



Kansas Foundation
for **Agriculture**
in the **Classroom**

Willie and the Beanstalk contest winners announced

Soybean growing contest provides opportunity for Kansas students to put their green thumb to the test.

MANHATTAN, Kan. - April 30, 2015 - Kansas youth had the opportunity to put their green thumb skills to the test and attempt to grow the largest potted soybean plant in the state this spring as part of the "Willie and the Beanstalk" contest.

The annual contest, organized by the Kansas State University Department of Agronomy and sponsored by the Kansas Soybean Commission, encourages teachers and students to learn more about soil and plant science, increase interest in agronomy and brings students to K-State's annual Open House, where they can interact with agronomy students and faculty.

Since its inception in 2008, more than 2800 students have taken on the challenge of growing the most impressive soybean plant. Dr. Nathan Nelson, contest coordinator and associate professor of agronomy at K-State, says the contest continues to grow each year. This year, 479 students entered the contest, making up 180 teams.

The contest starts on a common seeding day in March and ends at the K-State Open House in April, when contest participants bring their soybean plants to the event to be judged. The soybean plants are evaluated using the following criteria: cultural practices documentation, plant height, plant mass, leaf area and leaf greenness. Winners within each criterion and overall winners in each age division - 9-12th grades (Division 1) and K-8th grades (Division 2) - are selected.

The winners of the 2015 Willie and the Beanstalk competition are as follows:

Best Documentation:

- Division 1: Stilwell Bean Growers 1 (Stilwell Super Bean Growers)
- Division 2: Live Wires 4-H Club (Moundridge FFA)

Most Biomass:

- Division 1: Olpe Team 1 (Olpe High School)
- Division 2: Black-Eyed Beans (Hanover 5th and 6th grade)

Tallest Plant:

- Division 1: Bean Machine (Olpe High School)
- Division 2: RJ2 (Tescott Elementary)

Largest Leaf:

- Division 1: Bean Machine (Olpe High School)
- Division 2: Live Wires 4-H Club (Moundridge FFA)

Greenest Leaf:

- Division 1: Moundridge FFA 4 Ag Kids (Moundridge FFA)
- Division 2: Lucky Planters (Minneapolis Grade School)

Grand Champion

- Division 1: Stilwell Bean Growers 1 (Stilwell Super Bean Growers)
 1. Kimberly Stone
 2. Sarah WeinerAdviser: Chris Stone

Division 2: Live Wires 4-H Club (Moundridge FFA)

1. Lane McMannis
 2. Jace Beltz
 3. Isom Marston
- Adviser: Shad Marston

The scope of the contest requires an "all hands on deck" mentality by agronomy faculty, staff and students for it to be a success. Faculty and graduate students score documentation sheets and provide equipment necessary for plant evaluation. Staff assist with website development and promotional efforts. Undergraduate students work with contestants to score the soybeans on the day of the contest.

Because the contest is so hands-on intensive, it is a perfect fit for classrooms using project-based learning. "It's a great contest to help students understand all aspects that go into growing a plant," said Nelson.

Lesson plans that focus on soybeans, plant growth and development and soil science, are available from the Kansas Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom, an agricultural education non-profit organization, at www.ksagclassroom.org.

The 2016 Willie and the Beanstalk contest information will be released later this Fall. Nelson encourages students to consider the contest early and plan ahead for growing their soybean plants. He challenges them to consider doing their own experiments to evaluate the best growing conditions and factors that will yield the largest soybean plant.

"The contest puts some production goals behind growing plants, which is essential in agronomy and food production," Nelson said. "We've been able to give students a little flavor of that and they've been able to get excited and engaged in the contest."

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Additional Information:

Nathan Nelson, 785-532-5115 or nonelson@ksu.edu

Resources:

Willie and the Beanstalk: <http://beanstalk.agronomy.ksu.edu>

Kansas Soybean Commission: <http://kansassoybeans.org>

Kansas Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom: www.ksagclassroom.org

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About KFAC

The Kansas Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom is a 501(c)(3) non-profit foundation that provides educational resources for Kansas teachers to help students connect Kansas agriculture to their own lives while meeting curriculum goals.

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