



# Preparing Iris for an Exhibition

It is here that the exhibitor's performance as a horticulturalist is being evaluated. The use of point scales is for comparison of relative values of the characteristics which make a good specimen. The best way to learn to point score is to take one characteristic and decide what each specimen lacks in perfection for its variety, subtracting points for deficiencies. As there is no set rule which specifies the exact number of points to deduct for every fault, one must assess penalties for each defect in proportion to its deviation from typical performance of that variety.

## **Pre-selecting the week before:**

- 1) Look for proportionate bloom stalks. Thick sturdy stalks for the taller TBs and smaller/thinner stalks for the smaller iris.
- 2) Select stalks with well-spaced branches and with buds covering approximately 2/3 of the stalk.
- 3) Candelabra branching is ideal. However, branches/buds that appear to be bunched can be trained to grow outward.
- 4) Choose stalks that are healthy, with good color, and have no (or minimal) blemishes.
- 5) Train the stalks that have a chance for open blooms at show time. Or stalks that will have a second bud in the terminal that can be induced to bloom.
- 6) You need only one open bloom to have your iris be judged. A good quality well-groomed stalk with one gorgeous, open flower can win a blue ribbon.
- 7) Remove dead flowers to allow room for the new ones to form. Be careful not to tear the spathe. Terminal bud: carefully remove it if it will open more than 3 days before show and only if there is a second bud in the terminal socket.
- 8) Remove pests that may damage or chew your flowers or stalks.

## **Traveling to the Show**

### Labeling

- 1) It is best to tag or label your stalk before you cut. Even the best of us forget what the name was, or it starts to look like that other purple iris you cut.
- 2) You can use hanging paper tags on string or cheap cut up paper. Write with a ball point pen.
- 3) Along with the name of the cultivar, consider adding the class of iris, especially if it is one of the smaller irises (e.g., BB, IB, PCI, etc.).

## Cutting

- 1) On warmer days, the ideal time to cut is early morning or the second option is late evening. If the day is cloudy and cool, choose the evening or just before transporting.
- 2) If possible, hold the stalk by the spathe, so as not to knock off the "frost." Avoid touching or holding the bud.
- 3) Cut the bloom stalk taller/longer than you need. At the show, you will want to make a fresh cut and be able to select an appropriate height for the container.
- 4) After cutting the bloom stalk, remove all base foliage and immediately place the stalk upright in a container of water in the shade or indoors.

## Holding overnight (if necessary)

- 1) If cutting the day before the show, store stalks with open flowers in a cool, dark area.
- 2) For those buds that you need to encourage to open, place them in a brightly lit area (you might even use grow lights), with several warm (not HOT) water changes. The most ideal way to force opening, but most difficult to achieve, is to place the bloom stalk in a heated, humid space like a bathroom with both a space heater and humidifier.

## Types of containers for transporting

- 1) The ideal method is to allow each bloom stalk to have its own container, spaced away from the others to prevent bumping. I use a PVC transport container (a DIY project for you), which is ideal.
- 2) You can also use buckets with spacers (spacers being pool noodles, chicken wire, tape grids, foam, rolled up paper towels or newspaper).
- 3) Some use wine bottles, water bottles or even vases, but these are not as ideal, as they are heavy.
- 4) For the smaller iris, use test tubes, plastic cigar holders, cough syrup bottles, etc. that have been placed in a partitioned box.

## Check for pests, dirt, and debris

- 1) Remove aphids, spiders, ants, and other critters.
- 2) Use a Q-tip or small paint brush to pick up individual critters. Tip: Dip Q-tip or small brush into rubbing alcohol (or water) and use it to clean dirt, debris, and bugs out of the flower, spathe, and leaf junctions.
- 3) If the bloom stalk, branches, or leaves have dirt, debris, fingerprints, or sticky residue on them, gently wipe them with a damp cloth or cotton ball.

## Trimming (Trim only if absolutely necessary!)

- 1) Neatly trim off faint discolorations, diseased foliage, or leaf damage.
- 2) Cuts on the foliage should be less than 1/4" and should follow the natural contour of the leaf.
- 3) Blunt or choppy edges, massive amounts of trimming, or any trimming that is obvious and distracting is unacceptable and will be graded down.

## Removing flowers

- 1) Remove any dead flowers.
- 2) You only need one open flower for judging and that flower must be in good shape.
- 3) Remove all flowers that are fading (watery edges, wilting, curling) or have obvious faults that will cost points. However, remove the fading flower only if there is another bud in the socket. Be sure that no “stub” of the removed bloom is left visible.
- 4) If no other unopened buds are in the socket then you should remove the entire branch.

## Position in container (provided by Mountains and Plains Iris Society)

- 1) Place your entry into the container with the bottom branch (or leaf) above the container opening.
- 2) Position the bloom stalk so that it presents the best proportion to the viewer.
- 3) My rule of thumb for the height of the bloom stalk is 1.5 to 2 times the height of the container, maybe even 2.5 if the entry is a taller cultivar. The height of the bloom stalk depends on the type of iris you are showing. For example, spuria iris will be much taller than 2.5 times the container, and Louisiana iris are pretty tall too.
- 4) Ideally side branches should be positioned on 2/3 of the exposed bloom stalk. If they occupy only 1/3 of the stalk, consider cutting the stalk down a bit to improve the proportion. However, be careful not to cut off so much stalk that it looks under grown for that particular variety.
- 5) Place the entry with its “best face forward,” which would ideally have the bloom(s) straight up or slightly tipped forward, and the side branches out to the sides.
- 6) Wedge the bloom stalk securely so that it does not shift, rotate, or lean in the container.



## Cleanliness

- 1) Do a last-minute check to see if you missed cleaning off the dirt, insects, and smudges. If you are an exhibitor who doesn't mind removing the “frost” or whitish powder, do a wipe down of the bloom stalk, from top to bottom.
- 2) Don't forget to check the leaves AND the backside of your entry! The judges may ask to have your entry turned around.

## Arrival

- 1) When you arrive at the show, you should receive a show schedule.
- 2) Ask for your assigned exhibitor number.
- 3) Collect AIS exhibition tags and an exhibitor's list of entries sheet (blank) at the registration desk.

## AIS exhibition tags

- 1) You need one tag per entry. These may be filled out in advance (at least partially).

2) You will need the Show Schedule to determine the appropriate division number as well as sections and classes (if appropriate).

3) Write all appropriate information on the top of the card: division number, section letter, (class if needed), the registered name of the variety, exhibitor name (that is you!) For safety, I recommend NOT including your street address or phone number. Just write your city's name.

### Exhibitor's entry list

1) List the registered name of every variety you have entered. Include the section of each variety.

2) The entry list will also need your name, city, and exhibitor number.

3) Make sure you give this list to the show chair or assistant.

### Finalizing your entry

1) Hang your completed AIS entry tag onto your entry via a hook/rubber band provided by the club.

2) Place the entry tag exactly in the center of the container, the way you want your entry to face. The clerks will use the tag to orient your entry on the show bench.

3) Place your entry (entries) onto the table for the clerks to take out to the exhibition floor.

5) Hand your completed Exhibitor List to the appropriate show staff member. 6) Good Luck!

Final Thoughts After the official judging has ended and the show chair has opened up the show, walk around the room to compare your entries with others on the show bench. Look on the back sides of your AIS entry tags to read comments written by the judges or clerks. Take notes about how to improve your entries at the next show. One of the best ways to learn how entries are judged is to be a clerk. Ask the show chair how you can be a clerk at the next show. And again, good luck to you!!

## SCALE OF POINTS

### Exhibition Judging of Tall Bearded Iris Seedlings

1. Flower			40
	a. Color	15	
	b. Form	15	
	c. Substance & Durability	10	
2. Stalk			35
	a. Poise & Balance	15	
	b. Number of Buds	10	
	c. Branching	10	
3. Distinctiveness			25
TOTAL			100

# HOW TO EXTEND YOUR IRIS SEASON WITH PHOTOGRAPHY

## By Melanie North

How do you extend your Iris season? Take pictures, that way you can enjoy them all year round. By following these simple steps, you can take beautiful pictures no matter what type of camera you own.

1. Know your camera, lenses and equipment, read and re-read your camera's booklet. Practice taking pictures and evaluating your pictures. The best camera to use on Iris photography is the SLR or the Single Lens Reflex Camera with interchangeable lenses. Try different angles, backgrounds and different lighting situations. Take notes so that when you evaluate, you can improve your photo the next time you take your picture, or know that you are on the right track and can use that information to take other photos.

2. Avoid shooting at noon. The bright sunlight will bleach out your colors. If you can only shoot at noon use a diffuser or a reflector to get rid of unwanted shadows. A diffuser works the same way as a cloud passing overhead. I use a white umbrella but you can also use a transparent white material. Hold this material over your subject, get someone to help you with this. The material can be attached to a wire hanger. If your subject is in an uneven lighting situation, half shade half sun, a reflector can allow you to bounce the light around and fill in the shadow area, making the light appear more even. A plain white poster board is ideal for this situation. Other colors to try are silver (you can use aluminum foil for this attached to a piece of cardboard) and gold. The silver board will give your subject's area a crisp clear light, and the gold will give a warm glow. Make sure to hold the board as close to the subject without getting your board in the shot. The best time to photograph your Irises is during overcast days, early morning or late afternoon. Your colors will be more vibrant. Taking a picture after a rain storm is pleasing when you can photograph tiny droplets of rain on your Irises. But never take pictures in the rain unless you can protect your lenses and camera. Unwanted droplets on your picture can ruin a perfect shot, not to mention water in your camera can damage it. Pros use a water bottle to mist flowers and get pretty much the same effect.

3. Use a tripod, and cable release if possible. A tripod-pod will enable you to shoot at slower speeds which will allow more of the picture to be sharp. A tripod will allow you to take your time with framing your shot. It will also allow you to make sure your area around your subject is free of unwanted twigs, people, pets etc.

4. Use a low ISO speed of 100 or less, which makes for a better picture especially if you want to enlarge it later. Larger ISO, 400 speed film and higher, tend to have a grainy appearance with washed out color.

5. Before you take your shot, check your Iris in all directions and every angle. you will be surprised the different shots you will get. Don't forget to try horizontal or vertical compositions with your camera.

6. Don't be afraid to get up close to your subject, the biggest fault that occurs with most pictures are shots taken too far away. Frame your subject, get as much of your subject into the shot as possible.

7. Have patience with your subject, take your time taking the picture. If it is not a good day for you, chances are you will not take a good picture.

8. Try to avoid taking pictures on windy days. But if you must take pictures on a windy day a piece of cardboard held close to your flower will help to steady your subject. Ask someone to assist you with this.

9. Try something different, why not do a still-life of your Iris. With simple materials you can take a very pleasing photo which can be enlarged and framed. Follow these simple steps:

9a. Find a shady place outside, this will eliminate any unwanted shadows in your photograph.

9b. Place a sturdy table or tv tray against the wall of your house, or in front of a nice back drop such shrubbery, someplace where it will not distract from your subject. Drape a piece of black velvet on your table, and if your table is against a wall tack up some of the velvet onto the wall. Other color backgrounds that compliment your flowers are blue, black, green, gray or off white. Colors that are least flattering are tan, beige, lavender and peach. Felt also works well as a background material. Try and avoid shiny materials that do not reflect well.

9c. Place your Iris and objects (these can be sea shells, vases, pictures, cards etc.) around the table, experiment with different levels and compositions.

9d. Place your camera on your tripod and look through the lens, do not take your picture at this time, check your composition, and surrounding area. If this looks pleasing to you take your picture. Slowly release your shutter button. If you are fortunate to have a timer on your camera set this and step away from your camera, and allow your camera to take the picture. All of these suggestions will allow you to take a picture without blurring at slow speeds because of camera shake.

Note: The best f stops to use are f16, f22 for flower colors such as white, yellow and light pink. For darker colors blues, blacks, orange, browns, use f11 or f13. This will give you the best depth of field for your flowers, and allow the entire flower to be in focus.

9e. Experiment with different objects, backgrounds, but most important have fun. Now as old man winter approaches and your beautiful Irises and roses get ready for next year's colorful show, get your photo albums or your slide projector a hot cup of cocoa and enjoy your Irises ...and share them with a friend or loved one...

## Entering Your Iris Photographs in an Iris Show

An iris Photography show is a delightful sight!

Show Schedule Photography categories include:

### DIVISION V - PHOTOGRAPHY

Group 1. Landscape

Group 2. Iris flower

Group 3. Close-up partial flower

Group 4. Iris with pet, wildlife or person

8x10 photo with white 11x14 matting. (standardized matts provided) Limit 10 photography entries per person.