



ADS Guidelines

For

Team Leaders



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Introduction

Many newly advanced accredited and senior dahlia judges feel they are unprepared or are unaware how to effectively lead judging teams at dahlia shows. We hope this organized document will provide judges with the information that they need to fulfill all their responsibilities toward show officials, team members, exhibitors, and the general public as they move into the leadership role that they have earned.

General Responsibilities of a Judge/Team Leader

Judges must know a variety of cultivars, and must be able to classify them according to form, color, and size; they must be up to date on the current classification descriptions. They must be able to recognize pest problems, diseases, and nutrient deficiencies. They must be rule conscious and sensitive to classification errors and misplaced entries. They should be able to judge with others who have varying temperaments and experience and they should be able to judge systematically and as quickly as possible.

1. Take refresher judging courses as offered.
2. Each year, review and study the textual materials: The most current edition of *The Guide to Judging Dahlia*, *ADS Classification and Handbook of Dahlias* and the *ADS Seedling Evaluation Scorecard* with the intent to master the information.
3. Always come prepared when judging dahlias. Bring your judging tools and supplies: pencil, pen, small tape measure, *ADS Guide to Judging Dahlias*, *ADS Classification Handbook and Local Show Program*, and in case of judging seedlings bring your *ADS Color Guide*, extra seedling score sheets, and small calculator.

4. Understand the relationship between a show schedule and the show's clerk sheets.
5. Understand the horticultural practices of dahlia growing.
6. Have a keen knowledge of many cultivars.
7. Possess willingness to travel and judge in many dahlia shows.

General Responsibilities Before a Show

1. Answer judging invitations promptly and honor all judging commitments, or notify show officials promptly if unable to attend.
2. Upon arrival at the show, immediately inform the judges chair that you are ready to judge and see what sections you will be judging and with whom (understanding that it may change by the judges meeting).
3. Familiarize yourself with the physical show layout. Look over each section so that you will have a working knowledge of the caliber of the show and the general condition of the entries. This preliminary activity will become the basis for why an exhibit should receive a blue or red ribbon or no ribbon at all. The caliber of entries depends upon externals, particularly weather.
4. Read the show schedule and rules so that you are familiar with the show rules. Remember that show committees vary rules according to their society preferences and area conditions.
5. Find the section(s) you will be judging and start to organize the flowers in form and color classes so they are ready for judging.

6. Attend the pre-show judges meeting for team assignments and any special instructions for the show.
7. Graciously accept all judging assignments.
8. Stay with your team until the judging assignment is complete.
9. Ensure that you are familiar with the show's clerking system. Be aware that many societies are establishing new systems of tallying the show and changing the show's clerking system and forms to better coincide with their system.

Establish a Comfortable Team

When the judging chairperson gives the team their assignments, greet and welcome each team member by introducing yourself and stating where you are from and which society you are a member. Have each person introduce themselves to the team, even if you know them. Be alert as to how each person introduces themselves so that you are aware of the first name they wish to be used, i.e., John Jones may introduce himself as Jack Jones or Elizabeth Smith may use Liz as her first name. Doing this introduction will put the entire team more at ease.

In a conversational manner, gather information about the growing and judging experience(s) from your other team members; their favorite forms, sizes, colors; what and how many they personally grow, and how long they've been growing dahlias. Ask if they are prepared and have their classification handbook, tape measure, show schedule, etc. (while we expect every Judge to come prepared, be accommodating to those that forget their tools by sharing resources with others on the team). This interaction should be brief but complete. Often these questions can be informally accomplished while the team is enroute to their assignment.

Probably the most important job on the judging team is the clerking and many times this will be the first time for that person to clerk. Clerks represent a valuable pipeline of future judges for the dahlia societies. Regardless, make sure that the clerk understands the local procedures, how to mark the clerk sheets, and that they are comfortable with their task. **Everyone** on the team will have to be sure the clerk fills out the clerk forms correctly, especially since all sign the clerk sheets when the judging is complete. Be sure to give the clerk attention during all phases of the judging process to ensure correctness. By providing basic boundaries, no one should feel threatened or confused.

At this time, as team leader, you can parcel out the judging responsibilities for each team member based on their individual experience level; such as who will help the clerk place ribbons, who will check the classification handbook for proper placement of all the dahlias in the section you are about to judge. Remember this is a learning experience for those candidate and accredited judges to learn how to use their tools and reference material.

Judging Your Own Flowers in a Show

Ask if any of your team members have an entry in any of the sections you will be judging together. Let them know they **need not make a pronouncement** of “I have an entry in this section, so I can’t judge”, but let them know they can **just keep quiet** when discussing a particular entry. If asked directly for your opinion – quietly say “Sorry, I have an interest in one of these entries”. Your team will understand and make a decision without your input, and we all move on to the next color class. In stating only “an interest” in a particular cultivar could mean: it’s your favorite flower, it is your friend’s origination, or any combination of reasons you cannot be impartial in your judgment of that flower (not just

that it is your flower which puts a lot of stress on the rest of the judging team). If one or more of your “interests” moves up in the judging process, see if you can swap judging assignments with another judge, so that every entry gets a full, impartial assessment. Once your entry loses – it’s back to work with your team. ***This is true even if you are the senior judge and the team leader.***

Team Leader Responsibilities to Team Members

Establish that you have some expectations of the team and that you expect their participation, cooperation, and input into the decision-making process; that this is a team project. When it’s all over, anyone on your team should be able to explain the judging decisions the team has made.

A good practice is, as a team, reread the form definitions of the forms that you will be judging before you start judging, so the fine points are fresh in mind for all involved.

Set the Example of courtesy, a stable temperament, and fairness at all times, making sure that each member participated in the decision-making process. Be sure each person has ample opportunity to view the exhibit, do not monopolize the best view. As team leader, be sure all team members get a good view.

Actively participate in discussions but don’t dominate. Be positive in your assessments. Encourage everyone to give their rationale for their choice, letting them know at the start that it is okay to make comments and ask questions. Ask them to let you know if, at any time, they do not understand what is being discussed and do your best to explain. Let your clerk participate also; endeavor to point out good points and faults. ***Any decision must be a team decision.***

Always judge every entry in a class. Look carefully at each bloom and then begin the elimination process. Make sure to assess the positive qualities of a bloom as well as the

negative. The team leader must be alert to the passing of time and act in an appropriate fashion. It is better to move slowly and thoroughly than to judge too quickly. Exhibitors deserve that their entries be given the attention they deserve.

Judging is a learning experience and it is up to you to educate through practical experience. Explain why one fault is worse than another, why a fault is more severe on the face of the flower rather than on the backside, etc. Show your competence, but with humility. Do not take on the air of knowing more, but do reveal your experience and competence. It takes good demeanor to put judging into perspective so that the process becomes an enjoyable experience rather than a stressful experience.

Misplaced entries may be moved to your section after you've judged the class; make every effort to go back and judge these entries – it may become the winner!

Judges must be fast, efficient and remain on task until the judging assignment is complete. ***Do not wander off from your team!***

After Completing the Assignment

After completing an assignment, immediately check and sign the clerk sheets, making sure they are completed accurately. ***It is the team leader's*** obligation and responsibility (not the clerk's) to make sure they are accurate.

Make sure that you attend to the show chair's requests such as carrying the winning entries to the head table and returning entries to their proper place and leave a good display for the public after judging is completed.

Before you dismiss the team, check with the judges chair to see if the team is needed for another judging assignment.

Candidate and accredited judges need and want your honest input. When you instruct in a friendly and positive manner, they will want to know how you view their judging. They are on a long journey and know they have much to learn before they reach the end. By being friendly and courteous, you model how they should behave when they are in your position. This extra effort on the part of the team leader will produce more effective and positive judges in the future.

Responsibilities of Judges/Team Leaders to the Public and Other Show Exhibitors

Be alert to the public's interest, answer questions in a friendly manner. Don't be too harsh if they get in the way or touch the flowers – encourage their interest; they could be your next new members and hooked for life...

Don't make adverse remarks about the show, the flowers, or other judging teams or their results. Avoid standing around the head table and criticizing or second guessing the decisions of the judges.

Be able to explain your team's decision to any exhibitor if asked. Be most careful in the handling of the entries.

Don't judge too harshly – whether judging on the horticultural bench or the seedling bench, encourage the exhibitors and hybridizers – we don't need to be punitive, just fair. Written comments on the entry tags can be helpful.

Show no appearance of bias. Do not judge your own entries, step back when necessary – quietly. Or call in another judge to take your place for as long as needed until “your interest in an entry” has passed.

Other Recommendations

The senior judge should provide instruction, making a definite contribution to the home society.

Take charge of the team, but do not take over the judging. Assure that each member of the team is allowed (required) to give his/her recommendations about each entry so that a consensus may be formed. Do not override your team's decision, just because you don't agree, doesn't mean they are incorrect.

Never make negative comments about entries you are judging like, "This person showing in the open sections sure doesn't know how to stage." Or "This entry should have been left on the compost pile." Neither should you allow members of your team to speak derogatorily about other growers or their entries. Invariably, some dissension will ensue if this activity is allowed. Just discuss the pros and cons of the bloom in an *objective* fashion.

The team leader should continue to learn and grow always aspiring to increase his/her awareness of what it takes to grow a good dahlia, to become a competent judge and to be a genuine leader.

Should grow and show quality blooms of many varieties, revealing a competence and understanding of what it takes to bring a superior exhibit to a show.

Should continue attending judging classes, dahlia workshops, seedling seminars whenever and wherever offered and try to grow some seedlings themselves if possible.

Should try to enter entries in all areas of the dahlia show including multiple bloom entries, baskets, arrangements, and photography to fully understand how difficult a winning entry is to assemble.

Remember the rules of judging are evolving over time. Gaining knowledge and experience is essential. There is no substitute for growing and showing to keep judges aware and up to date. A judge who no longer grows and shows dahlias will have difficulty providing leadership for his/her team.

Encourage team members to use reasonable speed in arriving at a decision. Encourage less experienced judges to come to a final decision first.

Remember, any collusion between judges indicating favoritism or prejudice against an exhibitor must not be tolerated.

Handling blooms roughly, re-staging a bloom (other than replacing a bloom that was jostled out of place when moved), or otherwise mishandling an entry is not in the best interest of improving judging standards.

Obvious Mistakes a Team Leader Shouldn't Make

- Using the wrong ribbons
- Rewarding entries that do not exhibit the correct form characteristics
- Clerk sheets – not checking the clerk's work before signing the sheets
- Color – pick the cleanest and best
- Judging entries when they're entered in the wrong class
- Judging entries without leaves attached
- Being impolite or allowing team members to be impolite to people who are trying to view the entries

Being a member of a judging team is an honor as it displays the show stewards trust our judgment. It should be a pleasurable experience for all members of the team. It is an opportunity for each of us to increase our knowledge of the dahlia and to pass our hard-earned knowledge to others. For most of us, dahlia culture is an avocation, a time to renew friendships, a cheerful time to create happy memories. The team leader can make this experience a pleasurable one or a time of frustration.

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