



HOW TO PREPARE YOUR CUT FLOWERS



For clarification on the terms used in this guide, or for more guidance on the entry process, view [Horticulture Glossary and FAQ](#)

IMPORTANT QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF WHEN ENTERING:

1. Is the bloom healthy?
2. Is this presented well/properly groomed/clean?
3. Is it true to form for the cultivar(s)?
4. Does the entry tag have all of the correct information?

**These questions may not apply equally to all entries.*

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ADVICE FOR CUT FLOWERS

There are many things that are out of your control when preparing for a cut flower competition (e.g., the weather) – but there are nonetheless many ways you can increase your chances of placing.

Flowers

All entries should conform to either a **single bloom** (one bloom, no side buds) or **inflorescence** (group of flowers on one stem, with a bloom count greater than bud count). Trim unopened buds as necessary to meet these criteria.

The form of a bloom, or the shape and arrangement of its petals, can sometimes be improved by carefully rearranging or trimming petals. Be careful if you decide to do this as you also run the risk of ruining the form or damaging petals if you mess up.

Form is usually the most important quality of any bloom, and weighs the most in judging.

Sometimes aspects of form that we consider interesting are considered faults by judges. Try to choose blooms which represent what most people would consider the “ideal form” of your flower – avoid unusually shaped blooms even if they are otherwise beautiful.



Although it's a pretty flower, the unusual “double center” of this rose is considered a fault from a judging perspective.

Stems

Ensure that you are only entering the main stem of your bloom! **Avoid stem-on-stem** (where the entry still includes a piece of another stem that the main bloom's stem sprouted from).

**Only one stem is allowed per vase.*

Pro tip:

Cut the stem long and trim it on-site to the perfect length.

Foliage

Note that most divisions and classes have specific rules for foliage:

- Dahlias and Hibiscus: remove foliage.
- Roses: include foliage.
- Other cut flowers: varies (consult the competition guide)

For classes without set rules for foliage, use your best judgment on whether to include the leaves. Generally, leaves are kept when they help to frame the bloom and trimmed when they distract from the bloom.

For blooms with foliage, attention to detail goes a long way. Leaves give a lot of information about the health of a plant: although there's little you can do to remove insect damage or sunburn, carefully removing unhealthy leaves may help your chances.

Pro tip:

Keep any leaves occurring on the first 12 inches of the stem – you can always trim them on-site if you don't want them.

Other small adjustments like keeping leaves out of the water in the vase (because they'll rot while on display) and wiping them clean before entering can make a big difference in the final placing!

**Foreign substances like wax must not be applied to leaves.*



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Staging

Although the judges do not directly consider the vases in their deliberations, the way a bloom is set in its vase is vital because it can affect how qualities like balance and proportion are perceived.

When staging flowers in vases, consider that some blooms will look better with extra support. Exhibitors may bring wedges for their flowers, but they must be placed below the lip of the vase. **We recommend floral foam** because it is easy to shape, unlikely to damage the flower and does not interfere with our ability to keep the water in the vases fresh.



Look at how much of a difference staging makes – even with the exact same cultivar of rose!

The one on the left, wedged to stand upright, shows much better than the one on the right (also see the foliage and stems sections for more details on why it shows better).

Classification

The Specimen Bloom Division for cut flowers is split into classes based on the scientific classification of plants and their relations. Living things are given scientific names, usually in Latin, describing their place within a hierarchical system that describes how closely they are related to other species. For our competitions, we focus on the three (3) most specific categories:

FAMILY

GENUS

SPECIES

- **Families** usually have names ending “-ceae” (e.g., the Liliaceae is the lily family). Classes organized by family allow any species within the family to be entered.
- A **genus** is a more specific group than a family and often includes several species within it. A full scientific name contains two (2) words, with the first representing the genus (e.g., black sage’s scientific name is *Salvia mellifera* while white sage is *Salvia apiana* – both are sages, so they are closely related enough to share the same genus of *Salvia*, but they are distinct species so each name ends differently). Any class with an italicized scientific name allows entry for any species within that genus.
- **Species** are generally the most specific level of categorization; the second word in a scientific name represents the species. Garden hybrids don’t usually fit neatly into a specific species, and may include an “x” in their name to represent being a garden variety [e.g., Shasta Daisy (*Leucanthemum* × *superbum*)].

A quick Internet search of your plant should identify its scientific classification (e.g., a search for “peace lily family” will show that they are actually members of the Araceae and thus are not true lilies).



COLOR & FORM GUIDE

Dominant Color vs. Blend

Generally, the **dominant color** of a bloom is the first color you notice when you look at it, regardless of what other colors are present. Dominant colors should also cover the majority of the bloom. When no dominant color is present or easily decided, the bloom may simply be classified as **multicolor**.

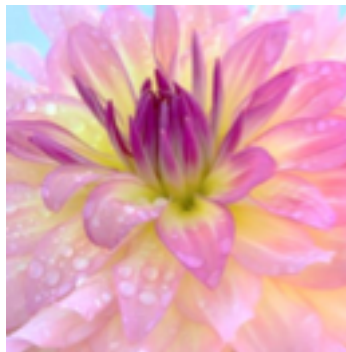
A **blend** is not the opposite of a dominant color; blends may still be classified by dominant color in some divisions (e.g., Rose: unknown cultivar). Rather, any bloom with more than one color mixed on the same flower may be considered a blend (more details in the dahlia section below).

Dahlia Colors



Solid Color

Any bloom with only a single color throughout the petals.



Blend

Two (2) or more colors mixing/without a clear border separating the colors.



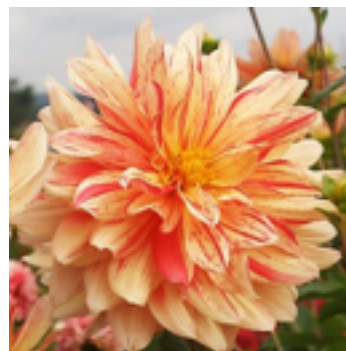
Bicolor

Two (2) colors sharply separated by a clear border into their own areas on each petal.



Flame

A specific type of blend that exhibits "fire" colors (red, orange, yellow).



Variegated

Blooms with two (2) or more colors arranged in narrow, well-defined dots, thin splashes or stripes with solidly defined borders between the colors.



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Hibiscus Forms



Single

A bloom with five (5) base petals, the classic "hibiscus" shape most people are familiar with.



Double

A bloom with **more than** five (5) base petals, with the additional petals forming multiple layers.



Fancy

Any bloom with ruffled, tufted and/or frilly petals.

Mini

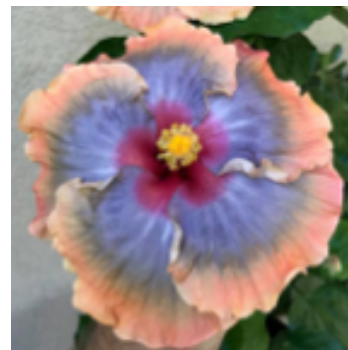
Any bloom small enough to fit through a five-inch wide ring without touching the sides.

Hibiscus Colors



Splashed

A color pattern resembling one or more colors being "splashed" onto the petals.



Banded

A color pattern showing distinct bands of color, sometimes forming rings.



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Roses Forms



Floribunda/Polyantha

Includes varieties which bear large clusters of flowers, usually with multiple blooms in the cluster open simultaneously.



Hybrid Tea/Grandiflora

Generally the most popular and well-known type of rose, with large blooms on long stems (usually single blooms, sometimes with side buds).



Miniature/Mini Flora

Small plants which bear small flowers (effectively small versions of Floribundas/Hybrid Teas).



Old Garden/Shrub

Includes types and varieties which existed before 1867 (when the first Hybrid Tea rose was introduced).



Climbing Species

Identified by their vine-like growth habit.

Rose Colors

When looking for the dominant color of a rose, consider which of the following color samples you feel is closest to your bloom (each color corresponds to one of our "Unknown Cultivar" classes; for known cultivars consult the "Forms" section above).

White	Yellow	Apricot	Orange	Pink	Red	Mauve	Russet



OTHER RESOURCES

Hibiscus information: socalhibiscussociety.org/

Dahlia information: dahlia.org

General rose information: rose.org/

Rose classification: rose.org/single-post/2018/06/11/rose-classifications

Rose identification and cultivar information: rose.org/rose-classifications-2/

Rose judging considerations: rose.org/how-roses-are-judged