

Illinois
Extension



Illinois 4-H Floriculture Resources

Floral Design Preview





WELCOME

The study and practice of Floriculture is a great way to learn plant science, develop creativity, and cultivate a lifelong appreciation for flowers, gardening, and outdoor spaces. A successful floriculture enthusiast needs to understand plant biology and care, master design principles, be detail-oriented with growing techniques, and know how to create beautiful arrangements, displays, and outdoor environments.

This guide will help you identify resources to help you learn to be a skilled, creative, and successful flower grower, designer, and landscape planner through exciting hands-on practice. Explore the resources available, from books to videos, to in-person workshops and online tutorials, and choose the ones that are right for you!

Want help planning your learning journey? Use the Project Plans available for different ages on the Illinois 4-H website at go.illinois.edu/memberresources.

We encourage you to identify an adult in your life who can help guide you in your learning as you get ready for Fair season!

The focus of this project guide is the **Floriculture: Floral Design** category. Floral Design is a creative way to work with the beautiful flowers and foliage around us. There are many different styles of arranging, and each designer or artist has their own touch they give to their designs.

Understanding the principles of floral design opens doors to many career pathways, including floral designer, special event florist, and more. The skills you can build in this project area can be used for running your own flower shop, helping a bride's wedding dreams come true, or becoming an industry professional and setting the upcoming trends.

As part of your learning journey, you're invited to share something you learned at your local 4-H show or fair through exhibits, demonstrations, or competitions.

You can also help develop this resource for the 4-H Floriculture project area! Please share your favorite resources, project ideas, and hands-on activities with the State 4-H Office using this form: go.illinois.edu/4HFloricultureProject.

Upon review, the State 4-H Office will publish your ideas so other 4-H youth and families can be inspired to do more in Floriculture.

Good luck and happy designing!

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FLORAL DESIGN STATE FAIR GUIDELINES

The art of arranging flowers and plant materials in a creative and visually pleasing way. Learn about color, balance, and shape while making beautiful arrangements for a variety of occasions. Flowers used can be purchased or harvested by the exhibitor.

Round Arrangement (SF 50111)

Exhibit a round fresh flower arrangement no larger than 12"x12"x15". Arrangement should be viewable from any side.

Wearable Flowers (SF 50112)

Exhibit a wearable fresh flower arrangement such as a corsage, boutonniere, pocket square flowers, floral crown, or other. The piece should demonstrate skills in wiring or gluing flowers appropriately.

Wedding Bouquet (SF 50113)

Exhibit a fresh wedding or special event bouquet at least 8" in diameter. A bouquet can be hand-tied or created using a foam holder. The bouquet should be finished and ready for use by the bride. The bouquet should be displayed in a clear vase with water accessible to the stems (if not in a foam holder).

Centerpiece Display: Live activity (SF 50114)

Exhibitor must make two arrangements suitable for use as a centerpiece(s) within one hour in front of the judge. Arrangements can be made from fresh and/or dried materials. No silks are permitted. The centerpiece should follow a cohesive theme. Final arrangements must fit on a tabletop and not exceed 2.5 ft x 2.5 ft. Exhibitors are not allowed to interact with anyone other than the judge and superintendent during the judging process. The judge may choose to ask the exhibitor about their process and other questions during the design time. The exhibitor is responsible for furnishing their own flowers, containers, and other supplies. Exhibitor is responsible for cleaning up their workspace at the end of judging. Table will be provided at State Fair.

FLORAL DESIGN SCORE SHEETS

As you prepare for fair season, be sure to reference the most recent score sheets for Floral Design on the Illinois 4-H Website under the Illinois 4-H State Fair event.

4h.extension.illinois.edu/events/state-events/illinois-state-fair





GUIDING YOUR LEARNING

The purpose of the new classes and learning opportunities in the Floriculture project area for Illinois 4-H has been to allow 4-H members the opportunity to expand the project resources that they can utilize to guide their learning. The traditional Floriculture project booklets (available through Shop4-H.org) will continue to be acceptable.

Here are a few resources to get you started

- American Institute of Floral Design - AIFD.org
 - Look under “Education” Then “AIFD Resource Center”
 - These are vetted resources by industry professionals
- Florists Review - www.floristreview.com
- Principles of Floral Design by Pat Diehl Scafe

As you start out looking for additional resources, here are some helpful things that can help youth determine the quality of an information source:

Credible - Resources that are known to be research-based.

- University / Land Grant programs (often ending in .edu)
- Professional floral organizations
- Established publishers of floral design books
- 4-H, FFA, or Master Gardener materials

Accurate - Consistent across multiple, reputable sources.

- Compare 2-3 different sources
- Look for agreement on:
 - Methods
 - Color Theory

Current - Plant science information changes as best practices evolve.

- Check the publication or update date
- Focus on resources from the last 10-15 years

Clear - Resources that explain why something works.

- Step-by-step explanations
- Photos or diagrams
- References to research, trials, or Extension guidance
- Clear cause-and-effect explanations

Educational - Resources that are about teaching and not about selling.

- Encourages learning and experimentation
- Explains options, not just one ‘perfect’ method
- Educational in tone, not pushing a product





SHOWING YOUR LEARNING

The 4-H program is about learning by doing, and 4-H participants are encouraged to demonstrate their learning in this project by practicing and experimenting with different arrangement techniques. If choosing to prepare a display, topic suggestions could include: history of floral design, different techniques of designing, color theory, shapes of designs, and more. Consult your county's show book for exhibit rules and guidelines. You can choose to make your project about anything you learned while doing this project! Some ideas for practicing your design skills are listed below.

- Shadow a local florist for a day
- Make a round arrangement and donate to your local nursing home
- Ask a local florist if they have any old flowers they will be throwing away, these are great to practice with.
- Ask neighbors and friends if you can harvest flowers and greens from their gardens to practice with. Give the arrangement back to them as a thank you!
- Make a corsage or boutonniere for a friend to wear.
- Make a flower crown for you and a friend and have a photo shoot.
- Practice making a small wedding bouquet for you or a friend to take to a school dance.

FEEDBACK FORM

Please take a moment to share your best resources, activities, and project ideas with the rest of the Illinois 4-H program! Your feedback will help us develop a more extensive project resource guide for the 4-H Floriculture project area: go.illinois.edu/4HFloricultureProject

CREDITS

Mark Becker, 4-H Food Systems Specialist, and Kathy Book, 4-H Educator, compiled this resource. It was originally published in February 2026.

PHOTO CREDITS

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