GREAT JONES COUNTY FAIR

4H & FFA Flower Pot/Containers

General Information and Background:
Once again, the Jones County Master Gardeners will sponsor the 4H/FFA flowerpots at the Great Jones County Fair. This activity was introduced by the Fair Board and the Jones County Master Gardeners in 2002 as part of the special celebration of the 100th anniversary of 4H and the 150th birthday of the Great Jones County Fair. Our hope is that it will serve as a community service project that will help beautify the fairgrounds for the Great Jones County Fair. The Fair Board and Master Gardeners would like to encourage all clubs and chapters to participate. The only rules are have fun and create something that you can enjoy doing and that the public will enjoy viewing. Be sure to take pictures of your pot/container to document your creations. If you have questions, contact the Jones County Extension office or the Jones County Master Gardeners.

Have Fun,
Jones County Master Gardeners

Awards:
Flowerpot/containers will be judged and prizes awarded in the following categories:

1. **Best Flower Arrangement** based on color and texture
2. **Best Composition** of flowers and flowerpot/container
3. **Best Decorations** supporting the floral arrangement
4. **Best Theme** showing originality of composition
5. **Best use of native plants** based upon prairie or woodland species

The winning 4-H club or FFA chapter in each of the categories will receive a $15 prize, only one prize awarded per club.

All prize money will be awarded at the annual 4-H Family Awards Day. Jones County Master Gardener(s) will do the judging.
Tips for preparing your pot/container

Preparations:
The flower pot/containers (plastic tubs) will be provided and are to be saved and used again each year. If you need a new flowerpot/container, contact the Jones County Extension office. (under normal conditions, flowerpot should last several years)

The clubs and chapters will be responsible for providing the soil and plants. You may possibly find sponsors that are willing to donate the materials for your pot/container. We encourage you to keep a record of your expenses.

Decorating your pot/container:
You might want to do this before putting soil and plants in the pot/container. It will be easier to move the pot/container around before it is full.

Paint or stencil your 4H club/FFA chapter name on the outside of the pot/container. Use colors that will contrast with the color of your pot so it will show.

Have a theme for your pot/container: like happy birthday to 4H, Extension, or the Fair; patriotic with the American flag; Irish with shamrocks; pigs for pork production; current Fair theme; etc. Select plants and decorate your pot with that theme in mind.

Decorations such as flags, ribbons, or banners will be allowed in your pot/container. Note the emphasis should be placed on the natural vegetation and plants. Put a bow on your pot if you like. Secure things so the wind will not blow them away. Decorations must be inserted in the pot/container or securely attached to the outside of the pot/container. Do not cover up your club name.

Consider putting drain holes in the bottom of your pot/container unless you are doing a water garden or using tropical plants.

Selecting Plants for your pot/container:
Flowers and other plants must be real - living or dried plant material.

Things to consider: type of plant, color, light requirements, water requirements, and height (if not excessive).

Color:
It’s hard to go wrong with mixed colors, but a single color or bicolor arrangement can be very eye pleasing. Single colors like white, pink, red, yellow, and purple are pleasing. Yellow and purple are good in a two color arrangement. Red, white, and blue colors work in a patriotic arrangement.
Light:
Some plants grow best in full sun and others like full shade. It’s best not to mix plants that prefer full sun, like a sunflower, with plants that prefer full shade, like impatient. Use plants in your pot/container that have similar light needs.

Water:
In nature, plants range from growing in the desert with 5" of rain per year to plants that will actually grow in standing water without any soil. Combine plants with similar water requirements.

Height:
Take advantage of the various heights of plants; do not use plants with excessive height. Put taller plants in the center of your pot/container and surround the tall plants with shorter plants. Place the shorter and trailing plants around the perimeter of the pot/container. The trailing plants soften the edge of the pot/container and give a fuller look to your creation.

Types of plants:
1. Farm crops, like corn, soybeans, oats, etc.
2. Prairie grass, like big bluestem, switch grass, little bluestem, Indian grass, etc.
3. Vines like sweet peas, scarlet runner bean, gourds, etc.
4. Ornamental vegetables like peppers and flowering kale
5. Annual flowers like sun flowers, petunias, impatient, etc.
6. Perennials like mums, purple coneflowers, day lilies, etc.
7. Bulbs like lilies
8. Corms like gladiolas
9. Water garden plants like cattail, rush, duckweed, water lily, and lotus
10. Small, short shrubs
11. Tropical plants like elephant ear, bamboo, etc.

How to make your plants grow:
Things to consider: soil, mulch, watering, fertilizing, and timing.

Soil:
It is generally best to use potting soil because it will be disease free. Potting soil with a large amount of peat will be lightweight but it will hold a lot of water. Potting soil that is a mixture of equal amounts of peat, perlite, and compost should work well. To economize on potting soil, fill at least the bottom third of the pot/container with Styrofoam peanuts or empty plastic containers. (example milk jugs or water bottles)
Mulch:
Put pea gravel, wood chips, moss, etc. on top of the soil to finish off your pot/container. If your plantings are dense enough forget the mulch because the soil won't be visible.

Watering:
Keep the soil moist and never let the plants wilt. If you put drain holes in the bottom of your pot/container, water your pot/container until the water runs out the bottom. Then wait 10 minutes and water it again until the water runs out the bottom the second time. That way you know it has soaked up enough water. Figure on watering every other day if you have a large pot/container with lots of soil.

If you are doing a water garden, or growing tropical plants, you should not have holes in the bottom of your pot/container. You want the pot/container to hold the water and the soil to be soggy.

Fertilizing:
Use a liquid fertilizer like Miracle Grow every other week to get the best growth out of your plants.

When to plant:
Here you have different choices. Let's assume you want the plants blooming at the Fair. If you are planting seeds, bulbs, corms, etc., read the package for how many days from planting to blooming and plant them so they will be blooming for the fair.

If you are planting large potted plants you can wait until the day before the fair to plant them in your pot/container. To save money, buy small potted plants early in the spring and plant in your pot/container. Let them grow and enjoy them until it’s time to take them to the fair.

Additional Tips:
1. Don’t use poisonous plants. The public will be looking at and touching your creations.
2. Avoid spiny plants or thorny plant to avoid injuries.
3. If you don’t water your pot/container before you take it to the fair, it will be lighter weight and easier to move. Water it when you get it into position at the fair.
4. Deliver your pot/container to the 4-H office at the swine barn on the fairgrounds on Saturday/Sunday and/or Monday prior to the opening of the fair.
5. Flower pot/containers are to be removed from the fairgrounds when FAST exhibits are picked up on Sunday evening or Monday following the fair.