

TIPS FOR SHOWING VEGETABLES

Potatoes

Potatoes should be as far as possible of the same shape and size, with eyes that are shallow. Wash them carefully so as not to damage the skins and ensure all traces of earth are removed. The exhibit will be marked down if the potatoes are misshaped, damaged by slugs, worm or blight. The presence of green colouring as a result of exposure to light is also defective.

Carrots

When taken from the soil be careful to try and maintain a long tap root. This can be achieved by watering them well and easing them from the soil. The carrots should be carefully washed with a soft cloth to ensure they are free of earth especially around the top of the shoulders. The skins should be undamaged and they should be of similar size and shape. They will be marked down if they display damage by carrot root fly grubs and green colouring around the shoulders due to exposure to light. The foliage must be trimmed back to 7.5cm (3ins).

Onions

Onions should be uniform in shape and size. Be careful to ensure that they conform to any weight restrictions. The onions should be well ripened, firm and with a dry, unbroken, unblemished and ripe skin. The onions should not be over skinned and green. The roots should be trimmed neatly and the top of the onion (the neck), which ought to be thin, should be turned over and bound neatly with raffia. The onions should be staged on rings so that they sit upright on the show bench. (Cardboard tubes from used kitchen roll etc. cut to size can be used)

Cabbage

The Cabbage (s) should be of a good size and colour and have a firm solid heart. The leaves as far as possible should be clean and free from slug and caterpillar damage. Make sure there are no slugs or grubs lurking in the foliage. Try to maintain the "waxy bloom" on the leaves which will disappear with excessive washing and handling. The roots should be cut off as can some of the outer leaves (if damaged), but not all, leaving a neat stalk of some 75mm. The cabbage (s) should be fresh. If two are being exhibited they should also be uniform in shape and size.

Beetroot

When taken from the soil, be careful to try and maintain the tap root. This can be achieved by watering them well and easing them from the soil. Carefully trim any side roots from the main tap root leaving just one root. The beetroot should be carefully washed with a soft cloth to ensure they are free from earth. The skins should be undamaged. They should be of similar size and shape. As a rule of thumb, the ideal size for globe beetroot is that of a tennis ball. If they are too large and woody they will be marked down. The leaf stalks should be cut to 7.5cm (3ins)

Courgettes

Courgettes should be fresh, ideally between 4 to 6 inches in length and uniform in shape and size displaying a good all over skin colour without blemishes. The flowers can be left attached but this is not a must. Do not cut the courgettes too close to the fruit as they should have about 2 cms of stalk attached. They should be clean without the need for washing which can be detrimental to their natural appearance. Round cultivars should be around 3.5 to 4 inches in diameter.

Marrow

Marrows should adhere to size limits and display an even and all over good colour. They should be displayed with at least 2cms of stalk attached. The skin should ideally be unblemished. If two are being exhibited, they should be uniform in shape and size.

Cucumber

The Cucumber should be exhibited with about 2 cms of stalk attached and with the dead flower intact and still attached at the end of the cucumber. The cucumber should be fresh, straight and not over mature. They should have a short "handle" i.e. the thin end to which the stalk is attached. They should be blemish free and retain their natural bloom. Care needs to be exercised when handling them as this can remove the bloom as may washing.

Sweetcorn

They should be fresh and ripe but not over ripe and starchy. The ears of corn should be even, regular (in line) and fully formed over the whole of the cob. They should be exhibited with at least 2 cms of stalk attached and with the protective leaves (the husk) and dead filaments present. To present the cobs the outer leaves on one side only should be neatly peeled back and tucked under the cob to display a section of the ears of corn.

Shallots

Shallots should be prepared for exhibition in much the same way as onions. They should however be presented neatly on a plate of clean dry sand. They will be judged on size and quality.

Parsnips

The tips for exhibiting parsnips are much the same as those above for carrots with foliage trimmed back to 7.5 cm (3ins). Specimens should be well washed and without blemishes if possible. Some varieties of parsnips are very susceptible to canker which is most unsightly on the show bench, so when purchasing seed it is worth seeking out varieties that show resistance to canker.

Leeks

Leeks should be thoroughly washed with the soil teased from the roots which should not be cut off. The flags (leaves) should also not be cut and in good condition. The barrel of the leek should be straight, even and not swollen (bulbous) at the base. The longer the blanched (white) part of the barrel the better. The leeks should be uniform in shape and size. It is advisable to tie the flags loosely with strands of raffia in two or three places along their length.

Squash

Select fully coloured, mature fruit with few blemishes. The stalk should be retained.

Lettuce (with roots)

Lettuce that looks fresh and clean on the day of the show will do well for you. Pull it carefully and don't turn it upside down until you have wrapped the root ball in a plastic bag. Wash the roots, trim off the minimum of damaged outer leaves and put the roots, wrapped in wet kitchen roll, back in a plastic bag. Leave the lettuce roots in the bag until the last possible minute to keep the leaves crisp and fresh. You could even give the head a spray with water. Lettuce can be picked the previous evening, be prepared and kept in a bucket of cold water somewhere cool until you take to the show.

Peppers

Select peppers that are the same size, shape, colour, degree of maturity and displayed in the same manner. All specimens in an exhibit should show uniformity. Do not remove stems from your peppers. Stems should remain on peppers when being displayed.

Container of Mixed Herbs

A minimum of 3 herb varieties should be used. Select fresh, healthy, clean specimens with no yellowing.

Any Other Vegetable

This doesn't have to be that unusual, just show something that isn't in the rest of the schedule. If you grow something that's not elsewhere in the schedule, put it in.

Beans (Broad, French and Runner)

Cut all pods from the vine using scissors and ensure each pod has a portion of stalk. Stage on a dish or plate or directly on the bench; stalks at one end. In the class for French beans, a climbing or dwarf variety can be exhibited. Judges will determine freshness by snapping or opening a pod. Beans for showing should all be of the same length and width (as near as possible). A couple of weeks or so before the Show look at your beans still growing and any beans which you think may be ready for the day of the Show, squeeze gently where the seed is so as to break the seed and it will not swell or bulge out and spoil your Runner Beans.

Tomatoes

The tomatoes should be regular in shape and size and firm but fully ripe (showing the true colour of the variety). They should be unblemished but not be polished and have a fresh green calyx attached.

Plate of Cherry Tomatoes

Should be fresh, ripe but firm, well coloured and blemish free with fresh calyx (or stalk) still attached. Each tomato should be no larger than 35mm in diameter.

A Truss of Cherry Tomatoes

Fruit all the same colour preferred. No obvious missing fruit.