

JUDGING STANDARDS FOR CULTIVATED STRAINS OF XIPHOPHORUS

ALA – 2017

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Based on French and German harmonized standards

Introduction

The following judging standards have been commissioned by the *American Livebearer Association* to better promote, classify and ultimately judge in an equitable and impartial manner the numerous cultivated strains of *Xiphophorus* presently being bred in the USA.

Objectives

The purpose of those standards is to serve as guidelines for judges to evaluate the diverse cultivated strains of *Xiphophorus*, but also for serious breeders to better define and selectively improve their strains in order to earn the highest awards in sanctioned shows.

Specimens can be entered as pairs or as a single entry. Please note that each fish in a pair is to be individually judged, yet it may earn an extra ten (10) points for harmony only as a pair. By the same token, any entry displaying lack of "selective breeding achievement" in either finnage or color – i.e. low-fin specimens and/or of wild green coloration – will be penalized by minus fifteen (-15).

In order to ensure consistent judging in sanctioned shows, all entries must primarily be sorted out and grouped by categories defined by their "parent" species; i.e. *X. helleri*, *X. variatus* and *X. maculatus*. A secondary grouping is to be organized by finnage variations; i.e. low-fin, hi-fin, lyretail or plumetail.

Each entry is then individually judged and the three (3) specimens or pairs in each group with the highest cumulative points will be respectively awarded: "First", "Second" and "Third" place.

Note that the present judging directives can be amended each year by the Commission of Standards, with the possibility of adding new potential strains as they become established in the hobby. Such a set of standards is meant to remain flexible, allowing breeders to continuously modify existing strains. In order to do so, a breeder must enter his or her newly selected strain in a minimum of three (3) sanctioned shows, OR the new strain must be entered by three (3) different breeders. Nevertheless, any new strains must also be validated after an official meeting of the Commission of Standards.

Table of Contents	Page
Introduction	1
Table of Content & Judging criteria	2
X. helleri	2
X. maculatus.....	3
X. variatus.....	3
Finnage conformation	4-5
Color conformation.....	5-6
Harmony (pair only)	7
Vitality	7
Selective breeding achievement	7
Judging Form	8

JUDGING CRITERIA

1. Body conformation	15 Points
2. Body length	10 Points
3. Finnage conformation	20 Points
4. Finnage length	10 Points
5. Color conformation	20 Points
6. Harmony (pair only)	10 Points
7. Vitality	10 Points
8. Selective breeding achievements	15 Points

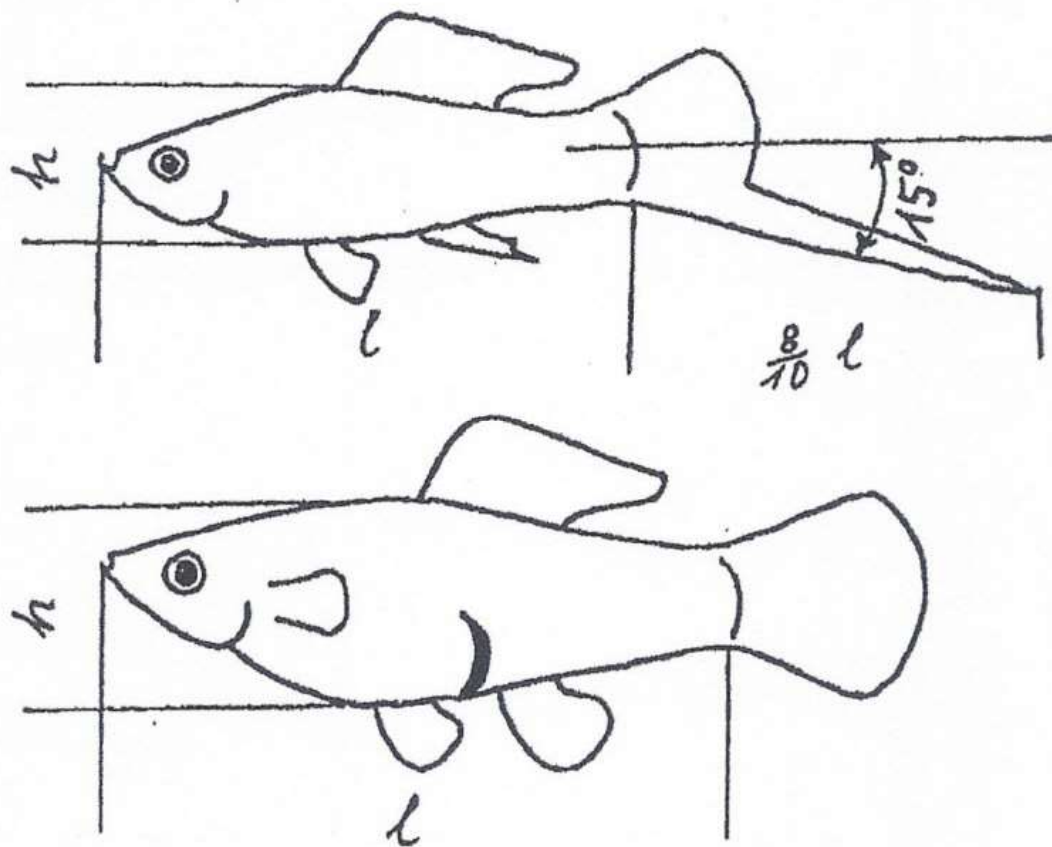
Maximum Total

100 Points

Xiphophorus helleri

Body conformation 15 points

Specimens by their body shape, size and sword appendage must closely resemble wild *Xiphophorus helleri* which is characterized by a harmoniously long and slender silhouette. Females, while having a larger, fuller body, yet lack any sword-like caudal extension.



$$h : l = 1 : 3$$

Body conformation penalties triggering points deduction:

Spine deformity.....	-3 points
Excessive curvature of the back.....	-3 points
Eyes deformity.....	-3 points
Hollow belly.....	-3 points
Flat body.....	-3 points

Body length 10 points

Body length is measured from the mouth to the base of the caudal fin.

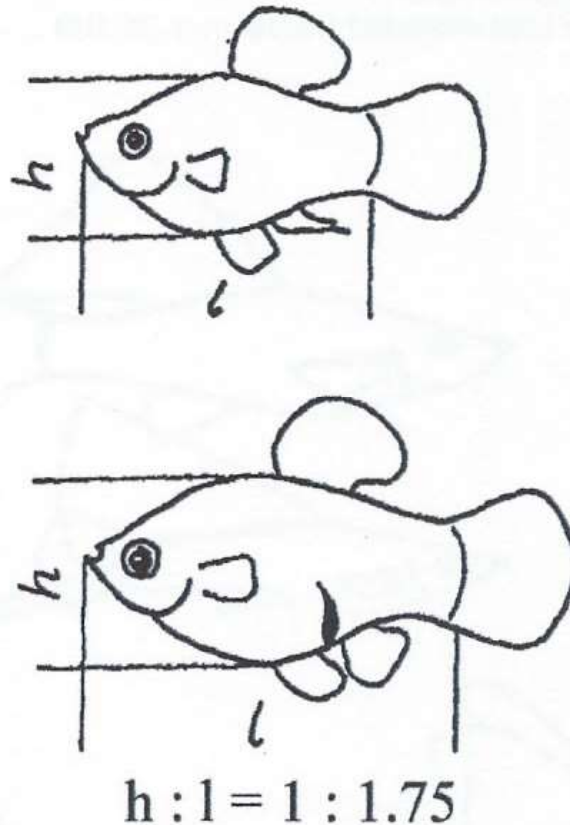
Body length necessary to earn 10 points: ♂ 6.5cm - ♀ 8cm

Body length necessary to earn 5 point: ♂ 5cm - ♀ 6.5cm

Xiphophorus maculatus

Body conformation 15 points

Specimens by their body shape and size must closely resemble wild *Xiphophorus maculatus* which is characterized by a short and “bulky” silhouette, along with a steep angle formed by the lines going from above the head and below the throat (angle even more pronounced in females). The male should as close as possible resemble this distinctive body conformation.



Body conformation penalties triggering point deduction:

Spine deformity.....	-3 points
Excessive curvature of the back.....	-3 points
Eyes deformity.....	-3 points
Hollow belly.....	-3 points
Flat body.....	-3 points

Body length 10 points

Body length is measured from the mouth to the base of the caudal fin.

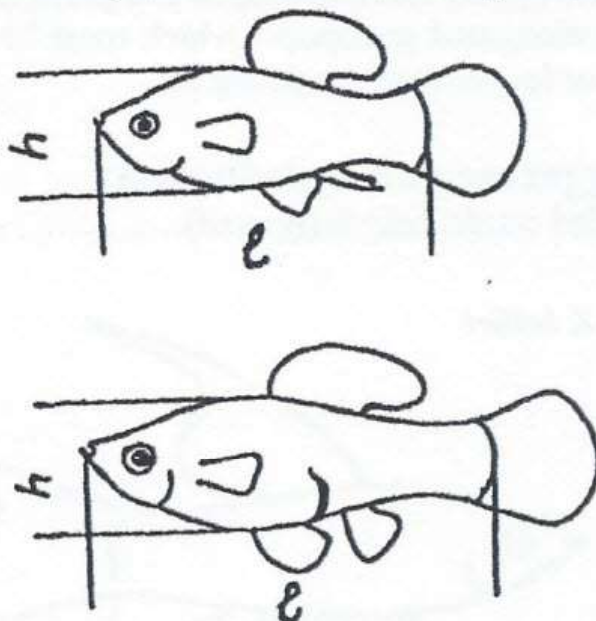
Body length necessary to earn 10 points: ♂ 3.5cm - ♀ 4.5cm

Body length necessary to earn 5 point: ♂ 2.5cm - ♀ 3.5cm

Xiphophorus variatus

Body conformation 15 points

Specimens by their body shape and size must closely resemble wild *Xiphophorus variatus*. The silhouette is a mix of both previous species. The caudal peduncle is more stretched than with *X. maculatus*, and its dorsal line is rather similar to *X. helleri*. As with *X. maculatus*, the caudal fin lacks any sword extension.



$$h : l = 1 : 3$$

Body conformation penalties triggering points deduction:

Spine deformity.....	-3 points
Excessive curvature of the back.....	-3 points
Eyes deformity.....	-3 points
Hollow belly.....	-3 points
Flat body.....	-3 points

Body length 10 points

Body length is measured from the mouth to the base of the caudal fin.

Body length necessary to earn 10 points: ♂ 3.5cm - ♀ 4.5cm

Body length necessary to earn 5 point: ♂ 2.5cm - ♀ 3.5cm

FINNAGE CONFORMATION **20 points**

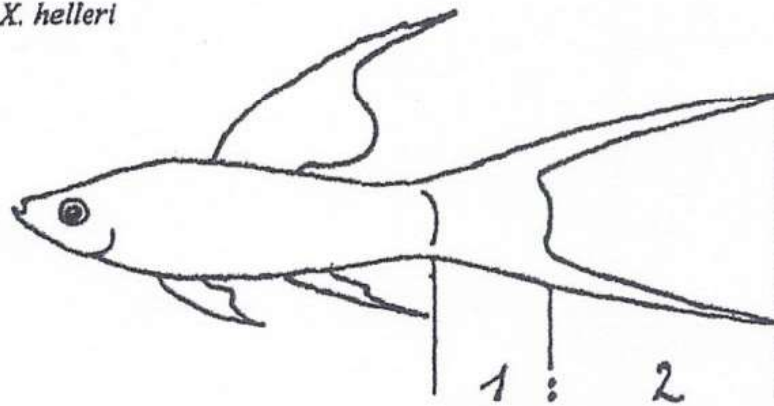
I - Lyretail

The first rays of the dorsal fin are longer (yet not hi-fin), as are a few rays of the anal and pectoral fins, while top and bottom caudal rays are elongated and of even and proportionate length. A slight curvature of those lengthy fin extensions is acceptable. The transition between elongated rays and regular ones must be progressive and regular, forming shaped and proportionally delineated finnage. Males display elongated gonopodia which must be held straight, unbroken and of similar length or longer than the dorsal fin.

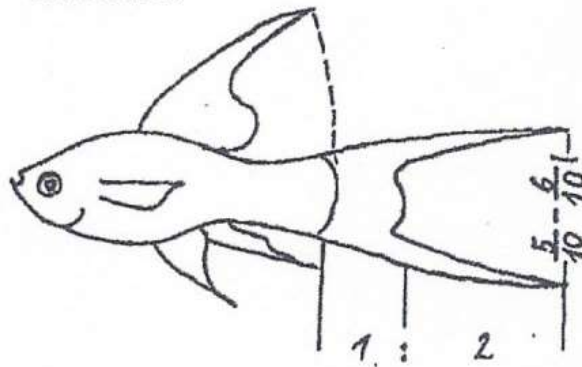
Penalty triggering points deduction:

Uneven extended caudal length (lyretail)..... -4 points

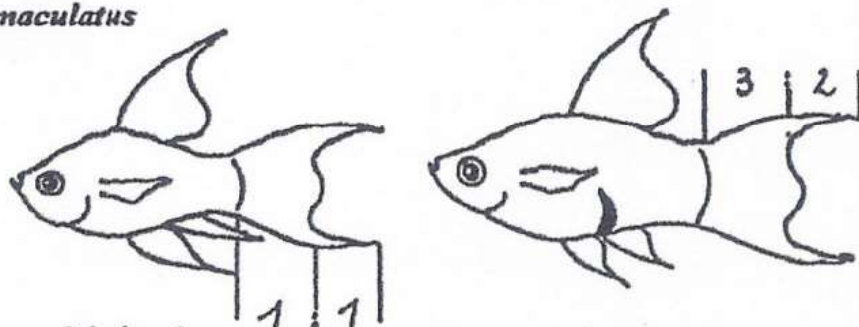
X. helleri



X. variatus



X. maculatus



Minimum acceptable extended ray length 1: 1

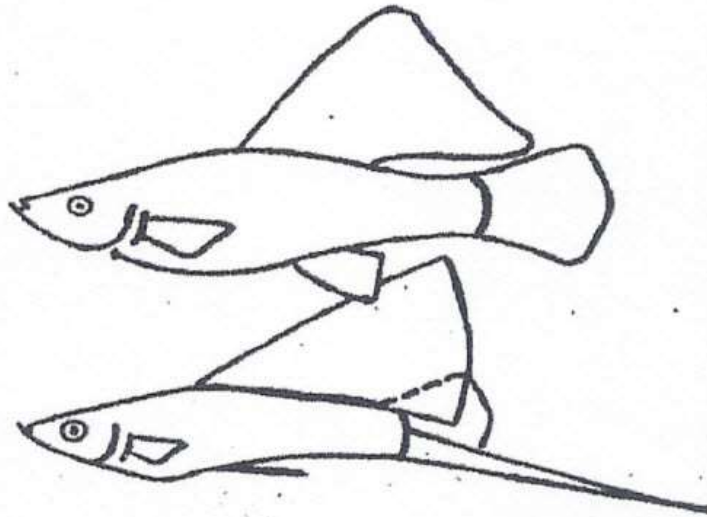
II – Hi-fin (aka: Simpson)

The dorsal fin is of large and wide area, shaped as a delta. With premium specimens, the dorsal fin resembles a veil, draping itself along the side of the body. The superior edge of the dorsal fin is wider than its base. Despite the fact that males display larger and wider dorsal fin than their female counterparts, any females showing substantially developed dorsal finnage is worthy of special recommendation.

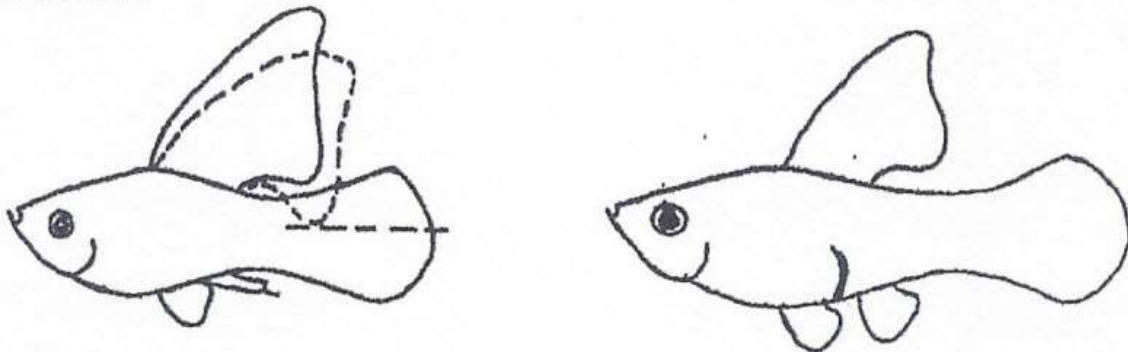
Penalty triggering points deduction:

Narrow and/or bent extended frontal rays (hi-fin) ...-10 points

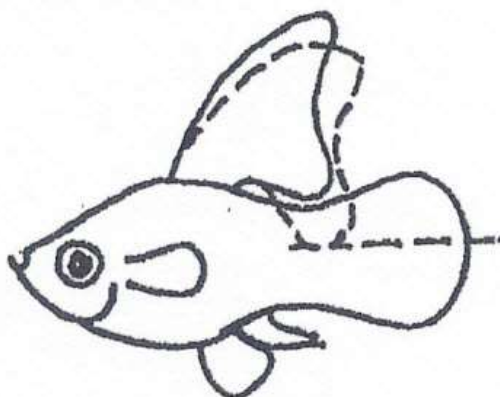
X. helleri



X. variatus



X. maculatus



III - Low-fin

Caudal, dorsal and pectoral fin are similar both in shape and proportion to those of parent species (refer to graphic representations on pages 3,4 & 5).

Penalty triggering points deduction:

Damaged and/or split fin..... -3 points

VI - Plumetail

The caudal fin, in its half, displays between two to five elongated rays. All extended rays end at even length. Pectoral and dorsal finnage remain unchanged. The plumetail characteristic is expressed by both males and females.



Minimum acceptable length of rays: 0.5 cm.

To earn the maximum of points, the minimum length of the "plume" must be equal to the length of the caudal fin.

Penalty triggering points deduction:

Damaged and/or split fin..... -3 points

COLOR CONFORMATION 20 points

Color conformation is evaluated in two phases:

1. Background colors
2. Foreground color patterns – i.e. recessive hue, shiny scale, black markings as well as eye color.

In general, more intense coloration is preferable.

1- Background main colorations

White

Homogeneous absence of coloration across the whole body. Slight black spots tolerated for some strains of *X. maculatus* (e.g. “bleeding heart”) and *X. variatus*.

Yellow

Yellow color uniformly spread and without any grayish color pattern or hue.

Red

Red coloration uniformly spread across body and finnage, without any grayish color pattern or hue.

Note that when background color patterns are present (such as black markings –e.g. tuxedo or Berlin), a red coloration with some slight gray factor is acceptable.

Gray-Green (natural coloration also commonly referred as “wild”)

While the background color is a solid gray, it may also display foreground colors (such as black and/or red) or subtler hue (e.g. metallic shine).

Marigold

Starting from the head section the color is bright yellow, gradually spreading throughout the entire body, progressively turning red or orange as it reaches the caudal peduncle. Premium specimens display intense red caudal fins and yellow or red dorsal fin. The color transition homogeneously occurs across the length of body.

Orange

Intense orange color across the entire body. The color can range from light orange to “brick red”.

2- Foreground body & finnage color patterns

Red dorsal fin

The red coloration starts at the base of the dorsal fin and may potentially cover the entire fin area. An intense red coloration is strongly preferred.

Red caudal fin

The intense red coloration may stretch to the caudal peduncle as well as the body area. It is important to note that a red coloration contained to the caudal area is preferred.

Yellow dorsal fin

The yellow coloration on the dorsal fin must be as pure and bright as possible. An irregular yellow color pattern is not recommended.

Yellow caudal fin

The yellow coloration on the caudal fin must be as pure and bright as possible. An irregular yellow color is not recommended.

Black dorsal fin

The black coloration starts at the base of the dorsal fin and covers the entire fin area. A common drawback is black pigmentation spreading over onto the main body area.

Black caudal, dorsal, anal, pectoral finnage and lips

The black coloration starts at the base of the finnage fin and covers it in its entirety. This color pattern is only displayed in two known strains: "arnoldi" and "wag".

An intense black pigmentation of membranes is a requirement for the "arnoldi" strain while the "wag" strain only requires the rays to be darkened.

In both color patterns lips, pectoral, dorsal, anal and caudal fin are black.

Blue

Blue coloration or greenish blue may be lighter toward the mid-section of the head section, the dorsal fin area, the belly and back sections, allowing the background color to be visible. Any darker markings and spots are not preferred. A typical example of that foreground color pattern is the *X. helleri* "Hamburg" strain with its shiny blue shiny scales covering the entire body but no finnage.

Red blotches

Red area, whether or not bordered by dark lines on the throat, the head, the pectoral fin area or the main body. It is worth noting that the *X. maculatus* "bleeding heart" strain illustrates this type of foreground color patterns. Males of that strain display a red area on the throat and the belly, on top of the white background color. Usually females of that strain do not show any red areas. The *X. helleri* "peppermint" as well as the "Koi" strains fall under the same category of color pattern. Scattered red areas showing a lack of contrast are a major drawback.

Horizontal black pattern

Semi-continuous black markings covering the body from the head section to the caudal peduncle. Examples of such foreground color pattern are "Tuxedo" and "Weisbaden" strains.

Black spots

Black pattern varies from small spots to plain dots. Dots are preferable and must be widely scattered one the entire body and finnage sections. A typical strain showing black spot foreground color pattern is the "Berlin".

A common drawback consists of close spotted marking forming larger patches, a color marking more associated with "marble" or "painted" strains.

Black markings

Large black markings evenly spread across the body section of the fish, allowed to extend to its finnage section.

Colored stripes

Long colored lines running horizontally on the length of the body. This rather uncommon color pattern is also referred as filigree. Irregular and/or broken lines are considered a drawback.

Albino and semi-albino

For the sake of standardized classification, specimens displaying a lack of any pigmentation in the eyes, body and finnage are considered to be albino. Any red-eyed specimens whose bodies are partially or fully pigmented are classified as semi-albino. Just to name a few, body of fin color can vary from dark to red, gold and pineapple.

The common denominator to both albino ad semi-albino designations resides in the presence of red eyes.

HARMONY (pair only) 10 points

The pair must be judged on their harmonious homogeneity and similarity in body form and size, as well as finnage and coloration. It is commonly understood that females may be slightly larger in body size and have inferior fin development as well as overall coloration than their male counterparts.

Penalties triggering point deduction:

- Major discrepancy in background coloration - 1 point
- Male smaller than female..... - 1 point
- Discrepancy in finnage type between ♂ and ♀..... - 2 points
- Different parent species (e.g. maculatus ♂ and variatus ♀) - 3 points
- Different color and/or finnage strains (e.g. hi-fin ♂ and lyretail ♀) ... - 3 points

VITALITY 10 points

Vitality is an essential judging criteria used to evaluate each specimen based on how it fares in a show environment (e.g. how does the fish carry its finnage, its swimming pattern, is it lethargic? etc....)

Penalties triggering point deduction:

- Sick and/or unhealthy fish..... - 5 points
- Defective swim bladder..... - 5 points

SELECTIVE BREEDING ACHIEVEMENTS 15 points

In the overall points attributed to *Selective Breeding Achievements*:

- Eight (8) points are allocated to the breeding difficulty of a specific finnage strain.
For instance, breeding a quality hi-fin specimen whose dorsal hi-fin is well and evenly develop requires more selective skills than breeding low-fin strains. This rewards the breeder who attempts to breed combined finnage patterns while maintaining both overall finnage quality and conformation.
- Seven (7) points are allocated to the breeding difficulty of a specific color strain (e.g. bleeding-heart, red alpha, red semi-albino, homogeneous black markings or spots, etc....)