

Texas 4-H Landscape Challenge
Hosted by the Texas A&M University Horticulture Department
Entry Deadline: Friday, May 1, 2026
Superintendent: Jayla Fry, jayla.fry@ag.tamu.edu

Schedule:

Project plan submission	Friday, May 1, 2026, as an email to Superintendent
Notification of advancement	Friday, May 8, 2026
Register Online	4-H Connect; \$15 per participant
Plan Implementation	Monday, June 1, 2026, check in at 7:30

Rules:

1. Each participant must be enrolled in 4-H Online and register if selected to advance.
2. Teams must consist of a **minimum of two (2)** or a maximum of six (6) students.
3. Students will only be allowed one copy of their design, clipboards, and pencils. All other supplies will be provided by Texas A&M AgriLife Horticulture Department including:
rakes, bags of mulch, brooms
4. Students will not be allowed to bring electronic devices into the competition. Talking between teams and with the audience may disqualify a team from participating. Only contestants and contest officials will be permitted in the judging area during the contest.

Challenge Overview

- a) Objective: This challenge is meant to promote landscape design knowledge and professionalism to 4-H students by simulating a real-life interaction between a customer and a landscape professional. Additionally, the challenge will serve to educate the public on the value of landscaping by beautifying the grounds.
- b) Contest Format: This challenge will be broken into two parts:
 - Project Plans: Teams will submit one (1) completed Project Plan in accordance with the rules and requirements listed below. **Project Plans must be emailed to the Landscape Challenge Superintendent in PDF format by May 1, 2026.** The title for the email should read "Landscape Challenge-Club/County Name." Plans not meeting all required documentation and/or submitted after the deadline will not be considered.
 - Final Challenge: The top 8 placing Project Plan submissions will advance to the Final Challenge held during Texas 4-H Roundup in College Station, TX. Final Challenge qualifiers should be prepared to install their Project Plans. However, contestants may be exposed to certain alterations in the Customer Objectives or Design Materials during the Final Challenge. Instructions will be given during the Final Challenge Orientation.

Project Plans

a) Overview: Team members will submit one (1) Project Plan based on Customer Objectives. The plan must be completed in its entirety to be considered for the Final Challenge. The Project Plan should consider the landscape plot in full sun.

b) Customer Objectives:

The clients are a local elementary school in Central Texas that wants to convert a 10' x 10' unused corner of their school courtyard into an interactive outdoor learning nook for students. The area receives full sun, with moderate foot traffic nearby. The design should create a welcoming, low-maintenance, and educational space that encourages students to explore plants through sight, touch, and smell.

The garden should feature durable, child-friendly plants that can tolerate occasional contact and thrive in school conditions (minimal summer care, compact soil, and limited irrigation).

The teachers have requested pollinator plants that demonstrate life cycles, attract butterflies and bees, and stimulate curiosity. The design should integrate clear access for maintenance and safe student movement. Bright colors, fragrant blooms, and tactile foliage are encouraged to make the space engaging and joyful while reinforcing lessons about native and adaptive Central Texas plants and sustainable gardening practices.

c) Site Description: The 10'x10' landscape plot is located in the client's backyard. There is little to no shade and currently no landscaping in the area.

d) Plot description: The Project Plan should be based on a 10' x 10' (100 square ft.) landscape plot.

e) Documentation: The Project Plan should include the following documentation.

- i. **Customer Objectives Report:** Detailed outline explaining how the proposed Project Plan meets the Customer Objectives. Include any relevant information that would help the customer understand why the Project Plan satisfies their goals. This is to be essay/paragraph format, at least 200 words.
- ii. **Sketch:** Legible landscape design drawing (by hand or computer software) representing the intended layout of the plot which could easily be understood by the customer. The design should include the following: customer's name, address, phone number (can be made up), and email, a materials list (plant and hardscape) that includes common and scientific names, quantity and size of material, designer's names and contact information (can be county office or made up), scale drawing with scale indicated on the design, compass/north arrow.
- iii. **Installation Report:** Step-by-step process on how the Project Plan will be installed from beginning to end. Provide an explanation for the order of the steps, when applicable. Give the customer an estimate of how long it will take to complete the installation (Max = 90 min.).

- f) Design Materials: See the plant material list that should be used to develop the design for the Project Plan. Contestants must take into consideration the Customer Objectives when deciding on which design materials to incorporate into their plot. Team members should outline their decision-making process on which design materials to use within the Customer Objectives Report for the Project Plan.

Include Plant Materials List

Project Plan should be made for a sun-loving plant palette that incorporates the use of some or all of the following plants: (Plant information resource <https://bestoftexas.tnlaonline.org/>)

Please note the day of the contest plant material is subject to change due to season and availability.

Trees: (up to 2 - 15 gallon trees of each available)

Nellie R Stevens Holly *Ilex* x 'Nellie R Stevens'

Shumard Red Oak *Quercus shumardii*

Bald Cypress *Taxodium distichum*

Crape Myrtle *Lagerstroemia indica*

Shrubs: (up to 5 - 3 gallon plants of each available)

Pittosporum *Pittosporum tobira*

Bottlebrush *Callistemon citrinus*

Dwarf Nandina *Nandina* spp.

Garden Hydrangea *Hydrangea macrophylla*

Burford Holly *Ilex cornuta* 'Burfordii'

Boxwood *Buxus microphylla*

Loropetalum *Loropetalum chinense*

Elaeagnus *Elaeagnus* spp.

Red Tip Photinia *Photinia* x *fraseri*

Japanese Yew *Podocarpus macrophylla*

Dwarf Yaupon Holly *Ilex vomitoria* 'Nana'

Wax Myrtle *Myrica cerifera*

Annuals: (up to 5 - 1 Gallon plants of each available)

Portulaca *Portulaca grandiflora*

Mexican Heather *Cuphea hyssopifolia*

Salvia *Salvia splendens*

Annuals: (up to 72 – 4” pots total in this section)

Vinca *Catharanthus roseus*

Marigolds *Tagetes* sp.

Pentas *Pentas lanceolata*

Zinnias *Zinnia* sp.

Petunias *Petunia* x *hybrida*

Angelonia *Angelonia angustifolia*

Annual salvia *Salvia splendens*

Perennials (including ornamental grass): (up to 7 - 1 gallon plants of each available)

Salvia Mystic Spires *Salvia longispicata* x *farinacea*

Plumbago *Plumbago auriculata*

Copper canyon daisy *Tagetes lemmonii*

Turk's Cap *Malvariscus arboreus* var. *drummondii*

Mexican Mint Marigold *Tagetes lucida*

Mexican Feather Grass *Nassella tenuissima*

Bamboo Muhly Grass *Muhlenbergia dumosa*

Blue Lily of the Nile *Agapanthus africanus*

Yarrow *Achillea millefolium*

Rock Rose *Pavonia lasiopetala*

Daylily *Hemerocallis* sp.

Firebush *Hamelia patens*

Lantana *Lantana* spp.

Gulf Muhly Grass *Muhlenbergia capillaris*

Foxtail Fern *Asparagus densiflorus* 'Myers'

Artimisia *Artimisia* spp.

Ground Cover:

Dwarf Mondo Grass *Ophiopogon japonicus* (up to 72 – 4” plants available)

Liriope *Liriope Muscari* (5 – 1 gallon plants available)

Greenmound Juniper *Juniperus procumbens* 'Nana' (up to 5 – 5 gallon plants available)

Asian Jasmine *Trachelospermum asiaticum* (up to 5 – 5 gallon plants available)

Final Challenge

a) Final Challenge:

- Only team members who are present at the Final Challenge will be eligible for awards.
- Landscape install plots will be randomly assigned to each team during Final Challenge Orientation. Plants will be placed in a 10x 10 wooden planter box, not incorporated into the soil. Mulch will be used to cover the ground and as much of the pot as possible. The plants will be returned to the nursery at the conclusion of Roundup.
- Final Challenge contestants should be prepared to install a design consistent with the Project Plan they submitted. However, contestants may be exposed to certain alterations in the Customer Objectives or Design Materials. Team members should be able to explain their original Project Plan to the judges along with any adjustments that were made as a result of the alterations. Complete instructions will be given during the Final Challenge Orientation.
- Team members will have a maximum of 90 minutes for installation.
- Team members must be able to verbally explain their design concepts to the judges at any time during or after the competition.

b) Judging Criteria for the Final Challenge:

- Following original Project Plan
 - Integrity of plants kept intact
 - Teamwork
 - Design uniqueness
 - Sustainability of design
- Judge's questions

Study Materials/Resources

TNLA The Best of Texas Landscape Guide- <https://bestoftexas.tnlaonline.org/>

Texas Master Gardener Handbook- <https://agrillifelearn.tamu.edu/s/>

LANDSCAPE CHALLENGE FORMAT AND SCORING

I. Project Plan Round: Worth 100 points

Documentation	100
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- Meeting Customer Objectives
- Specific design concept
- Presentation of Project Plan
- Placement/usage of plants
- Degree of difficulty
- Attention to detail

II. Final Challenge Round: Worth 100 Points

Plan and Installation	100
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- Integrity of plants kept intact
- Teamwork
- Design uniqueness
- Sustainability of design
- Judge's questions

III. Overall Landscape Challenge Scoring Breakdown: The ranking of the final teams will be based on the points accumulated in the Project Plan Submission Round and the Final Challenge.

	<u>Percentage</u>
Percentage Project Plan	40
Final Challenge	60