

# CLERK TRAINING

The American Orchid Society Handbook on Judging and Exhibition describes the function of show clerks as:

## PART II EXHIBITION

### 3.8 Clerking

Clerks are a very important part of the judging process. They should have careful instruction in their duties beforehand and at least one general meeting with the clerking chair and the judging chair. Detailed directions should be given and the procedures rehearsed. The clerking chair should have both experience and leadership ability.

Clerks should understand the schedule and the rules. They should know where the classes are placed and the number of entries in each class. They should have a final briefing after all exhibits are in place.

Clerks must find the location of each entry in their assigned classes. Adequate time to do this must be allowed before judging begins; a floor plan of the show is of significant assistance. A team of two or three clerks is assigned to each judging team. The chief clerk records the judges' decisions on the entry forms; the ribbon clerk places the appropriate ribbons on plants and exhibits. A third clerk may be responsible for locating the entries in each class.

Clerks should never volunteer information about exhibitors or plants nor engage in distracting personal conversations. They should never discuss the judges' comments afterward.

Clerks should neither disband their team nor leave until the judging chair and the clerking chair have excused them from further duties.

Societies affiliated with the Great Lakes Judging Center (such as the Greater Lansing Orchid Society) use the Mid-America Orchid Congress Show Entry Rules and Show Schedule for ribbon judging. Clerks and judges are expected to become familiar with the show rules and any local modifications of the rules or show schedule. The Mid-America Show Entry rules for judging are as follows:

Show judging will begin promptly at the time and date listed in the show schedule.

## JUDGING

### 1. General information

An American Orchid Society (A.O.S.) sanctioned show must comply with the current rules of the American Orchid Society Handbook on Judging, and Exhibition and any interim rules issued by the A. O. S. Committee on Awards. At the show, there must be three or more judges accredited by the American Orchid Society (A.O.S.). The decisions of these judges will be final. The American Orchid Society system of judging will be used in all events.

All judges and clerks are expected to familiarize themselves with the show rules.

All plants and flowers will be considered for recognition based on present quality, without regard to previous awards. To maintain highly competitive standards, no trophies or other recognition will be awarded if, in the judges' opinion, the flower, plant or exhibit does not warrant such recognition. Judges may subdivide or add additional classes or awards at their discretion.

### 2. AOS awards

This show has been approved for A.O.S. judging. All flowers, whether entered for ribbon judging or not, will be considered for A.O.S. awards unless otherwise marked by the exhibitor. If the

flowers have previously been exhibited at an A.O.S. approved function, they are considered to have been screened and therefore, are not eligible for further consideration. They should be marked, 'Not for A.O.S. judging". This will not disqualify the flower from consideration in the proper ribbon or trophy class. Submission of plants or cut flowers for judging shall obligate the exhibitor to accept any award granted and to pay any fees connected with such an award except where he has clearly indicated before the judging that his entry is not to be A. O. S. judged.

3. **Ribbon judging**

First, second and third place ribbons may be awarded to the best three (3) entries in each class other than a trophy class. An honorable mention ribbon award may be offered when, in the opinion of the judges, additional recognition is merited. All plants and cut flowers must be correctly entered in the appropriate class, or reclassified by a judge, to be eligible for ribbon judging. Exhibitors will enter their plants using standard Mid-America show tags. After completing the registration of the material the copy goes on the plant while the original remains at the entry desk. Entry tags should show plant parentage, clonal name, if assigned, and previous awards, if any, to the clone. (See section on Entry Tags.) Each plant should be entered into ONE class only. An official copy of the correct entry classes to enter your plants is available at the entry desk. Where a plant could conceivably fit into more than one class, the exhibitor shall enter it into the first applicable class listed. A mericlon is considered a vegetative division of the original plant and must be treated as such. If a plant is a mericlon, it should be so designated and the clonal name given. Species classes will include natural hybrids. Criteria employed in ribbon class definitions refer to characteristics prevailing for mature plants grown according to normal horticultural practices.

4. **Reclassifying entries**

Improperly entered plants/exhibits may be either reclassified or disqualified at the discretion of the judges.

5. **Trophy eligibility**

All trophies are open to all exhibitors in this show, if the exhibit is entered properly and show rules are complied with, unless otherwise specified in this schedule.

6. **Plant and flower trophies**

In order to be eligible for any special trophies, plants and exhibits must be entered for ribbon judging. No separate entry is required.

7. **Exhibit trophies**

Each exhibit may be entered in ONE CLASS ONLY. All exhibits must be entered on standard Mid-America entry tags. The copy goes on the exhibit and the original to the entry registration desk. All exhibits are eligible for the A.O.S. Show Trophy and will be judged in accordance with the criteria in the current A.O.S. Handbook on Judging and Exhibition.

The types and roles of clerks are also outlined in the Mid-America Orchid Congress Show Entry Rules and Show Schedule:

**SHOW CLERKS**

(A) group of clerks assists the judges during the show (ribbon) judging. These are:

1. **Head Clerk** - Responsible for the efficient performance of the judging process. This also includes recording the decisions of the judges, making a record of the awards given, and leading the judges to the next class to consider. When personnel are available, this person should be assisted by two (2) additional clerks.
2. **Ribbon clerk** - Responsible for maintaining the ribbon supply, adding class, entry number and date to each ribbon awarded, obtaining the signatures of the judges, and placing the ribbons in accordance with the awards granted.

3. **Spotter** - Assists in locating exhibits and plants plus any other duties that may be assigned.

During the show judging, clerks are not to participate in the process unless asked to do so. Most often only judges are to be involved in the deliberations concerning an entry considered for competitive awards. In all cases, clerks are to assist the judges to effect efficiency during the judging process. Further, deliberations when verbally expressed, must not be repeated nor discussed with others.

Some judges prefer to have two clerks that alternate between the ribbon and spotter clerk functions. This enables clerks who have spotted for a class to hang ribbons on those plants while the other clerk spots the next class.

Usually, several classes are combined into a trophy class. The first place winners in each ribbon class are compared and the best first place ribbon winner may be awarded a trophy.

Once ribbon and trophy judging has been completed, clerks may be asked to assist the judges in "pulling" plants for AOS award judging. Obtain any materials that are placed in the display to indicate that a plant has been removed to be evaluated for an AOS award. Plants should be carefully removed from the display. If there is any concern that the plant or exhibit may be damaged if a plant is removed, the clerk should locate the exhibitor to remove the plant from their exhibit. If the plant cannot be safely removed from the exhibit for judging purposes, it can be judged in situ.

## AN OVERVIEW OF THE CLERKING PROCESS

### **Preparation for clerking:**

1. Obtain a copy of the Show Schedule and review the show rules before the show. Pay particular attention to any special trophies or classes that are unique to your show.
2. Wear comfortable walking shoes, avoid apparel that is too baggy, and do not carry a purse. (You don't want to knock over any plants or props with baggy clothes or a purse.)
3. Bring a pen or pencil, clipboard (be sure to put your name on it), and a work apron with pockets.
4. Arrive 30 minutes before the scheduled start of judging (**note:** many societies provide a light breakfast for clerks and judges).
5. Obtain a floor plan of the show and familiarize yourself with the exhibit area and locations of the exhibits.
6. Accept team assignments and last minute instructions from the Clerking Chair and Chair of Show Judging.
7. Identify your ribbon judging team captain.

**Head clerk:**

- 1) Obtain entry tags for the team
- 2) Mark the assigned class numbers on your copy of the show schedule.
- 3) If time permits, also add the numbers of plants in each class to your copy of the show schedule.

**Ribbon clerk:** Obtain an initial supply of first, second, and third place ribbons.

**Spotter:** Work with the head clerk to identify the location of the plants/exhibits in the first class to be judged.

Be prepared to HAVE FUN!

**General Conduct During Judging:**

1. Refrain from volunteering information about exhibitors or plants. This ensures that judging is done in an anonymous and unbiased atmosphere.
2. Avoid engaging in distracting personal conversations or asking questions until the judging process has been completed.
3. Resist volunteering opinions unless specifically asked by the judges.
4. You may be asked for your opinion if a judge asks to be excused because of a conflict in a class (they own a plant displayed in the class). If you also have a conflict in the class, ask to be excused from judging (you may continue your clerk duties).
5. The judge serving as the ribbon team captain may give additional instructions. (e.g. for two clerks to alternate between the ribbon and spotter clerk functions.) Follow the instructions of the team captain, who may have a different way of handling things..

**Head clerk:**

- 1) Announce the class from the description in the show schedule (e.g. Class 31. Paphiopedilum hybrids, Green/Yellow primary).
- 2) Indicate the number of entries in the class.
- 3) With the assistance of the spotter, point out each plant,
- 4) Read the name (names if an un-named hybrid) from the entry tag.
- 5) Make sure the judges have seen each entry (**hint:** place a small check on the top of each entry tag after the judges have viewed the plant.)

**Spotter:**

- 1) Direct your team to areas and plants/exhibits as designated on each entry tag. (**hint:** make sure you know the class description, it is much easier to locate a pink Phalaenopsis without markings than to find tags marked class 48.)
- 2) Take the most direct route possible.
- 3) If an exhibit is congested with other teams, go to the next closest exhibit and return later.
- 4) Once the judges' final decisions are indicated:

**Head clerk:** Circle the award received on the bottom of the entry tag.

**Ribbon clerk:**

- 1) Fill out the tag on the back of the ribbon (see example at end)
  - a) Name: write out or abbreviate the name of the plant (ribbons may become separated from plants and show tags may be lost)
  - b) Event: since the name of the show is usually on the front of the ribbon, add the exhibit number to help you locate the plant.
  - c) Class: enter the class number. Also add the tag number if there are two or more plants with the same name in the exhibit.
  - d) Date: Do not predate too many ribbons, especially if you are using a pen.
- 2) Give each of the judges a ribbon to sign, and
- 3) Hang the ribbon on the plant. (**note:** Ribbons should be placed on plants in a manner that avoids damage to the plant and does not obstruct the view of the

flowers or name tags. **Please also note:** If you have any doubts about which plant was awarded the ribbon, ask the head clerk or the judges for assistance).

- 4) After all ribbon classes within a trophy class have been completed:  
**Head clerk:** Review the first place ribbons with the judges. Once their decision is final, circle special and write TROPHY on the bottom of the entry tag.

**Ribbon clerk:**

- 1) Obtain a trophy ribbon,
- 2) Fill in the back of the trophy ribbon as described above, but also indicate all the classes included in the trophy class
- 3) Ask all members of the judging team to sign the trophy ribbon, and place the ribbon on or near the plant. (This may be a real challenge because some trophy ribbons are much larger than the plant!)
- 4) After a trophy class has been completed, the entry tags for the class should be returned to the Chair of Show Judging. Make sure you identify which plant (or plants) was awarded the trophy or special recognition.

**When ribbon judging/trophy assignments have been completed:**

- 1) Clerks should remain assembled with the judging team until they have been excused from further duties.
- 2) Additional classes or special trophies may be assigned by the Chair of Show Judging.
- 3) Clerks may be asked to assist in pulling plants for AOS award judging.
  - a) Obtain the form that is left in display to indicate a plant has been pulled for AOS judging.
  - b) If there is any concern that the plant or exhibit may be damaged if a plant is removed, locate the exhibitor to remove the plant.
  - c) If the plant cannot be safely removed from the exhibit for judging purposes, inform the Chair of Show Judging so it can be judged in situ.
- 4) Do not remove entry tags from exhibits until the AOS award judging process has been completed. Plants too large or difficult to remove must be judged in situ and the tag contains information necessary to complete the award process.)

**When all assignments have been completed:**

RELAX, REFLECT, AND RESOLVE TO DO IT AGAIN SINCE YOU HAD SO MUCH FUN!

Updated January 12, 2026

E. Cypripedium Alliance

- 33. Paphiopedilum species, single flowered.
- 33a. Paphiopedilum species, multiple flowered.
- 34. Paphiopedilum hybrids, White primary.
- 35. Paphiopedilum hybrids, Green/Yellow primary.
- 36. Paphiopedilum hybrids, Bronze/Mahogany primary.
- 37. Paphiopedilum hybrids, Red/Pink primary.
- 38. Paphiopedilum hybrids, Other Colors/Vinicolors primary.
- 39. Paphiopedilum hybrids, White complex.
- 40. Paphiopedilum hybrids, Green/Yellow complex.
- 41. Paphiopedilum hybrids, Bronze/Mahogany complex.
- 42. Paphiopedilum hybrids, Red/Pink complex.
- 43. Paphiopedilum hybrids, Other Colors/Vinicolors complex.
- 44. Phragmipedium species.
- 44a. Phragmipedium hybrids.
- 44b. Allied Cypripedium alliance species, hybrids and intergenerics other than above.

35	6			
Class #	Tag #			
58	10			
Owner #	Exhibit #			
Name <i>Paph. Maudiae</i>				
Cross	<i>callosum</i>			
<i>lawrencianum</i>				
Award				
1	2	3	J.C.	Spec.

<i>Paph Maudiae</i>
Name <i>Paph Maudiae</i>
Event <i>Exhibit 10</i>
Event <i>35 T 6</i>
Class
Date <i>4/19/97</i>
Judge <i>Joe Judge</i>