



Willie and the Salad Bonanza Elementary Contest Rules

The Willie and the Salad Bonanza challenge is to grow the most of three different leafy salad greens in a container using no more than 5 gallons of soil or filled hydroponic setup. For 2025, the elementary contest will last for 46 days. Students will need to write down what they are doing to grow the plants in their “Practices” packet. The plants used this year will be Lacinato Kale, Fusion Lettuce, and Space Hybrid Spinach.

Seeds are picked up by group sponsors at the Johnson County K-State Extension office (11811 S. Sunset Drive, Suite 1500, Olathe, Ks) on September 9th, 10th, or 11th from 8:30am to 5:00pm. Classrooms participating in hydroponic growing are limited to four hydroponic setups and may have groups larger than 4 students.

In the spirit of youth learning, the elementary component of Willie and the Salad Bonanza no longer involves competition. Instead, it emphasizes learning from one another by comparing final results and exploring different growing methods.

Beginning September 12th, the three different types of salad greens can begin being grown. They must be grown together in the same container over 46 days, writing down all work done to change plant growth. The number of seeds planted of each type of plant will be up to teams to decide, but there must be at least one of each type of plant.

The volume of the non-hydroponic (soil) containers cannot exceed 5 gallons. The “Practices Packet,” is where everything done to the plants is written down. This is due with the entry on October 27th.

Upon completion of the 46 days, an Extension representative will meet with classrooms to measure and discuss their projects, as well as the fundamentals of plant growth.

Contest Rules

Planting Date:

- Seeds can begin being planted on September 12, 2025.
- You have 46 days to grow the plants to size for measuring. Measuring day is October 27, 2025.
- Be sure to mark your planting date in the “Practices” packet.
- **Remember: Seeds may not be planted or soaked until Sept. 12, 2025.**

Seeds:

- Each team decides how many of the seeds to plant, but the container must include at least one living plant of each type (lettuce, spinach, and kale) when it is judged.
- **Remember: Too many seeds may cause smaller plants to grow, which means less plant weight at judging. More isn't always best.**

Pots:

- Pots used for growing the plants can hold **up to 5 gallons** of soil, **however**, it can be less.
- Pots can be of any material.
- At measuring day, the final score will be counted by visual estimate, dividing the amount of leaves by the amount of soil used, OR, by comparing the amount of greens grown between hydroponic setups.

Soil, Fertilizer, and Fertilizer Solution (hydroponics):

- Different fertilizers and different amounts of fertilizer effect plant growth differently.
- **Remember: Write down any fertilizer added in the “Practices” packet.**

Lighting and Temperature:

- Students should select a lighting and temperature they think will make the plants grow best.
- **Remember: Track these and write them down in your “Practices” packet.**

Water:

- Add the right amount of water for maximum growth or hydroponically monitor water available.
- **Remember: Describe how you maintain water in the “Practices” packet.**

The “Practices” Packet

- This is a record of everything you do to help your plants grow.
 - Keep it detailed, neat, and readable.
 - The best packets with the most details will be the tiebreakers if there is a tie.
- **A copy of the packet must be turned in when plants are judged.**

Judging Day - Oct. 27th, 2024

- Measuring will be conducted in person in schools on October 27th, as scheduled by sponsors.
 - Time slots will have limited availability. If needed, measuring will continue on October 28th.
 - An Extension representative, agent or volunteer, will be leading project discussions.
- Entries must be measured in their original growing container.
- Entries will be measured based on:
 - Visual growth assessment.
 - Amount of soil or hydroponic solution used.
 - Estimated total weight of plants grown divided by total amount of soil used.
- Sponsors are encouraged to continue growing their projects with students, however, hydroponic setups will need to be returned within 30 days of the measuring date.

Sponsored by: Johnson County K-State Extension and Compass Minerals

