

# Oregon 4-H Horticulture Contest Guide

## Vegetables

Growing vegetables is a great way to learn about plants. You'll also provide fresh produce for your family and feel a sense of accomplishment.

When you display your vegetables at a fair or exhibition, you get a chance to show the results of your efforts. You can learn more about vegetable production and looked-for qualities of vegetables when you interact with the judge or get the results of the judging. Also, you show others what can be grown in the area.



### Steps in Planning and Preparing Vegetable Exhibits

#### 1. Learn about planting and caring for a vegetable garden.

Grow varieties adapted to local conditions. You can find recommended varieties, planting dates, and gardening hints at the OSU Extension website <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/>. Look there for the publication *Vegetable Gardening in Oregon* (EC 871). Also, talk with local vegetable growers and exhibitors.

#### 2. Plan to have enough vegetables ready at the right time so you can prepare a good exhibit at fair time.

Schedule planting dates to achieve the best quality at the time of the exhibition. Think about how long it takes each variety to grow from planting to harvest in relation to the opening date of the fair. To allow for weather variations, make extra plantings of crops that might be over- or under-mature at harvest.

Grow enough produce to show a good selection. It's easier to achieve an exhibit of well-matched specimens when you have enough produce to pick only the best.

#### 3. Know the fair rules and regulations, and find out what types of vegetables can be shown.

Review the current fair premium book. It's the best place to find the rules on how to display your vegetables. Enter items correctly, and be certain that each entry has the proper number of specimens.

#### 4. Know how to prepare different vegetables for showing at fair.

Please see specific recommendations in this publication.

#### 5. Learn the best ways to transport vegetables to avoid damaging them.

Handle vegetables carefully. Avoid bruising and prolonged exposure to sun or heat. Wrap individual tomatoes, eggplant, and peppers in

*Revised by Joy Jones, Extension 4-H faculty, Tillamook County. Adapted by Beverly Hobbs, Extension specialist, 4-H youth development; and N.S. Mansour, Extension vegetable crops specialist emeritus; all of Oregon State University. Based on OSU Extension Service publications EC 653 and 4-H 2330, and a University of Nebraska-Lincoln Cooperative Extension publication.*

paper and place them in a strong container. Take extra specimens along to replace any that may spoil or become damaged.

## 6. Recognize the qualities judges look for.

Think about these features when you choose and prepare your vegetables for exhibit:

- **Uniformity.** Specimens should be alike in size, shape, color, texture, and stage of maturity.
- **Condition and quality.** Specimens should be edible, in prime condition, and have no blemishes or damage from insects, disease, or handling. Specimens with deepest color are preferred.
- **Typical of type.** Specimens should be typical of the variety in shape, color, and size.
- **Size in relation to market demand and variety.** Contrary to what many people think, large entries do not have a competitive edge over other entries (except for special entries, such as “largest pumpkin”). Largeness often suggests coarseness, over-maturity, and possible poor quality.

**Select specimens that are similar to products sold at a store.** For example, summer squash should be small to medium size, young, and tender. Baby carrots should also be small and tender. Most other carrots should be long, straight, and not too large or too small.

- **Cleanliness.** Dirt detracts from the natural attractiveness of vegetables. Wipe cucumbers, tomatoes, peppers, and other soft-skinned vegetables with a damp cloth. Wash or lightly brush soil from potatoes, carrots, and beets. Clean leafy vegetables such as Swiss chard by dipping in cool water.
- **Neat arrangement in containers.** Carefully place specimens to show their most attractive and desirable characteristics.

## Judging

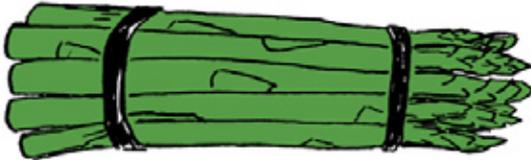
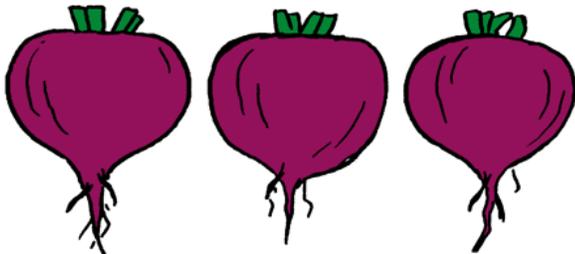
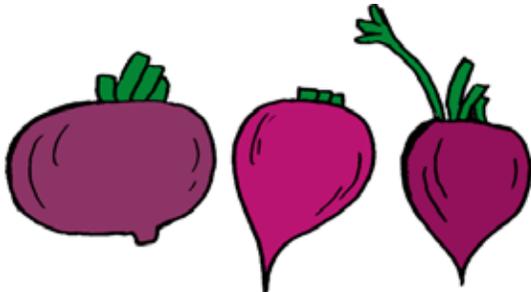
These lists show characteristics of vegetable exhibits with their relative importance in judging:

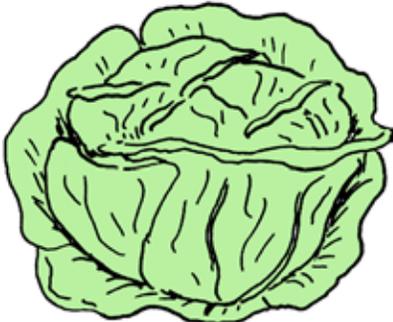
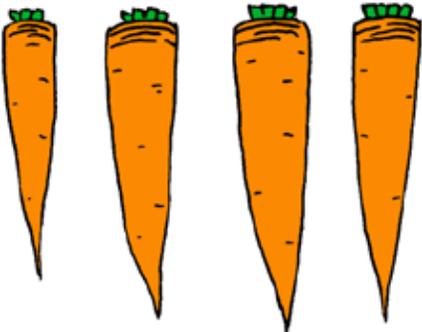
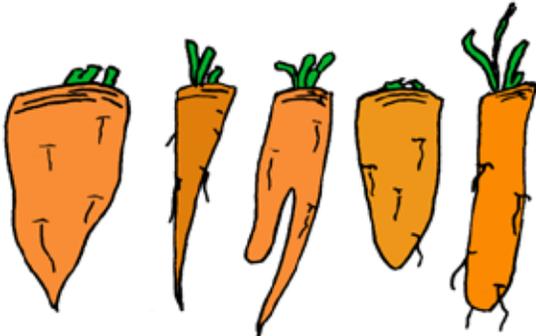
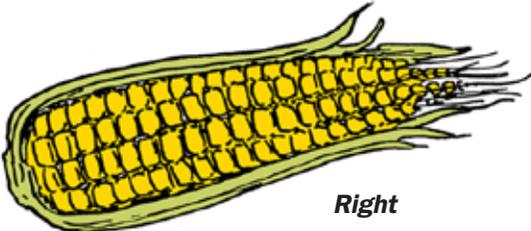
### Specimen Vegetable Exhibits

Uniformity—size, shape, color .....	25
Condition—free from dirt, disease, blemish .....	25
Quality—crisp, firm, edible, mature.....	20
Typical of type.....	20
Size in relation to market demand .....	10
	<hr/>
	100

### Vegetable Collection Exhibits

Uniformity—size, shape, color .....	25
Condition—free from dirt, disease, blemish .....	25
Quality—crisp, firm, edible, mature.....	25
Number of kinds of vegetables.....	15
Neatness and labeling .....	10
	<hr/>
	100

Vegetable	Desirable characteristics	Possible faults	Preparation	How to keep fresh
Asparagus <i>5 spears</i>	Five spears of equal thickness. Compact tips, butts trimmed, leaving 1" white showing. Stalks a minimum 3/8" diameter and 5 3/4" long.	Stalks branched, wilted, varied in color.	Tie bunch of 5 spears at both ends, using bright ribbon.	Keep butts wet. Store in humid place at 32–34°F.
				
	<b>Right</b>		<b>Wrong</b>	
Beans, snap <i>5 beans/pods</i> green yellow wax purple Italian	Straight, fleshy, tender, well-filled pods with seeds about half mature.	Crooked, broken, poorly filled, or overmature, stringy pods. Pods wilted, rusted, or blemished.	Wipe with soft, dry cloth. Do not wash. Leave all stems intact or remove all without damaging pod.	Pick in cool of morning and store in humid place at 40–50°F.
Beans, other <i>5 beans/pods</i> horticulture dry	Clean, uniform seed of same variety.	Shriveled, cracked, or blemished beans. Foreign matter and insect damage.	Sort beans and remove foreign material by hand.	—
lima	Uniform, well-filled pods. Fresh bright green.	Misshapen or poorly filled pods. Yellow, dried, rusted, or insect-damaged.	Wipe with soft, dry cloth. Do not wash.	Pick close to fair time and keep in humid place at 40–50°F.
Beet <i>5 beets</i>	Smooth, round, uniform, medium to small size, free of side roots. Tops trimmed back 1" to 3". Deep red color.	Blocky or angular roots, rough skin, missing taproot, insect or disease damage. White or light colored internal rings. Roots too large.	Soak and wash in cool water. Trim tops to 1/2" to 1" inch. Do not trim roots.	Harvest close to fair date and keep in a humid place at 32–34°F.
				
	<b>Right</b>		<b>Wrong</b>	
Broccoli <i>1 main head or 5 side shoots</i>	Dark green, crisp head with tightly closed buds.	Buds open or showing yellow color. Wilted heads. Insect damage.	Rinse in cool water.	Store in humid place at 32–34°F.
Brussels sprouts <i>5 sprouts</i>	Uniform, medium-size, round. Heavy, firm, compact. Clean and green.	Loose, open sprouts. Yellow or light green in color. Oval or elongated in shape.	Trim all sprouts uniformly. Wash.	Store in humid place at 32–34°F.

Vegetable	Desirable characteristics	Possible faults	Preparation	How to keep fresh
Cabbage <i>1 head</i>	Uniform, solid head, heavy for size.	Cracked or wilted head. Insect-damaged, peeled, shiny heads.	Peel away only damaged leaves, leaving at least two layers of outer leaves. Wipe with moist cloth if necessary. Cut stem squarely no more than ½" long.	Store in humid place at 32–34°F.
	 <b>Right</b>	 <b>Wrong</b>		
Carrot <i>5 carrots</i>	Uniform roots, true to size, shape, and color of variety. Deep orange color, straight roots with smooth skin free of side shoots.	Forked or misshapen roots. Purple or green color. Too large or too small. Dirty roots. Cracked roots. Disease or insect damage. No tap root.	Trim tops 1" to 3" and wash thoroughly in cool water.	Store in humid place at 32–34°F.
	 <b>Right</b>	 <b>Wrong</b>		
Cauliflower <i>1 head</i>	Firm, white, smooth head at least 4" diameter with 4 to 6 leaves trimmed slightly above head or curd.	Discolored, grainy head. Insect damage. Hollow stem.	Trim outer leaves slightly above head and wipe with soft, dry cloth.	Store in humid place at 32–34°F.
Celery <i>2 stalks</i>	Large, firm stalks, uniform petioles. Butt white, cut squarely. Leaves, if left on, must be green.	Spindly petioles, wilted leaves. Dirt between petioles.	Trim all roots. Wash.	Store in humid place at 32–34°F.
Corn, sweet <i>2 ears</i>	Well-filled, plump, uniform ears. Kernels with good color typical of variety.	Worm, bird, or insect damage. Immature or overmature kernels. Poorly filled ears. Yellow husks.	Trim silk to 1" of tip of husk. Shank 1" to 2" from base of ear. Remove loose husks.	Harvest as close to fair time as possible. Store in humid place at 40–50°F.
	 <b>Right</b>	 <b>Wrong</b>		

Vegetable	Desirable characteristics	Possible faults	Preparation	How to keep fresh
Cucumber, pickling <i>5 cucumbers</i>	Deep green specimens of uniform size and shape. Size no more than 3½" long and 1¼" diameter.	Misshapen or crooked fruit.	Do not wash or wipe fruit.	Harvest close to fair time and store in humid place at 40–50°F.
Cucumber slicing <i>2 cucumbers</i>	Fruit crisp, firm, free of blemish. Straight, dark green specimens of uniform size and shape.	Yellow color, oversized, puffy fruit.	Wipe with soft, moist cloth if necessary.	Harvest close to fair time and store in humid place at 40–50°F.
lemon	Uniform yellow color, symmetrical shape, medium size.	Overmature, misshapen.		
Eggplant <i>1 eggplant</i>	Specimen firm, dark purple fruit with small blossom scar.	Immature fruit. Dried calyx. Bronze or green color. Soft fruit.	Wipe with soft, dry or moist cloth if necessary.	Harvest close to exhibition time. Store at 40–50°F.
Garlic <i>2 regular bulbs or 1 elephant bulb</i>	Uniform, solid, well-cured bulbs with uniform size, cloves equally distributed around the bulb.	Sunscald, green colored, lack of complete scales surrounding the cloves, water stained, disease or insect damage.	Timely harvest is necessary to allow for curing before bulbs "shatter." Remove one layer of skin to clean. Bulbs must have two or three intact scales containing the cloves. Leave 1" at the top and trim roots to ¼".	Do not allow to wilt. Do not cure in full sun. Store in refrigerator crisper drawer if needed.
Kohlrabi <i>2 kohlrabi</i>	Uniform specimens 2" to 3" in diameter.	Woody stems. Cracks or discoloration.	Cut stem ½" below "ball" and leaves even with its top. Brush or wipe with dry cloth.	Store in humid place at 32–34°F.
Lettuce <i>1 plant head</i>	Medium size, firm and crisp. Keep two wrapped leaves attached.	Wilted wrapper leaves. Misshapen head, too soft, damaged or discolored leaves.	Trim butt squarely. Trim off all damaged leaves. Wash thoroughly.	Store in humid place at 32–34°F.
leaf	Well-matched, crisp, tender, and fairly compact.	Damaged, discolored leaves. Dirt between leaves.	Leave roots attached. Display in vase of water. Trim off loose leaves.	Store in humid place at 32–34°F.
Muskmelon <i>1 melon</i>	Mature specimen, medium- to large-size. Typical of variety in shape, color, and netting. Fragrant and of edible quality.	Soft or cracked fruit. Sun scald or lack of netting (if netted type).	Brush, if necessary, after soil is dry.	Store at 40–50°F.

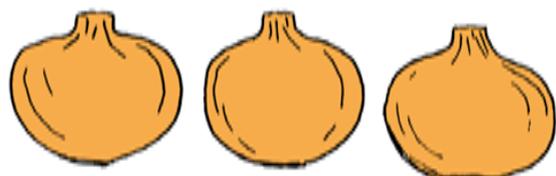
Onion, bulb  
*3 bulbs*

Uniform, solid, well-cured bulbs with smooth, clear scales.

Green colored, peeled skin, soft neck, sprouts, or double bulbs. Disease or insect damage.

Harvest early to allow for curing. Remove no more than 1 layer of skin to clean. Do not wash. Leave 1" at top and trim roots to ¼".

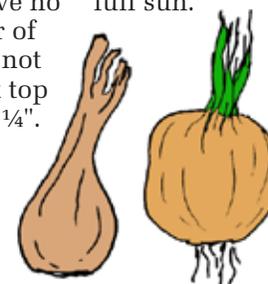
Do not cure in full sun.



**Right**



**Wrong**



<b>Vegetable</b>	<b>Desirable characteristics</b>	<b>Possible faults</b>	<b>Preparation</b>	<b>How to keep fresh</b>
Onion, green <i>5 onions</i>	Dark green leaves with long, straight, slender white shanks.	Enlarged bulbs. Crooked or discolored shanks. Dry or yellow leaves.	Remove only loose skin. Cut tops uniformly, 4" to 5" above white shank. Tie in bunch.	Store in humid place at 32–34°F.
Parsnips <i>2 parsnips</i>	Clean, medium- to large-size, smooth, well-shaped roots. Light, even-colored skin and firm flesh.	Soft or woody roots. Green shoulders. Insect damage.	Trim tops to 1" length and soak and wash in cool water. Do not rub skin or remove taproot. Trim off rootlets.	Store in humid place at 40–50°F and freshen in cold water if necessary.
Peas <i>5 pods</i>	Uniform, well-filled pods. Fresh bright green.	Shriveled, cracked, or blemished pods. Discolored or disease- or insect-damaged.	Sort pods, wipe with a soft dry cloth. Do not wash. Leave stems intact.	Pick in cool of morning, store in humid place at 40–50°F. Protect from desiccation.
Pepper, bell or sweet <i>2 peppers</i>	Firm with deep color. All specimens same size, shape, color, and number of lobes.	Wrinkled or misshapen specimens. Sunburned or blemished. Traces of contrasting color.	Wipe with soft, dry cloth and trim stems even with shoulders of fruit.	Harvest close to time of fair and store in humid place at 40–50°F.
Pepper, hot <i>5 peppers</i>	Well-colored, uniform, and true to type.	Wilted, sunburned or blemished.	Same as bell pepper.	Same as bell pepper.
Potatoes <i>5 potatoes</i>	Uniform, clean specimens, true to shape and color for variety.	Greening or sunburn. Insect, mechanical, or disease damage. Non-uniform shape.	Brush or wipe with soft cloth after specimens have been harvested. Do not wash.	Store at 40–50°F in darkness. Exposure to light may cause greening.
Pumpkin <i>1 pumpkin</i>	True to type in size, shape, and color. Thick flesh and heavy for size. Mature with clear color. Hard skin.	Misshapen fruit. Scars or blemishes. Light weight for size.	Wipe and polish with soft, dry cloth. Leave portion of stem attached.	Store at 50–55°F.
Radish <i>1 bunch of 8–10 radishes</i>	Well-matched specimens. Fresh, neatly bunched, tops and roots left on. Bright red. Medium size, firm, and crisp.	Loosely tied bunches. Wilted, damaged leaves. Dirt on roots.	Wash thoroughly and gently. Do not scour surface of roots.	Store in humid place at 32–34°F.
Rhubarb <i>5 stalks</i>	Uniform in size and color. Smooth, well-colored skin. Fresh, solid, straight.	Wilted stalks or those with lower end cut. Poor color or blemishes.	Pull, do not cut, stalks. Leave 1" leaf on stem. Tie bundles at both ends.	Soak in ice water.
Rutabaga <i>2 rutabagas</i>	Uniform size and shape with matched color patterns. Smooth skin, medium size, and free of blemishes.	Irregular shape or blotchy colors; insect, disease, or mechanical damage. Spongy or soft roots.	Cut tops back to 1" to 2". Leave 2" of taproot. Soak and wash in cold water.	Store at 32–34°F. Keep from shriveling.
Spinach <i>5 leaves with stems</i>	Well-matched, fresh, dark green. Leaves attached to the crown.	Spindly, damaged leaves. Dirt between leaves.	Wash thoroughly.	Store in humid place at 32–34°F.
Squash, summer <i>2 squash crookneck or zucchini</i>	Matched specimens true to variety in size, shape, and color. Medium size with soft skin. Zucchini 6" to 10"; yellow 5" to 8".	Large and over-mature. Missing stems. Blemishes.	Clean by brushing. Do not wash.	Store in humid place at 40–50°F.

Vegetable	Desirable characteristics	Possible faults	Preparation	How to keep fresh
Squash, winter <i>1 squash</i>	Medium- to large-size specimens. Rind hard and free from blemishes. Color fully developed.	Immature, soft, or damaged rind. Scars, blemishes.	Brush dirt off lightly. Leave short stem attached.	Store at 40–50°F. Keep dry.
Sweet potato <i>5 potatoes</i>	Smooth, bright color. Free of pest damage or bruises. Uniform and true to variety. Medium size.	Side roots, growth cracks. Too large or small. Poor shape. Rough skin.	Dig early enough to cure well before a fair. Clean by brushing or wipe with soft, dry cloth.	Store in humid place at 55–60°F.
Swiss chard <i>5 leaves with stems</i>	Clean, fresh, well-colored leaves with bright, tender stems.	Wilted, poorly colored leaves with damaged skins.	Wash in cold water.	Store in humid place at 40–50°F. Exhibit in jar of cold water to prevent wilting.
Tomato, cherry/other <i>5 tomatoes</i> (under 2" in diameter)	True to variety in size, shape, and color. Smooth skin with uniform color.	Poor color, sunscald, puffiness, growth cracks. Disease damage. Overripe.	Avoid overmature fruit. Remove stems to prevent damage. Clean with moist, soft cloth.	Store at 40–50°F.
Tomato, slicing/other <i>3 tomatoes</i> (over 2" in diameter)	True to variety in size, shape, and color. Smooth skin with uniform color.	Poor color, sunscald, puffiness, growth cracks. Disease damage. Overripe.	Avoid overmature fruit. Remove stems to prevent damage. Clean with moist, soft cloth.	Store at 40–50°F.
Turnip <i>2 turnips</i>	Uniform size and shape with matched color patterns. Smooth skin, medium size, and firm flesh.	Irregular shape and forking roots. Insect, disease, or mechanical damage. Soft, spongy roots.	Cut tops back to 1" to 2". Leave 2" of tap root. Soak and wash in cold water.	Store at 32–34°F.
Watermelon <i>1 melon</i>	Typical of variety in shape and color. Ground spot should be yellowish and skin of good color.	Misshapen fruit. Blemishes. Sunburn.	Wipe with moist cloth.	Store at 40–50°F.

## Vegetable Collections

Collections require a specific number of different vegetables.

Juniors—3 different vegetables

Intermediates—4 different vegetables

Seniors—5 different vegetables.

For each kind of vegetable in the collection, you should show the same amount as for an individual vegetable entry. For example, a Junior collection might include 2 ears of corn, 5 green beans, and 3 bulb onions.

See the chart above for each specific type of vegetable.

© 2007 Oregon State University. This publication may be photocopied or reprinted in its entirety for noncommercial purposes. Produced and distributed in furtherance of the Acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914. Extension work is a cooperative program of Oregon State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Oregon counties. Oregon State University Extension Service offers educational programs, activities, and materials without discrimination based on age, color, disability, gender identity or expression, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran's status. Oregon State University Extension Service is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

Revised July 2001. Revised March 2007.