

AIS Awards 2021

To: Jody Nolin (President of AIS) and the AIS Board of Directors

From: Committee to review the Awards System for 2021 (Gerry Snyder, Bonnie Nichols, Gary White, Wayne Messer, Mike Reed and Andi Rivarola)

Overview

The Committee was conceived with the mandate to look at whether voting by AIS Judges will be reinstated for 2021.

Specifications

The Committee members communicated this week about what to do for the AIS Awards 2021. **We're all in unanimous agreement that AIS should send a full ballot out for the 2021 Awards** (as we have done in the past before the Covid-19 Pandemic). The Pandemic was the main reason that the Award System was disrupted in 2020. AIS should cautiously still monitor the situation around the country in the coming months in case it changes dramatically for the worse.

The decision to cancel ballot voting for 2020 was based on several issues:

- A. The cancellation of all national, regional and section conventions and tours.
- B. Several states had mandatory "stay at home" orders in place; many other states had strong recommendations to stay at home.
- C. Most non-essential business and travel closed or stopped throughout most of the country.
- D. We were not knowledgeable enough about safety and avoiding contracting the virus, even in outdoor spaces.
- E. There were a few judges who felt comfortable and safe visiting gardens, but a great number of judges did not.
- F. In some states it was illegal to visit non-essential businesses and places of interest, including gardens.

Conclusion

For 2021, we think AIS should send the Awards Ballot because:

1. We hope that there will be no mandatory "stay at home" orders in the country, or if any, that they will be reduced in numbers compared to 2020.
2. Most businesses would have reopened, even if on a limited basis in some cases, with some exceptions.

3. As with all new emerging diseases, we are learning much more information with every passing day, week and month. Part of that learning is how to live life and to do it in a manner that is relatively safe (compared to what we knew this past spring).
4. Now we know that it is reasonable to be outdoors if rules are observed, such as: social distancing, wearing masks when appropriate, and reducing the size of groups, etc.
5. Visiting gardens could be done safely, provided there are no crowds and following local and state restrictions to group size; strictly abiding by social distancing standards; and wearing masks when appropriate and when required.
6. More people will feel comfortable visiting gardens too, as long as they can maintain appropriate distancing, wear masks if necessary, and if there are no large boisterous crowds.

Important Note: AIS judges should be knowledgeable enough to vote for an iris eligible for the Dykes Medal and for irises eligible for the Special Medals in the classes that they usually vote for. The AM vote gets a bit more strained, but most judges will have already voted for some of those iris in the past when they were awarded an HM. So, presumably judges will at least know those irises eligible for an AM that they have already voted for in awarding them an HM.

Andi Rivarola

For the Committee to Review the Awards 2021