

IF YOU GROW IT, SHOW IT

Some advice and encouragement for exhibiting at Ilmington's Annual Show of Flowers, Fruit, Vegetables, Cookery and Crafts 2015

You may be put off exhibiting your produce at the annual show on August Bank Holiday Monday because you are not sure what's expected. How to present what you have grown or made and how vegetables, fruit, flowers and cookery are judged may seem a bit of a mystery.

So the Ilmington Horticultural Society Committee members, themselves with different levels of experience and skill in these things, have put together some guidelines¹ which we hope might shed some light on how to make the best of your entries for the IHS annual show. We hope this will encourage you to have a go.

Here are some ideas to start you off:

- Read the Schedule- there is lots of information already there.
- Note the requirements of each class, e.g. the number and ESPECIALLY the size of exhibit.
- When showing fruit, flowers and vegetables select specimens that are similar in size, length and appearance.
- Pick/cut your exhibits as late as possible but allow time for preparation and cleaning.
- Discard damaged flowers and leaves and misshapen fruit and vegetables.
- Soil should be washed off but don't be tempted to polish your specimens. The judges want them *au naturel!*

Below you will find some specific advice for each class of entry. But remember, these are just guidelines. The judges' decisions are final.

SECTION A: VEGETABLES AND FRUIT

Fruit

- Pick as near to show time as possible. Retain stalks.
- Do not polish fruits – leave the natural 'bloom'.
- Do not select over-ripe fruits.

Apples (Class 11-13)

Select large, solid unblemished fruits of shape and colour typical of the cultivar, with stalks intact. Stage with the eye uppermost and stalk end downwards. If an odd number of fruit is called for, place one fruit in the centre and the remaining fruit around it. The centre fruit may be raised by placing a cushion of white tissue beneath it.

¹ With thanks to the Naphill Horticultural Society whose example we followed and whose work we borrowed extensively.

Pears (Class 14)

Select large and shapely fruit with eyes and stalks intact, with skins clean and unblemished and the colour of the particular cultivar.

Plums (Class 15)

Select large, firm, ripe fruits with a good colour and having perfect bloom. Display with stalks intact.

Soft fruit (Class 16)

Blackcurrants and redcurrants: Select large strings with plenty of berries. Berried should be large, ripe and uniform on fresh stalks. Display on a plate. Your own foliage may be used for decoration.

Gooseberries: Select large ripe fruits of good colour with stalks. Stalks should look green and fresh and point all one way when staged.

Strawberries: Select large ripe fruits of good colour with stalks. Stalks and calyces should look green and fresh and all point one way when staged.

Vegetables

Wash root vegetables careful to remove soil. Use a soft cloth and plenty of water as brushing may damage the skin. On other vegetables, retain the bloom where possible.

Beetroot (Class 20)

Select uniform size beetroot (not too large between 50 and 70mm) with smooth skin. For cylindrical cultivars the root should be about 150mm long. Retain the full length of the tap root. The judge may cut the beetroot to check that the flesh is of uniform colour.

Beans (Runner, French) (Classes 7-9)

Select straight tender pods of even length and good colour with no sign of seeds. Stage with stalk intact.

Broad Beans

Select fresh pods of uniform colour. Stage a uniform-sized exhibit with pods arranged on a plate or directly on the bench, stalks at one end, tails at the other.

Cabbage

Select good shape with a fresh, solid heart. Retain the surrounding leaves in tact with bloom but remove outer discolour leaves. Stage with about 75mm of stalk and the head towards the front.

Carrots (Class 10)

Select full-length roots of good shape, colour and size, free from side roots and from green on the crown. Retain the full length of the tap root.

Cauliflower

Select a head with symmetrical, close, solid white curds, free from stain or frothiness. Before judging keep the curd away from light. Normally staged with about 75mm of stalk and leaves trimmed back to the outside of the curd.

Celery

Select a head that have no diseased or pest-damaged foliage or that have been damaged by slugs. Reject specimens with heart rot or with flower heads forming. Place a tie round the base of the leaves to prevent breaking and clean by a continuous flushing with water. Ensure any pests are removed. Before staging neatly trim off the roots, leaving a pointed butt end.

Courgettes (Class 23)

Select young tender uniform fruit of 100 to 200mm in length or, if round, approximately 75mm in length. Display flat with or without flower still attached.

Cucumbers

Select fresh, young, straight fruits with uniform thickness with short stems and flowers still attached. Retain the waxy bloom.

Leeks

Select solid, thick, long-shafted, well-blanching, tight-collared leeks with clean blemish-free skin and no bulbing. Avoid the excess stripping of outer leaves. Wash carefully. Stage with the roots to the front.

Lettuce (Class 21)

Select a fresh head of uniform and attractive colour. Lift with roots intact in the evening or early morning when the leaves are turgid. Roots should be washed, wrapped in moist tissue, inserted in a plastic bag and neatly tied. Wash between the leaves to remove soil particles. Remove only markedly damaged outside leaves and stage laid on the show bench with the heart facing forward.

Marrow

Select young, tender uniform fruits which should be less than 380mm long or, if round, less than 500mm in circumference. Stage directly on the bench after wiping clean.

Onions (Classes 2-3)

Select uniform well-ripened bulbs of good colour. Avoid removing too much skin. Necks should be firm and thin. Tops should be tied with uncoloured raffia or string. Trim roots to the base of the onion. May be staged on rings or soft collars.

Parsnips

Select well-developed, well-shouldered smooth skinned white roots. Roots should be full length and free from side roots.

Peppers

Select fresh, brightly coloured fruit. Stage on a plate with the stalks.

Potatoes (Classes 5-6)

Select equally matched, medium-sized tubers (between 170 and 225 grams) with shallow eyes and free from skin blemishes. Before judging keep the curd away from light. Stage on a plate.

Radishes (Class 25)

The radishes should be fresh, firm, medium-sized, young tender and brightly coloured.

Rhubarb

For show purposes this is a VEGETABLE. Select fresh, straight, thick, stalks. Trim leaves back to approximately 75mm. Cut off any bud scales at the bottom and stage directly on the bench after wiping clean.

Shallots

Bulbs should be well ripened with thin necks. Remove loose skin and roots. Tie or whip tops neatly with uncoloured raffia or string. Stage on dry sand in a saucer or tray.

Tomatoes (Classes 17-18)

Select uniform, ripe but firm, richly coloured fruit with stalks attached. Avoid over-ripe fruit or those with greenback. Stage on a plate with stalk uppermost.

SECTION C: FLOWERS

General flower and plant classes (Classes 28-30, 39-41)

- Select flowers in good fresh condition, i.e. In the most perfect stage of its possible beauty and free from damage from weather, pests and diseases.
- Flowers should be displayed in a plain container (vase) having a greater height than width measurement of its mouth. No account is taken of the containers when judging material shown in it.

Dahlias (Classes 35-38)

Select clean blooms with florets intact, firm and free from blemish. Stems should be straight and proportionate to the size of bloom and the bloom held at an angle of not less than 45 degrees to the stem. Stage with blooms all facing the same direction, not touching and with balanced effect. Retain some foliage on the stems if possible.

Gladioli (Classes 26, 42)

Select straight, well-balanced spikes still carrying the bottom floret, ideally one third in full flower, one third with buds in colour, one third in green bud. Remove secondary spikes.

Roses (Classes 31-33)

Select blooms with a well-formed centre, free from blemishes with strong stems and healthy leaves.

Pot plants (Class 27)

Indoor and outdoor. See Schedule for maximum pot size.

SECTION D: FLOWER ARRANGING

Make sure the dimensions of the exhibit complies with the schedule.

Plant material must predominate, be well-prepared and in good condition. Exhibits should show good overall harmony in the choice of colour, texture and form of plant material chosen. There should be evidence of good design by overall balance, scale and proportion with a good overall shape.

The cut ends of fresh plant material must be in water or water-retaining material so that it remains turgid for the duration of the Show. Do not use artificial plant material unless specifically stated in the schedule.

SECTION E: COOKERY

Jams and preserves

- The flavour and consistence and colour are all judged and some account is also taken of the jar, which should be well polished with a clean cloth, with no fingerprints.
- Labels should be of a suitable size for the jar and state the contents and the date of making
- Jars should be filled to within 3mm (1/8") of the top of the jar
- To seal jars use either a wax disc (smooth side down and carefully trimmed to fit the rim of the jar. Avoid honey jars with screw tops as the thread does not produce a good seal.

Jams (Class 48)

Should have a bright, even and characteristic colour with no scum, foreign bodies, mould or sugar crystals. Fruit should have tender skins, be evenly distributed with not too many stones. The jam should be consistently set, not runny or sticky, no loose liquid or syrup.

Curd (Class 49)

Should have a bright characteristic and even colour with a spreadable consistency but not runny or rough. The flavour should be fresh and well-balanced with no greasy taste. Fruit curds should be sealed with a wax circle and cellophane.

Jellies (Class 50)

Should be brilliantly clear and of even colour, with no pulp, scum, haze or air bubbles. Consistency should tremble but hold its shape.

Marmalades (Class 47)

Should be based on citrus fruits but other ingredients may be added unless the Schedule states otherwise and labelled accordingly. Traditionally peel should be sliced rather than minced and should be uniformly cut and distributed. Consistency should be set, not runny or too firm.

Chutney (Class 51)

The ingredients should be boiled down to a uniform consistency. The colour should be bright and even throughout. Chutney should be kept for at least two months before showing. Fill jars leaving a 12mm (1/2") headspace. Use a twist top with an integral plastic lining or a plastic press-on cover to prevent corrosion.

Cakes and pastries

- Items should be exhibited on a plain white plate, pottery or paper.
- Slide a folded length of greaseproof paper under a cake to place it in and remove it from the container you are using to transport it.
- The majority of marks are awarded for favour/aroma, but the internal condition and overall appearance are also taken into account.

Bread (Class 54)

The bread should be baked 24 hours before judging. The loaf should be well-risen and evenly baked with a base free from shaping cracks and bulges. The inside should be even-textured with no streaks or holes showing lack of kneading.

Cake (Class 56)

Cakes should be presented on a doily. Lining papers should be removed. The cake should be well-risen, even in shape and baking. Sides should be smooth indicating a well-lined tin with no cooling rack marks on the top of the cake. Any fruit should be evenly distributed with no signs of flour pockets.

Cookies (Class 52)

Cookies are made from a softer mixture than biscuits and are usually thicker. The dough can be rolled in the hands or sliced from a roll or dropped in spoonfuls onto the baking tray. They should be uniform in shape and size with a good balance of flavours.

Jam tarts (Class 55)

The individual tarts should be identical in size and shape. Cook the jam (not marmalade or curd) in the pastry making sure it does not overflow. The pastry should be 4mm thick, not too deep, light

golden in colour and cooked underneath. Prick the bottom of the pastry before filling to ensure the jam goes to the middle of the tart.

Scones (Class 53)

Scones should be even in shape, size and colour (pale golden), flat on top and should stand erect. Savoury scones should always be prepared using a plain cutter. A fluted cutter may be used for plain, sweet or fruit scones. Diameter should equal the height (in an ideal world!).

SECTION F: ALCOHOLIC DRINKS

The colour should be bright characteristic and brilliantly clear with no sediment in the bottle. Bottles should be filled within 12mm (1/2 inch) of the base of the cork (ideally white plastic topped) and need not be sealed.

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