

American Iris Society: Cook-Douglas Medal-SDB
History item written by Clarence Mahan

This medal is restricted to standard dwarf bearded (SDB) irises. It is named in honor of Paul Cook (1891-1963) and Geddes Douglas (1902-1993).

Paul Cook was born in Indiana in 1891, and began hybridizing small fruits and sweet peas when he was a teenager. He soon was attracted to iris hybridizing, but his work was interrupted by Army service in France in WW I. Cook was a highly literate man, unpretentious but brilliant. He worked as rural mail carrier, an occupation that allowed him to have his afternoons free to work in the garden. He collected as many iris species as he could obtain and made extensive crosses to learn about iris genetics. His first tall bearded iris introduction, 'E. B. Williamson,' won the Roman Gold Medal from the Concorso Internazionale in Rome in 1938.

Because of the popularity of tall bearded irises, Paul Cook is probably best known for his revolutionary breeding, of that class of irises, and particularly for his 'Progenitor' line that is behind all of our modern dominant amoena irises and the 'Emma Cook' pattern. Three of his irises won the Dykes Memorial Medal: 'Sable Night' (1955), 'Whole Cloth' (1962) and 'Allegiance' (1964).

Paul Cook's work with dwarf irises was truly pioneering. His early breeding of dwarf irises led to a series of *I. arenaria* hybrids, the most notable being 'Keepsake,' 'Tampa,' and 'Promise.' He was the first to use the true *I. pumila* in his breeding programs, and this resulted in the introduction of the first of the great stud irises in the standard dwarf class: 'Baria,' 'Fairy Flax,' and 'Green Spot.' When the British Iris Society awarded Cook the Foster Memorial Plaque in 1957, Dr. L. F. Randolph wrote of him: "...his major contributions have been in the improvement of dwarf irises and in the utilization of species to produce a wide range of color-variations, in heights and blooming-periods ranging from the very early miniature dwarfs through the medians to very late-blooming tails."

Geddes Douglas was born in Nashville, Tennessee in 1902. Douglas was a chemist and businessman. In the early 1950's, he founded the Geddes Douglas Garden Center in Nashville. He became 'a leader in the Tennessee Nurserymen's Association, and served a term as president of the Southern Nursery Association. He was widely known in Tennessee as the horticultural commentator on a Nashville television program from 1954 to 1969.

'Francesca,' his first iris introduction came in 1934, the year he joined AIS. Phil Edinger has written that its greatest distinction was as a grandparent to Douglas 'Titian Lady,' the first tangerine-bearded white tall bearded iris, introduced in 1941. Douglas later introduced many award-winning tall bearded irises, including 'Extravaganza,' 'Amadine,' and 'Pagan Princess.'

Douglas's historically most important hybridizing achievements were with dwarf irises. Working with stock from Paul Cook, Douglas's crosses of *I. pumila* with tall bearded irises created the race of irises that came to be known as 'lilliputs.' Some of his best known standard dwarf cultivars are 'Lilliput,' 'Helen's Child,' 'Happy Thought,' 'Pigmy Gold,' and 'Dark Star.'

Geddes Douglas served the AIS in many ways. He was Editor for many years: 1946-1948 and 1950-1959, a Director from 1943 to 1948 and Secretary from 1949 to 1956. He received the Distinguished Service Medal in 1956. Geddes Douglas also edited the book on garden irises published by AIS, *The Iris, An Ideal Hardy Perennial*.

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Winners List: COOK-DOUGLAS MEDAL Standard Dwarf Bearded (SDB)

2019 RASPBERRY ICE (Keith Keppel, Salem, OR)

2018 MY CHER (Paul Black, Portland, OR)

2017 BRIGHT BLUE EYES (Michael Sutton, Star, ID)

2016 OPEN YOUR EYES (Paul Black, Portland, OR)

2015 MAUI SUNRISE (J. T. Aitken, Vancouver, WA)

ZOOBOOMAFOO (Paul Black, Portland)—tie vote

2014 EYE OF THE TIGER (Paul Black, Portland, OR)

2013 WISH UPON A STAR (Paul Black, Portland, OR)

2012 Bluebeard's Ghost (Paul Black, Portland, OR)

2011 Fires of Fiji (Paul Black, Portland, OR)

2010 Ultimate (Tom Johnson, Salem, OR)

2009 Puddy Tat (Paul Black, Portland, OR)

2008 Cat's Eye (Paul Black, Portland, OR)

2007 Music (Keith Keppel, Salem, OR)

2006 Ruby Eruption (Chuck Chapman, Guelph, ON)

2005 Marksman (Marky Smith, Yakima, WA)

2004 Minidragon (Marky Smith, Yakima, WA)

2003 Dot Com (Bennett Jones, Portland, OR)

2002 Little Blue-Eyes (John Weiler, Fresno, CA)

2001 Starbaby (Marky Smith, Yakima, WA)

2000 Vavoom (Allan Ensminger, Lincoln, NE)
1999 Pele (Terry Aitken Vancouver, WA)
1998 Little Showoff (Earl Hall West Alexandria, OH)
1997 Bedford Lilac (Bennett Jones Portland, OR)
1996 Pumpin' Iron (Paul Black Portland, OR)
1995 Serenity Prayer (Perry Dyer Blanchard, OK)
1994 Orange Tiger (Bennett Jones Portland, OR)
1993 Dark Vader (Lynda Miller Noblesville, IN)
1992 Sun Doll (Bennett Jones Portland, OR)
1991 Chubby Cheeks (Paul Black Portland, OR)
1990 No award
1989 Baby Blessed (Lloyd Zurbrigg Radford, VA)
1988 Raspberry Jam (Dave Niswonger Cape Girardeau, MO)
1987 Little Black Belt (Dave Niswonger Cape Girardeau, MO)
1986 Rain Dance (Bennett Jones Portland, OR)
1985 Michael Paul (Bill Jones Oklahoma City, OK)
1984 Sapphire Jewel (Melba Hamblen Roy, UT)
1983 Sapphire Gem (Hazel Schmelzer Walla Walla, WA)
1982 Starry Eyed Joe Gatty Stockton, CA)
1981 Hocus Pocus (Ben Hager Stockton, CA)
1980 Mrs. Nate Rudolph (Harley Briscoe White Hall, IL)
1979 Kentucky Bluegrass (Bennett Jones Portland, OR)
1978 Amazon Princess (Hooker Nichols Dallas, TX)
1977 Stockholm (Bee Warburton Westboro, MA)
1976 Laced Lemonade (Bee Warburton Westboro, MA)
1975 Cotton Blossom (Bennett Jones Portland, OR)
1974 Gingerbread Man (Bennett Jones Portland, OR)
1973 Regards (Ben Hager Stockton, CA)
1972 Cherry Garden (Bennett Jones Portland, OR)
1971 Grace Note (Melba Hamblen Roy, UT)
1970 Knotty Pine (John Goett Monroe, CT)
1969-M Brassie Bee (Warburton Westboro, MA)
1968-M Green Spot (Paul Cook Bluffton, IN)
1967 Blueberry Muffins (Bee Warburton Westboro, MA)
1966-M Blue Denim (Bee Warburton Westboro, MA)
1965 Easter Holiday (Jack Durrance Denver, CO)
1964 Lilli-White (Walter Welch Middlebury, IN)
1963-A Blue Denim (Bee Warburton Westboro, MA)
1962-A Brassie (Bee Warburton Westboro, MA)
1961 Fairy Flax (Paul Cook Bluffton, IN)

1960 Tinkerbelle (Geddes Douglas Nashville, TN)

1959-A (Green Spot 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.