

AIS Judges Training Introduction and Timeline

The judges training program is one of the most vital parts of The American Iris Society. It is the judges' votes that determine which irises receive awards and are recommended to the public. Serving as a judge is a privilege that comes with duties and responsibilities to fulfill. The training process to become accredited as an AIS Judge takes several years and includes an apprenticeship period. Judges fill out the annual *Official Ballot of the AIS* to vote for irises to receive awards. Judges also serve their Regional and Regional Affiliate Clubs by periodically being Show Exhibition Judges (this is usually done as a team of 2-3 judges). Travel expenses are typically paid by the affiliate clubs or region unless you were already planning to attend.

Initial Training

Any member of the American Iris Society may aspire to be a judge. However you must be an AIS member for at least three years before applying as an apprentice judge. The following steps are involved PRIOR to applying for apprenticeship:

1. Tell your club's Judges Training Mentor that you wish to start training
2. Fill out the *Application for Persons Wishing to Begin Judges Training* and mail it to the Regional Judges Training (JT) Chair. Give a copy to the club Training Mentor and keep one yourself.
3. Over the next few years you must (you can start even as a new member but must be a member for at least three years before applying for apprenticeship):
 - Receive 10 hours of approved judges training followed by an open-book written exam (given at various local club, Regional, and National meetings)
 - Purchase the latest copy of the *AIS Handbook for Judges and Show Officials* and read pages 1-8 on AIS judges. Study the rest of the book on how to judge.
 - Be recommended by 5 judges (when apprenticeship is applied for)
 - Before August 10 of each year, complete and send the *American Iris Society Region 4 Activity Report for Judges* to the Regional Judges Training Chair and your club's Training Mentor
 - Keep a personal record of iris gardens you visit each year (August through July)
 - Fill out and keep for yourself the form *Permanent Record for Judges Training* so that you have easy access to your training history

Your club's Judges Training Mentor can assist you with all steps in this process, help to ensure that you turn in reports on time, answer questions for you regarding the training process, and help you to arrange for Tutoring as an Apprentice Judge.

Apprenticeship

At the end of the training period above, you will need to:

1. Fill out the *Application for Candidate to Become an Apprentice Judge*. Keep a copy, give a copy to your Training Mentor, and mail the original to the Regional JT Chair. On the form you list 5 accredited judges whom you have asked to write recommendations for you. Your Training Mentor will help ensure that those judges write and mail the recommendations.
2. You now have three (3) years in which to complete the following apprenticeship requirements (although it often doesn't take that long):
 - Complete two 2-hour in-garden tutoring sessions with two different accredited judges
 - Use the Voided Official Ballot of the AIS which the Chairman of Awards will send you each year to help you during your tutoring sessions (this is for private use)
 - Attend a 2-hour training session on AIS Awards and Balloting (put on by the Region, or at AIS National Conventions) [Note: A training session on Awards and Balloting may be counted towards apprenticeship credit if taken within the three years immediately prior to appointment as an Apprentice Judge and provided the ten hours of training requirements are still completed.]
 - Receive two hours of Apprenticeship exhibition training at two different accredited iris shows under the tutorship of different fully accredited AIS judges (not as a clerk)

The in-garden tutors and the exhibition tutors submit a tutoring form to the Regional JT Chair – give them a copy of the form along with a SASE to ensure that they submit the form in a timely fashion. Each tutoring session counts as two hours of training (for a total of 4 hours in the garden and 4 hours at exhibitions). The Awards and Ballots training session is a two hour class, but if completed prior to being appointed as an Apprentice, two additional hours of training will need to be substituted.

Your Training Mentor will help you every step of the way. If you start now, go to any local training sessions, and attend at least one Regional Meeting per year (either spring or fall) taking the training sessions there, you'll easily have the 10 hours of training time needed by time you've been a member for three years. Although you can take as many years as you want before applying to be an Apprentice Judge, the only credits that count are those taken in the three years before applying for Apprentice status. After you are granted Apprentice status, you have another three years to complete the requirements to advance to Garden/Exhibition Judge. And again, your local club members can quickly help you get your in-garden tutoring done, while you can ask to be a Show Apprentice at any Regional Meeting.

Becoming a Garden Judge

Now ask your club's Judges Training Mentor to request the Regional JT Chair to submit your name to AIS for approval as Garden/Exhibition Judge. The JT Chair will inform you when you are approved (typically after the Fall AIS Board Meeting). To continue as a judge you must:

1. Complete at least five (5) hours of judges training every three-year period (at least two of these hours must be in-garden training)
2. Vote the Official AIS Ballot in a timely manner (sent to you by the AIS Chairman of Awards)
3. Submit the Annual Activity Report to the Regional JT Chair