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2026 DSBN REGIONAL HORTICULTURE & LANDSCAPE SKILLS CHALLENGE SECONDARY LEVEL SCOPE

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PURPOSE OF THE CONTEST:

- To evaluate student competitors' theoretical knowledge and practical work in the field of horticulture and landscaping.
- Promotes students' engagement in skilled trades jobs and post-secondary opportunities in the skilled trades through competition.

EVENT DETAILS

Date: Wednesday March 4, 2026

Time: 9:00-2:00

Location: Niagara College, NOTL Campus Rm BARN

Maximum Competitors: 4 teams of 2

ENTRY: Please connect with a teacher advisor at your school to complete your registration for this competition to be eligible to participate.

TEACHER'S ROLE: Instructors are expected to acquaint their student participants with all of the enclosed guidelines. Teachers may accompany their students or visit any time during the competition but may not assist the competitors during the challenge.

AGENDA:

Wednesday March 4, 2026	
9:00-9:30	Sign-in / organize gear / introduction
9:30-10:00	Contest begins
10:00-10:30	Contest
10:30-11:00	Contest
11:30-12:00	Lunch
12:00-12:30	Contest
12:30-1:00	Contest
1:00-1:30	Contest
1:30-3:00	Judging and clean up / tear down

ASSIGNMENT:

The contest will be a “build” contest in which each team will build a landscape based on a common set of criteria and drawings. Teams will be required to apply theoretical knowledge necessary to carry out the practical work.

The test project covers the layout and construction of a small landscape (approximately 10 ft X 10 ft) by preparing and using materials such as landscape rocks, aggregates, precast wall and paving units, composted mulch, plants, and wood materials.

SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE TO BE TESTED:

- Apply skilled techniques to construct a landscape using drawings, materials and tools provided
- Measurement
- Hardscape plans
- Perform all tasks safely including: personal, work area, hand tools and machinery
- Softscape plans
- Lumber installation
- Knowledge of tools, equipment PPE and safety
- Knowledge of planting material and planting standards
- Interpretation of drawings, written notes and specifications
- Knowledge of precast wall and interlocking paving construction
- Knowledge of materials and their application
- Knowledge of basic construction layout techniques

SAFETY REQUIREMENTS: Competitors are required to follow all industry safety standards during the competition.

• Steel toe boots	• Safety glasses
• Long pants	• Gloves

EQUIPMENT, MATERIALS, TOOLS, AND SUPPLIES:

Equipment Supplied by the Competitor:

• Carpenter square	• Gloves
• Level	• Clipboard, pencils/pen
• Flat head screwdriver	• Refillable water bottle
• Rubber mallet	• Additional snacks
• Hand trowel	• 2 long-handled square spades
• Measuring tape • Chalk line	• 2 garden (hard) rakes
• Steel toed boots	• 1 push broom
• Long pants	• 1 corn broom
• Safety glasses	• 1 whisk/brush

Equipment Supplied by the Organizers:

- Stone
- Mulch
- Plant material
- Wood Bench top preassembled
- Wheelbarrows

JUDGING CRITERIA:

A panel of judges will mark the construction of the project, using a common set of criteria and a standard marking sheet for consistency.

Measurement and layout: How accurately the work is laid out based on a comparison of the built dimensions and the drawing dimensions. Allowance shall be made for slight adjustment of dimensions to accommodate the modular dimensions of the precast material and to eliminate small pieces of paving or wall stones in the final structure.

Work process/procedure: Was the work carried out in a logical sequence and orderly manner? This will be evaluated through written, verbal and/or observational testing of the team.

Technical/theoretical knowledge: Based on a brief written or oral test, evaluate the team's knowledge of materials and their applications.

Pavers (stone): How well the pavers are installed in terms of how straight, smooth and level the pavers are, consistency of joints, lack of small pieces in the pattern especially at the edges.

Walls: How well the walls are built in terms of vertical and horizontal alignment, joint quality, proper overlapping corner jointing. How well the pillars are built in terms of correct height, square and plumb, units assembled according to the specified pattern with good joint quality, natural stone coping installed stable and level with equal and correct overhang, properly hand faced edges.

Lumber Installation: An evaluation of the structure stability of the bench installation. Does the bench fit properly into the stone pillars? Is there over hanging wood?

Plants: Proper installation (plants installed at proper height, root balls or pots properly concealed). Planting layout and overall appearance. NOTE: Due to the temporary nature of the gardens, teams must plant potted materials with the pots.

JUDGING EVALUATION FORM:

**** Each competitor will be given a number by their coordinator upon registration at the location and will be judged anonymously during the competition.**

Using the criteria provided select one of the 4 options provided in each table for the competitors' overall points. For example, if the team was perfect in the accuracy to design plans section they receive all 10 points.

Design Interpretation		
Accuracy to Design Plans	Perfect adherence to the design plans.	10
	Minor deviations from the plans.	8
	Moderate deviations affecting aesthetics or functionality.	5
	Significant deviations significantly affecting overall design.	2

Technical Skills, Part 1		
Precision & Accuracy	Excellent precision with no errors.	10
	Minimal errors that do not affect functionality.	8
	Noticeable errors impacting quality.	5
	Significant errors affecting overall quality.	2

Technical Skills, Part 2		
Tool Usage & Safety	Proper and safe use of tools throughout.	10
	Minor safety or usage concerns.	8
	Frequent safety concerns or improper use of tools.	5
	Unsafe practices or misuse of tools.	2

Construction Quality, Part 1		
Structural Integrity	Highly durable and well-constructed.	10
	Minor flaws but structurally sound.	8
	Noticeable weaknesses in construction.	5
	Major structural issues.	2

Construction Quality, Part 2		
Aesthetic Appeal	Professional-level appearance and detail.	10
	High-quality appearance with minor flaws.	8
	Average appearance with noticeable flaws.	5
	Poor appearance with significant flaws.	2

Construction Quality, Part 3		
Cleanliness of Worksite	Clean and organized workspace with no safety concerns.	10
	Workspace moderately clean but there is some clutter.	8
	Workplace is moderately clean with some safety concerns.	5
	Workspace disorganized or unsafe.	2

Teamwork and Communication		
Team Collaboration / Communication Skills	Excellent teamwork and communication.	10
	Good teamwork/communication with minor conflicts.	8
	Limited teamwork/communication, frequent conflicts.	5
	Lack of teamwork/communication or major conflicts.	2

Time Management		
Completion within Timeframe	Completed on time with no issues.	10
	Minor delays with no major impact.	8
	Noticeable delays affecting overall performance.	5
	Significant delays of incomplete project.	2

Final Score:_____/80