

Horticulture 2024 Newsletter

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Video of the Week: [Pruning Fruit Trees](#)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

We asked. You answered. We are grateful you took the time to share your thoughts about the 2023 Horticulture Newsletter. We have been reviewing responses and making lists of changes for the 2024 Hort Newsletter. We are working on formatting updates of the email and pdf versions of the newsletter but this will take some time.

Several of you shared amazing stories of your garden. Since this survey is anonymous we cannot follow up with you. Please contact Cynthia at cdom@ksu.edu if you are willing to share your garden adventures. If you didn't have a chance to complete the survey you can access it here: [Horticulture Newsletter Needs Assessment](#).

Tech Complications

As you know, K-State has experienced campus-wide IT complications. We are pleased to tell you our online bookstore is available again. This means the links shared in earlier newsletters should now function properly.

Student Research Opportunity

We are inviting you to participate in the following survey: "The Perception and Environmental Impacts of Naturalistic and Manicured Lawns." These anonymous survey results will only be used for research purposes and will help build the knowledge base for naturalistic landscapes. The survey is easy to complete with an estimated time of 10-20 minutes and will be open for 3 weeks. At the conclusion of the survey, participants will have the option to receive an incentive for the new K-State Extension publication of naturalistic landscaping scheduled for Fall 2024. Thank you for your time and we appreciate your consideration to participate!

https://kstate.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0kdIFqOKRybBiey

GARDEN CALENDAR

- Start seeds indoors: Cabbage, Broccoli, Cauliflower, Lettuce
- Prune fruit trees now through March

FLOWERS

Sharing the Love – Valentine’s Day Flowers



Americans celebrate Valentine’s Day with gifts of flowers, candy, cards and more. In 2023, customers spent an estimated \$2.5 billion on flowers for Valentine’s Day. The rose is the most widely recognized and celebrated flower. Roses accounted for about 84 percent of the 2023 sales. Sixty-nine percent were red roses.

The rose is beautiful and versatile. Roses can be used in any type of design, from classic to contemporary. There are an abundance of commercially-grown varieties available in vibrant colors, sizes and shapes.

Bloom size, shape, speed of opening, color, petal count, petal texture, fragrance, and foliage are all points to consider as you select roses for your event.

The rose symbolizes love, romance and passion, so it’s no surprise that red roses are the most popular flower choice for Valentine’s Day. By following a few simple practices, you can ensure the longest-lasting roses.

1. Roses often come in a plastic sleeve which retains moisture. The sleeve should be removed after purchase.
2. Cut 1½ to 2 inches of each stem with a clean, sharp knife or flower snips. Uncut stems cannot efficiently absorb water needed by the flower to open fully. (Current research suggests that cutting stems under water is not necessary.)
3. Remove any leaves that will be underwater once stems are arranged in the vase.
4. Follow directions on flower food packet to mix the right amount of cold water to food ratio into the vase. Flowers need to be nourished. Professional flower food generally contains three ingredients:
 - a. Carbohydrate - (sugar) nutritional source
 - b. Acidifying agent - lowers the solution pH and improves water uptake
 - c. Microbiocide- reduces microbial growth
5. Arrange freshly cut stems into the vase.
6. Check the water level daily, repeat steps 2-5 every 2-3 days so flowers last as long as possible. Keep flowers away extreme cold, heat, direct sunlight and sources of ethylene gas (fruits and vegetables). (Irina Sheshukova)

FRUIT

Time for Fruit Trees

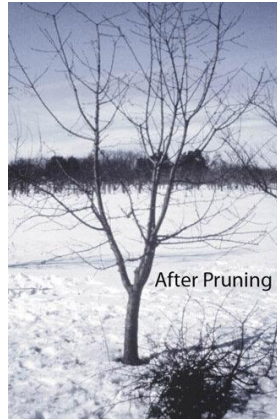


If you’re considering growing fruit planning is important. You will need plenty of space in full sun to accommodate fruit trees. Some varieties of trees will require multiple plants for pollination while others are self-fruitful. Know your soil and ensure it drains well. Be realistic about how many fruit trees you have time to manage.

Following thorough planning procedures is the best prevention against diseases and pests. This will save you time and money while also protecting beneficial insects from unnecessary pesticide use. Here is a guide from K-State Research and Extension for [Planning your Fruit Garden](#).

[Small- and Tree- Fruit Cultivars](#), is another great resource that provides information about types of fruits to consider including their harvest timing, size and pollination requirements.

Pruning Fruit Trees



For most of Kansas, it is time to start pruning fruit trees. This should be completed before active growth begins, which is typically in March. Folks in southern Kansas may need to finish pruning earlier.

Fruit trees have to be managed to promote the highest yield and healthiest plants. Pruning helps maintain the size of the trees for ease of harvest and to support the weight of the fruit. It is important to allow sunlight to reach the leaves so they can produce sugars

to feed the plant. Methodically removing branches prevents parts of the tree from being shaded and negatively affecting fruit production.

Proper pruning also allows the root system to better support a smaller structure allowing the remaining branches to grow more vigorously.

Here are some of our publications with specifics for fruit tree pruning:

[Pruning Apple and Pear Trees](#)

[Pruning Peaches, Plums, Cherries and Other Stone Fruits](#)

Peach Leaf Curl



Last year, did leaves on your peach, nectarine or apricot trees appear swollen and/or curled? Were there reddish or purplish colors on the leaves? Did the trees have premature leaf and fruit drop?

These are symptoms of the fungus, *Taphrina deformans*, commonly referenced as: peach leaf curl. If your tree(s) had it last year, prepare for a resurgence unless trees

are treated in early spring.

This fungus overwinters on the bark of the tree. Spring rains wash the spores to developing buds and leaf tissue spreading and infecting the new tissues. For this reason, it is important to treat the tree with fungicide prior to bud swell. Applying

fungicide after symptoms appear as trees leaf out is ineffective. Fungicide must be applied during spring dormancy or during fall when most of the leaves have dropped. Always follow label instructions when using pesticides.

Prevention is the best recommendation for controlling diseases. Start your orchard with fruit tree cultivars with resistance or tolerance to peach leaf curl. Provide proper care to strengthen trees and prevent stress.

For more information about peach leaf curl and fungicide recommendations visit: [K-State Research and Extension: Peach Leaf Curl and Plum Pocket](#)

VEGETABLES

Square Foot Gardening



Limits on space for vegetable gardening combined with the desire for food security led to the square foot gardening method in the late 90's. Through our Horticulture Newsletter Needs Assessment we learned some of our readers are looking for ways to garden in limited space. Square foot gardening solves that need but is also a practical strategy gardeners with unlimited space may want to consider.

The concept is simple: divide each raised bed into one-square-foot sections. Plant the garden according to the provided charts following the recommended number of plants that can grow in each square foot section. Achieve the maximum harvest with minimal space. The planting recommendations take into consideration the size of the

plants at maturity as well as compatibility for growing in close proximity. The website: squarefootgardening.org is a valuable resource for this practice.

Here are some tips to get you started:

- Build a raised bed that is 4'x4'. Though an in-ground bed can be used, starting with a square-shaped raised bed allows for precise measurements. This size allows you to grow a variety of vegetables and is easy to maintain. The raised bed can be made from wood, recycled plastic, concrete blocks and various other materials. The goal is to create a structure to outline the garden.
- Fill the raised bed with a quality growing mix. A combination of peat moss, compost and vermiculite provides aeration, good water-holding capacity as well as nutrients for the plants.
- Create a grid with one-foot square openings that lays over your garden space. The grid can be made from wooden lath boards or another material.



(Getty image)

School Garden Tip: Educators, can't you just imagine all the connections between square foot gardening and math??? This method is perfect for schools because of the educational value as well as making the most out of limited space, time and budget. If you're looking for ways to incorporate math into the garden reach out to us for resources.

[Square Foot Gardening Planting Chart](#)

DISEASES/PESTS

Scale Insects



Varying in size and host, scale insects cause damage by sucking sap from plants. Their damage is not restricted to just trees and shrubs. They can devastate crops of herbaceous ornamentals as well. The time for investigating plants for scale is here and early detection is the best way to prevent crop damage.

Many scale varieties have white, tan or brown shell-like coverings that are round or oval in shape. They can blend into the bark so close inspection is necessary. If signs of scale are found, a dormant oil can be used as long as the plant is in dormancy and the temperature is above 40 degrees F. Dormant oils are beneficial because they can combat a wide range of life stages for scale insects. They are also less detrimental to beneficial insects because of the application timing and are less toxic than chemical controls. Read more about the use of [dormant oils](#) from K-State Extension Entomology.



Here are some resources to check out for more information about specific scale insect varieties and their hosts.

[Euonymus Scale](#)

[Magnolia Scale](#)

[Pine Needle Scale](#)

[San Jose Scale](#)

COMMUNITY GARDEN CORNER

Growing for the Community



Community gardens serve a number of purposes including fresh produce, social interaction and learning opportunities. I once helped establish a community garden in downtown Baltimore, MD where the goal was to turn abandoned lots into productive garden spaces. City beautification is among the many benefits community gardens can bring. With all these advantages come challenges too. Some are familiar to all gardeners but some are unique to community gardening.

Everyone has their own style of gardening. Some gardeners are meticulous about weeding while others are not. In a shared space, allowing weeds to set seed has an impact on the surrounding gardeners as well. Using community garden funds to keep a large mulch pile onsite for gardeners to use is one strategy to prevent this scenario. Planning regular “community workdays” where all gardeners are encouraged to work side-by-side is another option. Turn workdays into fun social events by playing music and having a potluck lunch when the work is done.



Clear, concise rules and regular communication go a long way for success in the community garden. February is a great time to bring the gardeners together for a planning meeting. Allow everyone to contribute and establish the rules for the year based on what worked well and what needs to improve from last year. During this meeting create a contact list with everyone’s email and phone number. Plan the calendar for the year including several celebrations. Focus on building community and get everyone working towards the same goals.

Funding is another challenge for community gardens. Charging a fee to individual gardeners who grow in each plot helps to offset these costs. This also results in the gardeners being more invested (literally) in caring for their space. Another source for funding is sponsorships. You may seek funding, even small amounts, from neighboring businesses who appreciate the beautification work your group is doing. Sponsors may be recognized with their company logo on community garden t-shirts, signage or by having their name(s) engraved on the tools they helped purchase.

If you are looking for resources to establish a new community garden or find an existing community garden in your area, contact your local extension office.

QUESTION of the WEEK



“Fall came and went and I never got my tulip and daffodil bulbs in the ground. Should I try to plant them now or wait until next fall?”

This is a common question this time of year. The problem with waiting to plant the bulbs until next fall is they are likely to rot due to unsuitable conditions.

Examine the bulbs. If they are still firm go ahead and plant them. They will probably not bloom in the spring. In fact, they may not bloom for a full year, but at least they weren't wasted.



Alternatively, the bulbs can be forced to bloom indoors. Remember, many spring-flowering bulbs require a certain number of weeks of cold temperatures. You can plant the bulbs in containers and keep them chilled for the required time. Then move the containers to a bright room indoors to promote blooming.

Either way, planting the bulbs gives them a much better chance of survival than storing them any longer.

COMING UP NEXT WEEK...

The Return of the Permaculture Feature

In the Permaculture feature next week the topic of “Growing Native Plants” will be highlighted. Why should we use native plants? What are some good options for urban landscapes? Can I grow native plants in my balcony garden? These questions and more will be considered. Stay tuned!

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For questions or further information, contact: cdom@ksu.edu OR cdipman@ksu.edu
This newsletter is also available online at:
<http://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/info-center/newsletters/index.html>

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