



The San Diego County Fair's Landscape Garden Competition is a dynamic and competitive outdoor showcase featuring student, adult, and professional garden landscape exhibits that celebrate the boundless creativity, horticultural expertise, and environmental stewardship of all participants. This vibrant event brings together diverse gardeners—from budding students to seasoned professionals—to demonstrate their skills and passion for landscape design. Through stunning garden displays, the competition highlights innovative approaches to sustainable gardening practices, the art of landscaping, and the importance of eco-conscious design.

Exhibition Timeline

Landscape Exhibitor's Workshop	Saturday, February 28, 2026 9:30 a.m. San Diego County Fair Boardroom
Preliminary Designs Due	Friday, May 1, 2026
Entry Deadline	Friday, May 1, 2026 by 8:00 PM
Landscape Exhibit Set-up	Monday, May 11- Thursday, June 4, 2026 (Credentials required)
Judging	Friday, June 5, 2026
Fair Dates	Wednesday, June 10 – Sunday, July 5, 2026 (closed Mondays and Tuesdays)
Award Ceremony (Invite Only)	Wednesday, June 10, 2026, 6:00 PM
Teardown	Monday, July 6- Wednesday, July 8, 7 AM -5 PM (Credentials required)

Contact Us

Patty McGinty, [Coordinator](#)

San Diego County Fair Entry Office

2260 Jimmy Durante Blvd, Del Mar, CA 92014

Office (858) 792-4207 - Mon-Fri 10am-4pm

Garden Show Landscape Eligibility & Competition Rules

1. Open to all California residents, including youth ages 9-19.
2. See Division description for eligibility requirements, as they vary between divisions.
3. Management reserves the right to assign display locations.
4. Collaborative projects must be approved by the coordinator.
5. All Division 2001, 2002, and 2003 exhibitors will be required to have general liability insurance coverage. Requests for assistance may be made with Garden Show.

Divisions and Classes

Division 2001: Adult Amateur Garden Landscape

Open to garden clubs, plant societies, horticulturists, and amateur gardeners.

Class 001 Amateur Exhibit DIY (Do it Yourself), 250-750 sq. ft.

Division 2002: Adult Professional Landscape

Open to professional businesses, nurserymen, professional associations, public agencies, educational institutions, and professional horticulturists.

Class 001 Small Professional Exhibit, 500 sq. ft.

Class 002 Medium Professional Exhibit, 750 sq. ft.

Division 2003: Botanical Institution Landscape

Open to bona fide botanic gardens, zoos, aquariums, amusement parks, or other paid venues that educate the public about their botanical collections.

Class 001 Large Professional Exhibit, 1000 sq. ft.

Division 2004: Youth Garden Landscape

The 15' X 20' exhibit should aim to create a dynamic outdoor space by thoughtfully arranging and modifying elements such as plants, additional structures (fountains, benches, etc.), and natural features suited to the terrain of your choice to enhance both the aesthetic appeal and functionality of a space. Landscape designs can include everything from gardens and parks to urban streetscapes and commercial properties, blending creativity with principles of sustainability and environmental stewardship. Additionally, the design should feature vibrant plant materials and those that are appropriate for San Diego County's climate.

Class 001 Student Landscape Exhibit: School Based Organizations; Ages 9-19—300 sq. ft.

Class 002 Youth Landscape Exhibit: Volunteer Organizations; Ages 9-19—300 sq. ft.



Entry Limits & Fees

One entry per class. Entry fees are payable online with a credit card and are not refundable.

Division 2001- Adult Amateur Garden Landscape Exhibits	
Class 001	\$150
Division 2002- Adult Professional Garden Landscape Exhibits	
Class 001	\$250
Class 002	\$300
Division 2003- Botanical Institution Landscape Exhibits	
Class 001	\$350
Division 2004- Youth Garden Landscape Exhibits	
Class 001	\$75
Class 002	\$75

How to Enter

1. After reading all entry materials, click the “Enter Now” link below to go to the ShoWorks Entry Homepage.
2. Register as an **Exhibitor**.
3. Select the appropriate division and class and input the required information. (See “Divisions and Classes” below for a list of all divisions and classes.)
4. Review your entry before completing registration to ensure that you have entered the correct division and class for each entry.
5. Click the check-out button and pay for all entries.
6. Read the confirmation statement and type YES. **Do not click multiple times**, as it will charge you each time.

If you plan to make changes to your entries or need to leave ShoWorks at any time, SAVE YOUR CART before exiting out.

For additional help with entering, review this detailed step-by-step guide:

[Entry Tutorial](#)

Still have questions? Please call or [email the Entry Office](#).

Phone: (858) 792-4207, Monday-Friday, 10am-4pm



Landscape Entry Information & Requirements

Space Allocation and Design

There will be a maximum of 50 exhibits accepted in Divisions 2001-2003 and 15 exhibits in Division 2004. Space assignments will be allocated in the order they are received. Exhibitors must have entry fees paid and a current W-9 Tax ID form completed. All potential exhibitors must submit a landscape design by the deadline to reserve the space needed, including a request for border wall materials. Exhibitors are encouraged to use creative border materials. The coordinator must approve the design. Deviation from the approved plan can result in disqualification or removal.

Fair Theme

Landscapes do not need to be designed to reflect the annual Fair theme; however, it is encouraged that some elements of the theme be incorporated. Landscapes should showcase designs that could realistically be replicated by a homeowner in their own yard.

The 2026 Garden Show theme is “Enchanted Realms- A Garden Journey.”

Exhibitors are encouraged to create their own enchanted garden space.

Construction Specifications

Hardscape: All hardscape elements (i.e., water features, walkways, patios, walls, etc.) must be in place by Monday, June 1. River-rock beds must have a liner underneath for easy removal.

Electrical: Electricity for the display is available and provided by Fair Staff. Electrical needs for exhibits must be coordinated with the Garden Show coordinator and the Fairgrounds electrician prior to landscape display installation. All electrical connections within the exhibit must be wrapped for weatherproofing. Cords must be UL-approved, heavy-duty, and three-prong grounded with a maximum length of 20 feet.

Lighting/ Sound: Lighting of exhibits is required as part of the judging rubric. The use of sounds in any display must be approved by the coordinator.

Water/ Pools: No standing water is permitted. Pool pumps must be screened. Pool liners should be 20 mil minimum and heavy-duty to prevent leakage. Waterfalls and fountains should be designed not to overflow when they are off. These will be shut off nightly after the Fair closes and on dark days unless prior arrangements have been made with the Garden Show coordinator.

Public Access: If the public is allowed to enter an exhibitor space, it must meet ADA specifications. Please see the Garden Show coordinator for additional information.

Miscellaneous: Exhibits must be finished on all sides visible to the public. Landscape containers must not be visible. Any concrete barriers, posts, landscape containers, electrical cords, water sources, etc., within the display area must be covered.



Landscape Entry Information & Requirements (Continued)

Materials

Exhibitors are responsible for providing their own materials, accessories, and labor. All products and materials used must be of high quality. Artificial flowers, foliage, and high-quality synthetic turf are permitted with prior approval from the Garden Show Coordinator.

All hardscape and decorative elements must be tasteful and appropriate for display in a garden setting. At the discretion of Fair Management, any items deemed inappropriate or distasteful will be removed and held for pickup at the conclusion of the Fair.

Provided Items

The Garden Show will provide on a “first-come, first-served” basis: Assigned space, block borders, fill dirt, rough grading, and mulch. Each landscape exhibit area will have electricity, security lighting, access to water, and a Fair-provided sign board for displaying your sign. The Fair will also provide a basic sign for each exhibit with the name of the exhibitor.

Accessory Suppliers

If an exhibitor needs to borrow materials or accessories, they should contact the Garden Show Office for a current list of potential suppliers. The exhibitor will need to arrange the details for pick-up and return with the chosen supplier and is responsible for any items included in their exhibit. In addition to the list, many other companies are responsive to requests for loans of the products to exhibitors. Exhibitors may contact other suppliers as they wish. To acknowledge the participation of accessory suppliers, their names may be included in the information that appears on the exhibitor’s additional sign.

Signs

The Fair will provide a basic sign for each exhibit with the name of the exhibitor. A sign board will be provided by the Fair to hold additional signage (maximum 24” x 36”) provided by the exhibitor. As part of the judging criteria, additional signage must include:

- Exhibit theme statement- Explain what the display represents and how
- A conceptual landscape plan of the exhibit- A bird’s eye view of the exhibit
- A plant identification guide- List all plant varieties and label plants with numbers
- A thank you list of suppliers- Thank all suppliers that contributed to the display

Literature

All literature and handouts must be reviewed and approved by the Garden Show Coordinator. All printed handouts must be professional in appearance and available in the literature holders attached to the sign holders. A limited number of literature holders will also be available by request. Staff will attach literature holders. Literature will be put in holders after judging is completed. The use of QR codes is encouraged.

Exhibit Staffing

During Fair hours, landscape exhibitors (not suppliers) may staff their exhibits. Exhibitors must

inform the coordinator when they arrive. The purpose of these staff members is to provide information and education. Sales are prohibited on Fair property.

Set-Up & Teardown

Vehicles will be allowed in the show area for unloading landscape materials and set-up on the dates listed in the timeline above. All basic construction and large plant material must be in place by Noon on the day before judging. Vehicles must be parked in designated areas and display access passes on dashboards. Vehicles without proper access passes will be subject to towing. No exhibitor access on the day of judging.

Exhibitors may begin to dismantle their exhibits, according to a schedule provided by Garden Show staff, the day after the Fair closes. Exhibitors dismantling their exhibits early may have premiums withheld. All hardscape elements (i.e., water features, walkways, patios, walls, boulders, flagstone, river rock, etc.) must be removed by the exhibitor by the last day of teardown at 5 pm. Failure to remove all hardscape, including boulders, flagstone, and river rock, will result in forfeiture of all premiums. Security will be provided until Saturday following the last day of the Fair. All items not removed by this time will become the property of the Garden Show. Removal of all items in displays must be coordinated by the exhibitor. No one may remove items from an exhibit (other than the owner of said exhibit) without prior written authorization from the owner on file in the Garden Show office.

Maintenance

Watering of entries during the Fair will be done by trained Garden Show staff per the watering schedule exhibitors provide before the Fair. [This watering schedule form](#) must be completed before Opening Day. Maintenance of plants in containers and landscapes throughout the entire Fair is critical, and entries should be inspected by the exhibitor often. Exhibits may be maintained on open Fair days between 6-9 am (after which all vehicles must exit the Garden Show area) and on closed Fair days (any Monday or Tuesday between 6 am-6 pm). All vehicles must display a valid Garden Show exhibitor permit on the dashboard or be subject to tow. Exhibitors must use their own tools and remove all equipment when finished with maintenance each day. Excessive watering that causes run-off into area drains may result in State-imposed fines. Any entry that is not maintained properly may be determined ineligible and have premiums withheld.

The 22nd DAA has strict requirements associated with its stormwater permits (Industrial General Permit and Small Phase 2 MSR). Both permits require the 22nd DAA to ensure that no water, other than what falls from the sky, makes its way into the storm drain system. This includes excess plant water. Anyone found watering in a manner that results in discharges to any storm drain shall be fined \$500 for the first incident. If the behavior continues, the violator shall be referred to the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board (SD RWQCB) for action. Fines and penalties levied by the SD RWQCB shall be the sole responsibility of the violator, along with any direct costs sustained by the 22nd DAA for



clean-up and repair.

Fair Tickets

Individual exhibitors will receive two Exhibitor Access Passes. Exhibiting groups will receive two Exhibitor Access Passes per participating team member. Questions regarding Exhibitor Access Passes may be directed to the Agriculture Programs Supervisor.

Judging

Displays must be completed by Noon the day before judging. Judging will take place on the date specified in the entry materials. Exhibitors' and suppliers' names must be covered by exhibitors prior to judging. Failure to do so can result in disqualification. Exhibitors will not be permitted in or around the show area during judging. Failure to comply will result in disqualification.

Judging Criteria

Entries are judged using a scorecard, which varies depending on the division. Click here for scorecard details: [Adult Amateur, Adult Professional, Botanical Institution, Youth](#)

Judging Results

All accepted entries will be displayed in the Garden Show exhibit with any awards received.

Awards

Award checks will be available at teardown. Checks not picked up will be mailed within 30 days. You must notify the Fair if the person or business name to be issued your award check is different from the exhibitor/group name the entry was registered. For collaborative projects, only one check will be issued, and the participating exhibitors are responsible for dividing the premium check. All award money may be forfeited if the exhibitor fails to maintain their exhibit throughout the duration of the Fair.

Division 2001- Adult Amateur Garden Landscape Awards

Each landscape exhibit will be judged using a point system. The amount of points earned will determine the monetary award received per the following:

Class 001	\$5 per point, up to \$2,500
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Division 2002- Adult Professional Garden Landscape Awards

Each landscape exhibit will be judged using a point system. The amount of points earned will determine the monetary award received per the following:

Class 001	\$6 per point, up to \$3,000
Class 002	\$8 per point, up to \$4,000



Awards (Continued)

Division 2003- Botanical Institution Landscape Awards

Each landscape exhibit will be judged using a point system. The amount of points earned will determine the monetary award received per the following:

Class 001	\$10 per point, up to \$5,000
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Additional Adult Garden Landscape Fair Awards:

See the Awards List for division eligibility

Coordinator's Award	\$500
Don Diego Award	\$500
Edgar Engert Educational Merit Award	\$500
Landscape Lighting Award	\$500
New Exhibitor Award	\$500
Noteworthy Plant Specimens	\$50 and Rosette
Paul Ecke, Sr. Trophy	\$500
Ecke Family Award	\$500
Paul Ecke, Jr. Garden Show Award 1 st Place	\$1,000
Paul Ecke, Jr. Garden Show Award 2 nd Place	\$500
Paul Ecke, Jr. Garden Show Award 3 rd Place	\$350

Divisions 2004 - Youth Garden Landscape Awards

Each landscape exhibit will be judged using a point system. The number of points earned will determine the amount of the monetary award received. Once the points have been awarded, the American system of judging will be used to determine Top 3 Placings in each Division and Class.

The following will be awarded in each class:

Class 001	\$8 per point, up to \$800
Class 002	\$8 per point, up to \$800

Additional Youth Garden Landscape Fair Awards:

See the Awards List for division eligibility

Outstanding Student Landscape	\$400
New Exhibitor Award	\$500
Outstanding Landscape Plan & Execution	\$200
Outstanding Plant Harmony	\$150



2026 Local Rules

1. Completion of online entry registration shall be deemed acceptance of all rules and permission to use your name, photograph, and images and description of entries in print, digital, and other media.
2. Online registration is required for all competitions and one-day contests. Online entries and any required image/document uploads are accepted until the published deadline, which specifies a date and time. Late entries will not be accepted.
3. Once registered, the exhibitor's name, entry description, title, and price may not be changed. Substitutions will only be allowed in accordance with current State Rules. Fair Management is not responsible for errors on entry forms, which may lead to elimination or disqualification of an entry.
4. Processing fees must be paid online at the time of registration. Processing fees are non-refundable.
5. Exhibitors must be living at the time when the online entry is submitted.
6. All non-livestock/non-agricultural entries must be the creative work of the exhibitor (whose name appears on the entry registration), be in good taste, and suitable for family viewing. Fair Management reserves the right to disqualify any entry/exhibit it deems objectionable or not in accordance with competition standards.
7. If an entry is disqualified after judging is complete, no changes will be made to the status of awards given for other entries.
8. Exhibitors are responsible for obtaining necessary permission from models and/or for using material in their entry that is considered copyrighted.
9. No entry will be accepted should the exhibitor describe the conditions under which he/she will exhibit, or the exhibit will be displayed.
10. Judges are selected for their expertise in the divisions or classes they evaluate. New judges may be appointed each year, and judging assignments may vary annually based on the needs of each competition.
11. If a coordinator or judge deems an entry to be in the incorrect category, division, class, etc., he or she may direct the Entry Office to move that entry as appropriate. The Entry Office may combine divisions or classes to create an adequate judging pool.
12. Fair Management reserves the right to limit entries and display thereof, to facilities available, and to cancel any division or class in which, in its judgment, the entries are insufficient to secure adequate competition.
13. Entries must be delivered on the date(s) and times specified. Entries will not be accepted before or after the stated entry delivery date. All accepted exhibits must remain on display and shall not be removed until the stated entry pick up date. Any exhibit not picked up on the specified date becomes the property of the San Diego County Fair and will be disposed of promptly.



2026 Local Rules (Continued)

14. All exhibits are entered and shown at the owner's risk. Reasonable care will be taken to prevent loss or damage to exhibits, but in no event will the 22nd District Agricultural Association (San Diego County Fair) be responsible for any injury or loss which may occur or for the actions of third parties. Insurance, if desired, should be obtained by the exhibitor at his/her own expense.
15. Any person who violates any Local, State, or Department rule or displays unethical conduct will forfeit all privileges and premiums and be subject to such penalty as the 22nd District Agricultural Association (San Diego County Fair) may order.
16. To ensure reliable award notification, exhibitors are responsible for submitting all address, phone number, and email address updates promptly in writing to entry@sdfair.com or Entry Department, 2260 Jimmy Durante Blvd, Del Mar, CA 92014.
17. Premium money will be paid per the recorded placings in the official judging reports rather than the ribbon attached to the exhibit.
18. Donated Award recipients will be selected per the instructions given on the Donated Award Confirmation Form submitted by the donor.
19. Premium, donated cash award, and auction checks will be made payable to the exhibitor as listed on the online entry registration. Checks will be mailed within 30 days after the close of the Fair to the address shown on the online entry registration, or as updated by the exhibitor via written notification to the Entry Office. Checks not cashed within six (6) months from the date of issue will be forfeited. Replacement checks may be subject to a stop payment fee.
20. The 22nd District Agricultural Association (San Diego County Fair) is required by the Internal Revenue Service to report any premium payments totaling \$600 or more. Exhibitors whose awards meet or exceed this amount must submit a W-9 form before their check can be issued.
21. The 22nd District Agricultural Association (San Diego County Fair) management reserves the right to amend or add to these rules and assumes no liability or responsibility not herein expressed.
22. California State Rules apply and are available [here](#).