Cleveland Botanical Garden's

20th Annual Gingerbread House Competition

Entry Form

Be a Part of *Tropical Holiday*

Swap winter blues for island hues at Cleveland Botanical Garden's *Tropical Holiday*, presented by JPMorgan Chase. Explore lush tropical plants, island-inspired adventures, a festive marketplace, and delightful surprises around every corner. Oh, and our gingerbread competition is going tropical!

- The Gingerbread competition will be on display through the run of *Tropical Holiday* in only one session.
- There are two (2) categories available for registration: Youth (ages 5-17), Adult/Family (18 and up). Register for the category that best fits the primary maker(s) of the house. If a group or family are creating the house together, register as a family.
- Our visitors will vote for Best in Show for each category from November 21-December 25, 2026. Winners will be announced on Christmas and ribbons will be placed.

Be sure to visit the Botanical Garden during *Tropical Holiday* to see your house on display. Participants will receive two (2) General Admission tickets per house at the time of drop off. These tickets will be valid through January 3, 2027.

Prizes for 2027

The last day for voting this year will be on December 24, 2026. Winners will be announced and ribbons will be placed on the visitors top two (2) choices for each category on December 26, 2026

- 1st Place Winners will receive a 1 year Holden Forests and Gardens Family Membership
- 2nd Place Winners will receive a $100 Holden Forests and Gardens Gift Card that can be used for tickets, event/class registration, or in the Garden Store.

Important Dates and Deadlines

- **Sign Up Deadline: November 8, 2026**
- Drop Off: Tuesday November 17 and Wednesday November 18 between 9am-5pm*
- Display Dates: November 21, 2026 - January 3, 2027
- Pick-up: January 4, 2027 8am-Noon

*Please note, drop off dates/times have changed.

Guidelines and Liability

- There is a limited capacity, so please only one entry per household and only sign up if you plan to participate
- When signing up, you only need to sign up for the number of houses being entered, not the number of people participating.

- House must be received on a flat base that is between 1/4”-3/4” thick (preferably plywood). **The bases will be discarded along with the house should it not be picked up by the deadline.**
- The base should be painted, decorated to create a complementary scene, or covered with foil
- The base for your house should be between 10”x 10” to 15”x 24”
- Drop Off and Pick Up is at the entrance at 11030 East Blvd. between 8am-noon on the designated date only
- Houses not picked up by noon on the designated Pickup date will be discarded
- When dropping off your house, the Entry Form must be included
- Holden Forests & Gardens does not guarantee the safety or security of entries and cannot be held responsible for damages incurred during exhibition

Holden Forests & Gardens reserves the right to:

- Refuse any entry it deems inappropriate for display
- Photograph and use images of any or all entries for purposes of promotion

Questions:

For any questions, please contact Marian Reyes at mreyes@holdenfg.org

Tropical Holiday Gingerbread House Entry Form - Must be dropped off with entry

Title of Gingerbread House:			
Decorator Name(s):			
Organization/Contact Name:			
Address:			
City:		ZIP:	
Phone:		Email:	
Category (Circle One):	Youth (ages 5-17)		Adult (18 and up)
[ ] Check this box if you would like to pick up your Gingerbread House after the disply session is completed.			

How to Make a Gingerbread House

Step 1: Pick Your House Style

There are many free patterns and inspirational images online. You want to have a strong, sturdy base and a balanced structure. The walls should be strong enough to support the roof.

Step 2: Cut Out the Shapes

Create your patterns and cut them out of cardboard to help make the gingerbread forms.

Step 3: Make the Dough

Search “Gingerbread House Recipe” online to find a low moisture, construction grade dough. You want the dough to be hard once it bakes and cools! Roll the dough and cut each shape out of dough using the patterns previously cut. Be sure to follow the recipe and not to roll the dough too thin. Bake shaped dough as directed.

Step 4: Make the Icing

While the cookies are cooling, prepare the icing. You will want to use Royal icing or an equivalent icing that is thick and will dry and harden. This icing will act as the glue keeping the house together.

Immediately transfer icing to a pastry bag fitted with a pastry tip or a Ziplock with a small hole cut in one corner. Cover any excess icing with a damp paper cloth, and if necessary, beat the icing on high to restore its texture before adding to the piping bag.

Step 5: Assemble the Base

To assemble the gingerbread house, pipe the icing along the base and edges of the front wall and one side wall. Position the pieces at a 90° angle and place on your base. Prop up the pieces with small jars or cans.

Repeat the process with the back wall and a second side. Let icing dry for at least 30 minutes. The exact time will depend on how thick the icing is applied, but it should be dry to the touch.

Step 6: Attach the Roof

To attach the roof, pipe icing along the peaked edges of the front and back walls. Position roof pieces into place and let fully dry before decorating.

Step 7: Decorate

Now that your house is assembled, it’s time to decorate.

The way you decorate your house is entirely up to you, but some traditional ways include candy canes, gumdrops, cookie wafers and frosting. You can use the royal icing used to assemble the house and any other colorful, edible items you would like.

SHARE YOUR PHOTOS: Show off your skills! #CBGHOLIDAYSHOW2026