

Appendix B

Preparing Iris for an Exhibition

Written by Leigh Moon (Region 15)

Note: This list is to be used as a guide only. Requirements and rules might be slightly different at each iris club. Always read and follow your club's show guidelines.

I. Training Iris in the Garden

A. Garden training kit

- 1) Large garden stakes (18" - 48" depending on what size iris you grow).
- 2) Wooden BBQ skewers (for the smaller iris such as PCN, SDB, or MDB).
- 3) Stretchy green garden ties so stalks are not bruised or damaged.
- 4) Foam peanuts, cut up iris stalks, or tightly folded pieces of paper towel.
- 5) Sharp scissors to snip out dead blooms. Smaller, precision tips are best.
- 6) Tweezers.

B. Pre-selecting the week before

- 1) Look for proportionate bloom stalks. Thick sturdy stalks for the taller TBs and smaller/thinner stalks for the smaller iris.
- 2) Select stalks with well-spaced branches and with buds covering approximately 2/3 of the stalk.
- 3) Candelabra branching is ideal. However, branches/buds that appear to be bunched can be trained to grow outward.
- 4) Choose stalks that are healthy, with good color, and have no (or minimal) blemishes.
- 5) Train the stalks that have a chance for open blooms at show time. Or stalks that will have a second bud in the terminal that can be induced to bloom.
- 6) You need only one open bloom to have your iris be judged. A good quality well-groomed stalk with one gorgeous, open flower can win a blue ribbon.

C. Staking

- 1) Stake any bloom stalk that is leaning. Stake any stalk that is close to another and is in danger of its flower becoming damaged. Especially stake bloom stalks if expecting high winds.

Appendix B Preparing Iris - p 2

- 2) Use the large garden stakes on the TBs and affix the tie **BELOW** the spathes to allow them to grow and not inhibit the flowers.
- 3) Use small bamboo skewers for the little guys.

D. Training

- 1) If a branch or bloom is too close to the main bloom stalk or is growing at an unattractive angle, place a spacer between the branch or spathe and the main bloom stalk.
- 2) Spacers can be foam peanuts, cut iris stalks (strong, but also easy to miss later when grooming), or paper towels swatches.

E. Flowers

- 1) Remove dead flowers to allow room for the new ones to form. Be careful not to tear the spathe. Terminal bud: carefully remove it if it will open more than 3 days before show and only if there is a second bud in the terminal socket.
- 2) Remove pests that may damage or chew your flowers or stalks.

II. Traveling to the Show

A. Labeling

- 1) It is best to tag or label your stalk before you cut. Even the best of us forget what the name was, or it starts to look like that other purple iris you cut.
- 2) You can use hanging paper tags on string or cheap cut up paper. Write with a Sharpie!
- 3) Along with the name of the cultivar, consider adding the class of iris, especially if it is one of the smaller iris (e.g., BB, IB, PCI, etc.).

B. Cutting

- 1) On warmer days, the ideal time to cut is early morning or the second option is late evening. If the day is cloudy and cool, choose the evening or just before transporting.
- 2) If possible, hold the stalk by the spathe, so as not to knock off the "frost." Avoid touching or holding the bud.
- 3) Cut the bloom stalk taller/longer than you need. At the show, you will want to make a fresh cut and be able to select an appropriate height for the container.
- 4) After cutting the bloom stalk, remove all base foliage and immediately place the stalk upright in a container of water in the shade or indoors.

C. Holding overnight (if necessary)

- 1) If cutting the day before the show, store stalks with open flowers in a cool, dark area.
- 2) For those buds that you need to encourage to open, place them in a brightly lit area (you might even use grow lights), with several warm (not HOT) water changes. The most ideal way to force opening, but most difficult to achieve, is to place the bloom stalk in a heated, humid space like a bathroom with both a space heater and humidifier.

D. Types of containers for transporting

- 1) The ideal method is to allow each bloom stalk to have its own container, spaced away from the others to prevent bumping. I use a PVC transport container (a DIY project for you), which is ideal.
- 2) You can also use buckets with spacers (spacers being chicken wire, tape grids, foam, rolled up paper towels or newspaper).
- 3) Some use wine bottles, water bottles or even vases, but these are not as ideal.
- 4) For the smaller iris, use test tubes, plastic cigar holders, cough syrup bottles, etc. that have been placed in a partitioned box.

III. Grooming

A. Suggested grooming kit and tools

- 1) Pruners or garden shears.
 - 2) Sharp scissors (larger for long leaf cuts and small ones for fine, precision cuts).
 - 3) X-acto knife (optional).
 - 4) Tweezers.
 - 5) Q-Tips, cotton balls, cotton pads, or soft rag.
 - 6) Small container of rubbing alcohol. Another container of water might be useful, too. The rubbing alcohol works better at forcing bugs out of their hiding places.
 - 7) Paint brushes.
 - 8) Paper towels.
 - 9) Pens (ball point or waterproof ink).
 - 10) Extra cut up iris stalks or wood wedges*
 - 11) Hooks* for the exhibition tags.
 - 12) AIS exhibition tags*
- *Provided by the show officials.

B. Remove all peanuts, cotton balls, and other training materials.

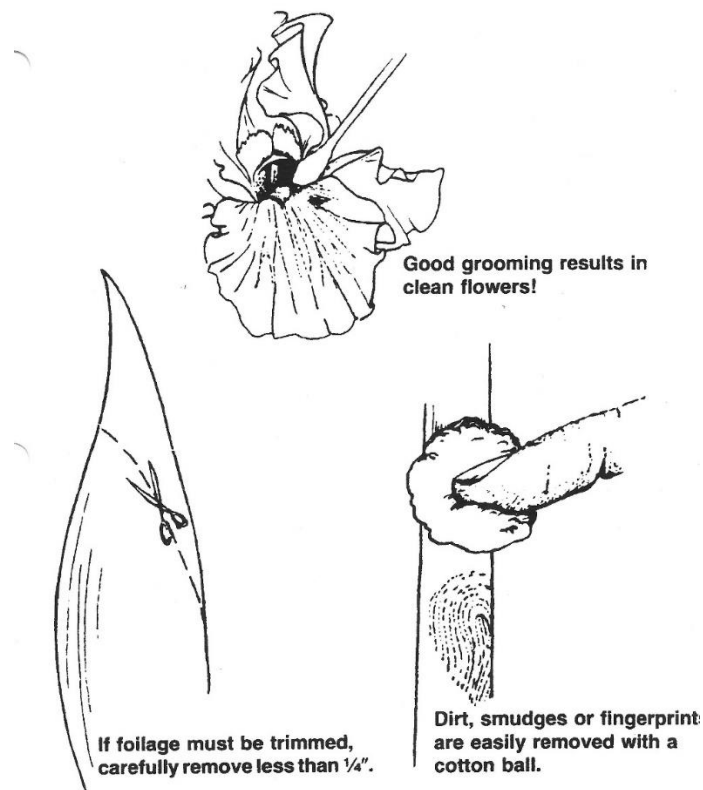
Appendix B Preparing Iris - p 4

C. Check for pests, dirt, and debris

- 1) Remove aphids, spiders, ants, and other critters.
- 2) Use a Q-tip or small paint brush to pick up individual critters. Tip: Dip Q-tip or small brush into rubbing alcohol (or water) and use it to clean dirt, debris, and bugs out of the flower, spathe, and leaf junctions.
- 3) If the bloom stalk, branches, or leaves have dirt, debris, fingerprints, or sticky residue on them, gently wipe them with a damp cloth or cotton ball.

D. Trimming (Trim only if absolutely necessary!)

- 1) Neatly trim off faint discolorations, diseased foliage, or leaf damage.
- 2) Cuts on the foliage should be less than 1/4" and should follow the natural contour of the leaf.
- 3) Blunt or choppy edges, massive amounts of trimming, or any trimming that is obvious and distracting is unacceptable and will be graded down.



E. Removing flowers

- 1) Remove any dead flowers.
- 2) You only need one open flower for judging and that flower must be in good shape.
- 3) Remove all flowers that are fading (watery edges, wilting, curling) or have obvious faults that will cost points. However, remove the fading flower only if there is another bud in the socket. Be sure that no "stub" of the removed bloom is left visible.
- 4) If no other unopened buds are in the socket then you should remove the entire branch. Refer to F (1) for information about removing branches.

F. Remove spurs or branches (if necessary)

- 1) A branch may be removed where a leaf or bract conceals its connection to the stalk. There should be no damage to either the stalk or the leaf.
- 2) Although a spur might add flowers to the bloom stalk, it is likely that the spur will upset the proportion of the bloom stalk. This mis-proportion generally will cost more points than you would gain from the extra blooms.

G. Position in container

- 1) Place your entry into the container with the bottom branch (or leaf) **above** the container opening.
- 2) Position the bloom stalk so that it presents the best proportion to the viewer.
- 3) My rule of thumb for the height of the bloom stalk is 1.5 to 2 times the height of the container, maybe even 2.5 if the entry is a taller cultivar. The height of the bloom stalk depends on the type of iris you are showing. For example, spuria iris will be much taller than 2.5 times the container, and Louisiana iris are pretty tall too.
- 4) Ideally side branches should be positioned on 2/3 of the exposed bloom stalk. If they occupy only 1/3 of the stalk, consider cutting the stalk down a bit to improve the proportion. However, be careful not to cut off so much stalk that it looks under grown for that particular variety.
- 5) Place the entry with its "best face forward," which would ideally have the bloom(s) straight up or slightly tipped forward, and the side branches out to the sides.
- 6) Wedge the bloom stalk securely so that it does not shift, rotate, or lean in the container.

H. Cleanliness

- 1) Do a last-minute check to see if you missed cleaning off the dirt, insects, and smudges. If you are an exhibitor who doesn't mind removing the "frost" or whitish powder, do a wipe down of the bloom stalk, from top to bottom.
- 2) Don't forget to check the leaves AND the backside of your entry! The judges may ask to have your entry turned around.

IV. Presenting Your Iris Cultivar

A. Exhibition paperwork

- 1) When you arrive at the show, you should receive a show schedule.
- 2) Ask for your assigned exhibitor number.
- 3) Collect AIS exhibition tags and an exhibitor's list of entries sheet (blank) at the registration desk.

B. AIS exhibition tags

- 1) You need one tag per entry. These may be filled out in advance (at least partially).
- 2) You will need the Show Schedule to determine the appropriate division number as well as sections and classes (if appropriate).
- 3) Write all appropriate information on the top of the card: division number, section letter, (class if needed), the registered name of the variety, exhibitor name (that is you!) For safety, I recommend NOT including your street address or phone number. Just write your city's name.

C. Exhibitor's entry list

- 1) List the registered name of every variety you have entered. Include the section of each variety.
- 2) The entry list will also need your name, city, and exhibitor number.
- 3) Make sure you give this list to the show chair or assistant.

D. Finalizing your entry

- 1) Hang your completed AIS entry tag onto your entry via a hook (provided) by the club.
- 2) Place the entry tag exactly in the center of the container, the way you want your entry to face. The clerks will use the tag to orient your entry on the show bench.
- 3) I like to insert the hook into a green stalk-wedge. This way the hook doesn't slip to the side causing my entry to be placed in the incorrect direction.
- 4) Place your entry (entries) onto the table for the clerks to take out to the exhibition floor.
- 5) Hand your completed Exhibitor List to the appropriate show staff member.
- 6) Good Luck!