

SHOWING TIPS FOR NOVICE EXHIBITORS

Jackie Petherbridge

When attending a flower show you inevitably hear visitors express the opinion that they have better specimens in their own garden. Yet few, if any, make the effort to enter a show and as novice and amateur entries dwindle the traditional flower show has an uncertain future. At the risk of stating the obvious here is a quick run through some basic steps for the novice daffodil exhibitor. You will be made very welcome at the Daffodil Society show and I suspect any Spring flower show.

BEFORE THE SHOW

- Register for a schedule. As soon as it arrives, read it carefully, making a note of classes you think you can enter. Contact the show secretary if you are unsure about anything.
- Consider offering to be a show steward or ask if you can observe. You will pick up some good tips.
- Prepare your equipment:

Vases (unless like the Daffodil Society and the RHS they are provided) Plain and stable are best but judges do not assess the vases, only the flowers.

Pre cut plain card for labels and have lip pins or paper clips carefully opened at one end to form a spike to secure the labels.

Small watering can or empty plastic bottle to top up your vases.

Cotton buds, small soft brush, large headed soft brush to remove spots, insects and smooth any creases.

Soft cloth to wipe your vase.

- Send in your entries before the deadline. Secretaries generally prefer you to include all possible entries so that they can allow adequate space and there is no penalty if you cannot enter them all.

WEEK BEFORE THE SHOW

- Check regularly on your flowers. Look for good length, strong stems and unblemished flowers or opening buds.
- Pick early. A week early is certainly not too early. Tight buds will not be ready next day but picked 7-10 days in advance they should be ready for the show. Many flowers, especially whites and pinks, need time to develop their colour fully. Place the picked blooms initially in tepid water in containers where the flowers can mature but do not

touch each other and place in a cool shed or garage. Flowers picked early are generally a better size and smoother as they have had the chance to fully absorb water.

- Discretely write the name of the flower in ball point pen towards the bottom of the stem or carefully hang a small price ticket type label around the stem. This will help you remember the correct cultivar name label for your entry. Do not remove the spathe (brown sheath from where the flower bud emerges)
- Clean off any mud splashes or fly poo with a moist cotton bud and remove any insects, webs, pollen from the cup.
- Avoid placing in sun as any orange or red colouring, however small and narrow, will frizzle and burn. Be conscious that flowers will move towards a light source. This can help if your flowers are hanging their heads.
- Pick more flowers as required, as they mature. Fully open flowers kept in a cool outdoor place can last for longer than you think - a couple of weeks is not uncommon. If flowers are a bit slow to open, bring them indoors and place in good light in a coolish room in the house.

DAY BEFORE THE SHOW.

- Buy moss or gather moss from your lawn (woodland moss is a protected species), to secure your flowers in the vase.
- Check if the schedule requires flowers to be shown with leaves. Most do not as this hampers flower formation for the following year but if they do, pick carefully as required. It is permitted to select leaves from other daffodils that you have grown. Be aware that different daffodils have leaves of different colours and widths.
- Match your flowers to your entries and write a list of what flowers you are going to enter in each class.
- You may want to arrange these in vases prior to arrival at the show or leave that task until the day of the show.
- Select clean unblemished flowers, ideally with good poise and at a 90 degree angle to the stem.
- Choose smooth untwisted, undamaged petals, fully open with a good overlap at the base. With your thumb and forefinger grip the base of the petal and gently but firmly press to fully open any hooded flowers. (try practicing on a bunch of shop bought daffodils - you will be surprised at the difference it makes)
- The ideal flower will have symmetry and balance and be the correct condition, colour and size for the cultivar.

There should be no gaps between petals - check the back of your flower to see if it looks as good as the front