

EPSOM GARDEN SOCIETY



‘HAVE A GO AT A SHOW’ VEGETABLES CRIB SHEET

1. Vegetables are really very amenable as well as much easier to show than you might think. You simply do not have to have an enormous allotment anymore. Look for varieties suitable for containers and boxes, grow potatoes in sacks and runner beans, French beans, squashes all do very well on tripods in amongst the flowers. Cucumbers, such as ‘Mini Munch’ are great grown like this, not only can they be picked almost daily for weeks on end, but they taste delicious. If you do grow in containers and boxes, make sure that either the soil is replaced each year or it is topped up with a suitable organic fertiliser or compost. Also be aware that they will need more watering than in the ground.
2. Always clean your vegetables thoroughly before showing. Root vegetables such as parsnips, carrots, potatoes can be done using a soft nailbrush, but be really careful not to mark the skin. Make sure they are completely dried. Check leafy vegetables for ‘wildlife’. Many marks are lost by having a slug or snail ambling across the show table. If you can manage it, without stripping the plant entirely, remove any leaves that have been munched by said wildlife.
3. To show that you haven’t just ‘nipped’ to Waitrose, root vegetables should have their tops trimmed to about 75mm. Roots shouldn’t be cut and, if possible try to get them out of the ground without breaking. You may need to make a judgement between an intact root and a better matched vegetable. It is usually much better to have well matched veg. Unforced rhubarb foliage should be trimmed leaving approx. 75mm from stalks. Don’t trim foliage on unforced rhubarb (there isn’t likely to be much anyway). Onions and Shallots should have their top growth trimmed and tied down with raffia or twine. Garlic doesn’t need to be tied down, just trimmed and all should have their roots removed (you would do this anyway to stop them rotting in store).
4. As mentioned above, one of the most important thing when showing vegetables is to ‘match them up’. There is no point having two beautiful enormous parsnips, if the third one is half the size or full of holes. Even if you go for smaller sizes, you will get more marks if they are matched.

5. Be very careful to check the schedule for numbers, it is very easy to miscount something like cherry tomatoes or shallots, eight and nine respectively.
6. To transport vegetables try and get hold of the small shallow freezer boxes (Poundland or Wilkos are good), these will take anything from courgettes, cherry tomatoes, peas, beans, radish etc and are a really good way of keeping them fresh and undamaged. Wrap root vegetables in slightly damp kitchen towel and put in a plastic bag. It's a good idea to put all the bags and boxes on a tray and label them with the category number and just take out one at a time. Don't try and prepare at the Show, it's much easier to do at home. For small vegetables, display on a paper plate. Larger ones can just be placed directly on the table, provided they are not wet. If entering a collection of vegetables, they can look nice displayed on black card or a cloth or even an attractive wooden box. Remember, like faces vegetables have their best side. The judge may pick them up and turn them around, but then again.....they may not!
7. Always have a look at fellow exhibitors displays once the Show has opened (NOT during setting up!) and see what they have done, any little ideas for displaying vegetables to their best advantage. Most people are happy to share their ideas on growing and it makes the Shows even more enjoyable to have a chat on a mutually interesting topic.