

**Illinois
Extension**



Illinois 4-H

Floriculture Resources

Landscape 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 prepare for Fair season!

The focus of this guide is **Floriculture: Landscape Design**. Landscape design introduces youth to the planning and design of outdoor spaces using plants, hardscape elements, and natural features in ways that are both functional and visually appealing. In this project area, members learn how to evaluate a site, consider environmental factors such as sunlight, soil, and drainage, and apply basic design principles like balance, scale, unity, and color. Youth explore how thoughtful plant selection and layout can improve the appearance, usability, and sustainability of residential, school, and community landscapes.

Landscape designers and horticulturists work in careers such as landscape architecture, urban planning, nursery production, grounds management, environmental restoration, and public garden education. Learning landscape design helps 4-H members build problem-solving, communication, and planning skills while gaining awareness of how green spaces contribute to environmental health, community well-being, and quality of life.

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. Make sure to reference the State Fair Guidelines and Score Sheets for your project area and pull together resources to guide your learning.

You can 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 growing!

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LANDSCAPE DESIGN STATE FAIR GUIDELINES

Recommended for ages 14 and up

Small Landscape Design (SF 50115)

Develop a landscape design/drawing for a 10'x15' garden bed. Hand drawing is to be completed in top view (plan view) at a 1 in = 1 ft scale. Plan must include a title block showing: designer, scale, north arrow, sun exposure, numbered plant list of plants and shrubs/trees, and how many of each plant were used. Example: 1-Rose (6), 2-Hydrangea (3). The bed can be designed for a sunny, part-sun, or shady application.

Large Landscape Design (SF 50116)

Develop a color landscape design/drawing for a residence using required basemap. Residence basemap drawing will be provided for youth via the state 4-H website. Hand drawing is to be completed in top view (plan view) at a 1 in = 10 ft scale. Drawing must include 2 hardscape elements. Walkways should be 3 - 5 ft wide. Plan must include a title block showing: designer, scale, north arrow, sun exposure, numbered plant list of plants and shrubs/trees, and how many of each plant were used. Example: 1-Rose (6), 2-Hydrangea (3). The bed can be designed for a sunny, part-sun, or shady application.

LANDSCAPE DESIGN SUGGESTED TOOLS

The following items, while not required, can be beneficial and helpful to your design process.

- Sketching journal - to take notes, diagrams, and clippings
- 1 circle template with 1/16" through 3" circles
- Standard ruler
- White tracing paper or vellum
- Drawing pencils with different lead weights
- Good quality eraser
- Colored Pencils with 8+ colors to represent different plant foliage and flower colors

LANDSCAPE DESIGN SCORE SHEETS

As you prepare for fair season, be sure to reference the most recent score sheets for Landscape 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

- Cohen, S. and Brenner, S. (2010). The Non-Stop Gardener: Step-by-Step Guide to Smart Plant Choices and Four-Season Designs.
- Oklahoma State University - Landscape Design 4-H Exhibit
 - Search in your internet browser with the above phrase. Oklahoma presents 4-H'ers with video demonstrations on Landscape Design.
- University of Minnesota Extension - Sustainable Landscaping
 - <https://extension.umn.edu/lawns-and-landscapes/landscape-design>
- Illinois Landscape Contractors Association
 - Professional association with several listed resources used by the industry

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)
- Botanical gardens and professional horticulture organizations
- Established publishers of gardening and horticulture books
- 4-H, FFA, or Master Gardener materials

Accurate - Consistent across multiple, reputable sources.

- Compare 2-3 different sources
- Look for agreement on:
 - Design styles
 - Plant correctness for the region

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

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 preparing a landscape design that is realistic and pleasing to the viewer. Consult your county's show book for exhibit rules and guidelines. Practice makes better designs. Below are a few tips and tricks to use as you practice your design skills.

- Find a friend or neighbor who is willing to help with inspiration. They should have thoughts on a potential garden they'd like or a dream garden for the future. Ask them the following questions.
 - Do you have a color theme for your garden?
 - Are you hoping for a native garden? Or perennial? or low-maintenance?
 - Where will your garden be located? Look at existing hard-scapes and size of space
- Research plants you'd like to use.
 - Make a list of potential plants, then answer the following questions
 - Do your plants have a diverse range of color, or fit your client's wishlist for color?
 - Do your plants have a range of 4-season interest?
 - Do your plants have a pleasing range of heights, widths, and textures?
 - Take time to look at your plants again and switch out as necessary
 - Remember that some types of plants have various varieties that have different attributes.
- Make a mock layout of your plants in the space you have.
 - Make a few different layouts. See what your client thinks!

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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Cover: beautiful landscape design by YuraWhite, Landscape architect student learning design garden plan by toa55, Impressive backyard landscape design with patio area by irina88w

Page 2: Landscape Design of Garden by Industrial Photograph

Page 6: Beautiful backyard landscape design by irina88w





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