

## **Be Brave – Enter Your Club’s Show**

*By Sherrie Wallace*

*First Austin AVS*

Are you new to the African Violet world or maybe not so new, but have never entered anything in a “Official Show”. Is it fear of ridicule from other members (not likely) or from the viewing public (highly unlikely) or maybe (gasp) the JUDGES (well.... maybe, but they are really nice people) that keeps you from toting your precious babies to the show for all to see? Been there, done that, have the T-shirt.

Now I stand before you, the ripe old veteran of 2 whole shows. Now I say, “ Fear not, you probably have as many nice plants as the other members of your club” (well, unless you are in a club with professional growers, then I’ll join you under the nearest rock). I exhort you, take a deep breath, choose a few plants and start grooming them for the next show. You’ll probably do better than you’d even dream. You might even be able to compete with some of the real pros – you never know until you try.

I will now quickly relate my experience so you will know why I’m giving you this little speech.

After many years of going to our local AV Club’s Shows & Sales, I finally made the leap to joining. They are a wonderful bunch of ladies (we keep trying encourage some fellows but I think it will take 1 brave guy and then others will follow). They are free with their advice and generous in sharing leaves and babies with the group. They are also some of the best growers of violets and other gesneriads, winning both in horticulture and design at the state and national levels. So, who was I to try and compete against them?

My first show I sent 3 plants but didn’t attend as my family was on spring break vacation. Much to my surprise all my plants got blue ribbons and best in class. I was stunned – but very relieved and happy – I had not disgraced the club - which was my biggest concern.

So this year, after that encouragement, I entered 17 plants. My fervent hope and prayer was that I would get at least all blue ribbons (please don’t let me get a red ribbon or worse)! I will now make it very short. I waited nervously in an adjoining room while the judging was going on. I would peek through a little window every once in a while but waited an eternity while the judges took their sweet time going over the entries. Finally, our Show Chairman came and motioned me into the room. “Now don’t get too excited,” she said as she led me to the Winner’s Table. I was totally surprised to see that my “Rob’s Boogie Woogie” had won Best in Show, then another had won Second Best in Show, as I toured the table most of the winners were my entries and I had won the Horticultural Sweepstakes! Now, I will quit bragging long enough to say that we had a young lady that it was her FIRST show and she was on the Winner’s Table as well, with the Best Hanging Basket, so now I know first timers can win, as well.. My feelings, TOTAL SHOCK! The only explanation - some of my plants were ready at the right time and some our best growers were “out of pocket” the past few months. They let me know that they will be gunning for me next year. So it should be a great show!

Go ahead, give it a try. It is great fun and now my next goal – get up enough courage to enter the State Convention.

Sherrie Wallace

First Austin African Violet Society