

# Horticulture 2024 Newsletter

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**Video of the Week:** [Easy to make Grow Light](#)

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**REMINDER:** Share your 2023 Hort Newsletter Experiences!



We have had great feedback from readers about our 2023 Hort Newsletter. We hope to make the 2024 Hort Newsletter an even more useful resource for our subscribers. Please take a moment to share your K-State Hort Newsletter experiences so we can better serve your needs. 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](#)

## LANDSCAPE

### Managing Plants in the Cold and Snow



With Kansas's cold weather and snow, there are a few things to consider for plant protection. First, snow is a good thing! In addition to bringing moisture, snow that sticks around serves as insulation against colder temperatures and desiccating wind. For small shrubs and perennials, leave snow where it lands to protect them from further injury and provide winter moisture when it melts. Evergreen trees and shrubs, particularly Arborvitae and plants with multiple

leading stems, may need to have heavy snow loads knocked off to prevent breakage.

When clearing snow from paved surfaces, avoid piling it onto plants or near plants sensitive to salty runoff or splashing from vehicles. Parking lots are often cleared by pushing snow into large piles- make sure not to pile snow on top of low-growing plants or in a way that crushes plants or damages tree trunks. Large piles of snow take a long time to melt, and evergreen plants need to photosynthesize in the winter so avoid burying them under a mountain of snow.

Chemical treatments used to prevent human falls on hard surfaces can be detrimental to ornamentals and pets. Consider alternative de-icing salts like calcium chloride and calcium magnesium acetate and follow the label instructions. Sand can also help provide traction. (Cheryl Boyer)

## HOUSEPLANTS

### Are My Houseplants Receiving Enough Light?

Plants have many ways of communicating their needs to the grower. Too much or too little light will trigger responses from plants. Not all plants have the same lighting requirements. While



many houseplants are well-suited to traditional house lighting, those of us who have brought in our flowers, succulents and other outdoor plants to overwinter in the living room may have plants that are trying to tell us something. Determine the lighting needs of your specific plants and adjust accordingly.

Too much light? Indoors, too much light is typically a concern for plants kept in a south or southwest facing window. Artificial lights that are kept too close to plants or left on for too long can also cause stress. If your plants are beginning to display spots on the leaves that are pale or faded this could be symptoms of excessive light.



Too little light? Plants with insufficient lighting are not able to efficiently produce chlorophyll. Consequently, they may lose their green coloring turning to a paler shade of green or even white. As the plants attempt to grow toward the light source the stems can become elongated or “leggy”. Leaves may drop prematurely and flower buds may not develop. Plants that should be variegated may become solid in color.

If low light is a problem for your indoor growing, check out the video of the week for a grow light you can easily make for your home. If you plan to start seeds indoors, grow lights may be necessary to ensure seedlings receive enough hours of light at the right intensity. (Cynthia Domenghini)

## TURF

### Effects of Ice on Turfgrass



When temperatures drop below freezing ice forms inside the plants. Ice that forms outside plant cells (extracellular freezing) is typically not a problem. However, plant cells cannot survive ice that forms inside the cells.

The most important part of the turfgrass plant regarding survival is the crown, or growing point. Ice forming outside cells inside the crown is common and usually not harmful. It can become an issue, primarily in warm season grasses, like bermudagrass, when temperatures are very cold for extended periods of time. This forces water inside cells to exit toward the ice. Too much water leaving the cells will cause dehydration, which can cause the crown to die.

In the central US we don't deal with extended periods of ice cover on turf. Ice cover can result from sleet, freezing rain or snow melting and refreezing. Being under ice cover for more than 60 days can start to cause issues with lack of oxygen and/or accumulation of toxic gases under the ice.

We do see ice develop on leaf surfaces of turfgrasses, otherwise known as frost. Cool-season grasses tolerate frost on leaves just fine. Warm-season grasses don't like frost and will often go dormant shortly after the first hard frost in the fall. Foot traffic on frozen turf can cause problems as ice crystals are pushed through the leaf surface and puncture cells causing them to collapse. The result is often brown patches of turf where the foot traffic was present.

Protect your lawn by avoiding walking on it when frost is present. Also keep tools such as mowers, wheelbarrows and carts off the grass during these conditions. (Jack Fry)

## MISCELLANEOUS

### Conservation Trees from Kansas Forest Service



The Kansas Forest Service Conservation Tree Planting Program offers tree and shrub seedlings for use in conservation plantings including wildlife habitats, windbreaks, wood lots, timber plantations or educational and riparian plantings. Seedlings are one to two years old and vary from 8 to 36 inches tall.

Bare root and container-grown seedlings are available. Bare root seedlings should be planted as soon as possible though they can be stored for a couple of days in the shipping box if kept in a cool, shaded location. To store longer than this, keep the sealed box at 33 to 38 degrees Fahrenheit. Another option is to "heel in" the seedlings. Heeling in seedlings requires digging a V-shaped trench. Remove the seedlings from the packaging and cover the roots with soil in the trench. Pack firmly and water thoroughly. Seedlings should be planted in their permanent location before they begin growing. Drying out is a common cause of planting failure for seedlings. Protect the seedlings by wrapping them in wet burlap and/or keeping the roots covered in moist medium until planting.

Container-grown seedlings should also be planted as soon as possible for the greatest chance of success. If the planting is going to be delayed proper care must be given to ensure survival. Remove the plants from the cardboard shipping box and store them upright in light shade. Protect the seedlings from wind and saturate with water three times per week.

The Kansas Forest Service offers instructions for planting and care of tree and shrub seedlings ([Tips on Planting Trees and Shrubs](#)). Orders are accepted now through May 1<sup>st</sup>, but order early to ensure availability. Shipments begin mid-March. Orders may be picked up as well. To place an order call 1-888-740-8733 or visit [kansasforests.org](http://kansasforests.org).

## QUESTION of the WEEK



*"How should I be watering my young trees during the freezing temperatures?"*

The extreme cold temperatures have many gardeners wondering what to do with trees and shrubs. On days when the temperature is above freezing, and if the soil is not frozen, it is safe to water. Apply water deeply, at least 8-12 inches, to ensure most of the roots are being reached. The first few years of establishing trees and

shrubs it may be necessary to water every two to four weeks if there has been little to no precipitation. To determine if water is needed insert a metal rod into the soil. If it can be inserted easily up to 12 inches deep the soil is likely sufficiently moist. Dry soil is more difficult to push through so if there is resistance to the metal rod, it is probably time to add water.

Did you know K-State offers a [Horticulture Resource Center](#)? This is designed to facilitate your success in gardening. Find links to our current and past newsletters, common plant and pest problems, recommended plants and contacts for expert analyses. We can also help you find your local extension office for region-specific advice.

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