



Berry Show – Pot Plant Education Series

Cacti Specimen & Succulent Specimen - Classes 1404 & 1406

Why Enter

Single-plant specimen classes highlight your skill in growing a plant to maturity and showing it at its natural best. Healthy, well-grown, and neatly presented specimens often outshine rare species – it's about condition, not complexity.

Class 1404 – Cactus Specimen (*must have areoles – the tiny cushions from which spines or flowers grow*)

A cactus should show even growth, strong form, and clean spines. It should fill its pot without crowding. Avoid newly potted or unstable plants.

Good Choices	Description
Mammillaria elongata	Dense clusters with golden spines, easy to flower.
Rebutia fiebrigii	Compact, neat balls with orange blooms.
Gymnocalycium baldianum	Dark ribs with pink-purple flowers.
Echinopsis oxygona	Rounded ribs, large night flowers.
Ferocactus latispinus	Slow-growing, bold spines, compact habit.

Growing and Preparing

- Soil: 50% coarse grit, 30% potting mix, 20% perlite or scoria.
- Pot: Unglazed terracotta for airflow and drying.
- Watering: Deeply every 2–3 weeks; keep dry for 4 weeks before the show.
- Feeding: Half-strength cactus fertiliser in spring.
- Repotting: At least 8 weeks before the Show.
- Cleaning: Brush off dust and use vinegar on cotton buds for mineral marks.
- Top-dress: Fine gravel for a clean, finished look.

Quick Entry Option (2026)

Use an established cactus already in your collection. Replace the top layer of soil, brush off dust, and refresh the gravel. Clean spines and a neat rim can make an ordinary plant look outstanding.

How Long to Grow

Mammillaria and Rebutia can reach display size in 12–18 months. Larger types like Ferocactus or Echinopsis may need 2–3 years. Start new specimens in spring 2026 for the 2027 Show.

Class 1406 – Succulent Specimen (*non-cactus – no areoles*)

A good specimen has symmetry, clean foliage, and balanced proportions. The pot should enhance the plant's character without drawing attention to itself.

Good Choices	Description
Echeveria 'Lola'	Tight rosette with pale tones and symmetry.
Echeveria 'Perle von Nürnberg'	Soft lilac leaves; reliable and elegant.
Crassula ovata 'Hobbit'	Compact, tree-like stems with glossed leaves.
Aloe 'Christmas Carol'	Compact with red-spined margins.
Haworthia truncata	Architectural, windowed leaves – slow but striking.
Gasteria bicolor	Great for part-shade; resilient and tidy.

Growing and Preparing

- Soil: 60% potting mix, 40% coarse sand or pumice.
- Light: Bright morning sun, protect from hot afternoons.
- Feeding: Monthly diluted liquid fertiliser in spring and summer.
- Maintenance: Remove dead leaves, inspect for pests, and clean surfaces.
- Watering: Let soil dry completely; stop watering 2 weeks before the Show.
- Presentation: Firm plant, dry soil, polished pot, and neat top dressing.

Quick Entry Option (2026)

Choose your best rosette now. Repot into a clean pot with fresh mix and gravel. Within 6–8 weeks, it will settle and look show-ready.

How Long to Grow

Echeveria and Crassula can be show-ready in 12–18 months; Haworthia and Gasteria need 2–3 years. Start new ones for next year while preparing this season's entry.

At-a-Glance Care Calendar

Task	When to Do It
Select & repot plants.	By early December 2025
Reduce watering & feeding.	Mid-January 2026
Final clean & presentation	Show week

Presentation Tips

- Choose pots that complement the plant's form and colour.
- Keep designs simple – no ornaments or artificial gravel.
- Ensure plants are stable, firm, and dry on the day.
- Bring a brush and tweezers for final clean-up on staging.

Related Resources

- Creating a Cactus or Succulent Collection in One Pot (PDF)
- Designing with Thrill, Fill & Spill (PDF + 30 sec video)
- [About the Garden – Cacti & Succulent Care in Australia](#)