

JUDGING HERBS

An Herb Society of America Guide
for Planners, Judges and Exhibitors



Revised and Updated 2005



The Herb Society of America
9019 Kirtland Chardon Rd.
Kirtland, OH 44094

CONTRIBUTORS & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

© 1985, 2005 The Herb Society of America

Original 1985 edition by:
Nancy Putnam Howard and Dorothy Spencer

2005 revision contributors:
Caroline Amidon, Susan Armstrong, Linda Bowers, Joyce Brobst, Joyce Douglas, Lorraine Kiefer, Christine Liebson, Michele Meyers, Ginny Miller, Robin Siktberg and Dorothy Spencer.

Special thanks to all of the HSA members who contributed to this revision.

Disclaimer: Information is provided as an educational service. Mention of commercial products does not indicate an endorsement by The Herb Society of America.

The Herb Society of America
9019 Kirtland Chardon Rd.
Kirtland, OH 44094
(440) 256-0514
<http://www.herbsociety.org>

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	4
Suggestions for Show Planners	4
Suggested Classes & Points	4
Container-Grown Herbs	4
Cut Specimens	6
Gardens	6
Other Classes	6
Suggestions for Judges	7
Suggestions for Exhibitors of Container-Grown Plants	7
Suggestions for Exhibitors of Cut Specimens	7
Suggestions for Passers	8
Glossary	8
Resources	9

INTRODUCTION

Herbs are unique. Because they include many families of plants, many growth patterns and many uses, they present a challenge to show planners, exhibitors and judges. This guide, inspired by many inquiries to The Herb Society of America, offers guidelines for all three. These guidelines, adapted with imagination to specific situations and types of shows, will encourage others to become better acquainted with these fascinating plants, and provide for quality judging.

SUGGESTIONS FOR SHOW PLANNERS

CLASSES: Those listed are basic suggestions which can be adapted for any flower show/exhibit that includes herbs, from traditional flower shows to children’s and state fair exhibitions. The section of the country, time of the year, size of the show, or special studies/interests of participating groups will shape the schedule. Description of classes and special requirements for entry must be explicit in the schedule.

POINTS & GLOSSARY: The points and the accompanying glossary clarify some of the special features of herbs that are not as apparent in other horticultural classes. The points may be adapted to each show/exhibit. Base the numerical value of the point system on the desired qualities to be showcased.

The classes and points presented in this guide, as well as requirements for entry, may be simplified for exhibits prepared by children. Keep in mind when planning for children’s exhibitions that children learn by doing. Focus on making the preparation process an enjoyable and memorable learning experience.

SUGGESTED CLASSES & POINTS

CONTAINER-GROWN HERBS

All container-grown herbs shall have been in the possession of the exhibitor at least 3 months and potted for at least 6 weeks. See Suggestions for Exhibitors of Container-Grown Plants (page 7).

Suggested Classes

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Culinary (individual specimen in pot) 2. Medicinal (individual specimen in pot) 3. Aromatic (individual specimen in pot) 4. Other Use, i.e. dye, industrial, etc. (individual specimen in pot) 5. Genus (i.e. <i>Origanum</i>) (individual specimen in pot) 6. Collection 	<p>Suggested Point System (Classes 1-6)</p> <table border="0"> <tr><td>Condition</td><td style="text-align: right;">40</td></tr> <tr><td>Presentation</td><td style="text-align: right;">15</td></tr> <tr><td>Grooming</td><td style="text-align: right;">15</td></tr> <tr><td>Difficulty of Culture</td><td style="text-align: right;">10</td></tr> <tr><td>Rarity</td><td style="text-align: right;">10</td></tr> <tr><td><u>Labeling</u></td><td style="text-align: right;"><u>10</u></td></tr> <tr><td><i>Total</i></td><td style="text-align: right;"><i>100</i></td></tr> </table>	Condition	40	Presentation	15	Grooming	15	Difficulty of Culture	10	Rarity	10	<u>Labeling</u>	<u>10</u>	<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>
Condition	40														
Presentation	15														
Grooming	15														
Difficulty of Culture	10														
Rarity	10														
<u>Labeling</u>	<u>10</u>														
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>														

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Strawberry Jar 8. Theme Garden in Container 	<p>Suggested Point System (Classes 7-8)</p> <table border="0"> <tr><td>Condition</td><td style="text-align: right;">40</td></tr> <tr><td>Presentation</td><td style="text-align: right;">30</td></tr> <tr><td>Selection</td><td style="text-align: right;">10</td></tr> <tr><td>Grooming</td><td style="text-align: right;">10</td></tr> <tr><td><u>Labeling</u></td><td style="text-align: right;"><u>10</u></td></tr> <tr><td><i>Total</i></td><td style="text-align: right;"><i>100</i></td></tr> </table>	Condition	40	Presentation	30	Selection	10	Grooming	10	<u>Labeling</u>	<u>10</u>	<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>
Condition	40												
Presentation	30												
Selection	10												
Grooming	10												
<u>Labeling</u>	<u>10</u>												
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>												

9. Hanging Basket

Suggested Point System (Class 9)

Condition	40
Floriferousness/foilage	15
Presentation	15
Grooming	20
<u>Labeling</u>	<u>10</u>
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>

10. Topiary
11. Espalier

Suggested Point System (Classes 10-11)

Condition	40
Presentation	25
Grooming	15
Difficulty of Culture	10
<u>Labeling</u>	<u>10</u>
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>

12. Trained Plant on Stuffed Form

Suggested Point System (Class 12)

Condition	40
Presentation	30
Grooming	20
<u>Labeling</u>	<u>10</u>
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>

13. Window Box
14. Living Wreath

Suggested Point System (Classes 13-14)

Condition	40
Presentation	15
Grooming	15
Difficulty of Culture	10
Rarity	10
<u>Labeling</u>	<u>10</u>
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>

CUT SPECIMENS

Study the show's schedule thoroughly. See Suggestions for Exhibitors of Cut Specimens (page 7).

Suggested Classes

1. Culinary
2. Medicinal
3. Aromatic
4. Dye
5. Genus
6. Collection
7. Family (i.e. Lamiaceae)
8. Tussie Mussie
9. Dried Wreath

Suggested Point System for Cut Specimens

Condition	50
Selection	10
Rarity	10
Presentation	15
<u>Labeling</u>	<u>15</u>
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>

GARDENS

Gardens can be designed according to a theme or topic (i.e. children's gardens, dye gardens, colonial gardens, Native American gardens, etc.)

Suggested Point System

Design (form, texture, unity, balance, proportion, scale)	30
Adaptation to topic/theme (suitability of plant material)	10
Condition (cultural perfection of plant material)	30
Special features (appropriateness/relevance of accessories)	10
<u>Labeling</u>	<u>20</u>
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>

OTHER CLASSES

Although flower shows traditionally showcase horticultural traits, scent and flavor are of primary importance to many herb enthusiasts, and individual show planners may wish to create classes that assess these qualities. When other classes are included:

1. Explicitly state the rules and guidelines for entry and judging. Because horticultural judges are not typically permitted to touch plants, scent and flavor are best judged as distinct classes with separate plant specimens, which can be sampled. Some shows may be more flexible with judging, assessing flavor and scent along with other traditional qualities using the same plant specimens, and permitting judges to touch plants.
2. Use judges with expertise related to the established class or classes; horticulture, scent or flavor.

SUGGESTIONS FOR JUDGES

Before the show:

1. Obtain the show schedule immediately upon accepting the invitation to serve as a judge.
2. Study the rules of the show and the show's assigned point system, since these may vary from show to show.
3. Study the classes assigned.
4. Learn the growing conditions of the show's geographical location to determine the herbs of easy and difficult culture and rarity for the area.

At the show:

1. Unless the rules state otherwise, do not touch any plant or any part thereof. A clerk may be asked to turn a plant if necessary.
2. If you have a question, do not hesitate to ask for a show officer.
3. Be patient when considering exhibits, and tactful, kind and courteous to fellow judges, clerks and show officers.
4. You must judge entries as passed (see Suggestions for Passers, page 8). If you feel there is an error in nomenclature, leave a tactful note for the exhibitor, if possible.
5. Leave positive, helpful comments if the show permits.
6. Carry a reference book.

SUGGESTIONS FOR EXHIBITORS OF CONTAINER-GROWN PLANTS

Study the show's schedule thoroughly. Clean container. Clay is the preferable container material. (Check show rules.)

1. Make sure your pot conforms to the show's measurement guidelines and is clean and free of salt build-up.
2. Use appropriate top dressing.
3. Verify that botanical nomenclature is correct.
4. Make sure plants are well groomed and show no signs of insects, disease or other damage. Plants should be free from blemishes, dirt, fertilizer residue and water spots.

SUGGESTIONS FOR EXHIBITORS OF CUT SPECIMENS

Study the show's schedule thoroughly. On the day prior to the show:

1. Cut herbs early in the morning or late afternoon.
2. Identify each specimen with its botanical name on a convenient temporary label as soon as it is cut to avoid confusion, mistakes and loss of time when preparing the exhibit/entry.
3. Cut more than your anticipated need.
4. Cut stems as long as possible.
5. Strip the lower leaves.
6. Remove all faded or undesirable leaves, buds or branches close to node, stem or trunk.
7. Plunge into a bucket of tepid water up to lower leaves. Floralife® can be added to the water used for hardening off and can also be used for soaking Oasis® for arrangements.
8. Leave in a cool, shady, protected area.
9. When preparing entry or entries use only specimens in prime condition.
10. No leaves should be below the water line.

SUGGESTIONS FOR PASSERS

Passers are the screen or filtering system for judges, making sure plants are entered and identified correctly and of show quality. Bring chalk, a measuring tape, a spray bottle, small clippers or scissors and a small paintbrush (for exhibitor to use in grooming the plants).

1. Know the rules of the show.
2. Study the classes to be passed and any special requirements for any specific class.
3. DO NOT pass any entry that does not meet the requirements of its class or the rules of the show.
4. Plan to be patient, encouraging and helpful, especially with new exhibitors who may be nervous and unfamiliar with the fine points of "showing."
5. Encourage exhibitor to groom plant(s) to perfection. (You may not touch them.)
6. Do not accept any plant that is diseased or insect infested because it could infect other exhibitors' entries.
7. If in doubt about nomenclature, seek help. The show's organizers should have reference books available.
8. Ask the exhibitor to mark the back of the pot with chalk, so that it can be staged for the best effect.

GLOSSARY

Plants are frequently judged on the following categories:

COLLECTION: A collection may be three (or more) separate species or cultivars of the same genus, planted in the same container. In the case of cut specimens, a collection might be five or more separate species or cultivars of the same genus.

CONDITION: Overall cultural perfection. Well-grown, vigorous, compact (not leggy); evidence of new growth, form, shape, symmetry, health, maturity ideal for its particular genus, species, cultivar or variety.

DIFFICULTY OF CULTURE: Some container-grown plants demand daily manicuring for ultimate perfection, particularly small-leaved scented geraniums, *Helichrysum italicum* (curry plant), and fine-leaved lavenders. Low-growing shrubs such as germander, sage, thyme and *Santolina* require infinite patience and constant attention for development into standards of exhibition quality. A container-grown plant which has attained a venerable age and for which the exhibitor has maintained horticultural excellence is an achievement of great merit.

FLORIFEROUSNESS/FOLIAGE: Many flowers in prime condition; color clear and definite. Full foliage in prime condition.

GROOMING: No dead or fading blooms/flowers or leaves or portions thereof. No withering or dead ends of stems. All/any cuts should be made with razor sharp pointed scissors as close as possible to node, stem or trunk. Pruning should be done early enough that no cut leaves or stem tips are evident. No synthetic or shining material, used for support, should show.

LABELING: Correct botanical identification for every entry. When many plants are involved, a list and numbered key is helpful.

Every plant has its own individual, scientific/botanical name comprised of genus and specific epithet in Latin and author (the botanist who first described the plant). The botanical name is recognized worldwide and identifies the plant exactly. The name to be used by all exhibitors must include the genus and specific epithet* (i.e. *Rosmarinus officinalis* or *Salvia officinalis*). If applicable, botanical variety (var.) or subspecies (subsp.), and cultivar name should also be listed. *(Some cultivars of uncertain parentage are properly identified by genus and cultivar name and do not include a specific epithet.) See the Re-

sources at the end of this guide to determine the correct name to appear on the label.

Common or popular names are not correct alone. They may be added if desired or if asked for in the schedule.

Show planners may wish to standardize label size. Certain classes may require additional labeling requirements. Show planners must include these requirements in the schedule for exhibitors.

PRESENTATION: The summation of the exhibitor's herbal horticultural knowledge, experience and expertise, demonstrated by the suitability and originality of plant material and its training; including proportion and placement in container and the perfection of fundamental details, such as an immaculate container, structures (if any) as unobtrusive as possible, soil neat and free of debris, with top dressing appropriate to the size of the pot and the plant.

RARITY: A particularly fine herbal plant not frequently exhibited because of geography, difficulty of culture, or newness of introduction. All other points being equal, preference may be given to the rarest specimen. Certainty of rarity is helpful in the final decision.

SELECTION: The coherent choice of several varieties based on a family, genus or species or a mixture based on a particular theme.

RESOURCES

The following reference books provide basic information about herbs and can be useful for verifying nomenclature and uses.

* Bown, Deni. *The Herb Society of America New Encyclopedia of Herbs and Their Uses*. New York: DK, 2001.

This revised edition of Bown's 1995 classic reference work covers everything from herb history and mythology to worldwide uses, cultivation, and herb garden design. The "A-Z of Herbs" includes detailed profiles of over 1000 herbs with 1500 color photographs, arranged by botanical name. Also includes bibliography, a list of herb gardens, glossary and common name index.

* Bremness, Leslie. *Eyewitness Handbooks – Herbs*. New York: DK, 1994.

This concise and compact paperback includes photographs and profiles of over 700 species. Easy to carry in order to verify uses during a show.

Buchanan, Rita, ed. *Taylor's Guide to Herbs*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1995.

This portable paperback includes information on over 400 culinary, fragrant and medicinal herbs. Includes photographs, line drawings, and information on cultivation and uses.

RHS Plant Finder. Royal Horticultural Society, annual.

This annual paperback publication lists species and cultivars, including rare and unusual plants. Information is limited to name and commercial suppliers. An online version is available on the RHS website: <http://www.rhs.org.uk/rhsplantfinder/plantfinder.asp>

* Tucker, Arthur O. and Thomas DeBaggio. *The Big Book of Herbs: A Comprehensive Illustrated Reference to Herbs of Flavor and Fragrance*. Loveland, CO: Interweave Press, 2000.

Introductory chapters cover "Plant Identification," nomenclature, "Maximizing Flavors and Fragrances," "Container Cultivation," creating the best growing conditions, "Propagation and Planting," "Keeping Herbs Healthy" and harvesting. Includes profiles of over 100 herbs. Individual profiles include common and botanical name, names in various languages, family, growth form, hardiness, light, soil, propagation, uses, chemistry, botanical description and cultivars. With black and white line drawings,

Judging Herbs: An Herb Society of America Guide for Planners, Judges and Exhibitors

extensive reference list for each genus, and index.

For additional nomenclature resources, see the Library Links section of the HSA website.

For resources devoted to specific groups of plants, contact the HSA librarian at library@herbsociety.org or search the library's online catalog.

For information on children's shows:

* Taylor, J. Lee and Jane L. Taylor. *The Michigan 4-H Guide to Herb Gardening Projects*. Michigan State University Extension, 1993. (Available from Michigan State University Extension <http://web2.msue.msu.edu/bulletins/mainsearch.cfm>).

Includes brief guidelines for county fair exhibition for young gardeners plus information on herb growing, theme gardens, uses, activities, recipes and crafts.

* indicates items in the HSA Library collection that circulate to HSA members