



## Willie and the Salad Bonanza

### Elementary Contest Rules

Willie and the Salad Bonanza brings plant science to life by giving elementary classrooms the opportunity to grow their own salad greens while exploring the basics of plant growth. Rather than competing against one another, classrooms compare their results, share growing methods, and learn from one another while reinforcing key concepts such as soil health, soil amendments, lighting, temperature, and watering. Classrooms will grow three provided varieties of leafy green seeds provided by the Extension office in a single container over a six-and-a-half-week growing period.

Students will document their growing practices in the **Practices Packet** provided after registration. Teams may choose how many seeds of each variety to plant, but all three varieties must be grown together. Soil-grown entries may not exceed a 5-gallon container. Hydroponic classrooms are limited to four systems, which are available in limited quantities and require a **\$50 refundable deposit** returned upon the return of all borrowed supplies.

Seeds may be picked up by sponsors at the Johnson County K-State Extension office September 1-10.

- 11811 S. Sunset Drive, Suite 1500, Olathe, KS from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

At the conclusion of the growing period, an Extension representative will visit participating classrooms to measure plant growth, discuss results, and reinforce the fundamentals of plant science with your classroom.

### Program Rules

#### Planting Date:

- Seeds can begin being planted on September 11, 2026. Mark this in the Practices Packet.
- Classrooms have roughly 46 days (6.5 weeks) to grow the plants to size for measuring.
  - Measuring week is October 26-30, with **classroom visits scheduled by appointment.**
- **Seeds may not be planted or soaked until the Sept. 11 date.**

#### Seeds:

- Each team decides how many of the seeds to plant, but the container should try to include at least one living plant of each type when it is judged.

#### 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.
- Write down any fertilizer added in the Practices Packet.

**Lighting and Temperature:**

- Students should select lighting and temperature they think will make the plants grow best.
- Track these and write them down in your Practices Packet.

**Water:**

- Add the right amount of water for best growth or hydroponically monitor water availability.
- Describe how you maintain water in the Practices Packet.

**The Practices Packet**

- This document is a growth journal of everything the students do to help their plants grow.
  - Keep it detailed, neat, and readable.
  - The best packets with the most details will be the tiebreakers if needed.
- A copy of the packet must be turned in when plants are judged.

**Judging Week – October 26-30, 2026**

- Measuring will be conducted in person in schools the week of October 26-30.
  - This **must be scheduled by sponsors** in coordination with the Extension office.
  - Time slots will have limited availability.
  - 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.** \$50 deposits on hydroponic setups will be returned at this time.

**Sponsored by: Johnson County K-State Extension**