**HARTEST & DISTRICT GARDENING CLUB**

**PREPARING EXHIBITS FOR THE ANNUAL SHOW**

**Most importantly – HAVE A GO !! Secondly – READ THE SCHEDULE !!** Check the number of items needed.

(Not all of these vegetables appear as classes in our Schedule, but can be in the Top Tray, or just useful!)

**Peas :** Sow 12 and 14 weeks ahead of the show (sow twice). Cut pods day prior to show, using scissors and leaving a good length of stalk on the pod. Never hold the pod as it leaves fingerprints and spoils the natural ”bloom”. Always hold by the stalk. Put in a cool place the evening before the show, hold each pod against the light to count the peas in each pod. A pinprick hole in the pod denotes possible maggot damage. Show on a plate side by side, or in a cartwheel.

**Potatoes:** Buy new seed potatoes each year. Sow in trenches lined with compost, leaving all shoots on. Crinkled leaves suggest a virus. When lifting, cut the haulms (tops) a week before lifting, make sure they never dry, have a bucket of water ready and wash with a sponge. If they dry, you won’t get them clean. They will keep fresh for several days if wrapped in tissue, placed in a box and kept in a cool place. Best for showing are Kestrel, with coloured eyes, Maxima, which is red, and Pentland Javelin. Winston potatoes are flavourless, but very white and show well. A good size for showing is about 7 – 8 ounces.

**Carrots:** Short carrots can be grown in a V-trench. When pulled, wash soil away with a hose pipe or watering can, saving as much of the tail as possible. Wash with a sponge going round and round, not up and down. Trim tops to same length (3-4”), tie with raffia if liked. Remove hairs. Show on black cloth. A length of stalk placed under carrot will prevent rolling. Long carrots should be grown in a barrel.

**Parsnips:** Can be grown in sandy compost in a barrel, or punch a hole in the ground with a crowbar and fill with compost. Sow 3-4 seeds and pinch off those not wanted. Do not pull them out as it disturbs the roots of the remaining one. When pulling, dig a small trench along the row and fill with water to soften the soil before removal, jiggling it about to loosen the roots. If there is resistance, fill up with water, leave and try again. Like carrots, wash round and round the root with a sponge. Trim tops. Gladiator is a good variety to show.

**Onions:** For Japanese onions, sow seed in August. Pull about 4 weeks before the show. Cut off roots with scissors and leave enough top to tie down when required. Wash off membrane and rub talcum powder over the onion and a new clean skin will grow in 3-4 weeks.

For giant onions grow Beacon or Kelsey. Sow seed at Christmas, place in a cold frame in April and plant out in May in ground prepared with Vitax Q4. Chicken pellets can be used at this stage but beware of too much feed as it makes the onions soft. Plant so that leaves go the same way to make hoeing and weeding easier. Lift 3 weeks before the show. Trim roots and foliage. Clean to one skin and dust with talc. Trim tops and tie with raffia so the knot is at the back of the onion. 32-40 oz is a good size. Sit on rings on a black cloth. Small onions are shown on silver sand.

**Leek:** Sow under glass or in a heated greenhouse in January, plant out when 6-8” tall. When grown another 6-8 inches, place lengths of waste pipe round each stem, about 18”. The tops will appear out of the top of the waste pipe, place newspaper round tops to keep out light and feed well. On show day, take off pipe and select three the same. Clean off outer skin and wash roots.

**Shallots:** Plant on the shortest day, lift on the longest day. Display on silver sand and tie tops.

**Beetroot:** In the ground, they can be earthed up to help prevent the hard ring round neck. When pulled, trim tops to 3”. Red Ace has good colour. You want the size to be between a golf ball and tennis ball. Wash, and fill a bucket with water and 2 tablespoons of salt. Salt brings out the colour.

**Tomatoes:** Pick when just ripe, with a healthy calyx. Shirley and Alicante are good for exhibition. The size is not judged, but must be as uniform as possible.

**Cucumber:** Carmen is a good variety. Try to show with the bloom (flower) still on. Wash and wrap in tissue. The straighter the better, display on black cloth.

**Lettuce:** A cabbage type is best, like Cassandra. Sow every 2 weeks. Lift lettuce with roots. Wash lettuce by holding the root while the lettuce hangs upside down and squirting water upwards. Drain and place in polythene bag and keep in cool place.

**Sweetcorn:** Is shown as picked – not skinned, although sometimes exhibitors will peel down a small section. Leave the tassel on.

**Cabbage and Cauliflowers:** Lift as near to the show as possible. Look for a good heart. Trim root leaving 3” stalk. Trim round leaves to tidy. All brassicas like lots of water and a very rich soil. Brigadier and Brunswick are good cabbages. Cauliflowers need similar attention except the curds must not be washed as they will discolour. The leaves are cut just below the top of the curd level.

**Courgettes:** Should be as even in length and shape as possible. 4-6” long, with flower attached if possible. Defender and Parthenon are good varieties.

**Marrows:** Should be shown nice and young, 12-14” long.

**Runner beans:** They don’t like hot, humid nights – it makes the flowers drop off. It helps to spray the plants frequently. A week beforehand, cut a length of wood to the size you think you can achieve with the number required. Pick the runners when they reach this size every day until the show, then select your entry. Picked beans should be wrapped in a damp tea towel and placed in the bottom of the fridge. The warmth of the hand will straighten a curved bean. Show on a black cloth. Ditto all the above for **French beans.**

**Pumpkins:** Feed and water again and again. Place a blanket over the top in cold spells or they will stop growing. The night before the show put a wet blanket over your pride and joy as it absorbs water and will be heavier the next day. **Giant marrows** ditto.

**Flowers:** When exhibiting roses, dahlias, marigolds and chrysanthemums, ensure that the petals are not dirty or eaten (by earwigs). Do not put any other foliage in the vase unless stated. You can use some moss or paper to hold your stems in place if required.

**Pot plants:** The main bugbear is bad presentation – dead leaves, eaten leaves, seed heads, bad staking and typing, and dirty pots. This also applies to foliage plants. Under RHS rules foliage plants may still have their flowers left on.

**Fruit:** Should all have stalks, uniform condition, size and colour. Minimise handling to avoid marking.

**Produce:** Jars should be clean, with no fingerprints, and have a label showing contents and date. Try to avoid commercial jars and lids. Previously used lids do not give a good seal and therefore the item has not been preserved.

Pickles are usually raw vegetables or fruit that you can see what it is, chutney is chopped up and cooked.

Cakes should have no cooling rack marks and should be in a clear bag (NOT CLINGFILM), which the judge will remove. If cakes crack along the top, it is because your oven is too hot and they have risen too quickly.

Bread should be 24 hours old, and displayed on a board.

Sweet items should be on a doyley, savoury ones on a dish mat.

Lastly, after judging, if you have not won a prize, please do not complain. Remember the Judge’s decision is final. If the judge is present, you could ask them why your entry had not won.

**Happy showing !**