

Short primer for selecting dahlia blooms for showing

Credit: Rochester Dahlia Society



1. To enter dahlias into a show, you need to know the name of the variety. Google search the **name to confirm** your bloom matches the image results.
2. Using the name, look up the **classification number** in the American Dahlia Society (ADS) Classification Handbook. Or you can search for the classification number on the ADS website. <https://www.dahlia.org/ocg/> Search: enter the name of your dahlia into the field 'Cultivar' and scroll down for the result. Write down the classification number shown under 'Class' and the info about 'Size', 'Form' and 'Color'.
If the variety you plan to exhibit is not registered with ADS, there are several possible reasons. (i) The name of the variety could be slightly misspelled. Check to see if different versions of the name exist. For example, "Peaches N' Cream" is a different variety than "Peaches and Cream". (ii) The variety could be very new or new to the US. (iii) The variety is rarely or never entered in shows and not in the database. (iv) If you can't find a classification number, you can still bring your flower to the show and ask the show's classification chair for help.
3. Don't forget to **bring all this information with** you to the show.
4. Weeks to days before the show, **'disbud'** those dahlia plants with the most promising flowers. Make sure not to damage the first set of leaves below the main bud because **the foliage will be judged as part of your show flower!**

For more information on **disbudding** watch these brief video clips by Kristine Albrecht.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GzPFRBBR1Vc>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UJn21jHMZfw>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l-KAll7o7Ik>

Key characteristics of a 'show flower'

Overall condition: No petal damage, no brown petals, no wilting; flower is not immature or too mature. One set of green healthy leaves is present; side buds or shoots have been removed.

Flower form:

- Viewed from the front, the flower should be symmetrical and circular.
- The centers of all fully double flowers should be round and tightly covered by petals. The center must not be open or green. For fully doubles, the pollen in the center should not be visible. This does not apply to open-centered dahlia forms such as collarettes or orchids for example.
- Open-centered dahlias ideally should have 2-3 rows of pollen showing.
- The petal color should be uniform and not faded or blotchy.
- The bloom should be well centered on the stem.
- Ideally, the bloom should sit atop the stem at an approximately 45° angle.
- For waterlily, ball, mini-ball or pompom forms, blooms may directly face up.
- The stem should be straight.

Harvest, hydrate and transport your blooms

Most people harvest their blooms the evening before the show. Cut blooms well below the 1st set of leaves. Leave a long stem. Always keep stems in fresh water in a cool place. Store the flower upright and make sure the petals are not touching anything and the foliage is above water.

When transporting flowers to the show, make sure they stay hydrated and upright and don't bump into each other. For example, one or several tall vases or bottles inside a bucket or a box with the vases held in place by newspaper or foam packaging works well.

If transporting arrangements, set a wet towel under the arrangement to keep it from sliding or tipping in the car during transport.

Qualifications of a Show Bloom

