

American Iris Society: Hans and Jacob Sass Medal-IB
History written by Clarence Mahan

This medal is restricted to intermediate bearded (IB) irises. It is named in honor of Hans Sass (1868-1949) and Jacob Sass (1872-1945). Hans and Jacob Sass were born in Alt Duvenstedt, Germany and immigrated to the United States with their parents in 1884. They settled on a farm in Nebraska, and were interested in breeding garden flowers at an early age. They bred irises, peonies, daylilies, lilacs, gladiolus, lilies and other garden plants. When they became charter members of the AIS, they had been breeding irises for more than a decade. Their irises were famous for being strong growers because they used 'Amas' and *I. trojana* as tetraploid stud irises instead of the tender *I. mesopotamia* and *I. cypriana*.

The two brothers were very close and shared ideas on hybridizing as well as seedling pollen. When someone complimented Jacob on one of his seedlings, he would say: "Wait until you see what Hans has!" If you praised one of Hans's seedlings, he would say: "Wait until you see what Jake has!" They each introduced scores of irises, and what irises! Two of Hans Sass's irises won the Dykes Medal: 'Rameses' in 1932, and 'Prairie Sunset' in 1943. Likewise, two of Jacob Sass's irises won the Dykes Medal: 'The Red Douglas' in 1941, and 'Ola Kala' in 1948. Hans was the first to introduce true reblooming cultivars, the tall bearded 'Autumn King' and the intermediate bearded 'Autumn Queen,' in 1926.

Both of the Sass brothers bred all types of irises that would grow in Nebraska, but their early fame as hybridizers came for their work producing intermediate bearded irises. Crossing dwarf irises with tall bearded irises, they were the first American breeders to develop many new colors and forms in the intermediate class. They saw the great advantage of intermediate bearded irises on the windy prairie, and the value of a type of iris that filled out the bloom season between the early dwarf irises and the later tall bearded irises.

The Sass brothers were two of the world's greatest plant breeders. Their irises won many awards and are to be found throughout the pedigrees of nearly all the modern tall bearded irises in our gardens. A number of their peony introductions are still considered outstanding cultivars, including Jacob's 'Nebraska' and Hans's 'Elsa Sass,' 'Hans P. Sass,' and 'Sea Shell.'

Winners: HANS AND JACOB SASS MEDAL Intermediate Bearded (IB)

2019 LEAVE THE LIGHT ON (Riley Probst, Modesto, CA)

2018 CAT IN THE HAT (Paul Black, Portland, OR)
2017 RED HOT CHILI (Michael Sutton, Star, ID)
2016 STAR IN THE NIGHT (Paul Black, Portland, OR)
2015 MAN'S BEST FRIEND (Paul Black, Portland, OR)
2014 DAZZLING (Paul Black, Portland, OR)
2013 RIMAROUND (J. T. Aitken, Vancouver, WA)
2012 NICKEL (Paul Black, Portland, OR)
2011 GARNET SLIPPERS (Keith Keppel, Salem, OR)
2010 RUBY SLIPPERS (Keith Keppel, Salem, OR)
2009 DEVIL MAY CARE (Paul Black, Portland, OR)
2008 MING (Marky Smith, Yakima, WA)
2007 Delirium (Marky Smith, Yakima, WA)
2006 Midsummer Night's Dream (Lowell Baumunk, Littleton, CO)
2005 Starwoman Marky Smith (Yakima, WA)
2004 Gnu Rayz (Brad Kasperek, Elwood, UT)
2003 Bottled Sunshine (Hooker Nichols, Dallas, TX)
2002 Protocol (Keith Keppel, Salem, OR)
2001 Maui Gold (Terry Aitken, Vancouver, WA)
2000 Dark Waters (Terry Aitken, Vancouver, WA)
1999 Prince of Burgundy (Dave Niswonger, Cape Girardeau, MO)
1998 Cee Jay (Carol Lankow [by Terry Aitken], Kirkland, WA)
1997 Hot Spice (Terry Aitken, Vancouver, WA)
1996 Lemon Pop (Larry Lauer, Independence, OR)
1995 Blue Eyed Blond (Allan Ensminger, Lincoln, NE)
1994 Ask Alma (Carol Lankow, Kirkland, WA)
1993 Maui Moonlight (Terry Aitken, Vancouver, WA)
1992 Hot Fudge (Ben Hager Stockton, CA)
1991 Butter Pecan (Ben Hager, Stockton, CA)
1990 Hellcat (Terry Aitken, Vancouver, WA)
1989 Honey Glazed (Dave Niswonger, Cape Girardeau, MO)
1988 Oklahoma Bandit (Hooker Nichols, Dallas, TX)
1987 Az Ap (Allan Ensminger, Lincoln, NE)
1986 Rare Edition (Joe Gatty, Stockton, CA)
1985 Silent Strings (Perry Dyer, Blanchard, OK)
1984 Shampoo (Virginia Messick, Walnut Creek, CA)
1983 Peachy Face (Bennett Jones, Portland, OR)
1982 Pink Kitten (Vernon Wood, Pinole, CA)
1981 Raspberry Blush (Melba Hamblen, Roy, UT)
1980 Appleblossom Pink (Jack Boushay, Cashmere, WA)
1979 Swizzle (Ben Hager, Stockton, CA)

1978 Voila Joe (Gatty, Stockton, CA)
1977 Vamp Joe (Gatty, Stockton, CA)
1976 Sea Patrol (Cleo Palmer, Geary, OK)
1975 Butterscotch Frills (Melba Hamblen, Roy, UT)
1974 Little Bit Blue (Gordon Plough, Wenatchee, WA)
1973 Lemon Flurry (Tell Muhlestein, Orem, UT)
1972 June Prom (Alta Brown, Kirkland, WA)
1971 Sing Again (Gordon Plough, Wenatchee, WA)
1970 Drummer Boy (Schreiner's, Salem, OR)
1969 Lime Ripples (Alta Brown, Kirkland, WA)
1968-M Moonchild (Tom Craig, Escondido, CA)
1967-M Lillipinkput (Geddes Douglas, Nashville, TN)
1966-M Kiss Me Kate (Paul Cook, Bluffton, IN)
1965 Cutie (Schreiner's, Salem, OR)
1964-A Lillipinkput (Geddes Douglas, Nashville, TN)
1963 Cloud Fluff (Wilma Greenlee, Chrisman, IL)
1962 Blue Asterisk (Wilma Greenlee, Chrisman, IL)
1961-A Moonchild (Tom Craig, Escondido, CA)
1960-A Kiss Me Kate (Paul Cook, Bluffton, IN)

The Median Iris Society sponsors the annual awarding of four medals by AIS to medians in each of the recognized classifications: SDB, IB, MTB, and BB. Note that most classifications within the AIS Awards System began with Award of Merit (AM) equivalent Awards, later elevated to Medal status. At this transition, previous Award winners from a specified period of time re-competed for the higher Medal honors. Thus there are some duplicate entries. They are designated with an "A" beside the date on which they won the AM-equivalent, and an "M" on Medal status. "T" designates a tie. Any year omitted is a year in which no award was made.