



Orange County Orchid Society

Preparing Your Plants for Exhibition

When the judge looks at you plant and/or display, you want it to make the best possible impression on them. Here are a few tricks of the trade:

1. The plant should be well groomed. Although in most cases it is the flower quality that is being judged, the condition of the plant does affect the judge's subconscious evaluation of the flowers, and in an exhibit, it is of major important on the exhibit score.
2. Remove all dead leaves, dried flower sheaths and dead plant material. Cut the tips off that have dried or turned brown. Remove any weeds such as oxalis that grow in the plant medium. Put a covering of new medium on the top if you think it would improve the appearance.
3. Check for and remove insects and carefully spray if necessary.
4. Clean the leaves with your favorite mixture, such as lemon juice, milk, etc or try this one: *one cup water, one tablespoon powdered milk, one tablespoon liquid dishwashing soap*. Wipe on with cotton or a soft paper towel and dry with a clean piece. To remove lime deposits or resistant water spotting, try: *one cup water with two tablespoons vinegar*, before you shine with the above mixture. Be careful to not let any of these items get on your flowers.
5. Inspect flowers for bits of foreign matter, potting medium, webs, etc. and try gently blowing it off.
6. Staking will often improve your presentation. There are two kinds: one for travel and one for exhibiting. For travel, a more elaborate staking of the flowers and, if necessary, the plants with special

attention paid to the flowers so that they do not bump or rub anything. Sometimes a little light shredded paper will help protect them. Remove the heavier stakes that you used for traveling and check the position of the lighter stakes. It is much better to start staking as the inflorescence grows rather than to wait until the last minute. Paphiopedilums should be staked so that the flowers hang normally, not facing heavenward. Make sure that wire, bamboo, string, twist ties or whatever you use does not detract from or overwhelm the plant. Cut the end short, they should appear as subtle as possible.

7. If you are placing your plant in an **OCOS** display, it is a good idea to push an extra tag down into the pot with your name or use a return address sticker on the side of the pot with your name to help identify it at the end of the show.
8. If you are entering your own display, you may want to make your own labels hot glued or taped onto thin wooden stakes. Make sure they are clear, legible and of a color that does not distract from the display. Avoid white “tombstones” dancing across your exhibit.
9. You may want to prepare your display at home in a basket with sheet moss, Spanish moss, etc. covering the areas between the pots so that it looks like a basket from the woods. You can bulk the open spots between the pots with newspaper and then camouflage them with the moss, etc. You may add small ‘greenery’ such as ferns so long as they do not compete with the orchids for attention. When you are at the show, look around at the other exhibits for ideas for next year. This is also a good way to display your plants at home.
10. The night before the show, check through the show class guide to match your plants with the appropriate class and fill in the entry forms provided. You will receive an exhibitor number and your plant will receive a plant number at the registration table.

A final note: while more flowers on a plant are usually better, more judging points are usually given to the *quality* of the flowers. Just because your plant is a young one does not mean that it will not win a first place ribbon! As a general rule, the more flower plants at the show, the better the show. So bring your plants or send them with someone else!! Just get them to the show on set-up day.