

# Horticulture 2023 Newsletter

## No. 36 September 12, 2023

1712 Claflin, 2021 Throckmorton Plant Science Cntr.  
Manhattan, KS 66506 (785) 532-6173

---

**Video of the Week:** [Cuttings to Grow Inside for the Winter](#)

### REMINDERS

- Fertilize cool-season lawn (Kentucky bluegrass or tall fescue) if not yet done.
- Dig gladiolus when foliage begins to yellow and air dry before storing.
- Buy spring-flowering bulbs. Plant in late September through October.

### TURFGRASS

#### Lawn Seeding Timing



Although September is typically the preferred month to reseed cool-season lawns, such as tall fescue and Kentucky bluegrass, with the heat we have been experiencing throughout the state, postponing may be a good idea. When temperatures are elevated as they have been recently, newly-planted seeds need additional water. Homeowners who put down seed during the heat may find themselves watering several times a day. By middle to late September, we should have relief from triple digits allowing homeowners time to re-seed.

Our usual recommendation is don't plant Kentucky bluegrass past early October. However, you can get by with an early to mid-October planting for tall fescue. October 15 is generally considered the last day for safely planting or overseeding a tall fescue lawn in the fall. With a late seeding, take special care not to allow plants to dry out. Anything that slows growth will make it less likely that plants will mature enough to survive the winter.

Seeding after the cut-off date can work, but the success rate goes down the later the planting date. Late plantings often fail as a result of poorly rooted plants being heaved from the soil after repeated freezing and thawing. Roots are then exposed and quickly dry out. Help the seedlings establish a healthy root system prior to freezing weather by keeping them well-watered. See the August 29th newsletter for information on how to seed or overseed a lawn. (Cynthia Domenghini)

### VEGETABLES

#### Harvesting Sweet Potatoes

Cold soil negatively affects the quality of sweet potatoes in taste and shelf-life. To prevent this, harvest prior to the first fall freeze. Sweet potatoes are typically ready for harvest three to four



months after planting. Gently unearth the sweet potatoes in one mound to check for readiness. You may also notice die-back of the above ground growth as harvest time approaches.

After digging, sweet potatoes need to be cured for several days. This process increases the shelf-life and flavor of the sweet potatoes. Curing should be done in a warm, humid location. Ideally the temperature should be between 85- and 90-degrees F with a relative humidity

between 85 and 95%.

Store sweet potatoes for several weeks before consuming. During this time starches are converting to sugars which improves the flavor. Protect sweet potatoes during storage by keeping temperatures above 55 degrees F. (Cynthia Domenghini)

### **Vegetable Crop Rotation**



Crop rotation is the recommended practice of changing the location of plants within the same family each growing season. Plants within the same family are often susceptible to similar pests. They also have similar nutrient requirements. By planting crop families in different areas of the garden each season, a common host plant is removed. Pests that overwinter in the soil or debris are not able to continue their life cycle which prevents the population from growing exponentially. Additionally, the varied root system depths and nutrient requirements prevents nutrient

depletion in the soil. Often, cabbage, peas, lettuce, onions and other cool-season crops have more shallow roots. Warm-season crops tend to have a more extensive root system.

To plan your crop rotation draw a diagram of your vegetable garden now while you remember where everything is. Next year, as you making your planting plan, reference this sketch and alternate locations for each plant family. For example, in the area where you have tomatoes this year avoid planting anything from the Solanaceae family (eggplant, pepper, potato) next year. If you planted bush beans this year, be sure to avoid planting anything from the fabaceae family (lima beans, peas, pole beans, etc.) in the same location next year. (Cynthia Domenghini)

## **ORNAMENTALS**

### **Ornamental Sweet Potatoes**

Ornamental sweet potatoes are mostly valued for their attractive foliage as it drapes down the sides of containers and spreads over the ground within planters. As with other ornamental vegetable varieties, though ornamental sweet potatoes are edible, they are grown for their



aesthetic value. Consequently, the flavor quality of ornamental varieties is often lacking. In the case of ornamental sweet potatoes, the tuberous roots are much more bitter than the edible counterpart. If you choose to consume them, follow the curing instructions in this newsletter.

Ornamental sweet potatoes can be overwintered by digging them just before the first frost and storing until it's safe to plant in the spring. Remove the above ground growth and keep the roots in moist peat moss in a cool, dark room. Alternatively, the entire plant can be moved indoors and kept as a houseplant during the winter. Check the plant first for signs of disease or pests. Cut the vines back to about one-foot and carefully transplant into the desired container. Keep the plant in a space with plenty of natural light until warmer weather returns in the spring.

(Cynthia Domenghini)

## MISCELLANEOUS

### Garden Spiders



Though some consider spiders to be unwelcomed, they are a valuable resource for pest control. The yellow garden spider is commonly found in our Kansas gardens. The body is one-inch long and has yellow markings on the dark-colored abdomen. Legs of the garden spider are black with a yellow or reddish band.

The banded garden spider is similar in size with yellow and white bands marking the legs and abdomen. The legs have black and orange bands.

These two varieties of spiders are types of orb weavers and construct large, circular webs often in bushes, tall grasses and other areas with high insect populations. These spiders are not

dangerous to humans and should be left alone to allow them to continue feeding on pests in the garden. (Cynthia Domenghini)

## Lacebugs



*Description:* Adults are 1/8 to 1/3-inch long with lace-like wings. Their bodies are lightly colored and have dark markings. Nymphs do not have wings, are darker than adults and have an oval-shaped body. Nymphs leave behind exoskeletons when they molt. These can be seen attached to plant foliage. Small, dark droppings are deposited on undersides of leaves by adults and nymphs. Eggs are small and black and can also be found on the underside of leaves.

*Life Cycle:* Lacebugs have two generations each year. Adults overwinter under tree bark or in plant debris on the ground. As plants leaf out in the spring the adults begin feeding and lay eggs which hatch within two weeks. The nymphs feed for several weeks as they molt and grow into adults. Eggs laid from this generation of adults mature and feed through summer and into fall.

*Damage:* Lacebug damage is often seen on oak and sycamore trees in our area. Some other hosts include: hawthorn, pyracantha and cotoneaster. Adults feed on leaves using a piercing mouthpart. This creates a stippled look on the leaf which can result in discoloration and premature drop if the infestation is heavy.

*Control:* Control measures are not recommended as we prepare for fall. Trees and shrubs have adequately stored food for the winter so lacebugs will not negatively affect an otherwise healthy tree/shrub at this point in the season. (Cynthia Domenghini)

### Contributors:

Cynthia Domenghini, Instructor  
Ward Upham, Extension Associate

Division of Horticulture  
1712 Claflin, 2021 Throckmorton  
Manhattan, KS 66506  
(785) 532-6173

For questions or further information, contact: [cdom@ksu.edu](mailto:cdom@ksu.edu), [wupham@ksu.edu](mailto:wupham@ksu.edu) OR [cdipman@ksu.edu](mailto:cdipman@ksu.edu)

This newsletter is also available on the World Wide Web at:

<http://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/info-center/newsletters/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.

Brand names appearing in this newsletter are for product identification purposes only. No endorsement is intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products not mentioned.

K-State Research and Extension is committed to making its services, activities and programs accessible to all participants. If you have special requirements due to a physical, vision or hearing disability, or a dietary restriction please contact Extension Horticulture at (785) 532-6173.

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity employer. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension Work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, as amended. Kansas State University, County Extension Councils, and United States Department of Agriculture Cooperating, Ernie Minton, Dean