

Kalamazoo County 4-H Floriculture Project Guidelines

Project Leader or Superintendents: N/A

Project Social Media: N/A

Project Objectives & Life Skills*

- Understand the process of sowing, planting, growing, and maintaining a flower garden.
- Have fun with floriculture and realize the importance of floriculture as a leisure activity.
- Develop a sense of accomplishment through raising and caring for a flower garden.
- Develop creativity through gardening.
- Understand the difference between different types of flowering plants (annuals, perennials, varieties, etc.).
- To imagine and gain a working knowledge of influences that affect a landscape plan including flowers (height, color, spacing, etc.).
- Understand the importance of improving our environment by landscaping.
- **Head**
 - Wise use of resources
 - Planning/organizing
 - Service learning
 - Learning to learn
- **Heart**
 - Social Skills
 - Empathy
 - Sharing
 - Nurturing relationships
- **Hands**
 - Teamwork
 - Self-motivation
 - Marketable skills
 - Responsible citizenship
- **Health**
 - Personal safety
 - Stress management
 - Self-discipline
 - Character

**note these life skills are just some examples of what 4-H members will learn in this project*

Additional Resources:

[Shop 4-H Floriculture Curriculum](#)

[Spark Ideas. Ignite Possibilities. Exploring 4-H Floriculture](#)

[Floriculture & Greenhouse Crop Production](#)

[Ohio State University Flower Gardening](#)

MSU is an affirmative-action, equal-opportunity employer, committed to achieving excellence through a diverse workforce and inclusive culture that encourages all people to reach their full potential. Michigan State University Extension programs and materials are open to all without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, religion, age, height, weight, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, family status or veteran status. Issued in furtherance of MSU Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Quentin Tyler, Director, MSU Extension, East Lansing, MI 48824. This information is for educational purposes only. Reference to commercial products or trade names does not imply endorsement by MSU Extension or bias against those not mentioned.

Michigan State University is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all programs, services and activities. Accommodations for persons with disabilities may be requested by contacting the event contact Kalamazoo County 4-H two weeks before the start of events at 269-383-8830 or msue.kalamazoo@msu.edu. Requests received after this date will be honored whenever possible.

[Floriculture–Cut Arrangement](#)

[Floriculture–Potted Plant](#)

[Floriculture–Terrarium](#)

Floriculture

Guidelines:

- Read the Fair book at home before picking flowers. If the book says 3 or 5 flowers, use only 3 or 5 flowers. It's ok to take more flowers with you so if one gets damaged on the way to the fair you can replace it. But, take only the correct amount to the judge.
- **All materials must be grown by the exhibitor. No borrowed or purchased exhibits will be allowed. No artificial flowers or foliage allowed in this department.**
- Suggested learning projects
 - Have a flower identification party by having each member buy five types of flowers and talk about them.
 - Have each member develop a garden plan.
 - Have each member start a garden photo book.
 - Experiment with various flower arrangement styles and techniques; each member can take home a table arrangement.
 - Make corsages for each Community Club officer and/or leader to wear at an annual club or County event.
 - Visit each member's gardens and start a club photo album.
 - Plant flowering plants in a public space for others to enjoy – (wildflowers, spring flowering bulbs, etc.)
 - Develop a naturalized garden using native plants.
 - Get involved in area flower shows.
 - Perform color experiments to develop an understanding of the use of color in the garden.
 - Experiment with soils – plant the same variety of plant in different soil mixtures and document the results.

Section A –Cut Flowers

- Stem length and diameter must be in good proportion to blossom size. Stem must include some attached foliage.
- Make sure to check the fair book for what each class is looking for in terms of blooms before going out to collect your flowers for show.
- Choosing and preparing for exhibit:
 - Cut stems as long as possible with foliage.
 - Cut flower stems at an angle with a knife and put in water immediately.
 - Foliage is as important as the flower. Look for a good green color. If you need to clean the foliage do so under running water, being careful not to bruise the foliage.
 - Grooming the foliage is necessary. If there are holes (caused by insects) in the middle of the leaf, carefully remove the whole leaf. If there is some damage on the edge of the leaf, trim the edges with sharp shears. Remember, there should be no foliage in the water of the exhibit container.
 - When selecting flowers, be choosy. Don't select a flower that has insect damage. Flowers should be close to but not at maturity. Do not select flowers that are old or past their prime. The flower color should be bright with no brown edges.
 - If you are exhibiting 3 or 5 flowers of the same species, the flowers should be close to the same size as possible.

- How to cut flowers for the show
 - Gather one to three days before the show.
 - Carry a container of water with you to the garden in which to immediately place cut specimens.
 - There is less chance for air to block the stems and cause premature wilting.
 - Cut in the late afternoon, after the sun is down, or early in the morning before the dew is dried.
 - Never cut when the sun shines directly on flowers.
 - Cut soft stems on a slant with a sharp knife one or two inches longer than desired.
 - Choose blooms with firm, long stems in good proportion to size of bloom.
 - In specimens with more than one bloom on the stem, there should be some buds, some nearly open and some full blooms. None should be past prime.
 - Use sharp pruning shears or a small saw for heavy branches. Cut hollow stems through the node (swelling in stem where leaf or stems are formed).
 - Most single or semi-single flowers would be cut in the bud stage and allowed to open in the house.
 - Those double in form and of dark shades should be cut when about ¼ to 1/3 open.
- Conditioning:
 - When picking flowers, pick more than you will need for your exhibit. The evening before, put flowers and plant material in a container larger than your exhibit container so the foliage is not crowded or damaged.
 - The flowers should be in this larger water container for at least 2-4 hours at room temperature. Be careful not to get the flower heads wet. Do not remove all the foliage from the flower stem, only leaves that have been chewed on by insects. When you need to shorten the flower stem, re-cut under water.
- Exhibit Container: Select a container in proportion to the flowers and stems; a small jar for marigolds, a tall, sturdy jar for gladiolus. You do not have to purchase a vase. You can use food container jars that have been washed and had their labels completely removed.
- For more tips check out page 5 of this document.

Section B—Arrangements

- Flower arrangements—Fresh cut flowers
 - Exhibited plant material must be grown, cut and arranged by the exhibitor
 - Create a flower arrangement in a vase of 3 to 5 main flowers and appropriate amount of filler flowers and greenery grown in the exhibitor's garden.
 - Vase should not be taller than 9” or wider than 3” and be clear or white only.
- Corsage (homemade)
 - Corsage must be made by the exhibitor.
 - Flowers should be grown and cut by the exhibitor.
 - The exhibition should be one corsage in a clear display container. One main focal flower and appropriate amount of filler or greenery grown by the exhibitor.
- Arrangement-natural dried plant material
 - Exhibited plant material must be grown, cut, dried and arranged by the exhibitor
 - Create a flower arrangement in a vase from 3 to 5 main flowers and appropriate amount of filler flowers and greenery grown in the exhibitor's garden and then dried by the exhibitor.
 - Vase should not be taller than 9” or wider than 3” and be clear or white only.
- Plaques or framed dried flower picture
 - Exhibited plant material must be grown, cut, dried and arranged by the exhibitor.
 - An exhibition can be any artistic display of dried flowers in a non-traditional display such as a vase.
- Wreaths or special occasion decorations from natural, dried plant material
 - Materials must be collected and preserved by the exhibitor. No artificial flowers or plants

allowed. Bows and other decorative items are ok but should be minimal.

Section C– Indoor Plants

- **All exhibits must be in the care of the exhibitor at least 3 months prior to the fair.**
- Any flowering house plant in bloom
 - Display one flowering house plant in a container to be a maximum size of 12” in diameter.
 - The flowering plant can be any color.
- Any foliage plant
 - Display any foliage plant in a container to be a maximum size of 12” in diameter.
- Dish garden, terrarium or planter
 - Exhibitors are only allowed to exhibit one of the above per year and must be different from the previous year's project.
 - The size of the exhibit should be no larger than 12x12”. All dish gardens and terrariums must have a cover when on exhibition.
 - Make sure the plants that are being used in this display work with the housing style you have picked out.
- Hanging containers (indoor/house plants)
 - The hanging container should be no larger than 12x12” and should work with the chosen plants.
- Hanging containers (annuals)
 - The hanging container should be no larger than 12x12” and should work with the chosen plants.
- Patio pot of flowering or non-flowering annual plants
 - Patio pot should not be any larger than 2 feet by 2 feet.
 - Plants must be in the care of the exhibitor at least 3 months in advance of the exhibition.

Floriculture Tips and Tricks

- Conditioning plant material
 - Choose a conditioning container that is made of glass, pottery, plastic, or other non-rusting materials.
 - Containers should be roomy and clean.
 - Wash them after each use.
 - Use clean, fresh water always. Let faucet water stand in conditioning pails for at least 10 minutes before flowers are placed in them.
 - Condition in a darkened room.
 - Use deep water.
 - Handle flowers quickly by their stems and as little as possible. When working with them, place them on a table with blooms extended over the edge.
Spray residues should be washed off, a few damaged or scorched petals may be removed from the back of bloom, if done carefully.
 - If foliage grows on the stem, it should be in good condition, clean, insect damage free, and healthy. Stem and foliage should be in proportion to the bloom.
 - Flowers will benefit if the stem is held under water and re-cut and then left in the water. It reduces the chance of having an air bubble in the stem.
 - For small flowers place a paper over the conditioning pail and slip stems through to keep blooms from getting into water.
 - Condition for at least 8 hours, preferably overnight.
 - Avoid closed atmospheres. Free circulation is essential but avoid drafts.
 - Keep away from heating units.
 - High humidity is helpful.
 - Spray a fine mist over and around, but never directly on flowers.
 - If conditioning for specimen blooms, keep on foliage, if for an arrangement remove foliage below the water line.
 - Cut flowers have three pet peeves – draft, dry heat and direct sunlight.
- Woody branches
 - Crab apples, flowering quince, lilacs, chrysanthemums, etc.
 - Cut when partially in bud. Split stems and remove foliage below the water line.
 - Choose a branch with blooms evenly spaced along the stem with some open and some ½ open blooms, and some in bud.
 - Foliage must be clean and free of damage.
- Stems with milky or colorless fluid
 - Campanulas, poppies, Hosta, maidenhair fern, etc.
 - Push stems through thick paper (2-3 sheets of newspaper). Fold paper gently around flowers and place exposed stem ends into 1 to 2 inches of boiling water for 1 to 3 minutes.
 - Or, split stems for an inch and char in a flame (a candle will do). If stems are re-cut they must be seared again. The reason for burning is that the stems exude a form of latex, and unless this is destroyed, water cannot be drawn up satisfactorily and flowers will soon wilt. Place treated stems in conditioning containers at once.
- Hollow or hairy stems
 - Hollyhocks, calendulas, peonies, stocks, dahlias, for-get-me-nots, heliotrope, etc.
 - Place in hot water (not boiling) until water cools, then add more cold water and let stand.
- Sweet diet
 - Some experiments have shown that a little sugar (generally about 4 tsp. To 1 qt of water) will prolong life in aquilegias, asters, delphiniums, nigella, petunias, sweet peas.
- Roses
 - Hybrid teas should be shown to be disbudded, with no evidence of recent disbudding. A rose should be ½ to 2/3 open when it is judged. The stem and foliage count a great deal in the scale of

points.

- Transporting arrangements and specimens
 - Re-cut stems under water, carry in as deep water as practical for transporting.
 - Avoid drafts, extremes of heat or cold or overcrowding.
 - Hold the container firmly in place; you may use dampened newspaper. Cover box with plastic.
 - If an arrangement is made the night before, keep it in a cool, dark room.
 - Always carry a few extra flowers in case of damage. Some fragile flowers like iris, lilies, gladiolus, may be packed in florist boxes, lined with wax paper.
 - Do not lay blooms on top of each other, cushion them. Carry others in jars firmly packed and covered, never crowded.