

Below is the current draft of the email planned to be sent to judges. It is not yet decided whether an addition will come from the Judges Chair, or whether that information will be in a separate message.

Dear judge,

Because of the ongoing COVID crisis the American Iris Society reluctantly decided early in 2020 not to have an Awards vote that spring.

We knew that there would be negative impacts in multiple areas, but encouraging garden visits at that time was clearly the wrong thing to do. We now have a plan for how to handle the voting for 2021 and into the future.

Every Iris will still get its three years on the ballot at each level: Honorable Mention, Award of Merit, Special Medal, and Dykes Medal. But because the HM ballot will now have four years of introductions rather than three, it will grow from large to huge, and this bulge will work its way through AM and the Special Medals over the years. We do not see any reasonable alternatives.

Every Iris will still have the same chance of winning an HM or an AM as it would have if we had voted in 2020 (the 10% number will remain), but the timing will be somewhat delayed unavoidably, since the winners will be spread out over the next few years.

But the situation is different for the Dykes Medal and the Special Medals for each class of Iris, since they have a fixed number of winners, rather than a percentage of the candidates. If nothing special were done, then there would be fewer winners of them. Since many members of the public base their buying on AIS Awards, this would hurt everyone--hybridizers, nurseries, and public alike. Therefore the AIS board voted to double the number of Special Medals in each class for 2021.

So judges will be able to vote for six iris for the Wister Medal, and two for each of the other Iris classes, and there will be double the usual numbers of winners. This will be made clear both on-line and on the paper ballot. This is a one-time-only change to voting. In 2022 it will go back to three Wister Medals and one of each of the other special medals. Because it takes a while for the anomaly to work its way through the voting system, it will not be until 2025 that all of the eligibility years return to normal.

These changes are painful, but we could not see better options.

Gerry Snyder
(retiring) Awards Chair

PS I am stepping down, and Michael Reed (4mikereed@tx.rr.com) is taking over as AIS Awards Chair. I (as co-chair) will continue supporting the software that is used in preparing the ballot and tabulating the votes, but from now on Mike is in charge.