

Who Can Be a Judges' Clerk??

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This past November I had a wonderful opportunity to participate in the Lone Star State Show as a judges clerk. What an experience! I was placed with a panel of judges that consisted of advanced, senior, and master judges. A little intimidating for a hobby grower but if you want to run with the big dogs..... well, you know how that goes :).

So here's little ol' me rubbing elbows with some top growers in our field and not really sure what I was in for. It was one of the most rewarding experiences I could have participated in. Most of all..... I truly watched every judge place ribbons on the plants based on BEAUTY not flaws. These judges know there stuff but they all were focused on the symmetry not the missing leafs, the beautiful condition not the various spots and tears, and the beautiful flowers not the lack of blossoms. Each plant was fairly judged against a "set" standard and not against any other plant in the room. Each plant was admired for it's particular qualities.

As a hobby grower it can be really scary to enter a show not believing that any plant on the shelf is worthy of the coveted blue ribbon. If this is a fear of yours... .go clerk a show!!! You will find that each plant is appreciated for it's own qualities and judged accordingly. One of the purposes of the show is to challenge and encourage club members to grow better plants. You will be encouraged by the judges acknowledgment of the beauty of each plant and challenged by the things the judges note for improvement.

The single best encouragement to enter that next show is to take the time to be a clerk. All it takes is a few short hours helping a panel of judges and then you reap the rewards of an free education.

Besides.....you are the first person to see the awards for the entire the show!

Here's a quick run down of what the "technical" side of being a clerk is.

Who can be a judges clerk?

Anyone. Anyone who has the desire to learn more about violets and participate in the inner workings of an African violet show can be a clerk. It's easy, it's fun and it's free! Besides.....it's the best way to learn about violets from the experts.

What is a judges clerk?

Well.....let's start at the beginning. An AVSA Standard Show is a show sponsored by one or more AVSA affiliate clubs,- it conforms to the requirements as set forth in the

AVSA Scale of Points (for judging an AVSA Standard Show), and is judged by AVSA Judges. Shows are judged to improve the overall quality of the show.

The Judges committee for the show determines how many judges are needed depending upon the number of entries. The judges are divided up into panels, or teams, and assigned different classes of the show to judge. This way, there are multiple teams judging various areas of the show, all at the same time.

Each panel of judges is responsible for assigning a point value to the show plant based on “merit”. The plants are judged only against a set standard for African violets and not against any other plant. This way the individual participant is only competing against himself not every grower that has entered the show. This should take some of the anxiousness out of entering your first show. It isn’t a competition. It’s a way to measure the condition of your plant as compared to a set standard. Plants are judged for BEAUTY not flaws.

So.....back to the question at hand.....what is a judges clerk? Well, during the judging time the judges need helpers, or “clerks”, to be there is they need something. The judges can’t leave the area to get extra pens, or have questions answered so the clerk is there to help out.

What is the role of a judges clerk?

There are two clerks per panel of judges. One clerk’s primary responsibility is to record the awards, decided by the judges, on the entry sheets. This is nothing more than noting on the entry sheet whether the specimen received a blue, red, or white ribbon or any other special award. Easy stuff!

The second clerk’s primary responsibility is to place the ribbons and awards. As the judges tell clerk #1 what ribbon and/or award to give each plant, clerk #2 goes to the awards table and collects the applicable ribbons and places them next to each plant. Again, easy stuff!

In addition to these primary responsibilities the clerks might be asked to retrieve pens, pencils, erasers, show schedules, water, etc. The clerks are there to help the judges as they need it. The clerks might be asked to confirm master variety list descriptions, names, classifications or retrieve the Show Chairman. Still.....really easy stuff!

The clerks should know the basic rules of the show as listed in the show schedule. Just reviewing the schedule and making sure you have read the rules is a good start. The clerks should know where the various classes are located in the show room and which classes their judges panel will judge. This information is readily available from the judges chairman and they are happy to help you familiarize yourself with the show layout and assignments.

Where do clerks come from?

Well.....we already said anyone can be a clerk. We have beginners, amateur growers, hobby growers, commercial growers, and master violet growers that clerk. It’s an excellent opportunity to learn about African violets and how they grow. What better

way to learn about the different varieties, sizes, colors, and habits of violets and gesneriads? In addition, the different perspective that each individual judge has looking at the plant brings to light all the things we can learn about these beautiful plants. Anyone can learn more about violets no matter how much experience they already have.

When are clerks needed?

Every AVSA judged show needs clerks. These helpers are the unsung heroes of our shows. The clerk needs to be available during the time which the judges are judging the show and then their job is done. It's a great way to get your "feet wet" helping with a violet show and learn a lot about our hobby.

So.....when's your next show? Will you be a clerk?