

Pointers for Exhibiting Vegetables

Asparagus - Select straight, dark green spears. They should be at least ½ inch diameter at the butt end and trimmed to a uniform length of 7 to 8 inches. Display in water to prevent wilting.

Bean (snap) - Either green or yellow, pole or bush. Beans on display should be whole with about ¼ inch of stem. They should be cleaned and not contain any trash or spent blossoms. Pods should be plump and fleshy with small seeds from ¼ to 1/8 inch in diameter. Pods should have the same degree of curvature and be arranged with the stems and curves facing the same way.

Beans (lima) - Select full size, dark green pods that are still tender and fresh. Beans inside should be well developed. Do not use pods that have begun to yellow. Arrange neatly as described for snap beans.

Beans (dry) - Unshelled dry beans are harvested, selected and displayed in the same fashion as fresh beans. They may not be washed, but trash will have to be removed by careful brushing.

Beets - Roots should be well colored, smooth, tender and well-shaped according to variety. Select roots 1 ½ to 2 ½ inches in diameter. Allow most of tap root to remain. Trim tops 1 to 1 ½ inches.

Broccoli - Select heads that are fresh, firm, tender, tight and crisp. Color should be dark green with a bluish cast. The minimum diameter of the head should be 3 inches with the stalk 6 to 8 inches long. Remove all leaves below the head. No yellow florets should be developed on the head.

Brussel sprouts - Sprouts should not be less than 1 inch in diameter. They should be round, fresh and firm. Stems should be smoothly trimmed to about ¼ inch.

Cabbage - Heads should be firm, crisp and heavy for their size. They should not be trimmed excessively, but loose leaves should be removed, keeping the last two to three “wrapper” leaves that show the “field” color rather than the shaded undercolor. Cut the stem off squarely at the base of the outermost leaf.

Carrots - Select straight roots typical of the variety, free from cracks, knots and greening of the shoulders. Cut tops squarely about 1 inch long. Remove stumps of dead leaves. Wash free of soil carefully, but do not scrub.

Cauliflower - Select heads that are firm, crisp, white and free of graininess and roughness. The head should be 5 or more inches in diameter. The head should not be granular or ricy. Remove lower wrapper leaves.

Chinese cabbage - Heads should be thick, firm and crisp. Allow two to four outer leaves to remain. Heads may be washed and dried before showing.

Cucumbers - Cut from vine with about ¼ inch of stem. Wipe gently to clean and remove spines. Wash only if necessary. Select smooth, straight, crisp, dark green fruit. Yellowing or softening indicates overripeness. Cucumbers should have at least two classes - picklers and slicers. Picklers should not be more than about 1 ½ inches in diameter and 5 inches long. All other things being equal, large pickling cucumbers are not considered superior to small sizes. Slicing cucumbers should not be more than 2 ½ inches in diameter and generally range between 6 to 9 inches, although longer types are acceptable if characteristic of the variety.

Eggplant - Select normal-sized fruit, well colored without greening or bronzing. Color should be deep purple, nearly black. The calyx or “cap” should be bright green with about ½ inch of stem remaining. Do not “oil” fruits to increase shine but polish lightly with a soft cloth.

Endive - Select full crisp, fresh plants. Wash roots and exhibit with roots in water.

Garlic - Select plump, well colored bulbs with dry necks. Trim top to ½ to 1 inch and trim roots to ¼ inch.

Kale - Select plants with bright stems and dark green, crisp leaves. Wash roots and exhibit whole plant with roots in water. Lower leaves may be removed if discolored.

Kohlrabi - Select firm, tender stems 1 ½ to 2 ½ inches in diameter. If dirty, they should be washed and dried. Trim tops to allow only 1 to 2 inches remaining, and trim bottoms to ½ inch. Exhibit one entire plant with roots in water. Lower, discolored leaves may be removed.

Muskmelon or cantaloupe - Most melons shown will be of the netted type. These separate from their stems when ripe and should be shown without stem attached. Crenshaw melons should be represented in a separate class and should be shown with about an inch of stem attached. Select well-formed, round fruits with a slightly sunken stem scar. Netting should be well defined with the rind showing a grayish or yellowish tinge. Clean with a soft brush rather than washing.

Okra - Select fresh, green, fairly straight pods no longer than 4 inches with about ½ inch of stem attached. Clean by gently brushing, but do not wash pods.

Onions - May be classed as the flat, American type (ex. Ebenezer) and the round European types (Bermuda, Spanish). Further breakdown according to color (red, yellow, white) may also be specified. Select large, smooth, clean bulbs. The neck should be dry and trimmed to ½ to 1 inch. Brush clean and remove extremely loose outer dry skins. Leave on dry skin that is clean and fairly tight to the bulb. Do not peel onions beyond dry, mature skins. Roots should be clean and left on the bulb, although they may be trimmed back to no less than ½ inch for a neater display. Never cut them off entirely.

Parsnips - Select medium-sized, smooth, straight roots, free of side roots. Roots may be washed and dried. Trim tops to 1 to 2 inches.

Peas (English) - Select large, plump, bright green pods well filled with seeds at the eating stage. Do not wash, and handle carefully to preserve the waxy “bloom” on the pods.

Peas (Southern, black-eye, crowder) - These are actually beans and should be displayed as described in the section on dried beans.

Peppers (sweet, green, red, yellow) - Colors should be displayed as separate classes. Green peppers should not be streaked with red. Select large, deeply colored, heavy fruits. Cut stem squarely ½ to 1 inch long. Select for uniform number of lobes. Wipe clean if necessary.

Peppers (hot) - Select for uniform color development, shape and size. Allow about ½ inch of stem remaining. A class of dried hot peppers is sometimes included.

Potatoes (Irish) - White, red, russet. Select carefully for uniformity of shape and size. Do not display any tubers with greening in the skins. Wash gently if necessary, but if they're fairly clean, brush with soft brush for best results. Skin should be mature and not flake up easily when rubbed or handled. Potatoes should not appear scrubbed.

Potatoes (sweet) - Select and clean as for Irish potatoes. Avoid breaking stems and "tail" roots back into the main flesh. Crooked potatoes or those showing corky patches should be avoided. Well-shaped roots of medium size are better than extremely large roots of poor shape. Very slender roots also are not desirable.

Pumpkin - Select only symmetrical round or oval fruits. Each pumpkin should stand upright and have a uniformly developed color characteristic of the variety. Cut stems 2 to 3 inches long, depending on the size of the pumpkin. Wash or wipe clean, but do not polish away the natural wax on the surface.

Pumpkin (Cushaw) - This plant is a member of a small intermediate species of the pumpkins and squash and is sometimes listed as a squash. It is distinctive enough to be shown separately and should not compete with other pumpkins. It should have hard skin and prominent white and green streaking. The curve of the neck on all fruit within a single display should be similar.

Radish - Select smooth, brightly colored or pure white roots characteristic of variety. Wash and dry roots, and remove discolored leaves. Exhibit with leaves in a bunch or bunches.

Rhubarb - Rhubarb should be selected with good uniform color, and stalks should be about 1 inch or more across the flat face at the center of the stalk. Stalks should be straight, not curved or twisted. The tops should be neatly trimmed, leaving 1 to 2 inches of leaves and prongs. Basal husks should be removed. Stalks should be bundled for exhibit.

Spinach - Select thick, crisp, deeply colored plants. Roots should be washed and any lower, discolored leaves removed. Exhibit with roots in water.

Squash (summer) - Straightneck, crookneck, zucchini, etc. Harvest close to time of exhibit, and hold in refrigeration. Summer squash should be young and tender. Brush gently to clean or wash if necessary. Largest sizes are undesirable in this crop. Best eating stage size is as follows: Crookneck, 4 to 5 inches long, Zucchini, 6 to 7 inches long; Scallop, 2 inches diameter. Trim stems to ¼ to ½ inch.

Squash (winter) - Acorn, butternut, buttercup, hubbard, etc. Harvest when well matured with hard rinds. Color should be fully developed and typical of the variety. Brush gently to clean, or wash if essential, but do not remove any waxy natural covering that may be present in some varieties. Allow about 1 inch of stem to remain. Sizes typical of the type or variety should be selected.

Sweet corn - Select fully filled ears with kernels at the “milky” stage, not ears with kernels that have a mealy interior when tested by pressing with a thumbnail. Top end may be opened neatly and carefully to check for maturity and earworms. Check for complete filling of the ears by firmly grasping the ears in several positions. The husk should feel tight over the entire surface. It is desirable to carve a “window” in the side of the husk to expose several rows of kernels. Dry silks which are firmly attached need not be removed, or they may be trimmed back to about 1 inch. The shank at the base of the ear should be neatly cut off about an inch below the bob. “Roasting ears” of field corn should not be entered in a sweet corn class. Brush any dirt off the ears, and sprinkle with water occasionally before exhibiting to preserve freshness.

Swiss chard - Select crisp, well-colored leaves with bright, tender stems. Leaves and stems should be 8 to 10 inches long. Wash if necessary, and exhibit with stems in water.

Tomatoes - Tomatoes should be shown in separate classes according to color or form: red, pink, yellow, cherry, pear, etc. Tomatoes should be full colored and at peak maturity, but not overripe. Varieties without cracking or green shoulder are superior. They are shown with stem end down with the stem and calyx removed. Clean fruits carefully, and do not wash unless absolutely necessary. Do not cover with film or other moisture-proof material that may tend to promote rot infection. Size should be typical of the variety, not abnormally large or small. The blossom end scar should be minimal although the accepted size of it may vary with variety. The “beefsteak” types tend to have a larger scar.

Turnip - Select smooth, firm roots with good color and free of side roots. Select roots 2 to 4 inches in diameter, but uniform in size within a display. Cut tops back to about 1 inch. Tap root does not have to be cut back, but the very thin end may be removed as necessary for good appearance of display.

Watermelon - Select large, well-shaped symmetrical melons with good color development typical of the variety. Mature melons may have a cream or yellow colored bottom, or “ground spot.” Do not plug a melon for exhibit, although the judge should be allowed to plug a melon if competition is close and there is some question about maturity. Overripe melons are often dull in appearance and somewhat springy when pressed. Melons at the best eating stage should have a velvety appearance. When cleaning melons, do not remove the waxy covering. About 1 to 1 1/2 inches of stem should be allowed to remain on the melon.