

The suggestions below are taken from *The RHS Horticultural Show Handbook*, *The NAFAS Handbook of Schedule Definitions* and the *WI Handbook*. Please refer to the relevant specific schedules for details for our shows.

Vegetables

Picking for a show: different from picking for the kitchen as there are rules to observe. Keep strings in fruit, e.g. the green calyx on tomatoes, strawberries & raspberries, to prove it was grown, not bought.

Stalk: beet, carrots, parsnips and turnips should have 7.5cm of leaf stalk.

Leeks: tidy the tops of leeks if you wish. Roots to be left intact.

Courgettes: if possible, exhibit marrows and courgettes with the flower.

Sweetcorn: display with 25mm of husk, silk and hank.

Runner beans: should be straight with a short stalk. Trim stalks to same length for all to give uniformity. No outline of the beans inside should be showing.

Broad beans: no outline of the beans inside should be showing. If the black eye on broad beans is showing, choose smaller beans.

Peas: ideally should have around nine in a pod. Don't over handle them or the bloom on the pod becomes spoiled. Hold them up to the light to see if there are any gaps between the peas inside. Such gaps lose points.

Rhubarb: show as a vegetable. Remove leaf blades so there is not more than 75mm left. However, forced rhubarb should not be trimmed.

Tomato classes: note the size rules for classes. Cherry <35mm, medium approximately 60mm and large >75mm. The calyx should be fresh with good colour. Stage on a plate.

Beetroot: also get extra points for colour. Beetroot are maritime plants and like a bit of salt. Give a light dressing when you sow the seed and once halfway through the season. Just before the show, sponge gently in salty water.

Roots eg carrots, parsnips and beet: wash carefully with a soft sponge under running water. Never use a brush to wash roots; they will get broken.

Potatoes: judges look for uniformity in size, shape, colour, health and

maturity. Avoid potatoes with too many eyes or deep eyes. Broken skin on potatoes will cost points so for best results dig the potatoes early and leave in peat or sterilised compost to allow the skins to harden before washing carefully.

Onions other than spring (salad) onions: tie down neatly with raffia. Do not skin onions excessively. Trim roots and tidy skin a little if necessary, without exposing the fleshy onion inside.

Shallots: should be separated, not exhibited as clusters of bulbs and prepared as per onions. Displaying on the bench in silver sand is tidy and they will stand nicely to emphasize uniformity.

Pickling onions: should be less than 25mm diameter. Again, do not skin excessively. Tidy the roots and tie the tops. Prepare as per shallots.

Display: vegetables can be displayed on the provided dish or plate. Collections of vegetables can be garnished with parsley, but, don't overdo the garnish. If the schedule says "display in a seed tray or box", do so. Don't lay the vegetables on the show bench. Borrow a tray from the society.

Collections: For the best chance of success with a collection, choose vegetables that have higher points such as potatoes, onions, leeks, celery, parsnips. Herbs can be shown in a collection of vegetables but will not earn many points.

Packing: pack exhibits carefully for transport. Wrap vegetables in damp newspaper. Wrap runner beans in a damp tea towel as it keeps them crisp.

Fruit

Soft fruit: show on the stalk and not hulled. Do not top and tail gooseberries that are going to be shown.

Currants: show as a bunch.

Grapes, plums and apples: The natural bloom should be preserved on grapes, plums, apples, etc.

Transport: pack carefully to avoid damage.

Garnish: must be with its own leaf, if garnished.

Flowers and Pot Plants

Pot plants: note the size of the pot, stated in the schedule. Measure from rim to rim taking the inside diameter. Water pot plants so that they are fresh. At home, turn the pot every day so that the plant develops a nice shape. Pot plants need to have been in the possession of the owner for the 3 months previous to the show. Ensure the pot is clean.

Flowers: cut them in the evening or early morning, making a slanting cut.

Selections: choose flowers with no weather or pest damage.

Roses: for specimen roses, the judges look for an upright pointed bud centre with rounded petals.

Room temperature: remember that a warm show hall can cause flowers to droop, fully open or drop. A tight bud at 6am can be a full bloom by 12 o'clock

General

Allow yourself plenty of time to stage your exhibits. Take time for a thorough check after you finish staging.

Check that you have the required number of specimens required.

Uniformity of size, form and colour bring in higher marks.

Cut more specimens than you actually need, choosing in a good light.

Entrants *must* adhere to the size rules in show classes.

Floral Art

Definition: *an exhibit is composed of natural plant material with or without accessories, contained within a space as specified in the show schedule.*

Be sure to comply with any specific requirements of a class as stated in a show schedule, i.e. the measurements or the components.

Cookery

Shortcrust pastry: texture light and short, not hard or brittle.

Cakes: well risen, even in shape and baking and in proportion (depth, width). Sides should be smooth indicating well lined tin (lining papers)

should be removed). Present cakes on a plate. Fruit should be evenly distributed with no burnt fruit showing (remove before baking). Domed appearance with slight cracking is OK.

Jams: jar filled to within 3mm of top (fill to the top and allow for shrinkage) Colour, bright, even and characteristic. No scum, foreign bodies, mould or sugar crystals. Even fruit distribution - not too many stones. Consistency - jellified, not runny or sticky, no loose liquid or syrup. Flavour full, fresh and characteristic of the fruit.

Chutney: colour bright and even throughout, no muddiness. Jars filled to 1cm from top of jar. Cover must not be liable to corrosion – so twist tops should have plastic lining. Do *not* use cellophane cover. Reasonably firm, uniform consistency. No large pieces of onion etc. present. No air bubbles or free vinegar or repotting. Flavours blended well and characteristic of ingredients used. Mature flavour indicative of being potted for 2 or 3 months.

Jellies: brilliantly clear. No pulp, haze, scum or air bubbles. Consistency of the chosen fruit. Flavour true of fruit, full and well balanced.

Jars of jams & jellies: sealed as soon as they are filled, with a new white twist top or wax disc covered with cellophane top when cooled.

Jars must be clearly labelled with contents and date produced.