

Home Gardening Newsletter



August-September
2022



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Wanted: Jams Flowers Cakes Vegetables and more!

The hot days of summer are up on us and it is time to start planning what items you are going to bring to **The Macon County Fair**. This year we want to have a record number of entries submitted into the fair. We are hoping to have both adult and youth residents of Macon County enter all their prized Art & Photography, Baked Goods, Best Cake Contest, Best Pie Contest, Clothing, Crafts, Farm Products, Flowers, Food Preservation items, House Furnishings, Needlecraft, Handweaving & Spinning items, Poultry, Rabbits and more into the fair this year.



The Fair Theme this year is **“There is Country in the Air”** The fair will be held September 21-24, 2022. All your prized items will need to be entered on **Tuesday, September 20, from 9:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m.** Bring your items to the information booth at the fair entrance, receive your numbered ticket and then take your item to the appropriate booth to be entered.

Rules and classes for each exhibit category can be found at the Macon Extension Website: macon.ces.ncsu.edu and soon at the Macon County Fair’s website: www.themaconcofair.com.



Exhibitor Tips for Flowers Fruits and Vegetables

When preparing an exhibit, it is helpful to know what the judges look for in the display. The judge may lift and examine products on all sides, so be careful not to hide imperfections. The important characteristics of good vegetables are not greatly different from those looked for in flowers and fruits. Choose carefully the flowers, fruits and vegetables without spot, blemish or insect chewing marks. Crops must always be shown at their best. Some cleaning is important, but take care to avoid giving an unnatural look to the crop.



Macon Fair Vegetable Fruit and Flower Exhibit Tips

Be sure to check the Guidelines at www.macon.ces.ncsu.edu for Farm Product Exhibits (e.g., fruits and vegetables) and Flower Exhibits (e.g., for annuals, perennials, roses, bulbs, varying artistic arrangements & more). The following are the main characteristics a judge evaluates.

Quality - means that the vegetable and or fruit is at its best and in prime eating condition. In some vegetables, prime eating condition may be at a young stage such as in summer squash, beets or green beans. In others, such as tomato, watermelon or eggplant, it means fully developed fruits at the peak of maturity. The quality of a vegetable includes color, shape, texture, taste and size. When choosing which vegetables, fruits and flowers to exhibit, make sure they are free of disease spots, chewing marks, bites, cracking and scaring. Basically, choose your selection that is without spot or blemish.



Quantity - read the Farm Products Exhibitor Guidelines to determine how many of like kind you need to submit. For example if submitting hot peppers you need 5 of the same color and size for plate of 5; while bell peppers require you to submit 3 of the same color and size for a plate of 3. Corn is best of 5. Beans and peas are a plate of 12. Potatoes and tomatoes are a plate of 3 unless submitting cherry tomatoes, then a plate of 5 is the required amount.



Condition - is a measure of how the crop has been handled. An important part of this evaluation is cleanliness. Such items as tomato or pepper are seldom a problem, but root crops such as onions, potatoes and beets, or leaf crops such as lettuce may present problems in cleaning. Avoid washing vegetables for exhibit unless necessary. Use a soft cloth or brush, and lightly remove any soil. Washing may remove the waxy "bloom" on some vegetables, which should be left on. In others, washing gives an unnatural "scrubbed" appearance. Select vegetables that are free as possible from spots, lesions, cracks, stippling and chewing marks.

Uniformity - one of the most obvious conditions of a display is uniformity. Size is important, and all vegetables, fruits and or flowers in one exhibit should be uniform in size. In addition, size should be typical of the variety/cultivar, not too large or too small. Uniform ripeness is also key. A display with slightly immature and uniform vegetables is better than one containing items at different stages of maturity. Lastly, uniform shape and color is desired when judges choose which exhibit may be take first place!



August Horticulture Tips



Lawns

- Check for white grubs under the turf and treat with insecticide if needed.
- DO NOT fertilize tall fescue now.
- Submit soil samples for fall fertilizer recommendations.



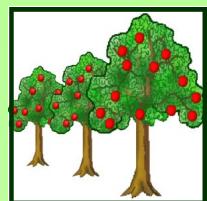
Vegetables

- Plant for fall garden: beets, mustard, onions, spinach, turnips, lettuce, kale and squash.
- Transplant broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, Chinese cabbage, and cauliflower.
- Continue to monitor for diseases and insects.
- Remove crop residues after harvest. Put plants in compost pile if not infected with disease or insects.
- Dig Irish potatoes this month or next.
- Harvest onions about one week after tops have fallen over.
- Submit soil samples so lime can be applied in the fall.
- Maintain fungicide spray on tomatoes to prevent late blight.



Fruits

- Harvest peaches and early apples.
- Spray trunks of peach and nectarine trees for peach tree borers at the end of the month.
- Continue grape and fruit tree sprays. Follow label directions for pre-harvest interval.
- Keep weeds pulled from around grape vines and fruit trees.
- Fertilize strawberries with nitrogen fertilizer. Keep weeds pulled from strawberry bed.



Trees Shrubs & Flowers

- Do not prune or fertilize shrubs.
- Cut back and feed annuals to produce new growth.
- Remove spent blossoms from purple coneflowers, daisies, Black-eyed-Susans and butterfly bush for blooms until frost.
- Divide daylilies if crowded. Cut back to 6-8" above ground.
- Feed roses for the last time by mid-month.
- Continue to monitor for insects. Remove and destroy bagworms.
- Prepare landscape plan for a fall planting.
- Perennials to start from seed include: poppy, lupine, cardinal flower and Shasta daisy.
- Mulch flower beds with pine needles or pine bark. Remove weeds before applying mulch.



Miscellaneous Tasks

- Be alert for yellow jacket nests. Beginning in August, populations that have been docile become more defensive around the nest.
- Empty birdbaths regularly to prevent mosquitoes from breeding. Scrub with bleach solution to prevent algae buildup.

A Few Garden Questions

Why is my lettuce bitter? Lettuce is a cool-season vegetable. Bitterness occurs when lettuce is grown during high temperatures. Washing and storing the leaves in the refrigerator will remove the bitterness in 48 hours.

When do I harvest potatoes? New potatoes can be harvested as soon as they reach a suitable size. Potatoes for storage can be harvested when the vines turn yellow. Do not harvest potatoes when the soil is very wet. This will increase the chance of rotting. Avoid exposing potatoes to too much light as the green portion contains an alkaloid called solanine that can cause illness. All green portions should be thoroughly cut off before cooking.

When do I harvest sweet potatoes? - Harvest the roots when they are large enough for use before frost. Avoid bruising or scratching during handling. (Damaged sweet potatoes rot easily in storage.) Ideal storage conditions are a temperature of 55°F and a relative humidity of 85%. Crawl spaces or basements usually do the trick.



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