

Following is a summary of the responses to the email survey sent to approximately 20 Iris sellers ranging from small to very large. With the exception of a response from Keith Keppel (because he was the Registrar from 1994 to 2003 and contributes a great deal of institutional knowledge) immediately below, I have attempted to anonymize the responses.

## **THE RECORDING OF INTRODUCTIONS**

The question of eliminating a “year of introduction” has come up for debate in Board meetings before, but so far it has been deemed beneficial to retain. A few points to consider.....

**AWARDS:** The introduction date is currently used as the basis for an iris entering the awards system. Presumably with no introduction date, we would go by the year of registration. The main impact would be listing of irises which are never put into general circulation. As such, they would most likely never be seen unless sent to a national convention or regional meeting and thus would never win any award. Consider the HM voting for tall bearded; the 2019 Ballot already lists 689 names. If we add only another ten irises a year, ones that are never introduced (“named it for my grand-daughter's birthday”, “next year it bloomed and wasn't good enough”, etc.), we are adding 30 names to the voting list. (Names stay on for three years unless winning an award, which they wouldn't.) An already unwieldy ballot becomes increasingly cumbersome.

**FOREIGN IRISES:** Special attention should be paid to foreign registrations. Under current rules, foreign originations first and solely introduced in North America are eligible for AIS awards. No introductions recorded? Then NO foreign irises eligible....or....ALL registered foreign irises eligible? Listed in the 2017 Registrations and Introductions booklet are 605 irises not originating from North America.....more than the number that are coming from the U.S. and Canada.

**SHOWS:** Seedling classes are for non-introduced irises, currently whether under number OR named. If a non-introduced but named iris is entered in the show, presumably it could not be entered in seedling competition. Or could the breeder still enter it under number? If so, it could be entered both as a seedling and in the general horticulture division.

**RESEARCH:** Knowing when and by whom an iris was introduced is an invaluable aid when searching catalogues, bulletins, etc., for descriptions, comments, or other information.

**RELEASE OF NAMES:** The lack of introduction is the prime factor in considering the re-use of a previously registered name.

It should be noted that the year of registration and the year of introduction do not necessarily correspond. A hybridizer may register a promising seedling several years before it is put on the market, or he may not complete registration until after introduction (having previously reserved the name). In other words, it would be possible to have an iris automatically put on the ballot prior to its ever having been distributed.

I would recommend retention of an introduction date. - Keith Keppel, AIS Registrar 1994-2003

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I am against that change that would eliminate the date of introduction. I think it would be confusing just to have the date of registration along with the name of the iris. As a small business that list a limited number of iris it would be confusing to list newer iris if you were not sure of the year of introduction or if that plant was introduced or put on the market by the hybridize. So I think it should stay as it is. Anyway that is my opinion.

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I am absolutely opposed to the changes proposed. I believe the system that is set in place is fine the way it is. Changing it to the proposed mentioned below is only going to complicate things greatly. I have been strongly encouraging other hybridizers that I introduce for to have names on their iris and registered the year prior to intro so that they can be planted alphabetically in the field. I spend a lot of time walking and searching where each intro is the beginning of each dig season because when we line them out for introduction most of the time they are still under number. I too would like to do that with my intros and I do have some with names on them prior but time for me as with most of us so called larger growers is very limited. We have all felt the immense pressure created by the lack of an immigrant labor force. With these proposed changes once the iris is registered it is eligible for the clock to start ticking towards an award. Technically an iris that was registered two years prior to being offered for sale could then instantly be in the running for and HM the year it is introduced. This would be a very unfair advantage where a grower could time the registration date to push the iris hard the year it is offered for sale for an immediate HM. We could strategically register iris and send them to conventions and regionals based on this.

I totally agree with the confusion about year of intro when it comes to pricing as was mentioned below. I would be most tempted to drop all that info (hybridizer and date of intro/registration) from the catalogue and website to simplify things if these changes were made. Frankly I am quite annoyed at the continued assault by those who feel the little guy does not have a chance when it comes to awards. I actually strongly disagree with this. I feel they actually have an advantage at least over what I do. Sure, I put out a color catalogue and website but it is also at very large expense and about three months of work. It is just me, there is not a team of people. I have a full-time employee starting in March each year until October and a couple more part time people that help during shipping season and that is it. I have no time to send guest plants to regionals, and sometimes even the national convention. In fact, I have no plants entered in the competition for this year's 100th anniversary, and I have no guest iris there either. There was only a one-week window to send guest and competition plants and it was right at the first week of my shipping season. There was simply no time to deal with that. Ironically, I was responsible for all or at least most of the European entries as they shipped all of their plants to me on my import permit and I then resent them to NJ. I feel that the "little guy" has far more time than I do and they have all of the same avenues to get their things seen. I get requests for guest iris for regional meetings all the time and they usually end up in the garbage for two reasons. My main focus is actually making a living not awards and if I give everything away how do I make money? The second reason is time as I mentioned above. I love awards and the recognition as much as anyone else, but it cannot be my main focus. The excuse about maintaining an expensive website is just that an excuse. Nowadays it is so easy to introduce your own things, in fact easier than it ever has been. A simple \$50 ad in one of the bulletins gets the job done. There are also ample opportunities with social media to promote with \$0 cost involved. I don't know who is behind this constant push but I feel they want something for nothing. It does

take effort and some expense to promote your things. Just because we are larger does not mean we do not have the same expenses.

I am sorry if the email seems a bit sharp, I am not always the best at writing but I will say that I am really tired of the comments I have heard about an unfair advantage for the big guys, who I might add are the life blood of AIS. One more small comment. In my opinion based on years of experience and observation. If you really want to win awards there are a few simple things that everyone can do. Send plants to conventions and regionals, make yourself available to speak at regional meetings, do judges training classes, post lots on social media, and meet as many judges as you can. These are the things that help you to win awards and are all things that are easily accomplished by anyone that makes them a priority. Of course, it also helps to have a quality iris but sadly even for a big grower like me that does not in any way guarantee an award.

In closing I realize that you are only the messenger and I want to be clear that these comments are directed to the proposal not at anyone in particular. If you think we should discuss it further I am open to talking via phone. I appreciate all that you and Joann do with the registration process and I feel that these proposed changes also have the potential to make your job more complex.

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Yes, we are very strongly against eliminating the introduction date. Other commercial garden owners may not have thought about what using that registration year may do to their listings.

Looks like you have it down just right, you've understood and done very good in your explanation! One other point that you also need to illustrate is exactly HOW is a commercial garden owner to get the registration date that must be used if this new system is implemented? Can't get it from the R&I, always a year behind just due to the process/system. The online data base isn't up to date, so when a commercial garden owner wants to list a plant, where does he get that registration date in a timely fashion to be able to be used in his catalog/web site? Causing a whole mess for the commercial iris world.

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Interesting proposal but not in favor of it. We use the intro year as an anchor for pricing as mentioned, no matter how it is presented getting rid of the intro year would age the iris in the buyers eye. We can list the iris at whatever price we like but folks that buy iris from specialty growers are pretty savvy in general and would probably balk at paying a higher price for what is perceived as an older iris. This could possibly hurt the smaller growers/hybridizers even more as it could mean a decrease in revenue both in sales and pricing. This would probably be a higher percentage of loss to their total sales in comparison to larger commercial growers.

There are other variables to consider too.. ie: if you have a perfect name for an iris, register it and then suffer a setback in stock the year before intro (personal experience with Edge Of Eternity), by the time it is actually released it could possibly be three years old or older... hard to list it for \$50+ dollars with a three year old registration date on it even if it is your own introduction. As nice as it would be to not have to worry about revenue it really is what keeps most growers going, running a commercial operation is not inexpensive.

Seems like it would play havoc with the awards system too... just thinking about Edge Of Eternity as an example.

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We are totally against doing away with the introduction date. Since we are eastern growers we need to get more stock before we introduce them for sale.

We like to register the seedlings ahead of time so we don't have to worry about waiting for the name to clear and get the paperwork done.

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Yes, I sell tons of other growers irises. Yes, I do introduce for other hybridizers. If I can find it out, I always base the price on the introduction year, not the registration year. Don Murphy is terrible about registering an iris and then not putting it out for several years. I think he must register them the year they bloom sometimes. I understand the situation better now that you have explained it. If I sell the iris introductions according to the registration year, I think it will hurt sales. I am pretty good about doing it the same year, but not always.

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I am totally against this and I feel that with it being the centennial year that the founders probably thought very long and hard about this system.

I feel the proposal is more than complicated and simply in my mind does not make sense. Why would you change after so many years because of people who don't have websites?

I'm sorry but anyone can make a website. They are pretty simplistic and many people now can sell on Facebook, Instagram and EBay.

EBay accounts are very easy to set up.

It would make one very confused looking back as to why it was changed.....and over complicate it. I think the system now is methodical with the guidelines set out.

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First, in answer to your specific question, we do not think abandoning the Introduction Date would have any direct impact on our business as we rarely offer irises for other hybridizers. When we do we introduce for them or co-introduce with them. So we are not in the position you described of offering irises of hybridizers one or two years after introduction. But we can see it being a problem for people who do.

Regarding the whole issue of eliminating Introduction Dates, we are totally against it ..... unless the Board has some really good ideas how to fix all the difficulties it will cause. Furthermore, it does not seem to be a good solution for the problem presented, i.e. the expense and/or difficulty for some lesser known hybridizers with smaller businesses to "offer their irises for sale" for the purpose of introduction. Having started out as one of those lesser known hybridizers, I don't think there is anything difficult about printing up a list of irises to be offered for sale in a given year, making a copy of it, and sending it to the Registrar. They are not required to have a website, are they? Are these people planning to Register an iris and never offer it for sale and expect it to go into the AIS Awards System? Awards are a recommendation to the public to grow a particular iris, how can AIS do that if the iris is never for sale?

If every registered iris would enter the awards system, does that include hybridizers from outside North America? Even if not, I agree that too many irises would be on the ballot. And how many HMs would be given for TBs under that system? I think many more would go to the big

hybridizers. It is my understanding that people would like to give the smaller hybridizers a better chance at awards, not just pad the HMs of well known hybridizers.

Also we think that the registrants who don't introduce for several years are often the less well known hybridizers. They may need time to build up their stock of an iris before offering it for sale. Having them go into the awards system at registration would be a huge disadvantage to them, because they would not have their irises distributed in time to be judged.

When we started out as irisarians, the two date system - registration and introduction - was a bit confusing. But it did not take long to understand the purpose and its value.

Perhaps there is some easier way to accomplish the goal of making Introduction easier without throwing out the whole system.

Thanks for asking.

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This is a very interesting question. Our first reaction is a very negative one to the idea of eliminating introduction. But we would like to spend some time discussing it. Can we have a few days to work this over?

A couple of questions came up right away.

How often do people register an iris and never introduce it or introduce it/have it introduced several years later?

Under a registration only system, when would an iris enter the awards system? Would the year of registration take the place of the year of introduction for the purposes of awards?

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Honestly, I think keeping the date of introduction is the very best policy.

I do not think any plant created by a hybridizer should be offered for sale in commerce until it is officially introduced for the first time.

Having been an AIS member since 1966, I remember some really ugly situations where guest irises from a national convention were sold/distributed BEFORE it was introduced. I am not a hybridizer but I know well how much work is involved --TOTALLY AGAINST.

Thank you for your email. Your service is most important to the genus iris and I see no reason to change a plant that has worked well for very good reasons for many years.

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I definitely think the registration system should continue as it is.

For the awards system to be on an even footing, there needs to be a date that the variety was made available for public distribution, the introduction date. If I register a variety in 2016 and don't distribute it until 2020, the HC period is already over. It seems that the registration and

introduction date would need to be the same if the awards are going to be based on this date. The other way it could work is if hybridizers wait to register their creations until the year they're introduced.

The current system has worked for many years and I see no need to change it at this time and particularly if there is no compelling reason to do so and I do mean compelling. Consistency over time with the registrations is a good thing.

“Offering for sale to the public” should be no problem. A simple list listing the name and address of the person or garden and the name, description and price of their introduction should be sufficient. How they distribute that list and their introduction is up to them. It seems that even a hand written offer for sale should be fine.

It seems to me that if the decision is made to keep things as they are or make the registration and introduction date the same then that takes care of the problem of commercial growers pricing and the economic impact of that pricing.

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The date of registration has nothing to do with when an iris is offered for sale. I have registered one Tb that may not even be offered for sale by us until we have enough stock to handle estimated sale plus enough for plant back for the following year.

The date of introduction is essential for as long as the plant is in the award system.

This past year, I discovered a Siberian which most certainly will be introduced whenever I have enough stock – which could be 4 or 5 years. It is a “world beater”!!! Selecting a name for this thing will be very important and I can apply for a name and register it at any time in the next “few years” until it is finally offered for sale to anybody. The year of introduction is critical for its standing in the award system. The year of registration matters not to anybody. I expect to offer this plant up for auction when the next National AIS convention comes to Portland. This will be interesting!

I have several other plants in a similar state – the name is registered- and the plant will not be introduced for sale until I have enough stock.

This issue of registration also applies to several other hybridizers who send us seedlings for testing years before we have enough stock to actually offer it for sale.

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This issue really doesn't affect me directly - the current system works fine as far as I am concerned and doesn't need changing. If it were to be changed, wouldn't it mean changing all the current rules for awards based on year of introduction? That's quite a can of worms to open up! Why do that?

For me, I do not think it would impact me much. I guess if an iris is registered in October 2020, then it would be odd to consider it a 2020. I think it could change the dynamics for you. People may start holding off until after January to register to create a newer registration year.

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People would adjust and I don't think it would change my pricing. I will think on it some more. In general the vendors will adjust to the system whatever it is. Also I would like to consult my all knowing neighbor, but I will not be back until 2/26.

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