

## Tips for Entering Plants in the 2012 Horticulture Show

**The first step** in entering the horticulture show is to carefully read the 2012 Alamo Area Horticulture Show and Contest “schedule” (show talk for rules, regulations and guidelines) then read it again! Mark your calendar when entries are received at Alzafar Shrine **Friday, May 25, from 3 – 7pm and Saturday, May 26 from 8 – 10am. The entries are picked up Saturday, May 26, 4 – 6 pm.** No entries are to be removed before 4pm Saturday.

**After reading the schedule** take it plus paper and pencil into your yard, balcony garden, greenhouse or vegetable garden and compile a list of possible candidates to enter in the show. During the weeks prior to the show continue to make trips to the garden to check the status of listed plants, deleting or adding ones more suitable for entry.

**About 1 to 3 weeks before the show** list the names of the plants that are possibilities for entering in the show. Plants should be properly named on the entry form; species and variety are preferred but optional. If you are unfamiliar with the names of your plants now is the time to look them up, do an Internet search or take specimens to a local nursery for identification. Volunteers will be available at the show to assist with difficult plant identification.

**If you are entering Division 2 - Cut Specimens,** begin to collect plain, clear, narrow necked bottles and jars that are of suitable size and stability for the entry. Generally, cut specimens are 1 ½ to 2 times the height of the container – a 10 inch tall container is best used with flowers having stems 15 to 20 inches above the container rim.

**Two weeks to a few days before the show** groom disease and insect free container plants and hanging baskets removing seedpods, damaged foliage and broken stems. Clean foliage of dust, dirt and spray residue by wiping each leaf with a damp cloth or spray with a mild soap solution and gently rinse. Plants should be in scale with size of container, either re-pot up or down centering plant in the container. If the outside of container is dirty or old then clean or re-pot. Plastic containers can be made to look like new by spraying a small amount of WD 40 on paper towel and wiping the outside. Clay pots may be scrubbed with a mild soap solution then rinsed. Remove leaves and trash from top of soil. Lightly dress the top of the soil with fresh potting soil or complimentary mulch that is to scale of plant such as pine bark, pea gravel, or decomposed granite.

**A few days or the night before the show** using a pencil or pen with waterproof ink fill out one official entry form for each entry you plan to enter in the show. On the entry form is an area listing exhibitors information save time by using a mail address label. Filling out forms before the show speeds up the entry process. The show rules permit 3 entries per each division in the show.

**Cut specimen entries** should be collected late evening or early morning before the show. The stem should be cut several inches longer than required for the exhibit container. Use a sharp knife or clippers to make a long slant cut on the stem for greatest intake of moisture. Place cut specimens in a container of deep tepid water that is kept in a cool, dark place, for several hours or overnight. This conditioning helps the cut specimen take up more water than it releases and retain freshness for the duration of the show. Plan to recut the stems after conditioning and just prior to exhibiting. Remove any blooms or foliage that is below surface of water. Only the stem should be in the water of exhibit container.

**Vegetable and fruit entries** should be of top quality, at prime maturity, with stems attached and look good enough to eat. They should be free of scarring, cracks, sunburn, spots and discoloration. Specimens should be free of soil but not washed or polished, as this would remove the bloom or powdery surface covering. Be sure to keep the entries cool after cutting and transporting to the show.

**Dish gardens** should be in a clean open, shallow container that compliments the selection of plants. The plants should have similar growing conditions and be insect and disease free. The arrangement of plants and design of the dish garden is important. The names of the plants should be listed on the entry form.

**A terrarium** is a transparent container that is almost closed or totally closed containing a single plant or plants that have similar cultural requirements. The plants should be insect and disease free. Above the growing media there should be no soil or algae on the sides of the container. The names of the plants should be listed on the entry form.

**Topiaries** should be insect and disease free in clean containers, clean and groom the foliage.

**Water** all container plants thoroughly and allow the container to drain well before bringing to the show. Cut specimens should have stems recut and fresh water put in container.

**Transporting entries to the show** may require pre planning. Cut specimens, if size of vessel permits, may be placed in cardboard beer cartons then surrounded by newspapers inside a box. Fragile blooms may need to be gently wrapped in tissue paper. Container plants, dish gardens and terrariums can be placed in a box surrounded by newspapers.

Entering plants in the show will move quickly if you fill out the entry form before leaving home.

**As a rule of thumb the entries are judged on healthy growth, grooming, distinctiveness and maturity. The rarity of a plant, or how difficult it is to grow, may also factor in the judging.**

If you have any questions concerning show entries please contact Mary Ann Johnson [majmgb39@mac.com](mailto:majmgb39@mac.com) or 497-5446.