



# HOW TO STAGE YOUR FLOWERS

You've successfully grown and transported your flowers to the show, and you now want to stage them, how do you do that?

## Choice of vase

Some shows provide vases, but most don't, so do check the schedule. Judges aren't going to give you marks for a pretty vase if you are in the horticultural section of the show. What you need is something consistent (if you need to stage multiple vases), sturdy and easy to use and store. Typically, if you want to do a lot of shows, you might want to invest in a set of metal or plastic vases designed to show off your flowers – they are less likely to break than your favourite glass vase!

Metal vases are hard to source (unless second hand), but new plastic vases (called 'Bikini vases' when they were introduced 50 years ago) are available from LBS Horticulture.

You might worry about buying plastic vases, but these are fully reusable and, with care, should last 50+ years.

## Size of vase

For most uses the large 12" vases are what you need, but smaller 11" vases are handy for some miniature blooms, waterlily blooms, large poms etc. A shorter 7" vase is sometimes called a pompon vase – and is great for just that! Small sweet pea vases (6" high) can sometimes be useful – eg a specimen pompon bloom, for example.

## Traditional packing materials

Traditional green floral foam is now widely frowned upon because of the environmental impact of using single-use plastic that breaks down into microplastic. It is now banned at RHS shows and discouraged at an increasing number of other shows. It is, however, cheap and is (undeniably) very



Figure 1 Gurtla staged using Bio foam



Figure 2 Downton 3 vase class using Blo foam



Figure 3 Agrawool in action



reliable! **'Bio' floral foam** is the slightly newer version – but views differ on exactly how biodegradable it is – and it is banned at RHS shows. The vases in Fig 1 & Fig 2 were all staged with bio oasis and the material is clearly visible in the vase of poms.

**Newspaper** was the preferred medium used by many prior to the invention of floral foam – and is still fairly widely used today. Most of us today don't buy paper newspapers, so it's not readily available and has to be specially purchased. Suffice it to say that staging 5 blooms with it is as much of an art as a science. Some will point to **chicken wire**. I don't use it, and suspect it's a bit of a fight to arrange 5 blooms! I wouldn't advise using things like sand – as can you imagine the weight and the mess of clearing up. Other natural products like **stems** or lawn moss are possible – but it depends how you source the materials, and they can be messy and lack precision.

### **Agrawool/Fibre Floral**

These are the new kids on the block – fully compostable material. It can be horrible to handle and it is about twice the price of Bio foam. The trick is to stage it dry and then add water – not as I first tried in this picture (Fig 3) where I try using it wet! I also drill pilot holes with a 6" nail as it is much more 'layered' than traditional green foam which has a more uniform texture. This recent vase of waterlilly's was staged (dry) and then filled with water (Fig 4).



Figure 4 Waterlilly's staged in Agrawool at Clevedon



Figure 5 Yeovil exhibit using staging rings

### **Bespoke staging supports**

I use my own 3D printed fully reusable staging rings, but I have seen other people on the show circuit using similar home-made products – my multi vase Yeovil exhibit used rings in 4 of the vases (Fig 5). Finally....not dahlias but sweet peas... these three vases were staged using Bio foam, Agrawool and my own staging rings (Fig 6) – can you spot the difference? Whatever you choose to use, have fun and good luck! September 2024



Figure 6 Three similar vases using Bio Oasis, Agrawool & Staging Rings