



# YOUTH ESSAY CONTEST GUIDELINES 2024

[gardenclub.org/contests-and-activities](https://gardenclub.org/contests-and-activities)

## Is Recycling Plastics the Answer to Our Plastic Disposal Problem?

### Guidelines

- Include name, address, age, grade, school, sponsoring local garden club and state garden club of the essayist on the entry. (Youth privacy is important to NGC, and thus, published winning national essays will only identify the essayist's first name, last name initial, local garden club and state.)
- Essayist's family does not have to be a member of the local sponsoring garden club.
- Essays must be between 600-700 characters in length and be the unique and original work of the essayist. *NGC reserves the right to test winning entries for plagiarism and/or AI generation. Essays failing such tests will be disqualified.*
- Essays must be typed and submitted in Microsoft Word, using a font no smaller than 11 point.
- Essayists may submit one photo to accompany their essay. The photo must not show faces of any people included, and the essayist must attest that they have the rights to the photo (or that the photo is free and open source). The photo is not judged, but may be used in the digital booklet.
- When choosing an essay title, please be creative and incorporate the theme: "Is Recycling Plastics the Answer to Our Plastic Disposal Problem?" However, the theme should not be used as the title to any essay. When judging, the title is worth 10%.
- All entries become the property of National Garden Clubs, Inc.
- Sending Region winning entries to NGC: All Region winning entries must be sent to the National Chairperson (James Pavelka, [jamespavelka@comcast.net](mailto:jamespavelka@comcast.net)) in Word format via email, and a hard copy mailed for judging.
- National winners will be announced at the NGC 2025 National Convention and the local garden club contact person will be contacted regarding any winning entry.

### Submissions and Deadlines

All essays are submitted to a local garden club affiliated with National Garden Clubs, Inc. Local clubs send their winning essays (1 per grade-level in each category) to their State by the published State deadline. State winning essays are sent to their Region Contest by 2/1/2025. Region winners are sent to the National Contest by 3/1/2025. National winning essays are announced in May 2025, and published online in a free digital essay booklet.

### Eligibility and Judging Criteria

- Youth in grades 9th-12th compete by grade-level, with one national winner per grade-level and one overall winner who receives \$50.
- Scale of Points: Originality 20%, Central idea of essay is clear and addresses the theme question 20%, Organization of ideas uses a logical structure, clear paragraphs, and appropriate transitions 20%, Vocabulary, grammar and mechanics effectively communicates meaning 20%, Creative title 10%, Conformance to length 10%.

