

Flower Show Exhibitor Tips

by Nicky Hall

Welcome to all new exhibitors!

Why enter the flower show? Entering is not just for winning; flower shows are educational. You can see what many garden favourites look like and what are the new varieties, so please enter a flower show.

Here is some information to help you do so.

1. Once a year, the flower show schedule is handed out. Look to see what plants you have and can use in the up-coming shows. For the September and October shows, you may pick a flower on the schedule to grow over the summer. If there is no specific class for your entry, look for AOC (any other cultivar). This is usually for perennials and annuals but also bulbs, biennials, etc.

2. Check and see what kind of entry is required. For example, a stem, three blooms, spray, etc. If a maximum height is given, measure the branch/vine correctly. If the branch/vine is too long, it will be disqualified.

- A spray: a plant portion, small branchlets or flowers cut from the main stem i.e. bleeding heart.
- A stem or stalk: i.e. sweet pea, primula, and iris. If showing daffodils or tulips, do not cut leaves as they need to die back to feed the bulb for the next spring.
- A spike: an upright stem carrying several flowers, usually with short pedicles, i.e. snapdragons, gladiolus.
- A bud: an immature flower insufficiently open to show the form of a bloom. A bud showing colour is considered a bloom except in a rose. Sometimes a certain type of rose (floribunda) may have to be de-budded in a class. Read the schedule carefully!
- A collection: a variety and/or kinds of flowers, plants, fruit and/or vegetables shown in one exhibit. The quality, number and rarity of items making up the group, plus horticultural perfection are foremost in judging collections.

3. Cut your exhibit the night before or early in the morning for best vigour. (especially in the hot summer).

4. Cut the stem in proportion to the plant, i.e. a tall flower like cosmos should have a fairly long stem.

5. Check your exhibit, removing damaged/dirty flowers. Always inspect for bugs. Infested plants will be disqualified!

6. A container should have a narrow neck to support the stem upright. A glass bottle is better than plastic because of the weight. The container is not judged so there is no need for anything fancy for cultural classes.

- Rose in a Bowl – The rose should float freely but not lost in a huge space. A bowl is a container that is wider than it is tall.

7. Fill in an entry form. We provide the forms. If you know how, it is helpful to do this at home prior to the show. If you need some assistance, come a little earlier so we can do it with you. Provide the cultivar name, if you know it.

8. The show table is divided by class number; put your entry in the right spot.

9. All entries **MUST** be in place by 7:30 pm. At that time, **ONLY** the show conveners can remain at the tables. We place a sign stating judging has started. After the judges choices have been made, you can freely go to see the results. Look at the variety of flowers shown (you may see a new cultivar you are considering adding to your collection). Take photos. We encourage the judge to stay until the guest speaker has finished, to comment on the entries. If they are not able to wait, I will try to answer your questions or concerns.