

Woolston & District Allotment Association

Summer Show – Tips on Showing

Welcome to the Summer Show

The Woolston & District Allotment Association Summer Show is one of the highlights of the gardening year — but most importantly, it's about coming together, having fun, and enjoying what we grow, bake, preserve, and create as a community.

Please don't look through the show schedule and think:

“Mine isn't good enough to enter.”

Every single year, people say exactly that... and every single year they are genuinely surprised by how well their entries do! The Summer Show is not about being a professional grower or expert baker. It's about taking part, having a go, learning something new, and enjoying the day.

You may have: A few lovely tomatoes A bunch of flowers from the plot A Victoria sponge everyone enjoys
Homemade jam that family and friends rave about ... and not even realise they are more than worthy of entering.

Most judges are looking for freshness, care, presentation, and uniformity — not perfection.

If you are unsure what to enter, please ask! Committee members are more than happy to visit your plot, have a wander round with you, and point out things that could make excellent entries.

Above all else, the Summer Show is about enjoyment, community spirit, and having a laugh together.

General Showing Tips

- Read the Schedule Carefully
- Harvest produce as close to the show as possible
- Uniformity wins shows
- Presentation matters
- Bring spare specimens if possible

Preserves

Jam: Judges are looking for clean, well-sealed jars, proper labels, good colour, a firm set, and fresh fruit flavour. Labels should include the fruit and date made.

Jelly: Should be crystal clear with a delicate set and fresh fruit flavour. Avoid cloudiness and scum.

Marmalade: The jar should be clean and properly labelled. Peel should be evenly cut and distributed with a strong citrus aroma.

Chutney & Piccalilli: Judges want thick, rich chutney with evenly chopped ingredients and good flavour.

Cookery

Victoria Sponge Cake: Judges look for evenly risen sponges, golden colour, light texture, and a visible jam layer. Dust lightly with caster sugar.

Scones: Straight-sided, golden, fluffy scones are ideal. Brush with beaten egg before baking.

Vegetables

Potatoes: Choose medium-sized tubers with smooth skins and no blemishes. Wash gently with a sponge.

Shallots: Firm, round, well-ripened bulbs with good colour. Tie neatly with raffia.

Garlic: Choose clean, uniform bulbs with stems neatly trimmed.

Onions: Uniform size, firm bulbs, and thin necks are ideal.

Courgettes: Young, tender, evenly coloured fruits with flowers attached if possible.

Marrows: Young, evenly shaped specimens no more than 14 inches long.

Cabbages: Fresh, dense heads with minimal pest damage.

Carrots: Fresh, firm, smooth carrots with no forks or splits. Arrange neatly in a triangular formation.

Runner Beans: Long, fresh pods around 10 inches in length. Judges may snap one to check freshness.

French Beans: Straight, tender pods with no visible seeds. Present neatly with tails forward.

Rhubarb: Long, straight stalks arranged neatly with bases to the front.

Salads

Beetroot: Smooth, evenly coloured roots with a single tap root.

Tomatoes: Firm, ripe fruits with green calyces attached.

Cucumbers: Straight, evenly sized specimens displayed in the same direction.

Spring Onions: Uniform onions with roots attached and fresh green leaves.

Fruit

Dessert & Cooking Apples: Uniform, clean fruit with stalks attached.

Raspberries: Large, ripe berries arranged neatly in rows or circles.

Blackberries: Evenly matched berries arranged with stalks outward.

Pears: Uniform pears with clear skins and stalks attached.

Final Thoughts

Please remember — the Summer Show is meant to be enjoyable.

Most people underestimate what they can enter, and many prize-winning exhibits come from growers and bakers who nearly didn't enter at all.

So give it a go. Enter a few classes. Have some fun. Chat to others. Enjoy the atmosphere.

And if you are still unsure what might be worth entering, just ask — committee members are always happy to visit plots and help spot potential exhibits. You may be far more show-ready than you think!