

Preparing Your Orchid for the Show Exhibit

St. Augustine Orchid Society

If you have a really nice plant that will be in full bloom during the show weekend, you may want to consider entering it into the SAOS exhibit or exhibiting the plant individually for a potential award. To prepare your plant, follow these steps.

Groom Your Plant. You should remove dead or brown leaves and pseudobulbs from the plant. Trim dead areas from leaves if possible with a single edged razor blade, but not too early or edges will brown. When cutting tips of leaves, be sure your cut follows the basic shape of the natural leaf ending. Make sure it is insect and disease free. Clean the leaves with a mildly acidic solution like white vinegar, lemon juice, Sprite, 7 Up, etc to remove calcium build up or other spotting. Remove trash, debris, dead leaves or stems and weeds from the pot. Stake the inflorescence to show the flower to its best advantage.

Identify Your Plant. To make sure your plant is properly labeled and to make sure you get your plant back after the show, some preparatory steps are necessary. Complete the interactive form and email it to Plant List Coordinator who will send you a number to identify your plant. You should mark your pot with this number and your name, e.g., with masking tape and a Sharpie pen. Remove or bury the plant tag in the pot so it is not visible above the potting medium, but is there for your future use.

Getting Your Plant to the Show. If you are not going to participate in setting up the exhibit, arrangements will be made to transport your plant to the show. Work with Exhibit Chair to either arrange for an individual to pick up the plant or bring the plant to a central collection location for transportation to the show. In either case, secure your plant in a carry box with newspapers to hold the plant stationary. The plants must be ready no later than the day before set up.

Checklist. Here's a handy checklist to follow for preparing your plants.

- ★ Clean the pseudobulbs and leaves (water helps to soften the dry papery covering (cataphyll) around mature pseudobulbs so that you can gently rub it off).
- ★ Make sure the media in the container is clean and free of weeds.
- ★ Wipe the top of the leaves (vinegar, lemon juice, sprite, 7 up, diluted milk, etc.) to remove residue. Do not use commercial spray to shine the leaves, it is not good for the plant.
- ★ Carefully inspect plant for pests and if any are found remove them with alcohol and a Q tip. If there is a bad infestation, do not bring the plant to the show.
- ★ Inspect the flowers for thrips and other damage. If a flower is marred by the spots of Botrytis fungus it is better to leave the plant at home.
- ★ Carefully stake the inflorescence if this will help present the flowers to their best advantage. If you can plan ahead of time it is best to train the inflorescence as it emerges and is soft, a mature inflorescence is hardened off and can break easily.
- ★ Provide the plant label information in the interactive form to the Plant List Coordinator who will assign a plant number to your plant. Take a piece of masking tape, write your name and the number you received from the Plant List Coordinator and affix to the side of pot. This unique number identifies your plant and this is how the Exhibit Committee knows the proper plant owner so it will be returned to you.
- ★ Once your plant is identified by your name and the plant number, remove or bury the label in the pot so it is not visible.
- ★ Remove any wire hangers, hoops, etc.
- ★ Water each plant thoroughly before bringing to the show.
- ★ If the plant is in plastic, drop it into a clay pot for stability. Place each plant carefully in a large box or container for transport. To keep the plants from moving around and sustaining damage you can put crumpled newspaper around the pots. Some people use cotton batting, florists shred or other material to protect the flowers and inflorescences from damage.