

Showing and Staging Daffodils - 2004

Showing and staging daffodils can be a mystery to some, however, to others it's an art that is second nature. To me, it's a learned skill that I obtained by directly working with and observations of some of the best in the business (Ted Snazelle, Bill Pannill, Marie Bozievich to name a few), as well as lessons learned.

The first lesson is long stems. Judges like to see tall daffodils. The longer stems suggest better grown and will win.

The next rule is uniformity, meaning the same size for all the daffodils to be used in that category. This generally does not apply to single stem entries, but it does apply to three stems or more shown together. Uniformity is subjective, but one should strive for it anyway.

A good rule to live by is that the collection should look nice, with it's color balanced throughout. Judges will tell you that "looking nice" has no point value, but a favorable impression will never hurt. And, if all other "points" are equal... I'd rather have the best looking collection.

Use daffodils that are symmetrical. Meaning the fan of the petals and sepals combined are even all around, giving a "circle" look to the flower. Some say the sepals should look like a triple triangle. Insure that the cup is round and the stem is straight.

The best advise is to always use freshly bloomed daffodils.

Here are some key points to remember when showing daffodils.

Three daffodils shown together:

- In a vase or collection of three stems, the three flowers that you are using should be the same size (uniform). Assure that the judges can see the entire bloom of each daffodil. If the daffodils are not the same size, stage them in such a way that the difference isn't the first thing that strikes you when you look at them.

Collections of Five:

- Always put the largest daffodils in the back row.
- In a collection of five, try to stage the daffodils so that you will have three daffodils in one line and two in the other. Avoid showing them five across, if possible.
- The near daffodils should be slightly lower than the ones farther in back.
- Uniformity in size would be best, however, a collection of five is an ideal category to stage different size flowers and make them look neat and well balanced.
- Make the daffodils in back as tall as possible. The ones in front should be placed below the ones in back so that the judges have full unobstructed view of all five daffodils in the collection.
- If you have one daffodil that is bigger than all the others, it should go in the middle of the back row if possible. When you do this, be aware of the color pattern. Always assure that the collection is attractive.
- Balance is vital. All five daffodils being the same color is best. When that is not possible,

look at both the color and the size of the five daffodils that are being shown. When staged properly the differences in size or color should be an appealing factor.

- If there is one small daffodil, put it in front.
- If you have one color that is totally different than the other four, try to put it in the middle of the rear row. If that doesn't work, put it on the rear right. You don't want it on the rear left as judges most often work from left to right. An odd daffodil as the first to be judged is not a good way to get started.

Collection of 12, 15, and 24

- Always put the largest daffodils in the back row.
- Put your very best daffodils on the back rear corners. Get the judges off to a good impression.
- Keep each row in your collect as standard in size as possible.
- Balance the color in the collection so that the presentation will be the best possible.
- Keep all the smaller daffodils together, e.g., the upper divisions. I'd recommend the front row.
- In collections of 12 or 24 make sure you have the proper number of divisions represented as required by the show category.
- Count the daffodils in the entries. Make sure you have the right total number of daffodils as required for that entry category.
- If you want to win a Quinn Award of 24, assure that each daffodil used would win its class in the single stem categories.
- On the Throckmorton Award or collections of 15 stems. Insure that you personally look up the color code on each and every daffodil and insure the codes are correctly recorded on the labels. The judges will be checking each detail. The Throckmorton Award is where the judges are required to be "super" critical. No mistakes are allowed.

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Picking Daffodils from the Garden for Show

~by Donna Dietsch, Midwest Regional Vice President

When picking flowers, you will want to have a container with water in it to take out to the garden. Use lukewarm water since it is more easily absorbed by the flowers. I have some small plastic wastebaskets that I got at a dollar store. They are just the right size. Also you need a pen to write the name of the flower on the stem. If you need to do it, you can also write the color code on the stem. Write it near the bottom of the stem but not so low that you may cut it off when you adjust the heights for an entry. You have to have been out in the garden for a few days before the day you want to pick for the show since you need to have an idea of what will be ready to pick. You want to pick the bloom at its peak. If you have a refrigerator or a cold basement to store them for a few days, then you will go out each day and pick those that are ready. Have an idea about which classes you would like to enter. If you want to do a Green Ribbon, you need four divisions, so you will need to plan to pick some that fit in. First, look at the flower closely to reject those that have obvious flaws, especially tears and cuts. Check the back of the flower to see if all petals are evenly spaced. Be sure that there is no green on the back and the spathe is intact. Check the stem for discolorations and reject those with a lot of twisting which is hard to correct. Look at the cup for tears and uneven edges. Some problems with the edges can be corrected, but if you have enough flowers, just get the best ones. Look at the color. Has the reverse actually reversed? Is the cup that is color coded "R" really red all the way to the bottom? Count the petals on multiple headed flowers to be sure they all have six.

The most important part of the judging, and the one that has the most points, is condition. This refers to

tears, cuts and nicks, and the age of the flower. Too young is as bad as too old. Let the bloom develop on the plant until it is at its peak. If you have many insects in your garden, they can remove pollen from the flower, so look for pollen dropped in the cup. The judges will.

When you decide that you want to pick one, remember that virus is spread by using the same instrument to cut all your flowers. I have two ways that I ensure that I am not spreading virus to another flower. I get a box of single edged razor blades at the hardware store. They come in a box of 100 for less than \$6. I use each blade twice, making a cut on one side then the other. Then I put the blade in alcohol. Or I have used my fingernail to make a cut in the stem and then bend the stem over to break it off. I can pick ten blooms before I wash my hands. Since I do have a fridge, I pick for several days before a show, so I seldom pick more than ten per day. There are viruses that are not readily apparent in one cultivar, but will show up in another. I don't want to take any chances. Cut the stem as long as you can. You can shorten it later.

Immediately, when you pick the bloom, write the name on the stem and put it into the water. Many people hold the flower, bloom down to keep the sap from running out. When I have finished picking, I take the container into the house and change the water. I still use lukewarm and let them sit for about an hour. Then I change the water to cold and sit down to double check the blooms and do some grooming on them before I refrigerate them. It is easiest to do it then before they stiffen. If you leave it to the night before the show, you may not get much sleep, and you can get sloppy. It's when you're

tired that you put your fingernail through the petal of the one that would have been Best in Show. I've done that.

When you check over your blooms, look for the same things you looked for when picking them. There will always be a flaw that you missed. Putting them in warm water and having them in the house for an hour before touching them, gives the flowers a chance to soften up and makes it easier to manipulate them. Then you put them in the refrigerator to keep cool. Cold flowers are impossible to groom. The reason why I change the water to cold after they have been in the house for a while, is that the cold water will keep them from developing further. You did pick them at their peak of perfection.

After you have let your flowers sit inside for a hour or so, you will go through each of them. Look for faults that you overlooked outside. There will be some.

First check the petals. Turn the flower to the back and make sure all petals are at right angles to the opposite ones. Reject any that have a petal not in place. Look at the spathe and make sure it is whole and not badly torn.

Look for mitten thumbs and large tears and splits on the edges. Remove any little "things" that may be inside the spathe. They are leaf parts. These are usually on multiple flowered blooms. Use cuticle scissors because they are small and sharp.

Check the front of the flower. Look for mittens again. Look at the place where the petal is attached to the cup. Sometimes it is attached too far up on

the cup which will make the inside of the cup bulge inward. You can try to correct this by inserting a Q-Tip inside the cup and holding the cup in two fingers, press the Q-Tip outward, squeezing the cup a little to the outside, and sometimes it will go back into place. Use a squeeze, press, squeeze, press to try this. Or you can put the Q-Tip inside and press the cup around it to round it up. If it doesn't work, there is nothing you can do.

Make sure there are no tears on the rim of the cup, and that the ruffles are even or nearly even. If the ruffles are not even, you can fix this a little. Make sure your fingers are warm. Place your index finger in the cup and your thumb on the outside, right at the ruffle. Slowly work your fingers along the cup, flattening out the ruffle as you go. Very carefully!! You can tear the edge if you don't do it slowly. You


may find it easier to put your thumb inside and your finger outside. I use my finger inside for jonquil and triandrus types and my thumb inside for larger flowers. I use my pinkie for minis. Yes you can groom those, too. As you grasp the edge, twist your hand

slightly to the outside forming the ruffles to the outside of the cup. Check to make sure the ruffles are even around the cup. Sometimes they go further out at the bottom of the cup. You can use the same method to put them closer in.

Sometimes the cup is square or lopsided and not round as it should be. Put your finger inside the cup, all the way down or as far as you can and gently press your fingers together to re-form the cup. You use a light pressure for this and the heat from your finger is enough to press the tissue of the flower to make it go the way you want it to go. I would suggest that as soon as you find a pot of daffodils in

"An exhibitor has to know some of the things the judges will consider in order to know which bloom to pick from his or her garden."

~Donna Dietsch



the grocery store, you get some to try these techniques out. It's easier than waiting until you have that blue ribbon one to try to groom.

You should know by now how to press the petals back to make them flat. I use a Q-Tip for this if I think I might tear the petals with my fingers. Otherwise, just push them back.

Here's a tricky little trick. When you have folds in the petals, or the edges are not flat, there are some things you can do. Make sure your fingers are warm, again. Carefully press the petals between your fingers. The pressure is just enough to flatten the folds, but not enough to bruise the petal. Hold the pressure for a short time and do it again if the petals are not flat. You can flatten the edges of the petals the same way, but do it very carefully. If you press too hard or too fast, you will tear the edge of the petal. You can make the petal have less of an incurve as long as you don't go all the way up to the center at the micro. This takes some practice, and that's why you should get a pot of daffs to practice on or use one of the early ones in your garden. I have had a clump of Jetfire for a long time and I used it to practice on. This technique will also work to smooth petals that are ridged or the texture is a bit bumpy. It will not eliminate these problems, but you can get a flower looking better and into the show when you need a particular one. This pressing of the petals is something that very few people do, mostly because they think it will not work or they are afraid that they will bruise the petals. If I am going to smooth a ridge, I start at the bottom of the petal and work upward. For uneven edges, I go the same way. If your fingers are up too far on the petals you can tear the edges. You do have to practice this, but when I showed the people in Pittsburgh, they could do it right away.

When the petals curl forward too much, you can get them to go backward. This can be used for

cyclamineous that don't want to recure properly. Place you index finger and thumb across the petal, thumb in the front. With your thumb, curl the petal over your finger. Do this slowly and move upward a little at a time until you get nearly to the top. The petal will recure backward the way it is supposed to do. This will also take a bit of the incurve out of a petal.

This smoothing with the fingers is the best technique I have found. Almost no one does it. That's what gives you an advantage over others. They can grow them as well as you do, but if they can't groom as well, your flowers will look better. I once won Best in Show with a flower that had a slightly bumpy texture. I won because the other flower had a cup that was square. The other person could have adjusted the cup, but didn't know how or didn't want to try to fix it. In judging, form has more points to it than texture. Condition has the most points, so that is why you want your flowers in the best possible condition. Then you work on form.

