

Exhibiting Fruits and Vegetables

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**Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment
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Exhibits

Horticulture exhibits can be enjoyed by everyone. They are educational and exciting to grow and observe, and provide beauty and food as well. When you exhibit fruits and vegetables . . .

- follow fair show rules and regulations.
- exhibit best quality specimens.
- keep items in the display uniform in size, color, and shape.
- arrange the display to develop a central point of interest.
- use standard amounts of specimens on displays.

Amount to Exhibit

Check the premium book for your local fair for the number of specimens that constitute an exhibit. These may vary from one show to another. The following are considered standard amounts for each vegetable.

Selecting Horticultural Exhibits

The following factors should be kept in mind as you select exhibits for show.

Quality and Condition: The most important points in selecting exhibits for display.

1. Specimens of food crops should be of edible maturity, not overripe, shriveled, or wilted.
2. Free of injury from diseases, insects or mechanical means.
3. Color should be uniform and typical for the product.
4. The shape should be typical of the variety.

Shelf Life: The way the exhibits hold up after the show.

1. Only firm fruits and vegetables that will remain fresh and appealing during the show period should be entered, especially if cooled display cases are not available.
2. Choose kinds of products that have longer shelf life. Products that deteriorate rapidly include leafy green crops, green beans, and strawberries.

3. Specimens should be judged on the basis of appearance at the time they are judged.

It is hard to predict what they will look like or what they did look like. However, crops that change rapidly should not be used unless absolutely necessary.

Cleanliness: An aid to the attractiveness of specimens.

1. Brush or wash root crops
2. Dip leafy vegetables in cool water
3. Wipe vegetables such as eggplant with a damp cloth
4. Polish apples with a soft dry cloth

Size: Often an important consideration.

1. Too large may indicate coarseness and poor quality in some vegetables.
2. Medium to slightly above medium is desired.

Type: Specimens selected should be typical of variety. This may be indicated by size, shape and color.

Uniformity: Uniformity is very important in “blue ribbon” quality exhibits. Specimens should be uniform in size, shape and color as well as in their texture, quality and degree of maturity.

Packing for Transportation: Sprinkle leafy vegetables with cold water and place them in plastic bags. Crushed ice will also help preserve them. Wrap each large vegetable in paper to prevent bruising. Include a few extra specimens in the event that some are damaged or bruised during transportation to the fair.

Preparing Exhibits

Preparing Exhibits at the Show:

1. Neatly trim stems or tops at the last minute.
2. Place specimens on plates or containers, wiping to remove dust collected during transportation.
3. Look over the exhibit carefully for any unnoticed blemishes, defective or undesirable specimens, and count to make sure that you have the proper number for show rules and have met all the regulations.

4. Check with the superintendent on where and how to place the exhibit on tables, show racks, or other display locations.

After the Exhibits are in Place:

1. If rules allow, watch the judge as he/she judges your exhibits.
2. Ask the judge questions you may have regarding your exhibits and how to improve them.
3. Look at other exhibits in your class to observe the type of exhibit that place highest.
4. Make notes that may be useful next year.

Decorating:

1. The vegetables or fruits themselves are the important part of the exhibit, so make them the most important.
2. Flowers, gadgets, or other decorations should be used sparingly so as not to detract from the overall exhibit.
3. Display containers or plates should be uniform and not gaudy or showy.
4. Labels indicating kinds and varieties are desirable, but

not mandatory. Labels should be correct, neat, and not so large as to detract attention.

5. Contrasting colors should be used to “show” vegetables off to their maximum. Avoid too much green if most vegetables are green.
6. Do not wrap each vegetable in plastic or cellophane. However, if the show area is dusty, a large single covering of plastic over the entire exhibit is permissible.

What the Judge will be Looking for

In general, the following factors are considered by most horticulture judges when placing exhibits. Sometimes this is called a “scorecard” and the judge assigns points to each factor or does this mentally as he/she evaluates the specimens. These factors are listed from the most important to the least important in the judge’s mind.

Individual Entries:

Condition—Free from disease, insect or mechanical damage or other forms of damage including dirt or stains—30%

Quality—Exhibits that are at their “peak of perfection” for eating. Specimens should be crisp, firm, mature but not overripe, and flavorful—25%

Uniformity—Uniform in size, shape and color. Attractiveness of an exhibit is enhanced by all specimens being uniform—20%

Typical of Variety—Specimens should be typical of the type and variety of vegetable and fruit. Avoid unusual or nontypical types of exhibits for show purposes—15%

Size—Size of specimens should conform to market demands. In general, very large specimens may be undesirable since they are not as tender or flavorful as more medium sized specimens. Don’t select specimens on the basis of size alone—10%

Collection Exhibits:

Individual specimens comprising the exhibit evaluated by the above factors—75%

Attractiveness of the display, arrangement, artistic qualities, and showmanship—25%

Preparing Specific Fruit and Vegetable Exhibits

Fruit

Apples and Pears

1. Keep stems attached but clip ends short enough so it cannot puncture other specimens in the display.
2. Uniform in size and shape.
3. Free of disease, insect or other damage.
4. Polish with a dry cloth.
5. Color should be typical of variety; red varieties should be uniformly colored.

Cherries and Plums

1. Leave stems attached
2. Select plump, uniform, and ripe specimens
3. Clean with a soft brush or cloth.

Peaches

1. Stems should be removed; keep exhibit uniform among individual fruit.
2. Ground color or “under color” of peach should be yellow.
3. Avoid selection of over or under-ripe fruit.

Grapes

1. Clusters should be uniform in size.

2. Fruit in clusters should be firm, compact and uniformly ripened.
3. Avoid skin breaks.
4. Stems of clusters may be cut, preferably in the same length on each cluster.

Raspberries and Other Bush Fruit

1. Each specimen should be uniform in size, shape, color, and ripe.
2. Fruit should be clean.
3. Specimens should be free of injury.
4. Remove dust with a soft brush.

Strawberries

1. Stem or “cap” should remain attached.
2. Each strawberry should be uniform in size, shape, and color.
3. Fruit should be firm and free of injury.
4. Clean with a soft painter’s brush.

Vegetables

Asparagus

1. Uniform bunch 6 to 8 inches long and 2 to 3 inches in diameter. Tie with rubber band or twist-tie.

2. Stalks crisp, firm and not bleached white.
3. Scales and tips tight.
4. Bottom of the bunch should be even and freshly trimmed.

Beans

1. Uniform in size, shape, color, and stage of maturity.
2. Free of blemishes.
3. Seed about half matured in pod.
4. Not stringy, should snap readily when bent.
5. No broken ends.

Beets

1. Uniform in size and color.
2. Smooth and free from side roots
3. Medium to small sizes preferred, 1½ to 2 inches in diameter.
4. Tops trimmed to 1 to 3 inches; about 2 inches preferred; trim tops evenly.

Broccoli

1. A standard entry may be one or two heads.
2. Heads should be evenly matched (if more than one) and the bottom trimmed evenly and fresh.

3. The head should be compact, dense, and free from insect or disease blemishes.
4. Avoid heads with yellowing or florets beginning to open.

Cabbage

1. Head should be solid and dense.
2. Remove only outer leaves that are diseased or damaged. Allow one or two of the dark green “wrapper leaves” to remain on the head.
3. The stem should be evenly trimmed at the base of the last leaves left on the head.

Cantaloupe

1. Uniform in size, shape and color.
2. Free from injury
3. Picked at full slip (the stem slips easily away from the attachment to the melon).
4. Uniform netting and true to type.

Carrots

1. Uniform in size, shape and color.
2. Smooth, clean and fresh.
3. Typical of type
4. Tops trimmed 1 to 3 inches (1 to 1½ inches preferred).

Trim tops evenly and cut should be fresh.

5. Avoid carrots with green discoloration at the top.
6. Remove all side or hair roots and trim taproots evenly.

Cauliflower

1. Outer green leaves trimmed $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 inch above curds or head.
2. Head should be white, solid uniform, smooth, and close flowered.
3. Avoid heads with brownish discoloration, looseness, or small leaves in the head.

Cucumber

1. Firm specimens
2. Dark green color
3. Uniform length and size. Avoid pointed or uneven diameter specimens.
4. Specimens may be washed but do not wax or oil.

Eggplant

1. Fresh, not wilted or soft.
2. Wipe with moist cloth.
3. Uniform color, bright, deep and shiny
4. Heavy, firm and free from blemishes.
5. Avoid bronze discoloration.

Kohlrabi

1. Not hard, woody, or pithy.
2. Taproot removed, and cut evenly at bottom of kohlrabi.
3. Uniform in size and shape.
4. Tops trimmed even with top of specimen.

Lettuce, Head

1. Crisp, good color and firm.
2. Removed damaged outside leaves.
3. Medium sized head.
4. Trim stem evenly at the base of the outer leaves remaining on the head.

Lettuce, Leaf

1. Tender, good color, and fresh (not wilted).
2. Cut off stem at crown or ground level (exhibit plant intact).
3. Wash plant thoroughly and carefully to prevent damage to leaves.

Okra

1. Harvest when half grown (about 2- to 3-inch pods).
2. Woody pods are overmature.
3. Uniform in size, shape and color.
4. Leave stems on—trim to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch with stems trimmed evenly.

Onions, Green

1. Medium sized, tender stems with long white shanks, clean
2. Remove loose or discolored outer skin.
3. Trim roots evenly $\frac{1}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch.
4. Bulb should be no more than twice the diameter of the shank

Onions, Mature

1. Uniform, mature, solid, bright.
2. Neck small and well cured or dry.
3. Smooth, clean with outside skin intact. DO NOT PEEL.
4. Color typical of variety
5. Tops trimmed $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 inch above the bulb.
6. Roots neatly trimmed $\frac{1}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch below bulb.

Peas

1. Smooth, clean, free from defects.
2. Uniform, deep green pods, and well filled.
3. Avoid over maturity as indicated by yellowing of the pods or toughness and bitterness of the peas.

Peppers, Hot

1. True to type.
2. Color uniform.
3. Good condition, not wilted.
4. Trim stems $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch.

Peppers, Sweet

1. Deep in color.
2. Fresh, firm, symmetrical
3. Traces of red color not desirable unless peppers are uniformly red in color.
4. Number of lobes should be uniform.
5. Trim stems $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch (but not so long that the peppers cannot stand up on the stem end).
6. Exhibit with the stem end down.

Potatoes, Irish

1. Uniform specimens in size, shape and color.
2. Free from skin defects (scab, scurf).
3. Free from insect and mechanical injury.
4. Clean (may be washed gently so as not to scratch skin).
5. Typical of variety.
6. Do not exhibit sunburned or greened potatoes.

Pumpkins

1. Typical of variety.
2. Uniform in color and shape and symmetrical in shape (avoid pumpkins with a distinct flat side).
3. Free from blemishes and dirt.
4. Trim stem evenly 1 to 3 inches.
5. Don't attempt to carry pumpkins by the stem.

Radishes

1. Medium size, smooth, firm and crisp. Not pithy.
2. Uniform in color and bright.
3. Typical of variety.
4. Leaves left on (but carefully remove yellowed leaves).
5. Wash thoroughly.

Rhubarb

1. Stalks uniform in size and color.
2. Fresh, brittle, solid, free from blemishes or dirt.
3. Pull from plant, do not cut but remove small bracts at the base of each stalk.
4. Leave $\frac{1}{4}$ inch of leaf at the top of the stalk, trim the rest of the leaf away.
5. Stalks may be tied in bunches or shown loose.

Spinach

1. Remove dried, yellowed or wilted leaves.
2. Remove root system just below bottom leaves.
3. Leaves should be crisp, deep green, and free from blemishes and dirt.

Squash, Summer (Zucchini, Yellow Crookneck or Straightneck, Patty-Pan)

1. Specimens should be uniform in size, shape and color.
2. Stems should be attached and trimmed $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 inch.
3. Specimens should be immature or rind should not be tough or hard (specimens 6 to 9 inches long are preferred).
4. True to variety type and free from blemishes and dirt.

Squash, Winter (Acorn, Hubbard, Butternut, Delicious, Cushaw)

1. Specimens should be uniform in size, shape and color.
2. Stems should be trimmed $\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 inches.
3. Specimens should be mature or rind should be hard and firm.

4. True to variety type and free from blemishes and dirt.

Sweetcorn

1. Exhibit with husks on.
2. Freshness is necessary.
3. Well-filled kernels and filled to the tip of the ear.
4. Leave a few loose leaves at the top of the ear.
5. Trim base of the ears evenly to the base of the last outer leaf.

Sweetpotatoes

1. Specimens should be uniform and free from disease, insect or mechanical damage.
2. Should be typical of variety.
3. Diameter should not be less than 2 inches or more than $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches.
4. Length should be 2.5 to 3 times the diameter.
5. Gently wash specimens to remove dirt.
6. Remove all "hair" roots and do not trim the ends of the specimens.

Swiss Chard

1. Leaf blades should be uniform in color, crisp, with bright tender, fleshy leaf stalks.

2. One plant or leaves from one plant makes an exhibit.

Tomatoes

1. Select for varietal type, size, color, and maturity.
2. Firm, free from cracks, disease, insect, and mechanical injury.
3. Remove stem when exhibiting.
4. Do not get overripe or soft specimens.
5. Exhibit with stem end down.

Turnips

1. Smaller sizes are generally most desirable.
2. Uniform with bright color.
3. Clean and free from side roots and blemishes.
4. Trim tops 1 to 3 inches.

Watermelons

1. Typical of the variety in shape and color.
2. Symmetrical.
3. Free from gourd necks or bottle necks.
4. Not overripe, sunburned, or damaged by insects or disease.
5. Avoid "flat bottomed" melons.