



## Flower Judging...The Low Down

Expert from American Peony Society Handbook  
 'Handling Exhibition Blooms'

Judges will be looking for specific criteria and knowing what they are basing their observations upon can be quite helpful. Use the current year's exhibition schedule (minor changes may occur from year to year) to classify your blooms and create labels. Exhibition labels are provided by the APS Exhibition Committee. There are usually plenty of experienced exhibitors in the preparation room, the evening before the exhibition and are quite willing to help new exhibitors get started. Preparation of blooms is an enjoyable activities and a great deal comradery is experienced by all, not to mention the activity is a great learning experience.

Make your entries, retire gracefully, do not criticize the judges and praise the other fellow's exhibits'. Never mention the grand flowers you left back home in the garden. Take your winnings with modesty and your defeats with sportsmanship.

<b>GUIDE FOR EXHIBITION JUDGING</b>				
Scale of Points for Exhibition Peonies				
	Lactiflora	Hybrid	Tree	Collection
Form	40	35	25	30
Color	20	25	25	20
Texture	10	10	15	10
Stem and Foliage	5	10	15	10
Condition and Grooming	15	15	15	10
Size	10	5	5	5
Distinction				15

**FORM:** Perfection of form is a most important consideration in the judging of exhibition peonies. Good form in any type of peony consists of the petals being uniformly and symmetrically arranged. The guard petals should be uniform in shape and length and firmly support the inner petals. On singles or Japanese type, outer petals should form a cupped pattern. Stamens on singles and staminodes on Japanese should be firmly held to make a compact center. In the doubles, the true rose type wherein the petals are of uniform length symmetrically arranged with the edges recurved holding a fine rose bud center, is the most perfect form. The bomb type and crown or conical types are subdivisions of the double, and when in good condition and form can go to the top. Poor form is any relaxation or drooping which takes away from perfection of form. Guard petals drooping, stamens and staminodes not firmly held, or tufting in the Japanese type, should be faulted as not good form. On singles and Japanese type, the outer petals should not be incurved so much as to obscure the center (generally an im-mature bloom). Notching and uneven length or size of the guards or outer petals is not desirable.

**COLOR:** In judging peonies, there is no one best color. Red is not better than white, nor is white better than pink, per se. The color should be clear, clean and fresh. It is probably easier to evaluate color by enumerating color faults—the magenta tones in the pinks, muddy, cloudy tones in the reds, or washed out appearance of some of the near whites. Some varieties that have good color are: Mrs. Livingston Farrand and Walter Faxon in deeper pinks; Mrs. F.D. Roosevelt in the light pink; Marilla Beauty, Moonstone, and Solange in the blush class; Corina, Red Charm, or Red Red Rose in the reds. When a bloom has more than one color (as in Japanese type), the colors should be harmonious. Flecking of color and shading of color must be considered as to whether it adds or detracts from the overall color. Artificial lights have a tendency to make some of the pinks and reds seem especially muddy, and care should be taken to recognize this if it occurs.

**TEXTURE:** Texture is the surface quality of the petals. Silken sheen characterizes good texture, but additional charm and interest may be provided by velvety, suede-like or satiny petals. The petals may be thin and delicate; but, if the exhibitor can show the specimen without loss of form or condition, it should be judged without prejudice. Poor sheen, lack of sparkle or glow and coarseness are faults.

**STEM AND FOLIAGE:** The stem should be straight and of sufficient strength to support the bloom in the exhibition container. Since most peonies cut for exhibition must be refrigerated and stored for some time, the foliage is not of major consideration. Leaving the foliage on reduces the length of time the bloom can be stored and reduces its quality. Also in bagging, the foliage is easily damaged. Any leaves left on should not show damage either physical or from insects or disease.

**CONDITION AND GROOMING:** The specimen should be fully mature and at peak condition. Generally any faults in condition also adversely affect form. Fallen pollen is an indication that the bloom is past prime. Grooming is the manner in which the bloom is presented by the exhibitor. It should be set up to show off the best advantage possible using props in the container if necessary. Any torn or bruised petals should be considered careless handling by the exhibitor. Dust or spray residue are considered faults in grooming by the exhibitor. Actual presence of insects, with or without damage, is a fault. Failure to disbud, indications of disbudding too recently, or leaving stubs where side buds have been removed, should be considered as faults.

**SIZE:** Size is impressive, and as exhibition peonies are shown to impress, the importance of size is self-evident. However, size in itself is meaningless if it is attained at the sacrifice of good form. To receive full credit for size, the bloom should be above average without becoming coarse.

**DISTINCTION:** This is for collections only and refers to a broad range of types and colors. A collection of peonies should contain the various types such as doubles, singles, Japanese, hybrids with as wide a color range in each type as possible. Where a collection is limited to one type, such as single, there should be a wide color range from

white through red. A collection which is predominantly one color should be severely faulted. The purpose of a collection is to show off the wide range of variations in color and form that are available.

**REMARKS:** Judges should know the difference between the different types. Many mistakes are made by entering singles in classes calling for Japanese and vice versa. Remember that the chief difference is that singles shed pollen and Japanese forms do not. See an APS flower anatomy article to clarify this further. Also, there is widespread ignorance about the anemone type. Usually no attempt is made to separate this type from either the double or the Japanese according to the variety. It is probably better not to have classes for this type. Entries not properly labeled should be disqualified. Unlabeled flowers in a class calling for named varieties should disqualify the entry. However, this is usually caused by hurry in setting up exhibits, and if possible, a chance should be given the exhibitor to correct the error. As the color of a variety often varies with the location and weather, be cautious about disqualifying a flower because of color. It is extremely hard to make a hard and fast color classification of some varieties, especially blushes and light pinks. Exhibitors should give far more thought to the appearance of a collection than is done. Colors should not be unpleasantly mixed nor should short and long stemmed flowers be staged helter-skelter. Arrange the entry so that it makes a good picture.

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