

Don't be afraid of showing

The annual village show is returning to the Uphill Village Victory Hall and here's
Uphill Village Society's hints on showing

Have you ever been to a show and thought "mine are as good as that"? Well why not try your hand at entering our show? Even the experienced exhibitors started that way and it really isn't anything to be scared of. You don't need to have grown metre-long runner beans or gladiolus.

The **schedule** tells you what each class requires and also has some tips on presenting your exhibits. Do look at the number of specimens needed and the size if specified.

Here are a few hints, but if you have questions about other things, don't hesitate to contact any committee member.

Vegetables and fruit are judged on uniformity (ie whether all the items in your exhibit are similar size, shape and colour), condition (not diseased or too blemished, and fresh rather than wizened, rubbery or wilted) and size (and bigger isn't necessarily better). For example, the longest beans may be knobbly and tough, and potatoes should be medium sized rather than giant bakers. You can put your exhibits on paper plates or doilies if you wish, but this isn't essential (except in the Cookery section, where exhibits should always be on plates). The stalk, if there is one, should always be left on fruit and vegetables.

Onions are best displayed on sand or rings—these could be plastic milk-bottle lids or sections of plastic pipe or toilet roll. Remove the loose papery outer onion layers, but stop before you get to the white fleshy layer.

Wash potatoes, carrots, beetroots and parsnips gently with a sponge to avoid damaging the skin. If potatoes have coloured eyes they count as coloured not white. Beetroots should be no bigger than about tennis ball size. Don't trim off the base of rhubarb stems, but trim the leaf to 10–15 cm.

Flowers should be left on courgettes. Don't polish fruit—leave the natural bloom on. Always try to handle fruit by the stalk.

In most **flower** classes you need to bring your own vase. You can support the stems in the vase with crumpled newspaper or broken floral foam, but keep it below the rim. Cut off faded flowers and scruffy or diseased leaves. Individual Fuchsia flowers are usually exhibited by poking the flower stalk through foil or black cloth into water or floral foam. Pick flowers in the evening or early morning, and put them in a deep bucket of water away from light to stop the stems bending. Pick more than you need so you can choose the best specimens. Flowers should be a good shape and without blemishes on the petals. Damaged petals should be carefully removed. Roses should be about three-quarters open when picked.

For **pot plants**, remove damaged, diseased or dying flowers and leaves. Plant pot size is the inner diameter at the rim. Clean the outside of pots and remove debris from the surface of compost and maybe dress the surface of the pot with clean grit.

In the **Cookery section**, check whether a recipe or tin size is specified. Preserves should have a waxed disc on the surface and have a cellophane lid.

Whatever you exhibit, take a spare specimen if you can—accidents do happen. And do count again the number of specimens you have actually exhibited.

The first year show what you've grown or made; next year you may want to see which entries won prizes and try to grow or make those next year. Eventually you may even start growing your carrots in drain pipes just for the show, but most of us just want to grow things to eat or flowers and crafts to enjoy and put a few of the best specimens in the show.

Whether you exhibit vegetables, fruit, flowers or crafts—just have a go!