

Aquarium Competition Handbook YOUTH & ADULT

Aquarium Superintendent: Bill Shields

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**QUESTIONS?
CONTACT US!**



BY PHONE AT
(813)621-7821

BY EMAIL AT
CREATIVELIVING@FLORIDASTATEFAIR.COM

IMPORTANT DATES

Entry Deadline: Friday, December 5, 2025

Late Entry Deadline: Friday, December 12, 2025

**Item Delivery: Saturday, January 31, 2026 - 10:30am-5:00pm
Sunday, February 1, 2026 - 10:30am-5:00pm
Monday, February 2, 2026 - 10:30am-5:00pm
Tuesday, February 3, 2026 - 10:30am-5:00pm**

Entry Pickup: Tuesday, February 17, 2026 - 11:00am-3:00pm

NO ENTRIES WILL BE ACCEPTED
AFTER DEADLINES HAVE PASSED

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**

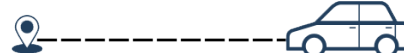
ENTRY FEES

Youth entries are sponsored by the Tampa Bay Aquarium Society

Youth Division (Ages 6-18): FREE

Adult Division (Ages 19+): \$5 Per Entry

Late Fee: \$5 Per Entry



ENTRY FEES ARE NON-REFUNDABLE

GUIDELINES

- The Hobbyist Adult and Professional Adult divisions are open to Florida residents who are 18 years or older. You may only enter one of these divisions—not both.
- The Hobbyist Youth divisions are open to Florida residents in grades 1 through 12 as of September 1, 2025.
- The Saltwater Open division is open to Florida residents ages 6 and up as of September 1, 2025.
- All entries must remain on display for the full duration of the Fair.
- You must include your tank dimensions when registering, as space is limited. While there is no minimum or maximum tank size, tanks over 55 gallons must be approved by Bill Shields.
- Display space is assigned on a first-come, first-served basis. If we cannot accommodate all entries, we will notify those affected.
- Exhibitors may enter multiple tanks, but each tank may only be entered in one class.
- Fish shown in previous years at the Florida State Fair are allowed.
- Each exhibitor must supply their own tank and equipment, including a light, filter, and a drop cord with a three-way plug. Only one electrical outlet will be provided per tank. The Fair will provide electricity, water, and a display table.
- The Fair will ensure professional care for all entries but is not responsible for any accidents or fish loss. Fish will be fed once daily with standard flake food.
- Late entries are not allowed. You will receive a Claim Receipt when you set up your display.
- All entries will be displayed, regardless of whether they win an award. To maintain a family-friendly environment, any items deemed offensive, controversial, or inappropriate will not be accepted.

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

Awards are determined on both the fish and the tank appearance.

Fish Judging (50% of Total Score)

Health, size, finnage, behavior, category, and compliance to class.

Tank Judging (50% of total Score)

lighting (especially when live plants are used), water, clarity and overall appearance and compliance to class.

DEFINITIONS

Nano tanks: Natural freshwater or saltwater tanks less than 10 gallons with an emphasis on small-scale inhabitants. Plants and fish should be chosen from the smaller species. They will be judged on their ability to be maintained long-term in the Nano setup.

Freshwater with Live Plants: Any freshwater aquarium with live plants excluding artificial plants.

Freshwater without Live Plants: Any freshwater aquarium without live plants.

Freshwater Biotype: All fish, plants, and decor hardscape from the same geographic habitat.

Novelty: Any creative setup with artificial decor.

Saltwater: Any saltwater aquarium including reef tanks.

Saltwater Open Division: Open to all hobbyist adults, professionals, and hobbyist youth.

Hobbyist Adult Division: Adults (age 18 or older) who have purchased or raised their fish.

Professional Division: For those who are professionally involved in the sale or maintenance of aquariums or aquarium fish, including wholesale and retail markets.

Hobbyist Youth Division: Youth must be a student in grades 1 – 12 as of September 1, 2025.

DIVISIONS & CLASSES

ADULT DIVISIONS

Aquarium - Hobbyist Adult [Division 10.101](#)

Class Description

- 1 Nano Tank
- 2 Freshwater w/ Live Plants
- 3 Freshwater w/o Live Plants
- 4 Freshwater Biotype
- 5 Novelty

Aquarium - Professional [Division 10.201](#)

Class Description

- 1 Nano Tank
- 2 Freshwater w/ Live Plants
- 3 Freshwater w/o Live Plants
- 4 Freshwater Biotype
- 5 Novelty

Aquarium – Saltwater Open [Division 10.601](#)

Class Description

- 1 Saltwater

YOUTH DIVISIONS

Aquarium - Youth (age 6-10) [Division 10.301](#)

Aquarium - Youth (age 11-13) [Division 10.401](#)

Aquarium - Youth (age 14-18) [Division 10.501](#)

Class Description

- 1 Nano Tank
- 2 Freshwater w/ Live Plants
- 3 Freshwater w/o Live Plants
- 4 Freshwater Biotype
- 5 Novelty

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.

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

Hobbyiest Adult, Professional & Saltwater Open

First Place - State Fair Ribbon **\$50**

Second Place - State Fair Ribbon **\$40**

Third Place - State Fair Ribbon **\$30**

Best of Show - State Fair Ribbon **\$100**

Best of Show award will be chosen from the First-Place winners in Each Class within the 3 adult divisions.

Hobbyiest Youth

First Place - State Fair Ribbon **\$35**

Second Place - State Fair Ribbon **\$25**

Third Place - State Fair Ribbon **\$15**

Best of Show - State Fair Ribbon **\$40**

Best of Show award will be chosen from the First-Place winners in Each Class within the youth divisions.

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

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



2026 Florida State Fair

Aquarium Entry Form

Entry Forms must be postmarked by Friday, December 5, 2025

Late Entry Period: December 6-12, 2025 (Adult Double Entry Fees) Failure to complete any portion of the entry form may result in disqualification.

Please print legibly

OFFICE USE ONLY

Exhibitor # _____

Late Entry ☐ YES ☐ NO

Total Fee _____

Paid ☐ YES ☐ NO

Type ☐ Cash ☐ MO ☐ Check

Check No. _____

Exhibitors Name (First, Last)		If youth exhibitor, who should the premium check be written to:	
Mailing Address		County	
City	State	Zip Code	<input type="checkbox"/> Check if you are a new exhibitor
Phone ()		Email	

Please indicate Age Group	Age as of SEPT 1, 2024, _____	Date of Birth _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Hobby Adult (18 +)	<input type="checkbox"/> Youth (age 6-10)	<input type="checkbox"/> Youth (age 11-13)
<input type="checkbox"/> Professional (18 +)		<input type="checkbox"/> Youth (age 14-over)

Entry Fee: Adult, Professional & Saltwater Open Division \$5 per | Late entry \$10 per entry

Youth Division FREE

Exhibitors may enter as many tanks as they like, but each tank can only be entered in one (1) class.

Late Entry
☐ YES ☐ NO

#	DIVISION #	CLASS #	Tank Size & Length of Tank	Fee
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
Total Amount Due				\$

I hereby certify that I have read the Florida State Fair General Rules for the Competitive Exhibits Program and the above item(s) is/are entered for exhibition strictly in accordance with these rules, by which I agree to be governed. I also agree that the Florida State Fair may use my name, likeness, or photograph (including, but not limited to photographs of my entry), in any manner relating to my participation in the Competitive Exhibits Program, free of charge and without further notice or consultation.

I understand that the 2026 Creative Living Competitions & Exhibits are held in conjunction with the 2026 Florida State Fair and agree that the Florida State Fair is not liable or responsible for any delay, change of dates or cancellation of the 2026 Florida State Fair due the following unforeseeable circumstances: (a) acts of God; (b) flood, fire, earthquake; or (c) other potential disaster(s) or catastrophe(s), such as epidemics, pandemics, or explosion.

Signature of exhibitor	Date
Signature of parent/guardian (Youth ONLY)	Date
If Youth wins prize money, who should the check be made payable to?	

Mail Entry Form to:

Creative Living Competitions –
Aquarium Beautiful
Florida State Fair
P.O. Box 11766
Tampa, FL 33680

Make checks payable to: Florida State Fair Authority