

“GROW TO SHOW”

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2015

Horticulture tips for growing and preparing horticulture for show. Emphasis is on well-grown, well-groomed, correctly named fresh plant material.

1. The Schedule is the Law of the Show. Study the schedule – read rules and policies.
2. Know the procedure for correct botanical names.
3. Familiarize yourself with the Scales of Points for judging.
4. Learn how to select, prepare, condition, groom and transport cut specimens and container-grown plants.
 - All specimens must be grown by the exhibitor and must be all fresh plant material.
 - Container-grown plants and cut specimens must be in the exhibitor’s possession for 90 days. Multiple or combination plantings must be owned at least 6 weeks.
 - Specimens should be prime maturity, the peak of perfection
 - The quantity of flowers, fruit or cones should be ideal for that specimen
 - Substance should be firm, turgid
 - Color should be fresh, pure
 - Foliage and stem should be firm and in proportion to the specimen
 - Specimen should be free of blemishes, insects, dust (good grooming)
 - The container should be clean, a neutral color (terra cotta or plastic), and an appropriate size for the plant.
 - Most schedules require a compatible saucer with the container – it should be appropriately sized for the container.
 - Know the correct, complete botanical name of your specimen (an exhibit must be a blue-ribbon winner and score 95 or above to receive a Top Award). Labeling should be legible and neat.
 - Exhibitor may make more than one entry if a different variety, cultivar, type or color.
 - Cut specimens should not have foliage below water line.
 - Double potting is permitted unless prohibited by schedule.
 - Top dressing is permitted unless prohibited by the schedule. Orchids, cacti and succulents typically are shown with top dressing such as bark or small pebbles, respectively.
 - Wedging (inconspicuous “plug”) is permitted, for example, plastic wrap or a small cut branch to prop a woody specimen.
 - Inconspicuous staking is permitted.

Conditioning

Cut specimens the day before a show so they have a chance to “condition”. Pick in the early morning or late afternoon. Place specimens in a bucket of tepid water in a cool, dark location. Before taking the specimen to the show, remove unnecessary foliage, spent blossoms, check for insects, and chewed leaves or petals. When choosing container-grown plants to show, repot a week ahead of the flower show so the plant has a chance to acclimate to its new container. Groom and stake plants at home. Wedge cut specimens if necessary. Now you are ready to transport your entries to the show!

HORTICULTURE GOOD GROOMING TIPS

1. Wear your glasses or use a magnifying glass to look for:
 - a. Dust, soil, spray residue, dropped pollen, leaf spots
 - b. Remember – look on undersides of leaves
 - c. Dead leaf/plant material on soil surface
 - d. Insect infestation or signs of pests i.e. sticky dew, chew marks on leaves / flowers, miniature cob webs, signs of powdery mildew, or the pests themselves.
2. Remove all dead leaves and spent flowers at the main stem.
3. Clean the outside and rim of your pot of all soil and mineral deposits
 - a. solution of a couple Tblsp. of vinegar in pint of water helps remove salt and mineral stains – use stiff brush and rinse well with clear water.
 - b. Sand paper, very fine steel wool, nylon scrub pad or knife for scraping difficult spots
 - c. As a last resort, you may rub a small amount of vegetable oil on the clean, but still lightly stained pot, and then wipe off any excess. This will work for the time period of a show.
 - d. **WHEN IN DOUBT - RE-POT!**
4. Clean the leaves of your plant with water using Q-tips, soft make-up brush, soft cloth, cotton balls. **NEVER USE LEAF POLISH.**
5. The wound from a pruned woody branch can be disguised by ashes or magic marker.
6. Check any staking material and replace if faded or soiled. Make sure to leave no frayed ties. Clip them for neatness. Staking should always be unobtrusive and usually removed unless for bulbs, orchids and in some cases trained plants.
7. Check the top of the soil for cleanliness; remove a bit and replace with clean soil being sure to leave enough space below pot rim for watering.
8. Have a matching, proportionately sized saucer available, if schedule requires one.
9. Be sure to put your name and garden club on the bottom of the saucer and your plant pot. Mark unobtrusively.

Tools for Good Grooming

Tweezers

Magnifying glass

Q-tips, cotton balls, nylon stocking

Soft brushes, paint of make-up

Nail scissors or other small, very sharp scissors

Spray bottle of water with fine mist

Small watering can

Plastic bag with extra soil

Plastic bag with extra top dressing

Rubbing alcohol or alcohol swabs

Small scrub brush or nylon scrubbing pad

Steel wool

Fine sandpaper

WD-40

Extra stakes

Raffia, fine wire

Measuring tape

Fork

Waterproof pen or pencil

White-out

Small pen light