FRUIT AND VEGETABLE FAIR EXHIBITS

By

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Each year it is customary for rural people in the United States to bring the products of the farm to community, county and state fairs. These products are entered in competition and judges award prizes to the top entries in the various classes. The exhibitions are all educational in nature, and illustrate the results of better methods of production as well as changes in market demands of the consumer. Prizes are awarded by judges as a recognition and reward for work well done, for initiative, and for leadership.

Fairs and agricultural exhibits create an appreciation of the agriculture of the region for city visitors. To farmers, they serve as an example and an inspiration to produce better quality products. The purpose of this article is to stimulate more general interest in exhibits for their educational effects by the object lesson method. Certain factors depend largely on correct classification of the exhibits. This is particularly necessary where competition is exacting, and where the awarding of prizes is educational in effect. Without correct classification, it is impossible to stage departmental exhibits, to correctly receive entries, to equitably award placings, or to release exhibits to the owners after the fair. If products are properly classified, it is possible to inspect and compare them, and to get new ideas on choosing the better and discarding the poorer article. Here is a practical education to the visitor in showing, through proper classification, the products actually being grown in the state, and it should create a desire to buy local products rather than take chances on something produced in a locality far removed.
Correct classification also makes it possible for exhibitors to understand the points on which entries are judged, and the man who exhibits should be commended even if he does not win a place with his product. If he fails to select or exhibit the best he has produced, he should at least know the particular points on which awards are made. Discussions with and inquiries made among successful exhibitors are helpful in learning their methods of selection and growing practices. An exhibitor returns home without having learned some new and valuable lessons. If he is a loser, he should be determined to come back next year and do better; and if he is a winner, he should come back determined to hold his position.

A few suggestions are given here for preparing attractive educational exhibits of fruit and vegetables for fairs.

1. Exhibits should be fully representative of the agriculture of the county or community.

2. Only products of high quality and excellent condition should be displayed.

3. Avoid crowding the exhibit. Arrange all items in an orderly and attractive fashion.

4. Introduce every possible feature to increase the educational value of your exhibit. This should include the showing of the resources of the county so that they may be judged on variety, quality, proportion and ingenuity.

5. Strive for attractive, decorative effects. Skill in design, and arrangement of special merit are considered in judging.

These suggestions are made on the basis of judging exhibits, and it is evident that each exhibitor has unlimited opportunity to use his individual skill and initiative in the group arrangement of the products shown.

It is important in planning to know the dimensions of the space
available for the display. For backgrounds neutral colors such as tan or green are good. With them, attention can be focused on the products displayed and not on the background. Border decorations should frame the picture, and it is wise to have a focal point of interest in the center; then the remainder of the exhibit can be directed toward this focal point. Massing of bright colored products toward the center can then be arranged more effectively. Insist on variety labeling with neat uniform labels and the use of uniform sized containers.

Selecting Fruit Specimens for Exhibition

Horticultural products are not often displayed to the best advantage, and too often they defeat their own educational value. In choosing fruit specimens for exhibition, uniformity in size, form, color, condition and ripeness are important. They must be normal to the variety, and free from bruises, worm injury and specks. Most shows require fruit in its natural state and not polished. Common mistakes in selecting and showing apples are as follows:

1. Fruit not typical of the variety; too large; too small; irregular in shape, or of poor color.
2. Apples with stems cut.
3. Apples that show worm injury.
4. Wrong number for a plate entry.
5. Entering the wrong variety in a class.
6. Entering early apples in fall or winter classes.
7. Entering bruised apples and polished apples.

A plate of apples consists of five specimens; they should be uniform in size, free from blemishes, true to variety name, and up to
standard in the other respects mentioned. A good plan is to pick a specimen that is as nearly perfect for the variety as possible, then match this one specimen as closely as possible. It will require sorting over many specimens before that one can be matched.

The same general principles hold true for other fruits in selecting and exhibiting. Apples, pears, plums and cherries should be picked with the stems on. Peaches and apricots are picked without stems. Grape bunches are seldom too large for good show purposes, and the form and compactness of the bunch are important considerations. The size of the berries, their color, condition, ripeness and flavor are also very important with grapes. In box fruit, uniform size and color, packing and condition of the fruit are important.

In judging apples, as with other fruits, the judge must understand the points on which the placings are made, and while a score card of points cannot be given for each class of fruit, an example for apples is given. Plate exhibits of five apples of the same variety are often judged on the basis of the following score card:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Form</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Color</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uniformity</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom from blemishes</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Selecting Vegetable Specimens for Exhibition

Commercial displays should be confined to those vegetable crops that are grown and sold in commercial quantities in the region. Judging is based on the commercial viewpoint, and the question, "Which of these entries would sell most readily and bring the best market price?", should be answered in the placings. Quantity, quality, condition and uniformity are considerations in judging vegetable entries.
Mistakes similar to those made in selecting fruit specimens are also common with vegetables. Mistakes frequently made are:

1. Selection of the wrong type for the class, or a mixture of types.
2. Overgrown specimens, too large and coarse textured to be even considered in the placings.
3. Selection of over-mature specimens which are too ripe to stand up.
4. Immaturity.
5. Bruises, insect and disease injury.
6. Poor color for the products.

Cantaloupes, if picked one or two days before showing, may be picked at the full-slip stage, but may be picked at the half-slip stage if necessary. Too many entries are too ripe and soft.

Cabbage should be solid and mature, not cracked; free from insect injury.

Cucumbers, slicing, should be fully grown but not mature.

Sweet corn should be picked in the predough stage.

Bunched carrots, beets and turnips should be immature, fine textured, and succulent.

Snap beans should be brittle, free from strings, with the pods fully developed and the beans from one-fourth to half-grown in the pod.

Tomatoes are often too soft. Pick specimens which are well colored but not fully ripened. They should be smooth and free from cracking. Show with the blossom end up.

Summer squash should be immature, but winter squash mature. Leave the stems on.

Pod peas are often over-mature. Select full-grown pods, free from injury.

Watermelons should be well formed specimens of the variety; ripe
but not mealy or overripe.

Potatoes should be mature, but that is not always possible. Do not wash them, but clean by brushing.

Do not wash cantaloupes, snap beans, Lima beans, potatoes, pumpkins, eggplant, peppers, squash. Bunched vegetables such as carrots, beets, turnips, green onions, spinach and celery should be washed.

In selecting specimens color is important with many crops. The deeper shades are preferred to the light or dull shades. Deep orange-yellow carrots and deep dark-red beets are preferred. Dark green spinach is better than light green, and pure white cauliflower is better than the ivory or yellowish-white.

In judging, quantity, quality, condition and uniformity are basic. Score cards for each vegetable crop have been developed. However, only the general considerations can be given here on a range of scoring evaluations. These may be relative guides to points used by judges in placing.

Individual crop entries, score card of points:

1. Quantity ....... 10
2. Quality ....... 50
3. Condition ....... 20
4. Uniformity ....... 20

100

Quantity.- Correct number, weight or measure. An incorrect number may eliminate an entry.

Quality.- The variety, maturity, smoothness, ease of preparation, color, flavor, texture, and loss due to peeling, are all considered, and the value or weight of these points will vary with different crops.

Condition.- External factors such as freshness, crispness, freedom from blemishes, and succulence are examples of condition. Poor condition may eliminate an entry.

Uniformity.- All specimens in the entry should be uniform as to varietal characteristics, size, shape, maturity and color. Lack of uniformity is too common a mistake.
Commercial packages are scored in a general way as indicated by the following score card:

1. Quantity ..... 5
2. Quality ..... 45
3. Condition ..... 25
4. Uniformity ..... 15
5. Package ..... 5
6. Packing ..... 5

100

The first four items are considered in a manner similar to that discussed under individual entries. Commercial packs must be exhibited in standard packages used for carlot shipment of the commodities named in the premium list. Packing should be firm, not loose, neat, and standard for the commodity exhibited.

Many exhibitors of fruit and vegetables have failed to place exhibits in the money, not because of lack of ability to grow prize-winning specimens, but rather because of a lack of knowledge of the points considered in selecting and arranging their exhibits. These suggestions should be helpful in selecting and preparing specimens for fruit and vegetable exhibits.