

Dahlias – Preparing for the Show

By Dave Reid

After months of preparation, we are now ready for the first show. Sometimes a daunting experience for first time exhibitors.

When and where do we commence?

Check the show schedule and make sure you fully understand the requirements of the classes to be entered.

The wording **‘and /or’ sometimes causes a problem** and can lead to the dreaded **‘Not According to Schedule’** being applied by the judge(s). It means you can enter either of the two classifications mentioned in the class e.g. when it states ‘Cactus *and / or* Semi-Cactus’ you can enter both in the same exhibit. Or, if it states ‘Giant *and / or* Large blooms’ the same applies.

Make sure all the **containers are watertight** – as plastic can harden with age and easily split.

Water well all plants a few days previous to the show.

Cut blooms in the morning or evening, never around mid-day.

Take the **container to the plant area** and cut the bloom stems at a sharp angle to assist good water take up. Vent blooms top and bottom where practicable – to release air. An old kitchen fork with one prong left on is ideal. Always make sure the bloom is supported at all time after cutting.

Store blooms where the **sun will not get at them directly**. Avoid wooden buildings.

Time can be saved by **marking blooms previously**, or place a split cane on them.

Blooms should be secured so that they are free from contact with each other.

Cactus / Semi-Cactus should be cut **24hrs before the show** as it improves the form, being in water for this time.

Check the **height of your transport** access so that the containers can enter easily.

Old carpeting is ideal for placing on the floor of the transport, to prevent movement. Have suitable pieces of material handy to keep containers separate, and so avoid movement and contact of blooms.

Make out a list of all the items you need at the show and check them off before leaving home.

An apron with pockets will assist in keeping most items at hand whilst staging.

On arrival at the show, **find a quiet spot**, away from the busy areas. If appropriate, get your class cards, so that discrepancies can be rectified before the busy time when judging is about to

commence. Oasis material assists and speeds up staging and can be thoroughly soaked by being placed in the containers on the way to the show. One Oasis block is sufficient to fill three, 3inch vases.

The dressing of blooms can be assisted by the use of **tweezers and a small paint brush**. Make sure all split canes are removed when staging.

A **collapsed bloom** can sometimes be restored by placing in a cool dark place overnight.

Blooms not fully developed can be assisted by the application of tepid water to the plant.

Do not move other exhibitor's vases to make room for your own, but get a show official to do so. Make sure your class card is in position and the variety card, unless it is a seedling class.

Check all the blooms with the rings prior to judging, especially Cactus / Semi-Cactus types.

Best of luck!