

Pacific Coast Iris (PCI) In Garden Evaluation (Chapter 16)

Garden Judging of Introduced Cultivars of PCI

The Society for Pacific Coast Native Iris adopted criteria for judging this group of iris but did not establish a point scale for garden judging

PCI Section Award – Sidney B. Mitchell Medal.

**An Iris Must Always Be Judged On Its Total Garden Qualities!
Awards must always be based on the total iris: plant, stalk, and**

General :

The most common hybrids are derived primarily from *Iris douglasiana* and *Iris innominata*, however, other species such as *I. tenax*, *I. munzii*, and *I. fernaldii* can be found in the heritage of some PCIs. The PCI appear in a never-ending variety of sizes and forms. goal is to retain the diverse characteristics and charm of the species while producing attractive and easy to grow garden plants. Two tactics are being used to extend the range: Incorporating the genotype of some of the little used species into the gene pool of the modern hybrids such as the deciduous species *Iris tenax* for the purpose of increasing cold hardiness and *Iris macrosiphon* and *Iris munzii* for increasing the tolerance for hot summers; Growing PCIs from hybrid seed in unfavorable climatic zones and using the survivors to produce hybrids. judge to reward advancements in this diverse group that produce especially attractive and garden-worthy plants. first year plants do not always perform in a manner typical for the variety.

Plant

Plant should be vigorous and hardy in the areas where the Pacific Coast Iris thrive. Plants which thrive beyond this normal growing area are especially desirable, provided they can produce an attractive garden effect. Disservice to reward a plant that is a difficult garden subject. plant should bloom reliably every year and should be able to withstand adverse weather conditions, including excessive heat, cold, wind and moisture.

Foliage

Except for the deciduous species and their hybrids, the foliage should remain attractive throughout the year, varying in size under six inches to broad and tall up to 3.5 feet tall. Foliage might be stiff and upright or gracefully arching. Foliage not uniform in appearance, is sparse, or produces a twisted looking clump should be penalized. Judges encouraged to evaluate foliage when in bloom and other times of year, particularly in late summer.

Habit

Plant should form a neat clump. Those with wandering tendencies or overly compact form should be faulted. should be sturdy and floriferous, producing a few well-branched stems or many unbranched stems. each bloom should be displayed such that the flower can be viewed without interference from its neighbors. A long bloom period is preferred. A short, sparse bloom season should always be faulted. A good modern hybrid should

give a minimum of two weeks of bloom. Mild coastal climates, the variety should bloom sunny conditions or in partial shade. Hot summer variety should bloom reliably when planted in partial or deciduous shade.

Stem.

The size and length of the stem should be in pleasing proportion to the size of the flower it supports. Branching that creates a top-heavy, loose or relaxed appearance is heavily faulted as are snaking stems. Stems should always hold the flower away from the ground and at the top or above the foliage. Crowding of bloom stems or crowding of flowers on a branched stem is a serious fault. stem should bear a minimum of two buds. The exceptions are *Iris innominata* and *I. tenax*, which may often have one bud per stem but display many stems per clump. Credit should be given if there are more buds or additional bloom stalks opening in sequence to extend the season.

Flower.

The size of the flower should be in proportion to the foliage and stem. Larger the flower, the more color it will project. Width and size of flower parts is of little value unless desirable traits are present. Large flowers, with wide floral parts can be just as appealing as smaller flowers with a dainty and graceful shape. Shape and color contribute to the aesthetic value more than size alone. Standards may be erect or spreading toward the horizontal, but they should never flop. Substance in all flower parts is of utmost importance. Ruffling and the more tailored forms are both acceptable, but neither should alter the flower's basic form. The flower should endure harsh weather conditions without losing its form. Twisted or distorted flowers are to be faulted. Color may vary from almost pure selfs with no visible signal area to patterns with elaborate and intricate veining, contrasting style arms and eye spots or blazes. All are acceptable, if pleasing to the eye. Variety in color patterns is encouraged. Subtle coloring is as desirable as the vivid and vibrant. Streaking occurs occasionally and should not be penalized unless it detracts. Colors should not fade. Dirty or muddy coloring is a fault.

Judging Seedlings

Identify those seedlings which represent significant advances in color, color combinations, form, size, good growth and bloom habits. Judge must be familiar with introduced varieties already available. The judge should be aware of what color patterns are common and what colors or color combinations and patterns represent an innovation or advancement. Special attention should be given to the overall effect of the clump and foliage as well as the form, substance, color, color pattern and size of the bloom. Distinctiveness is a plus. Large flowers are appealing if in proportion to the plant and stem. Equal consideration should also be given to the development of the dwarf types from *Iris innominata*. Only genuine and solid advances should be encouraged.