a light breakfast or lunch refreshments for the workers and judges.

PUBLICITY

The Publicity Committee is responsible for creating public interest in the show as well as iris in general. They should also take this opportunity to promote the local society and the American Iris Society (AIS). This can be done through social media, websites, newspaper releases, radio and television announcements, paid advertising, posters, flyers and personal letters or emails to other garden clubs, organizations and friends.

News releases to newspapers and broadcasting facilities should be submitted several weeks in advance of the show. Contacting the news media in person can influence them to send a reporter and/or photographer to the show. A follow up news release immediately after the show, giving information on outstanding exhibits and names of winners of AIS awards, is an additional opportunity to call public attention to iris, the local society and the AIS.

CLEANUP

The Cleanup Committee is responsible for assuring that the show area remains clean and orderly during and after the show. Before judging begins, Cleanup Committee members should check the area and remove any debris that has accumulated. Care should be taken to mop up any spilled water, both for the sake of appearance and to avoid accidents caused by slipping.

At the close of the show, the Committee should again clean the area, performing necessary chores and working closely with the Properties Committee in clearing the area. A member of the Cleanup Committee should be the last to leave and area so a final inspection can be made. The show is not over until the premises are clean and in good order with all furniture, equipment, and supplies having been returned to their proper places.

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