



## ALL-AMERICA SELECTIONS®

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### 2017 AAS Display Garden Landscape Design Challenge TIPS FOR SUCCESS

This year, our judges were very generous with their time to thoroughly go through each entry, view each photo and read each story in order to choose the best as winners. Based on their comments, we thought we'd share tips for more success in the future.

#### Criteria:

**Promotion of the display and contest to local media and garden visitors/members – this criteria is very important to the judges. (20% of score)** There are numerous ways to achieve this and when possible, include PDF attachments and links on the entry form when you describe some of the things you did. The judges were critical and deducted points where there was a lack of promotion from some gardens. Here are a few ideas to get you started (and make sure you document what you did!):

- Feature the contest on your website. (Do a screen grab to show the judges!)
- Feature your participation in one of your newsletters, if you have them. (Then save that as a PDF to include with your entry.)
- Post photos of the garden on your Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or other photo sharing website. (Be sure to tag AAS when you do posts!)
- Invite local media for a tour. (Take pictures of the event to submit with your entry.)
- Hold an educational or entertaining event in the garden to bring more visibility to the AAS Winners. (Take pictures of the event to submit with your entry.)
- Write about the contest in your garden's blog, if you have one.
- Invite local groups to participate in the planting or weeding or construction, or, or, or!
- Location of the garden...is it hidden in the very back of your garden or front and center where the majority of garden visitors can see it?

**Quantity of AAS Winners used and signage noting variety names (20% of score)** – Our judges made good use of the lists of AAS Winners featured in your display beds. This is 20% of the score. With a possible 20 points in this category, we saw the judges give the full points to the gardens with the highest number of AAS winning varieties used, in their respective size category. The gardens with the lowest number of AAS Winners got around 1-5 points then everyone else fell somewhere in-between.

So please keep this in mind when planning your garden for the contest. The Winners All list on our website ([www.aaswinners.com](http://www.aaswinners.com)) is the best source of all AAS Winners that you might want to select from, in addition to the ones you are sent each year, which are the Winners from the past five years. If you need help finding certain seeds, our "Seed Source" list is a big help, as is an online search by variety name.

Designating the AAS Winners with either the signage we provide or your own goes a long way with the judges. We encourage you to be diligent using the signage promoting the space as an AAS Display Garden as well as the individual variety signs noting the names of each winner as

that will garner additional points. In fact, we now require at least one photo that shows the AAS signage in use in the Display Garden.

**Overall attractiveness of design (20% of score)** – We loved the stories of how you had to work with, and sometimes took advantage of, existing bones in the garden, such as buildings, trees, shrubs, parking lots etc. and used them to influence your design. The judges were impressed when a good color combination was achieved. Explaining how you came up with the design offers additional insight, which adds to the story the pictures tell. Some gardens created a theme then designed the garden to meet that theme. When we provide a theme, it's very worthwhile to expand it into something creative. Open bed space was a negative in the judge's eyes so they encourage you to fill up all the space possible with AAS Winners or existing perennials or other ornamentals. Good looking, healthy plants are a plus as well so please make sure you tend your plants, keep them fertilized and well maintained.

**Creativity of design and/or design story (20% of score)** – For example, combining veggies and ornamentals, mixing older AAS Winners with new, showcasing AAS Winners next to popular heirlooms to show the differences; these types of things caught the judge's attention because they were different. Remember that the judges can only read your story and look at pictures so please use your words wisely when explaining your design and how you achieved it.

Combining an educational aspect to the garden theme scored high with judges. Like the one garden that used a sustainability theme and props. Or a historical perspective on gardening or farming. Or a garden to attract pollinators. In today's digital age, signage that is photo-friendly will allow garden visitors to take ideas home. Be original, be creative, educate and inform!

**Photo quality and design description/explanation (20% of score)** – We were not expecting professional quality photos so we did not take points off for any lesser quality but keep in mind that many of your photos are used in our publicity. What we are looking for in the photos is to see if the photos helped tell the story. Before taking photos, be mindful of garden maintenance. The judges expressed disappointment when the gardens obviously needed tending in the photos. Early-season photos and end results photos are expected. Photos of volunteers are not necessary but photos of a publicity event are great. Close-ups of individual AAS Winners are not necessary for this contest's purpose. Do not make collages, Power Points, slide shows, etc.

If the photos need cropping, please do so before sending them to us as we cannot show any favoritism by making photo improvements.

Label each .jpg photo 1-8 and submit them as per this list as: (1\_gardename.jpg, 2\_gardename.jpg, 3\_gardename.jpg, etc.):

Photo #1 "Early Season"

Photo #2 "Large AAS sign in the garden" (Yours or ours)

Photo #3 "AAS variety sign(s) in the garden" (Yours or ours)

Photo #4 "Distance photo to show overall design"

Photo #5 "Publicity event that occurred with or in the garden"

Photo #6 "Unique edible/ornamental combination #1"

Photo #7 "Unique edible/ornamental combination #2"

Photo #8 "Unique edible/ornamental combination #3"

Note: Videos are not necessary but a great way to get the judge's attention. Please keep it to 1 minute or less.

For a few good tips on how to take great landscape photos, click on these links:

[Exposure Guide.com](http://Exposure Guide.com)

[Digital Camera World](http://Digital Camera World)

Submitting your entry – Allow time to pull your presentation together – don't push the deadline so tightly that your presentation suffers. After a season of planning, planting, and photographing, you want to do justice to your entry.

**Entry data and photos can be sent via email to [project.AASNGB@gmail.com](mailto:project.AASNGB@gmail.com)**

**Entry deadline: September 15, 2017**

**This is what we send to the judges:**

- Your completed Entry Form
- Your Intent to Participate Form
- All photos you submit
- Any PDFs of publicity
- Video, if one was created, or a YouTube link to your video