

SHOWING FLOWERS

WHY SHOW FLOWERS?

The Ontario Judging Standards for Horticulture and Floral Design (OJES)(1) states that flower shows are held to

- educate,
- stimulate interest in horticulture
- provide a venue for creative expression
- encourage community participation and
- have a project in which all members can participate.

Shows may include flowers, plants, fruit, vegetables, floral designs and special exhibits. OJES describes a Standard Flower Show as having at least two divisions, which must include one Horticultural and one Design Division. Each division has a minimum of five classes with a minimum of four exhibits in each class. Our Faux Show will have one Horticultural Division with 2 to 4 flower classes (to be divided if need be) and a Design Division of one class, so will not be a full "Standard Show", but it will be fun.

Clubs are encouraged to have Shows which conform to Ontario Judging and Exhibiting Standards for Horticulture and Floral Design, 2003 Edition, but it is the **Show Schedule and the accompanying rules which become the 'Law of the Show'**, so it is important to read and follow the guidelines for the specific show. The Show Schedule will provide you with information such as the containers specimens are to be shown in, the number of specimens you may enter per class and any size restrictions. Other things such as foliage/no foliage may also be indicated. The Show Committee Chair and Clerks can provide answers to your questions.

For our "Faux Shows" we will try to keep things simple and hopefully straight forward. One thing that is important to remember is that judges are looking for cultural perfection, not the newest or prettiest cultivar. Cultural perfection means that the plant has "the appearance of general good health, is at the peak of perfection and prime maturity" (The Encyclopedia of Judging and Exhibiting)(2). Which means the plant has been well grown (the plant's requirements-food, water, soil, light and humidity etc. have been met) and there is no chemical or nutrient deficiency.

Care needs to be given to preparing, conditioning and grooming of your specimen(s). We will let you know some of the tips and tricks we have learned to help you with this.

Selecting Specimens: Check the show schedule and note the classes for which you will have specimens ready (i.e. at cultural perfection). Take a bucket of lukewarm water to the garden and immediately place your cut flowers in the water to keep them hydrate until you can begin the conditioning and hardening processes. When choosing your entries it is important to remember that if a bud is showing colour, it is considered a bloom. Only attached foliage is permitted unless otherwise stated in the schedule and sometimes no leaves are required and for other specimens the number of leaves is limited. You should also check the schedule for the required number of specimens in the exhibit (some classes are for a single specimen while others are for a group of 3 which can be further subdivided into 3 identical cultivars or 3 different cultivars). It will vary between classes.

Hardening: All cut specimens are hardened. This will ensure that your specimens are at their best.

- Remove lower foliage cleanly, upper foliage must be attached unless otherwise stated.
- Specimen blooms should not have side buds
- Make a fresh cut (on a slant) underwater to ensure maximum water uptake
- Place in a wide bucket of warm water for at least 3 hours, but overnight is preferable
- Keep in a cool, dark, humid, draft free area
- Re-cut the stems before placing in the show containers. (Be aware of any specimen size limits—see Measuring).

Conditioning: Some plant material requires special treatment known as conditioning prior to hardening. The type of plant will determine how this is done. Ideas from OJES are: many ornamental branches will benefit from splitting the cut end to allow more water absorption; the life of flowers that exude white latex/sap are often improved by burning the ends (a candle is an easy way to do this); others will benefit from placing the bottom 2" of the stems in boiling water for a minute or two before placing in cold water. You can find further references about conditioning on the internet and in many flower arranging books.

Measuring: Some classes have height/length restrictions. When measuring, the measurement is taken from the table to the tip of the branch or cutting. It is important to use a flexible tape because you are measuring along the curve of the specimen, not simply how high it stands. If your entry exceeds the length stated in the show schedule, it will be disqualified.

Design classes also have dimension restrictions. The measurement applies to height, width in any direction and breadth. You need to imagine that you could cover the design with a box of the required measurement and no element should touch the box.

Grooming: This step is often overlooked. It involves removing all evidence of insects, disease, dust, pollen, or foreign material from the blooms and foliage. You can use items such as feather duster, cloth, paint / make-up brush, small scissors to trim leaves (removing yellow while keeping natural shape) to groom your specimens.

Containers: When choosing containers for your specimens you need to consider transparent or opaque, the show schedule will specify. (Many judges want to be able to see the stem.) The size of container should reflect the size of the specimen. A large specimen in a small container is sure to topple over! The mouth size will also affect the way the specimen shows, narrower is often better. All containers must be scrupulously clean.

Number of Entries per Class: In some classes you are restricted to submitting only one entry, for others you may have multiple entries in a class.

Entry Tags (NIP-Named if Possible): Make sure to complete the entry tags with the proper class number and description. If two specimens are deemed to be equal, the judge may place a named specimen higher.

Transporting Specimens to Show: Use containers such as plastic soft drink cartons, cardboard beer 6 pack boxes, cut down liquor box, etc. where each bottle has its own section. The blooms should not touch, otherwise they might be damaged. I use newspaper around the vases to wedge them in place in the container. You can gently "collar" the stems with newspaper to stabilize the stems, so the flowers don't touch.

Placement at the Show: When placing your specimens at a show **you MAY NOT move other specimens** that are already on the table. If there is insufficient space let a show committee member know. They will ensure that there is room for all the specimens.

RESOURCES

1. **"Ontario Judging and Exhibiting Standards"**
Ontario Horticultural Associations
The Garden Clubs of Ontario
2. **"The Encyclopedia of Judging and Exhibiting"**
Esther Veramae Hamel

