

FLORAL DESIGN

HOW TO ENTER A FLOWER SHOW

THE ESSENTIALS

- Your material must be free of bugs.
- Your material must have no evidence of plant diseases.
- You may not use invasive or endangered plants in your design.

READ THE SHOW SCHEDULE CAREFULLY

- You must fulfill the requirements exactly. The schedule is essentially the rulebook for the show.
- Read *both* the rules for the show and the requirements for the class.
- Review the timeline for exhibitors.
- Don't guess at what is meant in the schedule. If you are unsure, contact the class consultant or the show chair.
- Be sure you don't use any prohibited materials (shells, feathers, etc.).

TIPS FOR READING THE SCHEDULE

- Know the staging details (height of the table, width of the pedestal, table covering, background).
- Know specific size requirements (depth, width, height).
- Check for any pre-registration requirements or entry deadlines.
- Consult the GCA Flower Show & Judging Guide glossary for unfamiliar terms.
- The scale of points is a list of qualities to be considered and the approximate importance that each should be given in judging.
- The scale of points helps you focus on what is important.
- Point scales in references such as the FS&JG are not set in stone. They may be adjusted for a particular show and if they have been adjusted they should be included in the show schedule.

INTERPRETATION

The class title or show theme can help guide you as you consider your design.

- Express your interpretation figuratively or metaphorically. Don't fall into the trap of being too literal in your interpretation.
- If the schedule permits, a well-crafted statement of intent may help guide the viewer to better "see" your interpretation.
- The thoughtful integration of your components, colors, and textures strengthens your intent. Avoid relying on an accessory to express your interpretation.
- If the schedule requests a particular design style, consult the GCA FS&JG and study the definition of that style.
- If you are unclear about the class description or the class title, ask the class consultant for clarification.

YOUR ENTRY CARD

- Complete your entry card with a permanent, black (usually), marker or pen *before* you get to the show.
- Type or print your cards carefully and neatly. Place all your entry card(s) in a plastic bag to keep them dry.
- Downloadable, fillable entry cards can be found on the GCA website. A sample entry card is attached.

NOMENCLATURE

Botanical nomenclature is the formal, scientific naming of plants. Botanical names are universally recognized, and it is important to use them.

- Research all botanical names before completing your entry card. Each piece of plant material used in the design will need to be identified by its botanical and common name.
- Know the correct spelling of the plant(s).

Know How to Write a Botanical Name Correctly

Helpful nomenclature references:

American Horticultural Society: A-Z Encyclopedia of Garden Plants

Royal Horticultural Society: <https://www.rhs.org.uk>

[Missouri Botanical Garden:
www.missouribotanicalgarden.com](http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.com)

CONDITIONING YOUR PLANT MATERIAL

- Fresh plant material must be in water or conditioned in such a way that it remains pristine for the duration of the show.
- Experiment with your materials to be sure they will stay in good condition in transit and for the duration of the show.

TRANSPORTING YOUR DESIGN

- Mark the underside of your container with your name.
- Decide if you are taking the design completely or partially arranged.
- Check the schedule to be sure you are not required to arrange the design on site.
- Place your arrangement and materials in a box tightly and firmly wedged with newspaper, packing pellets, or other materials.
- You can secure your design with floral clay to the inside of a heavy container (e.g. cast iron frypan).
- Putting boxes on the floor may be safer than on the car's seat.
- Stake tall components to temporarily secure them during transport.
- Consider using a cart especially if your design is large or you have lots of supplies.

SUPPLIES TO TAKE WITH YOU TO THE SHOW

In addition to extra plant material, you may wish to take:

- Bring your own show schedule with your name on it.
- Q-tips
- Damp paper towels (in a baggie)
- Long tweezers
- Small scissors
- Small soft paint brushes
- Black waterproof pen or pencil
- Extra blank entry cards
- Extra mechanics: U-Glu, floral tape, pins, wire, etc.
- Step stool, if needed
- Old bed sheet for keeping your exhibit space clean

AT THE SHOW

- Use your grooming kit for any last minute touch-ups.
- Check to be sure your mechanics are not visible, unless they are a design component.
- Be sure your water source(s) are sufficient to keep your plant material fresh for the duration of the show.
- Have secured a plan for maintaining your design in peak condition for the duration of the show.
- Be sure all your entry paperwork is neatly completed.

PASSING

- Your design will be passed “in place”.
- When your entry is ready, ask for a passer to review your exhibit.
- Passers are there to help you make your exhibit present well. They may point out some damaged or dirty leaves or mechanics that are unintentionally visible.
- Comments by passers are suggestions only. As the exhibitor, you make the final decisions about your design.
- Passers usually have lots of experience and know what judges look for, so carefully consider their suggestions.
- The passer or the show committee will give you an entry number for your entry card.
- Your entry may not be touched after it is passed.

ABOUT JUDGING

- An exhibit is judged as it appears at the time of judging.
- The class schedule will specify the views from which the exhibit is to be judged.
- All exhibits commonly receive written comments, which should be brief, constructive, and begin with a positive statement.
- The decision of the judging team is final, and no other individual or group can change it.

A LITTLE ADVICE

- Be a good sport.
- Be on time with your exhibits.


- Space can be tight on the show floor. Be considerate of fellow exhibitors. Keep your materials organized and contained within the space designated for you.
- Follow the schedule explicitly. If the rules or schedule are not clear, ask the class consultant or show chair *before* the show, not after.
- Read and reread the schedule with care.
- It is your responsibility to ensure you have entered your exhibit correctly and followed the show rules.

AFTER THE SHOW

Note anything that you think could have been improved as well as anything that stands out in your mind that you know you did right.

Keep good records! Once you've gone through all these questions, take a picture of your work and paste it into a record book along with your notes and the judges' comments.

You will be able to see the progress of your work as the years go by. You will be reminded of mistakes and how to avoid them in future work. And you will be inspired by your successes!



THE GARDEN CLUB *of* AMERICA

☐ Passed

FLORAL DESIGN ENTRY CARD

☐ Club

☐ GCA

☐ Major

Class:

Entry #:

Award:

(Entry # given after passed)

Plant Material

Botanical Name: (*Genus species* 'Cultivar')

Common Name:

Judges' Comments:

Eligible for:

☐ Novice (Exhibiting alone)

☐ Club award

Exhibitor:

Exhibitor's Club & Zone:

Show Name:

Show Date(s):

THE GARDEN CLUB <i>of</i> AMERICA		<input type="checkbox"/> Passed
<h2 style="margin: 0;">FLORAL DESIGN ENTRY CARD</h2>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Club	<input type="checkbox"/> GCA	<input type="checkbox"/> Major
Class:	Entry #:	Award:
<small>(Entry # given after passed)</small>		
Plant Material		
Botanical Name: <small>(Genus species 'Cultivar')</small>	Common Name:	
Judges' Comments:		
<hr style="border-top: 1px dashed black;"/>		
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> Eligible for: <input type="checkbox"/> Novice <small>(Exhibiting alone)</small> <input type="checkbox"/> Club award </div>		
<hr style="border-top: 1px dashed black;"/>		
Exhibitor:		
Exhibitor's Club & Zone:		
Show Name:		
Show Date(s):		

ENTRY CARDS (Go to <https://www.gcamerica.org/members/flower-show> to download the fillable form). For most shows, the exhibitor completes the entry card with the necessary information prior to being passed. The passer confirms the accuracy of the information and the entry number is added. After the entry is passed, the card is folded once on the upper line, concealing the exhibitor's name.

CONDITIONING FLOWERS

Go to [the GCA Floral Design Committee's landing page](#) for a detailed guide on conditioning flowers and other resources to help you enter a flower show. This link includes information on helpful tools and supplies, floral design styles and the Principles and Elements of Design.

OTHER HELPFUL RESOURCES

GCA FLOWER SHOW & JUDGING GUIDE (YELLOW BOOK)

The GCA's [Flower Show & Judging Guide \(FS&JG\)](#) sets the standards for exhibiting and judging excellence. The FS &JG is divided into 5 books. Books 1-3 contain the information needed to host each type of show. Book 4 is the FS&JG Pocket Guide @ the Show; including passing, clerking, judging, as well as the scales of points and comment writing. Book 5 is a Glossary of Terms.

The FS&JG, affectionately known as the Yellow Book, is available for download on desktops, laptops, iPads, and mobile devices. In addition, the FS&JG Pocket Guide @ the Show may be printed and spiral bound or stapled together as a 5 ½" x 8 ½" size booklet.

The Flower Show & Judging Guide is maintained by the Flower Show Committee and many of the complementary materials such as entry cards, schedule templates are accessible on the [Flower Show Committee](#) landing page.

TIPS FOR EXHIBITING IN FLOWER SHOWS

First published in 1970 and updated several times over the years, this is an invaluable resource and includes sections on Floral Design, Horticulture, Botanical Arts, and Photography. It also includes the GCA point scales for horticulture and floral design.

Tips for Exhibiting in Flower Shows is a publication of The Philadelphia Committee of the GCA. To order, email: tipsforexhibiting2013@gmail.com | Cost: \$10.00, free shipping.

Hamel, Esther V., ***The Encyclopedia of Judging and Exhibiting***, Ponderosa Publishing, St. Ignatius, Montana, 1976

Hitomi Gilliam and Kathy Whalen, ***A Fresh Look at Judging Floral Design***, (2013)

Jane Godshalk, ***Flower Arranging Secrets-Natural Designs for Everyday Living*** (2014)