

Advice: Autumn Produce and Floral Sections, Autumn 2026

Your entries don't need to be perfect. Don't be afraid, just 'have a go'!

The more entries the better the show.

- **The purpose of these tips is to help those exhibitors who want to know more and not to discourage entries.**
- Exhibitors should check that their entries comply with all the requirements mentioned in the Schedule.
- Please contact the Show Secretary for further advice on specific classes. breamgardeningsociety@gmail.com
- The name(s) of the cultivar(s) exhibited may be displayed on your exhibitor card, for the benefit of the visitors.
- The following resources provide some excellent information to help you grow and prepare your horticultural exhibits for showing. Whilst this advice is generally applicable, the requirements listed in the **Bream Autumn Show Schedule 2026** should always take precedence.

Books:

'The Horticultural Show Handbook' published by the **RHS**. This guide will be followed when judging the Autumn Produce and Floral Sections. This guide is regularly updated but older editions still provide valid guidance.

'Getting Started on the Show Bench - A beginners guide to growing and showing vegetables' by Derek Brooks and published by the National Vegetable Society. Although our judges follow the RHS guidance when judging, this NVS book provides some great practical advice for those showing vegetables at any show.

'The Great British Village Show', published by Dorling Kindersley. A good beginners' guide with advice for all show sections.

Websites:

<https://www.teabreakgardener.co.uk/show-time-a-beginners-guide-to-showing-fruit-veg-and-flowers/>

<https://www.allotment-garden.org/vegetable-show/>

<https://medwynsofanglesey.co.uk/category/articles/>

https://www.frittendengardeningsociety.co.uk/frittenden_garden_society/file/PDF/Tips_for_Showing.pdf

Class-specific Advice: Autumn Produce Section

- The judge's preferences have been given for guidance only.

All qualifying produce is most welcome - please don't be discouraged.

- Ideally, exhibits should be fresh, clean, blemish-free and with no sign of pest or disease damage.
- In general, fruit and vegetables should be exhibited with no additional garnish.
- Where more than one of a kind is specified, the produce shown should be as near identical in size, shape and colour as possible.
- **Vegetables and fruit in collections** should be grouped but not cramped so that each kind can be seen.

These classes may include vegetables and/or fruit which appear elsewhere in the schedule or not.

For advice on any produce which is not individually listed in the schedule, please contact the Show Secretary.

- **Pumpkins** are round and symmetrical winter squashes which sit squarely on their base. They have thick skin which is typically orange but some varieties may be shades of green. Fruit should be firm and ripe with good colour. Displayed with stalk attached. Ideally, with some stem each side to form a T-handle.
- **Squashes** may be an edible **squash** or decorative **gourd** which does not qualify as a pumpkin. Fruit should be firm and ripe with good colour. Displayed with stalk attached. Ideally, with some stem each side to form a T-handle.
- **Brassicas:**

Cabbages should have fresh, solid heads. Shape according to cultivar. Not too many outside leaves removed. Stalk trimmed to 7.5cm.

Cauliflower heads should be tight, solid, symmetrical and of uniform colour. Ideally, no leaf bracts amongst the curds. Outside leaves should be neatly trimmed to expose the curd. Stalk trimmed to 7.5cm.

Kale heads are best presented in a vase of water to maintain freshness. Outside leaves removed leaving about 5 to 10 leaves attached for presentation. Leaves should be fresh and blemish-free, not limp. Size and colour according to cultivar.

Brussel sprout buttons should be fresh, solid and tightly closed. Not excessively peeled.

- **Root vegetables** should be fresh and firm, not coarse, misshapen, split or excessively ribbed. All traces of earth should be removed but take care not to damage the skin when cleaning.

Carrots should be pulled from the soil carefully to maintain an intact tap root. **Long carrots** should have a taproot that gradually tapers over its full length. **Stump-rooted carrots** with a good blunt end to the root, rather than a taper, are preferred. Ideally, there should be no green colouration around the shoulders of the carrots as a result of exposure to light.

When cleaning carrots, pay particular attention to cleaning the crown and foliage. Clean around the roots, never rub up and down. Small side roots should be removed. Leaf stalks should be trimmed to 7.5cm.

Arrange carrots side by side in a triangular formation with the roots pointing towards the front of the bench.

Parsnips should have long, tapered white roots. Well filled with good weight is more important than length. No signs of canker. In general, follow the same advice as for carrots.

Turnips and swedes should be medium size with shape according to cultivar. Aim for small single taproots with no sideshoots. Skins not patchy or cracked. Not spongy. Leaf stalks should be trimmed to 5cm.

Celeriac roots should be globe-shaped and blemish-free. Trim the foliage back to approximately 75mm, leaving the central young leaves intact. Roots should be trimmed back to the body of the vegetable.

Radishes shouldn't be tough, spongy or dull in colour. Size and shape according to cultivar. Leaf stalks should be trimmed to 3cm.

Beetroot should be pulled from the soil carefully to maintain an intact tap root. A single small taproot is preferred. Skin should be smooth with no leather effect. Exhibits which are too old and woody will be marked down.

Small side roots should be removed. Leaf stalks should be trimmed to 7.5cm.

Display your beetroot on a plain plate.

- **Potato** tubers of approximately 200-250g are preferred. Tubers should not be misshapen. Eyes should be few and shallow. There should be no green colouration as a result of exposure to light.

White potatoes should show no colour at all. **Coloured potatoes** may be uniformly coloured or just show colour around the eyes.

When cleaning potatoes, all traces of earth should be removed but take care not to damage the skin.

Arrange the potatoes on a plain plate with the eyes (rose end) facing out. You may cover your exhibit with tissue paper to exclude light prior to judging.

- **Collection of culinary herbs** should contain foliage from at least three distinct kinds of culinary herbs - variety is favoured. Your herbs should be displayed in water in a labelled jar. Common names are sufficient. Specimens should be fresh and young. Herbs should be picked in prime condition for culinary use. In general, culinary herbs should not be displayed in flower.
- **Hard fruit**, such as **apples** and **pears**, should be displayed with stalks attached. Handle fruit as little as possible and do not wash or polish the fruit so that the natural bloom is preserved.
- **Longest leek** grown from a 'Bulgarian Giant' seed, measured from leaf tip to root tip. See [Instructions for members-only classes](#) for growing advice.
- **Fruit or vegetable not in schedule**: contact the show secretary for advice and for the number of specimens required.

Class-specific Advice: Floral Section

- **The judge's preferences have been given for guidance only - please don't be discouraged from entering.**
- **General hints:** Desirable merits and defects vary considerably between varieties and types; however, some general hints are - freshness, cleanliness and condition; form and uniformity; trueness of colour; size of blooms in balance with stems; stems clean and free from defects. Look for flowers and foliage that are free from disease, insect damage and blemishes. They should be at the optimum point in their life cycle, fully developed but not yet fading.

Any **ornamental bracts** will be considered as part of the flower. The plant will be considered to be in bloom if its bracts are fully expanded, even if the true flowers aren't completely open.

The use of **foliage**, of the same kind as the flowers shown, is optional in all cut flower classes.

- **Cutting flowers:** Ideally, flowers should be cut in the evening, making a slanting cut to assist the uptake of water. Stems should be cut as long as possible. Remove unwanted side shoots, buds and lower leaves. Plunge into a deep container of clean water and store in a cool dark room until required. When preparing your exhibit, remove any damaged, discoloured, or broken leaves and trim the stem. Make sure the stem retained is appropriate for the size of the flowers.
- **Arranging blooms:** Unless otherwise stated, flowers should be displayed in a vase of water. Where possible, choose vases to suit the height of the stems. Unless an 'all-round exhibit' is specified, arrange blooms so that each flower is facing the front and is well spaced. Packing materials may be used to hold the stems in place in the vase; however, in line with RHS guidelines, floral foam (Oasis) is not permitted. Packing materials must not be visible in the finished exhibit. Flowers should not be wired.
- **Chrysanthemums:** Flowers should be in full bloom, not young or old.

Chrysanthemum types: reflex, incurve, anemone, etc. [Chrysanthemum Classification](#)

Exhibition and natural chrysanthemum sprays: www.dcds.org.uk/spray-crysanthus---showing.html

Further information is available from:

<https://chrysanthemum-ncs.org/>

www.chrysanthemumsdirect.co.uk/index.html

www.gardeningdata.co.uk/flowers/chrysanthemums/chrysanthemums-judging.php

- **Dahlias:** Flowers should be in full bloom, not young or old. All florets should be intact, firm and without blemishes. Stems should be strong, straight and in proportion with the blooms. Preferably, some dahlia foliage should be retained on the stem.

Dahlia types: Single-flowered, anemone, collarette, waterlily, decorative, ball, pompom, cactus, semi-cactus, miscellaneous, fimbriated, star, double orchid, paeony or stellar. [Classification - National Dahlia Society \(dahlia-nds.co.uk\)](http://dahlia-nds.co.uk)

For more advice on exhibiting dahlias visit:

[IDEALS.pdf \(hayling island horticultural society.org.uk\)](#)

[FAULTS.pdf \(haylingislandhorticulturalsociety.org.uk\)](#)

[Exhibiting \(dahliaworld.co.uk\)](http://dahliaworld.co.uk).

- **Mixed vase of cut flowers** must be arranged for '**all-round effect**'. A good proportion of the flowers should be in full bloom. If a single kind of flowers is shown, a minimum of three different cultivars is required. If foliage is included, it should be of the same kind as the flowers shown.
- **Mixed vase of foliage** must be arranged for '**all-round effect**'. May include any non-flowering plant material, including fruits and seed heads. If a single kind is shown, at least three different cultivars are required.
- **Mixed vase of dried plant material** must be arranged for '**all-round effect**'. May include any flowering and/ or non-flowering plant material - dried flowers, seedheads and/or foliage. Displayed in a vase without water. Plant material should not be sprayed with paint, glitter or similar.

- **Pot plants**, including **pot-grown chrysanthemums**, are generally displayed for '**all-round effect**', and so should be turned every few days in the lead up to the show. However, some pot plants (e.g. **orchids**) are naturally front-facing, and so won't be downmarked when exhibited in this way. Some pot plants (e.g. Tradescantia) may be composed of more than one plant in the same pot to generate a balanced display.

Plants should be commensurate with the size of their pot. Ensure that the pot is clean and undamaged; although the pot itself will not be judged. Naturally epiphytic plants may be shown attached to a piece of wood or bark instead of in a pot.

Foliage and flowers should be clean and healthy. Carefully remove any damaged or faded flowers or foliage from your plant. Remove any debris from the top of the compost.

If staking or wiring is required, it should be discrete and not detract from the appearance of the plant.

The skill required to grow certain pot plants will be taken into consideration by the judge.

For plant-specific advice please contact the Show Secretary.

- **Flowering pot plants** should be in full bloom and/ or in bud with most flowers open. Plants should be well balanced with flowers proportionate in size and number to the size of the plant. Decorative bracts are considered to be an integral part of the flower and are judged as such.
- **Foliage pot plants** should be sturdy and shapely. They **may be in flower** but will be judged on their foliage alone.