



LaPorte County 4-H Container Gardening Guidelines



Extension - 4-H Youth
Development



Purdue is an equal opportunity/equal access/affirmative action institution

Updated 8.18.2022

Welcome to 4-H Container Gardening!

Not everyone has space for a 20'X25' garden. Container gardening will introduce members to the fun of gardening without needing so much space.

Exhibit Class Guidelines:

3rd Grade	1 container, 1 plant
4th Grade	2 containers, 1 plant each
5th Grade	3 containers, 1 plant each
6th Grade	4 containers, 1 plant each
7th Grade	5 containers, 1 plant each
8 th – 12 th Grades	Choose any one of the activities in this manual under “Advanced Divisions”

Plants that can be exhibited include: Beans, Broccoli, Brussel sprouts, Cabbage, Cucumbers, Eggplant, Kohlrabi, Okra, Peas, Peppers, Squash, Tomatoes, Pumpkins (including small pumpkins) and Zucchini. You may exhibit two containers of the same vegetable, but they must be of a different variety. For example, you may choose to exhibit beefsteak tomatoes and cherry tomatoes or different types of beans such as green beans and pole beans.

Plant labeling instructions:

3rd – 7th Grade: Each plant must be labeled using a 3 x 5 card with the following information:

Name	Latin Name
Grade	Variety
Category Name	Date Planted
Common Name	Fertilizer

8th – 12th Grade: Each plant must be labeled using a 3 x 5 card with the 3rd- 7th grade information and the addition of:
of Days to Maturity
Soil Type

Advanced Project Options

The following project options are available for members in divisions 6 and above. Many of the advanced project options deal with companion plantings. This will be first time you have the opportunity to plant more than one plant in each container. The gardening manuals offer great reference materials for doing this successfully. Level A, lesson 2b; Level C, lessons 1c and 2c; and Level D, lessons 1a, 1b, 2a, 2b, and 2c will all provide you with good information. **All exhibits must be labeled with identifying cards and come accompanied by the Explanation of Exhibit Sheet.**

Advanced Option 1 – Compatible plantings

Exhibit three containers with compatible plantings. Each container should contain 5-10 compatible plants. One plant in each container **MUST** be a vegetable. Plants should consist of flowers, herbs, or weeds along with one vegetable plants. Each plant should be identified by their common name on a 2 x 4 card.

Consider the following when planting:

- Plant color
- Plant height at maturity
- Size of individual root systems at maturity
- Foliage size of each mature plant
- Container size must be large enough to accommodate the entire planting.

Advanced Option 2 - Unusual Vegetables

Grow three **unusual** vegetables **and** herbs in appropriate size containers with proper soil type. Minimum of 2 containers and a maximum of 4 containers may be displayed.

Consider the following when planting:

- Plant height at maturity
- Size of individual root systems at maturity
- Foliage size of each mature plant
- Container size must be large enough to accommodate the entire planting. All plants should be mature and ready to harvest at judging time. To have your planted salad ready, you will have to carefully plan planting times.

The plants should not be common garden plants. They should have some uniqueness to them. Examples are head lettuce, honey dew melon, sweet potato, horse radish, celery, lavender, chamomile, garlic, Chinese cabbage, chives, etc.

Advanced Option 3 - Dinner for Two

Prepare a dinner for two, a dinner salad, that is. One container of plantings is required for each dinner salad. At least two containers and no more than 4 containers may be displayed. Each container should contain 5-7 edible vegetable, herbs, flowers, and/or weeds.

Consider the following when planting:

- Plant height at maturity
- Size of individual root systems at maturity
- Foliage size of each mature plant
- Container size must be large enough to accommodate the entire planting. All plants should be mature and ready to harvest at judging time. To have your planted salad ready, you will have to carefully plan planting times.

Advanced Option 4 - Multiple Plantings

Four containers are required for this project. All plants must be mature with plant and/or fruit edible.

One container of 2-4 vegetables

One container of 3-7 herbs

One container of 3-5 flowers

One container of 3-5 weeds

Consider the following when planting:

- Plant height at maturity
- Size of individual root systems at maturity
- Foliage size of each mature plant
- Container size must be large enough to accommodate the entire planting.

Advanced Option 5 - Effects of Soil

Plant four containers with the same variety of vegetable, but the following different soil types:

One container of clay soil

One container of sandy soil

One container of loam soil

One container of potting soil mixed properly for vegetable variety chosen

Do your best to have the plants produce fruit at the same rate. This may mean extra water for some, more shade for some, less shade for others. You will probably need different food for each type of soil.

Advanced Container Gardening Explanation of Exhibit

Name _____

Container #1 Vegetable name(s): _____
Soil Type: _____
Water Needs: _____

Additional food needs: _____

Special treatment for this container: _____

Container #2 Vegetable name(s): _____
Soil Type: _____
Water Needs: _____

Additional food needs: _____

Special treatment for this container: _____

Container #3 Vegetable name(s): _____
Soil Type: _____
Water Needs: _____
Additional food needs: _____

Special treatment for this container: _____

Container #4 Vegetable name(s): _____
Soil Type: _____
Water Needs: _____

Additional food needs: _____

Special treatment for this container: _____

Helpful Hints for Happy Plants

- Size of Container:** Plants need room for their root system. Make sure your container(s) is large enough for the root system to develop and mature.
- Container:** Plastic containers will hold moisture for longer periods of time. Fired ceramic containers will hold moisture well also. Wood containers will allow the moisture to escape before being fully utilized by the plant. Clay containers allow even more moisture to escape than wood. Use good judgement when choosing your container. Consider the following:
1. How large will the root system grow?
 2. Will the location for your plant be in the sun or shade?
 3. Does the container look nice and will it make a nice display for the fair?
- Drainage:** It is better to have too many drainage holes for your container than not enough. Too few holes may cause root rot and/or a weaker plant.
- Type of soil/fertilizer:** Your plants do better in the right soil with the right food. Your plant may need more sand than other plants. Maybe your plant needs peat moss added to the soil mixture. Be sure to feed your plant the proper fertilizer. Read labels and talk with the greenhouse person that sells you your plants and/or seeds.
- Plant supports:** If your plant needs to be supported, be sure you do so. If you choose a wooden or metal stake, make sure it is sturdy enough to properly support your mature plant. This stake should be inserted at the time of planting the plant. It should be placed deep into the soil for the best support. Wire cages may also be used.
- How to secure plants:** String is a poor material for attaching your plants to the support. It is so thin that it will sometimes cut through the stalk of the plant. Thin strips (about 1") of sheeting, t-shirt material or nylon stockings seem to make good support ties for the plants. Remember, do not tie plants tightly to the supports, the plants need a little room to grow and to move in the wind.
- Mulching:** Mulching will help retain moisture in your soil. However, some mulches will drain your soil of the nutrients that are needed for your plants to grow properly and healthy. **If you want to use a wood chip mulch for exhibiting your plants, you should explain to the judge that you are aware that this is (or is not) the proper mulch to use.** You may be using it for display purposes only.



LaPorte County Record Sheet Container Gardening Project

Name _____ Age _____

Name of my 4-H Club _____ Grade _____

Date I started this project _____ Date I completed this record _____

SOME QUESTIONS ABOUT MY PROJECT

1. Type, number & size of container(s) used _____

Why did you choose this container(s) _____

2. Type of soil mixture _____

Why did you choose this mixture? _____

3. Type of fertilizer _____

Why did you choose this type and amount of fertilizer? _____

Keep track of your supply costs on the table below:

Date	Supply	Cost	Why Purchased

PESTS

1. List the following about your plants:

Insects I Found	In which Plant	Control Used	Results

Diseases I Found	In which Plant	Control Used	Results

Weeds I Found	Control Used	Results

ACTIVITIES

1. Garden tours I participated in _____

New things I learned from the garden tours _____

2. Garden workshops, schools, and meetings I participated in _____

New things I learned in the garden workshops, schools, and meetings _____

3. Demonstrations I gave relating to gardening _____

Title _____ How many times _____

For whom _____

4. Books, fliers, bulletins, etc. I found useful in working with my windowsill garden _____

I have reviewed this record sheet and believe it to be correct.

Signature of 4-H Member: _____ Date: _____

Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Leader: _____ Date: _____