

# HOW A WINNER GROWS

## THE BRIDE'S HALO STORY

The 1978 Dykes Memorial Medalist was BRIDE'S HALO, hybridized by Dr. H. C. Mohr of Lexington, Kentucky. The saga of its climb to stardom, presented here, is a classic success story with dramatic overtones.

The first surprise is that BRIDE'S HALO was the first iris registered and introduced by its hybridizer. One logically assumes that the iris designated as the best of the year by AIS judges will be the result of complicated years of successful commercial hybridizing. This has not always been the case, but with a glance at the list of past winners, one sees many prominent names. Dr. Mohr achieved this epitome of hybridizing success on his first official attempt.

BRIDE'S HALO was registered in 1971. Originally Seedling 68-14-2, it was described as a 36" tall bearded white self, bordered with a 1/8" band of yellow, heavily ruffled, lightly laced and complemented by a yellow beard. Its lineage refutes a "rags to riches" story. RAINBOW GOLD x DENVER MINT weds a prominent pair of iris parents.

Ron Mullin (*AIS BULLETIN* #231, Fall 1978, pp. 40-42) described recent popular descendants of DENVER MINT, including such yellow and white varieties as GOLD TRIMMINGS, OLD FLAME, JOYCE TERRY, GOLD RING and PONDEROSA, and traces them back to GLITTING AMBER. He stated, "There is usually something in the background of all the irises we like that provides them with that little something extra that gives them appeal."

BRIDE'S HALO was introduced in 1973, the same year that it was guested at the AIS convention in Philadelphia. Dr. Mohr had planned to attend and see his first iris in commerce blooming in a display garden, but was unable to do so. Enough AIS judges saw it, however, for it to be voted a High Commendation award.

In correspondence with the editor, Dr. Mohr writes, "This encouraged me to send it to Roanoke (1974 AIS Convention site), where it performed as well as I have seen it do *anywhere, on a one year clump* in the garden of Arthur and Mary Davis. This single clump attracted much attention and helped in BH being the top vote-getter for an Honorable Mention for 1974." The iris was also a runner-up for the Cook Cup, awarded to the best guest iris from out of the hosting region, by the votes of those attending the convention.

That H. M. award, garnered easily the first year the variety was eligible, was a portent of the future. Its success at this point was due, probably, to votes from judges who had viewed it in other areas, also. Dr. Mohr reports that it had been sold to growers in "widely separated locations from California to the east coast and reports of good performance were coming in from everywhere."

In the 1975 Judges' Choice balloting, BH received the third highest number of votes. In 1976, it was eligible for the Award of Merit competition and swept to the top as the number one vote-getter.

Thus far, with the exception of the convention balloting, the iris had been voted its triumphs by accredited AIS judges. Its first recorded notice by the general world of iris fanciers across the nation, was when it appeared on the 1975 Popularity Poll. All AIS members are entitled to vote in this poll, and there is no

limit to the number of times an iris may appear; consequently, two-year-old BRIDE'S HALO was competing with classic, long-popular irises in commerce for many years, including Dykes Medalists. Results show BH as number 25.

The next year, it had climbed to number 16. On the 1977, Popularity Poll, BRIDE'S HALO was number 5 and by 1978, public endorsement placed it number 3, surpassed only by STEPPING OUT and KILT LILT.

In addition, BRIDE'S HALO received the President's Cup, voted to the best variety by a hybridizer from the hosting region at the 1977 AIS Convention in Memphis. Otherwise, 1977 was a quiet year for BH. The iris was in the mandatory waiting period before the next stage of eligibility on the Awards Ballot; the next competition was its greatest, the Dykes Medal category.

The white and yellow iris appeared on the 1978 list of Dykes contenders, listed alphabetically among the 93 irises eligible, part of a 16-page ballot mailed to over a thousand judges. In the Dykes competition, each candidate must have won the AM, Knowlton, Sass or Cook-Douglas Medals, or an award equivalent to the Award of Merit. Beardless and bearded of all types who achieved these ranks were now pitted against each other.

In order to win this battle of champions, a contender must receive 15% of the votes cast by judges who chose to vote in the category. Tension began to build as the ballots arrived. The Awards Committee made periodic checks of enthusiastically early returns to ascertain the trends and the likelihood of a run-off ballot being required. Other statistics, such as the early receipt of ballots per region were also kept. Periodic results appear below. Please note that the percentages of judges refers to the percentage who *could* vote; honorary and senior judges are not required to vote. On the Dykes chart, the numbers shown are only for the leading contenders; not all ballots contained a vote in the category, and, of the 93 eligible varieties, 28 received no votes at all. Voting timetables were kept on all major awards.

PERCENTAGE OF 1978 AWARDS BALLOTS RETURNED EARLY PER REGION TIMETABLE

Reg.	June 13	June 30	July 8	Reg.	June 13	June 30	July 8
1	7.3	29.2	36.5	14	27.	42.8	69.8
2	9.4	25.	53.1	15	19.	41.3	58.6
3	10.	36.6	76.6	16	0	0	44.4
4	12.1	21.2	63.6	17	30.1	45.2	60.3
5	34.6	42.3	53.8	18	27.6	43.4	75.6
6	4.3	22.8	51.4	19	0	20.	70.
7	15.2	50.	74.7	20	4.2	37.5	62.5
8	0	26.4	67.0	21	2.4	33.3	64.2
9	5.7	25.7	57.1	22	36.7	55.	78.3
10	23.0	33.3	46.1	23	26.7	36.3	66.6
11	4.8	38.	47.6	24	11.6	25.5	53.4
12	3.7	3.7	59.2	Over Seas	25.	35.	60.
13	16.3	39.5	58.1				

## LEADERS ON EARLY DYKES MEDAL RETURNS

Variety	June 13	June 30	July 8
Bride's Halo	19	40	78
Going My Way	19	32	45
Mary Frances	19	37	53
Lemon Mist	13	23	44

The front-runners were obvious from the beginning: BRIDE'S HALO, GOING MY WAY, MARY FRANCES and LEMON MIST, all tall bearded varieties. Earliest results were a three-way tie. At that point, June 13, regions with more than 25% of the ballots returned included these states: South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Northern California, Texas, Kansas, Oklahoma, Arkansas and New Mexico.

June 30 saw leaps in the number of returns from north eastern, north central, north western and random other areas. BH began to pull ahead. By July 8, all regions' returns were flowing in smoothly, just ahead of the anticipated last-minute deluge from the mailbox.

At this point, BRIDE'S HALO had assumed a commanding lead: 35% of the votes cast. Final results a few days later, however, were less definitive. The Awards Committee triple-checked the ballots using differing systems and the results were invariable. BH had 14.50%; MARY FRANCES, 9.39%; GOING MY WAY, 8.96% and LEMON MIST, 6.97% of the Dykes votes.

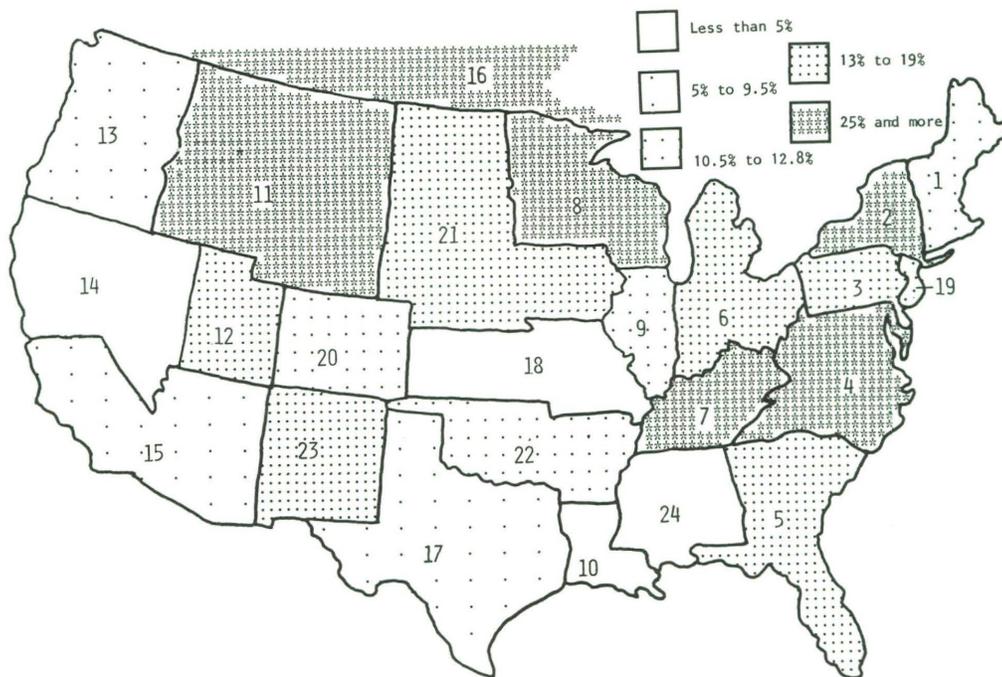
Rules demand that a winner have 15%; otherwise, a supplementary ballot may be ordered by the Board of Directors. The Awards Committee telephoned President Wolford to report the results and was instructed to poll the Board members immediately by mail to see if they wished a supplementary ballot issued. This was done. The Board was not, of course, told which irises were involved. They voted for the run-off ballot of all irises having 5% or more of the votes, plus a "no award" category.

This was mailed to judges with the Judges' Choice ballot and other results of the Awards Ballot. Throughout the process, utmost security was observed and utmost tension built. Finally, when the supplementary ballots were returned and tabulated, BRIDE'S HALO triumphed with 31.5% of the votes cast.

It has been stated that in order to merit the Dykes Medal, an iris must be able to grow well in many parts of the nation, under many climatic and cultural conditions. Obviously, an iris must impress a sizable number of judges with its quality in order to receive enough votes to win. The accompanying map shows the distribution of support for BH on the first ballot.

Dr. Mohr notes that his variety probably does well in most regions because both of its parents were "quite widely adapted." The map seems to indicate that its greatest popularity is in middle Atlantic coast and northern states. Overall, a "donut" pattern circles Regions 18, with Regions 14, 10, and 24 also lower in the percentage of votes for BH.

PERCENTAGES OF AIS JUDGES IN EACH REGION VOTING FOR BRIDE'S HALO  
FOR THE DYKES MEDAL ON THE 1978 AWARDS BALLOT



The hybridizer commented also, "I have observed that BH appears to require a somewhat higher fertility level than average, so we give it about 20% more fertilizer on old ground. It naturally does splendidly on new ground."

BRIDE'S HALO has reached the pinnacle of success in 5 years. Good performance as a guest iris at conventions in Philadelphia, Roanoke and Memphis, wide distribution, quality that impresses many judges and growing popularity with the general membership, as well as judges, have been steps on the ladder to the championship.

### THE NAME GAME

Bob Sobek of Westford, Massachusetts, who hybridized the iris DONKEY SERANADE states that he named it for the music of the same name, but also the animal. He admits that he isn't an expert on donkeys, but the iris' grey and brown colors seemed appropriate; "the name couldn't be misleading in any event."

FILLER TIDBITS are from the 1978 REGISTRATIONS AND INTRODUCTIONS booklet, published Jan. 1979 by the AIS, compiled by Kathleen Kay Nelson, assisted by Keith Keppel. This handy annual publication is a 69-page listing of the irises and their hybridizers for the year and is available from the AIS Librarian, Mrs. Dorothy Howard, 226 E. 20th St., Tulsa, Oklahoma 74119 at \$3.50, postpaid.