

AOS Judging 2001

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There is nothing more constant than change. This year begins the American Orchid Society's 69th year of providing a formal, recorded judging system. Since its inception in 1932, AOS judging has continually changed and adapted to provide the best possible service to its members and orchid growers everywhere. The structure of our system's rules and procedures, and the requirement that they be followed, have been designed not only to insure the highest standards of ethics in judging, but to provide for stability while allowing sufficient flexibility for change when appropriate. At the 2000 Fall Trustees Meeting held in Williamsburg, Virginia, the Trustees elected to direct a major change to the structure of the Judging Committee (JC) to facilitate its more effective administration and supervision of the judging system.

JUDGING COMMITTEE REORGANIZATION First called the Committee on Arrangements and then the Committee on Awards, the Judging Committee was first composed solely of members appointed by the trustees. Later the decision was made to include regional chairs as members *ex officio*. As time passed and judging centers proliferated, the Judging Committee reached the unwieldy makeup of 46 members. To explore alternatives, recommendations were sought from JC members and from each Center Committee. The responses received were remarkably similar and formed the foundation of the new JC composition approved by the trustees. As nearly all the Center Committees strongly recommended, the new JC will be composed of the 22 elected main center chairs, excluding supplemental center chairs. Centers whose chairs have excused absences will be expected to be represented by their vice-chair. Their participation, no longer, *ex officio*, now assumes the same conditions and requirements as all other volunteer committee members. Two unexcused absences by a center chair will result in the loss of his or her center's representation on the JC until such time as the center elects a new chair. The president will also appoint four members to the JC including its chair. This composition will preserve the important representation recommended by the Center Committees and allow the president to retain the privilege of selecting appointed members to insure that his or her plans for the organization are represented. There will be no proxies and consulting members will not be appointed other than on an as needed basis at the direction of the trustees. These changes significantly reduce the size of the JC and should help greatly in expediting its work. Along with the expected benefits of the new JC composition come increased accountability and responsibilities for the center chairs in accomplishing the committee's work.

JUDGING CRITERIA AND POINT SCALES The trustees also recommended that the JC revisit the *Handbook on Judging and Exhibition* (10th Edition), Article VII, Judging Criteria and Point Scales, with an eye toward ensuring that it adequately addresses current standards and provides for the satisfactory evaluation of plants submitted for judging. Our current standards have been criticized as being variously behind the times, no longer relevant and overly weighted toward improvement over parents rather than

intrinsic quality. Significantly, we have also been criticized for not sufficiently using the existing criteria.

As a first step in our efforts to reexamine this section, all Center Committees have been asked to conduct a thorough review and report their consensus by the end of the year, which will allow sufficient time for distribution, comparison and further comment prior to the Spring 2001 JC meeting. At the request of the trustees the various specialty groups such as the International Phalaenopsis Alliance and the Odontoglossum Alliance have been asked for input in their genera. The inquiry is open for recommendations from judges and nonjudges alike. This effort will likely require considerable discussion and multiple reviews by both the centers and the JC.

JUDGES TRAINING The trustees also recommend that the Judging Committee begin the major task of working toward a standardized training program throughout the system. The national training coordinator, perhaps an unfortunate title given that the system is truly international, is charged with coordinating training among the centers to ensure uniformity of judging practices. While our collective judging practices are largely similar, they are not uniform, nor are our training practices and methods. Our current training programs from center to center range from rigorous, demanding and thorough to lax. Criticisms of our efforts often include comments to the effect that we do an adequate job of teaching about orchids, but poorly when teaching about judging itself. Harry Gallis, MD, of the Carolinas Judging Center has kindly agreed to act as our new training coordinator and will direct our efforts. Gallis brings considerable and valuable experience to the task with a background in continuing education in medicine. Achieving this important goal requires our full cooperation and responsiveness.