

The North Carolina Gourd Society
Proudly presents the
84th Annual North Carolina Gourd Arts & Crafts Festival

Competition Information and Entry Form

Festival Theme: “Down on the Farm”

August 29-30, 2026

Saturday and Sunday 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

**Bethesda Ruritan Community Center
2001 S. Miami Blvd., Durham, NC 27703**

Festival Admission: Free at this new location!

Competition Entry Deadline: August 28, 2026

For more festival information and membership information, please go to the NC Gourd Society website
<https://ncgourdsociety.org/>

Dear Competitor,

We hope you will be able to enter your crafted gourds or grown gourds in the competition at this year’s festival. The festival theme is “**Down on the Farm.**” We are all excited to see what new gourds and gourd art will be entered!

Please read the following rules, instructions, and division and category descriptions carefully. A link to the North Carolina Gourd Society (NCGS) registration form is provided under the Division and Categories section. The registration form must be printed and filled out manually and can be submitted via email or by U.S. mail to the competition chair (see below) Everyone is encouraged to pre-register to avoid waiting in long lines with registrations being completed on-site on Friday August 28, 2026 from 5:00 - 7:00 p.m. If you register on-site, please bring a completed registration form.

If you are not a member of the North Carolina Gourd Society, please consider becoming one. Your \$15 annual membership dues entitles you to receive our quarterly newsletter that includes gourd news from across the state, gourd growing and crafting tips, and free entrance to the NCGS Gourd Festival. Forms are available at our website <https://ncgourdsociety.org/festival/competition/> and competition questions can be directed to the Competition Chair, Stan Atwood, at either satwood55@att.net or (919) 215-3399.

Please send completed registration forms to:

Stan Atwood, Competition Chair
1002 Black Oak Court
Apex, NC 27502

GENERAL COMPETITION RULES Which Apply to All Divisions

There are six competitive divisions and fifty-seven categories. Anyone can enter the competition (NCGS members, non-members, and all ages and skill levels). The divisions and categories are described at the end of this document along with a link to the entry form. The general competition rules are:

1. Entries submitted in ANY previous years' NCGS gourd festival may not be re-entered. Only one entry per category per competitor is allowed.
2. Crafted gourd entries shall be the work of the competitor; it is acceptable to use purchased dry gourds for crafted categories.
3. Non-crafted gourds submitted in the "Grower Division" must be grown by the competitor.
4. Entries shall be predominantly gourd (i.e., more than **51%** of the entry must be gourd and/or gourd parts). In cases where this is not readily apparent, the entrant should attach a brief description (no larger than a half page) of the process and techniques used. Up to four photographs of the gourd(s) before and during technique application may also be provided. All photographs should be sized and printed on one sheet of paper and attached to the gourd. Note: failure to submit description/photographs may result in disqualification.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Please note that the festival is a family event and any gourd considered offensive or inappropriate for young attendees may be removed or covered by judges.

The Competition Chair reserves the right to change, subdivide, and/or combine any entry categories and/or items entered in the competition. Entries not meeting the competition rules will be disqualified.

By entering the competition, you agree that your work may be photographed and possibly used for NCGS promotional use.

NOTE: Exhibitors are responsible for securing the stability of their entries to prevent damage due to fans, wind, bumping of table, accidental jostling by visitors, etc.

LIABILITY

The North Carolina Gourd Society is not responsible for accidents, loss, theft, or breakage.

ENTRY FEES

There are no entry fees for NC Gourd Society members or non-members.

STEPS FOR ENTERING THE COMPETITION

Consider joining NCGS for just \$15. To verify membership, please contact our Membership Chair, Paulette Disbrow, at artwork@supremetshirts.com.

- 1) Choose which Division(s) (I, II, III, IV, V, or VI) you plan to enter. Read the descriptions carefully to ensure you pick the correct division; however, you may enter more than one division provided you qualify. **Only one registration form is necessary regardless of the number of categories or divisions you enter.**

- 2) Select the competition categories in your chosen division(s). Only one entry per person per category is allowed.
- 3) Select your entry method: There are three ways to enter: email, U.S. mail, and walk-in. Email or mailed entries are recommended to avoid delays when dropping off entries at the festival and to allow sufficient time for the staging of the competition and the creation of entry tags. You may also bring the printed form to the festival for a **“walk-in entry” on Friday (not Saturday)**. Detailed instructions are on the entry form.
- 4) Bring your gourds to the festival at the specified drop-off times.
 - a. Drop off times are
 - **Friday, August 28, from 5 - 7 p.m.**
 - **Saturday, August 29, from 7:30 – 8:30 a.m.** All entries brought on Saturday **must have been pre-registered** via email or mailed via U.S. mail to the competition chair.
 - b. Remove or cover any names or other identifying personal information on the gourd. Initials are acceptable.
 - c. Have each of your entries photographed by our photographer *before* attaching the competition tag.
 - d. For each item, the festival will provide an entry tag which must be attached. After judging, the exhibitor’s name will be uncovered on the entry tag. A standard business card may be placed on competitive exhibits after that time.
 - e. Be sure that your gourds are checked in, photographed, tagged, and on display before judging begins at 9 am on Saturday.

SELLING YOUR WORK

If you wish to sell your work, you may place a card noting that the piece is for sale along with your contact information (e.g., business card) **AFTER** the judging has taken place. If a competitive entry is sold, it is the responsibility of the seller to make appropriate arrangements with the purchaser for subsequent delivery of any sold items **AFTER the festival ends** at 5 p.m. on Sunday.

JUDGING

The NCGS will coordinate all judging. Judging will follow the American Gourd Society (AGS) judging guidelines and will use AGS trained judges.

Grower entries are judged on quality, skill of manipulation, or dimensions (e.g., longest, smallest, largest circumference).

Crafted gourds are judged on overall appearance, craftsmanship, difficulty and level of effort, and fulfillment of category description (theme or technique).

Judging begins at 9 a.m. on Saturday, August 29, 2026. The decisions of the judges are final.

Ribbons may be awarded to the top three entries in each category but will be awarded at the sole discretion of the judges.

Ribbons and entries should be left in place until the end of the festival at 5 p.m. on Sunday, August 30, 2026.

AWARDS

BEST IN DIVISION AWARDS – These are not separate categories but are Grand Prize winners in each Division and are chosen by the judges. Monetary awards will be given as listed below.

Best in Division – Grower Categories \$50 award
Best in Division – Youth Categories \$25 award
Best in Division – New Artist Categories \$25 award
Best in Division – Intermediate Categories \$50 award
Best in Division – Advanced Categories \$50 award

BEST IN SHOW AWARD – Ribbon awarded. This is not a separate category but is given to one of the Best in Division winners and is chosen by the Judges. *The winner of this award is eligible for the American Gourd Society's "Artistry Award" by submitting to the AGS, <https://www.americangourdsociety.org/artistry-award.html> by December 1st.*

SPECIAL SHOW AWARDS

Chair Award is chosen by the Festival Chair from all entered items.

President's Award is chosen by the NCGS President from all entered items.

Most Creative Vendor's Booth Award is chosen by the NCGS President and Festival Chair.

People's Choice Award is chosen by popular vote of the attendees. *The winner of this \$50 award is eligible for the American Gourd Society's "Artistry Award" by submitting to the AGS, <https://www.americangourdsociety.org/artistry-award.html> by December 1st.*

Best in Division, Best in Show, and Special Awards are presented at the Saturday night NCGS quarterly meeting.

PICK-UP

Pick up of entries will be **Sunday, August 30, 2026 from 5 – 6 p.m.** At the competition entry pick-up, please show your claim ticket or driver's license to claim your entry. If you do not want your ribbons, please return them to the NCGS club table so we can re-use them.

All competitive entries, including any entry that is sold, MUST remain in place until the end of the festival at 5:00 p.m. on Sunday, August 30, 2026. This ensures that the last visitor to the festival may have the same opportunity to enjoy the competitive display as the first visitor. Exceptions may be granted on a case-by-case basis by the competition chair.

DIVISIONS and CATEGORIES

Please read the division and category descriptions carefully to determine the appropriate categories for your entries. Each competitor is responsible for placing his or her piece in the correct division and category. Judges reserve the right to move or disqualify a piece if it has been entered in the wrong category or division. **Only one entry per person per category is allowed.**

Anyone may compete in a higher division than their age or skill level indicates, but no one can enter in a lower division than their skill level or age dictates (see definitions and criteria for each Division below). For example, an Advanced level competitor may not enter the Intermediate Division, but an Intermediate level competitor may enter the Advanced Division). If unsure, consult with the competition chair.

****Please note:** The current American Gourd Society regulations prohibit competition entries crafted with 3-D laser cutting; computer aided burning, or fractal burning (Lichtenberg figures).

I: Grower Division – Non-crafted gourds

- Gourds in grower categories must be grown by the exhibitor and be in good condition.
- No finish of any kind is permitted.
- Gourds must be mature and cleaned of any dirt or debris. Natural mold is acceptable.
- Hardshell gourds should have stems.
- Except where noted otherwise, both previous and current season gourds are permitted.

Categories in the Grower Division:

1. Greatest Circumference
 2. Longest Gourd
 3. Smallest Gourd
 4. Most Unusual by Manipulation (*Eligible for the AGS Jim Story competition—see <https://www.americangourdsociety.org/jim-story-award.html> for details*)
 5. Group of various gourds (ornamentals or hard shells) on a plate or in a basket (current crop of 2 or more varieties, maximum of 6 gourds)
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II: Youth Division – Crafted gourds by youth aged 12 and under.

Categories in the Youth Division:

6. Birdhouse
 7. Gourd Creature
 8. Holiday Gourd
 9. Freestyle Gourd
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III: New Artist Division – Crafted gourds for ages 13 and up.

A New Artist is defined as a person who is just learning basic artistic techniques. A New Artist can submit a gourd that was done in a class.

The New Artist is eligible to compete in this division for up to 3 years; however, an artist that previously won a Best in Division or Best in Show award should consider entering the Intermediate Division. Competitors who are 13-17 years old are also considered in this division and may enter for more than three years.

Please note that anyone that has developed artistic skills working with other media (i.e., painting, wood carving, etc.) **is not considered** a New Artist and must compete in a higher division.

Categories in the New Artist Division:

10. Birdhouse
 11. Gourd Plant or Animal
 12. Holiday Gourd
 13. Gourd Container
 14. Freestyle Gourd
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IV: Intermediate Division – Crafted gourds.

The intermediate level artist is someone that routinely uses basic to intermediate techniques but is not eligible to compete as a New Artist and has not yet reached the skill level associated with advanced techniques typically used in gourd arts and crafts.

The intermediate level artist does not routinely display their work in art shows and galleries or teach classes using advanced techniques.

Competitors may not enter a piece they completed during a class in the Intermediate Division; however, they may enter it in the Open Division. If you have won “Best in Division” or “Best in Show” in the past for any of your work, please consider entering the Advanced Division.

For each category, the listed technique must be a predominant feature of the crafted gourd; however, one other technique may be used (e.g., pyrography and painting, carved and woven, etc.). A predominant feature is one that stands out to the casual observer. If two techniques are used (e.g., pyrography and painting), and both are predominant features, the gourd may be entered in either category. If more than two techniques are used (other than minor embellishments), the gourd should be entered in the “freestyle” category. Natural wood stains or clear finishes do not count as techniques.

Categories in the Intermediate Division:

A. Featured Technique

- 15. Pyrography
- 16. Painted or Color Pencil
- 17. Dyes or Inks
- 18. Carved (any type)
- 19. Fibers (woven, wrapped, coiled, teneriffe)

B. Holiday Gourds

- 20. Christmas
- 21. Gourd Ornament
- 22. Other Holiday

C. Wearables

- 23. Gourd Purse or Jewelry
- 24. Gourd Hat or Mask

D. Utilitarian

- 25. Gourd Container (any type)
- 26. Musical Instrument
- 27. Centerpiece
- 28. Gourd Lamp (any type)
- 29. Birdhouse or Bird Feeder

E. Miscellaneous

- 30. Group of Three
- 31. Gourd Sculpture (plant, animal, other)
- 32. Small Gourd (≤ 6 inches)
- 33. Gourd Toy or Doll
- 34. Freestyle Gourd

V: Advanced Division – Crafted Gourds.

This division is for competitors who show exceptional talent in creating artistic items from gourds and are skilled in the use of multiple advanced techniques and finishing techniques.

These artists may have received Best in Show ribbons and/or multiple blue ribbons in past competitions against their peers, sold in juried art galleries, displayed at juried art shows, and/or taught art classes which include advanced techniques.

All entries must be the competitor’s original work and design. Work completed at a class, workshop or seminar are not eligible unless the work is the original design of the artist. **However, they may enter it in the Open Division.**

For each category, the listed technique must be a predominant feature of the crafted gourd; however, one other technique may be used (e.g., pyrography and painting, carved and woven, etc.). A predominant feature is one that stands out to the casual observer. If two techniques are used (e.g., pyrography and painting), and both are predominant features, the gourd may be entered in either category. If more than two techniques are used (other than minor embellishments), the gourd should be entered in the “freestyle” category. Natural wood stains or clear finishes do not count as techniques.

Categories in the Advanced Division:

F. Featured Technique

- 35. Pyrography
- 36. Painted or Color Pencil
- 37. Dyes or Inks
- 38. Carved (any type)
- 39. Fibers (woven, wrapped, coiled, teneriffe)

G. Holiday Gourds

- 40. Christmas
- 41. Gourd Ornament
- 42. Other Holiday

H. Wearables

- 43. Gourd Purse or Jewelry
- 44. Gourd Mask or Hat

I. Utilitarian

- 45. Gourd Container (any type)
- 46. Musical Instrument
- 47. Centerpiece
- 48. Gourd Lamp (any type)
- 49. Birdhouse or Bird Feeder

J. Miscellaneous

- 50. Group of Three
- 51. Gourd Sculpture (plant, animal, other)
- 52. Small Gourd (≤ 6 inches)
- 53. Gourd Toy or Doll
- 54. Freestyle Gourd

VI: Open Division Category – Miscellaneous Crafted Gourds

This division is open to all levels. Any technique may be used. For the “Collaborative” category, one person will register the piece but should write the names of all contributors on one side of a 3” x 5” card and include this card when delivering the item for competition. For the “Head of the Class” category, include a 3 x 5 card giving credit to the class and instructor.

Categories in the Open Division:

- 55. Collaborative Gourd (crafted by more than one artist)
- 56. Head of the Class (gourd crafted in a class)
- 57. Festival Theme “Down on the Farm”

[Click here for the Competition entry form](#)

NOTE: Exhibitors are responsible for securing the stability of their entries to prevent damage due to fans, wind, bumping of table, accidental jostling by visitors, etc.

84th Annual North Carolina Gourd Arts & Crafts Festival Competition Registration Form

****Use this form only if you will not be completing the form online****

I have read and understand the competition rules. I certify that I have not entered these pieces in any past NCGS competitions, and I certify that I did not make any entries in a class. **Signature:** _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ Email: _____ ☐ NCGS Member ☐ Non-member

Circle or highlight the number of each category in which you intend to exhibit.

Division I – Grower Competition

1. Greatest Circumference
2. Longest Gourd
3. Smallest Gourd
4. Most Unusual by Manipulation
5. Group of various gourds

Division II - Youth

6. Birdhouse
7. Gourd Creature
8. Holiday Gourd
9. Freestyle Gourd

Division III – New Artists (Novice)

10. Birdhouse
11. Gourd Plant or Animal
12. Holiday Gourd
13. Gourd Container
14. Freestyle Gourd

Division IV – Intermediate

A. Featured Techniques

15. Pyrography
16. Painted or Colored Pencil
17. Dyes or Inks
18. Carved (any type)

19. Fibers (woven, wrapped, coiled, teneriffe)

B. Holiday Gourds

20. Christmas
21. Gourd Ornament
22. Other Holiday

C. Wearables

23. Gourd Purse, or Jewelry
24. Gourd Hat or Mask

D. Utilitarian

25. Gourd Container (any type)
26. Musical Instrument
27. Centerpiece
28. Gourd Lamp (any type)
29. Birdhouse or Bird Feeder

E. Miscellaneous

30. Group of Three
31. Gourd Sculpture (animal, plant, other)
32. Small Gourd (less than 6")
33. Gourd Toy or Doll
34. Freestyle Gourd

Division V – Advanced

F. Featured Techniques (Whole or Cut Gourds)

35. Pyrography
36. Painted or Colored Pencil
37. Dyes or Inks
38. Carved (any type)
39. Fibers (woven, wrapped, coiled, teneriffe)

G. Holiday Gourds

40. Christmas
41. Gourd Ornament
42. Other Holiday

H. Wearables

43. Gourd Purse or Jewelry
44. Gourd Mask or Hat

I. Utilitarian

45. Gourd Container (any type)
46. Musical Instrument
47. Centerpiece
48. Gourd Lamp (any type)
49. Birdhouse or Bird Feeder

J. Miscellaneous

50. Group of Three
51. Gourd Sculpture (plant, animal, other)
52. Small Gourd (less than 6")
53. Gourd Toy or Doll
54. Freestyle Gourd

Open Division

55. Collaborative Gourd (crafted by more than one artist)
56. Head of the Class (gourd crafted in a class)
57. Festival Theme "Down on the Farm"

Please mail completed this completed form to Stan Atwood, 1002 Black Oak Court, Apex, NC 27502 by August 20, 2026 to have your entry tags prepared in advance.