

The Judging of Allotments

This is a summary of the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) guidelines for judging of allotments taken from The Horticultural Show Handbook (2008) published by the RHS.

The primary purpose of an allotment is to provide crops of vegetables, fruit, flowers and culinary herbs for household use and the more completely a plot fulfils this objective the greater should be the credit accorded to it in competition.

The size of plot should not be a factor for consideration in competition. Suggested pointing system:

Condition of the plot **60 points**

Plots should be well stocked with crops free from obvious signs of excessive damage by pests, disease or weather. Unplanted areas should be clean, free from weeds and the soil should be in good well-cultivated condition.

Good workmanship **50 points**

Soil between crops should be free of weeds. Paths and leisure areas should be neatly edged, even and well maintained. Credit should be given for planting for a constant succession of crops and for intelligent use of organic methods of pest control (e.g. pinching out of broad bean tips to inhibit blackfly, barriers against carrot root fly). Supports should be properly positioned and sturdy.

Quality of crops, flowers, fruit and vegetables and plants **150 points**

All plants should be vigorous, sturdy and free from obvious signs of excessive damage by pests, disease or weather. A broad range of food crops, both vegetables and fruit, should be in cultivation and flowers grown for cutting or decoration should be assessed as for food crops with respect to their health, skill in cultivation and suitability to the site. The inclusion of culinary herbs in the cropping scheme should be given credit.

Originality of layout and planting **25 points**

The intelligent adaptation of the layout to suit the needs of the plot-holder, the use of companion planting to reduce damage by pests and a pleasing overall visual effect should be considered meritorious. The cultivation of less common crops and the use of no-dig and deep-bed methods of cultivation should be given credit.

Ingenuity in overcoming local problems **25 points**

Plot-holders who have overcome difficulties such as an exposed aspect or excessive shading and dehydration by an adjacent tree belt should be given credit for raising an acceptable (i.e. usable) standard of crop.

Visual aspect of the plot **20 points**

The overall appearance of the plot should be neat and pleasing and the balance of the cultivation should be as broad as possible.

Condition of garden sheds, etc **20 points**

Sheds, if present, should be of a neat and workmanlike appearance both inside and out. Frames, cloches and greenhouses should be clean and well maintained. Pea and bean supports should be sturdy enough for the weight of the crops that they bear and any bird netting should be properly positioned and undamaged so as to afford protection to the crops over which they have been placed.

TOTAL **350 points**