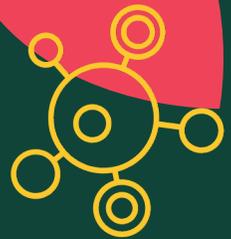


Illinois
Extension



Illinois 4-H

Floriculture Resources

Ornamental Display Preview





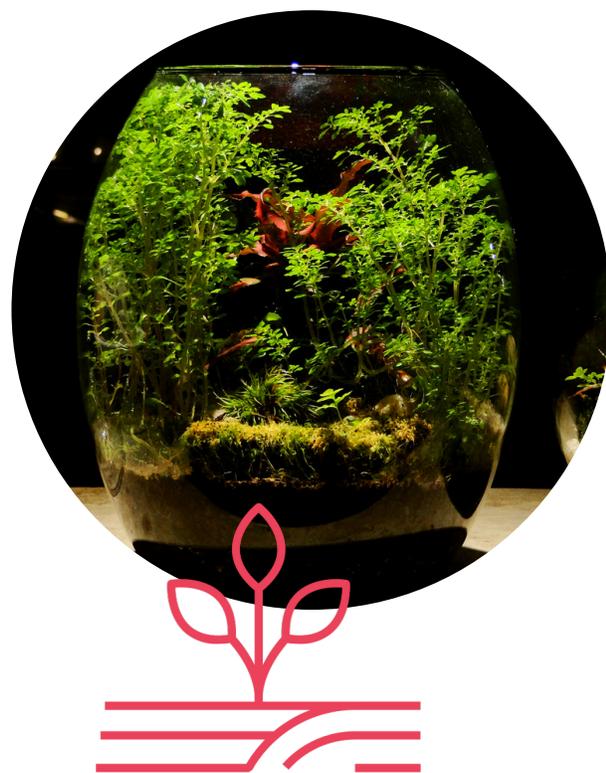
WELCOME

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.

The 4-H Floriculture project area can 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 the 4-H Fair season!



The focus of this project guide is **Floriculture: Ornamental Display**. Ornamental displays involve the creative use of plants and natural materials to design visually appealing arrangements such as terrariums, fairy gardens, dish gardens, and themed plant displays. This project area combines plant science with artistic design, allowing 4-H youth to explore how plant selection, container choice, scale, balance, color, and texture work together to create a cohesive and healthy display. Through hands-on creation and care of ornamental displays, you can learn how plants grow in confined environments and how proper care supports long-term success and plant health.

Developing skills in ornamental display opens pathways to a variety of careers, including interior plantscape technician, greenhouse grower, garden center specialist, floral designer, visual merchandiser, landscape designer, and botanical garden educator. Through study, trial-and-error, and showing your learning in the Ornamental Display project, you can build a strong foundation in both horticultural science and creative design.

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!

Mark Becker, 4-H Food Systems Specialist | mbbecker@illinois.edu

Kathy Book, 4-H Educator | kbook@illinois.edu





ORNAMENTAL DISPLAY STATE FAIR GUIDELINES

Each county may submit 2 entries from classes 50124, 50125, 50126, 50127, 50128.

Fairy Garden (SF 50124)

Create an artistic mini garden of plants, flowers, and/or herbs. Explain the process you utilized to prepare your fairy garden. Label your plants by name and explain how the plants were chosen to fit the theme. Fairy gardens must not exceed 18" x 18" x 18". Exhibitor responsible for transporting the planter to indoor judging space.

Outdoor Mixed Planter (SF 50125)

Display a mixed planter that may include herbs with foliage plants and/or flowering plants. The planter should include three or more kinds of plants. Include a list of the names and varieties of all plants used. The container exhibit space must be larger than 18"x18" and not exceed 3' x 3'. Exhibitor responsible for transporting the planter to indoor judging space.

Indoor Mixed European Planter (SF 50126)

Display a mixed European planter (mostly green plants/ house plants). The planter should include three or more kinds of plants. Include a list of the names and variety of all plants used. The container exhibit space must not exceed 18" x 18" x 24". Exhibitor responsible for transporting the planter to indoor judging space.

Closed Terrarium (SF 50127)

Create a terrarium. Selected plants should be started by the exhibitor from cuttings or seeds or purchased plugs. The terrarium must be cared for by the exhibitor for at least 5 months. Exhibitor should be able to explain the different plant, soil, and environmental needs and watering requirements of a closed system. The container exhibit space must not exceed 18" x 18" x 24". Exhibitor responsible for transporting the planter to indoor judging space.

Ornamental Poster (SF 50128)

Poster explaining the process of creating a terrarium/mini garden/or other related topic.

ORNAMENTAL DISPLAY STATE FAIR SCORESHEETS

As you prepare for Fair season, be sure to reference the most recent scoresheets for Ornamental Display on the Illinois 4-H website under the Illinois 4-H State Fair event page:

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 is to create opportunities for 4-H members 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.

As part of this process, 4-H members will be encouraged to find new project resources, hands-on activities, and learning opportunities. Below, we provide some guidance on finding trusted, evidence-based, and educational resources. Helping youth learn how to judge information quality is just as important as the information itself.

As you start out looking for 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:
 - Soil/substrate composition
 - Environmental Conditions
 - Plant care recommendations

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 preparing a photo collage, preparing cut flowers, a display, a presentation, or a video to exhibit at their local county 4-H project show. 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! You may find exhibit ideas in the project resources that you use to guide your learning.

Whether you use the resources recommended in the Project Resource Guide or those of your own choosing, it will be important to be able to explain your choice. As you prepare for your exhibit, you can ask yourself:

- Why did you trust this resource?
- How did this resource help you?
- Would you use this resource again? Why or why not?

Some other ideas for ways that 4-H members can demonstrate their learning in Ornamental Display:

Fairy Garden (SF 50124)

- A woodland-themed planter emphasizing shade-tolerant plants with natural materials.
- Mini flowering plants to attract pollinators organized into a creative theme.
- Select plants with texture and color to support a narrative or storybook theme.
- Small-leaf herbs chosen for scale and scent, focusing on proper growth control.
- Design with a specific season as the theme, using plants that maintain their appearance indoors.

Outdoor Mixed Planter (SF 50125)

- Combine flowering annuals and foliage plants with similar light/water needs.
- Pair culinary herbs with flowering companions.
- Focus on contrasting texture, shape, color, and height differences while maintaining balance.
- Utilize plants native to Illinois and adapted to Midwestern growing conditions.
- Emphasize a planter with season-long visual interest in mind, balancing plants of differing growth stages.

Indoor Mixed European Planter (SF 50126)

- Select plants for shade tolerance and low-light conditions.
- Focus on tropical foliage, balancing leaf texture, pattern, and growth habit.
- Choose plants with an emphasis on highly efficient water usage.
- Mix together trailing, upright, and mounding plants for visual balance.
- Demonstrate color through naturally colorful leaves rather than flowers.

Closed Terrarium (SF 50127)

- Include solely humidity-loving plants (rainforest theme).
- Plants selected from one ecosystem/biome.
- Plants started from cuttings or seeds (propagation theme).
- Plants requiring minimal maintenance, reducing water needs.

Ornamental Poster (SF 50128)

- Building a terrarium step-by-step.
- Plant selection for open vs. closed/indoor vs. outdoor displays.
- Design principles in Ornamental displays.
- Common mistakes in fairy gardens and terrariums.





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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Page 2: Terrarium by Marcelo Costa Barros

Page 6: Fairy Garden in a Cup by tamaw

Page 7: Four Potted Plants in Decorative Planters by Jhong Rhang





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