

Getting Ready to Enter the Spring Show

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In this document we hope to provide you with tips and techniques for entering designs in the upcoming Cowichan Valley Garden Club Spring Flower Show. We'll look at the Show Schedule and discuss how to interpret class titles (see separate document), plan your design, and how to choose and condition plant materials. We will discuss using oasis and how to work with plant materials as well as providing you with some useful tips and techniques.

Show Schedule:

Read this carefully! The Schedule is the law of the show and what the Judges use to determine winners in each class. If the parameters are not met, you may end up with 'NAS' on your design, meaning 'Not According to Schedule'. Although the Judges try to avoid using NAS (especially in Novice Classes), it is sometimes necessary.

Planning Your Design:

After deciding the class you wish to enter, think about what you will use for a container, how you will anchor your plant materials (usually Oasis), what shape your design will be, and what flowers and other plant materials are available. Keep in mind that you can purchase plant materials to use in the Design Classes unless the Schedule states otherwise.

Shape:

All designs must have a recognized shape. Please see the attached paper with some of the most popular design shapes. We would suggest starting with the easier low horizontal or triangle if you are inexperienced.

Containers:

There are numerous vessels that can be used as a container for floral designs, many of which you probably already have at home. As long as it holds water (you can line with plastic or put another waterproof container inside), if it is the right size, shape and colour, it will probably work. Keep in mind that often much of the container is covered with plant material and therefore not visible in the finished design. Thrift shops and garage sales are invaluable for finding reasonably priced containers to purchase.

Anchoring Plant Materials (Mechanics):

Oasis (Floral foam wet type)

You will probably use oasis most often to hold things in place. It is a highly absorbent, light weight, synthetic material that can be cut to fit most containers. After soaking in water, it provides a water source to plant materials in the design. Floral foam is available in Wal-Mart, Dollar stores and most florist shops locally. It comes in wet and dry forms so be sure to purchase the wet variety for using with fresh plant materials. When you use oasis in a design, it should be securely fastened in the container by use of plastic anchors and/or waterproof tape.

Kenzans (pin frogs)

They're another way of anchoring your plant materials. They are almost always used in Ikebana (Oriental) designs. One disadvantage is that they are quite expensive although they are long lasting and could be passed on to your grandchildren!

Selecting and Conditioning Flowers and other Plant Materials:

All plant materials must be conditioned before using in a design, even if purchased. This usually involves soaking in water overnight or at least for a few hours before using, but there are some materials that require special treatment. There is a wealth of information on the internet if you Google "Conditioning fresh plant material". For purchased flowers and foliage usually all that is needed is to remove the plastic covering, recut the stems and soak for a few hours in tepid water.

Schedule:

We are working with a Schedule for a Spring Flower Show (mid-May to early June). Carefully read the definitions at the beginning of the Decorative Division to determine the requirements. Take note that all categories in the Decorative Division are 'designs' so be sure you understand the definition of design. There is a size restriction to consider also.

You will notice that some of the designs require that only "spring flowers" be used. Think about what flowers are available now (or could be in May) that would meet this requirement. Some may be found in home gardens (yours or a friend's), or in local florist shops and grocery stores.

Novice Division

Putting it together: things to remember

- * if using oasis, cut it to fit tightly and soak before placing in the container.
- * determine the shape wanted and use plant material (usually foliage) to outline that shape.

- * fill in the shape using your chosen plant materials.
- * if stems are flimsy or fleshy, you may need to make guide holes in the oasis.
- * a light spray of water over the finished design helps to keep it fresh.

If not using oasis make a grid over the top of the container with clear waterproof tape.
A kenzan could also be used in the bottom of the container

A Class Example:

“Reach for the Sky”, a vertical design: The “name” invites a vertical design.

When entering a vertical design in a judged show, plant materials should not extend beyond the width of the container. Choose a container that will support a tall design in a colour that enhances the flowers. When planning a vertical design the most important things to consider are size, scale, and colour.

Suitable plant materials:

Long stem flowers, long stem foliage, filler foliage

A few samples



A Class Example:

“Roadside Wonder” a design using only material collected from the ditch or roadside

Use your creativity for this design. Choose a line or shape that will suit the material you have collected.

Suitable plant materials: twigs, bark, grasses, broom, cattails, cattail foliage, seed heads, salal, rose hips, stones etc.

Sample Photos

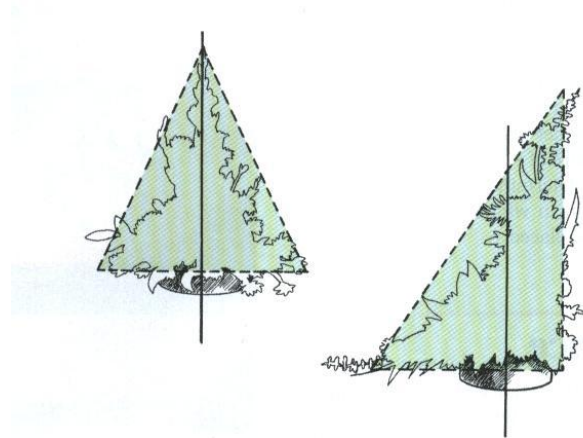


Mass

A Class Example:

“Himalayan Fantasy” a symmetrical triangle design predominantly rhododendrons and/or azaleas

In this class you are using rhododendron and/or azalea flowers with subtle hints of other small flowers, other foliage allowed.



Symmetrical-one side mirrors the other



Other categories

A Class Example:

“Natural Beauty”: a **pave design** (a flat composition in a shallow dish, of solid clusters or paths of flowers and other materials: e.g. stones, moss, dried materials, shells, etc) which are placed to form a motif or ‘picture’. This is one we would urge you to try. It is relatively easy, lots of fun, and almost anything can be used. Some things to consider are size, shape, and colour of plant materials as well as texture.

Suitable plant materials: Try to use a variety in texture of the materials used - smooth and rough, shiny and dull, hard and soft etc. Stones, small shells, moss sticks, small dried flowers, seed heads are a few suggestions – use your imagination.



A Class Example:

**“Mother & Child” a design using two containers,
Sample Photos**



Spring Duet

Partners Making Friends

Class Example:

“Home Grown”: a design using only home-grown spring flowers and plant materials (nothing purchased), design style not specified. Material can be from exhibitor’s own garden or a friend’s garden.

Sample Photos



Class Example:

“New Moon”: a crescent design

The design is a portion of a circle with a concave edge and a convex one, similar to the visible shape of the moon just before the first quarter or after the last quarter phases. It can be constructed in a variety of sizes, heights, and widths. Because of its asymmetry, the crescent center piece requires a great deal of negative space with a focal point generally near the container rim for visual balance.

Sample Photos



Floral Design Shapes:

