

Benching Your Show Plants

Preparing plants for the show bench begins the minute you bring home your new plant, not the week before the show. The following suggestions may serve as a help & a reminder.

- You must own a plant at least 6 months. If owned for a shorter time then it may be benched with a tag saying 'For display only' or 'not for judging.'

At home....

- Stake, tie & train your plants as they grow.
- Use a stake to train a Cattleya pseudo bulb to grow upright & therefore the inflorescence will have a good upright start in life. (Also canes on Dendrobium's & Vandaceous types.)
- Staking must conform to OSNSW/AOC rules.
- Stakes must not be too high (we don't want the judges to lose an eye.)
- Stakes should be unobtrusive & must not detract from the plant.
- Ties should be neat & blend in with the plant.
- Have even light all round & above the plant to get even flowering. (Not all growing towards one light source.)
- When flowers are forming use wedges of styrene to space the flowers evenly.
- Protect the flowers as they emerge from weather & water damage.
- Do not allow pests & diseases to infest your orchids. (The judges & other plant owners don't like to see ants running along the show benches.)

The day before....

- the outside of the pot must be clean. (Either replace the pot or place the pot in a new & larger one.)
 - The potting mix must be clean. (No weeds)
 - If a flower breaks off, leave it on top of the pot.
 - The plant & pot must be able to stand firmly on the show bench.
 - Clean the leaves by washing with milk & water. Do not use leaf shine.
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- When handling & preparing your plants always have clean hands & sterilize your tools.
 - Trim dead or damaged leaves by cutting them to the original shape of the leaf.

On the day....

- Water plants well allowing time for them to drain.
- Transport to show – a lot of care is needed not to damage the plant or flowers. (An upturned foam box is a handy carrier. Cut holes in the box to fit the pot.)
- A minimum of 50% of the buds on an inflorescence have to be open to be eligible for judging.
- If you are not sure where to place your plant ask an official.
- Place your plant on the show bench to show the flowers to the best advantage to the judges.
- Be very careful of other entrants' plants.
- Have labels where they can be clearly seen by the judges & the public.
- Have clean & neat printing on the label.
- Don't have flowers hidden by the foliage.
- Do not judge your own plant at home; let the judges do it at the show.

If you carry out all the above suggestions, then your plants will be in show bench condition