

Preparing Crop Sheaves and Threshed Grain for Exhibit



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Crop samples make interesting, attractive and lasting exhibits. High-quality exhibits require time and attention to detail. The exhibitor will learn about the crop in preparing a sample for exhibit.

If your project work is evaluated through an interview judging process, your knowledge about the crop and preparation is part of the determination for your final placing.

The guidelines in this publication can help you in the process of preparing your exhibit.

Sheaves

A well-constructed crop sheaf makes an excellent exhibit. Sheaves may be constructed from small grain, forage, row crops or other crops. The following are general guidelines for constructing crop sheaves. Remember to check the rules for the show in which you plan to enter exhibits for specific requirements.

Small-grain Sheaves

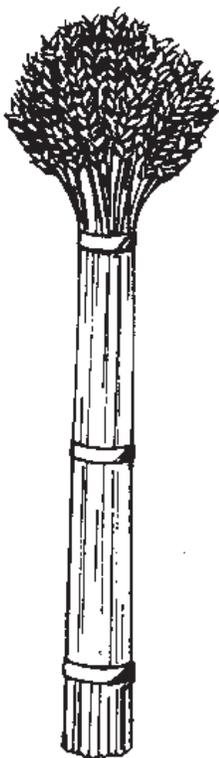
To make attractive small-grain sheaves, select the plants in the field from well-matured standing grain. You may choose immature plants as a second choice if mature plants are not available at the time of the crop show. The plants must be headed. Select plants with large, disease-free, well-filled heads and clean, bright stems. Cut the stems full length.

Spread out the plants in an airy room away from direct sunlight until they are cured (dried). Strip all leaves from the stems, taking care not to break the stem/straw. When ready to build the sheaf, place a damp cloth over the heads and upper stems to toughen them for the sheaf-building process. Another person working with you will make the construction easier and the sheaf better quality.

To start the sheaf, select 30 to 40 stems and tie them together with cord or electrical tape in several places to form a central core for the sheaf. Then place other stems around the core, with each succeeding head slightly lower to make a large, attractive, rounded bundle of heads.

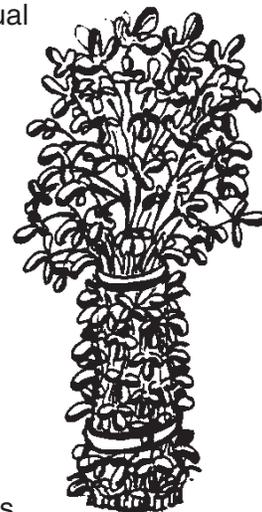
A sheaf should be at least 2½ inches in diameter (or 7 to 9 inches circumference) about half way up from the base. The sheaf should be tied firmly and securely in three or four places. To dress up the sheaf, cover the tied areas with colored ribbon or tape. After tying, cut the sheaf evenly at the base.

When finished, the sheaf should be hung head down until packed for the show. A well-built small-grain sheaf will stand by itself but is easily knocked down because it is top-heavy.



The sheaf should be free of disease, insect, weather or other damage. It should be free of weeds and other foreign material. Select leafy stems and cut close to the ground. Do not strip leaves or branchlets from the stem because forage should retain its color and leaves.

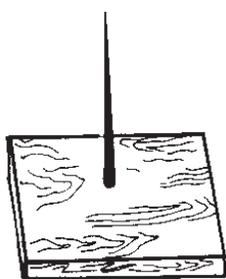
For the sheaf, select those individual stems that have retained the most and best leaves with their color. Forage sheaves should be 3 to 5 inches in diameter (9½ to 11 inches circumference) and tied securely at a point one-third up from the base. One or two additional evenly spaced ties may be added to secure the sheaf and prevent spreading. Use tying materials and other preparation guidelines as described earlier for a small-grain sheaf.



Other Sheaves

Generally, select plants that are nearest maturity. Cut plants as close to exhibit time as feasible to prolong freshness and quality.

Each stem or stalk should be cut to remove roots and to form a sheaf of uniform height. Except as noted, all other parts, including leaves, seeds or pods, should remain on each plant and be free of disease, insect and other physical damage. Tie stems or stalks with cord, ribbon or tape in three. Space the tied areas evenly with each other.



A sheaf stand may be constructed by putting a very large nail or a pointed ¼-inch wooden dowel through an 8-inch-square board as a base.

Forage Sheaves

Forage sheaves, which include grass and legume crops, usually are intended to be exhibited at hay harvest stage. This means a sheaf with emphasis on leaves, color (green) and early stage of maturity for top-quality hay.

Forages sheaves often are picked fresh and shown green; however, the plants should dry enough so they do not mold while on display. Forage may be cured before building the sheaf, but do not present samples that are excessively dry.



◀ Large row crops (corn and sunflower):

Prepare six plants for exhibit.
Remove leaves from sunflowers.

Small broadleaf crops (canola, dry bean, flax, soybean, etc.):

Prepare sufficient plants so the sheaf has a 2.5- to 3-inch diameter (or 7- to 9-inch circumference) at the middle of the exhibit. Remove lower leaves from canola, crambe, flax or safflowers.

Cleaning a Sample of Threshed Grain for Exhibition

To prepare a sample of threshed grain for an exhibit, follow the steps listed below.

Adequate time and paying attention to detail will result in a high-quality sample.

1. **Check the rules or guidelines of the show.**

The requirements on the size of the sample, how the sample is obtained and when the grain was grown may be different for each show.

2. **Generally, the grain is to come from the most recent harvest and be dried for proper storage.** In North Dakota, the state crop show held at the North Dakota Winter Show requires grain to be grown in the previous growing season. Exhibits at the North Dakota State Fair may be grown in the current or previous crop year.

3. **Each show sets the amount of grain required for exhibit.** The state crop show at the North Dakota Winter Show requires 2 quarts for wheat, durum, oats, barley, sunflower, rye, peas, lentils, beans and shelled corn. One quart is required for flax, canola, grasses, small-seeded legumes, millet and seeds of similar size. At the North Dakota State Fair, 1 quart is required for all lots of grain.

4. **Obtaining the sample:** Some shows require the exhibitor to raise the grain being exhibited. Other shows allow exhibitors to obtain the sample from a producer or local elevator; again, check the guidelines for the show.

5. **Information about the sample:** The exhibitor is expected to know and list the type of grain (for the correct lot), and the variety or hybrid.

6. **Preparing the sample:**

- A. Start with a sample two to four times the amount required.
- B. Screen the large sample to remove objectionable matter and obtain uniform seed size.
- C. Finish picking the sample by hand to remove impurities, damaged seed and nonuniform seed.

Process

When hand picking a sample, work with good light and use a tool such as a Popsicle stick or small paper card to move small amounts of the grain for closer examination. Remove damaged or discolored seed, seed of other crops or weeds and any other impurities in the sample. Collect the good seed and place it in a container until you have reached the amount required for exhibition.

Condition

Ideal samples are clean with uniform, plump kernels of good color and are free of musty odors. The sample should not have any sign of mechanical or insect damage, mold or rot. Also, the sample should not have any small, shriveled, cracked, broken, diseased, dull or off-color kernels.

Free of Weed Seeds

The sample should be free of weed seeds and any foreign or inert objectionable materials.

Package the sample for delivery to the show. Many shows will have display boxes for the samples. For those shows, bring the sample in a zip lock-type of bag (gallon size works well for most samples) and include the exhibit tag completed with the name of the exhibitor, grain variety or hybrid, and other information requested.

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100-5-13; web-9-15