

Horticulture 2024 Newsletter

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1712 Claflin, 2021 Throckmorton Plant Science Center
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Video of the Week: [Flower Bed Design](#)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Survey SAYS... Results from the 2023 Hort Newsletter Needs Assessment are rolling in and we are learning a lot from you. We have heard that you want more content about growing fruits, vegetables and turf but also you'd like to learn from other gardeners in Kansas. Today we are responding to that request with our first Garden Spotlight.



For those of you who haven't had a chance to tell us what you want from YOUR 2024 Hort Newsletter please take a few minutes to follow this link (or scan the code above) and tell us all about it. [Horticulture Newsletter Needs Assessment](#)

Tech Complications

As you know, K-State has experienced campus-wide IT complications. While some of the problems have been resolved, we are continuing to have issues with certain online resources. This is impacting some of the links shared through the newsletter. We apologize for this inconvenience and hope it will be repaired soon.

LANDSCAPE

Increasing Winter Interest in the Landscape



The garden chore list is minimal at this time of year though many gardeners are deep into the planning phase for the upcoming growing season. Now is the perfect time to evaluate your landscape for winter interest and identify areas for improvement. Looking for dull areas now will help you determine the shape and size of plants needed to fill the space. Here are a few ideas to get your started.

Allegheny serviceberry (*Amelanchier laevis*) is a native tree/shrub that provides year-round interest. Even after the leaves drop the form of the branches is appealing.

Blue rug juniper (*Juniperus horizontalis* 'Wiltonii') is a low-growing evergreen that is silvery-blue in color. It offers dense coverage and is resistant to deer. As long as the soil isn't constantly saturated, this is a great option for bringing low maintenance, year-round interest to the landscape.

The Coral Bark Maple (*Acer palmatum* ‘Sango Kaku’) is a 20-25-foot-tall tree with beautiful foliage that gives way to coral-colored bark in the winter. It makes a lovely focal point with its attractive leaves, fruit and branches.

These plants along with many others are detailed in the Kansas Roots resource online: <https://www.kansasroots.org/>.

TREES

Winter Care for Trees

If your trees have suffered damage from the recent ice and snow it is recommended to prune the branches as soon as possible to avoid further damage to the tree. Branches left to hang from the tree are more likely to tear the bark and expose the tree to an increased risk of disease and stress.

MISCELLANEOUS

Planting Calendar



The Kansas Garden Guide has the “Average Expected Planting Calendar” to help gardeners decide when to plant. The dates are estimates and should be altered based on the weather conditions for the current year, the varieties selected and regional considerations.

Use these dates as a guideline for your seed-starting calendar. Identify when you intend to transplant seedlings into the garden and count back to determine how many weeks earlier you need to start the seeds.

Crops such as Brussels sprouts, cauliflower and broccoli do best as transplants so they reach maturity before the heat arrives. Leeks are typically established as transplants rather than direct-seeded and seeds should be started 10-12 weeks before the transplant date. They can be difficult to find at garden centers so growing your own is typically necessary. It’s time to get a plan together to make sure you’ll have veggie starts this spring.

SCHOOL GARDENS

Thinking of Starting a School Garden?



Research has shown gardens can be used to extend the learning across the curriculum from math and science to language arts, history and more. Managing the school garden is often a barrier to starting and maintaining a program. If you’re an educator or know an educator who would like to incorporate gardening into the classroom, we have resources to help.

School Garden Planning:

Finances play a role in any gardening venture, but for school gardens this barrier can prevent a program from getting in the ground. Sometimes the costs fall on the educator who is managing the program. There are ways to supplement garden programs to reduce costs, but this requires planning.

Now is a great time to start collecting and asking students to bring in recycled containers for seed starting. Single-serving yogurt containers, pudding cups, lunchable trays and “to-go” containers from restaurants are a few possibilities to use for growing seeds. Students can even save their milk cartons from the lunchroom.



There are plenty of options for recycling containers for this purpose. Egg cartons are commonly recommended and can be used, but the ones made of cardboard tend to dry out very quickly and may require watering multiple times each day. Styrofoam cartons will dry out slower but because the container size is so small will still require daily watering. K-cups are another creative option for small seed-starting containers. Drainage holes will have to be added to the containers before adding soil.

Some considerations to make before asking students to bring in containers:

- How many containers do you need? Make this clear so you don't end up with an excess of materials taking up classroom space.
- Ask students to clean the containers before bringing them in. This will reduce the odor and mess in their backpacks and classroom and distribute the work of cleaning among everyone.
- Specify the type/size/material of the containers.
- Specify the end date for bringing in containers unless you want students to bring them in year-round.

Other tasks to consider for the school garden:

It's time to formalize a donation request letter to allow local businesses to partner with your garden program. Some materials to request include seed-starting mix, seeds, hand tools, hoses/watering cans and heat mats for seed starting.

Here is a link to an easy DIY for making a grow light for the classroom from [Kansas Healthy Yards](#). If you plan to do this, you may also request donations for the supplies including PVC pipe and a shop light. Check with your administrator for approval prior to installing this set-up.

Get to know your Master Gardeners. The local Master Gardener program is a tremendous resource for garden knowledge and potential volunteers.

Get students started building a compost system. Research the three-bin compost system and help students discover the benefits of compost.

It's time to get buy-in for new school garden programs. Generating the excitement now will help you establish a volunteer base to keep the garden growing year-round. Don't forget to share your progress with us!

GARDEN SPOTLIGHT

Welcome to our first Garden Spotlight. This monthly feature is intended to connect gardeners across the state as we highlight garden programs, community gardens and residential gardens. It's time to learn and grow together!

Grandma's House



When Lori bought her house in Osawatomie, KS she knew she had a lot of work ahead of her, but the opportunity to live near her grandchildren was persuasive. Initially the work kept her inside, making the home livable. However, as the indoor projects became tiresome Lori made her way outdoors and began transforming the landscape into a space she could enjoy with her grandchildren.

With any project there will come challenges and Lori had her share with this new yard. The slope of the backyard directed draining water from the neighborhood straight to her back

door. Additionally, this space, which formerly served as a play yard for an in-home daycare, was a giant sandbox. Though this sandy, sloped backyard was a new challenge for Lori, as an experienced gardener she was ready to get creative.

Lori hired a skid steer operator to adjust the slope of the backyard. Though he struggled to see her vision, Lori directed him to create upper and lower, more level, garden areas. She knew retaining walls were essential to keep the garden in place, but struggled to decide what material to use to create them. To buy herself some time she used recycled materials, such as pallets, spindles from an old stairway and scrap lumber, to build temporary support.



Compaction from the skid steer and all that sand meant Lori had to amend the soil prior to planting. As a soil lover Lori recognized the value of compost. She maintains a large pile of compost and did some deep-digging to integrate it into the landscape. Lori continues to add compost to the gardens annually and calls it "a layer of icing on the cake."



Selecting plants has also been a challenge due to the remaining slopes but after two years of renovations Lori hosted her first garden party at “Grandma’s House”. She invited friends as well as locals she barely knew to enjoy a garden tour and pie. Lori took pleasure seeing others enjoy this space she created and affectionately refers to this as her “victory lap”.

Taking full advantage of this opportunity, Lori involved her grandchildren in the learning. Lessons such as “measure once and cut twice” (this is not a typo!) and “eyeballing” gave the children freedom to take risks and learn from mistakes. It also gave them ownership of the space. Lori has observed how the gardens have allowed everyone to slow down and watch for changes as well as find beauty in the small things.

Some of Lori’s takeaways from this garden makeover:



- Once a gardener always a gardener.
- Break big projects up into smaller ones.
- Keep your vision even if others can’t see it.
- Things don’t have to be perfect to be perfectly wonderful.
- Compost is king.
- Family is priceless.

Thank you, Lori, for sharing your story.

GARDEN SPOTLIGHT Request: Let us share your garden story so we can all grow together. Email Cynthia at cdom@ksu.edu to tell your story.

QUESTION of the WEEK

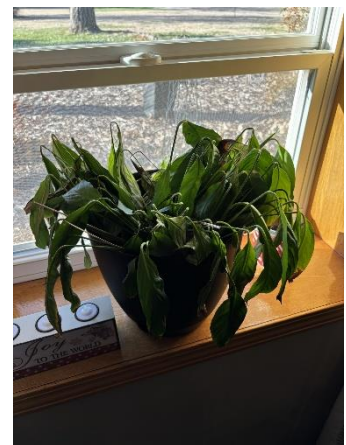


The Rapid Response Center is a service provided by K-State’s Horticulture and Natural Resources Department. Specialists respond to thousands of questions each year on a wide range of garden-related topics. Sometimes the questions we get prompt more questions before we find a solution.

Read on to learn how we work towards solving plant problems from a distance.

“What could be wrong with my Peace Lily? I’ve had it for multiple years and over the past month it has started drooping.”

Is the Peace Lily receiving the right amount of water? Be sure you only water when the soil starts to feel dry. Does the container have drainage holes? The plant should not be in standing water. If the soil dried out previously (you would see it shrinking away from the container) you will need to soak it in water for a few minutes so it can absorb water again.



Is the window drafty? Is there a heat source nearby? Sharp temperature fluctuations in either direction could cause stress to the plant.

How much light is the plant receiving? Too much light can cause these symptoms in Peace Lilies.

Have you checked for pests? Look closely on the undersides of the leaves and in the soil for tiny pests. Also notice if there is any sticky sap.

How humid is this site? Humidity levels are much lower this time of year and that can take a toll on tropical houseplants. If nothing above checks out, consider moving the plant to a more humid location such as a bathroom and see if the situation improves at all.

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For questions or further information, contact: cdom@ksu.edu OR 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>

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