

## Exhibiting Horticulture in a Standard Flower Show

### I. **NGC Flower Show Horticulture Policies**

- A. All plant material must be fresh and have been grown by the exhibitor
- B. Exhibits must have been in the possession of the exhibitor for 90 days or more, except plants grown from seed or seedlings. Combination plantings must have been grown together for no fewer than 6 weeks.
- C. Plant material may not be altered by the application of oil or commercial “shine” products that could artificially change the natural condition.
- D. Exhibitor may make more than one entry per class if each entry is a different species, variety, cultivar, type or color.

### II. **Preliminary Preparations for Entering a Flower Show**

- A. Selection of cut specimens:
  - 1. Entries should be planned during planting and growing season
  - 2. Special care of intended specimens, such as disbudding, removing spent leaves and blooms, protecting from debris or inclement weather
  - 3. Selection depends on the “peak of perfection” of type i.e. maturity, color, growth pattern, condition
- B. Cutting and conditioning specimens:
  - 1. Stem length is measured from tip of specimen to cut end. Check the schedule for arboreal specimens (Usually 30” maximum).
  - 2. For best condition, cut specimens when they are most “turgid”. I like to cut early in the morning when still cool and harden several hours or overnight.
  - 3. Cut stem longer than required for your exhibit. With sharp knife or clippers, cut on long slant for best water uptake. Plants that exude a milky substance must be sealed by applying a flame to cut end, or dipping in boiling water or alcohol i.e. poppy, poinsettia, some hydrangea. Remove all excess foliage that would be under the water line in your container.
  - 4. To “condition” or “harden” place cut end immediately in tepid water and place in a cool, dark, draft-free location. Some foliage requires or benefits from complete immersion in water for several hours or overnight i.e. ferns, evergreens, hosta leaves. Exception to this would be hairy surfaced leaves.
  - 5. Just before exhibiting, re-cut stem on sharp slant under water.
  - 6. I often cut several specimens of the same plant and just before show time select the one in best condition at the time. Flowers are best shown just coming into peak maturity, and can easily get beyond that point.
  - 7. Conditioning is also very important for plant material used in designs

- C. Foliage of cut flowers:
1. Check your schedule for requirement of foliage according to type of specimen before cutting your specimen.
  2. Only foliage naturally grown on the specimen and still attached is permitted.
  3. Unattached foliage is never permitted, except as wedging material if schedule permits.
- D. Grooming of specimens (**very important to judges as it is something the exhibitor can control easily**)
1. **Never, ever have foliage below water line. It is so obvious to judges and easy to correct.**
  2. You may remove, but never add, anything when grooming
  3. You may have to decide whether or not a fresh scar caused by removal of a leaf or branch would be penalized less than leaving the damaged portion on the specimen
  4. No wiring (Exception: trained plants), oiling, plant shine, or artificial coloring is permitted
  5. Evidence of spray, dust, insect damage, faded petals or leaves should be removed.
  6. Container-grown plants must be well groomed with surface clean and debris removed. Unobtrusive staking is permitted. Limited trimming of foliage is permitted, following the natural outline of the leaf or flower (Exception: African violet foliage)
  7. Be sure there are no insects (aphids, spider mites, etc.) on your specimen or it will be removed from competition.
- E. Staging involves the proper presentation of the specimen
1. Container must conform to schedule requirements and be in proportion to plant material. Our club requires clear green glass containers for cut specimens. The exception is small cut specimens where clear glass containers are permitted. If you are exhibiting for another club that states they provide containers, I highly recommend that you bring your own rather than rely on the club to provide one for you. That way you can be sure to have the most appropriate size for the specimen and to make sure that your wedging works well for you. **Pose is an important part of the presentation.**
  2. Wedging is permissible unless disallowed in the schedule. Examples: clear bubble wrap, oasis wedge, cork, yew, boxwood or other greens cut short and wedged unobtrusively, green sponge, Styrofoam, etc. Choose a bottle with a neck as narrow as possible to easily “pose” your specimen.
  3. Container-grown specimens should be in a plain undecorated pot, and centered in the pot. (Exception: sympodial orchids). **Important that the pot be clean of debris** and staining. Double potting is permitted, but inner pot should not be visible. If special staging is not indicated, the exhibitor should provide elevation for the container of a hanging plant (i.e., inverted pot) so that hanging portions of the plant will not rest on the table surface, and hangers must be removed.
  4. If you are planning to exhibit a collection (such as herbs, ground covers, etc.) called for in the schedule, be aware that your exhibit will be judged based on the **least** desirable specimen. If the schedule calls for at least 5 specimens, adding extra specimens does **not** give you extra credit. Your collection should be staged in matching containers.

5. Collections of vegetables, nuts, fruits are judged based on uniformity in size, shape, color, and texture, as well as freshness, maturity and condition. The exhibit should be at peak maturity for consumption or use. Correct number of specimens is dictated by the schedule. Fruits are never to be waxed or polished, but shown with natural bloom (waxy substance that covers fruits).

Unlike floral and foliage exhibits, a member of the judging panel is permitted to gently handle the exhibits to determine weight and possible hidden damage.

- F. Transporting entries to the flower show
  1. Protect from mechanical damage as well as sunlight and heat.
  2. Have cut specimens individually wedged in their water containers to prevent spillage.
  3. Large flower heads can be protected by cutting a radius of a paper plate and inserting stem just below the calyx.
  4. Container grown plants can be placed in a cardboard box big enough and deep enough to hold pot securely, slash an X across the bottom, slightly larger than dimension of the pot. Place the pot in X so it fits snugly.
  5. Various carriers i.e. six-pack holder, straw picnic utensil holders, milk bottle racks, etc. can be helpful.
- G. Filling out the horticulture entry card.
  1. Correct and complete scientific botanical labeling is not only educational, but **required** for an exhibit to receive a Top Exhibitor Award. Common names may be added, but not substituted for a scientific name. 5 points will be deducted if not properly named.
  2. The scientific binomial name includes the genus and species. The first letter of the genus is capitalized but the species is not. The variety, if appropriate is also lower case and underlined. (If it is in Latin, it is underlined.) If there is a cultivar, it is written with cv. or single quotes and capitalized. Example *Tagetes patula* cv. Lemon Drop or *Tagetes patula* 'Lemon Drop'.
  3. If you frequently have a lot of entries, it is helpful to print out little Avery labels with your name and garden club information to use on the entry cards.