

A guide to exhibiting at F.G.A. shows

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Flitwick Gardeners' Association

Introduction to our shows

It would be great if more of our membership took part in the shows we stage three times a year. However, we understand that some of you are not sure what is involved. This guide aims to let you know what to expect and to give some helpful tips about preparing for any show.

The Flitwick Gardeners' Association runs three shows each year. The Spring show is in late March or early April and is predominantly spring bulbs and flowers. Our main, Annual show is in August and includes classes for vegetables and flowers as well as home produce, handicrafts and much more. The Autumn show in early October is when we have fun showing off our largest, smallest, longest and weirdest!

There is information about our shows including reports of past shows and photographs on the FGA web site at www.flitwickgardeners.co.uk. You can also contact us with questions at any time at the Seed Box or by email at fgashow@flitwickgardeners.co.uk

The show schedule and how to enter

The show schedule tells you everything you need to know about the classes being judged at the show. The schedule for the Spring show appears in the first magazine of the year reaching our members in late February or early March. The schedule for the Annual show is delivered to members in June and this also has a copy of the Autumn show schedule on the back pages. The Autumn show schedule appears in the magazine again in about September.

For the main annual show in August you are asked to make your entries in advance. The schedule tells you how to do this using the form or by email to fgashow@flitwickgardeners.co.uk . If you wish to make a few late entries on the day of the show this may also be allowed at the discretion of the show secretary. For other shows it is not vital to make entries in advance. However, it is helpful to us and also saves some time for you, so please consider using the email address to let us know which classes you intend to enter.

Before entering any of the shows be sure to read the rules and class details! This may sound rather obvious but you would be surprised how often people make simple mistakes.

What to expect when you arrive

Look at the schedule for the show and ensure that you arrive with plenty of time to spare before the judging begins. We must begin judging on time so that the judge can finish before the doors open to the public - so if you are still placing exhibits on the show bench at judging time you will be rushed or perhaps even asked to leave.

At each of our shows, on arrival you need to check in at the desk. If you have let us know your entries in advance, you will be handed your entry cards. If not you will be asked to fill out a list of the classes you are entering so that cards can be written and given to you.

Tables are set aside for entrants to prepare their entries. It is important that you do your preparation here and not on the show benches in order to avoid accidentally disturbing someone else's carefully arranged entry.

We provide vases, glasses and paper plates for your use in displaying your entries.

Once you have prepared each item, take it carefully to the show bench, find the correct place for the class number and arrange it placing the appropriate entry card beside it – with the words 'This side up' uppermost!!

Entering novice classes

If you have never won a first prize in any of the classes described in section A of the show schedule or the Novice vegetable trophy, then you may enter the novice vegetable classes. This does not preclude you from also entering into as many other classes of the show as you wish including the general vegetable classes in section A.

If you have never won a first prize in any of the flower classes 54 to 66 (inclusive) in Section D of the show schedule or the Novice flower trophy, you may enter the novice flower classes. And you may also enter as many other classes as you wish including any of those in section D.

Vegetables

General tips

Pay particular attention to the number and size of specimens required, the amount of foliage or stem you are asked to leave (if any). You need to carefully read both the full show rules and the instruction for the specific class you are entering since relevant instructions could appear in either place.

Probably the most important tip of all for any show entry requiring more than one specimen is to try for 'uniformity'. Submit specimens that are of the same variety and very similar in shape and size.

Bring spare specimens. This way you will not be disappointed if an item is accidentally broken or spoiled while preparing it for display.

Vegetables should be cleaned gently. The only exception to this is for the autumn show when entering an item for one of the 'heaviest' classes.

Remember that bigger is by no means always better. A good, clean, tidy specimen will often beat a larger but less perfect entry.

If you know the variety of your vegetable, it is useful to write it on your entry card. However this is not a *requirement* and you will not lose marks if you do not do so.

Below are some tips for specific classes. Vegetables for which the general tips above are sufficient are not included.

Onions and Shallots

It is important that every onion or shallot in your entry is the correct size for the class, the judge will check them all. The best way to measure is to make a ring or circular hole of the stated diameter and see if the onion or shallot will pass through it. If you are unsure, please ask a committee member to help you as we usually have a ring available.

Tidily trim the top and the roots of your onions and shallots. You will see from the rules that onions 'may be dressed'. Dressing of onions with raffia is optional and most entrants to our shows do not do it. However if you would like to dress your onions there is information on the web page www.allotment-diary.co.uk/How-to-dress-exhibition-show-onions.html

Ideally you should remove untidy or broken skin a few weeks before the show and leave the onions in the sun to develop a new smooth skin. If you remove skin closer to the day of the show, don't overdo it!

A good way to display onions is to stand each on a ring cut from a toilet roll tube or similar. Shallots meanwhile are often shown standing in sand on a paper plate. There will be plates and some sand available in the setting up area.

Tomatoes

Ensure that you measure your tomatoes and enter them in the correct class. This is done in the same way as onions and shallots.

Tomatoes should be shown with some stalk attached. Pick your tomatoes as near to the show as possible so that they look fresh. Wrapping the stalk in a little moist tissue paper can help keep them looking fresh a little longer.

You can display your tomatoes either on the show table or on a paper plate. Arrange them symmetrically and with the stalk uppermost.

Beans

Both French and Runner beans should be cut from the vine with scissors leaving a little piece of stalk on the end of each bean. Cut them as near to show time as possible as they should look fresh, the judge is likely to snap one in order to check this.

Try to get a set of beans of the same or similar size and as straight as possible. If your beans are not quite straight it is possible to straighten them very gently in your warm hands... take care though in case they snap!

Depending on the size of your beans you may choose to lay them directly onto the show table or arrange them on a paper plate.

Carrots

A carrot is only described as pointed if it tapers all the way to its end like this one.

This is the shape of a stump rooted carrot.



This distinction does confuse many people so if you are at all unsure, please do ask and we will be pleased to advise you.

Potatoes

You must enter your potatoes into the correct class depending on whether they are white or coloured. A potato is described as coloured even if it only has tiny patches of colour. The variety Cara is an example of this as it has pink eyes.

Potato skins should be clean. This can be done by soaking the potatoes for a while and then gently wiping dirt away. Take care not to break the skin.

Beetroot

Don't choose huge roots as they are liable to be hard inside. The judge is likely to cut one of your roots in order to check for this.

Wash the roots gently taking care not to break the skin.

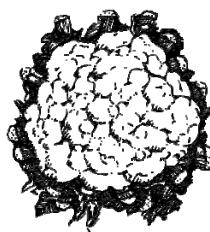
Beetroots should have a single tap root. Small side shoots can be carefully removed.

Lettuce, cabbage and cauliflowers

Please clean your exhibit gently.

A few outer leaves can be removed if damaged.

In the case of cauliflower trim the leaves to reveal the curd.



Peas

Pea pods have a 'bloom' which makes the pods look more attractive. Because of this try to pick and display your peas without actually handling the pods.

Leeks

Leeks should be of uniform length and be firm. Avoid excessive stripping of outer leaves.

Roots are best left on but should be teased out and gently cleaned.

Any other vegetable

You can enter into this class any vegetable not specifically named in any of the classes preceding it. There is no required number here but if you show more than one specimen they should be of the same type and variety and as uniform as possible in shape and size.

Flowers

General

The tips included here can be applied to showing any flowers in any of our shows. Tips are only included for specific classes where there is any extra or different advice to add.

Cut flowers in the evening or early morning when the flowers are cool. Cut stems as long as possible with a slanting cut to improve uptake of water. Remove undeveloped side shoots unopened buds and some lower leaves and plunge up to their necks in clean water.

Cut more stems than you need for the show to allow choice when staging.

Give yourself plenty of time to set up without rushing.

Flowers must be shown in one of the vases provided. There are several sizes so choose carefully. The vase should not be so large as to overpower the flowers or vice versa.

Do not forget to put water in the vase as your flowers need to stay alive and fresh for several hours.

Cut the stems to an appropriate length for the vase and to achieve a balanced, symmetrical display.

Pay attention to the number of blooms required.

Newspaper is usually used to hold stems in position in the vase and we provide a plentiful supply. Fill the vase two thirds with cold water, loosely place newspaper into the vase and then press stems into position, back blooms first. Add more paper before front blooms and finally enough paper to hold all the stems firmly in place.

Varying the angles of blooms in a vase can sometimes make the exhibit look more balanced and pleasing so try holding the bloom in various positions before placing it. Larger blooms often look better at the back of a vase while smaller ones may look better at the front.

Flowers should be clean, fresh and unblemished.

Fuchsia florets

Fuchsia florets are shown by inserting them into one of the display units provided. These 'units' are actually ex-ice cream tubs with evenly spaced holes in the lids.

Fill the tub with water and put the lid in place. Insert the fuchsia florets into the holes so that they will reach the water. If you have more than one size or variety of floret try to arrange them symmetrically or in a pleasing pattern.

Gladiolus

The ideal spike is straight and is one third in full flower, one third with buds in colour and one third in green bud. The spike should still be carrying the bottom bloom. However do not be afraid to show a less than perfect spike of gladiolus, perfection is hard to come by and your flower might still be the best!

Chrysanthemum

At the annual and autumn shows there is a class for 3 stems of spray chrysanthemums. A spray chrysanthemum is one where each stem bears multiple branches of foliage and multiple flowers.

Ideally the blooms of sprays should be of uniform size, development and colour; foliage should be fresh and clean. Remove any dead blooms and fading foliage before staging.

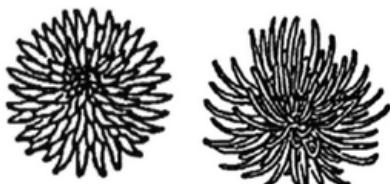
Dahlia

There are classes for several types of Dahlia in our annual and autumn shows. In some cases size limits are given and you must ensure that *all* of your blooms are of the correct size.

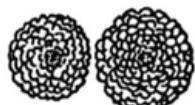
Blooms should be staged with some dahlia foliage, preferably on the stem.

The brief descriptions of types below should help you decide which class your dahlias belong in. There is further information and examples at www.dahliaworld.co.uk and as usual we will be very glad to advise you.

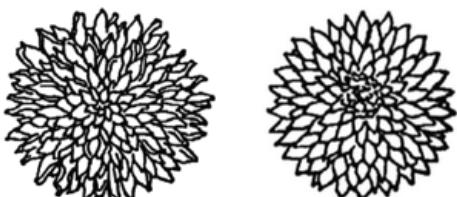
Cactus and Semi-cactus varieties are those in which the petals are fairly narrow and are pointed giving the bloom a spiky appearance.



Pompon and Ball varieties are those where the bloom is ball shaped (sometimes slightly flattened). Pompons are smaller – not exceeding 51mm diameter.



Decorative varieties have broad and usually flat petals.



Pot plants

Pots or containers should be clean, undamaged and of an appropriate size. According to the rules of FGA shows the pot must be plain terracotta or plastic.

You must have owned the plant for at least six months prior to the show.

If you need to stake or tie your plant make sure you have done this neatly and that it does not detract from the appearance of your plant.

Entries in the class 'Pot plant – foliage' should be plants normally grown for their attractive foliage. Your plant will not be disqualified if it happens to be in flower at the time of the show. The judge will ignore its flowers.

Similarly in the class 'Pot plant – flower' you may enter any flowering plant including those normally grown for foliage. The judge will award foliage points only on the normal scale ie for its general condition.

Remove any dead or dying foliage and blooms before the show.

Hanging baskets

Baskets are displayed suspended from our frame so bring along your baskets complete with their chains for hanging.

Plants should be closely grouped and overflow the basket so as to almost hide it. They should be arranged in a well-balanced fashion and be healthy.

Aim for a bright, bold colourful display which will make a big first impression on the judge.

When staging hang the basket carefully to be sure that its best attributes are well displayed.

Fruit

General

Pick fruit as near to show time as possible.

Handle all fruit as little as possible and by their stalks where applicable so that any natural bloom is not spoilt.

Use scissors rather than fingers to remove soft fruit.

You should use the paper plates provided for the staging of fruit.

Fruit should be fresh, uniform in size and colour. It should be free from blemishes. Pick spares in case some items are damaged during transportation or staging.

All fruit except nectarines, peaches and apricots, should be shown with stalks intact.

Aim for an attractive, symmetrical presentation.

Apples, pears and gooseberries may be shown ripe or unripe. Other fruit should be ripe but note that over ripeness is considered to be a defect.

Apples

Must be shown with the eye uppermost, stalk end down.

Soft fruit

Berries look attractive placed in lines and are easily counted. Stalks should look fresh and all point in one direction.

Pears

These are usually best arranged around the plate with the stalks towards the centre.

Grapes

Choose a complete well-filled bunch which is balanced in shape.

Any other fruit

Sprigs of currants and similar should be placed with the bottom of the sprigs to the front of the plate.

Home kitchen classes

Please ensure that no brand names are visible on jars, containers, etc., that you use to display your entry.

We provide cling film which you may use to cover your produce in order to keep it clean and safe from contamination. You may also choose to provide a cover yourself. The judge will remove this before judging your produce.

Be aware that the judge will cut cakes, open pickles and jams, cut cooked beetroot, etc., in order to examine them closely and taste them.

Make jars, etc., attractive with neatly written labels. As usual though these should not bear your name.

Other classes

Creative needlework

You may enter into this class any form of decorative or creative needlework. This includes embroidery, lacework, cross-stitch ... in fact the only exclusion is articles of clothing.

Please take care that your name is not displayed on your work.

Photographs

Photographs must be shown without frames or borders.

If you would like to give a title to your work please write it on the official show card.

The spring show

General

All of the tips about arranging flowers above apply also to daffodils and tulips.

Daffodil classification

The Basic Daffodil Dictionary

Anther the pollen-bearing part of the stamen

Corona refers to the cup or trumpet

Filament the stalk of the stamen

Pedicel is the 'neck' of the flower which joins it to the stem

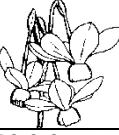
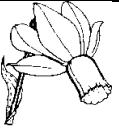
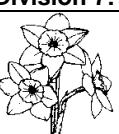
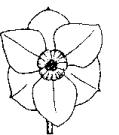
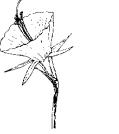
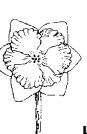
Perianth refers to the petals

Reflexed petals are those which are angled away from the corona

Stamen the male part of the flower, consisting of filament and anther

Further, more detailed information can be found on the Royal Horticultural Society web site at [/www.rhs.org.uk](http://www.rhs.org.uk)

Division 1: Trumpet	
	One flower to each stem. The corona is as long or longer than the perianth. Examples: Golden Harvest, Rembrandt
Division 2: Large Cupped	
	One flower to each stem. The corona is more than one third but less than equal to the length of the perianth. Examples: Armada, Carlton, Ceylon, Desdemona
Division 3: Small Cupped	
	One flower to each stem. The corona is NOT more than one third the length of the perianth. Examples: Angel, Barret Browning, Birma, Lemonade
Division 4: Double	
	One or more flowers per stem, with doubling of the perianth segments or corona or both. Examples: Acropolis, Golden Ducat, Unique

Division 5: Triandrus	
	Usually two or more pendent flowers per stem, perianth segments often reflexed. Examples: Rippling Waters, Thalia, Hawera
Division 6: Cyclamineus	
	One flower per stem; perianth segments prominently reflexed. Flower at an acute angle to the stem with a very short pedicel. Examples: Charity May, Dove Wings, Jetfire
Division 7: Jonquilla and Apodanthus	
	Usually 1 to 5 (more rarely up to 8) flowers per stem; perianth segments spreading or reflexed; corona cup shaped, funnel shaped or flared, usually wider than long; flowers usually fragrant. Examples: Lintie, Suzy, Sweetness
Division 8: Tazetta	
	Usually 3 to 20 flowers to a stout stem; perianth segments spreading (not reflexed); flowers usually fragrant. Example: Geranium
Division 9: Poeticus	
	Usually one flower to a stem; perianth segments white; corona very short or disc shaped, usually with a green/yellow centre and a red rim, but sometimes of a single colour; flowers usually fragrant. Example: Actaea
Division 10: Bulbicum	
	Usually one flower to a stem; perianth segments insignificant compared to the corona; anthers attached more or less centrally to the filament; filament and style usually curved. Examples: Golden Bells, Julia Jane, Nylon
Division 11: Split Corona	
a.  b. 	Corona is split, usually for more than half its length. a) corona segments opposite the perianth segments; the corona segments usually in two whorls of three. b) corona segments alternate to the perianth segments; the corona segments usually in a single whorl of six. Examples: Articol, Broadway Star
Division 12: Other	
Division 13: Other	

Tulips

To prevent the head of a tulip from drooping use a pin to make a tiny hole in the stem just beneath the flower.

Heaviest, longest, smallest – the fun of the autumn show

At the autumn show we have many 'fun' classes for heaviest, longest, smallest, etc. Not much explanation required here!

However note that if entering the heaviest cabbage for example, there is no need to trim off roots or untidy leaves ... they can all count towards its weight!

Vegetables do not need to be fresh or pretty, for example your longest bean can look dead and inedible!

We have lots of fun looking at the 'freak' vegetables. Please save yours and bring them along to show us.

After judging

After the judging is completed the show is open to the public. This is when you will find out how well your exhibits have fared. At our shows there are no cash prizes, if you have won first, second or third you will find a rosette placed beside your exhibit. For some classes and groups of classes a trophy may be awarded also.

Rosettes are yours to keep if you wish, however any trophy that you win must be returned to the Seed Box before the next show so that we can award it to next year's winner.

Please do not remove your exhibit or any rosettes and trophies until the end of the show. We want the public to be able to see all of the entries when they look around. As a rule of thumb do not remove entries until the raffle has been drawn. If you need to go before this then please speak to a member of the show committee.

If you would like to know more about what the judge thought of your exhibit please ask a member of the show committee as judges do sometimes make comments to us as they work. In addition some of us are qualified judges and would be able to explain why your exhibit did better or worse than you expected.

And finally..

It cannot be stressed often enough that we are there to help; we want you to enter and to do well. If you have any questions about your entries you can contact us before the show or during staging for advice.

If you are still in any doubt about whether to enter, please come along to any of our shows and have a good look around. We feel sure that you will see that it is not too difficult to take part and that you have vegetables, flowers or handicraft items which are as good (or perhaps better) than those on display.