

USK SHOW: HORTICULTURAL TENT **ADVICE FOR THOSE NEW TO SHOWING**

GENERAL

- Read the schedule; if it says ‘novice class’ it means that the class is only open to those who have not won in that class before, so the competition may not be so great
- Read the schedule; the numbers of vegetables, or flowers or types must be adhered to, otherwise you will see ‘Not According To Schedule’ the same applies to the sizes of pots or containers.
- Entries are best displayed on a clean white plate or plain container. Usually Dahlias or Chrysanthemums are displayed in bikini (2 piece) vases, but there is no downgrading for other types of container. If the class states ‘displayed for effect’ then the container does enhance the entry.
- Look at the winning entries to see how they have been judged, look at the angle of the flowers on the stems in the case of dahlias, the way the freshness of the vegetables have been judged, runner beans snapped, beetroot cut open, potatoes turned over to demonstrate the blemish
- Extra help and guidance can be obtained from books such as ‘The Horticultural Show Handbook’ published by the Royal Horticultural Society, or the handbooks from the National Vegetable Society, the National Dahlia Society and the National Chrysanthemum Society

VEGETABLES

- Potatoes - all tubers should be the same size, shape, with skins without signs of fungal disease or animal attack. They should be suitable for long-term storage. Avoid scrubbing the skins to clean them; wrap the potatoes in damp kitchen roll the night before, and wipe the skins clean with damp paper. Size is not all-important consistency and freedom from pest and disease is.
- Carrots - all roots should be the same length with the same thickness. The roots should not have split tap roots (fangs); avoid those with green tops, where the roots have been pushed up out of

the soil. If the schedule states 'with foliage' include all the tops. Avoid any roots with carrot root fly damage or canker. They should have a bright orange colour, and be full of moisture, again clean with kitchen paper as for potatoes. (Same for parsnips)

- Courgettes, cucumbers, marrows – when the class states 'a pair' they should be identical; in shape, colour, age, and variety. If flowers can be included it improves your chances. Pick with a piece of stalk.
- Onions – the diameter is vital, and determines the class. The skins should be dry, tight, not blemished by fungus, and not cracked. Avoid over peeling, taking too much dry skin off and exposing the soft green skin underneath. The 'neck'; (the stem), of the onion should be dry and thin. A thick neck would mean the onion would not store well. Bind the neck of the onion tightly with raffia, or wool, do it at the last minute, otherwise the stem will shrivel and the binding will come loose. Onions for sets and pickling onions should be displayed on dry fine sand on a white plate. Some classes ask for 'shown as grown' literally pulled out of the ground, tops as well.
- Tomatoes – all should be the same colour, and size, and age. The green sepals should be fresh and not withered. The skins should be free of green (greenback) and blemish. Fruits on the vine are allowed to be of less consistency.
- Herbs – the foliage should be young, fresh, and if grown for the leaves without flowers. Display can be the deciding factors. The more unusual herbs may make the difference between winning or not.

FRUIT

- Apples and pears - all the same size, and shape, free of pest and disease, consistent colour. Picked with a stalk, avoid the king fruit with a swollen fruit stalk. The fruit should appear full of moisture. Make sure the variety is in the correct class; e.g. dessert, cooking (culinary). Avoid bruising the fruit when it is picked.
- Stone fruit - should have their fruit stalks and still have the bloom so be careful how they are picked.

- Raspberries, strawberries, tayberries and currants - try and pick with the stalk (use scissors), currants should be left on the whole strig. Cut off any dried up fruit.
- Grapes – remove aborted fruit, display with leaves
- Unusual fruit, kiwi, passion fruit – always put a pair in if a number is not requested, always include the stalk and the more unusual and difficult to grow will usually get the prize

FLOWERS

- Collections – all should be the same types; all annuals, all perennials, each type should be of best quality
- Sweet peas - strong stems, long spikes with the top flowers open and the lower flowers still fresh coloured, a range of colours looks good but is not essential
- Roses – should have fresh sepals, clean unblemished petals, not over peeled to remove fade outer petals. There should be unopened petals sin the centre of the flower. A specimen should have a long straight clean stem, with the flower sitting on top of the stem, not bent. Multi-stems should have a range of buds, partly open flowers and open flowers. Evidence that blown flowers have been removed detracts from the multi-stems.
- Gladioli – the stem should show 1/3 tight bud, 1/3 half open, 1/3 fully open but not blown. Best blooms have the flowers all facing the same way, and the stalks straight. This applies generally to all multi-flowered stems.
- Pot plants – should show steady consistent growth, no insect damage, and if grown for flowers, open flowers and more buds to come. The judges can recognise a recent purchase from Tesco at three paces! Turn your pots ¼ turn every few days to ensure they are balanced in shape

Other links for advice

National Vegetable Society; www.nvsuk.org.uk

National Dahlia Society; www.dahlia.nds.co.uk

National Chrysanthemum Society;
www.nationalchrysanthemumsociety.org.uk

The Royal Horticultural Society; www.rhs.org.uk

**This information can be found on the Usk show web site –
www.uskshow.co.uk**