



Think your patio has what it takes to wow the crowd? Step into the spotlight in the **Patio Garden Competition** at the San Diego County Fair! This is where creative container combos, stylish outdoor setups, and bold planting designs battle it out for garden glory. Whether it's cozy, colorful, or completely outside the box- if it fits in an area the size of an apartment patio, it's fair game. Bring your best and let your patio shine!

Exhibition Timeline

Landscape Exhibitor's Workshop	Saturday February 28, 2026 9:30 AM San Diego County Fair Board Room
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	Wednesday, June 10, 2026, 6:00 PM
Teardown	Monday, July 6- Wednesday, July 8, 7:00 AM -5:00 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



Patio Garden Competition Eligibility & Rules

1. Open to all California residents, including youth ages 9-18.
2. All Divisions are intended for amateur youth and adult entrants. Professionals, please refer to the Landscape competition.
3. Management reserves the right to assign display locations.
4.  Division exhibitors will be required to have general liability insurance coverage. Requests for assistance may be made with Garden Show.

Purpose

The Patio Garden's purpose will be to transform a small space into a garden design, to prove you can have a beautifully crafted garden without a large backyard. These exhibits should be "outside the box" & educate fairgoers about the horticulture they can have in a small amount of space. The goal is to transform a patio into a creatively designed garden space transporting its dwellers to an oasis right outside their door. Designs do not have to simply consist of potted plants & hanging wall art, so come armed with your top-secret, space-making concepts & unique artistic flair to ensure you take home the top prize. The final display is intended to be a representation of the theme or concept of a larger patio space. It does not need to be a fully functioning display, rather a glimpse into concept or theme.

The Patio Garden will be viewed by the public as though they are standing in the apartment, looking out onto the Patio Garden. A Patio Garden cannot sell products from the display. Business, Sponsor, and Partner branding, in the form of branded products, plant labelling and signage etc., is encouraged to enhance your display and brand awareness, but may only be incorporated into the Patio Garden after judging has been completed.

Divisions and Classes

Division 3001: Adult Amateur Patio Garden Landscape

Class 001 Adult Amateur Individual Patio Garden

Open to individual amateur horticulturists and gardeners.

Class 002 Adult Amateur Group Patio Garden

Open to garden clubs, plant societies, and other amateur horticulture organizations.

Division 3002: Youth Patio Garden Landscape

Class 001 Youth Individual Patio Garden; Ages 9-17

Open to individual youth ages 9-17 that are aspiring horticulturists and gardeners.

Class 002 Youth Group/Organization Patio Garden; Ages 9-19

Open to youth participating with a school, youth organization, or as two or more individuals working together.



Entry Limits & Fees

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

Divisions 3001 & 3002 – Amateur Adult & Youth Patio Garden

The following Entry Fees apply to each Class:

- Class 001 Adult & Youth Individual Patio Garden**
 \$50 per Entry
- Class 002 Adult & Youth Organization/Group Patio Garden**
 \$50 per Entry

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.

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



Patio Garden Entry Information & Requirements

Space Allocation and Design

Display areas are 10' Wide and 8' Deep. The backside of the exhibit consists of a wall that is covered with a 10' X 10' scenic landscape backdrop banner. Competitors are not permitted to exceed the width or depth with any part of their display. The height may exceed the 10' of the banner if desired, but no "roof/cover" structure will be provided.

The base/floor material is blacktop. Penetration of the ground including, but not limited to stakes, spikes, nails, or anchors is strictly prohibited. Any damage to the ground caused by the competitor may result in a charge to the competitor. Each competitor will be responsible for installing and securing any additional flooring within their Patio Garden.

Competitors will be provided with the following to create their display:

- On a "first-come, first served" basis: assigned space, back wall, and backdrop banner of choice. Backdrop will portray an image as if the viewer is looking from inside a building to the outside of the patio in various environments (ocean front, lake house, garden area). Exhibitors will be contacted for backdrop choice after entries have been completed.
- Divider walls, providing the feeling of patio walls between units.
- Power can be provided for feature lighting, water features or any other inclusions, please describe your electrical requirements with the Garden Show Coordinator prior to installation. It is the responsibility of the competitor to request it. The competitor is responsible for the costs of any power requirements additional to the initial power provided. Solar powered features may also be used.

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 are 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 & Props/Accessories: All hardscape elements (i.e., water features, lights, etc.) and props/accessories (chairs, tables, lights, etc.) must be in place by the set-up deadline.

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.



Patio Garden Entry Information & Requirements (Continued)

Lighting/ Sound: Lighting of exhibits is optional. 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: The public will not be able to access the Patio Garden Landscapes.

Miscellaneous: Exhibits must be finished on all sides visible to the public. Container plants must be partially waterproof, allowing for minimal drainage.

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, prop/accessory, 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.

Signs

The Fair will provide a basic sign for each exhibit with the name of the exhibitor/group. A sign board will be provided by the Fair to hold additional signage (maximum 10" wide x 14" tall) 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.



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.

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 awards check is different than the exhibitor/group name the entry was registered under. 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.

Patio Garden Awards:

Divisions 3001 & 3002 – Amateur Adult & Youth Patio Garden Awards

Each patio garden 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 Adult & Youth Individual Patio Garden
\$5 per point earned, up to \$500

Class 002 Adult & Youth Organization/Group Patio Garden
\$5 per point earned, up to \$500

Additional Patio Garden Fair Awards:

To be determined based on donations to Garden Show.



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. Association (San Diego County Fair) be responsible for any injury or loss which may occur or



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 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.