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THE FLOWER & VEGETABLE SHOW

For those interested in exhibiting the produce of their labours at the local flower show, I thought a few tips on showing would be helpful. I have judged shows for over 50 years, and have exhibited at local shows and at the Royal Horticultural Society Halls, so I am not a beginner!

I will start with the schedules and the interpretation Judges put, on the wording of them. A 'dish' say of 6 potatoes, 12 beans, plums, peas and apples etc. means all of the same size and shape, always with the accent on freshness, cleanliness and uniformity. A good big one will always beat a good little one providing they fill the above conditions and are not old and are edible. The exceptions to this rule are beetroot and turnips, as large ones are not usually tender when cooked. Large onions are more tender and not so strong as small ones, so 4 lb onions, and beetroot as large as golf balls. Potatoes must have no green patches or scale marks and no worm holes, as in all root vegetable classes. Don't try filling up holes with soap - I have seen holes in carrots filled with Lifebuoy soap! Don't dust cauliflower with flour to improve the colour as it will be noticeable to the experienced eye.

With flower classes, a vase of six flowers means six and no buds. For spikes of flowers, the more flowers, the better, the buds at the top are not counted. Golden rules for floral exhibits are: no weather marks; should not be over-blown and the foliage must be fresh and clean, and there should be no supports for weak stems.

Fruit, with the exception of peaches, nectarines and apricots, are exhibited with stems, and don't handle the fruit. Pick it up by the stems otherwise the 'bloom' is removed from the fruit. Tomatoes must be freshly picked, complete with 'spiders' (stems), and don't polish them, the same goes for apples. In cases of doubt ask the show secretary, or if in doubt then refer to seedsmen's or nurserymen's catalogues. Some plants which survive several years are usually counted as annuals, ie Antirrhinums, carnations etc. and the various types of dahlias and chrysanthemums, the growers catalogues are the best references and guides.

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