

**American Iris Society Judges
March 2021**

In spring of 2020 the COVID-19 virus was beginning its rapid spread across the United States. There was so much uncertainty and concern about the virus that many celebrations such as our 100th Anniversary were not possible. In addition to cancellations of the convention, iris shows, iris sales, and judges training, the AIS Board of Directors voted unanimously to postpone judges' requirements for 2020 (8-1-2019 through 7-31-2020).

While we know more about the spread of COVID-19 and have vaccines available, vaccines are not available to 100% of the population. Some states have relaxed mask restrictions and reduced social distancing requirements, while other states have not. The AIS has provided on-line judges training and the classes have been well received; however, we have not reached 100% of our judges due to technology and/or schedule restraints.

In 2021, we are seeing a small percentage of regions and clubs sponsoring in-person iris shows, virtual iris shows, and in-garden judges training. All these are positive signs we are moving in the right direction.

The AIS board is diligently working to complete the "new" revised Handbook for Judges. Anticipated completion date is late summer 2021. I hope you will be pleased with the updates. A number of training sessions will be scheduled, hopefully in the fall, to update everyone on all the changes made. The updated Handbook is possible through the dedication of many people and hours. We are working through various print and print-on-demand ideas that will be announced very soon.

In summary, my recommendation is that required judges training hours be waived for the time period of 8-1-2020 through 7-31-2021. Advancements of Student to Apprentice and Apprentice to Judge is possible if required hours were achieved during this time period. In addition, an Apprentice Judge would have an extra year to complete their requirements. Garden/Exhibition Judges advancing to Master Judge status will occur automatically if the number of years of required service is met.

We will start a fresh AIS Judges year on 8-1-2021. Fresh with anticipation of resuming life-as-we-knew-it before COVID-19 and a fresh revised Handbook.

Thank you,

Bonnie J Nichols, AIS Judges Training Chair