

The “Iris of the Year” for 2023

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Photo by Lynda Miller

The American Iris Society (AIS) is pleased to announce its “Iris of the Year” for 2023: tall bearded iris ‘Football Hero’. This outstanding iris is the result of hybridizing work conducted by plant breeder Lynda Miller of Canby, Oregon. Lynda introduced ‘Football Hero’ to the public through Aitken’s Salmon Creek Garden of Vancouver, Washington in 2015. During that year, ‘Football Hero’ earned the AIS President’s Cup, an honor given to the best iris seen blooming at the Society’s national convention and introduced in its local region as voted by convention attendees.

About ‘Football Hero’

The Iris Encyclopedia describes this iris as having midseason bloom; its standards (top petals) butter yellow; style arms (at center of flower) same, accented violet; falls (bottom petals) plum purple, pale smoky orchid edge; beards gold; slight musky fragrance.

When asked to describe her iris, originator Lynda Miller enthused: “The reason ‘Football Hero’ is a standout in the garden is because of its garden strength. Good clean coloring on heavy substance flowers that last days in all weather conditions. Plus there are ample blossoms that are well positioned for good making stalks to win a blue ribbon at any show. The stalks are extremely strong and withstand windy conditions. Plants are strong-growing with just the right increases every year. Reports around the country have confirmed that it grows well everywhere, that is what confirms ‘Football Hero’ is an outstanding variety to grow.”

Additional AIS Garden Awards

Tall bearded irises are judged chiefly on their qualities as perennial garden plants, with more emphasis on strong growth characteristics and disease resistance than on mere beauty and distinctiveness of the flower. Judges accredited by the AIS cast votes that resulted in ‘Football Hero’ earning an Honorable Mention in 2017, an Award of Merit in 2019, a Wister Medal in 2021; and AIS’s highest award, the American Dykes Medal, in 2022.

About The American Iris Society

The mission of AIS is to organize and disseminate knowledge of the genus *Iris* and to foster its preservation, enjoyment and continued development. The society is welcoming to all people, regardless of race, religion, socioeconomic status, ethnic background, gender, or sexual orientation. Members collaborate locally, regionally, and nationally to encourage the cultivation, enjoyment, and preservation of all irises. Activities often include educational programs, judges’ training, exhibitions, and garden observation of irises in 15 horticultural iris classifications. The AIS also maintains the official world registry for non-bulbous irises. Visit the AIS website for more information, including a Commercial Directory of iris growers and hybridizers.

www.irises.org