

Show Preparation Begins in the Garden by Glenn Huddleston

When you hear the term “show prep”, you generally think of the night before the show and the time spent grooming the bloom stalk and positioning it in a container. Based on past experiences, I would say “show prep” begins in the garden ten days before the show. Actually, it starts earlier than that when you consider weeding, fertilizing, etc., but that’s another article.

At our today’s meeting, I will discuss grooming tips that occur the night before or day of the show. This article will focus on the ten days leading up to the show.

- Day 10—(April 4) Begin with a prayer for warm weather and light winds. Now go into your garden and write down the names and locations of irises that have bloom stalks 12” tall or taller. These are the only irises that will have time to mature and bloom for the show. Also note things like straightness of the stalks and branching.



- Day 9—Daily, check on identified stalks. At the base of selected stalks, use an insecticide approved for chewing insects, if cutworms are suspected.
- Day 8—Daily check: Carefully inspect stalks, leaves, buds, and

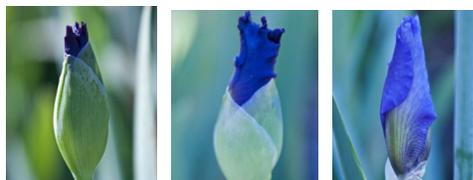


branching for insects, cracking, etc.

- Day 7—Daily check: If a stalk has a slight curve, you might try a stake attached to the stalk to correct the problem. Use padding between the stake and the stalk. Stalks are brittle and will snap if forced too much.



- Day 6—Daily check: Look at branching and bud angle. Styrofoam wedges (peanuts) can be used to widen narrow angles. Bud color should be evident in irises with taller stalks.
- Day 5—Daily check: Start recording color in the bud, tip color, 1/2



bud color, and full bud color with tight buds. Full bud opening will generally occur 3 to 4 days after tip color.

- Day 4—Daily check: By now, get serious and eliminate from consideration bloom stalks not worthy of show competition.

- Day 3—Daily check: From this point forward it is up



to you to make the call on cutting the irises since bright sunny days and warm nights will speed bud development. Fully developed buds can be cut early, however refrigeration is a must to slow the flowering process.

- Day 2—Daily check: Cut stalks that show promise, place stalks of all cut irises in fresh, clean water and hold at room temperature. Place a temporary variety label on each cut stalk. Bud openings should begin soon. Slow opening buds can be placed in a warm environment without direct heat to speed up the opening process. At 10:00 a.m. today, show judging is 24 hours away. Tonight you will go through the final show prep of your entries.



- Day 1—SHOW DAY. Be careful how you transport your entries, try your best to eliminate movement of the stalks and never let the blooms touch.



Have patience and good luck at the show.

