

HANDBOOK CHANGES RELATED TO ETHICS OF ORCHID JUDGING

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The task force on issues related to the ethics of orchid judging was created by the AOS Board of Trustees in May, 2007 to develop recommendations for additions and changes to the Handbook on Judging and Exhibition, 11th edition, concerning a procedure for suspension/termination of judges for non-compliance with rules for ethical behavior. We were to review all sections of the Handbook which addressed conduct, behavior or demeanor of an AOS judge and to recommend to the JC those areas in which changes were needed and how to implement those changes. We were also charged with the responsibility of suggesting a range of sanctions for the breach of ethical behavior and how these sanctions could be enforced.

The task force consisted of Jerry Brandenburg, Mario Ferrusi, Bill Guthrie, Gary Kraus, Glenda Lask, Maynard Michel, Fred Missbach, Jim Rose and Randy Tajima. All sections of the Handbook pertaining directly or indirectly to judges' behavior and ethics were extracted using AQ Plus. A preliminary draft proposal was written. All judging center chairs also were asked to offer suggestions, corrections or additions to the proposal. Input was received from approximately fifty people

The task force proposal was only a Handbook change. Prior approval by the judging centers for Handbook changes previously has not been part of the updating process. In instances in which a center has not been pleased with a Handbook change, a proposal for correcting this generally has been submitted to the JC. Changes to the Handbook will now be much easier and quicker in view of the fact that the Handbook is included in AQ Plus. Updates will be published quarterly, in addition to also being publicized on the AOS website. A definitive handbook is an oxymoron. The Handbook on Judging and Exhibition should be looked upon as organic: a continuously evolving work in progress.

The issues of judges' conduct and a process for termination of a judge are not new. They are mentioned in the fifth edition of the Handbook (1973). A structured process for termination was first described in the seventh edition (1982). This has remained virtually unchanged to the present time. It is vague, somewhat confusing, incomplete, inconsistent with other sections of the Handbook and draconian.

The task force's proposed Handbook changes were approved by the JC and the Board of Trustees at the January, 2008 Trustees' meeting

Highlights of the Handbook Changes

4.6 Responsibilities of Judges

To retain status as a judge, a certified judge must:

(1) Maintain membership in the AOS in good standing in order to legitimately serve as its representative. The judge must also subscribe to AQ Plus. If his/her membership in AOS or subscription to AQ Plus lapses, he/she shall forfeit his/her standing as a judge.

(2) Fulfill his/her judging requirements by participating in at least eight judgments in his/her assigned judging area each calendar year, at least four of which must be at the monthly judging sessions in his/her assigned judging center. Any judge, who has not attended the minimum number of judgments during the preceding calendar year, shall be denied voting privileges on any matter at the center's business meeting. A judge should judge annually at one or more AOS-sanctioned judging activities outside the area served by his/her judging center.

(3) Attend each biannual business meeting and any duly called business meeting of the judging center committee unless excused for valid reason in advance by the judging center chair.

(4) Participate annually in no less than 12 hours of scheduled training sessions, as specified in Section 4.7.3.

(5) Maintain the knowledge and abilities required in Section 4.5; and the standards of conduct required in Section 4.8.

(6) Cooperate fully with the chair of judging and the captain of their judging team in completing the routine duties of their assignment such as signing forms, describing and measuring flowers, and remaining with the team until excused.

(7) Express him/herself clearly and unequivocally in evaluating a flower, plant or exhibit, avoiding both passive acceptance and aggressive rejection of the opinions of other judges.

4.8 Conduct of Judges

Judges shall act at all times by word and deed, while serving as AOS judges, in a manner which will maintain the standards of AOS judging on the highest level and reflect credit upon the judging activities and upon themselves. They shall conduct themselves, while serving as AOS judges, in a manner which will never bring their or the system's integrity

into question. Serving as an AOS judge includes but is not limited to AOS judging, orchid show ribbon judging, pre and post judging activities such as judges meals at an orchid show, preview parties and banquets and other activities in which he/she officially represents AOS.

In addition, AOS judges shall:

(1) Refrain, while serving as a judge, from making personal comments about a flower, plant, exhibit or orchid grower that do not relate to the judging in process and which might, if repeated to the exhibitor, be considered gratuitous or derogatory and bring into question the deportment of the judge.

(2) Disqualify him/herself from participation in the judging of a plant, flower, exhibit or judging class with which they have any relationship that might in any way be construed as interfering with their impartiality.

(3) Avoid making demeaning comments publicly concerning other judges, judging team support personnel, orchid plants, orchid exhibits or exhibitors. Negative comments during open judging are often appropriate, but, should not be demeaning.

(4) Not make a slanderous or malicious remark publicly about another judge.

(5) Avoid using sexual analogies and comments (jocular or not) when publicly discussing plants or people.

(6) Avoid aggressive, persistent or recurrent attempts to influence other judges in awarding or not awarding a plant.

(7) Conduct him/herself in a calm and rational manner which will permit the harmonious resolution of differing viewpoints and judgments.

(8) Avoid "high-ball" or "low-ball" scoring intended solely to inflate the point count spread.

(9) Not be under the influence of alcohol or drugs, while judging or officially representing AOS.

(10) Dress appropriately when judging at an orchid show, thus showing respect for the event being judged.

(11) Neither be paid nor have to pay for the opportunity to participate in AOS award judging at any AOS-sanctioned activity.

(12) Not accept reimbursement in excess of actual cost, for expenses related to show judging (transportation, lodging and meals)

(13) Make a reasonable attempt to comply with the requirements for clearing his/her provisional award.

(14) Pay for purchased orchid plants, award fees, taxonomic plant identification charges and delinquent provisional award fees.

(15) Not steal orchid plants, pollen or tissue.

(16) Not be involved in sales transactions in the judging area during AOS judging.

(17) Not falsify a grex or clonal name or hybrid parentage.

(18) Not "buy" or "sell" an award as the reward for influencing or attempting to influence the granting of that award.

(19) Not disclose the results of the center committee's personnel meeting or other privileged information, prior to official notification.

(20) Notify the sponsoring organization if he/she is unable to fulfill orchid related commitments (judging orchid shows; lecturing at an orchid society, etc).

4.9.4.1 Suspension and/or Termination for Cause.

Grounds for suspension and/or termination for cause shall include: (1) lack of participation in judging sessions, business meetings or training activities as required by Section 4.6 (2), (3) and (4); (2) inadequacy as a judge as set forth in Section 4.5; (3) a violation of a standard of conduct as set forth in Section 4.8.

The initial investigation is to determine if the charge appears to be well founded and with merit. The process cannot proceed without approval by the judging center committee, which essentially will act as a grand jury.

If a charge is made of lack of participation in judging sessions, business meetings or training activities it shall be investigated by the judging center chair. In determining if the charge is well-founded and with merit the chair shall consider whether or not the judge has been given sufficient notice of his deficiencies with a proper opportunity to correct the same.

If a charge is made of inadequacy as a judge or of a violation of a standard of conduct by a judge, it shall be investigated promptly by the judging center chair, with or without the assistance of a special ad hoc committee appointed by the center chair, to determine if the charge appears to be well-founded and with merit. All known facts of the charge must be investigated and reviewed. The investigation shall include, but not be limited to,

interviewing individuals or witnesses and requesting and reviewing any documents or materials that are relevant to the case. Interviewing the judge involved is discretionary.

If a charge is determined to be well-founded and with merit by the investigation it, together with the chair's and/or ad hoc committee's findings, any supporting documentation, and recommendations shall be presented at the next duly called business meeting of the judging committee. If a two-thirds majority of the accredited judges present and voting at that meeting finds that the charge is substantiated by the facts, the nine step process outlined in the Handbook shall be invoked.

4.9.4.2 Automatic Suspension and/or Termination

Grounds for automatic suspension or termination shall include: (1) failure to maintain AOS membership and AQ Plus subscription; (2) failure to execute and deliver such waivers as may be required by the JC;

(3) failure to pay for awards; (4) failure to make a reasonable effort to clear his/her provisional award within a year.

In keeping with the concept that the Handbook is continuously evolving, a number of proposed changes will be reviewed at the fall Judging Committee meeting. Most of these are for clarification; however, some are new issues including the possible establishment of lesser disciplinary sanctions. The task force believes that many judges will not fully understand the new changes until they have been in place and functional for a period of time. We anticipate that during the next few years there will be many requests from the judging centers for further changes. The issue of judge's ethics will be the subject of the judges' forum, Saturday October 18, at the fall members' meeting at Longwood Garden.