

# Horticulture 2017 Newsletter

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## Video of the Week:

[When is Watermelon Ripe on the Vine?](#)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### K-State Commercial Vegetable Research Field Day - August 14



This workshop is held at the K-State Olathe Horticulture Research and Extension Center. There will be a detailed tour of their high tunnels while research projects will be discussed, so bring your walking shoes! The mobile produce cooler will be on display too. Stick around for a cookout in the shade after the tour hosted by the OHREC staff and students. For more information, go to <http://hnr.k-state.edu/events/2017%20GG%20Vegetable%20Research%20Tour.pdf>

## TURFGRASS

### Recommended Tall Fescue Cultivars



Though several cool-season grasses are grown in Kansas, tall fescue is considered the best adapted and is recommended for home lawns. The cultivar K-31 is the old standby and has been used for years. However, there is a myriad of newer cultivars that have improved color, density and a finer leaf texture. Most of these newer varieties are very close to one another in quality.

Each year the National Turfgrass Evaluation Trial rates tall fescue varieties for color, greenup, quality and texture.

Quality ratings are taken once a month from March through October. The cultivars listed below received an average rating of 6.0 or above when 2013 and 2014 ratings were averaged. Note that K-31 consistently rates at the bottom. The highest rated cultivars were Thor, Michelangelo, GTO, Traverse 2, Technique, Maestro, Firebird 2, 4th Millennium SRP, Reflection, Black Tail, Avenger II, Falcon V, Terrano, Rowdy, Rockwell, Rhambler 2, Hot Rod, Firewall, Bizem, Titanium 2LS, Hemi, Firecracker, Leonardo and Grande 3.

There are a number of other cultivars that did not make this list but should do well in Kansas. Go to [http://www.ntep.org/states/ks2/ks2\\_tf.htm](http://www.ntep.org/states/ks2/ks2_tf.htm) for access to the data. Keep in mind that mixes of several varieties may allow you to take advantage of differing strengths. It is not necessary for mixes to contain only the varieties mentioned above.

Though K-31 may still be a good choice for large, open areas, the new cultivars will give better performance for those who desire a high-quality turf. (Ward Upham)

### **Kentucky Bluegrass Variety Selection for Cool-Season Lawns**

Though Kentucky bluegrass is not as heat and drought tolerant as tall fescue and the warm-season grasses, it is commonly used in northeastern Kansas, where there is sufficient annual rainfall. It is also grown under irrigation in northwestern Kansas where the higher elevation allows for cooler summer night temperatures. The following cultivars have performed well compared to other bluegrasses in this region. Use this list as a guide. Omission does not necessarily mean that a cultivar will not perform well.



Recommended cultivars for high-quality lawns, where visual appearance is the prime concern, include Alexa II, Aura, Award, Bewitched, Barrister, Belissimo, Beyond, Diva, Everest, Everglade, Excursion, Ginney II, Granite, Impact, Midnight, NuChicago, NuGlade, NuDestiny, Rhapsody, Rhythm, Rugby, Skye, Solar Eclipse, STR 2485, Sudden Impact, Washington and Zifandel. Such lawns should receive 4 to 5 pounds nitrogen per 1,000 square feet per year and would typically be irrigated during dry periods to prevent drought stress.

Cultivars that do relatively well under a low-maintenance program with limited watering often differ from those that do well under higher inputs. Good choices for low maintenance include Baron, Baronie, Caliber, Canterbury, Dragon, Eagleton, Envicta, Kenblue, North Star, and South Dakota.

Instead of the 4 to 5 pounds of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet per year, low-maintenance program would include 1 to 2 pounds of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet per year. Obviously, a low-input lawn will not be as attractive as a higher-input lawn, but you can expect the cultivars listed above to look fairly good in the spring and fall, while going dormant in the summer. (Ward Upham)

## FRUIT

### Fertilize Strawberries



An August application of nitrogen on spring-bearing strawberries is important in order to increase the number of strawberries produced next spring. Plenty of daylight and warm temperatures during June, July and August promotes the growth of new runner, or daughter, plants. As daylight hours dwindle and temperatures grow cooler in September and October, fruit buds for the next year's fruit crop develop. To get a good berry crop next spring, it is important for

strawberry plants to be vigorous during this period of fruit bud development.

Nitrogen, applied mid August, will help promote fruit bud development. A general application rate is  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{3}{4}$  pound of actual nitrogen per 100 feet of row. The nitrogen may be in the form of a fertilizer mixture such as ammonium phosphate or 12-12-12, or in a fertilizer containing only nitrogen such as urea or ammonium nitrate. Some specific examples would include:

Iron + (11-0-0) at 6 pounds per 100 feet of row.

12-12-12 at 5.5 pounds per 100 feet of row.

Nitrate of Soda (16-0-0) at 4 pounds per 100 feet of row

Ammonium sulfate (21-0-0) at 3 pounds per 100 feet of row

Urea (46-0-0) at 1.5 pounds per 100 feet of row

On sandy soils, the rate may be increased by about a half. After spreading the fertilizer, sprinkle the area applying at least a half-inch of water to move the nitrogen into the strawberry root areas. (Ward Upham)

### When Are Apples Ready to Pick?



Apples mature over a long period of time depending on variety. Some varieties such as Lodi can mature in July and others as late as October. Here are some guides to help you decide when to pick your apples.

*Color change:* As apples mature, the skin color in areas of the stem and the calyx basin at the bottom of the apple turns from an immature green to a light-yellow color. Some apples will develop a red

skin color before they are ripe, so this is not a reliable indication of maturity.

*Flavor:* This is a good guide if you are familiar with the apples you have and know how they should taste. Even if you do not know the characteristic flavor of the kind of apple

you have, you can still sample slices of a few apples and decide if they have a sweet flavor. If they are not ready to harvest, they will taste starchy or immature. If apples have already fallen and taste a bit starchy, store them for a period to see if they become sweeter.

*Flesh color:* As apples mature and starches change to sugars, the flesh changes from very light green to white. When you cut a thin slice and hold it up to the light you can see the difference.

*Days from bloom:* The number of days from bloom is a reliable guide for general maturity time, but weather conditions will have some influence. Some kinds of apples and approximate days from bloom to maturity are Jonathan, 135, Delicious, 145, Golden Delicious, 145, and Winesap, 155 days. This process may be slower than usual due to the cooler weather this year.

*Seed color:* The seeds of most apples change from light green to brown as the fruit ripens. This indicator should be combined with other changes since it is not absolute. The flavor of the apples, the change in color of the stem and calyx basins and flesh color are important in deciding if apples are ready to harvest. (Ward Upham)

## VEGETABLES

### Harvesting Winter Squash



Summer squash such as zucchini and scallop are harvested while immature but winter squash such as acorn, hubbard and butternut are harvested later, in the mature stage, after the rind is tough and seeds have developed. We normally think September is the time that winter squash are harvested. Harvesting too early leads to fruit that shrivels and rots.

There are two main characteristics that help tell us when winter squash are mature: color and rind toughness. Winter squash change color as they become mature. Butternut changes from light beige to deep tan. Acorn is a deep green color but has a ground spot that changes from yellow to orange when ripe. Gray or orange is the mature color for hubbard.

A hard, tough rind is another characteristic of mature winter squash. This is easily checked by trying to puncture the rind with your thumbnail or fingernail. If it easily penetrates the skin, the squash is not yet mature and will lose water through the skin -- causing the fruit to dry and shrivel. Also, immature fruit will be of low quality. The stem should also be dry enough that excessive water doesn't drip from the stem.

Winter squash should be stored cool with elevated humidity. Ideal conditions would be 55 to 60 degrees F and 50 to 70 percent relative humidity. Under such conditions, acorn

squash will usually last about 5 to 8 weeks, butternuts 2 to 3 months and hubbards 5 to 6 months. (Ward Upham)

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To view Upcoming Events: <http://hnr.k-state.edu/events/index.html>

The web version includes color images that illustrate subjects discussed. To subscribe to this newsletter electronically, send an e-mail message to [cdipman@ksu.edu](mailto:cdipman@ksu.edu) or [wupham@ksu.edu](mailto:wupham@ksu.edu) listing your e-mail address in the message.

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