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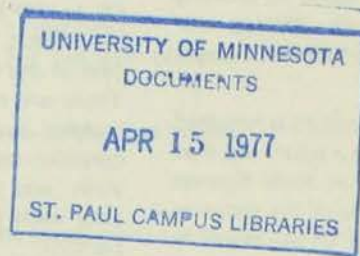
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Preparing Flowers For The Flower Show

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Your garden probably has prize-winning flowers. However, you must know which ones to select. You must also know how to prepare and show your flowers. Otherwise, even perfect blooms will look bad by the time the judge sees them.

All cut flowers must be correctly gathered and hardened. With a sharp knife, cut long stems at a slant or straight across. Both methods allow the same amount of water absorption. However, the straight cut is better for flowers in a floral design.

Always cut a few extra flowers. Place the flowers in a pail of warm (110°F.) water. But first cut any foliage which would be covered by the water, being careful not to damage the stems. Gladiolus are among the few flowers which should not have their foliage removed below the waterline.

Refrigerate the pail of flowers for 12 to 24 hours. If refrigeration is not available, store the flowers in the coolest place possible. Cooling hardens the flowers. In the cool air, they absorb the warm water quickly. Blooms will stay plump and full, and the flowers will remain fresh for a long time. However, a floral preservative can be added to the water to prolong freshness and to help develop unopened buds. This can be bought from a florist shop.

A different procedure is required for flowers containing a milky sap that thickens and dries when these flowers are cut. Singe the ends of the stems or hold the bottom inch of the stems in boiling water for a few seconds until the sap no longer flows. Keep the blooms away from this heat. Heating frees stems of sap that would slow absorption of water. Among flowers requiring heating are poppies, dahlias, poinsettias, lilies, milkweed, hibiscus, hollyhocks, and heliotropes. The flowers must be placed into the pail of water immediately after they have been heated.

Don't place flowers in a refrigerator containing apples; the flowers will be damaged. The apples produce ethylene gas which can cause flowers to age prematurely. This gas can also cause floret drop, especially in snapdragons. It can cause "sleepiness" in

carnations. The carnations' flowers don't open, the tips of the petals curl toward the center, and the flowers appear cupshaped or partially closed. Ethylene gas is also produced by other fruits and by old flowers. In rare cases when kept in tight containers, the flowers, themselves, can produce enough ethylene gas to cause floret drop.

Violets do not absorb water through their stems. They must receive a fine spray of water before refrigeration. Tuberous begonias need to be placed in water for only a few hours. Then they can be preserved in a refrigerator for a week if their stems are placed on a moistened pad of cotton and then covered with a dry pad and another moist pad. Don't drop water on their blooms. This will cause discoloration.

Lilacs, mockoranges, and stocks have woody stems. Crush the lower inch of their stems with a hammer to aid absorption.

To open a flower bud, place the flower in a warm location for several hours or immerse the whole stem in hot water so rising vapor can help open the bud. To prevent a bud from opening, place the cutting in cool water in a moist refrigerator set at 45 to 50°F.

Next, you need to select the best of the flowers you have hardened. There are several things to remember. Judging systems vary, but all judges consider color, form, size, condition, stem, and foliage. Most judges consider each of these to be equally important.

The color must be typical for that flower, and the color must be unfaded and clear rather than muddy. If more than one flower is in the exhibit, all the flowers need not be the same color. However, several identical blossoms make a more striking display. Warm temperatures cause less intense colors, and bright sunshine can bleach the color of flowers.

A bloom's form should be typical for that flower's variety. Blooms should be centered on an upright, strong stem.

Flowers should be large, but not untypically so. If the exhibit requires a specific number of blooms, they should be the same size. Three

medium-sized blooms are better than one large bloom and two small ones.

Condition of both bloom and foliage will be judged. Flowers should be mature and fully developed, but not past their prime. Foliage should be firm and have typical color. Neither the bloom nor the foliage should show insect, spray, or water damage. Presence of insects or disease are serious faults. Bent or broken stems or damaged leaves will also be faulted heavily. Spray residue can be removed from leaves and stems by carefully washing them with cotton or a soft cloth.

Stems should be long, straight, and strong. All flowers in a display should have the same length stems. Minimum lengths for some flowers are:

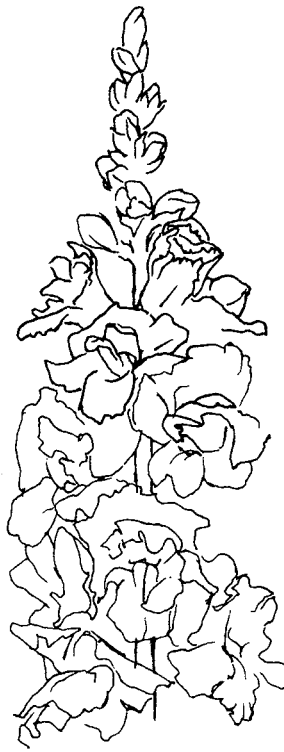
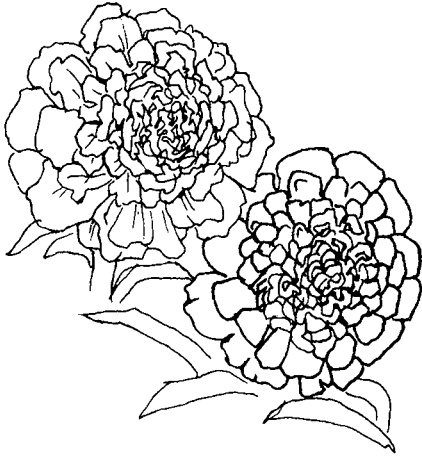
- Small Zinnias — 10 inches
- Asters — 12 inches
- Roses — 12 inches
- Large Zinnias — 18 inches
- Peonies — 18 inches
- Calla — 12-24 inches
- Gladiolus — 24-30 inches
- Delphinium — 36 inches

Follow the show's rules regarding stalk, spike, stem brace, etc., and annual, biennial, perennial, and shrub. When the show schedule asks for three blooms, don't arrive with four.

"House plants" should be truly indoor plants. They must be of appropriate size for the home. Flowering plants should have prolific bloom, and faded blooms and seed pods should be removed. Begonias and African Violets are examples of flowering house plants which should be displayed in full bloom!

Much damage can occur bringing the flowers to the show. Don't allow any wind to blow on the flowers, especially in the car. Properly prepared flowers can withstand heat, but not wind. Each exhibit should arrive at the show ready for immediate entry. Specimen exhibits should be already placed in separate bottles, and the bottles should be secured in a box or carton. You may want to exchange bottles at the show if standard bottles are supplied.

Remember, the exhibit wins or loses when the judge sees it. Try to meet perfection at the judging hour.



Cultural standards for flowers

What makes a prize-winning flower?

AGERATUM

Desirable: large, compact heads; fresh and vigorous; clear, bright colors.
 Common faults: short, weak growth; loose cluster; dull colors.

ANTIRRHINUM—Snapdragon

Desirable: large, straight, full spikes tapering to a point; large number of expanded florets well-placed; clear colors with delicate and harmonious shadings.
 Common faults: crooked, weak, or ragged spike; small florets; florets too closely or too widely spaced, unattractive coloring.

ASTER

Desirable: stiff, long stem; clean foliage; large, deep regular flowers; flowers fresh and one to a stem.
 Common faults: short stem; poor foliage; irregular blooms; fading or wilting; blooms not at best stage of development.

CAMPANULA—Canterbury Bells, etc.

Desirable: large, well-shaped blooms; many open blooms; bright color.
 Common faults: blooms small, wilted, or discolored; dull color, too few open blooms.

CENTAUREA—Bachelor's Button, Sweet Sultan, etc.

Desirable: straight, medium to long, stiff stems; large, regular form; clear colors.
 Common faults: short stems; wilting; small, irregular blooms; dull color.

CHRYSANTHEMUM

Desirable: full size and good form according to type; bright color; firm; substance; healthy foliage.
 Common faults: poor or faded color; underdeveloped centers; wilted; poor condition.

CLEOME

Desirable: large blooms; clear colors; strong stiff stems.
 Common faults: short stems; underdeveloped flowers; wilting.

COSMOS

Desirable: good stem length; large, broad petals; circular outline; clear color.
 Common faults: small; irregular; muddy color; short stems; wilting.

DAHLIA

Desirable: full size and good form for type; clear colors; center well-developed; fresh, strong, erect stems.
 Common faults: dull colors; poor form; underdeveloped center; wilting; fading outer rays.

DELPHINIUM

Desirable: large spikes branched at base and tapering to a point; large, evenly spaced florets; many open florets; bright, clear colors. (May be shown with side branches.)
 Common faults: weak, crooked spike; short, stubby spike; too few open florets; florets crowded; lower florets fading; dull colors, thin, transparent petals.



GLADIOLUS

- Desirable: spike well-proportioned; spike long, and florets large (except in varieties classified as "small" or "miniature"); florets attractively spaced; large number of open florets and buds; good substance.
- Common faults: weak, crooked spike; florets small and too widely separated or too crowded; too few florets open; withered lower florets; transparent florets lacking substance; insect or handling injuries.

HEMEROCALLIS—Daylily

- Desirable: long, stiff stems; several flowers and buds; large, fragrant flowers.
- Common faults: too few flowers and buds; poor condition.

LILIUM

- Desirable: blooms large; typical of species; clear colors; many open flowers; foliage and flowers clean.
- Common faults: too few flowers open; stained blooms; damaged foliage.

MARIGOLD

- Desirable: long, straight stems; good size for type; blooms regular in outline; blooms of double varieties deep.
- Common faults: weak, irregular shape; color or color combination unattractive.

NASTURTIUM

- Desirable: long stems; large flowers; colors clear; attractive markings and shadings.
- Common faults: short stems; poor form; small flowers; unattractive coloring.

PANSIES

- Desirable: good size and substance; adequate stem length; circular outline; overlapping petals; well-defined eye; pure, rich color; pleasing markings.
- Common faults: small, thin petals; short stems; poor coloring.

PETUNIA

- Desirable: bright, clear colors; markings (if any) clean and in pleasing color combinations; good size according to type; two or three open blooms; good texture; vigorous stem and foliage.
- Common faults: muddy colors and markings; small for type; stem weak; too few open flowers; flower and foliage lacking in substance.

ROSES

- Desirable: large, well-formed blooms of type or variety; firm, crisp petals; colors clear, rich; healthy, clean foliage; long stems. (Grandifloras may be shown as a single bloom or in a spray.) (Hybrid teas must be disbudded.)
- Common faults: weak, irregular form; petals wilted or faded or of impure color; stems weak; short foliage sparse; spray residue; pest injury.

SPECIMEN PLANT — FLOWERING

- Desirable: vigorous, good size and form for type; size in good proportion to container; in full flowering stage.
- Common faults: small, lopsided, or out of proportion with container; spindly growth; poor foliage; too few flowers.

SPECIMEN PLANT — FOLIAGE

- Desirable: vigorous, full, and dense; good size and form for type; in good proportion with container; healthy condition showing good culture.
- Common faults: weak, spindly growth; small; poor shape; poor color.

TUBEROUS BEGONIA

- Desirable: Specimen: should be disbudded, shown either with leaf or none as specified in schedule. Good size for variety; clear color; good substance; freshness.
- Plant: vigorous growth; erect flower stems; several flowers of clear color and good substance.
- Common faults: weak stems; poor foliage; deformed or weak flowering.

ZINNIA

- Desirable: deep, well-developed blooms; center florets expanded; long, stiff stems; brilliant, clear color; petals free from scorching; clean, fresh foliage.
- Common faults: shallow, flat blooms; scorched petals; dull color; short stems. Flower stage too advanced, foliage mildewed or injured.

Adapted from the Minnesota State Horticultural Society's "The Flower Show," and Pi Alpha Xi's "A Manual for Flower Judging"