

Exhibition Hall Guidelines

Common Ground Country Fair

Purpose

The Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA) hosts the Common Ground Country Fair, which celebrates rural living. The Exhibition Hall at the Fair maintains one of the original intentions of agricultural fairs: to improve local farming by bringing farmers together to compare the outcome of their farming practices. Traditionally, exhibition halls served as a post-harvest forum where farmers could teach and learn from each other about their successes and failures. MOFGA and the Common Ground Country Fair host an exhibition hall for this very purpose.

Rules

Maine residents can compete in many different contests in the Exhibition Hall. The primary contests include: vegetables, fruits, nuts, grains, and flowers of all kinds; canned foods; dried foods; honey; eggs; herbs and houseplants. The judging criteria for each category is outlined below.

This year in collaboration with the Country Kitchen Demonstration tent, contests for fermented foods, baked goods and children's pies will be held outside in the Country Kitchen area.

Other specialty contests include: great pumpkin; biggest squash; great zucchini; biggest cabbage; biggest beet; giant cuke; the "whatever" contest for vegetable oddities; "Compost Bin Specials" category for the largest and/or most unusual product of the compost bin! (oversized or most dramatically crossed varieties will receive special attention); organic farm exhibits; and MOFGA chapter displays.

Also appearing in the Common Ground Exhibition Hall is the work of amateur artists and craftspeople. Some of the arts and crafts on display in the Exhibition Hall each year include: afghans, bedspreads, quilts, clothing, sweaters, rugs, wall hangings, basketry, candles, dried flower arrangements, handmade soaps, pottery, photographs, paintings, woodcuts and silkscreens.

Exhibition Hall Health and Safety Precautions

It's great to be back for another year at the Fair in person. The Exhibition Hall will continue to be held indoors. The hall will be organized for one-way traffic; fairgoers can enjoy the displays by walking in the front door by The Common and exiting through the side door by the Country Store. While you can stop to view, explore and enjoy what you see, please move with the line of people through the building.

Some important notes, for which there will be signs:

- Masks are optional.
- The bathrooms are accessible only from the side entrance to the building. They will not be accessible by passing through the Exhibition Hall.
- The Exhibition Hall will be closed to the public for judging on Friday, September 22 from 10 a.m. to noon. No exceptions.
- In the event of rain, the Exhibition Hall will be closed until the rain subsides.

Schedule

Thursday, September 21, 2023. The Exhibition Hall is open from 7 a.m. until 6 p.m. Entries in all categories accepted.

Friday, September 22, 2023. Entries accepted from 7 a.m. until 9:30 a.m. Fairgoers with entries for the Exhibition Hall may proceed directly to MOFGA's Membership Tent for entrance prior to gate opening. Judging runs from 10 a.m. until noon, and the hall will be closed during that time. The Exhibition Hall is open to fairgoers from noon until 6 p.m.

Saturday, September 23, 2023. The Exhibition Hall is open to fairgoers from 9 a.m. until 6 p.m. Entries for baked goods and children's apple pie contest, as well as dairy and cheese will be accepted until noon. Judging for baked goods and children's apple pie contest is at 1 p.m. in the Country Kitchen Demonstration tent; judging for dairy and cheese is at 3 p.m. in the Country Kitchen Demonstration tent.

Sunday, September 24, 2023. The Exhibition Hall is open to fairgoers from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. Entries for the fermented foods contest will be accepted until 9 a.m. on Sunday morning. Ferments may be delivered before Sunday and will be kept refrigerated until and after judging. Judging for fermented foods will be from 10 a.m. until noon in the Country Kitchen Demonstration tent. Exhibits should remain in place until 5 p.m. for the benefit of all fairgoers. Those collecting exhibits must wait outside. We ask that you not come by until 4:30 p.m. or after to avoid a crowd waiting to collect their items. Exhibits must be removed by 7:30 p.m. on Sunday.

Eligibility

Competition in the Exhibition Hall is open to all organic growers in Maine. Entrants need not be certified organic growers, but must follow these practices:

- Soil fertility is achieved and maintained by using green manures, compost, animal manures and rock powders, seaweed, etc. Chemical fertilizers are not permitted.
- Crop rotation, predators, traps, biological insecticides or mechanical barriers are used to control insects. Synthetic pesticides and natural poisons with long-term effects are not permitted.
- Crop rotation, green manures, mulching, and cultivation used to control weeds.
- Synthetic herbicides are not permitted.

Due to licensing and liability issues, we cannot accept or display entries of controlled substances. These include entries of cannabis, hemp, alcohol and their derivatives.

General Rules for Submitting Entries

All articles are to be entered in the owner's name and registered at the Exhibition Hall with the volunteers who will be there to assist you. If you are planning to exhibit more than 10 articles, pre-registration materials can be obtained by mail by contacting Amy LeBlanc, by **September 2**, at **P.O. Box 273, East Wilton, Maine, 04234**; or by email at amy@whitehillfarm.com. Unless otherwise noted in the preceding text, all entries must be in place in the Exhibition Hall before 9:30 a.m. on Friday. If there is a problem meeting the deadline, we may be able to accommodate you if you call us early!

Judging Criteria for Primary Categories

The criteria for judging at the Common Ground Country Fair Exhibition Hall include the suitability of the entry for its intended use — table or storage. Uniformity is an important criterion for carrots or beans, but less so for some peppers. For instance, a collection can demonstrate the color changes typical to the variety. Size can be an advantage, up to a point, but it may be difficult to judge in some of the rare heirlooms. Heirloom fruits and vegetables are especially valued, since they help maintain the genetic diversity so important to food crops and are labeled at time of entry with special green tags to identify them as heirlooms.

Entries to the vegetable, fruit, canned and dried foods, grains, and herbs categories are judged by how well they measure up to the ideal standard for their type. If any item is judged to be excellent, it is awarded a blue ribbon. Good entries are awarded red and yellow ribbons. More than one entry in a category can receive a blue, red or yellow ribbon, as items are not judged against each other. Gift certificates are awarded to the first prize (blue ribbon), second prize (red ribbon), and third prize (yellow ribbon) entries in the primary contest categories: vegetables, fruits, nuts, grains, flowers, fresh herbs, canned foods, dried foods, honey, eggs, and houseplants. Blue, red, and yellow ribbon winners may redeem their gift certificates at the following Maine seed companies:

- Fedco Seeds, P.O. Box 520, Clinton, ME 04927. Phone: 207-426-9900
- Johnny's Selected Seeds, Foss Hill Road, Albion, ME 04910. Phone: 207-238-5300
- Pinetree Garden Seeds, P.O. Box 300, New Gloucester, ME 04260 Phone: 207-926-3400

Occasionally the judges may deem an entry to be exemplary and far superior to any others of its type. In this case the judges may award a Judge's Award. The Judge's Award will be accompanied by a \$10 cash premium.

Special Exhibition Hall Categories

- Great Pumpkin (by weight). Sample of one, named variety. Open to all ages. This category is for entries from the Cucurbita pepo species; this species includes acorn squash, summer squash, and the small gourds, as well as pumpkins. The stems are hard, with five sharply angled sides. Connecticut Field is an example of a very large variety.
- Biggest Squash (by weight). Cucurbita maxima; besides the giant pumpkin-like squash Atlantic Giant, this species includes Buttercup, Banana, Hubbard, and Turban squash. The stem is round and corky.
- Great Zucchini (by weight). Common Ground Country Fair's answer to what to do with the one that got away!
- Biggest Cabbage (by weight). One head cut from the roots, but including the wrapper leaves.
- Big Beet (by weight). Tops should be neatly removed.
- Giant Cuke (by weight).
- The Whatever Contest (vegetable oddities).
- Compost Bin Specials! For the largest and/or most unusual product of the compost bin! Oversized or most dramatically crossed varieties will receive special attention.
- Home Baked Goods and Children's Apple Pie Competitions. The children's apple pie competition will be judged along with baked goods this year in the Country Kitchen Demonstration tent. Any school-age child (or preschool-age child) who arrives at the ticket gate on Friday or Saturday morning with an apple pie in hand will get in free — provided they created the pie and are accompanied by a paying adult. Entries must be made in the Exhibition Hall and registered by noon on Saturday. In the spirit of MOFGA's food policy, ingredients should be Maine-grown and organic. For more information, please read [the Food policy here](#). Judging is at 1 p.m.

Exhibition Category Descriptions

Organic Farm Exhibits: Consisting of a display of produce, products, and materials descriptive of a single organic farm. Each display is judged on how well it presents a complete picture of the operation and avocations of the farm and its people. A prize of \$100 for a full booth or \$50 for a half booth will be given to first prize winners. Please reserve space by **September 1** by contacting Amy LeBlanc at P.O. Box 273, East Wilton, Maine, 04234, via phone at 207-778-2685 or email at amy@whitehillfarm.com, or by emailing Matt Dubois at mattdubois28@gmail.com. Display must be set up by 9 a.m. Friday.

MOFGA Chapter Exhibits: Consisting of a collection of entries from chapter members or a unified display depicting chapter life and events. Judged on how well the display represents the people, area and programs of the MOFGA chapter. A prize of \$100 for a full booth or \$50 for a half booth display will be given to first prize winners. Please reserve space by **September 1** by contacting Amy LeBlanc at P.O. Box 273, East Wilton, Maine, 04234, via phone at 207-778-2685 or email at amy@whitehillfarm.com, or by emailing Matt Dubois at mattdubois28@gmail.com. Display must be set up by 9 a.m. Friday.

Vegetables, Fruits, Nuts and Grains: Vegetables and fruits may be rinsed or brushed, but should not be scrubbed, peeled, waxed, or otherwise changed from their natural state. If grown from commercial seed, specify variety. If grown from saved heirloom seed, please indicate. Vegetables should be presented in appropriate condition for fresh use or storage. For example green beans should be young and smooth; onions should be ripened off, with their skins intact for long storage; carrots and turnips, etc., should have about an inch of tops left on, as if ready for storage. Tomatoes should be ripe, blemish free or with naturally sealed cracks, and presented neatly with stems all on or stems all off. Cleaning of vegetables should be limited and appropriate for each entry. For example, carrots should be rinsed but not scrubbed; tomatoes and peppers should be wiped clean; potatoes should have loose soil brushed off. Please provide your own white paper plates, small plates, or bowls, depending on the size of your entry. Please be sure to bring the correct number of articles for each exhibit.

Vegetables:

- Artichokes: one would be great! Go for it!
- Beans: six pods of snap or runner beans, or one cup of shelled or dry beans. Include the variety name.
- Beets: sample of five small or three large, named variety, trimmed for root cellar storage.
- Broccoli: one head, named variety, presented in water.
- Brussels sprouts: bowl of five, named variety.
- Cabbage: one head cut from the roots, but including the wrapper leaves.
- Carrots: sample of five, named variety, tops trimmed.
- Cauliflower: one head, named variety.
- Celery: one complete head, named variety, presented in water.
- Celeriac: sample of one, named variety. Roots and leaves should be trimmed for root cellar storage.
- Fresh corn: sample of three ears, named variety, husks intact and not pulled back. (Judges will open husks at time of judging.) Sweet corn, white; sweet corn, yellow; sweet corn, bi-colored.
- Dried corn: sample of three ears, named variety, husks intact and pulled back. Popcorn, field, dent and flint. Sample may be from previous year's crop but must be clearly noted as such on the entry tag.
- Cucumbers: sample of three, not overripe, named variety.
- Eggplant: sample of three small or one large, named variety.
- Elephant garlic: one complete head, clean wrappers intact.

- Garlic for storage: three bulbs, named variety. Garlic intended for storage should be presented with all its wrappers and properly/minimally trimmed.
- Garlic for display or value-added presentation: three or more bulbs, named variety. Bulbs may have wrappers removed for aesthetic reasons.
- Gourds: sample of three small or one large, named variety.
- Ground cherries: sample of 10, five with husks pulled back showing the berry, and five with husks intact.
- Greens or fresh herbs: sample of one large head or a bouquet displayed (in water) in a vase or jar. (Examples: Asian vegetables, lettuces, broccoli raab, parsley, basil, etc.)
- Jerusalem artichokes: sample of three tubers, named variety.
- Kale: sample of 10 complete leaves, named variety, displayed in water in a vase or jar.
- Kohlrabi: sample of three small or one large, named variety.
- Leeks: sample of three, named variety. Tops should be neatly trimmed.
- Mangels: sample of three small or one large, named variety.
- Onions: sample of five small or three large: yellow storage type; sweet Spanish type; red; white; pickling or cocktail; scallion; shallots; Egyptian; potato onion. Tops of onions for storage should be neatly trimmed and cured. Onions that are not for storage may be displayed with tops intact.
- Mushrooms, Shiitake: One small log demonstrating mushrooms in production.
- Parsnips: sample of three, named variety. Tops should be neatly trimmed.
- Peas: one plate or bowl sample: peas in a pod for shelling (six pods); edible podded (six pods [includes Sugar Snaps]); dry (one cup shelled).
- Peppers: sample of five small or three large, named variety: green; sweet red; yellow; hot; other.
- Potatoes: sample of five small or three large, named variety.
- Pumpkin: sample of one named variety: field; pie; other. Also see Special Exhibition Hall Categories: Great Pumpkin.
- Radishes: sample of five small or three large, tops trimmed.
- Rhubarb: sample of five stalks, cleaned and neatly trimmed.
- Rutabaga: sample of one, named variety. Tops should be neatly trimmed.
- Squash, Summer: sample of three, named variety (includes edible gourds).
- Squash, Winter: sample of one, named variety.
- Swiss chard: sample of 10 complete leaves, named variety.
- Tomatillos: sample of five, named variety with husks intact and not pulled back. (Judges will open husks at time of judging.)
- Tomatoes: ripe only; sample of five small, three large, or a complete cluster, named variety. Stems should either be all on or all off for a neat presentation.
- Turnip: sample of one, named variety. Tops should be neatly trimmed.
- Any other vegetable not listed here, sample of five small or three large, to receive the same premium judged by type and variety.

Fruits and Nuts: Specify if heirloom variety. All fruits should be named varieties. Sample of five unless otherwise stated.

- Apples: crabapples; green, red, or yellow apples.
- Apricots.
- Cranberries: one bowl sample (about one pint).
- Grapes: one bunch sample.
- Kiwi.
- Melon: sample of one.
- Peaches.
- Pears.
- Plums.
- Raspberries: half-pint basket.

- Strawberries: one pint basket, alpine or standard.
- Watermelon: sample of one.
- Any other fruit will receive the same premium by variety or type.
- Nuts: Must be cultivated by exhibitor, not wild-gathered. One-quart sample.
- Butternuts.
- Chestnuts.
- Hazelnuts.
- Walnuts.
- Any other type to receive the same premiums.

Grains: One small sheaf, consisting of 10-25 stems per sample (considering size) unless otherwise specified.

- Amaranth (sample of three small or one large).
- Buckwheat.
- Millet.
- Oats.
- Rye.
- Sunflower seed heads (sample of three small or one large).
- Wheat.
- Other.

Home Canned, Dried and Fermented Foods, Home Baked Goods, Dairy, Honey and Eggs

Home Canned Foods: Awards based on appearance and use of good canning practices. Judges will not taste canned food. Canned goods must be displayed in commercially sold canning jars with metal or BPA-free lids, and safe and proper canning methods must be used. Please feel free to transport canned goods, for safety, with rings, but rings must be removed for display. All items must be canned by the exhibitor. Please specify the canning method (water bath or pressure) on the entry tag.

- Fruits, one jar.
- Vegetables, one jar.
- Jams, Jellies, or Marmalades, one jar.
- Catsups, Chutneys, Relishes, Sauces, and other condiments, one jar.
- Pickles: sweet or sour, one jar.
- Meat or Fish, one jar.

Home Dried Foods and Culinary Herbs: This is a category with a lot going for it. Nothing but solar energy is needed for drying, and no energy is needed for storage. Vitamins and minerals are maintained very well. Dried foods and herbs are judged both by their appearance and their suitability for long storage. Crop maturity and degree of dryness, color, aroma, texture, and taste are all indicators of quality. The label must state contents and date. Clear glass jars, half pint or larger. Herbs may be presented in storage jars or jars designed for countertop use.

- Fruit and fruit leathers.
- Vegetables.
- Granola, cereals.
- Herbs: dried/prepared; cut, ground, powdered, or crushed leaves; seeds.
- Meats: jerky.
- Other.

Homemade Beverages, Vinegars, and Syrups: Clear glass jars, one pint or larger (Cider: one quart jar)

- Syrups: maple, other.
- Vinegars: homemade wine or fruit vinegars. Labels should indicate live cultures or pasteurized.

- Flavored vinegars: Label should indicate flavor and vinegar source; homemade fruit, wine, or commercial.
- Apple cider: Label should indicate apple variety, if known. Cider will be tasted by judges.
- Tonics: herbal; root; other. (Examples: sarsaparilla, ginger, spruce, birch, dandelion, nettle.) Samples will be tasted by judges.

Home-Baked Goods and Children's Apple Pies: Judges will taste all home-baked goods. Competitors must use ingredients that are in the spirit of MOFGA's food policy: Maine-grown and organic. For more information, please read [the policy here](#). No commercial bakeries or chefs. Leavening agents must be specified. We suggest you submit a copy of the recipe to be displayed with your items.

- Bread: whole wheat, rye, white (specify flours), other dark (specify flours), fancy or sweet, quick, other, one loaf.
- Rolls, biscuits, muffins; plate of five.
- Cakes: loaf, layer, coffee cake, other.
- Cookies: plate of five.
- Pies: single crust, double crust.

Home-Processed Dairy Products: Entries will be kept chilled until judging. Judges will taste all entries. Labels should include milk source, culture and rennet, and method.

- Milk, designated as raw or pasteurized. Sample of one quart.
- Farmer cheeses: examples: chevre, cottage cheese, mozzarella. Sample of 4 to 8 oz.
- Aged cheeses: examples: cheddar, Swiss, parmesan. 4-8 oz. sample block.
- Butter, sample of quarter pound.
- Yogurt, sample of one pint.
- Kefir, sample of one pint.
- Other cheeses if not listed above, sample size 4 to 8 oz.

Lacto-Fermented Foods: Entries will be kept chilled until judging. Judges will taste all entries.

- Sauerkraut: sample of one pint or one quart.
- Kimchi: sample of one pint or one quart.
- Other lacto-fermented foods: sample of one pint or one quart.

Medicinal Herb Preparations: Ingredients (including Latin names) and method should be included on the label.

- Tinctures.
- Salves.
- Lotions.
- Essential oils.
- Other herbal preparations.

Eggs: All eggs must be washed and cleaned. Eggs will be candled. Indicate a variety of hen, duck, turkey, etc., if possible!

- Hen's eggs, white, one dozen.
- Hen's eggs, brown, one dozen.
- Hen's eggs, other colors, one dozen.
- Duck's eggs, one dozen.
- Other eggs, one dozen.

Honey and Beeswax Products:

- Extracted honey: one pint or larger jar.
- Comb honey.
- Creamed honey: one pint or larger container.
- Beeswax cakes.
- Beeswax candles.

Flowers, Fresh Herbs, and Houseplants:

Flowers:

- Single specimen with foliage, any flower by variety.
- Mixed bouquet, annuals.
- Mixed bouquet, perennials.
- Mixed bouquet, dried materials.
- Wildflowers and grasses. Note: Do not use any endangered or protected species. Such items will not be displayed or judged.

Fresh Herbs:

- Fresh-cut herbs in bunches: six or more stems. List variety, if any.
- Herb plants, live, potted.
- Herb wreaths.
- Sachets, potpourris, etc.

Houseplants: Entries should have been under the care of the exhibitor for at least six months. Entries will be checked daily and watered if necessary.

- African Violets and other gesneriads, named varieties.
- Begonias.
- Bonsai. Please specify if purchased as nursery stock, grown from seed, grown from a graft or cutting or wildgathered.
- Bromeliads.
- Cacti and other succulents.
- Geraniums and scented geraniums.
- Hanging baskets or pots.
- Ivies.
- Other flowering houseplants.
- Other foliage plants.
- Terraria.

Arts and Crafts

Amateurs only, please. Items will not be offered for sale, but we will give your name and address to individuals wishing to place an order with you or wanting to ask about patterns, techniques, etc. We define an amateur as a person who does not make a substantial portion of his or her living selling the art or craft they have entered.

Occasionally the judges may deem an entry to be exemplary and far superior to any others of its type. In this case the judges may award a Judge's Award. The Judge's Award will be accompanied by a \$10 cash premium. A special Judge's Award and premium of \$25 may be awarded by the quilt judges for an exemplary bed-sized (regular, queen or king) quilt.

Needlework and Fancy Work: No kits please. Judging preference given to articles made with natural materials. Please specify if the design is original or not.

- Afghans: crocheted, knitted, other.

- Baby articles: afghans, crib blankets and spreads, carriage robes, booties, socks, slippers, bonnets, dresses, jackets, pant suits, sweaters, layette sets, buntings, etc.
- Bedspreads: crocheted, knitted, appliquéd, embroidered.
- Centerpieces: bureau scarves, dresser sets, doilies, dish mats.
- Kitchen items: appliquéd, crocheted, knitted, tatted, embroidered, other.
- Tablecloths, placemats, napkins, table runners: appliquéd, crocheted, knitted, tatted, embroidered, other.
- Chair seats and accessories: braided, crocheted, knitted, other.
- Children's clothing: slippers, socks, gloves, mittens, scarves, hats, dresses, pants, tops, skirts, shirts, suits, sweaters, vests, ponchos, shawls, capes, coats, sets of three items or more, not individually entered above.
- Adult's clothing and accessories: slippers, socks, gloves, mittens, scarves, hats; dresses, slacks, tops, skirts, blouses, suits; slacks and shirts, suits, jackets; sweaters and vests; ponchos, shawls, capes, coats, stoles; sets of three items or more, not individually entered above.
- Pillows: crocheted, knitted needlepoint, embroidered, sewn, quilted.
- Quilts: tied, quilted.
- Rugs: braided, hooked, other.
- Spinning and dyeing.
- Wall hangings: samplers, pictures, panels.
- Weaving.
- Toys: sewn, knitted, crocheted, other; dolls and doll's clothing, doll houses and furniture. (Must be made by exhibitor, no kits please. Other peoples' patterns and instructions may be used.)

Crafts: Amateurs only please. No kits please. Specify if the design is original or not. All pictures must be suitably framed and ready to hang on a pegboard hook.

- Basketry.
- Batik.
- Beadworking.
- Candle making.
- Caning and other forms of seat-weaving.
- Etching on glass.
- Folk art, whimsies, and whirligigs.
- Glass, stained, colored, copper-foiled or leaded.
- Jewelry.
- Leather.
- Macramé.
- Metal work.
- Paper mache.
- Pottery.
- Pressed flowers.
- Quilling.
- Sculpture and carving.
- Soapmaking: one bar or dispenser of liquid soap. List ingredients on tag. Judging preference given to soaps made with natural materials.
- Tole painting.
- Woodworking.

Graphic Arts: Amateurs only. No kits, please. Items must be suitably matted and framed and be ready to hang on a pegboard hook — a wire for hanging is strongly recommended.

- Collage.
- Drawings.

- Paintings.
- Photography. Limit of five photos as our space is limited.
- Printmaking: linoleum cut, woodcut, silkscreen, other.

More Information

For more information about the Exhibition Hall at the Common Ground Country Fair, contact exhibition hall coordinators Anne H. Warner at dixmontchix@gmail.com or Matthew Dubois at mattdubois28@gmail.com; or contact the MOFGA Fair office at commonground@mofga.org or by calling 207-568-4142.

Updated April 2023