

APLD Award Entries: Take your best shot

The following tips have been collected from previous award judges. By using these tips you are well on your way to success:

- Start taking the 'before' shots as early as your first documentation of the site during the planning phase
- Take the images from many different angles
- Once the installation is complete, take 'after' images from the same location and angle used for the 'before' shots.
- Photograph your installation in each season.
- Take images at different times of the day, including early morning and later in the day.
- If night lighting is part of the design, remember to take images that showcase this impact, too.
- Avoid taking images on bright days due to the impact of harsh sun and shade on the photos.
- Make it easy for judges to tour your site by creating a photo-point map that illustrates where each before and after photo was taken and the view angle.
- Provide a clear timeline of the project, from beginning to end. A good landmark for the beginning of the timeline is when the completed plan was presented to client. Remember to include key milestones such as the date installation began and was completed. Date images of follow-up photos of maturing plants.
- Print a clear concept statement of your goals and objectives right on the plan.
- Limit your summary of the project to several short paragraphs; it should be less than one page.
- Provide enough information in the project plan view to serve the purpose of orienting judges to the project without you there to explain it to them.
- Include a plant list in your project plan, with both the scientific and common names.
- Include a north arrow and measuring scale (both words and graphic form) on every drawing submitted for judging.
- Make sure the image is in focus.
- Check that the hose is put away and walks are swept and free of debris.
- Remove undesirable lawn furniture from view.
- Make sure the garden has been recently maintained and looks its best.
- Leave the pet out of the photo.
- When shooting architecture as part of the photo, check the horizontals and make sure they're horizontal and verticals vertical.
- Shoot photos that give a feeling for the time and place of the context is everything.
- Make sure plant photos serve a purpose—a photo of a plant without context does not add value.
- Take high resolution photos (200 dpi) that are 10 inches on the longest side.
- Protect your client's privacy by ensuring signage that could identify the homeowner is not shown in the image.
- When submitting for garden and planting design don't make the hardscape the focus of the photo—or the furniture, or the grill, or the fence, or the house
- Obtain your client's written informed consent for use of the image.
- Identify the photographer who took the image so a photo credit can be given and make sure you have the photographer's written consent to use the image

- for publication (some photographers restrict how the image can be used and/or stipulate an additional fee).
- Show as little mulch as possible.
 - Don't have empty spaces in planting schemes—or dead plants.
 - Remove real estate signs from view in the image.
 - When including a detail shot also show the larger context of that detail.
 - If the shot includes the neighbor's house make sure it's not a focal point.
 - Use a tripod.

Once your packet meets these requirements, obtain feedback from your colleagues. Give the submission to them without a background explanation; let them have a few minutes to study the documents, then ask what they think should be kept, removed and improved from the submission.

Using these tips will not only enhance your award submission, they will strengthen your own landscape practice by improving your ability to show clients the value of hiring a professional.