



Selecting and Showing Produce

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Produce is an important part of every fair. Experience in selecting and exhibiting fruits and vegetables will help exhibitors gain know-how and achieve success with these garden products. The exhibit is a demonstration of achievement.

Remember, the judge must place your entries as they are when he or she sees them. Because of the time involved in getting to the fair, the produce selected by the exhibitor may look much different when judged.

The Exhibitor

In addition to producing good fruits and vegetables, an exhibitor must know how to select a show sample, how to prepare the sample selected, and how to show it to its best advantage.

General Rules

- * Read *all* show rules carefully.
- * Follow the rules. If the exhibit calls for six specimens, do not enter five or seven; however, taking at least one extra with you as a replacement in case of damage or loss is best.
- * Decide what to exhibit well in advance of the fair entry deadline.
- * If possible, get the most perishable products ready the morning entries are due at the fair. The fresher they are, the better they will hold up at the fair.
- * Carry exhibits to the fair in a way that will protect them from bruises and preserve their garden freshness. Wrap tomatoes separately in paper and pack them loosely in a box with foam packing peanuts or crumpled paper on the bottom. Wrap root and leaf vegetables in a damp cloth and keep them moist.
- * Be on time for entry into the fair.

The Exhibit

It is very important to select fruits and vegetables that are uniform in size, shape, and color, and free from insect, disease, or mechanical injury.

Preparation

For best appearance, specimens should be clean. Remove excess soil by brushing or washing. Avoid marking the skin of fruits and vegetables. Generally, root crops need to be washed. Leafy vegetables may be dipped or sprayed to remove soil, dust, or any foreign materials. Peppers and eggplants may be wiped with a damp cloth or a cloth to which a drop of salad oil has been applied. In all cases, do the job carefully and do not injure or bruise specimens.

Uniformity

One of the most important factors for a winning exhibit is uniformity. All specimens should be as nearly identical as possible in size, shape, color, freshness, and degree of maturity. Pick a specimen that is most nearly perfect, and then select others like it.

Quality and Condition

Cultural perfection and degree of maturity are other factors to consider in selecting fruits and vegetables for exhibition. The condition or degree of maturity should be at its best for good eating, typical of grocery store-

quality produce. Entries should not be overripe, wilted, or immature. For cultural perfection, the entry should be free from insect or mechanical injuries, cracks or blemishes, disease spots, wilt, and mold.

Size

The size should be the same as, or slightly larger than, the size sold in grocery stores. Excessively large specimens may indicate overmaturity, coarseness, or poor quality, although there may be a “largest specimen” category in the class. Small size indicates immaturity, and specimens may soon wilt and collapse. High-quality vegetables will also have high food value and are in the best condition for table use and for exhibition.

Quantity

The exact number of specimens required for a fruit and vegetable exhibit must be shown or the entry will be disqualified. Specimens damaged in judging may sometimes be replaced after judging.

General Requirements for Showing Vegetables

To give all competitors an equal chance to win at state or county fairs, all premium books should require the same entry standards. The material presented here can be helpful in unifying state and county requirements. Suggested numbers are given for each entry. The exact number of fruits or vegetables required in your local premium book should be exhibited. Odd numbers of products in each entry are helpful to assist the novice or untrained judge in final placement.

Apples

- * Three fruits.
- * Should be round to slightly elongated.
- * Apples are commonly red, yellow, or green, but many of the newer varieties may be a mixture of these colors. Colors should be true to variety and should be named on the entry tag.
- * Flesh should be white, or, on some varieties, soft pink.
- * Flesh should be crisp, white, and juicy.
- * Skin should be smooth and devoid of blemishes with firm tissue all the way to the core.

* Each fruit should have good symmetry.

* Fruit should not have brown or bruised flesh, discolorations of the skin, corky tissue on the skin, soft flesh, or a watery core.

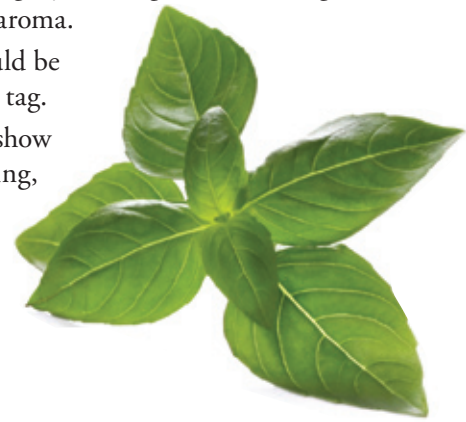


Asparagus

- * Nine stalks, untied; ends may be kept in water until judged.
- * Stalks should be uniform in color, whether green, white, or purple.
- * White butt not to exceed 1½ inches.
- * Diameter of stalk at midpoint about ½ inch.
- * Uniform taper and length.
- * Tip compact; not starting to open.
- * Entire stalk firm and tender.

Basil, fresh

- * Five stems.
- * Stems should be fresh and not wilted.
- * Free of insect damage, yellowing, or blackening, with a strong, pleasing aroma.
- * Variety name should be listed on the entry tag.
- * Stems should not show yellow leaves, wilting, signs of insect damage, or blackening of the stems.



Beans, green or wax

- * Twelve pods.
- * Wax and green beans must be clean, firm, crisp, and free of blemishes.
- * Pods should be long and straight, with uniform length, color, and maturity.
- * Ends should not be broken off in picking, although there may be bean length requirements in the premium book.
- * Seeds should not be more than half-grown.
- * Avoid dull and wilted beans as this indicates stringiness.

Beets, table or pickling

- * Five table beets or 11 pickling beets.
- * Beets should be uniform in size, shape, and color.
- * Smooth and free from side roots, cracks, or blemishes.
- * Tap root small and not too fleshy.
- * Flesh firm, crisp, and fine-grained. Avoid stringiness, which indicates overmaturity.
- * Medium-size beets, 1½ to 2½ inches in diameter, are preferred for table beets. Pickling beets should be ¾ to 1 inch in diameter.
- * Tops should be cut off, leaving 1 inch of stem.

Broccoli

- * One head.
- * Each head should be at least 3 inches in diameter.
- * Stems 5 to 6 inches long.
- * Heads compact and dark or purplish-green in color, depending on variety.
- * Avoid any yellowing of flowers in head. This indicates overmaturity and lack of quality.
- * Entries must be free from insects, worms, wilting, or other injury.

Brussels sprouts

- * Seven heads.
- * Heads should be compact.
- * Heads should be uniform in diameter; 1 inch is best.
- * Color should be uniformly green.
- * Heads should not be yellowing, overmature, puffy, or opening.
- * Stem should not exceed ½ inch.

Cabbage

- * One head.
- * Head should be firm, heavy for its size, free from insect or disease damage, and not withered or soft.
- * Midribs should not be too large. Leaves should not be trimmed too closely. Three wrapper leaves should be left after trimming. Leave core about ¼-inch long to hold leaves firmly.
- * Head should be of best commercial size and weight for its variety.

Carrots

- * Five roots.
- * Specimens should be typical of variety.
- * Select carrots that are smooth, clean, straight, fresh, firm, crisp, and of color characteristic of the variety. Variety should be named on the entry tag.
- * Carrots should be free from sunburn (greening at the top).
- * There should not be any side roots, cracks, deformities, or mechanical injuries.
- * When cut, the core should have the size, color, and firmness characteristic of the variety.
- * Avoid oversized or coarse specimens, except in “largest specimen” classes.
- * Do not trim tap roots.
- * Cut tops to 1 inch.

Cauliflower

- * One head.
- * Leave outer green leaves to protect the head.
- * Head should be white, yellow, or purple, solid, uniform, and smooth.
- * Do not trim the stem or core too closely; leave four to six leaves.
- * Trim green outer leaves to 1 inch above the head, just before showing.
- * If dirty, use a small, soft-bristled brush to remove soil. Move the brush in a circular motion over the head.
- * Heads should not have discolored buds.
- * Heads should not be overmature or show any development of the flower bud (ricing), which causes a rough surface.



Celeriac

- * Three roots.
- * Roots should be rough-surfaced and round, measuring 2 to 6 inches in diameter.
- * The root should have crisp, white flesh and smell like celery.
- * Roots should show uniform color and should be solid.
- * Celeriac should not be too large or small, wilted, or damaged from worms or insects.

Celery

- * One plant.
- * Remove roots.
- * Trim the butt straight across below the crown. Avoid cutting too closely.
- * Avoid split, pithy, woody, or stringy stalks.
- * Stalks must be clean and free from rust defects or mechanical injury.
- * Trim off outside stalks until the color is uniform.
- * Seed stalk should not be visible in the center of the plant.

Chinese cabbage

- * One plant.
- * Chinese cabbage heads should be compact and elongated with thin, many-veined leaves.
- * Color can be light green to white. One type, bok choy, has dark green leaves and white stalks. Bok choy does not form a solid head.
- * Look for solid, firm heads with tender, crisp leaves and uniform color.
- * Chinese cabbage heads should not show very prominent midribs, wilted leaves, or uneven color.

Chives

- * Three plants.
- * Chives should be dark green with hollow, thin leaves, preferably without flowers.
- * Leaves should be evenly green showing no sign of blemish or drying.
- * Avoid wilted or dried leaves, insect damage, or unevenly colored leaves.

Collards

- * Three plants.
- * Plants consist of rosettes of tender, dark green leaves attached to the main stem.
- * Remove roots.
- * Choose firm, crisp leaves with uniform color and size.
- * Avoid wilted, dirty, or damaged leaves.

Corn, sweet

- * Three ears.
- * Select ears filled out to the tip. Kernels should be tender and juicy.
- * Ears must be free from insect or disease injury.
- * Husks should be fresh and green. Dry or yellow husks indicate overmaturity.
- * Pull back husks slightly to examine the quality of the kernels, then smooth down.
- * Trim silks to 1 inch and shanks to 1 to 2 inches.

Cucumbers

- * Three slicing or 11 pickling.
- * Each specimen should be crisp, straight, and fine-grained, with shape typical of variety.
- * Pickling cucumbers should be 2 to 5 inches long. Slicing cucumbers should be 6 to 8 inches long but may vary with variety.
- * Cucumbers should be uniform in size, shape, color, and spines characteristic of the variety.
- * Avoid specimens with large, mature seeds. These are overripe.
- * Overripe cucumbers are generally puffy or dull in color.

Dill

- * One plant.
- * Dill should have green, fragrant flower heads with stems and green leaves.
- * Seeds are brown and immature and should not be shedding.
- * Look for freshness with clean leaves and stems.
- * Dirty foliage or flower heads, disease or insect damage, discoloration, or wilted foliage should be avoided.

Eggplant

- * One fruit.
- * Smooth and firm with small blossom scar and no blemishes.
- * Color should be uniformly purple, white, or black and shiny.
- * No greening or bronzing.
- * The stem should be short, about 1 inch. The calyx should be fresh and green.
- * Size should be about 4 inches or consistent with variety.
- * Wipe clean using a soft cloth before exhibiting.

Endive

- * Three plants.
- * Keep leaves attached to the crown.
- * Plants should be uniform in color, shape, and size.
- * The heads should be compact.
- * Plant centers should show creamy white.
- * All leaves should be tender, crisp, and fresh.

Garlic

- * Five bulbs.
- * Garlic bulbs should be 1½ to 3 inches in diameter.
- * Color may be white to pink; skin should be dry and papery.
- * Individual cloves should be uniform in size and shape. Clear skin also is a merit.
- * Soft or damaged bulbs indicate poor quality.



Grapes

- * One cluster.
- * Grape skins may be green, red, purple, or yellow when ripe.
- * The skin is usually thin and the flesh juicy. Seeds may or may not be present, depending on the variety.
- * Look for plump fruits with stem securely attached, rich coloring, and absence of shriveling or skin blemishes.
- * Blackening of skin near stem, soft or shriveled fruits, and mold present on fruits indicate underripe or overripe fruit.

Jicama

- * Three tubers.
- * Jicama should be free of bruises or cracks. Appearance should be fresh and firm.
- * Avoid tubers with cracks or bruises or that are soft.

Kale

- * One plant.
- * Foliage color should be grayish or blue-green and curly. Kale looks like a non-heading cabbage.
- * Firm leaves and color uniformity are important.
- * Avoid wilted, dirty, or damaged leaves or uneven color.

Kohlrabi

- * Three balls (stems).
- * Roots should be removed just below the ball.
- * Leave four to six upper leaves trimmed to 3 inches in length.
- * Specimens should be 2 to 3 inches in diameter.
- * Specimens should not be hard, woody, or pithy.
- * The skin should be easily punctured with a fingernail.

Leeks

- * Five bulbs.
- * Leeks should be large and green with thick, straight 1- to 2-inch thick stems.
- * Leeks should have flattened, v-shaped green leaves.
- * Uniform size, shape, and color, dark green leaves and clear white bulbs.
- * Underripe and overripe leeks will show uneven color and faded or pale tops. Avoid wilted or damaged leeks.



Mint

- * Five stems.
- * Stems should be green, fresh, and crisp. Free of insect damage or yellowing, with a strong, pleasing aroma.
- * The variety should be named on the entry tag.
- * Avoid signs of insect damage and blackened stems.



Lettuce, head

- * One head.
- * Heads should be fresh, crisp, firm, and fine-textured.
- * Pull off outer yellowed leaves.
- * Leave a core about ¼-inch long.
- * Leave one to three wrapper leaves to protect the head.
- * Keep lettuce cool at all times.
- * Avoid broken ribs, tip burn, and sliminess.
- * Heads should be heavy for their size.

Lettuce, leaf

- * Three plants.
- * Follow the same general principles as for head lettuce.

Muskmelons

- * One melon.
- * Free from cracks, decay, and injury.
- * The stem should have been removed smoothly and easily.
- * Avoid overripe and underripe melons.
- * Clean with a soft brush and remove soil from the netting.

Mustard

- * Five stems.
- * Look for fresh, clean, uniform, leaves and stems.
- * Dirty, diseased, discolored, or wilted leaves or stems should not be exhibited.

Okra

- * Five pods.
- * Pods should be uniform and not more than 3 inches long.
- * Pods must be light green and tender; okra becomes tough rapidly.
- * Dried pods are not acceptable.
- * Length and taper at the points should be uniform.

Onions, green

- * One bunch of five.
- * Select tender, medium-sized stems with long white shanks.
- * Shanks should be straight, smooth, and uniform in size. Look for fresh, green tops. Trim tops 3 inches above the white shank.
- * Cut roots to ½-inch long.
- * Remove wrapper leaves to expose the long, white shanks just before showing. Do not peel heavily.

Onions, dry

- * Five roots.
- * Each onion should have bright, hard, dry skin and should be well-shaped for the variety. There should be no splits or doubles.
- * Small basal roots should be trimmed to ¼-inch long.
- * Do not peel to give a slick appearance.
- * Necks should be small and dry and not green.
- * Color and size should be typical of the variety.

Parsley

- * One bunch.
- * Fresh, bright green, and free of soil.
- * No yellow or discolored leaves.
- * A bunch ½ inch in diameter makes one exhibit.
- * Stems should be at least 4 inches with overall length 8 to 10 inches.



Parsnips

- * Three roots.
- * Roots firm, smooth, and well-shaped for the variety.
- * Light, creamy-color skins.
- * Medium size (5 to 7 inches) indicates best quality.
- * Tops trimmed to 1 inch.
- * Soft, shriveled roots are undesirable and unpalatable.

Peas, in pod

- * Twelve pods.
- * Pods should be fresh, bright green, crisp, straight, and unblemished; evenly filled with well-sized but tender peas.
- * Flat, wilted, or discolored pods indicate poor quality.
- * Hard peas indicate overmaturity.

Peppers

- * Three fruits.
- * Fresh, firm, evenly colored, heavy for their size, and true to shape for the variety.
- * Green peppers should not show any red color.
- * Free of sun scald and insect, disease, or mechanical injury.
- * Leave stems ½-inch long.



Potatoes

- * Five tubers.
- * Uniformity, shallowness of eyes, smoothness, condition, size, and trueness of type should be considered.
- * Tubers must be free from soil, insect, disease, and mechanical injuries.
- * Clean tubers with a soft brush.
- * Avoid cracked, sunburned, and oversized tubers.

Pumpkins, pie

- * One pumpkin.
- * Clean using a soft-bristled brush.
- * Color and shape should be uniform.
- * Pumpkin should have good weight for its size.
- * Pumpkin should be free of injuries and blemishes.
- * The stem must be attached and should be no less than 1-inch long.
- * The pumpkin should be mature with a hard rind, resistant to puncture with thumbnail.

Radishes

- * Five roots.
- * Specimens should be medium-sized, smooth, firm, and crisp.
- * Entries should be uniform in size and color and should be true to the variety.
- * Mild pressure will indicate undesirable softness or a spongy texture.
- * Tops cut to 1 inch.

Raspberries

- * Fifteen berries.
- * Central core remains on the plant and should not be present in the fruit.
- * Raspberries may be red, black, purple, or golden when ripe.
- * Fruit should be juicy, fragrant, and rich in color.
- * Fruit should be firm and not overripe or underripe.
- * Avoid berries that are soft and falling apart, leaking, bruised or moldy.

Rhubarb

- * Five stalks.
- * Stalks should be fresh, firm, and fairly thick but not coarse.
- * Leave small portions of leaves (½ to 1 inch) to prevent bleeding.
- * Stalks should be pulled, not cut, from the crown. The sheath may be removed.
- * Wilted rhubarb can be soaked in ice water to restore firmness and color.

Rosemary

- * Five stems.
- * The variety should be named on the entry tag.
- * Leaves should be green and pliable, not brittle or dry.
- * Free of insect damage or yellowing with a strong, pleasant aroma.

Rutabaga

- * One root.
- * Medium-sized (4 to 6 inches in diameter), uniform, fresh, and of bright light-purple and cream color.
- * Free from insect, disease, or mechanical injury.
- * Rutabagas should be exhibited without tops. Leave stems 1-inch long.

Salsify (oyster plant)

- * Five roots.
- * Roots should be 1 to 1½ inches at greatest diameter.
- * Length not less than 6 inches.
- * Roots straight with an even taper.
- * All side roots removed.
- * Trim tops to 1 inch.
- * Brush off all soil.

Shallots

- * Five roots.
- * Round or oblong bulbs.
- * Shallots have dry yellow or red skin, are about 1 inch in diameter and up to 2½ inches long.
- * Bulbs must be crisp with uniform color.
- * Shallots should be relatively heavy, with clear skin, and uniform in size and shape.
- * Avoid thick, soft necks, damaged bulbs, or bulbs that are overmature/undermature.

Spinach

- * Three plants.
- * Leaves should be fresh, thick, and dark green, smooth or crumpled.
- * Wilted foliage, poor foliage color, and gritty texture are indications of poor handling or overmaturity.

Strawberries

- * Fifteen berries.
- * Fruit should be cone-shaped with even, red color.
- * Cut stems to 1 inch, leave calyxes attached.
- * Rich red skin with a juicy red flesh is important. The core should be fleshy and juicy.
- * The skin should be free of bruises and blemishes.
- * No visible dirt should be present.
- * Avoid mold on the skin, pulpy core, bruised flesh, and brown calyx or soft tissue near the calyx.



Squash, summer

- * Three squash.
- * Pick small- to medium-sized when the rind is soft and tender.
- * Select uniformity in size, shape, and color.
- * Leave stems about ½-inch long.
- * Brush to clean off soil, but do not wash.

Squash, winter

- * One squash.
- * Maturity is indicated by the hardness of the outer rind, resistant to puncture with thumbnail.
- * Specimens should be true to variety in type, shape, and color. Variety should be named on the entry tag.
- * Entries free from insect, disease, or mechanical injury.
- * The stem must be attached and should be about 1-inch long.

Sweet potatoes

- * Three roots.
- * Sweet potato roots should be round, spindle-shaped, or cylindrical.
- * Sweet potatoes may have red, orange, or yellow skin. Skin can be smooth or russeted.
- * Select for uniformity in shape, size, and color.
- * Roots should be fresh and free from blemishes.

- * Branched, blemished, or cracked roots, and uneven color are not acceptable.

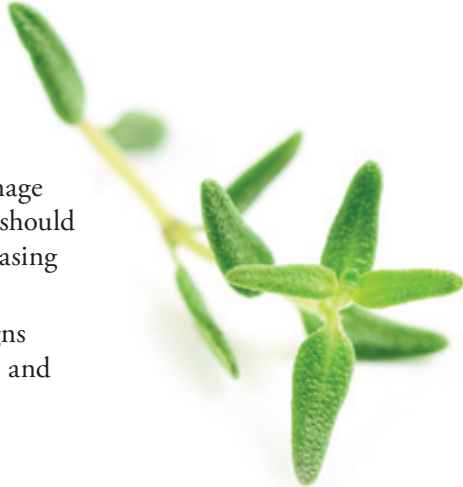


Swiss chard

- * Five stalks (leaf and petiole are one stalk).
- * Entries must be fresh, crisp, and have bright-green leaves with clear stalks.
- * Stalks must be free from injury.
- * Entries should be uniform in size and color and all of one variety.
- * Stalks should be medium to large size.

Thyme

- * Five stems.
- * Green stems must be fresh.
- * Thyme should be free of insect damage or yellowing and should have a strong, pleasing aroma.
- * Avoid wilting, signs of insect damage, and blackened stems.



Tomatoes, ripe

- * Five fruits.
- * Entries must be uniform in shape and color and should be true to type and variety.
- * The variety should be named on the entry tag.
- * Tomatoes should be free from cracks, insect or mechanical injury, sun scald, or blemishes.
- * Entries should be well-colored, ripe, and in prime condition for slicing.
- * No green streaks are permitted unless it is a characteristic of the variety.
- * Show ripe tomatoes without stems.



Tomatoes, green (pickling or preserving)

- * Seven fruits.
- * Entries must be uniform in shape and color and should be true to type and variety.
- * Tomatoes should be free from cracks, insect or mechanical injury, sun scald, or blemishes.
- * Show green tomatoes with stems.

Turnips

- * Three roots.
- * Entries may be white, purple-topped, or yellow.
- * Entries must be uniform in size and true to type in shape and color.
- * They should be of medium size, young, and tender.
- * Show turnips with tops trimmed to 1 inch.
- * Each turnip should be smooth, firm, bright-colored, and with few leaf scars.

Watermelon

- * One melon.
- * Watermelon should be uniform in color.
- * The entry should be smooth over the entire surface.
- * The entry should be mature but not overripe.
- * Watermelon should be free of sun scald, decay, and hail or other damage.
- * The stem should not be less than 1-inch long.
- * Wipe off soil but do not wash.
- * Inner flesh is considered. Only judges are allowed to slice.



Winter radishes (daikon)

- * Three roots.
- * Winter radish roots are large and round or elongated.
- * Their skins may be black, white, or pink. Their flesh should be firm, crisp, and white.
- * Look for firm, crisp, and bright-colored roots.
- * Good, uniform shape for the variety with smooth, clean skin.
- * Overmature roots or those with poor shape, color, or rough texture should not be exhibited.