

Keeping “Up-to-Date”

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“The awards appear so late in the *Awards Quarterly*! Why doesn’t the Editor publish them sooner than he does?” — This cranky refrain, skittering the edges of innocent editorial dreams, like wolves surrounding a forest cabin, has been sung for far too long. Let’s take a look at reality. The *Awards Quarterly* appears four times a year. Each issue originally contained 24 pages. Given the number of subscribers and the costs of printing in 1970, when the journal began, 96 pages per year was considered to be the financial break-even point. However, even then, a decade ago, 96 pages was inadequate space to maintain the publication of all awards in a reasonably current fashion, i.e., within 6 to 9 months from the granting of the awards.

In September of 1980, the Board of Trustees approved the Publication Committee’s formal request to increase the pages of each quarterly issue to a minimum of 48, for a probable total of 192 pages annually. It was hoped that the continuing backlog of unpublished awards (averaging between 400–600 over the years) could be eliminated and that the publication of new awards could be kept “up-to-date.” This fourth issue of the *Awards Quarterly* in 1980 contains 68 pages, 20 more than approved, of which a small number are devoted to the required *Annual Index*. The issue contains 427 awards. In 1979, the total number of A.O.S. awards granted in that calendar year exceeded 1400. Each year has shown a significant increase in the number of awards annually granted. By the end of 1981, there may be well over 1600 A.O.S. awards granted during that calendar year.

Clearly, 48 pages per issue can do nothing to remedy this growing problem. In fact, 68 pages per issue can only maintain the present *status quo* — i.e., the backlog of 400–600 awards remains. And, in a year or two, given proven trends, even 68 pages per issue will prove insufficient to keep the present backlog from becoming even larger!

What can we do? Publish more pages each issue is a swift, understandable and rather facile solution. How are these huge leaps in publication costs to be paid for? The present subscription rate to the *Awards Quarterly* has been increased to \$7.50. Provided that the present number of subscribers remains stationary at ca. 3000 (an increase of 1500 since the introduction of articles and the centerspreads), even the Croesean amount of \$20 per subscription, proposed by some judges, may not prove enough, in a year or two, to cover the publishing costs concomitant with providing sufficient space to publish awards currently. Is \$20 for a subscription an inducement to a public already proven to be reluctant to subscribe to the *Awards Quarterly*? And, or serious consideration, to what extent do we permit a journal, subscribed to by such relatively few A.O.S. members, to be underwritten by the dues of members who are apparently little interested in the awards system and its publication?

We could, of course, arbitrarily limit the number of awards which could be granted annually to a quota which the presently expanded *Awards Quarterly* could comfortably

handle, both financially and swiftly. I hope you find this concept as repugnant as I do. Award-worthy plants should be awarded, regardless of the final totals. Or we could eliminate the award descriptions, publishing only the bare bones of each award. This would be an enormous space-saver and, given the unhelpful nature of so many award descriptions, might not be quite the loss we would expect. However, the verbal description of each award, along with its illustration, is our historical record. It must not be sacrificed; otherwise the award system becomes an ephemeral pastime, rather than a serious study. And, to be honest, the award descriptions are, slowly, getting better.

I think there is only one real answer. More subscribers. With over 24,000 members in the American Orchid Society, Inc., surely we can intrigue more than 3000 to subscribe to the *Awards Quarterly*, to become interested and involved in the Society's awards system. We have to do it, somehow! With a greatly increased subscription base, finances will then become available to equal the pages of the *Awards Quarterly* to the increasing number of awards annually granted. Without this increased subscription base, we face one or the other of two inevitabilities: either greater and greater financial losses, if we try to increase the journal to handle the increasing awards; or, resignation to a greater and greater time lag in the publishing of all awards, if we keep the present number of pages per issue and costs relatively stable.

Efforts are being made to increase the number of subscribers. But the effort cannot be single-handed. Rather than cranky refrains, how about some hymns of praise to tentative subscribers? And, to the judging community, where are the articles for each issue? The initial articles swiftly doubled the subscription base. Today, there are no articles awaiting publication in the *Awards Quarterly*. Without such articles, of proven interest to subscribers outside the judging community (remember that the judging personnel, required to subscribe to the *Awards Quarterly*, only number about 400), we may swiftly find ourselves with a decreased subscription base rather than an increased one.

There was no space for an article this issue, even if we had elected to write one, once again, from the Cambridge office. However, in order to maintain the color centerspreads, we offer several illustrations of the highest-scored plants within this issue — with the following statistics for your perusal. Of 427 awarded plants appearing in this issue, 3 were granted an F.C.C., 135 an A.M., 220 an H.C.C., 34 a C.C.M., and the remainder divided among the other A.O.S. flower and plant awards. Please note that of the 135 plants awarded an A.M., only 27 scored higher than 82 points. Therefore within the point range of the Award of Merit (79.6–89.4), 108 plants received a score from 80 to 82. Of the 34 C.C.M.-awarded plants, 15 scored between 80 to 82. Eliminating a negligible number of scored C.H.M. plants and unscored C.B.R. plants in the bottom 8 points of a 25-point award range; or, nearly 7/8 of all awarded plants scored in the lower third of the point scale range. I am sure that this bottom-heavy characteristic has much significance. I wish we had space to think about it.

