

Handbook For Judges and Show Officials

Ch 15 Louisiana Iris



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Note: This chapter and others from the *Handbook for Judges* are available online. It is recommended that judges and other readers cruise 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 15

LOUISIANA IRIS

Approved by the AIS Board of Directors, May 11, 2021

Definition: The iris comprising the subsection Apogon (without beard or beardless), series Hexagonae, are commonly referred to as Louisiana iris. Currently, the five recognized species within the series Hexagonae are: *Iris hexagona*, *I. fulva*, *I. brevicaulis*, *I. giganteaerulea*, and *I. nelsonii*. Louisiana iris are unique among the genus *Iris* for their cultural adaptability, range of colors and flower forms.

GARDEN JUDGING

The worth of any iris cultivar should be based solely on garden performance and should not be influenced by personal likes and dislikes. Numerous observations are necessary to ensure consistency in performance. Proper judging requires that both the desirable and undesirable traits of a cultivar be considered. Observations should not be limited to just the blooming season.

Experience is the best teacher and is obtained through years of growing and evaluating iris. Initially, a judge should evaluate each characteristic individually. The following scale is suggested as a guideline for garden evaluations.

SCALE OF POINTS

Garden Judging of Introduced Louisiana Iris

1. Plant			40
	a. Vigor & Stamina	20	
	b. Foliage	10	
	c. Stalk	10	
2. Flower			60
	a. Color	20	
	b. Substance & Durability	15	
	c. Beauty & Distinctiveness	25	
TOTAL			100

1. Plant – 40 points

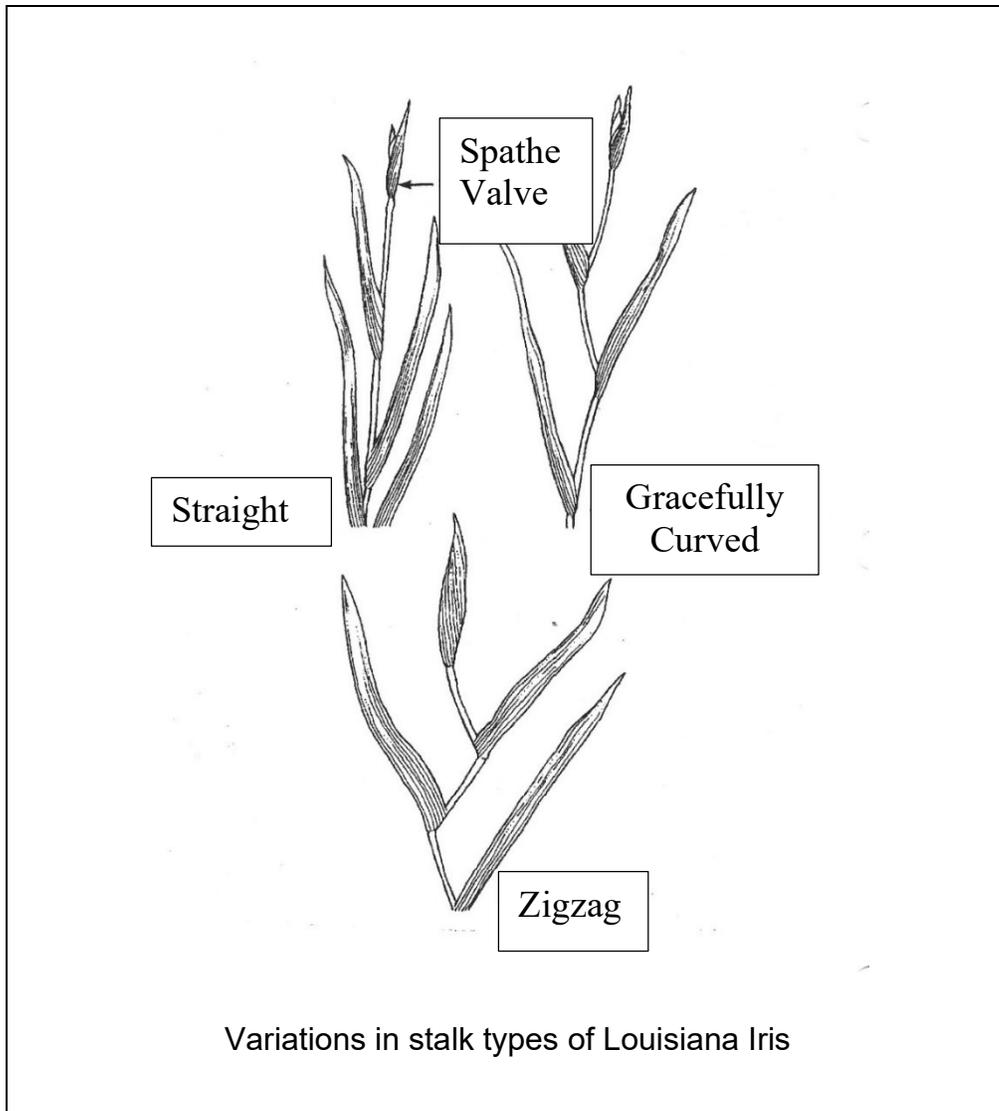
a. Vigor and Stamina (20 points). A good garden iris must grow and multiply under normal garden culture and conditions, tolerate normal variations in weather conditions and be free of disease. Particular attention should be given to the presence of rust and leaf spot. Leaf miners will cause gray streaking in the foliage and general loss of vigor, but this is associated with poor culture and should not be considered a fault. Each rhizome must produce a minimum of two offsets per season. It should be considered a fault if a cultivar produces few or no increases. Rhizome sizes vary a great deal in Louisiana iris. Clumps tend to be larger and less compact than in other types of iris. In areas where summers are long, hot and have a low relative humidity, outer leaves tend to turn brown and dry out. This should not be considered a fault but can be exacerbated by poor culture conditions, especially insufficient or inconsistent moisture.

b. Foliage (10 points). The foliage of Louisiana iris species and cultivars varies in length, thickness, width, and coloring. When evaluating the foliage, no criticism should be made of variations, provided the foliage is proportionate and free of disease. Both yellow-green and blue-green foliage are acceptable, although specimens with blue-green foliage may be less susceptible to rust and leaf spot than those having yellow-green foliage. Careful observation must be used to determine that the foliage is truly yellow-green and not yellow-green as a result of chlorosis, which can be caused by poor culture, damaged roots, compacted roots, and nutrient deficiencies. It should also be noted that foliage in colder climates tends to be more yellow, especially in early spring when the weather is cool and damp but should green up quickly when the weather warms.

Two unique traits of Louisiana iris foliage are particularly misunderstood: crinkling or pleating of foliage and the irregular spathe valve at the terminal position. Crinkling or pleating of the foliage, especially on the bloom stalk, is normal and should not be considered a fault. The terminal bud spathe valve is normally longer on one side than the other and might extend above the flower or curl under the petals. (See illustration.) This is not a fault.

c. Stalk (10 points). Louisiana iris stalks may be straight, gracefully curved, or zigzag. All are acceptable provided they have sufficient strength to remain upright without staking except when seed pods are maturing. The zigzag stalk is attributable to *Iris brevicaulis* and should not be confused with stalks that develop a bend or curve before straightening out. *Iris brevicaulis* stalks tend to lean from vertical, often with arching foliage, with flowers facing upward and with the terminal bloom rarely extending above

the foliage and should not be faulted for doing so. This courtesy does not extend to hybrid cultivars with *I. brevicaulis* in their lineage.



For general garden purposes, the height of the stalk should be 10 to 50 inches (25 to 125 cm). Stalk height should be relatively consistent within a clump. The height and thickness of the stalk should be in proportion to the size of the flowers. However, small flowers can look proportional on a tall thick stalk in some circumstances.

New cultivars under consideration for introduction or awards should carry a minimum of six buds per stalk. An exception to this rule may be made for cultivars that are very vigorous and produce a large number of stalks per clump and still have enough offsets to ensure good bloom the next season. However, a large number of blooms on each stalk is preferable.

Louisiana iris grown in cooler climates will tend to be shorter and have a lower bud count with fewer bud positions than the same varieties grown in warmer areas. Iris in cooler climates should not be penalized. Judges should become familiar with what is normal for a particular region or climate. Total bud count and the number of positions (i.e., location of the buds on the stalk) should be weighed against stalk height. Cultivars taller than 30 inches (90 cm) should carry four or more positions. Most modern cultivars should carry two buds at most positions. Shorter cultivars, under 30 inches (90 cm), may have fewer buds and bud positions but should not have points deducted as long as the number of buds and bud positions are proportional to the height of the stalk. Buds should be distributed proportionally over the upper two-thirds of the stalk to achieve a well-balanced appearance. Side branches which typically emerge from the lower two positions and extend upward 6 to 16 inches should not interfere with the flowers at other positions. Branches that cause a clustered or bunched look are not desirable. Culture and weather conditions can affect side branch formation and this feature may be variable.

Flowers at the terminal position must extend above the foliage in hybrid cultivars with the exception that, as previously noted, one side of the spathe valve may extend above the terminal bloom (see illustration). Cultivars of pure *Iris brevicaulis* will not extend their stalks above the foliage and should not be faulted. It should be considered a fault when the angle between stalk and foliage is acute or when foliage grows closely to the bloom stalk preventing buds and branches from emerging properly. Because the last bud position in Louisiana iris often is located down in the foliage, it may bloom tight against the stalk, facing forward, and should not be considered a fault. Occasionally, a cultivar may have flowers that open facing forward rather than upward, much like a gladiolus. While this is rather unusual, it should not be considered a fault if it is a consistent trait of the cultivar.

Louisiana iris do not always open the terminal bloom first and must not be faulted for not doing so. In most cases, the blooms will open sequentially and often two or more buds may open at once. Opening multiple blooms at once can be a problem unless there are a sufficient number of buds to allow the stalk to remain in flower for a maximum number of days. A Louisiana cultivar is expected to have blooms open over a period of two weeks.

2. Flower – 60 points

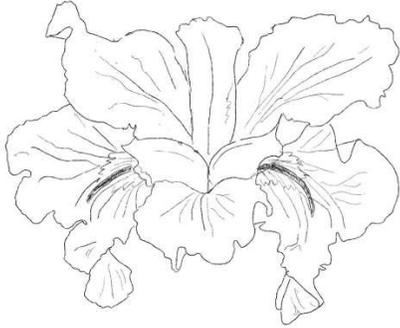
a. Color (20 points). Color is one of the most noted features of the Louisiana iris. All the primary colors and their combinations are found in the parent species and their natural hybrids. Colors should be clean, clear, and colorfast. An exception to the rule of color fastness occurs when fading results in a pleasing effect, such as a flower that opens a light yellow then fades to creamy white. Blended colors should produce a bright, pleasing color or color combination, not dull or drab. Bicolors should have a good color contrast and be in harmony. A new and different color or color combination must not overshadow the other characteristics of the cultivar. New color patterns, such as pronounced veining, spray pattern, halos, wide edges, multiple-colored rims, broken color, or luminata patterns should be evaluated along with other good characteristics. Streaking and blotches of color on floral segments is acceptable but should be consistent. If the streaking or blotches of color are present on one standard, the pattern should be repeated on the other standards and on every bloom or should be considered a fault.

b. Substance and Durability (15 points). Substance is the physical tissue makeup of the flower segments that directly affects the ability to maintain form and color. Flowers, under normal weather conditions, should last two to three days and still maintain their color and form without becoming floppy. Excessive substance can be a problem with both diploid and tetraploid cultivars. Flowers that never completely open or have edges that curl inward should be penalized.

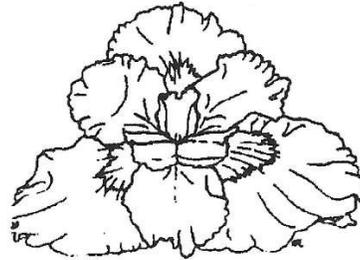
Texture is the surface appearance of the floral parts and is described by such terms as leathery, satiny, silky, velvety, rough or smooth. Any texture is acceptable if the underlying substance is good and adds to the beauty and distinctiveness of the flower. Certain colors are enhanced by texture, such as crepe-like pastels, satiny reds and velvety purples.

Flower Forms for Louisiana Iris

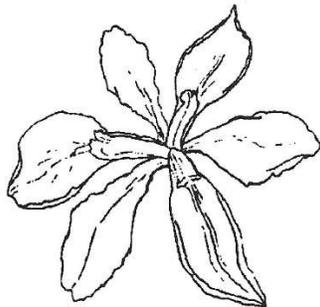
Recurved



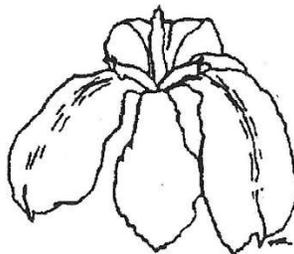
Overlapping



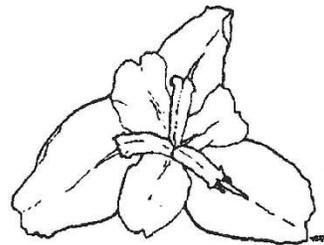
Open



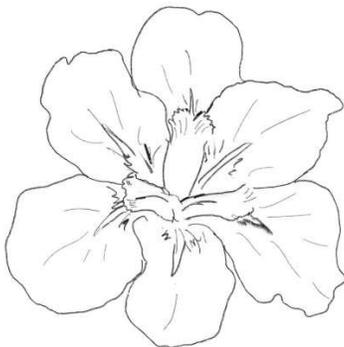
Pendent



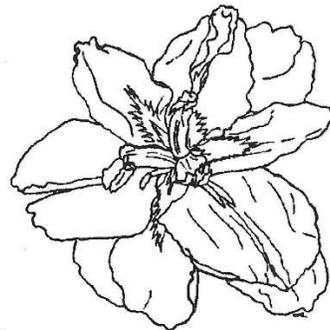
Semi-Flaring to Flat



Cartwheel



Semi-Double



c. Beauty and Distinctiveness (25 points). Many factors may contribute to beauty and distinctiveness, such as texture, form, style arms and signals. For an iris to be worthy of introduction or awards, it should possess distinctiveness as well as beauty. However, this one factor should not overshadow the other requirements.

The flower forms available in Louisiana iris are numerous and considered one of their major attributes. All forms are acceptable, and great care should be exercised to preserve this diversity. The basic and most frequently described forms are flat, flaring, pendent, recurved, open, overlapping, cartwheel and double or semi-double.

Contributing to the individuality and distinctiveness as well as the form is the ruffling of the standards and falls. However, the smooth, tailored form is equally good. Care should be taken when determining that the form is double or semi-double. It is important to differentiate between additional petaloids on the double flower form compared to an extra standard or fall, which does not constitute doubling. The latter is considered a freak bloom caused by weather or growing conditions.

Style arms are also important to the overall beauty and distinctiveness of Louisiana iris. Frequently the style arms are a different color than the standards and falls, and such variations should be considered desirable if they produce pleasing and harmonious contrasts. Style arms may be ruffled or edged with a different color and vary in length and width.

Signals are a marking, typically in yellow, orange, green, white or a combination of colors, located on the falls in the location of what would be the beard on bearded iris. Signals vary from very large to almost absent. Some cultivars have signals on both standards and falls. In addition, when the signals are identical on all six petals, it may be referred to as a 'star signal'. A line signal is a raised pubescent area and sometimes is referred to as a crest. The signals may radiate out some distance on the petal and be displayed on a different color background or outlined and extended by a contrasting color. All of these variations should be considered desirable if they add to the overall beauty and distinctiveness of the flower.

EXHIBITION JUDGING

Horticultural Entries of Louisiana 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.

Point scales are used to encourage consistent evaluation of specimens on the show bench. Swift and quality performance is demanded of the exhibition judge, making it impractical to point score every entry. The point scale is useful to the student judge in learning the special requirements of the class. It is especially useful in selecting the best specimen of the show. Consistency must be observed in judging all classes.

SCALE OF POINTS

Exhibition Judging of Horticultural Louisiana Iris

1. Cultural Perfection					75
	a. Stalk			35	
		i. Foliage	10		
		ii. Height & Form	5		
		iii. Bloom Positions & Placement	20		
	b. Flower			40	
		i. Size	10		
		ii. Color	10		
		iii. Form & Substance	20		
2. Condition & Grooming					25
TOTAL					100

1. Cultural Perfection - 75 points

Louisiana iris species are a diverse group, with each displaying unique traits in foliage, stalks, flower form, and range of colors. This great diversity within the five recognized species makes for an even more diverse group of hybrid cultivars. Each cultivar should be weighed on its own merits, with no preferential treatment based on personal likes and dislikes. Cultivars that typically display a given fault should not be penalized for doing so within their own class. This is not to say that cultivars displaying typical faults should not have points deducted when under consideration for section awards.

a. Stalk (35 points).

i. Foliage (10 points). The foliage should be free of brown tips, tears, and blemishes. Trimming should be held to a minimum.

Note: Also refer to the discussion under Foliage in Garden Judging.

ii. Height & Form (5 points). Louisiana iris are not subdivided by any form of height classification. However, the shorter cultivars, 30 inches (90 cm) and lower, should be considered just as worthy for special awards as the more familiar taller cultivars. Tall-growing cultivars should be left as tall as possible yet trimmed to a reasonable viewing level for judges. Any height restrictions for entries should be printed in the show schedule.

Note: Also refer to the discussion under Stalk in Garden Judging.

iii. Bloom Positions & Placement (20) points. Buds should be able to open without interference from foliage or other buds. The number of bud positions on the stalk will vary based on the height of the stalk. Total bud count cannot be adequately predicted in a show setting in real time since buds in double or triple sockets will appear in succession and will not all be visible at one time. Although not all buds may be apparent, the judge can count bud positions. Judges should not guess at the total number of buds based on a single moment in time. It is difficult to assess the ability of blooms to open freely and unencumbered looking at buds and stalks should not be discounted because of unopened flowers. Side branches, which typically emerge from the last two positions and range in length from 6 to 16 inches, should not interfere with the buds at other positions and should be strong enough to display blossoms properly. Ideally, buds will be distributed proportionally over the upper two-thirds of the stalk to achieve a well-balanced appearance.

Note: Also refer to the discussion of Bud Placement under Stalk in Garden Judging.

b. Flower (40 points).

i. Size (10 points). Just as stalk heights vary in Louisiana iris, so do the bloom sizes. Ideally, the bloom size and stalk structure should be in proportion to the height of the stalk. The bloom size should be typical of the cultivar as grown in the show area.

ii. Color (10 points). The flower color should be true to the cultivar. Caution should be exercised in questioning a cultivar's identity based solely on coloring. Artificial lighting sources can make certain colors appear different. Early-season or cool-weather bloom may cause colors to be more intense and patterns more vivid. Color can also be an indicator as to the age of the flower. Colors tend to fade and lose their brilliance as blooms go past peak. However, color should not be the only factor used in determining the age of a bloom. There are cultivars that typically open rather dark and then rapidly fade to a much lighter shade.

iii. Form and Substance (20 points). The flower forms available in Louisiana iris are numerous and considered one of their major attributes. No one form should be considered preferable over another. The basic and most frequently described forms are shown in a previous diagram. The flower form must be typical of the cultivar. Care should be taken when determining that the form is double or semi-double. It is important to differentiate between additional petaloids or simply an extra standard or fall, which does not constitute doubling. The latter is considered a freak bloom caused by weather or growing conditions and should be penalized.

Substance is the physical tissue structure of the flower segments and directly affects the ability to maintain form and color. A judge must learn to observe, not feel, substance.

2. Condition and Grooming - 25 points

The skills of the exhibitor are evaluated here. The specimen 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.

Selection and proper presentation are all-important in the exhibition of iris. The process should begin days in advance of actually cutting a stalk. Grooming should not be obvious and should not alter the normal appearance of the cultivar. Louisiana iris foliage should not be trimmed to look like any other type of iris. The typical Louisiana iris has a good deal of foliage on the stalk, and trimming should be held to a minimum. The foliage should be trimmed in such a way that normal contours are retained.

Blemished and fading blooms should be carefully removed without damaging the spathe. Any evidence of removal or trimming on the spathe should cause a deduction in grooming points. Stalks, foliage and flowers should be clean free of insects and any smudges or fingerprints.

The placement of the stalk in a container for exhibition is also important. The intersections of side branches to the stalk must be clearly visible and not hidden because the stalk is jammed down in the container. Judges should be able to see that the branch is attached to the stalk. Care must be taken to wedge the stalk securely into position. Judges may determine that a leaning stalk was not the fault of the exhibitor and request a clerk to adjust its position. Entry tags should be placed on the specimen in a position to face the judge.

EXHIBITION JUDGING

Louisiana Iris Seedlings

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 if no

entry is worthy. Exhibition Certificates are also awarded to seedlings that receive votes from at least five judges on special seedling ballots in a calendar year at AIS approved shows. 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 Louisiana Iris Seedlings

1. Stalk			35
	a. Proportion	15	
	b. Bloom Positions & Placement	20	
2. Flower			65
	a. Color	20	
	b. Substance	20	
	c. Beauty & Distinctiveness	25	
TOTAL			100