



RANGE AND PASTURE GRASS IDENTIFICATION CONTEST 4-H STATE ROUNDUP & DISTRICT ROUNDUP CONTESTS

RS 1

General Contest Rules - see 4-H Roundup Handbook

Which Grasses? The 74 grasses on Extension Publication RS1.044, Master Plant List (revised), will be used for the contest. The Master Plant List can be found on the State 4-H web site under materials for the Range Science Project. The grass name, correct spelling and characteristics associated with a grass used in this contest come only from the Master Plant List. Contest specimens consist of mounted grasses or live grasses. 4-H team members and youth involved in the 4-H Range Science Project generally study mounted grasses, but leaders and coaches are encouraged to conduct some training for youth outdoor on the range resource in a pasture, park or wildlife area, open space area and even vacant lots where different kinds and species of native plants can be found. Grasses on the contest can represent any season of the year, drought or above normal rainfall years, thus grass specimen may have inflorescence (flowers and seed-heads) or only vegetative characteristics such as leaves, sheaths, roots and/or old stems.

Are study mounts available? Grass mounts for study are available. The only known source of study mounts is the Range Club. These may be ordered from the TAMU Range Club, c/o Dr. Robert Knight, Department of Ecosystem Science and Management, 2138 TAMU, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas 77843-2138, by phone at (979) 845-5557, email at bob-knight@ag.tamu.edu. Entire grass sets or individual grass mounts can be purchased.

Where do contest mounts come from? District Roundup Contest grass specimens are selected and provided to the District Extension Director or contest coordinator by the Extension Range Specialists. Live grasses (growing in a pot or plant laid on table-top) may be used on both District and State Roundup contests.

How are contestant scorecards judged? The contestant's scorecard is compared to a master grading key for the individual contest. The scoring on Grass Identification Contests is on the basis of 10 points per grass including characteristics. Each characteristic is worth 1 point of the 10. For example: Contestant A gets the name of the grass "vinemesquite" correct. When the characteristics are graded, the contestant missed the longevity for this grass calling it an annual when correctly it was a perennial. Contestant A's score for this grass would be a 9, where $10-1=9$. With 40 grasses on the District Roundup contests, the total value for the contest or maximum score is 400 points. At 4-H State Roundup, 50 grasses will be on the contest with a total contest value of 500 points. The judges must be able to read the contestants answer or the contestant's answer may get no credit. The scorecard or form used for Grass Contests is RS 1.043, Plant Identification Contest Score sheet. 4-H participants write the common grass name and mark characteristics (using an X in the appropriate box) using a pencil. Erasing is allowed as long as it is done neatly and judges can tell the intended answer.

Reference Materials (other than grass specimens or mounts): Five excellent study references are available. Know Your Grasses (Extension Publication B-182, for sale only), is available to all clientele and can be ordered through Extension at <http://agrilifebookstore.org>. Common Texas Grasses, by Frank W. Gould, and Texas Range Plants, by Stephan L. Hatch and Jennifer Pluhar, are available from the Texas A&M University Press, John H. Lindsey Building, Lewis Street, 4354 TAMUS, College Station, Texas 77843-4354 or by telephone at (800) 826-8911, or (979) 847-1436 or by fax at (979) 847-8752. Extension Publication RS 1.045, Description of Range and Pasture Plants, provides a written identification guide for the 4-H project leader or coach on each grass and is available on the web at the State 4-H web site. Other training materials in range and natural resource management are available under the categories “4-H” and “Rangeland” at the Texas AgriLife Extension Bookstore website: <http://agrilifebookstore.org> or on the Texas State 4-H and Youth Development web site.

Contest Reminders for Roundup Contest Coordinator or Superintendent:

1. Contest coordinators provide the scorecards (RS1.043, 40 plants or 50 grass score card for Roundup) used at the contest. Each contestant shall write their name and county on the top of the scorecard unless this has been done by the contest superintendent ahead of time. Each team will be given a team number. Teams consist of 3 or 4 members. Team members should be identified as team member A, B, C and D. Thus the contestant number is a combined team number and team member letter, such as 3A, 14C or 27D. A senior team from a county has three team members. During registration they are noted to be team 11. The team members would then be 11A, 11B and 11C. Having contestant letters allows the coordinator to separate team members before entering the contest area by putting all A's, B's and so forth together.
2. Before the contest, the contest superintendent or coordinator should go over all of the rules which will be enforced during the contest session. Before entering the contest area, each contestant should have a legal size clipboard, scorecard (with the participants name, county and district on top of scorecard), two pencils and a magnifying glass with or without a light. No other materials are allowed in the contest area. Contestants use clipboards so that they will not disturb the grass specimen on the table tops or write on the table tops.
3. The contest coordinator should have contestants line up by division (sub-junior, junior, and senior) and by contestant letter. For starting the contest, the contest coordinator brings the contestants into the contest area by walking them to the plants. Each contestant stands in front of a contest specimen. The contest official asks each contestant to circle the number on the score sheet corresponding with the number on the grass specimen in front of the contestant. This number is then indicated to all contestants as the line on the scorecard where they begin writing. This will aid new contestants to not write on line 1 unless they are in front of the grass specimen numbered 1.
4. The contest coordinator should arrange the grass specimen in a logical flow order or pattern with adequate space between specimens to separate contestants. This is most easily done with 40 grass specimens laid out in a circle using a minimum of six 8-foot tables. The circle pattern allows the contestant on grass number 40 to easily step to grass number 1 next. Contestants rotate from specimen to specimen in either a clockwise or counter-clockwise direction.
5. Contestants write on the numbered line of the scorecard corresponding with the number on the contest grass specimen. Contestants should be reminded to write plainly and neatly.

Characteristic boxes should be marked with an “X”. Check marks and other symbols may often go outside of the designated box and cause a grader to mark the answer wrong.

6. Contestants **do not** talk during the contest. Although team scores are determined for award purposes, the contest challenges the individual’s knowledge. The contest is not a group/team effort.

7. There will be 40 grasses on the District Roundup Contests and 50 grasses on the contest at 4-H State Roundup. If more than 40 contestants are present for the District Grass Contest, two contestants can be placed at each grass if room allows, or the contest can be run a second time using one contestant per grass mount. Contest coordinators can replace mounts with live specimens if they so desire and are certain of the correct name for the grass being used.

8. There may be duplicate or even triplicate grasses of the same name on the contests.

9. The contest coordinator should designate a volunteer or other staff member to be the time keeper. Contestants should not begin writing until the time keeper says “begin”. Contestants will be given 45 seconds for identification and marking of characteristics at each contest specimen. Thus the contest will take 30 minutes for a 40 grass contest. An additional volunteer should be in the contest area with a handful of sharpened number 2 pencils to aid participants who break both the pencils they brought. Contestants are told to raise their hand if they need a pencil.

10. During the contest, contestants are **not allowed** to touch or handle the grasses.

11. Distinguishing characteristics will be present on each grass; look for them. Seed-heads, inflorescence, leaves or roots may not always be present. 4-H youth are asked to learn secondary characteristics are well (bulb-based hair on leaves, rhizome present, etc.).

12. Contestants should be asked to stay beside the last grass identified until the time keeper or contest official announces that scorecards are to be turned in or taken up by contest officials. 4-H participants should be encouraged to fill in all plant names, guess if they have to, but not leave any line blank. Plant naming encourages critical and deductive thinking.

13. Grasses will be named at the end of the contest for future study. During this viewing time, participants and others are **not allowed** to handle the grass specimens but they can view the specimens for further study and a learning event. After the contest, name cards with the correct grass name can be placed over the number on each specimen. A second method is to have a half-sheet with the correct answers which can be handed out to grass contest participants, coaches, County Extension agents, parents and visitors to the contest area. Upcoming events can be printed on the back of the half-sheet for all to have and leave the District or State Contest with additional information in hand.

14. Grading (volunteers, coaches, etc.) is most easily done by laying the grading key to the

right of the contestants grass names and grading the names first. If a grass name is missed, a red line should be drawn through the whole line over to the score box on the right or the last double line on the scorecard. The grass name must be correct before the characteristics of that grass are scored. Then the grading key is placed on the left side of the contestant's scorecard and the characteristics are graded (those lines that do not have a red line through them). A correct score for each grass is entered into the score column on the right side of the score sheet. The contestants score is then determined by adding all of the points in the right-hand score column together. The score box for a grass that is missed (incorrect name) should be left blank since no points were received. Placing a zero (0) in the column is not necessary. Negative numbers should not be used. Red pencils can be used for the initial grading.

15. Judges or graders need to recheck each score sheet for accuracy before summarizing the results for the contest. The most common errors in grading are human errors, ie. a grass was correctly named but the judge failed to write the points in the right hand column. Having a different individual review the score sheet will help to eliminate these errors or problems with grading. Coaches and/or parents should not grade their team members or children's scorecards. Blue pencils can be used for marks in a second grading of each contestants scorecard.

16. The delivery of awards to teams and individual winners is quite variable across the state. It is recommended that awards be given out in the order of sub-junior first, followed by junior and senior divisions. Individual awards should be given out first, recognizing the third high individual followed by the second high and the first place winner. Team recognition should follow the same order. While most districts give awards to three places (both individual and team), some districts will give up to ten places, especially in the individual category.

The award ceremony is an honorable occasion to recognize 4-H youth who have achieved a certain level in their knowledge and skills. The Master of Ceremony for the awards session should begin the session by stating what 4-H youth are learning in the Range Science Project Area and how the grass contest supports the project goals and serves as a learning activity. The grass contest is not the goal of learning or the project (See project handout and overview for additional details and Extension Publication L-5364, Know Your Plants to Protect Your Watershed). This approach will give meaning to the time and effort of participants spent in this educational program conducted by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. The Master of Ceremony should recognize volunteer graders, honored guests and any outside support for the District/State contests.

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