

The following information is taken from the RHS Horticultural Show Handbook.

The preparation and presentation of flowers

Cutting The ideal time to cut flowers is in the evening (or early morning if that is not possible). Flowers should be cut with as much stem as possible, making a slanting cut to assist the uptake of water. Sometimes flowers (such as chrysanthemums and penstemons) may not absorb water easily and the stems can be slit upwards (approximately 75mm) under water to assist. After cutting, remove sideshoots, unwanted buds and lower leaves and place the flowers upright in a container of clean deep water. It is better for this to be done overnight if possible, and then the container of flowers should be placed in a cool dark room. To save time at the show, labels showing the name of the cultivar can be written in advance using cards or paper.

Transit to show Many exhibitors carry their exhibits in vases in 'milk crates', making sure that packing prevents excessive movement of each flower during transportation. If using supports for flower stems, they should be removed prior to staging. It is useful to take spare containers to assist when staging.

Staging Carefully unpack each flower and place in a spare container. Fill each exhibition vase with fresh water prior to staging. If using oasis, place in position as early as convenient. Stage each vase carefully, ensuring that the stem is neither too long nor too short and that damaged leaves are removed. If inexperienced, look at the experienced exhibitors' staging, particularly height and spacing of blooms. Blooms should all face the same direction unless 'all round effect' is required by the class. Place exhibits in the classes entered and place labels with the exhibit.

Pot plants 'All-round effect' is important in most pot plants and plants should be turned every few days. This is particularly important in the few days before a show. If necessary, flowers and leaves should be gently 'teased' out so that the plant is displayed at its best. Any damaged foliage or flowers can be carefully removed. Take care during transit that the plant arrived undamaged. Final preparation should involve removing any faded foliage and flowers back to the base and ensuring that the container is clean. Stage the plant so that its best side is towards the front and place the label nearby.