

You've grown these gorgeous spring beauties and would like to try your hand at competing at a spring show. This information will help you get started. This is written from a New Zealand perspective.

The Show Schedule

The Daffodil sections in most spring show schedules consist of at least two different levels to suit your level of experience. You begin in the 'Novice' section, then proceed up through the 'Intermediate' and/or 'Amateur' to the 'Open' section. As your experience, enthusiasm and collection grows you will enjoy the greater challenge and competition these levels offer.

Each show schedule is different – it is important to carefully read and understand what is specified. There will be someone you can contact or talk to at the show to assist.

Go to **Classifications and Colour Codes** to understand the different terms you will find in the schedule.

Before the Show

Look at the schedule well before the show. You could take it into the garden to guide picking possible entrants. Some faults to reject flower could be

Cuts and nicks round petal edges, and tears in and misshapen cups

Bee holes especially likely in trumpets

Browning and scorching from weather

But don't enter your flowers if they aren't perfect. Everyone else is also coping with the weather.

Pick with fingers rather than a knife. If the stems are dry it helps to write the variety's name near the bottom of the stem. Gather some leaves for vasing at show (use leaves from ordinary garden daffs as remember they feed your bulbs). After picking, cut stem at an angle to increase water uptake and prevent stem curling up. You can pick many days before the show, keeping the flowers in a cool place indoors and changing the water every 2 or 3 days.

It helps to put hopefuls for each class in a jar together. A day or two before the show, select your best blooms for each class. Marking name and number of entries for each class on schedule will help when entering at show. It also pays to take a few spare flowers with you.

What is the Judge Looking For?

Perfection of form

Condition – freshness, bloom must be developed but not over developed and on the way down (or out)

Presentation or poise – look at the judge and wish to be chosen

Length or strength of neck – short preferred

Flatness of perianth side on (not div 6 etc)

Relative size of trumpet or cup – OK if in balance to size of perianth

Roundness of cup – must possess roundness

Stamens and pistil in centre of cup (6 petals, cup pistil and 6 stamens)

Colour – clean and fresh looking

Texture – thickness and substance

Smoothness of petal – not ribbed

Cleanliness of flower and stalk and leaf. No pollen specks, dust, holes or fly strikes

Symmetry of flower when dressed

Alignment of petals – line up at noon and 6 o'clock

Evenness of cup edge – OK if evenly rolled or split

Special markings – consistent with variety, regular and natural

At the Show

Take your list of entries to the entries desk either before or after you have vased all your flowers.

To present your blooms well you can learn many things to groom them. Ask an experienced grower, they'll be happy to share their knowledge. Here are a few things you could try.

Try to align the head of the flower evenly over stem i.e. the tip of upper and lower petals in vertical line with stem (called 'clocking'). Gently twist neck on stem until it looks right (don't panic – they can stand it – but practise a few times on an ordinary flower!)

With gentle pressure you can make a lop-sided cup or trumpet more evenly round.

Try smoothing out ribs in the petals by gently 'ironing' with warmth and gentle pressure between thumb and finger. Avoid the edge of petals as these will nick. Avoid smoothing when flowers are very cold.

Gently clean any dirt and pollen off with soft, small artist's brush.

Take a hand towel with you. Vase your flowers with one or two leaves, firming with moss. The tip of the leaf at the back of the flower should be about where the stem and flower bend at 90° or a little lower. Aim to have your flower look the judge in the eye. If your flower looks down or up you can help your case by placing the vase on highest or lowest shelf. Do not, under any circumstances, move anyone else's flowers. Only show stewards are able to do this if necessary, but of course, not when placing their own entries. Some shows lay out your entry card prior – the positions are randomly selected and you do not move these.

And last of all, relax and enjoy working with these spring beauties, don't hesitate to ask another grower/exhibitor for advice and GOOD LUCK!