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Writtle Garden and Allotment Society

www.writtlegardeners.org

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Writtle Garden and
Allotment Society

**SUGGESTIONS TO EXHIBITORS
OF HORTICULTURAL EXHIBITS**

Booklet 3—Fruit

**Taken from the RHS Horticultural
Show Handbook**

19. The preparation and presentation of fruit

Preparation

Initial preparation should begin well beforehand. Protect against frost and cold winds in spring; both may destroy, mar or blemish all kinds of fruit. Thinning is often necessary where a heavy set of fruit occurs. Apples, pears, plums, peaches, apricots, figs, grapes, gooseberries and strawberries all benefit from thinning. Thin in stages, especially those kinds of fruit that shed some of their fruitlets naturally, e.g. apples and pears, bearing in mind that early thinning has the most beneficial effect on size. Remove the small, blemished and misshapen fruits first. With many apple cultivars the "king fruit" or centrally placed apple in the cluster is misshapen.

The fruits that require plenty of sunshine to bring out their characteristic colours should not be over-shaded. As they begin to ripen, they should be exposed gradually to more sunshine by the judicious removal of leaves and the tying back of overhanging foliage. Peaches and nectarines may be tilted towards the sun by means of small pieces of wood placed behind them. There is the risk of sun scald on glasshouse-grown fruits; grapes and figs in particular must have the protection of their foliage. The aim should be to obtain sufficient uniformly ripened specimens for the class or classes to be entered.

Protect against birds well before the fruits ripen. Some growers protect individual fruits in muslin or perforated, clear polythene bags and often the skin finish can be improved in this way. Some fruits are liable to split when almost ripe and others may be spoilt by heavy rains. Black

polythene over the soil surface of the rooting area may sometimes mitigate splitting.

Picking

Pick as near to show time as practicable. Before handling it is suggested that the exhibitor's fingernails are trimmed to prevent damage to the produce. Currants should be picked with the strigs intact choosing the longest strigs with the largest fruits. Grapes should be picked as a complete bunch and each bunch should be cut with a piece of lateral shoot on either side of the stalk to form a T-handle. Melons should be cut in the same way. Apples, pears, plums and allied fruits, cherries, quinces, figs, medlars, blackberries and allied fruits, gooseberries, raspberries and allied fruits, loganberries and strawberries should have husks and stalks removed. Apricots, nectarines and peaches should be picked without any attached stalk and stem. Care should be taken not to split the skin in the stalk cavity.

Handle all fruits as little and as gently as possible and by their stalks, where applicable, so that the natural bloom where present, e.g. on grapes, plums and some apples, is not spoilt. Use scissors rather than fingers to remove soft fruits. In wet weather raspberries may be left on the canes and lengths of the fruit-bearing canes brought under cover and placed in water, until dry enough to pick. Strawberries may be kept dry by covering with cloches or by placing individual fruits on the plants in jars but care should be taken to avoid damage by excessive heat.

Selection

The desirable qualities of each kind of fruit are set out later. Choose only fruits as near to perfection as can be found. The fruits should be fresh, uniform, free from blemish and character-

istic in shape and colour. Pick more than required in the schedule so that reserves are available when staging. Do not use overripe fruits. Under-ripe fruits should also be avoided, where possible, except where allowed in certain classes. 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. Wood wool, cotton wool, tissue paper and newspaper are all suitable materials to use. Soft fruits may be damaged by their own weight; avoid packing too many in one container. Hard fruits are best wrapped individually in soft tissue. Keep in a cool place.

Presentation and staging

Aim for a neat attractive presentation, symmetrical if possible. Do not polish the fruits. Where applicable, the stalks should always point to the back of the table. In staging small fruits, the well of the plate is best filled with soft tissue paper and then the whole of the top covered, tucking the surplus paper under the plate. Use only white tissue paper.