

Handbook For Judges and Show Officials

Ch 20 Novelty & SA Iris



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Note: This chapter and others from the *Handbook for Judges* are available online. It is recommended that judges and other readers scan over the Introduction and Table of Contents in the full version of the *Handbook* in order to know the full list of available resources, e.g., Glossary, essays, Judge's Activity Record, etc.

Chapter 20

NOVELTY & SPACE AGE IRIS

Approved by the AIS Board of Directors, March 30, 2021

Novelty iris are becoming more popular as the quality of the plant and flower improves. Iris with multiple petals, broken color, variable color patterning or flat shaped flowers are examples of novelty iris. Variegated foliage is also included in the novelty iris category. Warmer temperatures often enhance novelty features such as in the flat-shaped flowers.

Space age iris came into existence through the work of a single individual, the late Lloyd Austin of Placerville, California. He noted that some plicata seedlings in the garden of the late Sydney B. Mitchell had little growths at the end of their beards. Mr. Austin interbred these seedlings until he obtained plants with horns at the ends of the beards. Further breeding produced spoons, flounces, pompoms, feathers, and other double appendages in this location.

Some iris possess both space age and novelty characteristics.

TYPES OF NOVELTY IRIS

Horn – The term “horn” is used to describe a short, stubby protrusion or extension of the beard.

Spoon – The term “spoon” refers to an elongated beard that widens near the end creating a spoon-shaped petaloid that flares upward. “Reverse spoons” are inverted compared to a typical spoon.

Flounce – A “flounce” refers to a still larger expansion of the beard into a wide, folded, often canoe or fan-shaped projection. Some flounces are so large they give the iris an appearance of being double. A “full moon” flounce lies flat against the fall and covers most of the fall.

Pompom – A “pompom” refers to a consistent multilayered carnation-like collection of petaloids that protrudes from the beard.

Feather – A “feather” refers to a long horn or horn-flounce (double appendage) that ends in small narrow fringed petaloids.

Horns, spoons, flounces, pompoms, or feathers are beautiful additions but can be detrimental to a flower. Judges should be certain these appendages do not distort the flower’s shape and weigh it down. The overall effect should be a harmonious extension of the flower form.

These unique projections are not 100% consistent on the flower. For example, there might be two flounces and one spoon on a flower. Extra points should be awarded ~~considered~~ for consistency. Iris judges should grow or visit gardens with a variety of novelty iris to be familiar with cultivars that produce consistent appendages.

Multiple Petal (multi-petal) Flowers - These varieties of iris possess more than three standards and three falls. The judge should closely ascertain that the flowers, though unique, still exhibit the basic accepted outline of the iris flower. Flowers with multiple petals (standards and falls) must be consistent at least 85% of the time.

Broken Color – The expression of an unstable color gene or other genetic material is thought to produce flowers that exhibit a random application of two or more colors. While the broken color pattern (streaking, splashing, etc.) should be fairly consistent from flower to flower, the color markings themselves are randomly expressed on the flower. The broken color pattern should not be confused with the plicata pattern. However, some iris can possess plicata and broken color applications together on the same flower.

Variable Color Patterning – There are rare cultivars that produce flowers with different colors. For example, the diploid MTB ‘Joseph’s Coat Katkamier’ (A.B. Katkamier by Eric Tankseley-Clarke, R. 1989) can produce flowers with a color pattern that varies from a white and violet amoena to a yellow and red variegata. This is different from broken color where the cultivar produces flowers of a consistent color or colors, but those colors are randomly expressed in the form of streaks, dots and splashes.

In exhibition judging, a stalk of ‘Joseph’s Coat Katkamier’ should exhibit two colors of one color pattern or the two colors of the other color pattern. The two distinctive color patterns appear unique to this cultivar, however, other iris with this pattern are likely to be hybridized.

Flat-Shaped Flowers – Flat-shaped iris, also known as flatties, are novelty iris with six falls arranged in a horizontal to downward arching pattern with six visible beards. Although there usually are no standards, flat-shaped iris flowers will occasionally have one standard. The novelty of this iris is especially attractive when the petals are very wide. Flat-shaped novelties may have one or two partially normal flowers on the same stalk with the flat flowers.

Total consistency of flower form is a plus. A good novelty iris should consistently display its novelty characteristics. If the flat-shaped flower is comprised of both standards and falls, the standards must consistently grow flat at least 85% of the time. Weak, floppy standards that collapse do not make a flat flower. The style arms of the flat-shaped flowers will most often appear in the normal quantity, but can appear in multiple or irregular counts.

Variiegated Foliage – foliage with colors other than the standard green such as purple, black, white, cream, etc. These unusual colors could be streaked, striped, edged or seasonal.

GARDEN JUDGING

Introduced Cultivars & Seedlings of Novelty & Space Age Iris

The Rule of Thumb is: The better the flower, the better the novelty. While a novelty iris flower may not look exactly like a traditional form, it should still be a beautiful flower.

The appropriate chapter in the *Handbook for Judges* should be used for judging novelty iris in the garden. For example, use the tall bearded chapter when the novelty iris is a tall bearded iris. The judge will have to exercise an independent judgment on specific points, particularly form and distinctiveness. Improved and innovative flowers, bud count, stalks, and plants are to be stressed as with all garden judging.

EXHIBITION JUDGING

Horticultural Entries & Seedlings of Novelty & Space Age Iris

The appropriate chapter in the *Handbook for Judges* should be used for judging novelty iris in exhibitions.

Novelty and space-age iris can be a class in the show schedule. Depending on the number of entries and exhibitors, novelty and space-age iris can even be in separate classes. Specimens that exhibit both novelty and space-age features, may be exhibited in either novelty or space-age sections of the AIS show or in any other appropriate section (e.g., historic, intermediate). The exhibitor will choose the section for their specimen.

As with all other iris in an exhibition, varieties should be evaluated carefully. Each entry should be compared to what is typically the best performance for the variety being judged. The unique nature of the novelty and/or space-age iris must not override the guidelines on form and proportion for the class being evaluated. The appropriate chapter in the *Handbook for Judges* should be consulted. However, the expression of the novelty or space-age characteristic on the exhibit is very important. If most other attributes are equal, the best example of a consistent novelty should be favored while specimens lacking the novelty and/or space-age should not receive awards.