

1 American Iris Society: Payne Medal-JI

History: History written by Clarence Mahan

This medal is restricted to Japanese irises (JI). It is named in honor of W. Arlie Payne (1881-1971).

W. Arlie Payne was born on a farm near Terre Haute, Indiana. He graduated from Central Normal College in Danville, Indiana, and studied pattern making. Payne worked as a lumberjack, photographer, real estate agent, and pattern maker until he established a landscaping business on sixteen acres of land south of Terre Haute. He was at first especially interested in peonies, but in the late 1920's, he "discovered" Japanese irises. He started hybridizing Japanese irises in 1932. Over the next three and a half decades, he raised many thousands of seedlings.

During the 1930's and 1940's, there was a sharp decline in the popularity of Japanese irises in the United States, especially during the period of WW II. One of the few nurseries on the West Coast that continued to offer them for sale renamed them "Pearl Harbor irises." Arlie Payne continued his, extensive breeding program striving to produce "a race suitable for outdoor American plants." He sought a beautiful flower of symmetrical form and a plant that demonstrated exceptional vigor. One of the most exceptional aspects of his breeding program was that it was developed in the early years using only six cultivars of the Edo type. Payne took line breeding to a new level of intensity.

Arlie Payne did not start introducing his irises until the early 1950's. When he did, it was apparent that he had developed a strain of wonderful new Japanese irises. He ultimately registered 170 cultivars, most of which were of exceptional quality. When his new cultivars were sent to Japan, the Japanese were astonished to see their diversity and quality. The gigantic maroon, 3-fall cultivar 'The Great Mogul' (1958) was especially admired by Japanese specialists. Payne cultivars took the Gold, Silver and Bronze Medals in the Internationale Garten Ausstellug in 1963. 'The Great Mogul' won the Silver Medal at the Vienna Internationale Gartenschau in 1964, and 'Confetti Shower' won the Bronze Medal at the same event.

The American Iris Society awarded Arlie Payne its coveted Hybridizers Medal in 1964. When he died at the age of 90, in 1971, he was universally revered as the world's premier breeder of Japanese irises.

From the Society for Japanese Irises (SJI):

The Payne Medal (named for W. Arlie Payne) is the highest award given by the American Iris Society that a Japanese iris can receive in its class. Payne Medal winners are then eligible to win the Dykes Medal, which is the highest award an iris can receive from The American Iris Society. Prior to 1992 the highest award a Japanese Iris could receive was the Payne Award. This award has now been elevated to a medal status. Below is a list of Japanese Irises which have received the Payne Award and/or the Payne Medal.

Winners: PAYNE MEDAL Japanese (JI)

2012 COHO (Chad Harris)
2011 LAKE EFFECT (Bob Bauer/John Coble)
2010 SUE JO (Donald Delmez)
2009 LITTLE BOW PINK (Donald Delmez)
2008 RASPBERRY CANDY (Bauer/Coble)
2007 Dirigo Pink Milestone (White 2000)

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2006 Sing the Blues (Reid 1997)
 2005 Blue Spritz (Delmez 1996)
 2004 Epimetheus (Innerst 1992)
 2003 *Lion King (Bauer/Coble 1996) and *Raspberry Glow (Aitken 1992) tie
 2002 Electric Glow (Aitken 1992)
 2001 Picotee Princess (Reid 1992)
 2000 Bellender Blue (Bauer/Coble 1993)
 1999 Geisha Obi (L Rich 1989)
 1998 Butterflies In Flight (Aitken 1991)
 1997 *Electric Rays (Aitken 1990)and *Iapetus (Innerst 1988) tie
 1996 *Edge of Frost (Dienstbach 1988) and *Kalamazoo (Hazzard 1989) tie
 1995 Cascade Crest (Aitken 1988)
 1994 Caprician Butterfly (Marx/Rogers 1994)
 1993 Oriental Eyes (Vogt 1984)

Winners: THE PAYNE AWARD Japanese (JI)

1992 Japanese Pinwheel (McEwen 1988)
 1991 Lilac Peaks (Vogt 1987)
 1990 Caprician Butterfly (Marx 1985)
 1989 Blueberry Rimmed (McEwen 1983)
 1988 Oriental Eyes (Vogt 1984)
 1987 Freckled Geisha (Reid 1981)
 1986 Ipsus (Innerst 1981)
 1985 Blue Marlin (Copeland 1981)
 1984 No Award
 1983 Raspberry Rimmed (McEwen 1979)
 1982 Returning Tide (McEwen 1976)
 1981 Fuji (Abel 1977)
 1980 Purple Parasol (McEwen 1977)
 1979 Prairie Velvet (Hazzard 1972)
 1978 Tuptim (Rich 1974)
 1977 No Award
 1976 Stranger in Paradise (Hager 1970)
 1975 Prairie Love Song (Hazzard 1970)
 1974 No Award
 1973 Hue and Cry (Maddocks 1970)
 1972 No Award
 1971 Numazu (Hazzard 1965)
 1970 Worley Pink (Worley 1966)
 1969 Star at Midnight (Rich 1964)
 1968 Dancing Waves (Payne 1964)
 1967 Leave Me Sighing (Maddocks 1964)
 1966 Strut and Flourish (Payne 1964)