

# Horticulture Competition Handbook

## ADULT

### QUESTIONS?

CONTACT US!

BY PHONE AT

(813) 21-7021

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 FEES

Adult Divisions (Ages 18+): \$3 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 50.101:** No more than ten (10) Individual Plants per person will be accepted for judging.
- **Container & Collections Division 50.102:** No more than three (3) Containers & Collections per person may be submitted for judging, however only one entry per class.
- **Special Competitions Division 50.103:** 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.



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

## **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
- Ceropegia
- 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
- Nephrolepsis
- Platycerium
- Polypodium
- Other Genera

## **Types of Palms & Cycads - Class 6**

- Caryota
- Chamaedorea
- Cycas
- Phoenix
- Rhipis
- Other Genera

## **Types of Orchids - Class 7**

- Brassavola and Hybrids
- Cattleya
- Cymbidium
- Cypripedium 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

## **INDIVIDUAL PLANT GUIDELINES**

- Individual plants should be entered in the correct plant family on the entry form. 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. *In addition, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service has a helpful plant database: <http://plants.usda.gov/java/>*
- No more than ten (10) Individual Plants per person will be accepted for judging.
- Exhibitors can enter a variety of different species in one genus. No duplication of species allowed.

## **INDIVIDUAL PLANTS DIVISIONS & CLASSES**

### **Individual Plants - Adult Division 50.101**

- 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 & COLLECTIONS GUIDELINES**

- No more than three (3) Containers & Collections per person may be submitted for judging.
- 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 different species, in one container.

## **CONTAINERS & COLLECTIONS DIVISIONS & CLASSES**

### **Containers & Collections - Adult Division 50.102**

- Class 1 Dish Garden
- Class 2 Terrarium
- Class 3 Plant Collection (any kind of plants)
- Class 4 Flowering Plant Collection
- Class 5 Hanging Containers (any kind of plants)
- Class 6 Ornamental Planter
- Class 7 Florida Native's Collection



## **SPECIAL COMPETITIONS GUIDELINES**

- Exhibitors can enter all five (5) Special Competitions.
- 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).

## **SPECIAL COMPETITIONS DIVISIONS & CLASSES**

### **Special Competitions - Adult Division 50.103**

Class 1 Wood Pallet Planter (vertical)

Class 2 Fairy Garden

Class 3 Succulents in Alternative Planters

Class 4 Cracked Pot Garden

Class 5 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, January 9, 2026. Failure to complete any portion of the entry form may result in disqualification. **Make checks payable to:** Florida State Fair Authority

### **Mail Entry Form to:**

Creative Living Competitions - 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](mailto: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 Division** - State Fair Ribbon **\$20**

Best of Division Awards will be chosen from the first place winners in each of these Divisions.

**Best of Show** - State Fair Ribbon **\$50** Best of Show awards will be chosen from the Best of Division winners.

**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

# Horticulture Competition Entry Form

**Entry Forms must be postmarked by Friday, January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2026.**

Failure to complete any portion of the entry form may result in disqualification.

## OFFICE USE ONLY

Exhibitor #

Total Fee

Paid:  YES  NO

Type:  Cash  Mo

Check  Cr. No.

Please print legibly

Exhibitor's Name (First, Last)		
Mailing Address		County
City	State	Zip Code
Phone (      )		
Email		

**Entry Fee: Adult Division \$3 per entry**

Exhibitors may enter no more than 10 individual plants per person for judging. And no more than three (3) Containers & Collections per person may be submitted for judging. Use additional entry forms if necessary.

#	DIVISION #	CLASS #	Name of Plant (Botanical & Common Name)	Fee
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
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) by me 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 to 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 explosions.

Signature of exhibitor

Date

Mail Entry Form to: Creative Living Competitions – Horticulture  
Florida State Fair  
P.O. Box 11766  
Tampa, FL 33680

Make checks payable to: Florida State Fair Authority