



American Iris Society Eric Nies Medal history + winners

History by Clarence Mahan

This medal is restricted to spuria (SPU) irises. It is named in honor of Eric Nies (1884-1952).

Eric Nies was born in Saugatuck, Michigan, the son of Dutch immigrants. He graduated with a BS degree from Michigan State College, where he was a star pitcher on the baseball team. In 1913, he and his wife Grace moved to Los Angeles, California, where he taught high school botany and agriculture for many years. He was a man who was praised for his beautiful singing voice, his wit and his charm.

Soon after Nies moved to California, he became interested in irises of all types. He obtained his first spuria irises from Jennett Dean, who operated one of the first iris specialist nurseries in the U.S. Spurias were his special interest. His first cross was with *I. orientalis* with 'Monspur.' He interbred seedlings from this cross, and in the second generation there was a virtual explosion of color: blue, lavender, brown, bronze and cream. Some of these early cultivars, the forerunners of great advances in spuria irises, are 'Bronzespur,' 'Saugatuck,' and 'Azure Dawn.'

Even during his lifetime, Nies was recognized as the foremost breeder of spuria irises in the world. Marion Walker took over his seedlings and breeding lines after he died in 1952. One of the Nies cultivars introduced by Walker is 'Driftwood,' which is chocolate-brown with a gold flush. This iris won the Eric Nies Award in 1959.

From 1956 until 1992 the highest award of the Spuria Iris Society (SIS) was the Eric Nies Award until in 1993 this became the Eric Nies Medal.

Eric Nies Medal:

2010 MISSOURI DREAMLAND (O. D. Niswonger)
2009 MISSOURI AUTUMN (O.D. Niswonger)
2008 ELFIN SUNSHINE (B.C. Jenkins)
2007 MISSOURI ORANGE (O.D. Niswonger)
2006 ADRIATIC BLUE (O.D. Niswonger)
2005 MISSOURI IRON ORE (O.D. Niswonger)
2004 MISSOURI RAINBOWS (O.D. Niswonger)
2003 MISSOURI SUNSET (O.D. Niswonger)
2002 SUNRISE IN MISSOURI (O.D. Niswonger)
2001 MISSOURI SPRINGS (O.D. Niswonger)
2000 ILA REMEMBERED (B. Hager)
1999 SULTAN'S SASH (O.D. Niswonger)
1998 MISSOURI RIVERS (O.D. Niswonger)
1997 COUNTESS ZEPPELIN (B. Hager)
1996 CHOCOLATE FUDGE (O.D. Niswonger)
1995 CINNAMON STICK (Niswonger)

1994 SON OF SUN (Wickenkamp)
1993 BETTY COOPER (McCown) 1st Nies MEDAL winner

Eric Nies Award replaced with Award of Merit (AM) and new Eric Nies Medal created.

Eric Nies Award:

1992 - DRESS CIRCLE (Hager)
1991 - HIGHLINE CORAL (McCown)
1990 - CINNAMON STICK (Niswonger)
1989 - DESTINATION (Hager)
1988 - JANICE CHESNICK (McCown)
1987 - SON OF SUN (Wickenkamp)
1986 - BETTY COOPER (McCown)
1985 - IMPERIAL GOLD (McCown)
1984 - ADOBE SUNSET (McCown)
1983 - HIGHLAND HONEY (McCown)
1982 - FERGIE'S POETRY (Ferguson/Runde)
1981 - IMPERIAL RUBY (McCown)
1980 - BUTTERED CHOCOLATE (Niswonger)
1979 - ILA CRAWFORD (Hager)
1978 - CLARKE COSGROVE (Hager)
1977 - PROVERB (Ferguson)
1976 - FORTY CARATS (Ferguson)
1975 - IMPERIAL BRONZE (McCown)
1974 - MARILYN HOLLOWAY (Hager)
1973 - ARCHIE OWEN (Hager)
1972 - PORT OF CALL (Hager)
1971 - HIGHLINE LAVENDER (McCown)
1970 - BARITONE (Ferguson)
1969 - CONNOISSEUR (Hager)
1968 - DAWN CANDLE (Ferguson)
1967 - ELIXIR (Hager)
1966 - WAKEROBIN (Ferguson '66)
1965 - MORNINGTIDE (Walker)
1964 - THRUSH SONG (Ferguson)
1963 - GOLDEN LADY (Coombs)
1962 - CHEROKEE CHIEF (Nies)
1961 - DUTCH DEFIANCE (Nies)
1960 - LARK SONG (Nies)
1959 - DRIFTWOOD (Nies/Walker)
1958 - WHITE HERON ((Milliken)
1957 - SUNNY DAY (H. Sass)
1956 - WADI ZEM ZEM (Milliken)