



NSPS Founded 1900

THE NATIONAL SWEET PEA SOCIETY

**JUDGES' RULES
and
STEWARDS' GUIDE**

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and

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Introduction

The judging of sweet peas is not, and cannot be an exact science. Decisions must often rest on a judge's personal knowledge and experience, but he or she should take care that in reaching a decision they are not influenced by personal dislikes or preferences, whether in respect of cultivars, colours or any other reason.

All who judge sweet peas should endeavour to acquire a thorough knowledge of as many cultivars and *Lathyrus* species as possible.

They must judge exhibits as seen at the time of judging and not as they possibly were, or might become, carefully assessing all merits or faults and placing them within a true perspective in relation to the exhibit as a whole.

A judge will be looking for perfection in every spike. When assessing the true merits of an exhibit, then the quality of the bloom, as detailed below, is the over-riding factor. All imperfections, defects, blemishes and other faults, should be considered as items detracting from the merits of the exhibit. These faults would need to be assessed in accordance with the circumstances, or the extent to which they are present in the exhibit. It is difficult to lay down hard and fast rules to cover this.

The quality of the flowers exhibited must at all times be the main consideration and will override mere size.

For each class, the judge must first scrutinise the wording of the show schedule to ascertain the constraints for the class and disqualify any exhibit(s) which fail to comply.

EXHIBITION VASES

Meritorious Considerations

Sweet pea judges should take into account the following criteria:

1. Freshness, Cleanliness and Condition
2. Form, Placement and Uniformity
3. Trueness of Colour
4. Size of Bloom in Balance with Stem
5. Presentation

Freshness, Cleanliness and Condition

Each floret should be fresh, in prime condition, fully open with standard and wings crisp, keel closed so that the whole structure, including calyx, is of good texture.

Blooms should be free from blemish of any kind and also free from aphids and caterpillars or the signs of their previous presence. There should be no tearing, bruising or fraying of the petals or evidence of the use of scissors to remove damaged tissue or florets. The presence of pollen beetles in acceptable numbers should be disregarded.

Form, Placement and Uniformity

For Spencer cultivars form should be true to cultivar and uniform throughout the vase, including frilliness of individual florets. The ideal bloom formation is an erect frilly standard, not reflexed (sides folded back) or hooded (folded forward), a pair of equal sized wings forward enclosing the keel. Blooms with a duplex standard are not acceptable unless they are of equal height and width and lie evenly one over the other.

There should be no malformation of the florets e.g. incomplete standard(s) or wings, wing(s) tucked into the keel, standard(s) interposed between wing and keel, notching of the edge of the standard(s), the base of the standard(s) trapped in calyx, or dropped, split or incomplete keel.

For Spencer cultivars, normally four, well poised, forward facing florets alternately placed and spaced on the stem at regular intervals, without gapping or bunching, are required. The number of florets per spike should ideally be uniform throughout the vase whenever possible, but allowance will be made without penalty for the inclusion of one or more stems carrying additional florets, providing the presentation remains in balance. Any stems carrying less than four florets will be down-pointed.

For Old Fashioned cultivars, form should be true to cultivar and uniform throughout the vase. The ideal formation is an erect plain standard but hooded standards and notched edges should not be downpointed where these are characteristic of the cultivar. A pair of equal sized wings should enclose the keel. There should be no malformation e.g. incomplete standard or wings, wing(s) tucked in keel, standard interposed between wing and keel, or the base of the standard trapped in calyx, nor dropped, split or incomplete keel. Florets should be well poised, forward facing, alternately spaced on the stem at regular intervals without gapping or bunching. Four florets per spike are preferred but three should not be downpointed. For those cultivars normally producing two or three florets, three florets per spike are preferred but two should not be downpointed.

Trueness of Colour

The colour of established cultivars should be true to the current N.S.P.S. Classification List. Novelty, seedlings and non-listed cultivars should be exhibited in their appropriate colour classes.

Except for vases of mixed colours the colour should be uniform throughout.

There should be no variation due to age, weather, virus, scorch, or loss of colour tone due to refrigeration of blooms, excessive use of covers or use of water additives after cutting, etc.

Size of Bloom in Balance with Stem

Size of bloom (often referred to as 'weight' of the exhibit) should be representative of the cultivar, without coarseness, and be uniform throughout the vase.

Stems should be straight with length and texture proportionate to size of the florets, without weakness in the neck, coarseness or flattening.

Presentation

The number of stems must be in accordance with the show schedule. They should be arranged to show each spike clearly and single cultivar vases should be accurately labelled with the cultivar name or "Seedling" if it is not yet commercially available.

In multi vase classes, the disposition of the cultivars should be harmonious and balanced with a broad spectrum of colours.

Sweet pea foliage, if used in vase classes, will not be judged as part of the exhibit, except where specified in the show schedule.

Pointing of Exhibits

It is strongly recommended that judges should award and record points for individual vases to provide a precise evaluation for multi vase classes, and also where necessary on single vase classes.

Points will NOT be awarded for Presentation but judges should assess Presentation prior to pointing. If exhibits are eventually judged to be of equal merit, preference will be given to the exhibit with the best Presentation.

The N.S.P.S. pointing system (total 20 points per vase) is:

Freshness, Cleanliness and Condition	7 points
Form, Placement and Uniformity	6 points
Trueness of Colour	4 points
Size of Bloom in Balance with Stem	3 points

Multi Vase Exhibits

The points awarded to individual vases are totalled to give an exhibit total. Judges will give consideration to colour range within an exhibit. Two or more vases which are not distinct will be downpointed. Where necessary, 1 point per indistinct vase should be deducted from the total awarded to the exhibit.

In the wording of a show schedule, 'Distinct' means recognisably different colours.

Best in Show and Special Awards

Judges should consider single cultivar vases as more meritorious when in competition with mixed cultivar vases for such Awards, other things being equal. Final judging of Special Awards and Best in Show vases may also be by the points system.

DECORATIVE CLASSES

When first ascertaining the constraints for the class, care must be taken to ensure that exhibits comply with the requirements concerning number of stems, permitted size of the exhibit, height of staging material, type of container, and use of any foliage, other species of flowers, flower buds, grasses or seed head, or floral art accessories. Flower buds count as stems where the number of stems is restricted. The exhibits must be judged either front facing or for all round effect as specified in the show schedule.

Meritorious Considerations

It is recommended that sweet pea judges take into account the following criteria:

1. Quality of blooms
2. Balance, Scale and Proportion
3. Foliage / other flowers / grasses
4. Rhythm
5. Contrast and Dominance

Quality of blooms

The same criteria and pointing should be used as for judging vases of sweet peas. It will often be necessary for the exhibitor to reduce, sometimes quite drastically, the length of stems. It is not a requirement of decorative exhibits for all stems to be the same length.

When judging *Lathyrus* species, difficulty of growing the individual species used should be considered. Exhibits that celebrate a wide diversity of species are generally preferred but an exhibit of a single species that is known to be difficult to cultivate may deserve more recognition. Superior strains of some species are available which produce more florets per spike.

Balance Scale and Proportion

The floral arrangement should be of a three dimensional design to show off the flowers to their best advantage. It should fill the allocated space but must not exceed dimensions where specified in the show schedule. The staging material should not be visible from any aspect. Blooms should not be resting on the show bench. Baskets must be capable of being lifted by the handle without disturbing any part of the display.

Foliage and/or other flowers and/or grasses

These should be in good condition, clean, fresh and free from blemishes, pests or diseases. They should not detract from the dominance of the sweet pea flowers. There is no obligation on the exhibitor to have grown these items, only the sweet peas must be grown by the exhibitor.

Rhythm

The exhibit should be of good design with harmonious shape and which looks attractive from all the required judging angles. The eye should pass easily over the exhibit without anything 'jarring' on the viewer. Flowers should be placed pleasingly throughout the exhibit without 'holes' or 'bunching'. Proximity of the blooms to one another should be neither too close nor too sparse.

Contrast and Harmony

The blend or contrast of colours used should be attractive and harmonious. Contrasting colours can be as effective as more subtle blends when used with complementary foliage to enhance the display. An even balance of colour throughout the display should be seen whatever colour scheme has been chosen.

Pointing of Decorative Exhibits

It is strongly recommended that judges should point individual exhibits to provide precise evaluation. Classes are judged for both quality of blooms and decorative effect with a maximum 20 points awarded for each element.

Points for decorative classes (total 40 points) are:

Quality of blooms	20 points
Balance, Scale and Proportion	6 points
Foliage / other flowers / grasses	4 points
Rhythm	5 points
Contrast and Harmony	5 points

FLOWERING POT PLANTS

One or more plants may be included in a container, which complies with the size, shape and type in the show schedule. Supports may be used for vegetative parts of the plant(s) but not the flower spike(s).

Meritorious factors include: a clean, attractive container; supports absent or unobtrusive; a sturdy, shapely plant well furnished with healthy unblemished foliage; a quantity of flowers of good size, colour, condition, cleanliness, form and placement. Preference should be given for decorative rather than botanical value.

Defects include: a dirty or distracting container; obtrusive supports; an undernourished plant with unhealthy, undersized, scanty or disease or pest ridden foliage; flowers undersized, sparse, and marked, by weather, disease or pests, with poor colour, condition, form or placement.

A plant which is difficult to grow would be selected over one which is smaller or easy to grow, all other things being equal.

Points (total 20 points) should be allocated thus:

Plant, general condition and container	6 points
Quality and quantity of blooms	6 points
Colour	4 points
Foliage	4 points

DISQUALIFICATION

Judges will disqualify:

Exhibits which do not comply with the schedule.

Exhibits where wire or other support to the flower(s) and / or spikes is used.

Exhibits where any staging material(s) appear(s) above the rim of the vase / bowl, except when specified in the show schedule.

Exhibits in which spike(s) are used with haulm attached, except in the basket, bowl, container and species classes when allowed in the show schedule.

Exhibits containing other foliage, flowers, flower buds, grasses or seed heads except where the show schedule permits the use of these in the class. Exhibitors should be aware that *Phalaris* (Gardener's Garters) is a grass species with decorative foliage.

Exhibits where the stems are not in water or water-containing material.

Exhibits where the wrong size and / or shape of vase / container has been used.

If a vase in a multi vase exhibit should be N.A.S. (Not According to Schedule), then the whole exhibit must be disqualified and cannot be considered for an award. However, awards are permitted to individual vases other than the disqualified vase.

GUIDE FOR JUDGES' STEWARDS

1. Ensure that all exhibitors' cards are face down and remain so until all judging is complete.
2. Check that all exhibits in a class are viewed by the judges (e.g. a class may be staged on more than one show bench).
3. Ensure that the number of stems in each vase, and the number of vases in multi-vase exhibits, conforms to the show schedule.
4. Prize labels are to be attached to the class cards of award winners.
5. Mark up the class books – a tick for all the staged entries and N/S for all those that are not staged. Record any awards that are made (e.g. 1st prize, Clay Cup winner, etc.).
6. Record the reason why any exhibit was judged and marked as NAS (Not According to Schedule).
7. Make sure the Audit cultivar name slips are made out correctly; if not, complete them from the cultivar name cards on the vases. Collect and return them to the Show manager with the Class books.

8. Confirm that the right number of awards per schedule is given to each class as decided by the judges and that the judges have signed the exhibitors' entry cards accordingly.
9. Ensure that every vase taken up for Special Award judging is marked with its Class and Exhibitors' numbers and is returned safely to its correct place on the show bench after judging of the award is completed.
10. Turn over the class cards only when all judging is completed.
11. Any queries are to be taken up with the Show Manager or his/her representative.

THE NATIONAL SWEET PEA SOCIETY

Anyone showing Sweet Peas is encouraged to become a member of the Society in order to keep up with best practice.

Societies and clubs hosting Sweet Pea classes should also affiliate to the Society. As well as keeping up to date with best practice, affiliated societies may offer a bronze medal and award card to the best vase / exhibit at their show.

For details, please visit the Society's website:
www.sweetpeas.org.uk