

Affiliate Liaison Report Spring, 2009

Since this position was begun at the Fall board meeting without a lot of definition, I set myself three goals for 2010:

- Starting an online discussion group,
- Taking a poll of the issues clubs are facing today and
- Developing a toolkit of things useful to the clubs.

As of this date, the following has been accomplished:

1. An introductory letter went out to all affiliates with a brief outline of the 2010 goals and some information about the creation of the discussion group.
2. With the assistance and guidance of John Jones, the affiliate discussion group is active. RVPs have been added to the group as well to promote open communication between them and the affiliates. There are 124 subscribers to the affiliates discussion group. In addition to the survey mentioned below, an other survey from Publicity was sent to the group, and a poll taken on the fundraising raffle.
3. A simple survey was sent to all affiliates. This was aimed at getting discussion started on issues, strengths, ideas for improvement. To date, 33 responses have been received: 12 by mail and 21 email. That's almost a 20% response rate (the average for a customer satisfaction survey is 10-15%). Many responses contained the opinions of the club membership gathered at meetings.

The number one **challenge** they face is attracting and keeping new members, particularly younger and active members.

The number one **strength** they perceive is a core group of knowledgeable, dedicated members. Doesn't this sound familiar?

Their ideas for **help** AIS could give them had no clear consensus. Roughly, they grouped into more publicity, judges availability and training, program ideas and locally relevant information.

Their ideas for **improving** AIS again had no clear hot topic. Their comments generally concerned streamlining the organization, finance issues and better communications in both directions.

There were also some comments on what AIS is doing right: the new bulletin format, the Wiki, the new website photos and the new show responsibilities.

Still to do:

The Affiliate toolkit: there were lots of ideas from the affiliates on things they need, and how to share them. Among them are:

A program exchange	Successful Sales
Recruiting/outreach ideas	Information for beginners
Hosting a tour	Show chair checklist
Making a personal garden profitable	Share sale dates
Converting a newsletter to e-letter	Fundraising ideas

I would like to see an affiliate web page with links to information and a forum for sharing files, pictures and ideas. I hope to have a **proposal** for those, including the amount of **effort**, how it would **operate** and **cost**, by the Fall meeting.

Survey response summary, total of 33 responses.

Top Challenge	recruiting new, younger members	23
	active participation	15
	getting members to take leadership positions	7
Top Strength	loyal, knowledgeable core members	23
	great flower show	6
	friendly, helpful members	5
	excellent sale	5
How can AIS help?	publicity packets for affiliates	5
	Programs, speakers	5
	educational display material available	2
	recruiting ideas	2
	Keep website interesting	2

How would you improve AIS?

The entire list of ideas is presented here. Most only had one survey response, but I feel it is important to see the general category of the ideas.

More publicity	2	publicity
programs, speakers, projects	4	programs
get more input to effect change	1	organization
clearer lines of communication, where to send things	1	organization
Board or official visits to clubs	1	organization
streamline bureaucracy	1	organization
improve leadership structure	1	organization
get more input to effect change	1	organization
clearer lines of communication, where to send things	1	organization
more info on website to help people decide what kinds of iris to grow	1	Information
have several editors for the bulletin	1	Information
cultural information in the bulletin	1	Information
more, frequent communication to membership, email?	1	Information
more information for show chairpersons	1	Information
make online register available to clubs for shows	1	Information
make bulletin more reader friendly - less business	1	Information
promote making a personal garden profitable	1	Information
idea exchange	1	Information
reduce the deficit	1	finance
show the benefits for the dues	1	finance
reduce membership fees for seniors	1	finance
Triennial membership bonus offer for seniors	1	finance
10 yr. Triennial membership bonus offer for seniors	1	finance
lower advertising rates	1	finance
membership incentives	1	finance
promotions for AIS membership that appeal to new members		finance
new convention format	1	Convention
none- doing a great job	1	

A sampling of ideas from the group:

- On-line judges training
- Small, local research projects
- Encourage commercial gardens to donate out-of-date catalogues as give-aways
- Articles on how to make your garden profitable
- Tape or record 'expert' programs for distribution
- Develop an on-line presence to attract younger members
- Web hosting for affiliates
- Checklist of tasks for a show
- CDs of gardens and tours
- Turn your newsletter into an e-newsletter

These are some of the ideas we would explore with a forum. Some clubs have success stories to share and tools other clubs can use.

Respectfully submitted,
Jody Nolin
Affiliate Liaison