



**SOUTH DAKOTA STATE
UNIVERSITY EXTENSION**

Horticulture Skill-a-thon Tip Sheet



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A skill-a-thon is an educational delivery method where youth can gain knowledge or demonstrate their knowledge and skills learned at various stations. The county horticulture skill-a-thon contest is an opportunity for youth to participate locally or to help them prepare for the State Horticulture Skill-a-thon contest that is held in conjunction with the South Dakota State Fair in Huron. Determine how many classes and stations you may want to have at the county level. Every contest looks different so do whatever works within your space, availability of products, and comfort level. Nothing wrong with starting with a smaller contest the first time around! Make it fun!

Where to find resources?

- The [SDSU Extension website](#) has a spot where all of the horticulture skill-a-thon resources are listed.
 - Study Guides
 - Handbook
 - Scantrons
 - Reference the “Preparing Horticulture Exhibits” guidebook for what a specimen should look like, and the quantity needed when putting together a judging class. This is in the Horticulture Display section along with that scoresheet.
- Visit with other counties to see what they have used in their county. SHARE quizzes and ideas!
- Reach out to the state 4-H Horticulture Skill-a-thon chairperson.
- Local Master Gardeners may be willing to help organize the contest or have specimens.
- The [National Junior Horticulture Association \(NJHA\) website](#) is where many study guides resources are listed.
- If you are a member of [livestockjudging.com](#), they have horticulture ID and Judging classes.
- Start creating your own library of specimens such as nuts and seeds.



What are some possible stations that could be organized on the county level?

- Identification (ID) – live specimen or pictures can work. Be sure to reference the Horticulture Handbook word bank for horticulture specimens that may be used in the identification portion.
 - Beginners ID edible portions of vegetables.
 - Juniors ID edible and/or seed portions of vegetables; edible and/or seed portions of fruit, nuts and berries and flowers of flowers and indoor plants.
 - Seniors ID foliage, edible and/or seed portion of vegetables; fruits, nuts and berries foliage, flower, or seed portion; landscape ornamental foliage, flower, or seed portion
- Vegetables
- Fruits, Nuts, and Berries
- Flowers and Indoor Plants
- Landscape ornamentals
- Judging Classes (4 items per class)
 - Beginners – only judge vegetables and fruits
 - Juniors and Seniors – only judge vegetables, fruits, and flowers/indoor plants



- Written Exam
 - Beginners – compose questions from the Beginner Study Guides
 - Juniors – compose questions from the Junior/Senior Study Guide and/or the NJHA topics that will be used for that year. These are typically published in January or contact the state Horticulture Skill-a-thon Chairperson.
 - You can also make other fun written exams that are on other horticulture topics such as garden tools or bugs.



What supplies are needed or are some pointers?

- When possible, use fresh or real items as opposed to photos.
 - Photos can be challenging for judging classes especially. We recommend classes of real items.
 - It is easy to buy a bag of potatoes or oranges or ask a flower shop or Master Gardener for four roses and create your own classes.
- Quizzes and pencils for each participant.
- Be sure to have ID or judging specimen labeled with sticky notes or place items on a paper plate that is labeled with the number.
- It is helpful to have clipboards for kids to use while moving around.
- Determine if you will be able to use the scantron process that is used at the SD State Horticulture Skillathon. Otherwise, use paper tests.
- Be aware that there may be people with allergies attending your contest. Place notes around that direct youth not to touch any specimens since that can change the integrity of the sample.
- Real nut specimens should be placed in a baggie to be safe for those with allergies.



Photography by: Jenny Voigt, SDSU Extension 4-H Educator - Meade County

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MC-03710