

## GETTING READY FOR THE SHOW – GROOMING ORCHIDS

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Consider ourselves in the role of a job seeker. We learn of a good employment opportunity, research the employer, their goals, objectives, workplace culture, and craft an application letter showing how our training and experience are well suited to the position. So when we submit the letter, why do we not first check it for typos? When we turn up for the interview, why is our grooming less than appropriate for the position? Is it any wonder that we will not be offered the job if even our letter lacks care and attention?

Consider showing orchids. We know when the show is scheduled and that there will be an opportunity to enter orchids in either the society exhibit or a display of our own. We read the show schedule including rules and deadlines. We know that our orchid is a blooming beauty. It may or may not win a special award but everyone is sure to admire it. We have plenty of time to groom the plant so why, when we get to the show, are there still old dead flowers amongst the foliage, or leaves spotted with lime? Why is the inflorescence staked with a rusty coat hanger and bright yellow ties? Why is the pot dirty? Grooming the orchid would greatly improve its appearance.

**Grooming** is about preparing orchids for a show but good grooming should be a regular practice consistent with having a healthy collection. Grooming also shows that you care about your orchids and pay attention to their wellbeing.

**START with the pot** – Use a damp paper towel to wipe away algae, dirt and lime. Be prepared to re-wipe the pot when you bring the plant to the show.

**Staking** should begin when inflorescences are still flexible. Apart from supports used in transport, stakes/ties should not detract from the flowers. Avoid using rusty wires, a mixture of colours or old and new stakes together. Ties should be discrete: cute glittery clips should be avoided when showing a plant.

**Remove dead foliage and spent blooms.** Use a sharp sterile knife or clippers to cut dead inflorescences. Aging and dead foliage can be removed using a sterile blade: never tear off old leaves. The final ‘look’ should be a clean uncluttered plant with the flowers drawing attention, not a dead leaf.

**END with the foliage** – Use a new paper towel wetted with water or a little diluted milk to gently clean the leaves, one by one, moving from the base toward the tip. Do not rub. If there are lime spots, use diluted lemon juice to reduce the spotting then follow with plain water and a final wipe with milky water. Use a new towel for each plant.

**Label plants**, hand print required information or register orchids electronically before the show.

Your effort may be rewarded with ribbons but your well-groomed orchids will show everyone how much you care about your orchids and viewer enjoyment.

Good luck at the show.