

ADVICE FOR EXHIBITORS

Below is a list of hints and tips aimed at assisting exhibitors. If you require further advice regarding staging exhibits or have a question on any class in the show, please contact a show official who will be happy to help.

GENERAL

Read the show rules and schedule carefully. Ensure that all sizes, colours, quantities etc. for each class are complied with, as the judge will disqualify exhibits deemed to be "not according to schedule" (NAS)

On the show day, allow plenty of time to stage your exhibits. Collect class cards from the show secretary, ensure they are correct and place a class card with each exhibit, name side down in the area set aside for that class. Name varieties of fruit, vegetables and flowers where known.

Do not move or alter in any way, other exhibitors' entries. If you feel you do not have enough space for your exhibit or experience any other problems please speak a show official.

CUT FLOWERS AND STEMS (excluding floral art)

Cut stems in flower the evening before the show. Cut stems as long as possible. Remove undeveloped side shoots, unopened buds, seed pods and some of the lower leaves and plunge cut stems up to their necks in a deep container of clean water in a cool dark place overnight. Some flowers in bud, eg daffodils, may be cut 4 or 5 days in advance and brought into the warmth and will open in time for the show day.

When staging your exhibit, remove any damaged, discoloured or broken leaves and trim the stem, making sure the stem retained is appropriate for the size of the flowers and the container used. Produce exhibits with flowers of equal size and quality in containers of suitable proportions. Arrange blooms so that each flower is facing the front. Oasis, crumpled wire or paper may be used to help to hold stems in place in the vase, but make sure that the supporting material is below the top of the vase.

Judges look for flowers and foliage that are fresh, free from diseases and blemishes and at the optimum point in their life cycle, fully developed but not yet fading.

POT PLANTS

Pots should be clean and plant supports can be included but should be as unobtrusive as possible. Pot size is the outside measurement taken at the pot rim. The plants should be free of pests and diseases. Damaged leaves should be removed together with spent flowers or seed pods and any debris on top of the compost.

FRUIT CLASSES

Pick as near to show time as possible. Fruit should be picked with the stalk attached. Handle fruit as gently and as little as possible, so as not to spoil the natural bloom. For this reason it is best to use scissors to pick the fruit. Do not polish the fruit as this destroys the natural bloom.

Fruits should be fresh, uniform, and free from blemish and disease and characteristic of the variety in shape, size and colour. When staging at the show, arrange the fruits on a plate in a neat and symmetrical way. Rhubarb should have the leaves trimmed to about 3"

VEGETABLES

Vegetables should be staged on plates or directly on the show table in a wheel formation or in rows. Root vegetables should have their leaves cut to approximately 3" of leaf stalk, which should be neatly tied. They should be carefully washed with a soft cloth and plenty of water to remove soil. Do not scrub. Do not apply oils in an effort to improve appearance.

When exhibiting vegetables, aim for freshness, with exhibits free from blemishes and disease and of uniform colour and size appropriate to the variety. All exhibits in a class should be of the same variety or cultivar unless otherwise stated. Remember that oversized and coarse specimens do not usually win prizes.

Beans – Broad, French and runner. Try wrapping them overnight in a damp tea cloth to keep them straight and fresh. Arrange on the show table with stalks at one end, tails at the other.

Beetroot. Size ideally between a tennis ball and a golf ball. Colour throughout should be dark with no whitening around the root area.

Carrots. Avoid broken tips or greening around the shoulders. Hairs on the root can be snipped off.

Cabbages. Choose solid heads with a waxy bloom. Remove only outer damaged leaves. Leave 3" of stalk.

Cauliflowers. Reject specimens that are damaged or have discoloured, loose or uneven heads. When staging, cut off the leaves to the level of the outside of the curd. Leave 3" stalk at the base.

Celery. Reject specimens with flower heads forming.

Courgettes. Select young, tender and uniform fruits between 4" and 8 "long.

Cucumber. Fruits should be a fresh green colour with a waxy bloom and the flower end fully developed.

Onions. Should be chosen for evenness of size. Remove the extreme outer skin but do not peel too much. Cut off the tops to 2" and bind with uncoloured raffia. The roots should be neatly trimmed to the basal plate. They can be staged on rings or bedded in sand on a plate so that they stay upright.

Peas. Take care not to remove the bloom. Snip each pod off the vine with scissors leaving some stalk.

Potatoes. Choose medium sized, equally matched, tubers, free from skin blemishes caused by pests and diseases. Stage on a plate with the rose end outwards.

Tomatoes. Choose specimens of the right size and colour for the cultivar. The fruit should be firm but with no "greenback". Aim for a uniform set of fruit with fresh calyces. Stage on a plate with the calyces upwards.

PRESERVES

Jars and bottles should be made of clear glass and be free of any commercial advertising. Jars should be full and have an airtight seal, preferably a transparent plastic film with a waxed paper disc next to the product. They should be labelled stating the contents and date made.

Jam. The fruit should be evenly distributed and tender. There should be no scum, mould, sugar crystals or air bubbles. Consistency should be jellified with no loose liquid or syrup and not runny, too firm or sticky.

Marmalade. Peel should be tender, uniformly cut and evenly distributed. Otherwise, as for jam.

Chutney. Colour should be even throughout with no air bubbles or free vinegar. Mature flavour, which will only be achieved about 3 months after making.