How Prize Winning Vegetables Are Selected

BY

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This brief circular is prepared with the idea of giving necessary information to the prospective exhibitor of vegetables. More attractive exhibits will result where the exhibitor understands the methods of selection and preparation of show specimens.

GENERAL POINTS CONSIDERED

Because vegetables are grown to eat, table quality is the general basis upon which table vegetables are judged. Sizes and qualities desired by the housewife for the home table are sizes and qualities that the judges will consider best. Bruised, blemished, coarse, rough, forked, overgrown specimens should not be entered for exhibit. Root crops, with the exception of potatoes, should be washed carefully, avoiding skin damage, with the tops trimmed neatly, leaving half an inch of top to prevent excessive "bleeding" of the vegetable. It generally is not considered desirable to have potatoes washed, but surplus dirt is brushed or wiped off carefully with a soft cloth, care being taken not to damage the skin or to remove the natural surface color of the potato. If washed at all they should first be soaked for a few minutes and then gently moved about in lukewarm water until the surface dirt dissolves and falls off; then dried by placing between soft cloths or by allowing the tubers to dry in the air without rubbing.

There is no objection to crisping or freshening plants just before placing on exhibit. This can be done by placing them in a pail lined with several thicknesses of damp cloth and by covering them with a damp cloth for twelve to twenty-four hours. Lettuce can be freshened in this way satisfactorily. Unless the rules of the exhibition forbid, the exhibitor can keep lettuce, celery, spinach and similar leaf crops fresh on exhibit by leaving a portion of the roots on the plants and by wrapping these roots with wet cloths.
Besides the points already mentioned it is important that all the specimens in an exhibit be uniform in size, shape and color, as well as true to variety and type.

**SPECIMENS REQUIRED**

The number of specimens required in an exhibit varies, within rather narrow limits, in different premium lists. It generally runs about as follows for individual or plate exhibits:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO. OF SPECIMENS</th>
<th>VEGETABLES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 to 2</td>
<td>Melons, Squash, Pumpkins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 to 3</td>
<td>Cabbage, Celery, Cauliflower, Parsley, Lettuce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 to 6</td>
<td>Rutabagas, Kohl Rabi, Rhubarb Stalks, Stock Beets, Stock Carrots, Stock Turnips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 to 10</td>
<td>Onions, Turnips, Tomatoes, Beets, Peppers, Carrots, Parsnips, Salsify, Sweet Corn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 to 12</td>
<td>Potatoes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SCORE CARD AND SCORING**

A score card which is in general use and very satisfactory for the ordinary country or community fair, gives a division of scoring points as follows:

- **Uniformity of Sample** .................................................. 15
- **Trueeness to Type** ...................................................... 40
- **Freedom from Blemishes** ............................................. 10
- **Table Quality** ............................................................ 35

"Table quality" refers to proper table size and to crispness, freshness, fine grain, flavor and other similar points. "Trueeness to type" can best be illustrated by example: Australian brown onions should be unmistakably brown and of the proper shape and size for this variety.

The following specific directions will give an idea how various vegetables are examined and also of points considered in cases where this card is not strictly applicable:

**POINTS OBSERVED IN EXAMINING CERTAIN VEGETABLES**

**Sweet Corn**—Fresh, well filled, uniform in size, shape and color. Will keep in exhibition condition better if inner husks are left on but stripped back on one side. Judges will pull back the husks to examine if competition is close. Kernels of off-color showing mixture will place an otherwise good example below a poorer one that is not mixed.

**Potatoes**—Free from pits, warts, excrescences, scab, brown scurf, etc., marks of insect or digger damage; fresh, smooth, skin unbroken, bright colored, eyes shallow. Should be matured, true to type and as uniform as possible in size, shape and color, and of fair marketable size. For most varieties in Montana score card used by the Horticultural Department is divided as follows: Uni-
formity 15, trueness to type 15, size 10, shallowness of eyes 10, freedom from scab and blemishes 15, color and smoothness of skin 15, color of flesh 10, condition of flesh 10. Scab is considered a serious fault and will cut the score severely.

Beets—Good, marketable beets of turnip type should not exceed three to three and one-half inches in diameter; should be of uniform size, shape and color, smooth and free from side roots and other blemishes. Should be bright, fresh and firm, with crisp, fine grained flesh when cut. White rings in the cut flesh are considered evidence of coarseness and lowered quality. Long beets should have all the points named above except the shape of the beets. Should be two to three inches in diameter one inch below the base of leaf scars. (Long beets are not commonly grown in this state. They cannot equal turnip beets in quality.) Tops should be trimmed off. Beets may be washed if care be taken not to break the skin.

Carrots—Sometimes divided into short, intermediate and long type. Short type should be between one and one-fourth to two and one-fourth inches across at top, depending on length, which should not be over three and one-half to four inches in the largest. Intermediate type not less than six inches long and two inches thick at thickest part, not tapering too rapidly. Long or stock carrots nine inches or longer and proportionately large. Color—except for white carrots—should be deep orange. Uniform size, shape and color, smooth and clean, fresh and bright, free from sunburn; crown where leaves are attached should be small. No coarse rings when cut.

Parsnips—Long type not less than fifteen inches long. Hollow crown not less than twelve inches, and not less than two and one-half inches thick at thickest part. Free from rust, smooth, fresh. Light creamy color. Not "corky." May leave on one-half inch or one inch of top.

Salsify—Size, straightness and smoothness are especially desirable in this vegetable. The larger they are, up to one and one-half inches top diameter, the better.

Turnips—Flat type should not exceed three and one-half inches in diameter. Color bright and clear whether white, yellow or purple top. Globe type two and one-half to four inches. Smooth, bright, fresh, tops trimmed off smooth. Fine grained flesh, sweet. Free from side roots and blemishes.

Rutabagas—Same points as for turnips but much larger in size. Market demands a root of three to five pounds weight if quality is good.

Onions—Size three inches or more in diameter according to variety. Color true to variety. Australian brown should be brown and not yellow. Should be smooth and clean, not peeled so as to be "slick." Should be mature and solid. Pressure on the neck of the onion will expose any softness. Neck should be small and well cured. Maturity is important. Immature onions will not keep.

Peppers—Deep green color, fresh and firm, straight, symmetrical as possible. In close competition advantages should be given to perfectly green specimens. Traces of red coloring not desirable, unless a class of red pepper is called for.

Cauliflower—Smooth, white (the whiter the better), close flowered. "Ricing," or opening up of the head is an especially bad fault. Size of head also is
important. Six to eight inches in diameter is a good size.

Cabbages—Drumhead, ballhead and early pointed head types. Drumhead is the largest, and well grown specimens should measure twelve to sixteen inches in diameter. Ballhead ten to twelve inches. Solidity is judged by pressure and by lifting. Red pickling and Savoy cabbages may be smaller, eight to ten inches in diameter being good sizes.

Celery—Heads clean, as well bleached as season permits, free from rust, defects or damage, crisp and fresh. No hollow stalks; these may be detected by pressure of the stalk between finger and thumb.

Lettuce—Leaf varieties, freshness, crispness, blanching and freedom from defects are points considered. Head varieties, solid and fresh; uniform size, shape and color; no indications of insect damage, decay or disease.

Cucumbers—Straight, dark green color except for some whitish streaks at the blossom end. Length six to ten inches according to variety. Fresh, firm, crisp. Diameter, average two inches. In close competition size of seed and seed cavity is examined. Small seed cavity is desirable.

Tomatoes—Place all specimens blossom end up and examine for smoothness, even ripeness, and freedom from all specks and blemishes. Turn stem ends up and examine for cracks and greenness. Specimens should be firm rather than soft. In size two and one-half to three and one-half inches diameter is standard.

Kohlrabi—Fresh and of good color. In good table condition, not hard, woody or pithy. Skin should be penetrated easily by thumb nail. Crisp, brittle and fine grained when cut. Size, same as for table turnip.

Squash—Hubbard, ten to twenty pounds. Hard. Score winter squashes on color, weight, hardness and freedom from blemish and upon symmetry. Vegetable marrow and summer squashes, soft shell.

String Beans—Straight and smooth as possible. Free from rust or specks. Five to eight inches in length according to variety. Brittle. For snap bean purposes they should be meaty when snapped and should not contain large, mature beans showing through the pod. The smoother the pod and the freer from strings when snapped, the better.

Shell Beans—Scored on size, color, variety and condition. Freshness and freedom from defects. They should actually be dry and ready for winter storage.

Peas in Pod—Smooth, clean, free from defect or disease and in prime condition for shelling and cooking. Good green color pods. Whitish pods or hard seeds undesirable.

Dry Shelled Peas—Color, variety and condition. Freedom from defects, blemishes, dirt or impurities.

Rhubarb Stalks—Good color (plenty of red), fresh, brittle, straight, solid stalks, medium to large size.

Note—Some of the larger fairs, such as the State Fair, publish in their premium list the score cards their judges shall use. Where this is the case, exhibitors must select their samples to conform to such score cards rather than to the ones published in this circular.