

# Entering Horticulture and Flowers in a Flower Show

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If you are planning to enter **horticulture** in a flower show here are some suggestions to help you have a successful experience.

- Several months before the show check the Horticulture schedule to see what classes you might like to enter. (If you wait to the last minute your chances of having a great entry are more luck than skill). Check your garden/houseplants to see what might be possible. At this time check to be sure you know the correct name of the plant – Genus, species and variety/cultivar. The correct name is important for two reasons: 1 – to educate visitors to the flower show. Your entry may inspire someone to grow that plant. If you have the correct name a person has a much better chance of finding that plant. 2. – If you are eligible to win a top award you must have the specimen correctly named. There are many resources available to help you in naming plants. The information you received when you purchased the plant (label tag), a friend who gave you the plant, seed catalogs or other books on plants.
- Check the requirements for the entry – how many blossoms, spikes, stems, etc. does the schedule require? (When entering individual flowers, herbs, etc. it is a good idea to pick an extra stem/blossom, just in case something happens during the conditioning or transporting it to the show.)
- Pick your specimens the day before the show and condition them. This helps to insure that your specimens will look their best and hold up during the show. Be sure your specimen is the “best it can be”. Try to pick it at the peak of maturity. Check for dirt and insect damage and carefully remove anything that would distract from the overall best presentation of your bloom. If you are entering houseplants, they should also be groomed – remove spent blossoms and damaged leaves. If the pot is not in the best condition – put it in another pot (known as double potting) not transplanting. Double potting is usually allowed unless the schedule says that it is not allowed. Check the condition of the soil in the top of the pot, if it is uneven or messy put a thin layer of new soil in the pot so it looks fresh and clean.
- Houseplants need to have been in your possession for at least 90 days before the show so if you check the plant at that time you can make any adjustments as necessary.

If you have any other questions ask a judge, the show chairman or someone in your club who has entered flower shows before.

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## Part 2 - Entering **Flowers** in a Flower Show

Scary business, but not if you take your time, relax, follow a few simple steps and have fun. As soon as you get the Flower Show Schedule read the entire thing. Schedules are written around a central theme and most have class and section titles that develop that theme. This will come in handy when you plan how you will interpret the class.

Read the rules carefully and pick a class that interests you. Call the Entries Chairman and enter! You can't begin to plan your design until you commit. If the Schedule lists a Design Consultant, call her and ask about anything you don't understand. Reread the class description and make a list of the requirements. For example, the Schedule might read;

Class 2 –“Let Freedom Ring” – a creative design using all fresh plant material and having a background. To be staged on one half of a six foot table, 28” deep and 40” high.

The requirements would be;

1. A creative design
2. All fresh plant material
3. A background

You know that you have a space 36” wide, 28” deep and 40” from the floor. A good place to start would be to mark an area 36”x28”, table height if possible, so you have some idea of the space you will need to think about filling and how high your finished design will sit when being judged. Decide what components you could use to best express the title of the class and begin gathering them together. The title suggests a bell and you might want to include one or perhaps choose bell-shaped flowers. The theme is patriotic so you might plan to use red, white and blue somehow in your design. You are required to use a background so choose one that compliments the components you have chosen. You may also want to plan some type of underlay even though it is not required. Careful coordination of color and components is very important. Call and discuss your plans with the Design Consultant or an experienced friend. Double check times in the schedule and make certain to allow yourself plenty of time to get your arrangement in place. You may choose to work at home, but allow time for last minute surprises at the show like spilled water on your overlay. To quote Bob Thomas, a well known designer, “The keys to success are selectivity, restraint and good taste”.

Your design will be judged using the following Design Scale of Points;

20 points – Conformance (to the requirements of the Schedule)

42 points – Design (Elements and Principles)

The elements are light, space, line, form, size, pattern, texture and color. They are the visual and physical characteristics of the components used in flower arranging. The principles are balance, proportion, rhythm, contrast, dominance and scale. These are basic standards which govern all visual art forms.

12 points – Artistic Concept (selection and organization)

“The components of design are like characters in a play. Each is carefully chosen for its role” (Bob Thomas) Remember restraint.

10 points – Expression (interpretation of class by exhibitor)

Beware of becoming so literal in trying to express a class title that you neglect the basic principles that govern all designs.

16 points – Distinction (marked superiority in all respects)

This includes the condition of the plant material and other components and the workmanship of any mechanics that you use.

This Scale of points can be found in the [Handbook for Flower Shows](#) and probably also in your Schedule. Your arrangement will be assigned a numerical score. The design with the highest score will win the blue ribbon.

A Flower Show offers you many wonderful opportunities. The chance to spend time and get better acquainted with people who share similar interests can be invaluable. Participation in all aspects of Flower Show makes it more meaningful and lots more fun!