

Revised Guidelines for AOS Award Photographers

The following requirements for AOS Award Photographers are intended to provide a measure of consistency across the judging program. A useful guide when setting up an award photograph is to ask the question, “Will this photograph accurately describe the orchid and the qualities for which it was awarded?” That is the basis of all AOS award photography.

- If unsure about which flower, inflorescence, or part of inflorescence best represents the award given, consult a member of the judging team that gave the award.
- All photography of CCM and CCE awarded plants must include the whole plant. Also take a photo of a single flower.



Coelia bella 'Bonheur' CCM/AM/AOS photographer Ramon de los Santos

- Flower-quality awards (HCC, AM, FCC, JC, AD) should include at least one flower facing the camera straight on, centered in and dominating the frame in the case of single- or several-flowered inflorescences (i.e., *Cattleya*, *Paphiopedilum*, *Phalaenopsis*, etc.). Photography of multifloral orchids (i.e. *Vanda*, *Dendrobium*, *Oncidium*, etc.) should include enough of the inflorescence to clearly illustrate the aspect and arrangement of the flowers as well as have at least one flower facing the camera straight on. If unsure, consult a judge. Additional images that show at least one flower in profile are encouraged as an aid to documenting flower form.



Aliceara (Bllra) Snowblind photographer Sergey Skoropad

- Specific photos for special circumstances;
- the back of the flowers on *vandas* of exceptional substance to show any extra tissue that may be present. An example would be hybrids with V. Dr. Anek in their background.
- the back of the flower for all *paphiopedilums*
- a top down view where it can provide important information like blooms on umbellate inflorescences (ie., *Bulb. makoyanum*), or those with significantly reflexed dorsals (ie., *Paph. tranlienianum* or *fairrieianum*)
- a close up of flowers showing unique characteristics like *paphiopedilums* with attractive veining in the staminodes, or *cattleyas* with veining in petals



Bulbophyllum rothschildianum 'Elizabeth' AM/AOS photographer Wes Newton

- Botanical awards (CBR, CHM) should have at least one flower centered and facing the camera straight on but also show enough of the inflorescence to accurately illustrate the aspect of the inflorescence. Showing part of the plant is required, or shooting a second shot showing the plant. Additional images that show at least one flower in profile are encouraged as an aid to documenting flower form. SITF requirements must be met for new species. See <https://www.aos.org/orchid-awards-judging/species-identification.aspx>. If unsure, consult a judge.



Dendrobium denudans 'Susan' CBR/AOS photographer Robert Hesse

- Multiple photos of displays are especially important if they are large floor designs. A photo from all angles is helpful, featuring the best angle as the primary photo. For large displays with height, it is recommended to take at least one photo from a position slightly elevated (using a small ladder to stand on, if possible) so that the camera is at eye level with the center of the exhibit.

- Taking photos of all displays before judging begins, guarantees the best photo of any that might receive awards minus the clutter of the ribbons that get added during judging. Also the room where the displays are located is often the quietest and least crowded at this time, allowing unobstructed views to best capture the photos.
- Properly identified digital image files **are required** of plants and flowers that receive the following AOS awards: FCC, AM, HCC, AD, AQ, JC, CCE, CCM, CHM and CBR.
- Photographers are encouraged to take photos and name image files with the award number for the following AOS awards: Artistic Certificate, Certificate of Meritorious Arrangement, Educational Exhibit Certificate, Gold Certificate, and Show Trophy.
- Frame photographs carefully and use vertical or horizontal composition as appropriate to the inflorescence. **DO NOT CROP IMAGES!** Cropped photos may not be considered for publication.



Phragmipedium Acker's Starlight 'Looking Glass Orchids' AM/AOS, photographer Greg Allikas

- Whenever possible (do not risk damaging the plant or inflorescence), remove stakes, hoops, ties, name tags or any other distracting mechanical elements or ask the exhibitor to remove them. Use masking tape to gently pull unsightly leaves out of the picture area.

- Use a plain background that provides contrast yet complements the flowers being photographed. Neutral or earth tones work the best. Avoid bright colors or backgrounds with distinct patterns. Place the background at least 24-inches behind the subject to minimize shadows, wrinkles, seams etc. Fabric backgrounds should be rolled around a cylinder to prevent wrinkles.



Papilionanda Paksorn Fragrance 'Garrett's Blueberry Hill' AM/AOS, photographer Wes Newton

- Use balanced lighting to prevent harsh shadows. There should be a primary light source to render form and a secondary light source to fill in shadows. The use of softening devices such as umbrellas and soft boxes is recommended. If using only a single light source, be sure to soften it by bounce or diffusion and use a white card to fill shadows. Be sure that your White Balance is correctly set for the light source you are using.
- Do not rely on auto-focus cameras; visually confirm correct focus and use a tripod. Review image on camera LCD for proper lighting and composition.
- Use the smallest f-stop possible for the lighting you are using. This will ensure that there is sufficient depth-of-field to render flowers sharply. Depth-of-field roughly extends $1/3$ in front of and $2/3$ behind the point of focus, so focus near the front of your subject. Posing small flowers so that as much of the flower as possible is on the same plane, and parallel to the back of the camera will minimize depth-of-field requirements.
- Do not use a camera's built-in flash. The light is too harsh. If using an auxiliary flash be sure that your shutter speed is set to synchronize with the flash.

- Determine exposure for each award you photograph; do not use the same settings for all awards in a session. Different flowers may require different exposures.
- Each award should be photographed as a digital image as specified below. Film images are no longer accepted.
- An FCC is a very special, rarely given award. If you are called on to photograph one, take extra time to set it up perfectly. Shoot extra images using different poses and exposures just to be sure.
- Digital image files of awarded orchids should be named using only the award number as assigned at the time of judging. Be sure you get this information from the judging chair, secretary or show chair. You may enter copyright and award information in the file metadata fields if you wish.
- The AOS will not pay for any show award photography. It is the responsibility of show chairs of AOS-judged shows to hire and pay an awards photographer. The AOS does not reimburse Judging Centers for photographer fees or expenses.

Submitting digital photography of AOS Awards

All AOS award photographers must submit digital images as specified below.

- Digital images should be taken with SLR or EVF cameras capable of at least 8 megapixel (appx. 2300 x 3400 pixels) resolution with 10 megapixel or greater resolution preferred.
- Shoot digital images as highest quality JPEG's, TIFF or RAW. **Do not** send TIFF or RAW files to AOS!!! Image files should be submitted as **highest quality** (lowest compression), **full resolution JPEG files only** and delivered to the event or center chair of judging. **Do not** crop images. Cropped images may not be considered for publication.
- Photographer should **name files using only the pre-assigned award number** supplied by judging center chair or secretary. For example: **20135021.jpg**
- Multiple images may be taken for any award to better describe it; botanical awards submitted for species verification require multiple images that follow SITF requirements. If submitting more than one digital image file of an award, use a single letter suffix to identify the files: **20135021a.jpg, 20135021b.jpg, 20135021c.jpg**
- Use a low ISO setting (100 or 200) to minimize digital noise.
- If using a constant light source (as opposed to flash) be sure to set proper white balance by either using a camera preset, or a WB reading off of a white sheet of paper. If using flash, set correct shutter speed for flash sync.
- It may be helpful, especially with light colored subjects, to shoot awards at -1 or -2 contrast to preserve highlight detail.
- Set your camera LCD brightness to show a close likeness to the actual files as they appear on your computer. Always check LCD for proper exposure and correct framing of subject. Digital cameras provide us the opportunity to confirm a good photo instantly. Do not rely on post-processing to "make it right".

- Images **are not** to be digitally manipulated using computer software. The photograph should be a faithful record of the orchid **as it was awarded**. Do not “touch up” photos to remove stakes, botrytis spots, mechanical damage, etc. Do not enhance color in any way. Image processing should be limited to minor correction of color-contrast-exposure.
- Back up images before deleting them from media card!!!

Greg Allikas February 11, 2022