The American Iris Society Announces
Iris of the Year 2027 'Alabama Blue Fin'
BY ALLEAH HALEY, NORTH CAROLINA

Media contacts:
Andi Rivarola, AIS Public Relations and Marketing
andinsky@gmail.com
Telephone: 818-802-4188

Linda Wilkie, AIS Awards Chairman
lwilkie.gois@gmail.com
Telephone: 402-250-7671



The American Iris Society (AIS) is pleased to announce the 2027 "Iris of the Year", inter-species hybrid iris 'Alabama Blue Fin'. This outstanding iris is the result of hybridizing work conducted by plant breeder Jill Copeland of Lawton, Michigan. Jill introduced 'Alabama Blue Fin' to the public through Ensata Gardens of Galesburg, Michigan in 2017. This is the first iris of its kind to win such acclaim in the 106-year history of The American Iris Society.

Photo by James Copeland

About 'Alabama Blue Fin'

The Iris Encyclopedia describes this iris as having late midseason bloom; its standards (top petals) cream white, style arms (center of flower) edged light yellow with darker midribs; falls (bottom petals) light yellow washed violet with a violet-blue heart-shaped signal centered in yellow and sharp pointed violet-blue lines radiating to the center of the fall. 'Alabama Blue Fin' is a result of crossing an *Iris pseudacorus* hybrid with an *Iris ensata* (Japanese Iris) hybrid.

When asked to describe her iris, originator Jill Copeland said it is "in fact an outstanding iris." It grows in Texas, across the northern states, the West Coast, and down the East Coast of the United States. "It is a reliable bloomer, blooming every year. It is quite vigorous and puts up bloom stalks on a one-year transplant. One rhizome will normally have two increases. One stalk will bloom for a month. There were 15 to 20 blooms on a single stalk." It can produce five blooms in the top-most position on the bloomstalk, a trait inherited from its wild ancestor. The name 'Alabama Blue Fin' came from Jill's husband being manager of a state fish hatchery and liking to fish and the fact that their granddaughter lives in Alabama.

AIS Garden Awards

Irises are judged chiefly on their qualities as perennial garden plants, with more emphasis on strong growth characteristics and disease resistance than on mere beauty and distinctiveness of the flowers. Judges accredited by the AIS cast votes that resulted in 'Alabama Blue Fin' earning an Honorable Mention including the Fred and Barbara Walther Cup for the greatest number of Honorable Mention votes in 2021; an Award of Merit in 2023; the Randolph-Perry Medal for best species-hybrid iris in 2025; and AIS's highest award, the American Dykes Medal, in 2026. Along the way, 'Alabama Blue Fin' earned both the Franklin Cook Cup (favorite iris originated outside the area) and the Favorite Guest Iris Award at the AIS national convention Portland, Oregon in 2024.

About The American Iris Society

The mission of AIS is to organize and disseminate knowledge of the genus *Iris* and to foster iris preservation, enjoyment, and continued development. The Society is welcoming to all people regardless of race, religion, socioeconomic status, ethnic background, gender, or sexual orientation. Members collaborate locally, regionally, and nationally to encourage the cultivation, enjoyment, and preservation of all irises. Activities often include educational programs, judges' training, exhibitions, and garden observation of irises in 15 horticultural classifications. The AIS maintains the official world registry for non-bulbous irises. Visit the AIS website for more information, including a commercial directory of iris growers and hybridizers: www.irises.org