



Exhibiting Fruits and Vegetables

K-STATE
Research and Extension

Exhibits

Horticultural exhibits provide something for everyone. Participants enjoy an exciting educational opportunity. Exhibits are visually appealing and provide food. Things to keep in mind when exhibiting fruits and vegetables:

- Follow fair show rules and regulations.
- Show your best quality specimens.
- Choose items of uniform size, shape, and color.
- Arrange items to develop a central point of interest.
- Display standard amounts of specimens.
- Items should be grown and cared for by the exhibitor.

Amount to Exhibit

Check the premium book for your local fair or show as the number of specimens that make up an exhibit may vary from one show to another. Standard amounts of vegetables and fruits are listed below.

Large Vegetables <i>(1 each)</i>	Medium Vegetables <i>(5 each)</i>		Small Vegetables <i>(12 each)</i>
Cabbage	Asparagus	Parsnip	Green beans
Muskmelon	Beets	Peppers	Lima beans
Eggplant	Carrots	Pumpkin (miniature)	Peas
Pumpkin (large)	Cucumbers	Radish	
Squash	Garlic	Sweet potatoes	
Watermelon	Irish potatoes	Tomatoes	
	Okra	Tomatoes (cherry)	
	Onions		

Tree Fruits	Small Fruits
Apples – <i>5 each</i>	Grapes – <i>3 clusters</i>
Cherries – <i>10 each</i>	Bush fruit – raspberries, strawberries, blackberries – <i>1 pint</i>
Peaches – <i>5 each</i>	
Pears – <i>5 each</i>	
Plums – <i>10 each</i>	

Selecting Horticultural Exhibits

Here are the most important factors when selecting exhibits for show.

Quality and condition:

1. Specimens should be of edible maturity, not overripe, shriveled, or wilted.
2. Free of injury from diseases, insects, or mechanical means.
3. Color should be uniform and typical for the product.
4. The shape should be typical of the variety.

Shelf life: Consider how well exhibits hold up after the show.

1. Enter only firm fruits and vegetables that will stay fresh and appealing for the entire show, especially if cooled display cases are not available.
2. Choose products with a longer shelf life. Avoid those that deteriorate rapidly, including leafy greens, green beans, and strawberries.
3. Specimens should be evaluated on appearance at judging time. It is hard to predict what they will look like or what they looked like before. Crops that change rapidly should not be used unless absolutely necessary.

Cleanliness: To improve the appearance of specimens.

1. Brush or wash root crops, taking care not to damage the skin.
2. Dip leafy vegetables in cool water.
3. Wipe vegetables such as eggplant with a damp cloth.
4. Polish apples with a soft dry cloth.

Size: This may affect quality, flavor, and appearance. For some vegetables, a specimen that is too large may indicate coarseness and poor quality. Medium size or slightly bigger is desirable.

Type: Specimens should be typical of the variety, giving consideration to size, shape, and color.

Uniformity: A key feature of blue-ribbon quality exhibits. Specimens should be uniform in size, shape, and color. They should have the same texture, quality, and degree of maturity.

Packing for transport: Sprinkle leafy vegetables with cold water and place them in plastic bags. Crushed ice will help preserve them. Wrap large vegetables individually in paper to prevent bruising. Include a few extra specimens in case of damage or bruising on the way to the fair.

Preparing Exhibits

Preparations at the show:

1. Neatly trim stems or tops at the last minute.
2. Place specimens on plates or containers, wiping to remove dust collected during transportation.
3. Check your exhibit carefully looking for unnoticed blemishes, defective or undesirable specimens.
4. Count to make sure your display includes the proper amount of specimens and meets all show regulations.
5. Check with the superintendent to find out where and how to place the exhibit on tables, show racks, or other display locations.

After exhibits are in place:

1. If rules allow, watch the judge evaluate your exhibits.
2. Ask the judge questions about your exhibits and how to improve them.
3. Look at other exhibits in your class to see the type of exhibits that place the highest.
4. Make notes for next year.

Decorating:

1. The vegetables or fruits are the most important part of the exhibit, so make them the central focus of your display.
2. Flowers, gadgets, or other decorations should be used sparingly and should not detract from the overall exhibit.
3. Display containers or plates should be uniform and not gaudy or showy.
4. Labels describing the types and varieties are desirable but not mandatory. Labels should be correct, neat, and not so large that they are distracting.
5. Contrasting colors should be used to show off vegetables to their fullest. Avoid too much green if most of the vegetables are green.
6. Do not wrap vegetables individually in plastic or cellophane. If the show area is dusty, covering the entire exhibit with a large single sheet of plastic is permissible.

What Judges Look for When Placing Exhibits

Most judges consider the following factors. Some assign points for each and record them on a scorecard. Others keep score mentally while evaluating the specimens. Entries are judged on the following factors, from the most to the least important.

Individual Entries

Condition – Free from disease, insect or mechanical damage, or similar types of problems, including dirt or stains. (30%)

Quality – Exhibits that are at the peak of perfection for eating. Specimens should be crisp, firm, mature but not overripe, and flavorful. (25%)

Uniformity – Uniform in size, shape and color. Attractiveness of an exhibit is enhanced by all specimens being uniform. (20%)

Typical of variety – Specimens should be typical of the type and variety of vegetable and fruit. Avoid unusual or atypical exhibits for show purposes. (15%)

Size – Size of specimens should conform to market demands. In general, very large specimens may be undesirable because they are not as tender or flavorful as medium-sized specimens. Do not select specimens based on size alone. (10%)

Collection Exhibits

Individual specimens that make up the exhibit are evaluated by the factors described above. (75%)

Display attractiveness, arrangement, artistic qualities, and showmanship. (25%)

Preparing Fruit Exhibits

All fruits should be at the mature, harvestable stage.

Apples and Pears

1. Keep stems attached, but clip the ends short enough that they don't puncture other specimens in the display.
2. Uniform in size and shape.
3. Free of disease, insect or other damage.
4. Polish with a dry cloth.
5. Color should be typical of variety; red varieties should be uniformly colored.

Cherries and Plums

1. Leave stems attached.
2. Select plump, uniform, and ripe specimens.
3. Clean with a soft brush or cloth.

Grapes

1. Clusters should be uniform in size.
2. Fruit in clusters should be firm, compact and uniformly ripened.
3. Avoid skin breaks.
4. Stems of clusters may be cut, preferably in the same length on each cluster.
5. Shrunken or damaged fruit should be removed.

Peaches

1. Stems should be removed; individual fruit should be uniform.
2. Ground color, or under color, of peach should be yellow.
3. Avoid selecting fruit that is overripe or underripe.

Raspberries and other Bush Fruit

1. Each specimen should be ripe and uniform in size, shape and color.
2. Fruit should be clean.
3. Specimens should be free of injury.
4. Remove dust with a soft brush.

Strawberries

1. Stem or cap should remain attached.
2. Each strawberry should be uniform in size, shape, and color.
3. Fruit should be firm and free of injury.
4. Clean with a soft painter's brush.

Preparing Vegetable Exhibits

Asparagus

1. Stems 6 to 8 inches long and $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{3}{8}$ inch in diameter at the widest point.
2. Stalks straight, firm, and not bleached white.
3. Scales and tips tight.
4. Free of rust, insect injury, and other blemishes.
5. Tie loosely in a bunch and trim ends evenly.

Beans

1. Uniform in size, shape, color, and stage of maturity.
2. Free of blemishes.
3. Seed about half matured in pod.
4. Not stringy, should snap readily when bent.
5. No broken ends.

Beets

1. Uniform in size and color.
2. Smooth and free from side roots
3. Medium to small sizes preferred, $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 inches in diameter.
4. Tops trimmed to 1 to 3 inches, preferably about 2 inches; tops trimmed evenly.

Broccoli

1. A standard entry may be one or two heads.
2. Heads should be evenly matched, if more than one, and the bottom trimmed evenly and fresh.
3. The head should be compact, dense, and free of insect or disease blemishes.
4. Avoid heads with yellowing florets beginning to open.

Brussels Sprouts

1. Heads should be solid and firm, heavy for size.
2. Remove from stem.
3. Do not peel excessively. Leave two or three outer leaves attached.
4. Avoid lightweight, loosely formed, wilted, or split specimens and those with insect, disease, or mechanical damage.

Cabbage

1. Head should be solid and dense.
2. Remove only outer leaves that are diseased or damaged. Allow one or two of the dark green wrapper leaves to remain on the head.
3. The stem should be evenly trimmed at the base of the last leaves left on the head.

Preparing Vegetable Exhibits

Cantaloupe

1. Uniform in size, shape and color.
2. Free from injury.
3. Picked at full slip, or when the stem slips easily away from the attachment to the melon.
4. Uniform netting and true to type.

Carrots

1. Uniform in size, shape and color.
2. Smooth, clean and fresh.
3. Typical of type.
4. Tops trimmed to 1 to 3 inches (1 to 1½ inches is preferred). They should be freshly and evenly cut.
5. Avoid carrots with green discoloration at the top.
6. Remove all side or hair roots and trim taproots evenly.

Cauliflower

1. Outer green leaves trimmed ½ to 1 inch above curds or head.
2. Head should be white, solid, uniform, smooth, and close flowered.
3. Avoid heads with brownish discoloration, looseness, or small leaves in the head.

Cucumber

1. Firm specimens.
2. Dark-green color.
3. Uniform length and size. Avoid specimens that are pointed or uneven in diameter.
4. Specimens may be washed but do not wax or oil.

Eggplant

1. Fresh, not wilted or soft.
2. Wipe with moist cloth.
3. Uniform color, bright, deep and shiny.
4. Heavy, firm and free from blemishes.
5. Avoid bronze discoloration.

Garlic

1. Clean, smooth, and may be white to pink with papery, dry skin.
2. Leave 1 inch of stem attached; trim roots to within ¼ inch of bulb; brush off soil; do not remove sheath; do not wash.
3. Avoid rough, off-colored bulbs; necks green and immature; missing or broken sheaths or cloves; blemished; roots or tops cut too closely.

Herbs, Leaves

1. Herbs used for foliage such as basil, oregano, rosemary, mint, parsley, and cilantro.
2. Best if harvested before bloom (flowering).
3. Fresh, clean leaves. Avoid leaves that are damaged, discolored, blemished, bruised, or affected by insects or disease.

Herbs, Flowering

1. Herbs used for flowers such as lavender, nasturtium, chamomile.
2. Six stems in a container of water; no leaves touching the water.
3. Fresh blooms, uniform color, and development. No overmature flowers.
4. Specimens free of dirt, insects, diseases, or mechanical injury.

Herbs, Seeds

1. Examples include dill, caraway, fennel, cumin.
2. Loosely tied together on plate (not in water).
3. Seed heads should not have shattered.
4. Select full head of seed, slightly green.
5. Seeds should not fall off.

Kohlrabi

1. Not hard, woody, or pithy.
2. Taproot removed and cut evenly at bottom of the kohlrabi.
3. Uniform in size and shape.
4. Tops trimmed evenly with the top of the specimen.

Lettuce, Head

1. Crisp, good color, and firm.
2. Remove damaged outside leaves.
3. Medium-sized head.
4. Trim stem evenly at the base, retaining outer leaves on the head.

Lettuce, Leaf

1. Tender, good color, and fresh (not wilted).
2. Cut off stem at crown or ground level (exhibit plant intact).
3. Wash thoroughly and carefully to prevent damage to leaves.

Okra

1. Harvest when half grown, pods about 2 to 3 inches.
2. Woody pods are overmature.
3. Uniform in size, shape, and color.
4. Leave the stems on the pod and trim evenly to ½ inch.

Preparing Vegetable Exhibits

Onions, Green

1. Medium sized, tender stems with long white shanks, clean.
2. Remove loose or discolored outer skin.
3. Trim roots evenly $\frac{1}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch.
4. Bulb no more than twice the diameter of the shank.

Onions, Mature

1. Uniform, mature, solid, bright.
2. Neck small and well cured or dry.
3. Smooth, clean, with outside skin intact. Do not peel.
4. Color typical of variety.
5. Tops trimmed $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 inch above the bulb.
6. Roots neatly trimmed $\frac{1}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch below bulb.

Peas

1. Smooth, clean, free from defects.
2. Uniform, deep green pods, and well filled.
3. Avoid overmaturity as indicated by yellowing of the pods or toughness and bitterness of the peas.

Peppers, Hot

1. True to type.
2. Color uniform.
3. Good condition, not wilted.
4. Trim stems $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch.

Peppers, Sweet

1. Deep in color.
2. Fresh, firm, symmetrical
3. Traces of red color not desirable unless peppers are uniformly red in color.
4. Number of lobes should be uniform.
5. Trim stems $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch (but not so long that the peppers cannot stand up on the stem end).
6. Exhibit with the stem end down.

Potatoes, Irish

1. Uniform specimens in size, shape and color.
2. Free from skin defects (scab, scurf).
3. Free of insect and mechanical injuries.
4. Clean, gently washed, without scratches on the skin.
5. Typical of variety.
6. Do not exhibit sunburned or greened potatoes.

Pumpkins

1. Typical of variety.
2. Uniform in color and shape, symmetrical, avoiding pumpkins distinctly flattened on one side.
3. Free of blemishes and dirt.
4. Trim stem evenly 1 to 3 inches.
5. Do not try to carry pumpkins by the stem.

Radishes

1. Medium size, smooth, firm and crisp. Not pithy.
2. Uniform and bright in color.
3. Typical of variety.
4. Leaves on, except those that are yellowed, which should be carefully removed.
5. Wash thoroughly.

Rhubarb

1. Stalks uniform in size and color.
2. Fresh, brittle, solid, free of blemishes or dirt.
3. Pull to remove small bracts at the base of each stalk from the plant, but do not cut.
4. Leave ¼ inch of leaf at the top of the stalk, trim the rest of the leaf away.
5. Stalks may be tied in bunches or shown loose.

Spinach

1. Remove dried, yellowed or wilted leaves.
2. Remove root system just below bottom leaves.
3. Leaves should be crisp, deep green, and free of blemishes and dirt.

Squash, Summer (zucchini, yellow crookneck or straightneck, patty-pan)

1. Specimens should be uniform in size, shape, and color.
2. Stems should be attached and trimmed ½ to 1 inch.
3. Specimens should be immature or rind should not be tough or hard. Specimens 6 to 9 inches long are preferred.
4. True to variety, type, and free from blemishes and dirt.

Squash, Winter (acorn, hubbard, butternut, delicious, cushaw)

1. Specimens should be uniform in size, shape and color.
2. Stems should be trimmed ½ to 2 inches.
3. Specimens should be mature or rind should be hard and firm.
4. True to variety, type and free from blemishes and dirt.

Preparing Vegetable Exhibits

Sweet Corn

1. Exhibit with husks on.
2. Freshness is necessary.
3. Well-filled kernels to the tip of the ear.
4. Leave a few loose leaves at the top of the ear.
5. Trim base of the ears evenly to the base of the last outer leaf.

Sweet Potatoes

1. Specimens should be uniform and free from disease, insect or mechanical damage.
2. Should be typical of variety.
3. Diameter should not be less than 2 inches or more than 3 ½ inches.
4. Length should be 2.5 to 3 times the diameter.
5. Gently wash specimens to remove dirt.
6. Remove hair roots; do not trim the ends of the specimens.

Swiss Chard

1. Leaf blades should be uniform in color, crisp, with bright tender, fleshy leaf stalks.
2. One plant or leaves from one plant makes an exhibit.

Tomatoes

1. Select for varietal type, size, color, and maturity.
2. Firm, without cracks; free of disease, insects, or mechanical injury.
3. Remove the stem.
4. Do not select overripe or soft specimens.
5. Exhibit with stem end down.

Turnips

1. Smaller sizes are generally most desirable.
2. Uniform with bright color.
3. Clean and free of side roots and blemishes.
4. Trim tops 1 to 3 inches.

Watermelons

1. Typical of the variety in shape and color.
2. Symmetrical.
3. Free from gourd necks or bottle necks.
4. Not overripe, sunburned, or damaged by insects or disease.
5. Avoid flat-bottomed melons.

K-STATE

Research and Extension

Vegetable/Crops Comment Card

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Needs improvement
Uniformity				
Market quality				
True to type				
Fair preparation				

Comments: _____

Exhibitor: _____

County: _____

K-STATE

Research and Extension

Vegetable/Crops Comment Card

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Needs improvement
Uniformity				
Market quality				
True to type				
Fair preparation				

Comments: _____

Exhibitor: _____

County: _____

Ward Upham, *Horticulturist*
Revised from original by
Charles Marr, Vegetable Crops Specialist, and
F.D. Morrison, Fruit Crops Specialist

Publications from Kansas State University are available at
www.bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu

Date shown is that of publication or last revision. Contents of this publication may be freely reproduced for educational purposes. All other rights reserved. In each case, credit Ward Upham et al., *Exhibiting Fruits and Vegetables*, Kansas State University, May 2019.

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service

K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension Work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, as amended. Kansas State University, County Extension Councils, Extension Districts, and United States Department of Agriculture Cooperating, J. Ernest Minton, Interim Director.