

History:

This medal is restricted to Louisiana (LA) irises. It is named in honor of Mary Swords DeBaillon (1888-1940).

Mary Swords DeBaillon was born in Opelousas, Louisiana, and she lived in Louisiana all her life. She and her husband, Dan DeBaillon, lived on a fifteen-acre tract 5 miles from Lafayette, Louisiana. She transformed the grounds of her home into a garden renowned for its exquisite beauty and its large collection of native Louisiana plants. She had been growing a few native irises when, in 1932, she visited Caroline Dorman's home, "Briarwood" and saw the large collection of different forms of Hexagonae irises blooming in the garden. Mary DeBaillon realized how varied these irises were and what lovely garden plants they were. She then set out to collect every form of Louisiana's native irises that she could find.

Mary DeBaillon amassed the largest collection of Louisiana irises in the world. She was tireless in promoting these irises as good garden plants and in encouraging any who would listen to grow them. She gained considerable fame as a naturalist and native plant collector. She encouraged collection of the indigenous iris species to save them as civilization encroached on the swamps and bayous. A year after her death the iris enthusiasts in Lafayette organized an iris society and named it the Mary Swords DeBaillon Iris Society. This society became the Louisiana Iris Society in 1948.

The highest award an LA could receive from 1948 until 1985 was the Mary Swords DeBaillon Award. During that period, SLI was an independent unit with no affiliation whatsoever with the American Iris Society (AIS). SLI became a Cooperating Organization of AIS in 1986.

After that date the AWARD was discontinued and replaced with the Mary Swords DeBaillon MEDAL, the highest award exclusively for Louisiana Iris. The MEDAL is a part of the AIS award system. All AIS medalists, including the DeBaillon medalist, are eligible for the Dykes Medal, the highest award presented by AIS.

Winners: MARY SWORDS DEBALLION MEDAL Louisiana Iris (LA)

2012 GINNY'S CHOICE (Wayland Rudkin)
2011 RASPBERRY RILLA (Rilla Hickerson)
2010 NIGHT THUNDER (Richard Morgan)
2009 HENRY ROWLAN (M. D. Faith)
2008 GREAT WHITE HOPE (Dorman Haymon)
2007 MY FRIEND DICK (Richard Butler by M.D. Faith)
2006 PEACHES IN WINE (Heather Pryor)
2005 RED VELVET ELVIS (Kevin Vaughn)
2004 HOT AND SPICY (Heather Pryor)
2003 (No Award)
2002 EXTRAORDINAIRE - M. Dunn
2001 PRALINE FESTIVAL - Haymon
2000 CAJUN SUNRISE - Mertzweiller
1999 PROFESSOR NEIL - Mertzweiller
1998 BAYOU MYSTIQUE - M. Dunn
1997 VODOO MAGIC - Rowlan
1996 PROFESSOR JIM - Mertzweiller
1995 KAY NELSON - Granger
1994 JERI - Bertinot

1993 FRANK CHOWNING - Rowlan
1992 BAJAZZO - M. Dunn
1991 RHETT - Dunn
1990 ACADIAN MISS - Arny
1989 BLACK GAMECOCK - Chowning
1988 EASTER TIDE - Arny
1987 CLARA GOULA - Arny
1986 ANN CHOWING - Chowning
1985 (No Award)
1984 MONUMENT - Dunn
1983 EASTER TIDE - Arny
1982 CLARA GOULA - Arny
1981 BRYCE LEIGH - Chowning
1980 ANN CHOWNING - Chowning
1979 THIS I LOVE - Chowning
1978 (No Award) - Tie between: F.A.C. McCULLA – Arny and SHRIMP CREOLE - Ghio
1977 MARY DUNN - Hager
1976 EOLIAN - Arny
1975 CHARLIE'S MICHELE - Arny
1974 CLYDE REDMOND - Arny
1973 MRS. IRA NELSON - Arny
1972 ILA NUNN - Arny
1971 DELTA KING - Hager
1970 MARIE CAILLET - Conger
1969 KATHERINE L. CORNAY - Arny
1968 BLACK WIDOW - MacMillan
1967 DIXIE DEB - Chowning
1966 G.W. HOLLEYMAN - R. Holleyman
1965 FRANCES ELIZABETH - Rix
1964 W.B. MacMILIAN - Conger
1963 NEW OFFERING - C. Davis
1962 DIXIE DUSK - Matthews
1961 LOUISE ARNY - Arny
1960 AMETHYST STAR - DuBose
1959 HER HIGHNESS - Livingston (Collected)
1958 WHEELHORSE - C. Dormon
1957 BLUE CHIP - S. Smith
1956 WOOD VIOLET - R. Dormon
1955 THE KAHN - C. Dormon
1954 SAUCY MINX - C. Dormon
1953 VIOLET RAY - C. Dormon
1952 ROYAL GEM - S. Smith
1951 CHERRY BOUNCE - Nelson
1950 CADDO - Trichel
1949 BAYOU SUNSET – MacMillan
1948 MARY S. DEBAILLION - C. Dormon (Collected)