

2026 Florida State Fair Creative Living Competitions

Horticulture Competition Handbook YOUTH

QUESTIONS?
CONTACT US!

BY PHONE AT
(813) 7621-7821

BY EMAIL AT
CREATIVELIVING@FLORIDASTATEFAIR.COM

IMPORTANT DATES

Entry Deadline: Friday, January 9, 2026

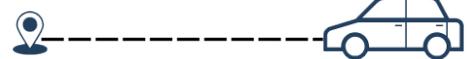
Item Delivery: Friday, January 30, 2026 - 9:30am-6:00pm
Saturday, January 31, 2026 - 9:30am-3:00pm

Item Pickup: Wednesday, February 18, 2026 - 11:00am-3:00pm
Thursday, February 19, 2026 - 11:00am-3:00pm
Friday, February 20, 2026 - 11:00am-3:00pm
Saturday, February 21, 2026 - 10:00am-2:00pm

ENTRY DELIVERY & PICK-UP

Enter off of Orient Road through the Service Entrance on the west side of the fairgrounds.

A map with directions to the Florida Center is available on the Creative Living Website



ENTRY FEES

Youth Divisions (Ages 6-18): \$1 Per Entry

ENTRY FEES ARE NON-REFUNDABLE

GUIDELINES

- **All entries must be from their own private collection and must have been owned and grown for at least 3 months prior to the Show.**
- Exhibitors can enter a variety of different species in one genus. No duplication of species allowed.
- **Individual Plants Division:** No more than ten (10) Individual Plants per person will be accepted for judging.
- **Container & Collections Division:** No more than three (3) Containers & Collections per person may be submitted for judging, however only one entry per class.
- **Special Competitions Division:** Exhibitors can enter all five (5) Special Competitions, however only one entry per class.
- The maximum plant size cannot be any larger than 48 inches in diameter and must weigh less than 40 pounds (Plant and container weight total).
- Individual Plants should be entered in the correct Division and Class on the entry form. Assistance will be available for plant identification when delivering the plants to the Fair. *If you would like to know the botanical name of your plant, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service has a helpful plant database: <http://plants.usda.gov/java/>*
- All plants must be of exhibition quality. The Fair reserves the right to reject any plant that is substandard, either in quality or maturity.
- Plants and flowers must be cleaned, trimmed, and free from insects or disease; they must be submitted in proper clean containers (Free of mold, moss, leaves, and acorns).
- No double pots, stands or saucers may be used. Clean clay pots & nursery pots are acceptable for display. Absolutely no cans will be accepted. Hanging plants must be hanging from a secure device.
- Water plants well before being brought to the Fairgrounds. Plants will be watered regularly during the Fair. Special watering instructions for individual plants must be provided when plants are submitted.

GUIDELINES CONT.

- The Fair reserves the right to reject additional entered items when exhibit display space is filled.
- Every precaution will be taken to protect your plants; however, the Florida State Fair Authority, its officers and agents are not responsible for any accident, loss or damage.
- Each adult exhibitor will receive one (1) admission ticket to the Fair.
- All entries will be displayed at the Fair whether they receive an award or not.

JUDGING & AWARDS

- The Fair selects judges who are experienced and knowledgeable in the categories they are assigned. Judges are expected to be fair and unbiased. They may reassign an entry to a different division or class if they feel it's a better fit.
- All entries will be judged using a scorecard to help ensure fairness and consistency. Judges' decisions are final.
- If the judge feels that an entry does not meet the standards for an award, no ribbon or prize will be given, even if it is the only entry in the class.
- Winners and final displays will be announced during the Fair.

JUDGING CRITERIA

Divisions and Classes in this handbook will be judged by a combination of the following criteria:

Form, Color, Size, Condition, Beauty and Interest.

WOOD PALLET GUIDELINES

- Must be able to be displayed vertically and stand freely.
- Pallets can contain any variety of plants.

FAIRY GARDEN GUIDELINES

- Must have a nice balance of accessories and plants. Fairy Garden components (plants & accessories) can be obtained from any source.
- Must have at least six (6) plants of any kind.
- Can use colored sand and gravel.

SUCCULENTS IN ALTERNATIVE PLANTERS GUIDELINES

- Succulents must be displayed in a non-traditional planter or container.
- Can use any amount of plants of any kind.

CRACKED POT GARDEN GUIDELINES

- Can use any kind of plant.
- Must be made from at least 4 broken pots.

LARGEST GREEN CABBAGE GUIDELINES

- Entries will be judged by weight.

TYPES OF INDIVIDUAL PLANTS FOR DIVISION 50.101

No more than ten (10) /individual Plants per person will be accepted for judging

Types of Bromeliads - Class 1

- Aechmea
- Guzmania
- Billbergia
- Cryptanthus
- Dyckia
- Neoregelia
- Tillandsia
- Vriesea
- Other Genera

Types of Flowering Plants - Class 2

- Annual
- African Violet
- Anthurium
- Azalea
- Beaucarnea
- Camelia
- Episcia
- Geranium
- Gardenia
- Gloxinia
- Heliconia
- Hibiscus
- Iris
- Ixora
- Lily
- Poinsettia
- Rose
- Other Genera

Types of Cacti & Succulents - Class 3

- Aeonium
- Agave
- Aloe
- Ariocarpus
- Astrophytum
- Cephalocereus
- Cereus
- Ceropogia
- Crassula
- Cryptocereus
- Echeveria
- Echinocactus
- Epiphyllum
- Euphorbia
- Ferocactus
- Gasteria
- Gymnocalycium
- Haworthia
- Hoya
- Kalanchoe
- Mammillaria
- Notocactus
- Opuntia
- Rhipsalis
- Sedum
- Stapelia
- Other Genera

Types of Foliage Plants - Class 4

- Acanthus
- Aglaonema
- Alocasia
- Anthurium
- Aphelandra
- Aralia
- Araucaria
- Asparagus
- Aspidistra
- Begonia
- Calathea
- Chlorophytum
- Cissus
- Codiaeum
- Cordyline
- Dieffenbachia
- Dracaena
- Fatsia
- Ficus
- Hedera
- Herbs
- Ilex
- Iresine
- Maranta
- Monstera
- Philodendron
- Plectranthus
- Pothos
- Sansevieria
- Scindapsus
- Spathiphyllum
- Syngonium
- Tradescantia
- Other Genera

Types of Ferns - Class 5

- Asplenium
- Cytomium
- Davillia
- Nephrolepis
- Platycerium
- Polypodium
- Other Genera

Types of Palms & Cycads - Class 6

- Caryota
- Chamaedorea
- Cycas
- Phoenix
- Rhapsis
- Other Genera

Types of Orchids - Class 7

- Brassavola and Hybrids
- Cattleya
- Cymbidium
- Cyripedium Paphiopedilum
- Dendrobium
- Epidendrum and Hybrids
- Oncidium and Hybrids
- Phaius
- Phalaenopsis
- Vanda
- Other Genera

Types of Bonsai - Class 8

- Bonsai – upright
- Bonsai – slanting
- Bonsai – cascade or semicascade
- Bonsai – multiple trunk of any of the above
- Bonsai – any other style



YOUTH HORTICULTURE GUIDELINES

Class 1-9 (Individual Plants) ONLY

- No more than 10 entries per person may be submitted for judging.
- Individual Plants are listed by class on page 3
- You will need to know the genus & species of the plants you bring to exhibit. Assistance will be available for plant identification of the genus and species when you deliver your plants to the Fair if you are unsure.
- Entered item(s) may not be more than two (2) feet in any direction.
- Dish gardens must be in attractive containers only. No aluminum tins.
- Terrariums must have lids.
- Ornamental Planters are plants in an attractive container or weathered wood
- All plants must be growing and well established.
- Do not use colored sand or gravel.
- Feature the plants, not accessories.
- Collections must be six different species of one genera, in one container.

Class 10-16 (Containers & Collections) ONLY

- No more than 3 entries per person may be submitted for judging, however only one (1) entry is allowed per class.
- Entered item(s) may not be more than two (2) feet in any direction.
- Dish gardens must be in attractive containers only. No aluminum tins.
- Terrariums must have lids.
- Ornamental Planters are plants in an attractive container or weathered wood
- All plants must be growing and well-established.
- Do not use colored sand or gravel.
- Feature the plants, not accessories.
- Collections must be six (6) different species, in one container.

Class 17-21 (Special Competitions) ONLY

- No more than 5 entries per person may be submitted for judging, however only one (1) entry is allowed per class.
- Must have at least six (6) different kinds of plants (excluding Succulents in Alternative Planters)
- All plants must be living (No artificial plants).
- Entered item(s) may not be more than four (4) feet in any direction.
- Entered item(s) must weigh less than 40 pounds (Plant and container weight total)

YOUTH HORTICULTURE DIVISIONS & CLASSES

Youth Horticulture (Age 6-10) - Division 105.301

Youth Horticulture (Age 11-13) - Division 105.401

Youth Horticulture (Age 14-18) - Division 105.501

Individual Plants

- Class 1 Bromeliad
- Class 2 Flowering Plants
- Class 3 Cacti & Succulents
- Class 4 Foliage Plants
- Class 5 Ferns
- Class 6 Palms & Cycads
- Class 7 Orchids
- Class 8 Bonsai
- Class 9 Species not listed

Containers & Collection

- Class 10 Dish Garden
- Class 11 Terrarium
- Class 12 Plant Collection (any kind of plants)
- Class 13 Flowering Plant Collection
- Class 14 Hanging Container (any kind of plants)
- Class 15 Ornamental Planter
- Class 16 Florida Native's Collection

Special Competitions

- Class 17 Wood Pallet Planter (vertical)
- Class 18 Fairy Garden
- Class 19 Succulents in Alternative Planters
- Class 20 Cracked Pot Garden
- Class 21 Largest Green Cabbage



GENERAL RULES

DISCLAIMER

All entries are submitted at the exhibitor's own risk. The Florida State Fair is not responsible for any loss, damage, or theft of exhibits even if caused by staff, volunteers, contractors, or visitors. If you want insurance for your entry, you must arrange it through your personal insurance provider before the Fair. Reasonable care will be taken to protect exhibits. No unauthorized people are allowed in the building after closing hours.

DIVISION OR CLASS CANCELLATION

The Florida State Fair may cancel any division or class if there are not enough entries to ensure fair competition. Any affected entries will be returned.

ENTRY ERRORS

Exhibitors are responsible for making sure their entries are correct. This includes online forms and summary sheets. The Fair is not responsible for correcting mistakes, and no awards will be given for entries disqualified due to exhibitor error. If an award is later found to be ineligible, it will be withheld or recovered. You may appeal a disqualification in writing within 90 days of being notified. Include your name, address, full entry details, and your reason for requesting a review.

PREMIUM PAYMENTS

Prizes will be awarded based on the Judging Criteria Record Sheets. **Prize checks are void 6 months after the date on the check. No replacement checks will be issued after that, so please cash them promptly.**

SUBSTITUTIONS

If needed, substitutions must be made within the same department as the original entry. They must be completed by the last day of the entry delivery period. You may not transfer your entry to another person.

PREVIOUSLY ENTERED ITEMS

Entries that have been shown at past Florida State Fairs are not allowed, except for entries in Horticulture and Aquarium Beautiful.

VERIFICATION OF ENTRY

To confirm that your mailed entry form and fees were received, include a self-addressed stamped envelope with your submission. Online entries will receive a confirmation code after submitting.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR EXHIBITS

The Fair is not responsible for exhibits left behind after the scheduled pick-up time. **Anything left after that time will be treated as abandoned and discarded by April 1st of the same year.**

ENTRY REMOVAL

Once accepted, entries cannot be removed until the official release date listed in the Competition Handbook. Early removal is only allowed in cases like serious illness, emergencies, or at the Fair's discretion.

RETURNED OR BOUNCED CHECKS

A \$25 fee applies to any returned checks. This must be paid with cash, a certified check, or a money order.

MAILING PAPER ENTRY FORMS

Entry Forms must be postmarked by Friday, December 5, 2025. Failure to complete any portion of the entry form may result in disqualification. Late entries must be postmarked before December 12, 2025. If you're submitting a late entry form, you must include the extra \$5 per entry fee. **Make checks payable to: Florida State Fair Authority**

Mail Entry Form to:

Creative Living Competitions
Youth Horticulture
Florida State Fair
P.O. Box 11766
Tampa, FL 33680

RETRIEVING ENTRIES

All entries not claimed by April 1st of the same year will be recycled, disposed or donated through our program department. Entries not picked up on designated dates can be arranged for a special pick-up appointment by emailing CreativeLiving@floridastatefair.com.

EXHIBIT DESIGN & SET UP

The Florida State Fair controls how exhibits are displayed. If your entry is meant to be hung but isn't ready to hang, the Fair will display it as they see fit. No changes can be made once items are on display. Exhibitors cannot handle their entries after drop-off. Fair staff will handle final placement and assembly, using any instructions you provide. If your item needs assembly or disassembly, include clear instructions and diagrams. The Fair may use pins or other tools to secure your exhibit for display. Online entries will receive a confirmation code after submitting.

AWARD PREMIUMS

First Place - State Fair Ribbon \$12

Second Place - State Fair Ribbon \$7

Third Place - State Fair Ribbon \$4

Best of Show - State Fair Ribbon \$15

Best of Show Awards will be chosen from the first-place winners in each class within the age group. For example, Best of Show awards will be given to each of the 3 age groups within Horticulture.

Director's Choice Award - State Fair Ribbon \$35

Honorable Mention Ribbons may be awarded at the discretion of the judge(s).

