

HELPFUL HINTS FOR EXHIBITORS

Floral art rules (based on *NAFAS Competitions Manual 1st Ed, 2001*) require exhibits to:

1. Comply with any specific requirements as stated in the schedule wording eg measurements or components.
2. Ensure that fresh plant material has cut stems placed in water or water-retaining material eg green oasis. Permitted exceptions are air plants, cacti, grass turf, lichen, moss, succulents, vegetables and long-lasting plant material (including strong fibrous stems) which will remain turgid for the duration of the Show.
3. Exclude any artificial plant material unless specifically allowed in the class wording.

Further details from **NAFAS, Osborne House, 12 Devonshire Square, London EC2M 4TE** - www.nafas.org.uk.

The following selection of hints refers to the exhibition of vegetables under National Vegetable Society (*NVS*) rules. Ensure that all produce is clean and fresh and meets the number of specimens required to be staged. Try not to mix small and large specimens and remember that biggest is not always best!

Potatoes should be well-shaped, shallow-eyed, even-sized with clean, unbroken skins. Wash carefully but do not polish. Optimum weight is 200g per tuber.

Carrots, Beetroot, Parsnips and Turnips should be smooth-skinned, free from damage and disease, straight and well coloured throughout their length. Turnips are normally cut by the Judge to assess flesh colour/disease. Wash carefully, around rather than along the root, to avoid scratching the skin surface. Avoid specimens with side or fanged roots or broken taproots. Stump-rooted carrots should have a pronounced stump (not pointed) root end.

Cucumbers should be fresh, tender, straight, uniform in thickness and colour, with short handles and free from damage/disease.

Courgettes should be tender with uniform shape and colour and flower still attached. Optimum length is 150mm.

Leeks should have firm, white, straight, non-bulbous barrels with no evidence of damage or disease. Foliage should be turgid and damage/pest-free. By definition, a pot leek must not exceed 150mm in length between the root plate and the 'button' (point at which the lowermost leaf joins the barrel) and a blanch leek must exceed this measurement.

Marrows should be fresh, young and tender with uniform colour and flower still attached. Optimum length is 400mm (200mm for round-fruited varieties). ***These criteria do not apply to the heaviest marrow class.***

Tomatoes should be firm, ripe, unblemished, well shaped and rounded. Optimum size is 60mm for exhibition types and 25mm for cherry-fruited varieties. Calyces should be fresh.

Onions should be dressed (roots/foilage removed and necks tied with natural raffia), with clean, unbroken, well-ripened skins free from ribbing, softness or discoloration. If the outer skin splits during storage do not remove it unless you feel sure that the next layer will dry in time for the Show date. Try to ensure that all bulbs are matched for size and shape. ***These criteria do not apply to the heaviest onion class.***

French and Runner Beans should be long, straight, shapely, fresh, tender, of good colour and with no outward signs of seeds in the pods. One or more pods may be snapped by the Judge to assess condition. ***These criteria do not apply to the longest bean class.***

Broad Beans should have long, straight, well-filled pods with unblemished skins. Avoid aged pods containing seeds bearing black eyes; one or more pods may be snapped by the Judge to assess condition.

Peas should have long, fresh, smooth, well-filled pods with good natural bloom and colour. Peas should be staged with some stalk attached. One or more pods may be snapped by the Judge to assess condition.

Rhubarb is regarded as an exhibition vegetable rather than a fruit. Stalks should be fresh, straight and of uniform weight and length. Good red colouring and no sign of pest damage is advantageous. Leaves should be trimmed back to 40mm approximately.

Shallots should be dressed (see **Onions** above), well-ripened, shapely and sound with no evidence of greening, purpling or broken skins. Large exhibition shallots are usually of *Hative de Niort* cultivar and staged on a dish of dry sand.

Sweet Corn should have fresh, well-formed cobs with a good, even grain set. Cobs should be staged with the silks attached.

Sweet and Chilli Peppers should be fresh and brightly coloured according to the cultivar. Fruits should be of a good size and shape and free from damage.

In collections, the Judge normally points vegetables and the following list shows the maximum total points that may be awarded under NVS rules for some of the commoner kinds. Different vegetables attract different judging criteria but points are awarded primarily for factors such as condition, size, shape and uniformity. Exhibitors should aim to stage higher-pointed kinds in vegetable collections as far as possible. A poor potato may easily outscore a perfect radish!

Aubergines 18, French Beans 15, Runner Beans 18, Globe/Cylindrical Beetroot 15, Long Beetroot 20, Green/Red/Savoy Cabbages 15, Stump Carrots 18, Long Carrots 20, Cauliflowers 20, Trench Celery 20, Self-blanching Celery 18, Cucumbers 18, Garlic 12, Blanch/Pot Leeks 20, Lettuce 15, Marrows/Squashes 15, Okra 18, Large Onions 20, Onions from Sets/250 gm or less 15, Parsnips 20, Potatoes 20, Pumpkins 10, Radish 10, Exhibition Shallots 18, Sweet Corn 15, Sweet/Chilli Peppers 15, Exhibition Tomatoes 18, Beefsteak Tomatoes 15, Cherry-fruited Tomatoes 12, Turnips 15.

Further details of the *Judge's Guide* can be obtained from **National Vegetable Society, National Secretary, 36 The Ridings, Ockbrook, Derby DE72 3SF - www.nvsuk.org.uk**

A **vase** is defined as a vessel for displaying cut flowers in water and having a height greater than the diameter of its mouth. A **bowl** is defined as a similar vessel having a mouth diameter equal to or greater than its height.

Pot plants normally grown for their ornamental foliage effect but in flowering mode at the time of the Show are not debarred from entering the flowering pot plant class.

The Horticultural Show Handbook (*7th Ed, 2008*) produced by the Royal Horticultural Society covers the judging of fruit, vegetables, flowers and ornamental plants, gardens and allotments, hanging baskets and outdoor-planted containers according to RHS judging criteria. This publication also offers useful hints to exhibitors, judges and show organisers. Further details can be obtained from **RHS Enterprises Ltd, RHS Garden Wisley, Woking, Surrey GU23 6QB - www.rhs.org.uk**

Dessert Apples should be of optimum size and colour for the variety, shapely and with stalks intact. Avoid specimens that are damaged, show blemishes or signs of disease.

Cooking Apples should be large, shapely and solid with undamaged eyes with stalks intact and with a skin colour characteristic of the variety with no blemishes or disease.

Plums should be large, ripe, of good colour with bloom intact and stalks attached.

Raspberries should be fresh, large, ripe, bright, with fresh calyces and stalks attached.