

17 The presentation of trug and basket classes In these classes, presentation is as important as quality and variety. Take care to comply with any size regulations. *See also Trug and basket classes, p56.*

18 The preparation and presentation of fruit (*See also The preparation and presentation of produce at shows, p43*) For specialist advice on growing fruit refer to *RHS Grow Your Own Fruit*, by Carol Klein, Mitchell Beazley, 2009, ISBN 9781845334345.

- **Picking** Pick as near to show time as possible, taking care not to damage fruit. Harvest currants, jostaberries and worcesterberries with the strigs intact, choosing the longest strigs with the largest fruits. Pick grapes as a complete bunch and cut each bunch with a piece of lateral shoot on either side of the stalk to form a T-handle. Pick apricots, nectarines and peaches, blueberries and citrus fruits without any attached stalk and stem. Take care not to split the skin in the stalk cavity. Show all other fruits with stalks fresh and intact.

Handle all fruits as little and as gently as possible and by their stalks, if possible, so that the natural bloom is not spoilt. Use scissors to remove soft fruits. Under no circumstances should fruit be polished.

- **Selection** The desirable qualities of each kind of fruit are set out in *Judging Fruits* (see pp63–86). Choose only fruits as near to perfection as possible. The fruits should be fresh, uniform, free from blemish and characteristic in shape and colour. Refer to the show schedule to see what is required, but pick more than is necessary so that reserves are available when staging. Do not use overripe fruits. Unripe fruits are not ideal except where allowed in certain classes (see *Ripeness, p64*). Figs with signs of splitting and gages with signs of slight shrivelling can be exhibited as this is a sign of ripeness.

- **Packing** Pack carefully bearing in mind that soft fruits may be damaged by their own weight; avoid packing too many in one container. Keep in a cool place.

- **Presentation and staging** Aim for a neat, attractive presentation, as symmetrical as possible. Do not polish the fruits.

Apples and similar-shaped fruits should be staged with the eye uppermost, stalk end downwards, placing one fruit in the centre and the remainder around it. The centre fruit can be raised. Do not cut the stalks.

Berries, excluding blueberries, look most attractive if placed in lines. The stalks and calyces should look green and fresh and all point one way. Reject malformed and damaged fruits. Blueberries should be staged around the perimeter of a plate.

Worcesterberries and currant × gooseberry hybrids should have strigs intact and laid roughly parallel, the bottom of the strigs to the front of the plate. Mound the fruit in the centre.

Grapes are usually shown in one of two ways. Unless some other method of staging is specified or permitted by the schedule, glasshouse grapes should be staged on stands and should be pulled

well up onto the board. Outdoor grapes grown for winemaking or dessert may be shown on plates.

Most pears, pear-shaped quinces and figs are best arranged around the perimeter of the plate with the stalks towards the centre.

Plums, cherries and similar-shaped fruits are best laid out in lines across the plate. It is important that the bloom is not disturbed and the stalks are intact.

19 The preparation and presentation of vegetables (*See also The preparation and presentation of produce at shows, p43*) For specialist advice on growing vegetables for shows refer to the National Vegetable Society at www.nvsuk.org.uk

Where necessary, vegetables should be carefully washed to remove soil but in no circumstances should oils or similar substances be applied in an attempt to enhance their appearance. Wash with a soft cloth and plenty of water: brushing will damage the skin and spoil the appearance of the exhibit. Retain the natural 'bloom' wherever possible. All vegetables should be handled carefully during preparation.

Vegetables should be staged as attractively as possible on plates or direct on the table.

Artichokes, globe Disbud the lateral heads leaving only the large main head. Stage heads on a plate, stalks to the centre.

Asparagus peas, mangetout and snap peas Select fresh pods of good colour, that snap easily, and of a size appropriate for the cultivar, approximately 30–40mm with stalk attached.

Aubergines Cut the fruit carefully and stage on a plate, taking care to retain the natural skin condition.

Beans, broad; French, climbing or dwarf; runner; and shelling, other than broad (eg borlotti and similar types) Exhibit fresh pods of uniform colour. Stage a uniform-sized exhibit with pods arranged on a plate or directly on the bench; in a line with the tail ends facing the front. With all beans it is advisable to check one or two spare pods to assess the condition and interior freshness. Cut all pods from the vine with scissors, ensuring that each pod has a portion of stalk.

Beetroot Select roots of even size; for globe beetroot, between 60 and 75mm; for long beetroot as for parsnips (see p48); and for cylindrical cultivars, roots approximately 150mm in length. Avoid specimens with poor skin colour at the base of the root or that do not have a single small taproot. Small side roots should be removed. Take care in washing as all marks will show up clearly after a few hours. Trim foliage to approximately 75mm.

Brussels sprouts Cut from the main stem with a knife, all stalks to be approximately the same length. Choose tightly closed sprouts of uniform size. Do not remove too many outer leaves, otherwise depth of colour is reduced.

Cabbages Choose solid heads of equal size, clean and with good waxy bloom. Take care not to mark the bloom. Reject split specimens and any