

Horticulture 2024 Newsletter

No. 1 January 8, 2024

1712 Claflin, 2021 Throckmorton Plant Science Cntr.
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Video of the Week: [Paperwhite Narcissus](#)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Horticulture Newsletter Needs Assessment: Share your 2023 Hort Newsletter Experiences!



Each year we distribute a survey to our readers to help us understand how to serve you better. Please take a moment to share your K-State Hort Newsletter experiences so we can improve this resource. Scan the QR code to the left or follow the link to a brief survey. All responses are anonymous. Thank you!

[Horticulture Newsletter Needs Assessment](#)

Horticulture 2023 Indexed

All of the articles published in the 2023 Horticulture Newsletter have been indexed according to subject. Carole Brandt, one of our Johnson County Extension Master Gardeners has undertaken this time-consuming task. Carole has linked all of the articles making this valuable resource. Thank you, Carole, for taking on this project for that past 15 years!

[Horticulture Newsletter 2023 Subject Index](#)

Happy New Year!

Welcome to the new year and all the opportunities that come with it. This year our team has decided to focus on a theme to guide our 2024 Hort Newsletter. While we will still provide timely content for your gardening efforts, we will also be sharing monthly content on the topic of mental health and well-being as it relates to horticulture. We look forward to this positive addition to our newsletter and how it will support us all as we grow.

MENTAL HEALTH MONDAY

Gardening for Mental Health and Well-Being



Returning to “normal” after the holiday rush can make January a challenging month. Combined with the often-dreary weather and visits with family and friends coming to an end. It is important to have something to look forward to.

Research has shown mental health benefits associated with gardening including reducing depression, anxiety and increase satisfaction with quality of life (Ainamani et al., 2021). Perhaps you have your own experiences with such benefits and that’s why you continue to garden.

Gardening can alleviate stress by providing food security. It is a source of physical activity and can serve as a social hobby. Each of these benefits supports why gardening is valuable for our mental health.

January is designated as Mental Wellness Awareness Month and with alarming reports of the prevalence of mental health concerns in youth and adults alike, there is reason to bring attention to this campaign. This may be the year to seek out someone you know who could benefit from time in the garden. Maybe they need a gardening mentor or space to grow a few veggies. Perhaps you’re the one who could use more time in the garden.

Instead of waiting for the warm weather to arrive to start gardening and reaping the wellness rewards, check out the indoor gardening activities included in this week’s newsletter. Here’s to a year of improved well-being through gardening.

FLOWERS

Forcing Paperwhites



A member of the *Narcissus* genus, paperwhites are spring bulbs that are easy to force into bloom. Begin with healthy bulbs from a reputable source. Store bulbs in a cool, dry location until planting.

Choose a clear, shallow dish (approximately three inches deep) that does not have drainage holes. Add a one-inch layer of washed gravel or decorative stones to the base. Place the bulbs on top of the rocks and use additional gravel or stones to hold them in place. The tops of the bulbs should remain visible. Fill the container with enough water to keep the base of the bulbs wet.

Keep the container in a cool, dark location initially to promote root growth. Then move it to a south-facing window until the bulbs begin to bloom. Keep flowers in a cool location away from direct sunlight to prolong the bloom period. Paperwhites can be expected to bloom within 8 weeks of planting.

Important Notes:

- The bulbs should never be submerged completely underwater. They should also not be allowed to dry out. Maintain the water level at the base of the bulbs throughout their growing period.
 - Paperwhites can be forced in a soilless mix as well. Use a container with drainage holes and plant the bulbs so the top third is visible. Keep the media moist.
 - Paperwhite bulbs should be placed within one inch of each other in the container.
 - The linear leaves of paperwhites will commonly fall over. They can be propped up with decorative supports or grown in a taller, glass container to hold them upright.
- Alternatively, Cornell University has researched a method of “pickling” paperwhites to prevent leaves from drooping. Details can be found here:

https://www.hort.cornell.edu/miller/bulb/Pickling_your_Paperwhites.pdf

VEGETABLES

Starting Onions Indoors



If grown from seed, onions need to be started indoors 10 to 12 weeks prior to the transplant date. Onions are typically planted in mid- to late-March to avoid the summer heat. Place seeds ½ to 1-inch apart in a tray filled with seed-starting media. Keep the tray in a warm location (75-80 degrees F) until seeds germinate. When the seedlings are one to two-inches tall, move the tray to a cooler location (60-65 degrees F). Provide adequate light and use a water-

soluble, general-purpose fertilizer no more than once per week when seedlings reach two to three inches in height.

Starting Garden Transplants from Seed



It's not too early to begin gathering seeds for the spring garden. Select seeds from reputable sources to ensure high quality. Saving seeds from previous crops can yield unexpected results due to cross pollination. Unless you have a specific reason for saving seeds, such as continuing an unusual species, this practice is not recommended. Quality seeds are often treated for disease and pest resistance helping them produce a more reliable crop. The best start for your garden is from healthy seeds.

Starting transplants for the vegetable garden typically requires four to eight weeks from seeding to transplant date. Visit the [Kansas Garden Guide](#) where you can find the Average Expected Planting Calendar to know when the best start date is for seedlings intended for transplanting into the garden.

Always use a disease-free, soilless planting media or seed-starting mix for seeds. The containers for seed-starting can be individual cups, trays or even recycled containers as long as they have drainage holes in the bottom. Fill the container with a couple inches of media and then lightly cover the seeds with the mix after planting. Keep the soil moist until the seeds germinate and keep the containers under lights in a warm location.

When the seedlings have grown two to four small leaves, they are ready to be transplanted into small pots. This will allow them to continue growing until it's time to transplant into the garden.

An important step for successfully transplanting seedlings into the garden is allowing time for hardening off. This should typically be started about ten days before the transplant date and involves gradually acclimating the seedlings to the outdoor conditions by reducing the amount of water the plants receive while slowly increasing their exposure to the outdoor conditions. This prevents the plants from experiencing transplant shock so they can continue normal growth when they are transplanted.

MISCELLANEOUS

Coping with Rascally Raccoons



Raccoons are very intelligent, resourceful animals that often live around farmyards in hollow trees, holes created by other animals, brush piles, abandoned vehicles, farm machinery and buildings. Raccoons are omnivorous, meaning that their diet is very diverse and can include plant material such as fruits and nuts, animal matter from earthworms and insects, reptiles, amphibians, small mammals and birds. While raccoons are fascinating animals, their broad diet, intelligence, and willingness to live close to humans can lead to conflicts with

people and pets and the need for some form of control.

Kansas is a state that allows for removal of animals that are causing damage to property as long as they are not protected by the federal Endangered Species Act, Migratory Bird Treaty Act or are a state-protected species. As a furbearing animal, raccoons have a season on their harvest (mid-November through late February), but landowners, legal occupants, or a Nuisance Wildlife Control Operator (NWCO) may use lethal means to remedy a problem that is being caused outside of the legal season and without a license to harvest as long as they use a legal method and do not try to utilize the animal that has been removed.

There are no registered pesticides for raccoons, opossums, skunks, armadillos or any similar species in Kansas and it is illegal to use fly bait, rodenticides or any other product with the intent to kill raccoons. One of the main reasons we have restrictions like this is because we need to be able to target the species that we are intending to control, and it is nearly impossible to put out a product that smells and tastes good enough for a raccoon to consume a lethal dose without also exposing non-target wildlife, pets, livestock and even people to the product. It is unethical to place a poison in an indiscriminate way, especially when there are options available that are humane, relatively easy to implement and highly selective.

Raccoons are easy to trap using equipment that excludes non-target species and makes it easy to release them unharmed. Municipalities often have restrictions that require cage traps to be used or may even prevent homeowners from conducting their own trapping within city limits so always check local laws before beginning a wildlife control program.

Kansas residents experiencing raccoon damage have several options for receiving assistance with lethal control efforts. Local trappers and hunters are often happy to have the opportunity to harvest raccoons on new properties, especially during the Kansas furbearer season. There are also many NWCOS throughout the state who will provide wildlife damage control assistance for a fee. It is important to first take steps to discourage raccoons from migrating to your property by not feeding pets free choice outdoors, removing bird and other wildlife feeders and securing trash containers. For additional information on wildlife management, please visit the KSRE Wildlife Management [website](#).

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

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