

## Guide for Show Organisers

In preparing such a guide it has been difficult not to include too much detail or advice without seeming 'to teach grandma to suck eggs'. We have received help from a number of clubs, for which we are grateful. Timing can only be approximate because of the varying size of the shows – a large one which may include country crafts and demonstrations will need to be planned further in advance than a small village spring flower show.

Between 12 months and 9 months before the show.

The first matter to attend to is to form a committee. No one person can think or do everything. Ensure you allocate tasks to every member. This increases their worth and raises their self esteem.

Next you will have to decide about the actual contents of the show so that classes may be printed in a schedule. Be accurate in describing each class i.e. six flower heads on a board, six varieties (to show you ant all different varieties). If the show is an annual event then, as soon after the last show as possible, get your thinking caps on whilst the 'errors' are fresh in your minds. Ensure you have a set of rules and regulations printed within the schedule. A basic rule should include 'All exhibits to be grown or made by the exhibitor', and 'No exhibit may be removed from the display until .....'. Don't forget to have a time limit for receiving entries- usually two days before the event. If you are holding the show for the first time you will have to consider whether you are to present cups and trophies for the winners of sections or best in show and arrange to purchase. Will you invite a VIP to give cups to winners and if so send off your request for attendance.

The RHS publishes a handy reference book called The Horticultural Show Handbook available from W.H.Smiths at £4.95 which gives excellent guidelines on such things as suggestions to schedule makers, organisation, to exhibitors and to judges of fruits, flowers and vegetables. Unless it is a big show it is not advisable to include in the rules 'Judges abide by the RHS rules' or similar as this would leave them no discretion essential in a smaller show.

A show needs a venue, be it the village hall or marquee. It is advisable to book this well in advance, even 12 months ahead. If a marquee consider whether you will require electricity and water and ask for quotes from tradesmen. If lighting is required will any exhibits such as floral art require lights? If you have trade stands will they require power points for demonstrations, lights, tools? If taped music is to be played you will need a licence from the Performing Rights Society. The Local fire brigade should be consulted in respect of the number and locations of fire exits, extinguishers etc although these are usually catered for in the initial licensing of the hall. They have a handy leaflet which can be obtained free of charge and no doubt they will send an officer along to check and advise you.

Judges like to be given as much notice as possible as they can be very busy during the summer period. Have a couple of 'stand-bys' in case one falls ill. Confirm what the fees are and how much their expenses will be so that your treasurer can be prepared to pay on the day. Phone first, confirming by letter.

It is advisable to seek out sponsors by personal visits up to six months in advance. This lets the treasurer know how much income he/she can expect. Sponsors' generosity must be acknowledged and could be included in the schedule, on the show benches and on a board somewhere within the hall.

### **Between 6 months and 3 months before the show.**

Ensure that the schedule is printed, is accurate and sent to the judges and to all last year exhibitors.

All your stationary needs will have to be addressed. Have you sufficient prize cards (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> H.C.) exhibitors' cards, judges' results cards. Class cards for the tables, dividers for separating the classes. Suttons Seeds of Torquay will provide class cards free if you trade with them.

Raffle prizes and draw tickets should be obtained.

Table coverings are needed suitable for use in the domestic science classes as well as more robust ones for the general exhibits. Do floral art classes require a specific coloured covering and if swags are to be displayed have you the necessary boards and hooks on which to hang them?

Consider whether you are providing refreshments and don't forget to provide for the judges as well as your stewards and helpers!

Publicity should be planned. Local radio, papers, and posters.

Hold a committee meeting to review arrangements.

### **About 1 month before**

Arrange stewards, helpers, to erect and prepare the tables, help with refreshments, and gate rotas. Go out and press gang members as it is rare to get volunteers.

Ensure there is plenty of blue tack, paper clips, pins etc. Prepare a list, either numerically or alphabetically, of exhibitors/ classes entered. Make out prize cards for each class ready to complete with the recipients details.

Follow up publicity.

As entries are received enter them in the show book, giving each one a sequential number. Make out the exhibitors cards. Place all paperwork relating to each of exhibitors in an

envelope or keep them together with paper clips. Keep them in name or numerical order ready for handing to the exhibitor on the day of the show.

Ensure all the cups/ trophies from last year have been returned in a condition for presentation.

If you have classes for the heaviest or longest ensure you have scales and a tape measure.

Purchase sufficient food, tea, coffee etc for refreshments.

### **Day before the show.**

Set up tables, cover with suitable material. Know how many entries there are in each class and mark out the tables accordingly. Place class number in each area.

### **Show Day**

Don't panic! If you have prepared well all should be fine. If it isn't – panic.

Tables should be marked out with class/section. Use small canes as these are moveable in case an entry requires more space than you thought.

Ensure exhibitors' entry cards with exhibitors number and class are handed to them as they arrive.

Provide kitchen roll, knife and spoon as necessary for domestic science judge. They usually bring their own, but be prepared. Provide sufficient tabling to enable exhibitors to prepare their exhibits prior to staging. Water should also be available for exhibitors.

Brief stewards fully. Provide them with identity badges. They should walk around their respective areas prior to the judging to ensure all irregularities are noted. Are there too many beans or too few?

Ensure that the exhibition area is cleared of ALL persons except for stewards and judges whilst the judging is in progress. Provide with results cards and plain sheets of paper for them to write any comments they may wish on a particular class or exhibit.

Ensure Lifting Cards are shown by the exhibitors before they retrieve their exhibits.

After the Show.

Send a report to the local paper. Winners like to see their names in print. It is also good publicity for the club

After it's all over, relax and spend the proceeds on a trip to Hawaii!