

American Iris Society: Mary Swords DeBaillon Medal-LA

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)

2019 DARK DUDE (Ron Betzer)

LEMON ZEST (Kevin Vaughn)

MICHIGAN BELLE (Jill Copeland) tie

2018 DEJA VOODOO (Patrick O'Connor)

2017 OUR FRIEND DICK (Ron Killingsworth)

2016 BLUE MOUNTAIN MIST (Bernard Pryor)

2015 SEMINOLE SUNRISE (Harry Wolford)
2014 EDNA CLAUNCH (Harry Wolford)
2013 JAMES FAITH (M. D. Faith)
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 (Mary Dunn)
2001 PRALINE FESTIVAL (Dorman Haymon)
2000 CAJUN SUNRISE (Joseph Mertzweiller)
1999 PROFESSOR NEIL (Joseph Mertzweiller)
1998 BAYOU MYSTIQUE (Mary Dunn)
1997 VODOO MAGIC (Henry Rowlan)
1996 PROFESSOR JIM (Joseph Mertzweiller)
1995 KAY NELSON (Marvin Granger)
1994 JERI (Neil Bertinot)
1993 FRANK CHOWNING (Henry Rowlan)
1992 BAJAZZO (Mary Dunn)
1991 RHETT (Mary Dunn)
1990 ACADIAN MISS (Charles Army)
1989 BLACK GAMECOCK Frank Chowning
1988 EASTER TIDE (Charles Army)
1987 CLARA GOULA (Charles Army)
1986 ANN CHOWING (Frank Chowning)
1985 (No Award)
1984 MONUMENT (Mary Dunn)
1983 EASTER TIDE (Charles Army)
1982 CLARA GOULA (Charles Army)
1981 BRYCE LEIGH (Frank Chowning)
1980 ANN CHOWNING (Frank Chowning)
1979 THIS I LOVE (Frank Chowning)
1978 (No Award) - Tie between: F.A.C. McCULLA (Charles Army) and SHRIMP
CREOLE - Ghio
1977 MARY DUNN (Ben Hager)

1976 EOLIAN (Charles Army)
1975 CHARLIE'S MICHELE (Charles Army)
1974 CLYDE REDMOND (Charles Army)
1973 MRS. IRA NELSON (Charles Army)
1972 ILA NUNN (Charles Army)
1971 DELTA KING (Ben Hager)
1970 MARIE CAILLET (Sidney Conger)
1969 KATHERINE L. CORNAY (Charles Army)
1968 BLACK WIDOW (W. B. MacMillan)
1967 DIXIE DEB (Frank Chowning)
1966 G.W. HOLLEYMAN (Ruth Holleyman)
1965 FRANCES ELIZABETH (Sam Rix)
1964 W.B. MacMILIAN (Sidney Conger)
1963 NEW OFFERING (Claude Davis)
1962 DIXIE DUSK (Lenora Mathews)
1961 LOUISE ARNY (Charles Army)
1960 AMETHYST STAR (Sid DuBose)
1959 HER HIGHNESS (William Levingston)
1958 WHEELHORSE (Caroline Dormon)
1957 BLUE CHIP (Sally Smith)
1956 WOOD VIOLET (Ruth Dorman)
1955 THE KAHN (Caroline Dormon)
1954 SAUCY MINX (Caroline Dormon)
1953 VIOLET RAY (Caroline Dormon)
1952 ROYAL GEM (Sally Smith)
1951 CHERRY BOUNCE (Irene Nelson)
1950 CADDO (Lillian Trichel)
1949 BAYOU SUNSET (W.B. MacMillan)
1948 MARY S. DEBAILLION (Caroline Dormon) (Collected)