Horticulture 2023 Newsletter

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Blog Post: http://www.ksuhortnewsletter.org

Video of the Week: High Quality Grass Seed: Worth the Extra Expense
https://kansashealthyyards.org/all-videos/video/high-quality-grass-seed-worth-the-extra-expense

REMINDERS

- Transplant cabbage, broccoli and cauliflower to their final location.
- Plant salad crops such as lettuce, radishes, spinach, turnips, mustard and other greens from mid-August to early September for a fall harvest.
- Harvest vegetable crops on a regular basis for season long production

TURFGRASS

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.

Recommended cultivars for high-maintenance lawns and low-maintenance lawns differ. High quality lawns are those that have irrigation to prevent stress and receive at least 3 fertilizer applications per year.

Lawns under a low-maintenance program may provide limited watering and fertilization.
Instead of the 4 to 5 pounds of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet per year typical of high-maintenance turf, a 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. A listing of both high-maintenance and low-maintenance cultivars can be found here. (Ward Upham)

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 are 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.

We recommend a regional blend of tall fescue cultivars that are commonly available in local garden centers and hardware stores. National blends such as those in big box stores often do not do well in Kansas as they frequently contain cultivars that do

not stand up to our stressful Kansas conditions. Pay special attention to the percent "Crop Seed" and "Weed Seed." Anything over 0.01% of either of these would not be recommended.

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

FRUIT

Pears

Pears are typically ready for harvest from now through October. Don't wait until fully ripe to harvest though; pears left to ripen on the tree may develop a gritty texture. Harvesting at maturity but before peak ripeness along with a chilling period can bring out the sweet flavors we love from pears.

Pears that are ready for harvest change to a darker green color. Some varieties will have brown spots on the skin. These are the fruits' "breathing pores" known as lenticels. The lenticels are white or greenish-white on immature pears and change to brown at maturity. The fruit will develop a waxy coating and will separate easily from the branch when twisted. Mature fruit should have a pear aroma.

When harvesting, carefully remove the fruit by lifting it at an angle and twisting. Avoid damaging the twig where it attaches as this could negatively impact fruit development next year.
Refrigerate newly harvested pears at 31 to 50 degrees F for two days to several weeks depending on the variety.

To complete ripening, remove pears from the cold storage and allow to sit at 60 to 65 degrees F for one to three weeks. Conditions that are too warm may cause the fruit to rot instead of ripening. (Cynthia Domenghini)

TREES

Tubakia Leaf Spot of Oaks

Description: Dark, circular spots 1/4 to 1/2 -inch in diameter. Adjacent spots may become joined creating larger splotches.

Life Cycle: Spores from Tubakia leaf spot overwinter on the twigs and leaves of diseased trees. In the spring the wind and rain cause spores to travel spreading the disease to new hosts.

Damage: Tubakia leaf spot is most common in red oaks but can also be seen in maple, elm and hickory trees. The damage is typically apparent this time of year into early fall and is mostly an aesthetic problem. Spots that appear on leaf veins cause the tissue to die and in extreme cases can result in leaf drop.

Control: The best control is prevention. Ensure trees are not under environmental stress by maintaining proper soil moisture. Clean up debris in the fall to remove spores that may try to overwinter. Chemical treatment is not recommended. (Cynthia Domenghini)

VEGETABLES

Harvesting Winter Squash

Spaghetti squash, butternut, acorn and hubbard are all examples of winter squash. Contrary to their summer squash relatives, such as zucchini, winter squash varieties should not be harvested until they have fully matured. Harvesting too soon will result in produce that shrivels up and lacks flavor. Mature winter squash can be stored longer as well.

Mature winter squash will have a hard rind that cannot be easily sliced with your fingernail and the color will be deeper. To harvest, cut the squash away from the vine leaving about two-inches of stem attached to the fruit. Handle the squash with care to avoid damaging the rind. Any winter squash that has a damaged rind or is harvested without a stem attached will not store well and should be used soon after harvest.

Winter squash should be stored in a cool, dry area. For the best air flow and to prevent rot, store in a single layer and avoid allowing the fruit to touch. (Cynthia Domenghini)

MISCELLANEOUS

Composting: Choosing a Bin

Composting within a bin is not a requirement for decomposition to occur. However, containing your compost piles in some manner serves several purposes including keeping a tidy appearance and expediting decomposition.

An ideal compost pile should be no larger than 3 ft x 3 ft x ft. This is a manageable size for turning by hand and reduces the likelihood of compaction. At this size the pile will generate enough heat to improve decomposition and kill off pests and weed seeds within the pile. Do not make the pile any larger than 5 ft x 5 ft x 5 ft.

Compost bins that facilitate regular turning can be purchased, but a more cost effective option is to build one. Compost bins can be built using a variety of materials including some that can be sourced free such as pallets. Here are plans for some do-it-yourself options https://extension.missouri.edu/publications/g6957

A common compost setup uses three bins to store materials throughout the stages. The first bin stores green material. The second bin holds the actively decomposing material and the third bin houses the finished compost that is ready to be used.
Here is a video to help with selecting the compost bin system that is right for you.
https://kansashealthyyards.org/all-videos/video/composting-choosing-a-bin (Cynthia Domenghini)

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