

Tips for County Fair Judges – Plant Crafts

Wisconsin 4-H recommends that you use the following criteria to judge plant craft entries at county fairs.

General County Fair Plant Crafts Exhibiting Requirements

- All plant craft materials must be live or dried, including foliage, flowers, fruit, vegetables, stems, seeds, etc. No synthetics, plastic, or other artificial plants or parts should be used, except for bonding materials or ribbon.
- At most county fairs, the exhibitor must have dried the majority of plant craft materials, though fill and accents can be purchased. Some county fairs say the youth must have grown all the flowers in their exhibits, while others allow professionally grown flowers.
- Exhibitors must usually furnish their own containers. Fairs encourage youth not to use valuable containers, or containers that can break.
- For home-blended potpourri, exhibitors must usually include a recipe.

Judging Criteria for Plant Craft Exhibits

Crafts must be made of fresh, dried, and/or treated plant material or a combination. Painting or other treatment of dried plant material may be permitted. Artificial plant material is never permitted. Use these criteria when judging:

- *Color Harmony*: Refers to the relation of colors to one another in the arrangement, which makes for a pleasing and unified arrangement of dried flowers and foliage. Good color harmony should also be evident between plant material and container. Avoid gaudy and unusual containers that detract from the arrangement.
- *Design*: Arrangements should have a definite design with stems arranged to create an attractive effect, such as a triangle, S-curve, crescent, or sunburst. This requires the tasteful use of color, space, texture, and plant shapes.
- *Balance*: Involves the volume and color of plant material, and making sure that the “weight” of one side of the arrangement is equal to the other side. A well-balanced arrangement is stable in appearance and does not appear to tilt to either side.
- *Proportion*: Refers to the proper relationship between various parts of the arrangement and between plant materials and the container. Size of dried flowers and foliage and stem length are major considerations.
- *Condition*: Plants should be properly dried. Plants should have maintained their color and shape (not be shriveled or broken).
- *Suitability of Material, Relation to Container*: Dried flowers and foliage used should naturally belong together. Containers can give rhythm and harmony of shape and color as well as complement line arrangements.
- *Distinction, Originality*: Look for exhibits that show style, are uncommon, out of the ordinary, and not imitated. The constructive expression of the designer’s personality is imaginative, inventive, unique, and dissimilar to the rank and file without being bizarre.

- *Construction:* Exhibit is well planned and executed. Construction techniques are solid. Foliage should be inserted so you can not see foam, wires, or other material used to hold stems in the container. The container's back also should be finished off.