

## American Iris Society: John C. Wister Memorial Medal-TB

History written by Clarence Mahan

This medal is restricted to tall bearded (TB) irises. It is named in honor of John C. Wister (1887-1982). John C. Wister led the organizing meeting that created the American Iris Society and became its first president, a position he held for fourteen years. He guided the society through its formative years. He was widely recognized as a man of rare management skill, leadership ability, and the highest ethical standards. R. S. Sturtevant wrote of him: "Probably few current members realize that the AIS started through the efforts and initiative of one man, John C. Wister...."

During a visit to England in 1922, Wister encouraged his many English friends to establish the British Iris Society. His contribution to the founding of the British Iris Society was formally recognized by his election as an Honorary Member and the award of the Foster Memorial Plaque. The American Iris Society awarded John Wister the Gold Medal in 1930, stating: "All Iris growers in America recognize Mr. Wister as their leader and will certainly approve the action of the Board of Directors in conferring upon him the highest recognition in their power to bestow."

John Wister was the author of four books: *The Iris*, *Lilac Culture*, *Bulbs for American Gardens*, and *Four Seasons in Your Garden*. He was the first to receive four major American horticultural awards: The Liberty Hyde Bailey Medal presented by the American Horticultural Council; the Scott Garden and Horticultural Award; the American Peony Society's A. P. Saunders Memorial Medal; and the Honor and Achievement Award of the International Lilac Society. The Brooklyn Botanic Garden presented him its Garden Medal in 1966, and that same year the Royal Horticultural Society dedicated its Daffodil and Tulip Yearbook to him, the first time an American had been so honored.

Wister was a landscape architect. He graduated from Harvard University and studied at the Harvard School of Landscape Architecture and the New Jersey Agricultural College. He served in Europe during WW I, and in his spare time visited gardens and leading horticulturists. He was secretary of the American Rose Society for many years and was a member of some fifty horticultural societies and thirty scientific and conservation organizations. He was the first director of the Arthur Hoyt Horticultural Foundation and designed and created the 240-acre public garden at Swarthmore College.

One of John C. Wister's endearing qualities was his modesty. He always denied that he was the founder of the American Iris Society, saying that it was the work of many people. Of himself, he said: "But I know I'm just an ordinary fellow who happened to come along at the right time." An ordinary fellow he was not. We all owe him a great debt of gratitude. John C. Wister, to a remarkable degree, created the American Iris Society's traditions.

All the other iris categories award only one medal for each year. The exception is this category, the very popular Tall Bearded (TB) iris category. There are three Wister Medals awarded each year. Only AIS registered judges may vote.

Winners: JOHN C. WISTER MEMORIAL MEDAL Tall Bearded (TB)

2019: AUTUMN EXPLOSION (Richard Tasco)  
DARING DECEPTION (Thomas Johnson)  
INSANIAC (Thomas Johnson)

2018: NOTTA LEMON (Tom Burseen)  
BOTTLE ROCKET (Michael Sutton)  
STRAWBERRY SHAKE (Keith Keppel)

2017: RECKLESS ABANDON (Keith Keppel)  
BEAUTY BECOMES HER (Paul Black)  
BLACK IS BLACK (Schreiner)

2016: SHARP DRESSED MAN (Thomas Johnson)  
HAUNTED HEART (Keith Keppel)  
TUSCAN SUMMER (Keith Keppel)

2015: MONEY IN YOUR POCKET (Paul Black)  
SNAPSHOT (Thomas Johnson)  
TEMPORAL ANOMALY (Richard Tasco)

2014: MONTMARTRE (Keith Keppel)  
MAGICAL (Joseph Ghio)  
BLACK MAGIC WOMAN (Richard Tasco)

2013: ABSOLUTE TREASURE (Richard Tasco)  
ELIZABETHAN AGE (Lowell Baumunk)  
INK PATTERNS (Thomas Johnson)

2012: GYPSY LORD (Keith Keppel)  
KATHY CHILTON (Frederick Kerr)  
CHIEF JOHN JOLLY (Tom Parkhill)

2011: FLORENTINE SILK (Keith Keppel)  
THAT'S ALL FOLKS (William Maryott by Joseph Ghio)  
TOUR DE FRANCE (Keith Keppel)

2010: DECADENCE (Barry Blyth)  
WINTRY SKY (Keith Keppel)  
CRACKLING CALDERA (J. T. Aitken)

2009: PAUL BLACK (Thomas Johnson)  
DRAMA QUEEN (Keith Keppel)  
ITALIAN ICE (Anna & David Cadd)\*  
SLOVAK PRINCE (Anton Mego) \* (\*tie vote)

2008: MILLENNIUM FALCON (Brad Kasperek)  
HOLLYWOOD NIGHTS (Roger Duncan)  
HEARTSTRING STRUMMER (Ben Johnson)

2007: STARRING (Joseph Ghio)  
RING AROUND ROSIE (Richard Ernst)  
DAUGHTER OF STARS (Donald Spoon)

2006: QUEEN'S CIRCLE (Frederick Kerr)  
GOLDEN PANTHER (Richard Tasco)  
HAPPENSTANCE (Keith Keppel)

2005: SEA POWER (Keith Keppel)  
FOGBOUND (Keith Keppel)  
UNCLE CHARLIE (Donald Spoon)

2004: SPLASHACATA (Richard Tasco)  
WORLD PREMIER (Schreiner)  
POEM OF ECSTASY (Ben Hager)

2003: CROWNED HEADS (Keith Keppel)

DIABOLIQUE (Schreiner)  
TOM JOHNSON (Paul Black)

2002: LOCAL COLOR (Keith Keppel)  
JURASSIC PARK (Larry Lauer)  
GYPSY ROMANCE (Schreiner)

2001: FANCY WOMAN (Keith Keppel)  
POND LILY (Evelyn Jones)  
SPIRIT WORLD (Keith Keppel)

2000: MESMERIZER (M. Byers)  
CELEBRATION SONG (Schreiner's)  
CLARENCE (L. Zurbrigg)

1999: STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN (L. Lauer)  
BOOGIE WOOGIE (H. Nichols)  
RHONDA FLEMING (R. Mullin)

1998: HELLO DARKNESS (Schreiner's)  
CONJURATION (M. Byers)  
YAQUINA BLUE (Schreiner's)

Prior to 1998, only one Wister Medal was awarded each year.

1997 ACOMA (Magee)  
1996 THORNBIRD (M. Byers)  
1995 BEFORE THE STORM (S. Innerst)  
1994 HONKY TONK BLUES (Schreiners)  
1993 SILVERADO (Schreiners)