

If you are a fan of crop art, you may wish to visit [www.cropart.com](http://www.cropart.com), the website created by master crop artist David Steinlicht decades ago. In recent years, the site has been lovingly maintained, for no remuneration, by master crop artist Teresa Anderson and her husband Joel. The Andersons took on the task of updating the website before the recent explosion in popularity of this uniquely midwestern craft form.

My crop art story took a turn this year. I am generally a rule-follower, but this summer both of my entries to the Crop Art competition were disqualified for rule infractions. And I think that's the correct result.

I have been submitting political crop art to the Fair for a quarter of a century. My past pieces have included Goodnight, Buffoon; Curious George Looks for Weapons of Mass Destruction; Charlton's Web; POTUS the Tortoise; The Little Golden Book of Sedition; Dick and Jane Have to Have a Baby Sister; and The Very Hangry Caterwauler. With one slight oops — I used sesame seeds in 2010 — I have followed the rules scrupulously. Until this year, that is.

My first mistake was failing to cross-reference the Minnesota Department of Agriculture's "noxious weed list" specifically noted in the Crop Art rules ([www.mda.state.mn.us/plantsinsects/minnesota-noxious-weed-list](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/plantsinsects/minnesota-noxious-weed-list).) If I had exercised due diligence, I would have discovered that crown vetch — a beautiful purplish red oblong, shiny seed I've been using since at least 2010 — is now on the forbidden seed list. (I can tell myself that I would not have won a ribbon in the natural colors category anyway, because Elizabeth Schreiber's stunning portrait of David Lynch objectively is far superior artistically to my silly entry, but that tastes like sour grapes.)

If I were to try to exert external blame, I might say that my second mistake was caused by the people who make up the Crop Art rules, because they eliminated a category I would have used for my second piece, Senior Citizen Crop Art, Advanced. "Advanced" is for people who have won at least 3 blue ribbons in the past; such folks are not permitted to enter in the "amateur" category even though some of us have never gone pro. (The Senior Citizen category still exists for amateurs.)

But the blame again is on me. I shoehorned my piece into a different category, "Special Occasion, Advanced." The rules say that the "special occasion" must be "clearly incorporated into the piece and noted on Legend Card." While I clearly noted the occasion (Metro Surge) on my legend, I only "subtly" (not "clearly") incorporated it into my piece. One can infer that a call to abolish ICE is intrinsically related to Metro Surge, but there was no explicit reference to the events in Minnesota in the winter of 2026. Shame on me.

I have learned my lesson. Whether the sanctions prevent me from competing in the future, I cannot say. In 2007, my then-12-year-old son submitted his last-ever crop art entry, the sentiment of which remains true: “Tru-Luv 4-Evah, My Mom + Cropart.”

——— Laura Melnick has won 24 blue and 9 purple (best in show) ribbons for her crop art. She didn’t win anything this year.