

Kew Horticultural Society

Exhibiting Vegetables

Preparation for the Show

All vegetables should be given a thorough watering well before harvesting for the show and should be handled carefully during preparation. Remember to harvest leaving stalks. This helps to prove that the vegetables have not been purchased at the local supermarket. Lack of stalks may lead to disqualification. Vegetables should be laid out on the show table as attractively as possible either on plates or directly on the table. Special requirements are listed under the various vegetables.

Always take a few extra specimens to the show in case of accident, and before leaving the Show table check that the correct numbers have been staged so that your exhibit is not marked NAS (Not According to the Schedule).

KIND means kind of vegetable - tomatoes, onions, beetroot, etc.

VARIETY means variety of its kind - Cherry, Beefsteak, Plum, etc. in the case of tomatoes.

Root Vegetables

These should be carefully washed to remove soil but in no circumstances should oil or similar substances be used to enhance appearance. Wash with a soft cloth and plenty of water; brushing will damage the skin and spoil the appearance of the exhibit. Retain finer roots if possible.

Other vegetables

Retain the natural bloom wherever possible.

Beans - French

Carefully cut off the vine with scissors leaving some stalk attached. Size of pod is less important than tenderness and quality. Discard tough fibrous specimens. Stage on a plate in a straight line for easy counting and uniformity. Check all stalks are at the top with tails nearest to you.

Beans - Runner

These should be carefully cut off the vine with scissors leaving some stalk attached. Stage a uniform exhibit and don't be tempted to include one or two extra long beans. Avoid poorly coloured coarse specimens with a poor shape. Do not include old, fibrous and poddy beans. Exhibit neatly across a plate or directly on the table; stalk at the top and all facing the same way. With all beans, as you are picking for the Show, snap one or two spare pods to check condition and interior freshness.

Beetroot

Soil or growing media should be soaked prior to careful lifting to ensure complete retention of the root. Cut off tops leaving approximately 7.5cm (3"). Select for even size. Round beetroot should be about the size of a tennis ball. Long beetroot: choose specimens of a good length which are evenly tapered and well-developed. Avoid specimens with poor skin colour. Take care with washing as all marks will show up clearly after a few hours.

Cabbages

Choose solid heads of equal size with good waxy bloom. Reject split and pest-damaged specimens. Remove a minimum of outer leaves. Stage with approximately 7.5cm (3") of washed stalk, heads towards the front.

Carrots and Parsnips

Soak the soil before lifting to ensure the root comes out easily. Select uniform straight roots. Cut off tops leaving approximately 7.5cm (3"). Avoid pale-coloured carrots or those with green shoulders. With parsnips, choose specimens of a good length which are evenly tapered and well-developed. Exhibit directly on the table or on a plate in a pyramid formation.

Courgettes

Select young, tender, shapely and uniform fruits, not less than 10cm (4") or greater than 15cm (6"). Stage flat on table.

Cucumbers

These should look as alike as possible with a good fresh green colour and waxy bloom undisturbed.

Marrows

Uniformity in shape and colour is important. Wipe clean and stage direct on the show table.

Onions

Weigh or measure the onions to ensure that you are in the correct class. Avoid soft, stained, specimens with thick immature necks. Remove only the outer skins. Unless otherwise specified, the tops should be tied down and roots neatly trimmed back to the base plate. Onions are often staged on rings or soft collars.

Shallots

As for onions. Often shown on dry sand on a plate.

Potatoes

Water well before lifting. Potatoes are of two types: white and coloured. Potato varieties such as Kestrel and Cara, which are mainly white with small areas of rosy pink, often round the 'eyes', are classified as 'coloured'. Select medium sized specimens for display, about 200-225g (7-8 oz), equally matched with shallow eyes, free from skin blemishes which have been caused by pests and diseases. These tubers should be washed in ample water with a soft sponge. Stage on plates with the rose end outwards (the end that was attached to the plant).

Tomatoes

Harvest making sure that the star-shaped calyx with its stalk remains in the fruit. Select fruit of the right shape, size, and colour for the variety. Must not be overripe or with hard 'green back' colouring around the calyx. Aim for similar size with a small eye and firm fresh calyx. Stage on a plate with the calyces uppermost. If staged in "A Collection of Vegetables" class, place the calyces downwards. Cherry tomatoes are shown in a truss. The fruit should all be as ripe as possible and trusses bearing the most fruit should be chosen for exhibition.

Peas

The pods should be carefully cut with scissors leaving some stalk attached. Reject specimens infested with maggots and mildew. Retain the waxy bloom. Holding pods to the light will detect internal damage. Exhibit directly on the table or on a plate in a 'spokes of a wheel' formation.