

Lavant Horticultural Society

'Preparing for the Show'

Notes from Barry Newman's talk, 8th June 2016.

Please read these notes in conjunction with the advice sheets for exhibitors available to download from the 'Shows' page.

Firstly read the Show Schedule carefully and stick to it, including the number of items to be shown in each class.

What the judges are looking for:

Condition Clean, fresh, tender, free of blemishes, pests and disease.

Uniformity Alike in size, shape, condition and colour.

Size Large specimens are preferable, but only if they are of good quality, as production of large specimens of good quality requires more skill.

Colour Colour should be fresh and true to the cultivar at maturity

Of these perhaps the most important is uniformity – better to have, say, 3 good medium sized potatoes, rather than 2 good large ones and 1 medium sized one.

Potatoes

A good size for showing is about the size of the palm of your hand.

Cut haulms off about 4 weeks before show – this will give the skin time to harden up so that it can be cleaned more easily. Dig up a few days before show and store in dry peat. After cleaning, exclude light.

Good varieties for showing 'Kestrel' (coloured); 'Winston' (white).

Onions

Roots should be cut off to the plate. Do not remove too many layers of skin – better to have a good ripe brown skin with some cracks in it, rather than going down to moist layers to remove the cracked ripe skin.

Tie the necks with plain raffia – they can be folded over & tied or whipped. Whipping is generally better, as folded over & tied can look very ugly unless the neck is very thin.

Carrots

Always earth up to avoid green tops. Keep as much as possible of the thin end to the tap root unbroken.

Beetroot

Keep earthed up – they tend to push the top out of the ground, leading to white corky tops.

There should be just one thin tap root. If there are many roots, keep the main one and remove the other hairy ones.

Cucumbers

Cucumbers can be straightened while growing – at about mid-day when it is hot and the cucumber is supple, gently straighten it out by hand.

Show with the flowers left on and cut with a short 'handle'.

Courgettes

Should not be bulbous, but have sides that are parallel.

When harvesting, cut with a longer stem that can then be trimmed back at the time of set-up.

Runner beans

Arrange the bean poles wide apart to form a wide 'tent'. The beans that hang down inside, protected from the worst of the sun and heat, will be the best. The line of beans should run north/south.

Beans can be straightened after harvesting with the help of a straight length of dowelling and a wet towel: wrap the towel around the dowel; then put the first bean next to the dowel, straightening it and wrapping the towel around it; repeat with the remaining beans and put in the salad compartment in the bottom of the fridge. Beans should last up to a week in the bottom of the fridge while others are catching up.

Shallots

Comments as for onions. When staging on sand, make sure the sand is really dry. Best variety for showing: 'Hâtive de Niort'.

Lettuce

Very difficult to judge uniformity of two heads of lettuce just by looking at them. Also hold them in hands to feel weight and density. When lifting lettuce for show, pull them up with all the roots. Wash the roots, dry off and cover them in cling-film. Then keep the lettuce upside down, to avoid the lower leaves breaking off.

Tomatoes

Never pick a tomato, always cut it, and further back than the knuckle. This will help keep the calyx green and stop it drying out.

Rhubarb

Rhubarb should be lifted by running the thumb down the concave side of the stick until the very bottom, then wiggling it gently back and forth so that it detaches from the roots with the spade intact. A sharp knife should be drawn over the concave side of the spade, removing the thin brown edge on both sides, and then the foot (the bottom end of the back side) of the spade should be trimmed off.

Herbs

Herbs should not be displayed with flowers, which indicate that they are not in best condition for culinary use. Try in advance to see which herbs take up water well, as some (coriander, hyssop) find this difficult and will therefore be wilting before judging.

Fruit

Fruit must be displayed without any leaves or decoration.

Apples should be shown with the eyes, not the stalks, facing upwards.

I hope these notes are of help, even though they cannot hope to give the full content of Barry Newman's clearly illustrated talk.

Any mistakes in the notes are mine, not his.

Any comments welcome to showsec@lavanthortsoc.org.uk.