

Tips for Training Student Judges: Ribbon Judging Exercises

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They laughed when I sat down to study ribbon judging! No wonder because about the only place we can study the skills needed is on the judging floor. At show time, that's tough turf for quiet contemplation.

A little trick that seems to help is the creation of "classes" in the form of photographic slides. True, we can't judge or learn to judge from a picture. But we can learn to retain a group of similar orchids, put them in order and, in effect, learn the mechanics of good ribbon judging.

If possible, team with another judge to prepare groups of slides to study. You might select a group of white cattleyas and the other person might choose a group of pink phalaenopsis. As the slides are placed in the projection tray, list just the name of the subject (don't include award or other information) on a piece of paper which can remain with the slide set. Start with four slides, then increase the number to 12 or so as you gain expertise. Project the slides at a rate which will give you the exposure time you expect on the judging floor: 10-15 seconds. When the set has been projected, call the individual subjects to mind and rank them 1, 2, 3 and discards.

As you practice, you'll find your retention span developing until you can keep six, eight or ten subjects clearly in mind for a period long enough to rank the best. Try very hard not to "go back" for a second look in your practice or on the judging floor. As you exercise your short-term memory capacity, you'll find your judging goes more smoothly and is much more relaxed. That translates into better judging and more enjoyable judging.

Talk to your Regional Training Director about organizing an exercise session at the regional center.