2026

ELKHART COUNTY 4-H AND AGRICULTURAL EXPOSITION, INC.
HORTICULTURE DEPARTMENT

Director – Kate Rink

Committee Members: Mary Hesser, Mayrea Reusser, Mary Riggs, Sherrie Zou, Barb Heeter, Donna Henderson

RULES

(No Pre-Registration)

PLEASE NOTE: Exhibits need to be brought in either Wednesday evening, July 22, 5-7 p.m. or Thursday morning, July 23, 7-9:30 a.m.! Judging will be open to the public. Starting at 10:30 a.m.

1. All articles to be entered must be brought to the Ag Hall on the fairgrounds between 5:00 and 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, July 22, 2026 or between 7:00 and 9:30 a.m. on Thursday, July 23, 2026 in entry ready condition.
   NO LATE ENTRIES.
2. The public may observe the judging; however, contestants are asked not to converse with the judges or their exhibit will be disqualified.
3. Except as otherwise specified, exhibits will be grown by exhibitor. Accent material for arrangements need not be produced at home.
4. The exhibitor must have grown all flowers and vegetables.
5. Only one entry per person is allowed in each class.
6. **An entry fee of $1.00 will be charged for the first exhibit in each section and $.50 for each additional exhibit in that same section.**
7. Department officials reserve the right to determine classification. **No endangered species or noxious weeds shall be exhibited.**
8. "Unclassified" means entry types other than already listed.
9. Containers for cut flowers are the responsibility of the exhibitor. Container must be a clear glass vase or jar. (Label bottom of container with name, address & phone number for safe return.)
10. Cut flower entries requiring more than one flower should be the SAME COLOR and VARIETY (with the exception of arrangements).
    ****Label Bottom of Container with Name, Address & Phone Number for Safe Return****
11. Maximum width for containers is 18 inches in diameter, weighing no more than 40 lbs.
12. All heights are measured from the soil line.
13. All potted plant containers must have a water saucer underneath the container to prevent leakage. Cookie sheets can be used for large plants. (Label bottom of container with name, address & phone number for safe return.)
14. The building is air-conditioned. Department officials will keep exhibits fresh.
15. **Premiums will be paid for first, second & third places at the rate of $3.00, $2.50 & $2.00 respectively.**
16. Judges are instructed not to award premiums or places unless the exhibits are worthy.
17. Champion ribbons will be awarded. These awards are automatic, based on 3 points for first placing, 2 for second, and 1 for third. Overall trophies and special trophies are also awarded. A Best of Show ribbon and Reserve Champion ribbon will be awarded for sections 1, 2, 3-5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, &11. (In case of a tie, winner will have the most 1st places.)
18. Winners will be notified and a photo will be taken at 1:00 p.m. the first Saturday of the Fair July 25, 2026.
19. Premiums, ribbons, and trophies may be picked up between 3:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. on Monday, August 3, 2026 after the Fair. Any premiums, ribbons or trophies not picked up are forfeited unless other arrangements have been made.

20. All exhibits must remain in place throughout the entire Fair week. (Unless discarded due to spoilage.)

21. The Horticulture Department will not be responsible for articles left after 6:00 p.m. Monday, August 3, 2026.
22. The Fair Board or its representatives are not responsible for theft or damage to articles.
23. Plant watering schedule will be as follows: Saturday, July 25th, Tuesday, July 28th, and Friday, July 30th, 2026.

Categories

Section 1: Potted Plants

(Flowering must have blooms at time of showing)

1 variety and color per container

****Label Bottom of Container with Name, Address & Phone Number for Safe Return****

Class

1. Double African Violets
2. Single African Violets
3. Ruffled African Violets
4. Miniature African Violets
5. Geraniums
6. Begonias (wax single flower)
7. Begonias (wax double flower)
8. Begonias (other – in bloom)
9. Impatiens (regular)
10. Impatiens (double)
11. New Guinea Impatiens
12. Unclassified plants – (in bloom) Identify variety on entry card

Section 2: Potted Plants

(Foliage)

1 variety per container

****Label Bottom of Container with Name, Address & Phone Number for Safe Return****

Class

13. Strawberry Begonia
14. Fiscus (fig) Family
15. Ivy
16. Sanseveria (Snake Plant, Mother-In-Law's Tongue or Bird's Nest)
17. Philodendron or Pothos
18. Coleus
19. Bromeliads
20. Hoya
21. Baby Tears
22. Ferns
23. Bonsai – may be taken home on 7/27
24. Unclassified Potted Foliage Plants – Identify variety on entry card.

Section 3: Cactus or Succulent

(Container no more than 18" diameter)

****Label Bottom of Container with Name, Address & Phone Number for Safe Return****

Class

25. Dish Garden – Multiple Variety
26. Cacti – 1 variety per container
27. Succulents – 1 variety per container
28. Holiday Cactus
29. Aloe-Vera
30. Hens & Chicks
31. Unclassified – Identify variety on entry card

Section 4: Planter or Dish Garden

(Maximum 18" in diameter – maximum weight 40 lbs)

****Label Bottom of Container with Name, Address & Phone Number for Safe Return****

Class

32. Terrariums
33. Foliage – no buds or blooms
34. Flowering

Section 5: Hanging Baskets

(1 variety per container)

****Label Bottom of Container with Name, Address & Phone Number for Safe Return****

Class

35. Wandering Jew
36. Swedish Ivy
37. Spider Plant
38. Geranium
39. Impatiens
40. Philodendron or Pothos
41. Unclassified, flowering – Identify variety on entry card.
42. Unclassified, foliage no blooms or buds – Identify variety on entry card.

Section 6: Arrangement of Cut Flowers

(Combination of flowers & foliage (and/or filler) - MUST BE GROWN BY EXHIBITOR)

(Stem lengths to best present flowers)

****Label Bottom of Container with Name, Address & Phone Number for Safe Return****

Class

43. Arrangement using flowers with driftwood and/or shells or coral.
44. Arrangement of fresh wild flowers, grasses, etc. (not endangered species)
45. Arrangement of Daisies
46. Arrangement of cut foliage (no buds or blooms)
47. Arrangement of vegetables or fruit with flowers
48. Arrangement of Zinnias
49. Arrangement of Marigolds
50. Arrangement in a kitchen container
51. Arrangement, all white (including accessories)(green foliage allowed)
52. Arrangement of dried flowers, one or any combination of herbs, weeds, and grains
53. Miniature arrangement 4" high or less, including container
54. Arrangement using red, white, and blue flowers
55. Arrangement of Gladiolus – may be larger than 24" wide
56. Holiday Arrangement
57. Centerpiece maximum 24" width – 12" height
58. Arrangement – unclassified

Section 7: Cut Flowers

(Stem length and leaves to best show flowers)

****Label Bottom of Container with Name, Address & Phone Number for Safe Return****

A. *Each exhibit should be same variety & color per container, with leaves*
B. *Daylilies must be 1 stem with at least 3 buds with at least 1 bloom open, without leaves*
C. *Displayed in clear (uncolored) vase or jars*
D. *Label bottom of container with name, address, & phone number for safe return*
E. *No leaves required on other Lilies, Gladiolus, or Gerbera Daisy.*

Class

59. Snapdragons, 3 spikes per container
60. Miniature Zinnia, 3 blooms per container
61. Regular Zinnias, 3 blooms per container
62. Large Marigolds, 3 blooms same variety per container
63. Small Marigolds, 3 blooms same variety per container
64. Gladiolus, 3 stems same variety per container
65. Rose, 3 individual blooms same variety per container
66. Black/Brown Eyed Susan, 3 blooms per container
67. Daisy, 3 blooms per container
68. Lilies (remove pollen)
69. Daylilies (cut stamens before displaying) see B above
70. Sunflowers, 3, under 8”
71. Sunflowers, 1, 8” and greater
72. Dahlias, 3, 1” to 6” blooms
73. Dahlias, 1, 6” and greater bloom
74. Unclassified garden flowers, 3, 3” and under blooms, labeled with name of variety
75. Unclassified garden flowers, 3, 3” to 6” blooms, labeled with name of variety
76. Unclassified garden flowers, 1, 6” and over bloom, labeled with name of variety

Section 8: Grains and Hay

(CLEAR UNCOLORED GLASS CONTAINER – GRAINS WILL NOT BE RETURNED)

****Label Bottom of Container with Name, Address & Phone Number for Safe Return****

Class

77. Legume hay, one 6” center section of bale or equivalent
78. Grass hay, one 6” center section of bale or equivalent
79. Mixed hay, one 6” center section of bale or equivalent
80. Wheat, 1qt.
81. Oats, 1qt.
82. Corn, 1qt.
83. Soy Beans, 1qt.
84. Field Corn, 5 ears
85. Indian Corn, 5 ears
86. Popcorn, 5 ears
87. Unclassified grains, 1 qt. – Identify variety on entry card.

Section 9: Above Ground Vegetables

(All entries become the property of the fair and will not be returned)

****Label Bottom of Container with Name, Address & Phone Number for Safe Return****

A. *Tomatoes must be ripe*
B. *Leave wrapper on cabbage (no more than 6)*
C. *Do not husk corn*
D. *Do not put dill in a vase*

Class

88. Horticulture beans, shelled, 12 beans
89. Green bush beans, round pod, group of 12
90. Green bush beans, flat pod, group of 12
91. Yellow beans, group of 12
92. Pole beans, group of 12
93. Purple beans, group of 12
94. Broccoli, 3 heads
95. Brussels sprouts, group of 12
96. Cabbage, 1 head round and/or Wakefield type
97. Cabbage, 1 head Savoy
98. Cabbage, 1 head flat type
99. Cabbage, red, 1 head
100. Cauliflower, 1 head
101. Corn, sweet, roasting ears, group of 5
102. Cucumbers, 5 green for slicing
103. Cucumbers, 5 pickling, 4" or less
104. Cucumbers, 5 burpless
105. Dill, 1 stem
106. Kohlrabi, group of 5
107. Herbs, best collection of 5, potted individually and labeled
108. Okra, group of 5
109. Peppers, green sweet, group of 5
110. Peppers, banana type, group of 5
111. Hot peppers, Hungarian type, group of 5
112. Hot peppers, Chile type, group of 5
113. Rhubarb, 5 stalks (trim to approximately 12" in length)
114. Squash, summer, group of 3, 1" stem
115. Squash, winter, 1, 1" stem
116. Zucchini, green, group of 3, 1/2" stem
117. Zucchini, yellow, group of 3, 1/2" stem
118. Tomatoes, cherry type, red or yellow, 1-1/4" diameter or less, group of 10
119. Tomatoes, pear type, group of 5
120. Tomatoes, red, other than cherry type, group of 5
121. Tomatoes, Italian type, group of 5
122. Tomatoes, other, group of 5
123. Eggplant, exhibit 1, with 1" stem
124. Peas in a pod, group of 12 pods
125. Edible pea pods, group of 12
126. Unclassified vegetable above ground, group of 5 small or 1 large Identify variety on entry car

Section 10: Below Ground Vegetables

In group of 5 unless otherwise stated.

(All entries become the property of the fair and will not be returned.)

****Label Bottom of Container with Name, Address & Phone Number for Safe Return****

Class

127. Beets, Table, with top 1” long
128. Carrots, with top 1” long
129. Onions, green
130. Onions, white globe, 3” top
131. Onions, red globe, 3” top
132. Onions, yellow globe, 3” top
133. Onions, flat type, 3” top, any color
134. Potatoes, Irish Cobbler
135. Potatoes, red
136. Potatoes, Kennebec
137. Potatoes, Russet
138. Potatoes, Yukon Gold
139. Radishes, red or white
140. Garlic bulbs
141. Turnips
142. Unclassified below ground vegetable, group of 5 small or 1 large – Identify variety on entry card.

Section 11: Miscellaneous

(All entries must be recreated after last year's fair)

****Label Bottom of Container with Name, Address & Phone Number for Safe Return****

Class

143. Wreaths made from plant products (artificial accessories permitted)
144. Garden Figures – made from vegetables, grains, etc. Judged on originality, decorativeness
145. Seed Craft Display – a craft using dried seeds
146. Collection of 5 dried and labeled (packaged) herbs
147. Best display of 5 or more kinds of vegetables (edible only). Container to be furnished by exhibitor
148. Ornamental Gourds, fresh or dried, exhibit 3 of each
149. Birdhouse – functional, made from dried gourd
150. Horticulture photography colored; 1 photo 8" x 10" framed under glass, no matte
151. Horticulture photography black and white; 1 photo 8" x 10" framed under glass, no matte
152. Birdhouse – homemade, functional
153. Pressed Flower – no larger than 8" x 10", framed under glass, no matte
154. Old fashioned scarecrow. Must be shown on base that will allow it to stand unsupported for use in a garden.
155. Largest dried gourd – Judges discretion
156. Largest tomato (does not have to be ripe) – by weight
157. Longest cucumber
158. Longest bean
159. Largest sunflower head, 3" or less stem – by diameter
160. Largest head of cabbage - by weight
161. Largest potato – by weight
162. Largest onion – by weight
163. Tallest stalk of corn from ground level, roots in container. (Label the height) – in a 5 gallon plastic bucket
164. Tallest sunflower, including flower head, from ground level, roots in container.
165. Odd or distorted vegetable – not altered or decorated.
166. Miscellaneous Fruit – produce smaller than 9" diameter needs to be a group of 5
167. Artistic Herb Arrangement, fresh or dried. Listing of herbs should accompany arrangement.
168. Fairy Garden - Youth (under 18 yrs of age) – maximum 40 lbs., maximum 24" diameter x 24" high (must include plants and a miniature Figure)
169. Fairy Garden - Adult (18 yrs and older) - maximum 40 lbs., maximum 24" diameter x 24" high (must include plants and a miniature Figure)

Section 11: Miscellaneous (Cont.)

170. Decorative Garden Stepping Stone – Youth (under 18 yrs of age) – No greater than 15 in. across. Maximum weight of 40 lbs. Maximum height of 4 in. Must be made by exhibitor
171. Decorative Garden Stepping Stone – Adult (18 yrs and older) – No greater than 15 in. across. Maximum weight of 40 lbs. Maximum height of 4 in. Must be made by exhibitor

2026 CELEBRATING 250 YEARS

Section 12: Trial Categories

(This trial category will be in place for one year only. It is our country's semiquincentennial celebration commemorating 250 years since the signing of the Declaration of Independence. To honor this, we are offering four categories to exhibit a patriotic theme. There is no charge for entering. No points or premiums will be awarded to trial categories. These categories do not have a bearing on trophy winners. Only ribbons will be awarded. Judging criteria will follow the Section 11: Miscellaneous categories.)

****Label Bottom of Container with Name, Address & Phone Number for Safe Return****

Class

172. Horticulture Photography Colored - 1 photo 8"x10" framed under glass, no matte
173. Old-Fashioned Scarecrow – Must be shown on a base that will allow it to stand unsupported for use in a garden.
174. Seed Craft Display – a craft using dried seeds
175. Birdhouse - home-made, functional

THANK YOU TO OUR FOLLOWING SPONSORSHIP PARTNERS

Corporate Levels

Golden Rose

Stanger Group
Michiana Master Gardeners
Tycol Excavating
Elkhart County Farm Bureau

Sunflower

Knepp Sand and Stone
The Stofleth Family
Stephanie Debolt Photography

Daring Dahlia

Sweet Corn Charlie Produce
Dogwood Hills Tree Farm
Charles and Beth Phillips

Zesty Zinnia

Phillips & Son Irrigation, LLC

Bountiful Begonia

McKinley Garden Center
R&R Regulators
Ted and Katie Sautter
Aaron and Sherrie Zou
Kercher Sunrise Orchard
Turkey Creek Garden Center
Bailey's Auto Parts
Rink Farms
Mary Riggs
Willow View Farms
Bill Evans Insurance
Countryscapes
Old Hoosier Meats

Climbing Ivy

Marilyn Miles
Barb Heeter

2026 GUIDELINES – (These suggestions may help your exhibit win)

Cut Flowers

1. Flowers are free from injury or damage.
2. Shape and size of flowers are typical for the variety.
3. Flowers are clean, fresh, and free of pollen on petals.
4. Flowers are one variety and uniform in size.
5. Stems are straight, clean, and undamaged.
6. Leaves are clean, healthy, and undamaged.

Vegetables

Do not peel onion or remove leaves from cabbage.
Do not clean vegetables by harsh washing or vigorous scrubbing.

1. Overall attractiveness. Clean, roots trimmed.
2. Uniformity: Size, shape, color, type, and variety development.
3. Prime, edible condition, fresh. Best usable size and maturity.
4. Freedom from injury or damage: Insects, weather, growth, handling, and sunburn.

Plants Growing in a Container

Foliage plants must have no buds or blooms whatsoever. Flowering plants must be flowering. Avoid leaf cleaners or shines that contain heavy oils or waxes, except for dried gourds.

1. Plant is attractive, clean, and undamaged.
2. Plant is healthy, well established, and growing vigorously.
3. Container is compatible with size.
4. Container is clean and suitable for growing a plant.
5. Container does not mean nursery pot.

Flower Arrangements

Geometric (triangle or cone) shaped flower arrangement is preferred over other shapes by most judges.

1. Lines establish a strong focal point (preferably the center).
2. Flowers are in scale with container and each other.
3. Flowers are fresh and undamaged.
4. Foliage and accessories supplement and enhance flowers.
5. Flowers should not be crowded.
6. Each flower contributes to the arrangement.

Agriculture Products

1. Uniformity of produce.
2. Condition (old, young, wilted, dirty).
3. Appetizing - appearance
4. Proper handling.
5. Insect free and disease free.

Miscellaneous

1. Overall attractiveness
2. Uniformity; Size, shape, color, type, and variety development
3. Freedom from injury or damage: Insects, weather, growth, handling & sunburn
4. Height, length, width according to rules
5. Suitability for intended use
6. Strong focal point
7. Basic elements of design (balance, movement, line)
8. Good use of color
9. Originality
10. Craftsmanship and creativity
11. Choice and appropriate use of material

Exhibitor No. _____

Total No. of Entries_____ Amount Paid_____

HORTICULTURE DEPARTMENT ENTRY BLANK

Name_____

Address_____

Town_____ Zip Code _____

Phone_____Email_____

Section 1 – Potted Plants (flowering)

1._____	4._____	7._____	10._____
2._____	5._____	8._____	11._____
3._____	6._____	9._____	12._____

Section 2 – Potted Plants (foliage)

13._____	16. _____	19. _____	22. _____
14. _____	17. _____	20. _____	23. _____
15. _____	18. _____	21. _____	24. _____

Section 3 – Cactus or Succulents

25. _____	27. _____	29. _____	31. _____
26. _____	28. _____	30. _____	

Section 4 – Planter or Dish Garden

32. _____	33. _____	34. _____

Section 5 – Hanging Baskets

35. _____	37. _____	39. _____	41. _____
36. _____	38. _____	40. _____	42. _____

Section 6 – Arrangement of Cut Flower

43. _____	47. _____	51. _____	55. _____
44. _____	48. _____	52. _____	56. _____
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Section 7 – Cut Flowers

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Section 8 – Grains and Hay

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Section 9 – Above Ground Vegetables

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Section 10 – Below Ground Vegetable

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Section 11 – Miscellaneous

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Section 12 – Trial Category

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