

Handbook For Judges and Show Officials

Ch 13 Judging AR & AB Iris



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NOTE: To facilitate understanding the chapter on judging aril and arilbred iris, it is recommended that judges read “Essay: Terminology for Aril and Arilbred Iris” which can be found in the printed edition of the *Handbook for Judges* and online.

This chapter and others from the *Handbook for Judges* are available online. It is recommended that judges and other readers scrutinize the Introduction and Table of Contents in the full version of the *Handbook* in order to know the full list of available resources, e.g., Glossary, essays, Judge’s Activity Record, etc.

Chapter 13

JUDGING ARIL and ARILBRED IRIS

Approved by the AIS Board of Directors, March 9, 2021

These iris are so different and variable that it is difficult to judge them properly without a thorough knowledge and understanding of the entire group. Therefore, it is vital that judges review “Terminology: Understanding Aril and Arilbred Iris” before entering the garden or any exhibition.

Arilbreds must exhibit at least two aril flower characteristics. To review these characteristics, see the illustrations in the chapter, “Terminology: Understanding Aril and Arilbred Iris.” The recognizable aril flower characteristics include:

Regelia Type

1. Elongated standards or falls as in *Iris korolkowii*.
2. Linear beards and beards on standards as well as the falls.
3. Conspicuous veining.
4. A prominent V-shaped spot in contrasting color.

Oncocyclus Type

5. Broadly domed and reflexed standards as in *Iris gatesii*.
6. Ruffled and reflexed standards as in *I. lortetii*.
7. Accentuated globular form as in *I. susiana*.
8. Extremely broad falls.
9. Well recurved falls.
10. Thick, heavy, or broadly diffuse beards as in *I. susiana* or *I. gatesii*.
11. Exaggerated styles as in *I. bismarckiana* and *I. iberica*.
12. A definable signal spot at the end of the beard.
13. Flaring and lanceolate falls as in *I. acutiloba*.
14. Narrow and flaring falls as in *I. paradoxa*.
15. Linear beards as in *I. meda* and *I. maculata*.
16. Beards on standards as well as falls.

Although some of these examples appear to be in direct conflict, they have been chosen to represent the incredibly wide and varied forms.

GARDEN JUDGING

Introduced Varieties & Seedlings of Aril & Arilbred Iris

Standard comparison procedures should be used for all evaluations because point scales would be difficult to apply to the wide variation of flowers and plant types encountered. In both arils and arilbreds the flower in all of its aspects should receive approximately two-thirds (2/3) of the total evaluation credit, and the plant and stem one-third (1/3).

Overall, the judge should evaluate cultivars for desirable improvements, diversities, goals, and typical expectations for the type and class. Plants should be evaluated for increased cultural and weather tolerances, regularity of bloom, number of stems, rate of increase, general vigor, better substance and disease resistance. This applies to both arils and arilbreds, but is particularly pertinent for arils, because this is a prime objective of their hybridizing. The judge must remember that there is no single "proper" form for either arils or arilbreds. Diversity of form and flower aspects are both inherent and desirable. Clean coloration is desired in all types and should not appear "muddy" or "dirty." Stems should carry the flowers above the foliage and be strong enough to support the blossoms through normal weather conditions. Flower size should be in relatively good proportion to the stem and should be distinctive as well as possess charm, grace, and poise.

EVALUATION OF ARIL FLOWERS: Hybridizing goals include new and improved forms; new colors and combinations of color; transfer of signal color, size, and shape to different plants; and different patterns and combinations of patterns.

Flower form is of prime importance. While no variety should be considered unfavorably because it has a different and unfamiliar form, the goal is to accentuate and enhance the most aesthetically appealing features of aril species in their progeny and hybrids. With over 50 different species to work with there is a large array of possibilities and challenges for hybridizers.

Historically, the round, globular form of many *Oncocyclus* species have made them the most sought-after arils by gardeners and plant collectors. The recurved falls, domed closed standards and wide flower segments which create this form are highly prized in new aril hybrids of the OH and OG groups.

Hybrids with a preponderance of Regelia features (RH and RC groups) with their less broad petals and more open, vertical segments are likely to display a somewhat oval form in overall aspect. Standards that flop or splay outward at their tips cause undesirable disruption of the symmetry of the flower. Severely narrowed hafts are undesirable because they detract from the fullness of the flower.

Excessive recurving, rolling, or "snapping" (a tucking under causing a horizontal petal break) of the falls is highly undesirable as this destroys flower form. Likewise, pinching or swirling of blossom segments is unacceptable. These are also undesirable traits in arilbreds.

Color aspects are more highly rated in arils than in most other iris types, for not only flower color, but signals, decorative patterns, veining, stippling, and dotting are evaluated. Signals should be completely visible when viewed from a horizontal plane and not partially hidden from view by excessive recurving of the falls. Size, color, shape, and definition of signals are considered in their effect on total flower evaluation. If present, decorative patterns, veining and stippling should be well defined and have good color intensity. Irregular color flecking, streaking, or splotching is not desirable, for they reflect imperfections or disease rather than true aril traits.

EVALUATION OF ARILBRED FLOWERS: Evaluation of arilbred flowers is basically the same as for arils. Hybridizing goals include transferring the exotic forms, signals, colorations, and patterns of the arils to plants having more hardiness, increased branching and bud count, better disease resistance, and greater adaptability to growing conditions. The extent to which these efforts have been successful is the primary basis for judging arilbreds within each subclass.

One of the most valuable attributes of the oncocyclus is the prominent dark or brightly colored signal, which is completely lacking in other bearded iris. Great progress has been made during recent years to transfer these signals to cultivars of one-half or more aril complement, some of which now display signals larger than found on most oncocyclus and oncogelias. Hybridizing advancements in the 1/2-aril OGBs have resulted in some plants displaying signals as large as or larger than those displayed by most arilbreds of more than 1/2 aril complement. Flower forms and beards are also more aril-like than found on some of more than 1/2 aril complement. A judge must be aware of these progressions in hybridizing and not arbitrarily dismiss such plants as being wrongly classified. He or she should also remember that arilbreds of more than 1/2 aril complement can have widely differing height and flower forms depending on whether the aril content is predominately Oncocyclus or predominately Regelia.

Flower characteristics of the oncocycli are particularly sought after, for they are the most beautiful and spectacular. Regelia content sometimes results in unusual bright color patterns.

Color aspects are also more highly rated in arilbreds than in most other iris types. Irregular color flecking, streaking, or splotching in arilbreds that is caused by broken color genetics is acceptable.

The same aril flower characteristics desired in tall arilbreds are expected in arilbred dwarfs and medians. Some may inherit the spot and ray patterns of *Iris pumila*, with or without signal and veining derived from their aril ancestry. Experience in growing both dwarfs and arils will help a judge to distinguish between these various patterns.

EVALUATION OF ARILBRED BRANCHING: Branches should be well placed and evenly spaced to display each flower separately without interference from another and should hold blossoms away from the stem. A judge must remember that amount of aril content is inversely related to the degree of branching displayed by arilbred cultivars. Arilbred dwarfs and medians will usually have less branching than the taller arilbreds.

Plants of less than one-half aril complement should display branching almost equal to that of the Eupogon parentage. Branching of plants having one-half aril complement is expected to be intermediate between the aril and Eupogon parents. Half-bred cultivars involving tall bearded should usually display one branch, a spur, plus terminal, with a total of four buds. Some cultivars have more or less branching and number of buds, but the cultivar should be judged as a whole, giving proper considerations to flower and plant. Varieties of over one-half aril complement typically have no branching whatsoever.

Arilbred medians should not be merely “stubby” versions of tall arilbreds, but show the appealing proportion and balance expected in median iris. Foliage, stalk, and flowers should be in balance and appealing. Some, particularly those with ½ aril complement, may show enlarged, globular blooms from *Oncocyclus* ancestry that would be out of scale in the SDB and IB classes. This ‘onco look” is a desirable trait in arilbred medians.

Similarly, arilbred dwarfs should convey the daintiness and charm expected of MDBs and small SDBs. Floriferousness should compensate for the usual absence of branching.

Weather and cultural practices strongly influence arilbreds depending upon aril content, and can result in erratic plant performance, degree of branching, and atypical expressions in the flowers. It is sometimes necessary to observe the cultivar for several years prior to final evaluation.

Arilbreds because of their quite varied types of bearded and aril ancestry that may be combined in different ways, will not always satisfy the bud count and branching expectations for the bearded classes they may otherwise resemble.

Most importantly, the judge should evaluate the amount and degree of desirable aril flower characteristics present in the cultivar for its particular class, as this is a prime objective of arilbred hybridizing. Two or more aril flower characteristics are required of all arilbreds, and three or more aril flower characteristics are required for arilbreds of 1/2 or more aril complement to be considered eligible for awards.

However, careful evaluations of progress toward plant objectives are also necessary.

A judge should grow as many types as possible so the performance of aril/arilbred plants may be continually observed and evaluated. Visits to gardens of other growers in the area will offer added insight for evaluations. Final consideration should be reserved until a two year clump is observed.

EXHIBITION JUDGING

Horticultural Entries of Aril & Arilbred Iris

Exhibition judging of iris is distinctly different from judging in the garden. On the show bench a judge is not trying to determine the qualities and attributes of a particular variety. Rather, the exhibition judge must pass judgement in two areas:

1. Cultural perfection - how well the specimen has been grown by comparing it to the maximum typical performance of the variety being judged.
2. Condition and grooming - how well the specimen was prepared for entry into the exhibition.

Exhibition judging evaluates the specimen as it is shown at the moment the judge sees it.

All show chairs should be in possession of the latest *AIS and ASI Checklists*, which will indicate which varieties are classified as arils or arilbreds and in which class (OB, OGB, RB) and subclass (<1/2, 1/2, >1/2 aril complement) they should be considered. This information is also available digitally on the ASI website and the Iris Encyclopedia (wiki). In the event of discrepancies, the AIS Register (electronic version preferred) supersedes the other resources for exhibition classification purposes.

Exhibition awards are given to the grower in recognition of skill and accomplishment in culture and grooming. The aril-arilbred section is peculiar in that some cultivars and species are relatively easy growers, while others demand a very high degree of horticultural skill. In close selections for higher awards, the judge should consider the degree of accomplishment and skill required of the respective exhibitors.

Familiarity with the variety or species is a necessary prerequisite to properly judge each cultivar against its potential performance. A judge may find it difficult to give a higher award to a single-flowered aril or arilbred with no branching over a branched variety with several buds, but the judge must remember that emphasis should be on what is typical of the variety within its particular class.

When selecting specimens for higher awards from first-place ribbon winners, a judge should remember that it is a potential Best Specimen of Show. This does not suggest that only a latest introduction should be chosen, but an outdated cultivar of obvious inferiority to current expected criteria should not be selected. Iris selected for such higher awards must clearly display the expected number of aril flower characteristics (two for arilbreds of <1/2 aril complement, three for all other arilbreds).

The following point scales are guidelines to indicate relative importance when considering the various aspects. Each variety should be considered for its individual merits, with no comparisons to cultivars of other classes.

There are separate points for arils and arilbreds because arils have no branching. When judging arilbreds of over one-half aril complement, the point scale for arils should be used.

SCALE OF POINTS
Exhibition Judging of Horticultural Aril & Arilbred Iris

			ARIL	ARILBRED	
1. Cultural Perfection					75
	a. Flower				
		i. Form	25	20	
		ii. Color	25	20	
		iii. Size	10	10	
		iv. Substance	10	10	
	b. Stem				
		i. Height & Straightness	5	5	
		ii. Branching & Bud Placement	N/A	10	
2. Conditioning & Grooming					25
TOTAL					100

1. Cultural Perfection - 75 points

a. Flower

i. Form - Consistent petal size and symmetry of form are most important. If necessary, request show officials to rotate the specimen for better viewing. A freshly opened aril or arilbred blossom will not rate the highest scoring for form because typical form is usually not reached until 8 to 24 hours after opening. Swirling or excessive overlapping of standards and a tighter than normal fall recurve may indicate a not fully opened blossom.

Irregular or abnormal recurving, rolling, or snapping of the falls is a serious fault, and should be heavily penalized. Pinching, twisting, or rolling at the edges of flower segments should receive like penalty. Severe or multiple tears and deformities are

major faults, and the specimen should be devalued accordingly. However, a very small tear or deformity is a minor fault and does not warrant heavy penalty unless it adversely affects the flower form.

ii. Color - Not only flower color, but signals, color spots, decorative patterns, veining, stippling, and dotting are evaluated. Color should be typical for the variety, and not pale or abnormally intense, and should be of even saturation for the variety. Irregular flecking, marbling, and splashing of colors are faults, unless such is typical of the variety and is always displayed. Signals and spot patterns should be of normal size and color intensity, as should decorative patterns, veining, stippling, and dotting. Flowers should be faulted if there is fading and diffusing of color in any aspect.

iii. Size -The specimen should display a full-sized flower or flowers in normal proportion to the stem. It is common for aril and arilbred flowers to be larger in proportion to the stem than is acceptable in the other bearded iris classes. If undersized for the variety potential, it should be penalized. Specimens with larger flowers than normal for the variety do not automatically warrant devaluation as being overgrown. If the stem is also larger and in good proportion, the exhibit should be scored very high in recognition of superior accomplishment by the exhibitor.

iv. Substance - Evaluation of flower substance is also reflected in form. It should be adequate to retain the specimen's definition of form in every case. It may be starchy and readily visible, or in some cultivars, of a more resilient nature. The specimen should show no signs of desiccation from wind, refrigeration, sun, or frost.

b. Stem

i. Height and Straightness - Aril stems should be almost straight, of typical height for the variety, and of adequate strength and rigidity to support the flower.

Arilbred stems should also be nearly straight, but some cultivars may normally have slight curving or gentle "s" curving. They should be of typical height and strong enough to well support the blossoms.

The specimen should be evaluated in total to evaluate symmetry and balance. If the judge has concerns or suspects trickery, the judge may request that show officials remove the specimen from the container in order to evaluate.

ii. Branching and Bud Placement - Branches should not be crowded near the top portion of the stem but be present in the upper 2/3 of the stalk. Branches, if present,

should be evenly spaced with buds pointing upward and outward, and should not occur at random around the stem, but should be staggered opposite from one another on a single plane throughout the length of the stem. A branch and alternate spur on the same side is badly out of balance. A spur may sometimes be found on stems of varieties which typically have no branching. Evaluation of such should include credit for the extra bud, placement, balance, plus overall size and condition of the specimen.

When multiple blossoms are present, they should be separately displayed and not crowded against the stalk or one another. A stem with two open blossoms is in much better balance if it has an opposing spur. Number of open flowers doesn't necessarily rate one specimen over another having fewer, if the extra bloom is crowded or throws the stem out of balance. A stem having one open blossom with a well-developed bud plus a spur is better balanced and may rate higher. Arils require a terminal blossom. Arilbred specimens lacking a terminal blossom should be recognized as severely out of balance and penalized accordingly, unless branching and other blooms are present to create balance. An empty socket is unacceptable at any bloom point.

Arilbreds will not always satisfy the bud count and branching expectations for the bearded classes they may otherwise resemble and should be judged accordingly.

B. Condition and Grooming – 25 points

The skills of the exhibitor are evaluated here. The exhibit should reflect visible improvement in the flower and stem resulting from the exhibitor's grooming. This includes neat removal of diseased or damaged foliage; cleanliness of the stem and flower; absence of insect infestations; firm upright positioning of the specimen; facing of the specimen; and a neat removal of spent blossoms, including the ovaries, with no damage to the spathes. The result should be a specimen being presented in its best possible appearance.

A judge may encounter trickery such as pinning or taping of flower parts, flower replacement from another stem, splicing of stems, unattached leaves or leaf spathes, cracking of stems to make them appear straighter, or hidden supports and wedges. If any such alterations are found, the entry is to be disqualified from competition.

Entry tags should indicate the Aril Society International (ASI) classification of the cultivar if not included in the Division/Section/Class section of the tag. Examples: "Hakuna Matata" – AB(OGB-), "Tadzhiki Bandit" – AR(RC). Black or blue ink is recommended for filling out all entry tags.

EXHIBITION JUDGING

Aril & Arilbred Iris Seedlings

When evaluating seedlings, the judge should consider the stem and flowers in comparison to named aril or arilbred varieties of the same class for possible Exhibition Certificate award. Condition and grooming are not considered as with named varieties. The seedling should display enough aspects of stem and flower for a judge to reasonably determine if the seedling is an improvement over-existing cultivars and warrants testing of garden aspects for possible future introduction. If, in the opinion of the judge, the equality of any seedling does not warrant further consideration as a garden flower, no award should be given.

Exhibitors of seedlings should indicate only the appropriate Aril Society International (ASI) classification on the portion of the entry tag visible to the judges. The seedling number should only be stated in the part revealed when the tear off portion of the tag is removed. Such tags could read “Arilbred – OGB sdlg” or “Arilbred – RB+ sdlg” or “Aril – Onco hybrid sdlg.” The inclusion of the height descriptor ABD, ABM, or AB(T) for arilbreds would also be of assistance to the judges in their evaluation. This would be adequate for the judge’s consideration and prevents recognition of any hybridizer’s seedling number.

FLOWER AND STEM – The flower and all its aspects is the major focus. The aril heritage and complement must be taken into consideration to evaluate all components. **DISTINCTIVENESS** – This is a very important quality for aril and arilbred seedlings. For arilbreds, that distinctiveness should flow out of the aril characteristics.

(VISIBLE) ARIL CHARACTERISTICS – The expression of the aril heritage in arilbreds is of utmost importance. Arilbreds of less than ½ aril complement must exhibit at least 2 aril characteristics. All other arilbreds must exhibit at least 3 aril characteristics. It is not desirable to make arilbreds that look like tall bearded, median or dwarf cultivars.

In judging seedling classes, judges should remember that they are not seeking a superior horticultural specimen as defined in horticultural judging. Rather, they are judging a new cultivar which not only conforms to the guidelines for the class, but exhibits desirable qualities comprising improvement and/or innovation. Condition is not a factor in judging seedlings. In fact, it is preferable that the stalks are not groomed, so that the judge can more easily evaluate such features as branching and bud count. Spent flowers can be removed if done so that the ovary remains visible.

The Exhibition Certificate (EC) is awarded to the Best Seedling if one is chosen. The certificate is not a recommendation for introduction since on the show bench it is not possible to evaluate plant qualities. The Best Seedling Award should not be given when no entry is worthy. Exhibition Certificates are also awarded to seedlings that receive votes from at least five judges on special seedling ballots. Judges visiting a show are urged to review the seedling entries and use these ballots to reward excellence where they find it.

SCALE OF POINTS
Exhibition Judging of Aril & Arilbred Iris Seedlings

		ARIL	ARILBRED
1. Flower			
	a. Form	25	15
	b. Color	25	15
	c. Size	10	10
	d. Substance	15	10
2 Stem			
	a. Proportion & Straightness	10	5
	b. Branching & Bud Placement	N/A	10
3. Distinctiveness		15	15
4. (Visible) Aril Characteristics		N/A	20
TOTAL		100	100

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Notes for Ch 13 Judging AR & AB Iris

