



Forest Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



National Garden Clubs, Inc.

ANNOUNCING 2026 Smokey Bear & Woodsy Owl Poster Contest

**Children from first through fifth grade
are invited to participate in this annual
drawing contest featuring conservation icons
Smokey Bear & Woodsy Owl!**

The U. S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service and the National Garden Clubs, Inc., are giving students the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of wildfire prevention and basic environmental conservation principles through original drawings of Smokey Bear or Woodsy Owl.

View previous contest winners:

<https://gardenclub.org/smokey-bear-woodsy-owl-youth-poster-contest>.

Smokey Bear says: "Only you can prevent wildfires!"



Smokey Bear is recognized nationally and internationally as the symbol for wildfire prevention. The original Smokey Bear appeared in 1944. Smokey's message, "Only you can prevent wildfires!" encourages personal responsibility for wildfire prevention. Smokey Bear teaches children and adults to be careful with campfires, barbecues, burning yard waste, and matches. For more about Smokey Bear visit <https://smokeybear.com>.

Woodsy Owl says: "Lend a hand—care for the land!"



Woodsy Owl is America's icon for the conservation of the environment. Since 1971, Woodsy has helped parents and teachers inspire children to observe, explore, and care for the environment. He challenges children to "Lend a hand, care for the land!" and to take an active role in caring for the land through recycling, reusing, and reducing waste; gardening, planting, and caring for trees; using resources wisely; and not littering. For more about Woodsy Owl visit <https://www.fs.usda.gov/learn/kids/woodsy-owl>.

2026 Smokey Bear & Woodsy Owl Poster Contest Rules

- Competition may include students from first to fifth grade.
- Posters are to be completed by individual student artists.
- Posters must have correct spelling (posters with spelling errors will be disqualified).
- All posters must feature Smokey Bear or Woodsy Owl and must not feature both together.
- Smokey Bear posters must include Smokey's wildfire prevention message: Only You Can Prevent Wildfires!
- Woodsy Owl posters must include Woodsy's conservation message: Lend a Hand—Care for the Land!
- All posters should encourage children to take a personal role in preventing wildfires or conserving natural resources.
- Smokey Bear and Woodsy Owl must be presented in their correct colors (they are official icons protected by law); check the colors on the website www.fs.usda.gov/learn/kids or www.symbols.gov.
- Each poster entry should be 11 x 17 inches in size.
- Materials that can be used include crayons, markers, poster paints, watercolors, and the like.
- The choice of paper color and texture is up to the child.
- No three-dimensional posters, computer-scanned, or electronically generated images will be accepted.
- All poster entrees must be sponsored by a recognized local garden club.
- The local garden club chairperson must submit the poster entries to his or her state chairperson no later than January 20, 2026. The state garden club chairperson must submit the five winning posters from his or her State to the regional garden club chairperson by February 23, 2026.
- The following information should be written on the back of the poster in the lower-right corner (do not use a dark marker for this information as it may show through):
 - The name, address, phone number, and email of the sponsoring local garden club.
 - The artist's name, address, contact phone number, grade level, school, teacher's name, city, and State. (Should school policy preclude giving students' addresses and phone numbers, please include the school address and phone number).
- Poster coordinators should take photos of their final, winning posters. The original winning posters will be the property of the Forest Service and not returned to the National Garden Clubs or the winners.

Poster Tips

- A good poster has a bold and simple design.
- The poster's message should be easily understood and delivered both in the picture and in text.
- An educator, parent, guardian, or other adult should provide 11" x 17" paper for a child to create their poster.
- Find inspiration for your poster with promotional and educational products from the National Symbols Cache, www.symbols.gov.
- Posters will be judged for originality, design, slogan, artwork, and overall effectiveness of the message.

Recognition Ceremonies

- It is recommended that local and/or State recognition ceremonies be coordinated in conjunction with local events during Earth Week in April or during National Public Lands Day (last Saturday in September). Smokey Bear, Woodsy Owl, or both should be present at these award ceremonies if possible. The Forest Service conservation education or fire prevention regional coordinators can help you identify local Forest Service offices that may assist you when planning for a Smokey Bear or Woodsy Owl appearance at your event. A list of coordinators is available upon request via email at sm.fs.symbols@usda.gov.
- Certificates of participation are free of charge. You can download them from www.symbols.gov or by requesting hard copies via email at sm.fs.symbols@usda.gov.
- The National Garden Clubs will announce the first-place national winners for each grade level and the national grand prize winner at their 2026 annual meeting.
- Certificates and prize money (\$50) for the five national winners will be mailed following the National Garden Clubs' 2026 annual meeting. The national grand prize winner will get the certificate, a trophy, and a framed copy of the winning poster during a recognition ceremony coordinated by the Garden Club that sponsored the submission; the ceremony is typically held during the summer.
- The Forest Service will support the recognition ceremony for the national grand prize winner by arranging for Smokey Bear and Woodsy Owl to attend.