



Harvesting and Preparing Vegetables for Exhibit

Reviewed by
Dr. Ronald Smith
Extension Horticulturist

Raymond Wagner
Retired 4-H Youth Specialist

Robert G. Askew
Retired Extension Horticulturist

Formatted and Updated by
Sarah Rude

General Considerations

4-H Horticultural and Garden shows are educational by nature. They should inspire project members to grow better quality fruits and vegetables and give pride in the produce grown.

4-H'ers are encouraged to exhibit the vegetables they have grown in their garden at local and/or county achievement shows. There are several types of exhibits for garden produce:

1. Entries of individual vegetable specimen
2. Entries of a group of vegetable specimen
3. And educational exhibit – one IDEA or theme learned from participating in the project. This is a self-standing, three-dimensional display with a maximum size of three feet and the accompanying wall space.

The premium list of each local achievement show will state the number of specimens of each type of vegetable to be exhibited. The numbers listed in this publication are suggested recommendations.

Tips on Exhibiting

1. Selecting Vegetable for Exhibits (optimum maturity important)

- A. Select uniform specimens slightly over average size – when possible. Over-grown specimens are seldom typical and are frequently coarse and lacking in flavor.
- B. Select a few extra specimens above the requirements of the premium list for last minute replacements.
- C. Showmanship is important. All items in each entry should be uniform in size, shape, color, and degree of maturity.
- D. Avoid blemishes caused by decay, dirt, disease, insects or mechanical injury. If blemishes of any kind are severe enough, the exhibit may be disqualified.

2. Preparing the Vegetables for Exhibit

- A. Vegetables should be washed only as a last resort. Clean vegetables with a soft brush or facial tissue to remove loose soil.
- B. The tops of all root crops like carrots and beets should be one inch long.
- C. Keep the vegetables as fresh as possible before exhibiting.

Garden Produce Standards

Specimen

Uniform
Whole

Preparation

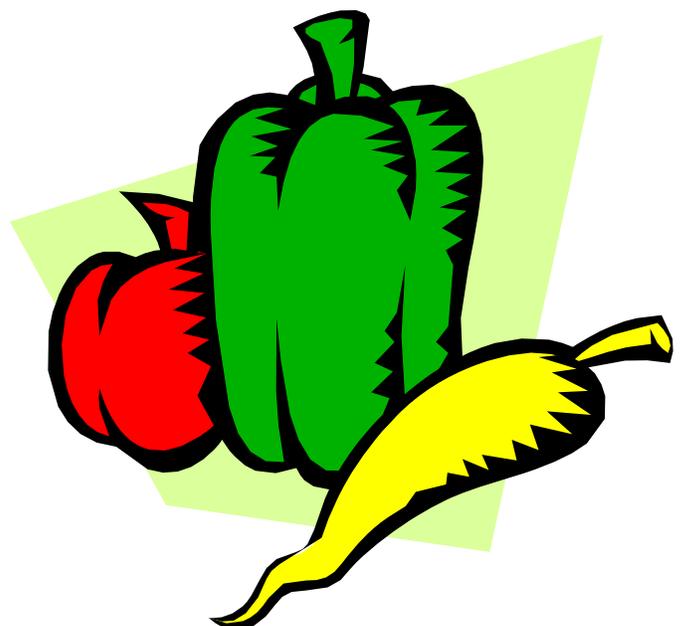
Correct number
Manner of preparation
Cleanliness, Neatness

Merits

Uniformity of size, shape, color, maturity

Faults

Wilted
Immature or overmature
Blemishes
Misshapen
Poor Color
Insect or disease or mechanical damage



4-H Garden Collection Exhibit

A 4-H garden collection provides each gardener with the opportunity to put together an attractive arrangement of vegetables. The produce needs to be prepared for exhibiting in the same manner as for individual displays. SUGGESTED REQUIREMENTS:

1. Each member may enter only one exhibit.
2. Each exhibit should contain five different kinds of vegetables.
 - a. Two varieties of squash or two varieties of tomatoes do not qualify as two kinds.
 - b. Fruits – apples, plums, raspberries, etc., do not qualify. Gourds are not considered a vegetable.
3. Vegetable categories:
Suggested number of specimens for each kind of vegetable by size category are as follows:
 - a. **Large vegetables** – one specimen: cabbage, cauliflower, eggplant, head lettuce, melons, pumpkins, rutabagas, squash
 - b. **Medium-sized vegetables** – three specimens: beets, carrots, cucumbers (slicing), Kohlrabi, onions, parsnips, peppers, potatoes, sweet corn, tomatoes, turnips
 - c. **Small-sized vegetables** – six specimens: beans (snap), cucumbers (pickling), peas (in the pod)

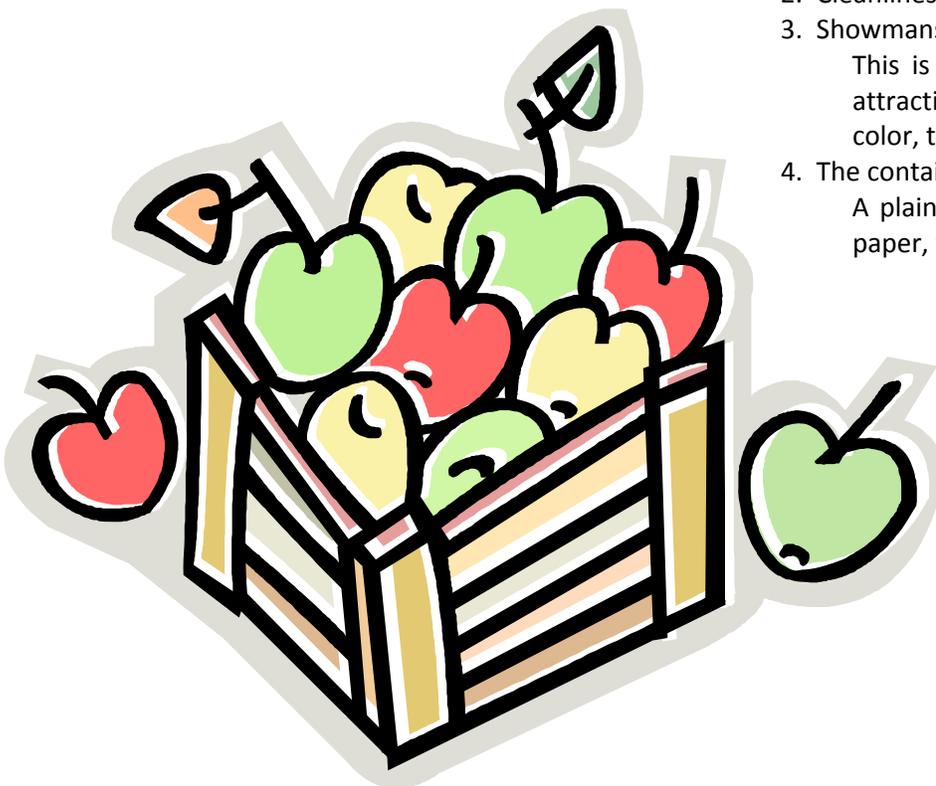
4. It is suggested that exhibitors choose vegetables from each of the three size categories to add interest to their display. However, the exhibit may contain all kinds of vegetables from the same size category, e.g., cauliflower, a well-colored pumpkin, an eggplant and a muskmelon (all from the large-size category) could make an attractive five-vegetable exhibit.

Display the collection in a shallow box approximately the size of a peach crate. Deeper boxes hide the vegetables.

- a. Line the box with white paper for neatness and uniformity.
 - b. Points will be taken off if the display is decorated in any manner (artificial grass, leaves, decorative basket, etc.).
5. Select vegetables with a variety of shapes, color, texture and form.

Standards for Judging

1. Quality of vegetables
The same basis will be used as for individual specimen displays.
2. Cleanliness
3. Showmanship
This is the arrangement of the vegetables in an attractive manner. Factors include eye appeal, color, texture, shapes.
4. The container itself is not to be judged
A plain container, appropriately lined with white paper, will enhance the display.



Asparagus

Merits: Straight, dark green spears with tight scales. Free of rust, insect injury, or other blemishes.

Faults: Crooked, off-color, overmature spears. Blemishes from insects, diseases. Shriveling or wilting

Preparation: Trim to uniform length of 7 to 8 inches. Tie in two places with rubber bands or ribbon.

Exhibit: One bunch of 6 spears.

Beans (snap)

Merits: Good color, straight, free from defects. Pods fleshy, well filled. True to variety. Uniform. Small seeds. Free from stringiness

Faults: Cracked pods, poor color, seeds too large (overmature); disease, insect, or mechanical injury.

Preparation: Harvest fresh or place in plastic bag and store in refrigerator until ready for exhibit. Leave calyx attached (stem).

Exhibit: 12 pods.

Beets

Merits: Color dark red, globe shape, firm, tender, smooth, 2 to 2 ½ inches in diameter.

Faults: Poor color, misshapen, rough skin, over-size, insect or disease damage.

Preparation: Tops 1 inch long. Leaves cause wilting of roots. Do not remove tap root. Roots may be washed.

Exhibit: 6 specimens



Broccoli

Merits: Head firm, good color, tender and crisp, free of insects. Not showing yellow flowers.

Faults: Wilted, poor color, flower open, insect or disease damage.

Preparation: Harvest fresh or keep refrigerated until ready to exhibit. Remove all leaves below the head. Minimum diameter of head (or heads) 3 inches. Stalk and head at least 6 inches long.

Exhibit: 1 head.

Cabbage

Merits: Head solid, firm and fresh; free from insect damage, tender and crisp, heavy for size.

Faults: Wilted, poor color, flower open, insect or disease damage.

Preparation: Harvest fresh or keep refrigerated until ready to exhibit. Remove all leaves below the head. Minimum diameter of head (or heads) 3 inches. Stalk and head at least 6 inches long.

Exhibit: 1 head.

Carrots

Merits: Smooth; straight; good, bright color; free of cracking, insect and disease damage; free of green or purpling crowns; uniform length and shape.

Faults: Too large or too small, crooked, poor color, cracked, green or purple crowns, insect and disease damage, green core.

Preparation: Cut tops to 1 inch long. Roots may be washed.

Exhibit: 6 specimens.

Cauliflower

Merits: White; not rough and grainy; crisp, solid "jacket" leaves; fresh and with good color; free from insects.

Faults: Poor color (yellowish), grainy, wilted, insect and disease damage.

Preparation: Trim jacket leaves even with top of head. Some of the older leaves may be removed.

Exhibit: 1 head.

Celery

Merits: Crisp; thick; free of insect, disease or mechanical injury.

Faults: Wilted, small size stalks, blemishes, poor color.

Preparation: Cut roots even with stalk. Trim leaves uniformly. Refrigerate until ready to exhibit.

Exhibit: 1 bunch.

Cucumbers

Merits: Straight, dark green color, free of “warts,” uniform in diameter from stem to blossom end.

Faults: Oversize, yellowish color, overmature.

Preparation: Leave stems ½ inch long on pickling cucumbers only, wipe clean. Size: pickling, 2-5 inches; slicing, 6-8 inches.

Exhibit: 6 specimens of pickling cucumbers, 3 specimens of slicing cucumbers.

Dill

Merits: Good color, mature, ready to use.

Faults: Immaturity, small size.

Preparation: Cut seed heads with 10-12 inch stems. Tie near lower end of stems and again just below seed heads.

Exhibit: 3 heads.

Eggplant

Merits: Firm, medium to large size, uniformly purple, small blossom scar, fresh green calyx.

Faults: Too small, bronze or green in color, dried calyx, immature.

Preparation: Use thumb pressure to determine maturity. One inch of stem attached. Large to medium size.

Exhibit: 1 specimen.

Kohlrabi

Merits: 1 ½ to 3 inches in diameter; tender; good color; free of insect, disease and weather damage

Faults: Too large, tough, poor color, weather or pest damage.

Preparation: Cut tops at base. Remove stem and root at base.

Exhibit: 3 specimens



Lettuce – Head

Merits: Fresh, crisp, well-colored leaves. Head should be large and firm.

Faults: Wilted, yellowed leaves, insect damage, seed stalk.

Preparation: Harvest fresh or place in plastic bag and store in refrigerator until ready to exhibit. Remove older outer leaves that show yellowing.

Exhibit: 1 head of head lettuce.

Muskmelon

Merits: Medium to large size, smooth stem end, good color for variety, fragrant, free from decay spots. (Judge should have privilege of sampling melon.)

Faults: Rough stem, poorly colored, bruises or decay spots, insect damage, over or underripe.

Preparation: Do not wash.

Exhibit: 1 specimen

Onions (Dry)

Merits: Firm, mature, well-shaped, free from sunscald, doubles and splits. Small neck that is well dried. Free from insect, disease and mechanical damage. Heavy for size, good color.

Faults: Peeled bulbs a common fault. (White underskin should not be exposed.) Immature, misshaped, double or split bulbs, large, soft neck. Poor color, size and finish. Disease, insect or mechanical injury.

Preparation: Remove no more than one layer of skin to clean. Best if no skin is removed. Do not cut tops so low that bulb is injured. Leave tops 1 inch long. Do not wash. Trim roots to ¾ inch. Do not trim roots closely or bulb may be damaged.

Exhibit: 6 specimens.



Onions (Green)

Merits: Up to ½ inch in diameter, straight, white stem and dark green leaves. Bulbs not enlarged. Even length. Table ready.

Faults: Too small or too large, crooked, poor color, dry or discolored leaves.

Preparation: Trim tops to an even length, overall length of onions exhibited 6-8 inches.

Exhibit: 6 onions

Parsnips

Merits: Clean, clear color, well-tapered root, free of blemishes. Medium to large size, absence of side roots or branching.

Faults: Poorly colored, crooked, misshapen roots, blemished, too small.

Preparation: Cut tops to 1 inch length, do not trim off lower portion of tap root.

Exhibit: 3 specimens

Peas

Merits: Bright green, well-filled pods. Table-ready, uniform size and shape.

Faults: Poorly filled pods, off color, seeds past best stage for use, blemished.

Preparation: Leave calyx on (stem).

Exhibit: 12 pods.

Peppers

Merits: Large and uniform in size; dark green color, crisp; absence of blemishes, insect disease and mechanical damage. Smooth.

Faults: Badly misshapen, rough, too small, off color or wilted. Sunscald, mechanical injury, insect or disease damage.

Preparation: Size is of considerable importance. Leave stem ½ inch long.

Exhibit: 3 specimens.

Potatoes

Merits: Firm, medium size, clean. Mature, free of insect damage or mechanical injury. Typical shape and color for variety.

Faults: Mechanical injury, unusually deep eyes for variety. Poor color. Sunburn. Hollow heart. "Skinning" of immature tubers.

Preparation: Brush or wipe off with soft cloth. Can be washed but do not damage skin.

Exhibit: 6 specimens.

Pumpkin and Squash

Merits: Good weight for size, good clear color. Unblemished from insects and disease

Faults: Too small, immature, stems removed. Color and shape not typical of variety.

Preparation: Exhibit with 2 or 3 inches of stem attached. Summer squash should have soft rind and be in eating stage (not over 8" long). Pumpkins and winter squash have hard rind.

Exhibit: 1 specimen.

Radishes

Merits: Fresh, firm, crisp, good color, smooth and free of blemishes.

Faults: Spongy, wilted, poorly colored, rough.

Preparation: Leave 1 inch top. Wash and tie six roots per bunch. Harvest fresh or refrigerate until ready to exhibit. Red and white radishes should be in separate classes.

Exhibit: 1 bunch of six radishes.

Rhubarb

Merits: Young, tender stalks, good color, free of blemishes, straight, uniform size.

Faults: Tough, overmature (coarse), poorly colored stalks. Lower end of stalks cut.

Preparation: Pull, do not cut stalks. Trim leaves so only 2 inches of leaf blade remain attached to stalk. Tie 6 stalks at both ends.

Exhibit: 1 bunch.

Rutabaga

Merits: Good color, firm, smooth, free of side roots, baseball size or larger, free of insect, disease or mechanical injury, uniform in size and color.

Faults: Poorly colored; soft and spongy; too small; rough showing insect, disease or mechanical injury.

Preparation: Cut tops back to 1 inch. Leave 2 inches of tap root.

Exhibit: 3 specimens.

Spinach

Merits: Clean, fresh, crisp, well-colored leaves, free of blemishes.

Faults: Wilted, poorly colored, insect-damage leaves.

Preparation: Wash roots, harvest fresh or refrigerate until exhibited.

Exhibit: 3 plants with roots.

Sweet Corn

Merits: Kernels well filled, in milk stage and in even rows. No insect or disease damage. Good color for variety. Fresh husks.

Faults: Immature or overmature. Crooked, uneven rows; poor color for variety. Cob not filled to tip. Dried husks. Insect damage.

Preparation: Do not remove husk. Corn deteriorates rapidly if husk is removed. Trim silk to within 1 inch of tip of husk. Shank 1 to 2 inches long.

Exhibit: 3 ears.

Swiss Chard

Merits: Clean, fresh, well-colored leaves. Free of insect and disease damage. Bright, tender stems, leaves 8 to 12 inches long.

Faults: Wilted, poorly colored, insect or disease damaged leaves.

Preparation: Wash and keep fresh by refrigeration. Remove roots from each plant.

Exhibit: 3 plants.

Tomatoes

Merits: Uniform in size and color. Ripe but not overripe. Smooth and well shaped. Freedom from cracking, insect and disease damage. Medium size or larger. Free from sunscald.

Faults: Poor color, sunscald, too large or small. Misshapen. Insect or disease damage. Overripe, which causes softness and "leaky" fruit. Unsightly scars on blossom end, cracks on stem end.

Preparation: Harvest fresh or refrigerate before displaying. Remove stems to prevent stem punctures.

Exhibit: 6 specimens of large fruited varieties. 12 specimens in the pear and plum (cherry) sorts.

Turnips

Merits: Good color; firm; smooth; free of side roots; medium size (baseball size or smaller); free of insect, disease or mechanical injury; uniform in size and color.

Faults: Poorly colored; soft and spongy; too large; rough; showing insect, disease or mechanical injury.

Preparation: Cut tops back to 1 inch. Leave 2 inches of tap root.

Exhibit: 6 specimens.

Watermelon

Merits: In best eating stage, medium to large size. (Judge should have privilege of sampling.) Good color, free of blemishes.

Faults: Immature or overripe, poor color, misshapen, blemished.

Preparation: May be washed to remove soil.

Exhibit: 1 specimen.



4-H Individual Vegetable Judging Card

Lot No. _____ Ribbon Placing _____

Exhibitor No. _____ County _____ Age _____

Exhibit Preparation

Manner of Preparation (tops, roots, base) Good _____ Untrimmed _____ Too close _____ Too long _____

Appearance Good _____ Blemishes _____ Dirty _____ Disease _____

Uniformity

Size Good _____ Too large _____ Too small _____

Shape Good _____ Variations _____ Misshapen _____

Color Good _____ Variations _____ Discolored _____

Maturity

Ideal _____ Immature _____ Overripe _____

Freshness

Good _____ Fair _____ Wilted _____

Defects or Damage

Insect None _____ Slight _____ Unacceptable _____

Disease None _____ Slight _____ Unacceptable _____

Mechanical None _____ Slight _____ Unacceptable _____

Other Defects Green areas _____ Sunscald _____ Woody _____

Quality

Good _____ Medium _____ Poor _____

Disqualified

Too many _____ Too few _____ Other _____