AIS Awards Report, Spring 2020
Information only – no action required

COVID-19 has thrown everything into a loop, including the AIS Awards process.

Early this year I had the ballot complete--the paper version ready to print, the online version loaded onto the server. And the process of updating the list of judges had begun.

When the 2020 Spring Convention was canceled, I started thinking about how to handle the 2021 Awards banquet—should Medals from both 2019 and 2020 be presented, and things like that. I assumed that even without the Newark gardens, judges would still have ample opportunities for garden visits. But regionals and club treks were canceled shortly thereafter, and by the time of the March telecon, many of us were being told to stay home except when performing essential business. Even local visits were out. I realized that I would see no gardens other than our own, and that many other judges would be in the same situation. And even in states without stay-at-home orders, AIS should not be encouraging activity which might spread the virus.

Therefore, believing that garden visits are needed for informed voting, I proposed canceling the Awards vote for 2020. After an extended discussion during the March telecon the Board of Directors agreed unanimously. When that was announced, some important irisarians disagreed, and stated their opinions via email and during the April telecon. After hearing the opposing arguments, the BoD declined to reconsider its position.

I have presented and circulated my proposed plan for handling the lack of a 2020 vote, as shown at the bottom of this report. For each level of award the plan has a descriptive paragraph followed by a table showing which qualifying years are on which year's ballots. (For HM the criterion for qualifying is introduction, for AM it is winning HM, etc.) The tables start with the 2018 ballot, to help show how the years normally flow.

As can be seen, the HM ballot for 2021 through 2023 will include introductions from four years instead of the usual three. This will make the ballot even more unwieldy than normal, but I don't see any decent alternative. The bulge will then move on to the higher awards, like a swallowed rat going through a snake. Things will get back to normal in 2024 or 2025, depending on the award level.

I am pleased that Michael Reed of Region 17 is going to be the new Awards Chair, and has started learning my system. I am in the process of documenting all the steps in the processes of generating the ballot, tabulating the results, and maintaining the list of judges. Of course I will be available to answer all of the Why, How, When questions that will arise.

Gerry Snyder
AIS Awards

AIS Awards with no 2020 vote

HM - For 2020 Honorable Mention, the (unused) ballot includes Bearded Iris introduced in 2018, 2017, and 2016; and beardless Iris from 2017, 2016, and 2015, except for the iris that previously won their HM of course. Normally in the 2021 ballot bearded iris from 2016 and beardless Iris from 2015 would be dropped. That will not happen. Those iris will stay on the ballot, and bearded iris from 2019 and beardless Iris from 2018 will be added. Since 10% of the eligible Iris win the award, irises will have the same chance of winning that they would have in a normal year.

Ballot year	Intro years (bearded)	Intro years (beardless)
2018	2016, 2015, 2014	2015, 2014, 2013
2019	2017, 2016, 2015	2016, 2015, 2014
2020	(2018, 2017, 2016)	(2017, 2016, 2015)
2021	2019, 2018, 2017, 2016	2018, 2017, 2016, 2015
2022	2020, 2019, 2018, 2017	2019, 2018, 2017, 2016
2023	2021, 2020, 2019, 2018	2020, 2019, 2018, 2017
2024	2022, 2021, 2020	2021, 2020, 2019 (first "normal" year)

AM - The Award of Merit - just as there is a 1 year gap between introduction and HM eligibility (for a bearded iris), there is a 1 year gap between winning the HM and being eligible for the AM. Therefore the same logic can be applied (with the difference that there will be no 2020 HMs).

Ballot year	HM win year
2018	2016, 2015, 2014
2019	2017, 2016, 2015
2020	(2018, 2017, 2016)
2021	2019, 2018, 2017, 2016
2022	2019, 2018, 2017
2023	2021, 2019, 2018
2024	2022, 2021
2025	2023, 2022, 2021 (first "normal" year)

Special Medals - there is also a 1 year gap between winning the AM and eligibility for the Special Medal in each iris class, so the same logic can be used again.

Ballot year	AM win year
2018	2016, 2015, 2014
2019	2017, 2016, 2015
2020	(2018, 2017, 2016)
2021	2019, 2018, 2017, 2016
2022	2019, 2018, 2017
2023	2021, 2019, 2018
2024	2022, 2021
2025	2023, 2022, 2021 (first "normal" year)

Dykes Medal - there is no gap between winning a Special Medal and becoming eligible for the Dykes Medal. Therefore it is handled differently

Ballot year	Special Medal win
2017	2016, 2015, 2014
2018	2017, 2016, 2015
2019	2018, 2017, 2016
2020	(2019, 2018, 2017)
2021	2019, 2018, 2017
2022	2021, 2019, 2018
2023	2022, 2021, 2019
2024	2023, 2022, 2021 (first "normal" year)