

Hints and Tips for Floral Exhibitors

Cut Flowers

1. The Schedule is the law of the show. Read it carefully and follow instructions.
2. Most specimens should be cut 3-24 hours before the show, stems put in water, and set in a cool place free of drafts. It is recommended that you take your schedule to the garden with you a few days before the show and choose your specimens then, even tying a small piece of string loosely around the stems of the intended blooms. Good results will be achieved if the flowers are cut the night before they are to be exhibited. They will last longer on the show table because they have had a chance to become conditioned.
3. The stem length should be in pleasing proportion to the size of the flowers. Short stems detract from a good exhibit.
4. The size of the bloom should be a little above average and the form should be characteristic of the variety.
5. When the exhibit is placed on the show table, it should be propped up in the container and supplied with enough water. A small amount of cedar foliage can be used inconspicuously in the neck of the container to support the stems. Do not use floral oasis in your containers in the Cut Flower Section of the schedule. The use of floral oasis is limited to the Design/Arrangement Section only.
6. An exhibit that is infested with insects that cannot fly is not judged. A flying insect that may have flown in, is not charged against the exhibit on which it is found, and the exhibitor is given the benefit of the doubt.
7. Diseased specimens are severely penalized. Mechanical injury (injury received during transportation, i.e. bruised or ripped petals) is penalized according to the amount of damage.
8. Exhibits should be cleaned, but not polished. There should be no soil, dust, spray residue, insects, dead or alive, or other foreign matter on the leaves or blooms. Products such as "Leaf Shine" must not be used. Remove damaged leaves carefully, but do not remove many. Remove faded florets and seed pods. Clip leaves and seed pods as close to the stems as possible; do not leave small "nubs" where you have made the cuts as this will detract for your exhibit and cause it to be marked down.
9. Choose your specimens carefully. You want the blooms that are almost mature; blooms that have been open for some time will have that tired faded look. The spray-type flowers should have a portion fully open, a portion partly open and a portion in tight buds.
10. All specimens should be shown with foliage unless the foliage is not attached to the blooming stem. The schedule should state where the foliage may be omitted. Foliage is important to the judge as it indicates culture.

11. Uniformity in an exhibit is very important. If the schedule calls for a more than one bloom, they should be as alike as possible in terms of size, maturity and length of stem. Uniformity in “collections” is limited to like flowers. If for example, a collection calls for two each of five different annuals, each flower in the sets of two must be as alike to its partner as possible.
12. The attributes the judge will be looking for in cut flowers are colour, form, size, stem, foliage, cultural perfection, and uniformity as well as distinction, rarity, and fragrance.

Houseplants

1. The specimen should be well groomed. Remove faded flowers and dead foliage. Dust the leaves with a soft cloth. Commercial leaf cleaners must not be used.
2. Clean all debris from the soil surface and remove all decorative items from the pot. Clean all soil and mineral deposits from the inside rim and outer surface of the pot.
3. All entries in a flowering plant class must be in bloom.

Designs/Arrangements

1. A design is a combination of fresh and/or dried plant material and/or inorganic objects, i.e. stones, decorative wood arranged to produce an artistic unit.
2. The judge will be looking at the elements and principles of design when scoring your entry.

The Elements of Design

1. Space – is the open area around and within a design.
2. Line – forms the structural framework of the design. It is the visual path which the eye is led from one point of interest to another. Line may be created by material, such as a branch, or with colour, such as the repetitive use of one colour throughout the design.
3. Form – is the 3-dimensional shape of a design (height, width and depth). It is the placement of the plant material in the design that achieves the 3-dimensional shape.
4. Colour – appeals to the visual sense and is the most compelling element in a design. The use of colour adds real drama to a design.
5. Texture – is the surface quality of materials. You should try to achieve a variation of the textures within a design, such as in the use of rough or coarse textured material as well as smooth material.

6. Pattern – is the design formed by solids and spaces (plant material, the container and empty space). Don't try to fill your whole design with plant material. Leave some empty space to accentuate the flowers and foliage.

The Principles of Design

1. Balance - is the visual stability from any angle or dimension. A balanced design does not appear top-heavy, bottom-heavy, or lopsided. A design without actual or visual balance is disturbing.
2. Rhythm – is the visual path that suggests motion in the design. It is accomplished by the repetition of an element at regular or irregular intervals i.e., the use of the same colour of flower throughout a design or the use of curving branches.
3. Proportion – is the relative amount of one area to another, for example, the amount of plant material to the container, the amount of round forms to linear forms, the amount of rough texture to smooth texture.
4. Scale – is the size relationship of all the components, for example, the size of one flower in relation to another, or the size of the design in relation to the container. As a rule the design should be one and one half times the height or width of the container.
5. Contrast – is difference. It is achieved by placing opposite or unlike elements together in such a way as to emphasize difference, for example, using a rough textured foliage such as cedar beside a smooth textured one, such as peony leaves.
6. Dominance – is the force of one element. Dominance is achieved by the emphasis of one element of a design i.e. repetition of form, line, colour or texture.

The elements and principles of design may seem complicated, but they all fit together once your design is complete. If something looks out of place when you are finished, it probably is. Remove it and take another look at your design. If something seems to be missing, try putting in a different type of material like a smaller or different flower or some foliage.

The important thing is to be creative and have some fun!