

# Horticulture 2024 Newsletter

## No. 9 March 4, 2024

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

---

### Video of the Week: How to Trap a Mole

Dr. Drew Ricketts shares about moles and the proven best method for eliminating them. Learn how to identify mole damage, locate the best runs for trapping and how to set a variety of styles of mole traps. Some mole traps could be available to rent or borrow from your local KSRE office. <https://youtu.be/Vjcllp2li1s?si=fXyJPLCqDmABdqBs>

## ANNOUNCEMENTS



### Selecting & Planting Fruit Trees for Kansas

Wednesday, March 6th 12:00PM -1:00PM CST

Join Rebecca McMahon, K-State Research and Extension Local Food System Program Administrator, and Anthony Reardon, Johnson County Horticulture - Small Farms Extension Agent, as they discuss the best fruit tree selections for Kansas, varieties to be on the lookout for, and how to go about planting and caring for them.



Register Here!

Please register for this free Zoom Webinar at:  
[ksre-learn.com/KStateGardenHour](https://ksre-learn.com/KStateGardenHour)



### **“A Gathering for Gardeners”**

The Hutchinson Horticulture Club invites gardeners to gather for a day filled with information galore about flowers, veggies and much more. Saturday, March 9, 2024 at Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in Hutchinson.

## GARDEN CALENDAR

### Planting

Crop	Type of Planting	Timing
asparagus	crowns	mid-March to mid-April
lettuce	seed	mid-March to early-April
leeks	transplant	mid-March
peas	seed	mid-March
potatoes	seed	mid-March to early-April
rhubarb	crowns	March to April
rutabaga	seed	mid- to late-March
spinach	seed	mid- to late-March
turnip	seed	mid- to late-March

### Pruning

- [Deciduous trees](#)
- [Summer-Flowering/Non-Flowering Shrubs](#)

### Scouting

- [Iris Leaf Spot](#)
- Apply fungicide for [Peach Leaf Curl](#) prior to bud swell

### Turfgrass

Cool season grasses:

- [Control broadleaf weeds](#)
- [Aerate lawn now through April](#)

Warm season grasses

- [Control broadleaf weeds](#)

## MENTAL HEALTH MONDAY

### Gardening for Life

The wellness benefits of gardening are available for all ages. Varied abilities among gardeners means adaptations to traditional practices are necessary. There are many tools and tricks to make this possible. Keeping gardeners safe, regardless of age, is key to a successful growing season.

### Tasks



Be realistic about what can be accomplished each day. If you're gardening with a child, plan to spend plenty of time exploring and learning alongside him/her. If time is of the essence, save these tasks for more experienced helpers or independent gardening. Hire a crew or seek other help to complete tasks in a timelier manner.

Make a list of the tasks that need to be accomplished each day and complete them in an order that varies the movements. Spending hours kneeling and weeding is going to put strain on joints which can result in long-term damage. Instead, spend 15 minutes weeding each day followed by a task that requires different movement and posture.

Minimize maintenance. Select plants recommended for your area. Use automatic irrigation or a soaker hose to reduce the amount of time spent watering. Limit the garden size. Supplement your harvest by visiting the farmers market. You can grow less and do good by supporting local farmers.

Observe the garden from a different perspective. Identify ways to improve accessibility such as increasing the raised beds to standing height. If there is a body of water, is it fenced to protect young children? Is the pathway level and safe to walk on? Is there a section of the garden that steals your joy? Change it!

### *Tools*

Ensure proper maintenance of all tools. Keep pruning tools sharp so less effort is required to make each cut. Keep wooden handles free from splintering. Here is a resource from K-State to assist with keeping tools clean and sharp:

<https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/mf3288.pdf>

Use lightweight tools such as those made with plastic, carbon, fiber or aluminum handles. Handle the tools prior to purchasing to ensure they are a good fit. Most gardeners tend to prefer lightweight tools with a long handle. This prevents bending over to work and adding strain to the back. Short-handled tools may be a better fit for gardening while seated. The handle of the tool can be thickened to improve grip by wrapping it with layers of tape or adding a foam pad.

A universal cuff is an adaptable device that can be added to most hand-held tools as a grip aid. Gardeners who lack a strong grip can use a hand cuff to assist them in holding tools including the garden hose. The arm cuff supports the hands and wrists to decrease strain while performing tasks such as cultivating and digging.



Kneeling pads/benches can protect joints while also reducing soil compaction. Rolling garden seats allow the gardener to sit while weeding and planting. It can be pulled through the garden to provide a place to rest as well. A bag installed on the side of the kneeling bench or seat can offer a place to store hand-held tools so they are easy to find. Pulling a wagon or other wheeled cart is helpful for gathering debris and transporting plants while reducing the strain to your body and the risk of tripping.

Invest in a good pair of gloves that will accommodate any gardening task. This will protect you from cuts and the potential for infection.

Store tools in a central location. Avoid leaving tools out where they can become a trip hazard. Unplug power tools and never leave tools unattended when gardening with children. It is important for young gardeners to learn tool safety which includes supervision.

### *Design*



Keep pathways smooth and level to reduce fall risks. Use contrasting path materials, sound or plants to define areas of the garden.

Bring the garden to you. Bountiful gardens can be grown in many ways. Window boxes, raised beds and a multitude of container types facilitate gardening while standing or seated. Keep the size of planters less than three feet across to reduce the need for reaching. All points in this size planter can be reached with short handled tools.

Rest and relax. Place a comfortable seat in a shaded area of the garden. On days that are predicted to be warm, do garden work in the early morning hours. Take frequent breaks, wear a hat and sunscreen. Bring your phone with you to the garden, especially if you garden alone, in case help is required. Bring a book to the garden to encourage you to take a break and do some reading in the shade.

There are many considerations to make when designing a garden that is safe for everyone. If you are planning to establish an accessible garden we have resources to help.

- [Gardening with Older Adults for Health and Nutrition](#)
- Accessible Gardening for All - K-State Garden hour: <https://youtu.be/pvp8lZd3cn0>

### **Seed Tape**



Seed tape is a method of preparing seeds for planting. It is a great option for gardeners of all ages because it reduces the amount of time spent bending over the ground. It also makes it easier to handle small seeds and get proper seed spacing.

To make a seed tape cut a paper towel into strips 2 inches wide by 12 inches long. Create a paste by mixing  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup flour with water. Use a ruler and pencil to mark dots at the proper spacing for the type of seed being planted. (See the seed packet for recommended plant spacing.) Put one seed on each dot on the paper towel. Put a small drop of the flour paste on top of each seed. Allow the paste to dry before moving the seed tape.

At the appropriate time, each seed tape can be planted at the proper depth in the garden. The seeds will germinate through the paste. Over time, the paper towel will dissolve into the garden. Toilet tissue and tissue paper are other options for making seed tape.

This activity is perfect for getting children involved. Sit together at a table and create an assembly line for an efficient way to get the garden growing.

<https://kansashealthyyards.org/component/allvideoshare/video/making-your-own-seed-tape>

## VEGETABLES

### Rhubarb



Rhubarb is a perennial vegetable native to Asia. The leaf stalks are used for jellies, sauces and pies.

Success growing rhubarb starts with well-drained soil. One of the biggest concerns is crown rot. Begin with healthy, disease-free plants, and plant in well-drained or mounded soil.

Weed control is essential. Eliminating weeds surrounding rhubarb plants reduces habitats for pests. Mulch can be used to limit weed growth. Monitor plants for signs of slugs and snails.

Plant rhubarb crowns from mid-March through early April. If you're planning to divide existing rhubarb plants this should only be done with plants at least three years old. Plants that have been growing for five to ten years will lose productivity if not divided. Established crowns can be divided into smaller plants as long as each has a large "eye" or bud. Dig a shallow trench and bury each plant so the bud is ½ to 1-inch below the soil surface. Space plants two to three feet apart. Gently pack the soil over the plants.

During the first year of growth rhubarb should not be harvested. A few stalks can be harvested during the second year. This will allow plants to become well-established and highly productive. The harvest window lasts about eight weeks.

If seed stalks develop, which is not uncommon, break them off right away to direct energy to the crown and roots.

Rhubarb leaves contain oxalic acid which can cause sores on the mouth if eaten. The stalks are the only edible part of the plant. [K-State Research and Extension Rhubarb](#)

## TURF

### Buffalograss Lawn



Buffalograss is a warm-season grass native to Kansas and much of the Midwest, with excellent heat, drought and cold tolerance. It is important to understand the characteristics of your site before determining if buffalograss is an adequate fit.

Buffalograss grows best in an area receiving morning sun and 6-8 hours of sunlight throughout each day. It is not recommended to plant buffalograss in poorly drained areas or sandy soils. For non-irrigated sites, planting is recommended in the spring once soil temperatures reach 55 degrees F. An optimum seeding rate is 1.5 to 2 pounds of buffalograss burrs (1 to 5 seeds in a burr) per 1,000 square feet.

Buffalograss is dioecious, which means there are male and female plants. In seeded areas, you can see the inflorescences (male flowers) on male plants emerge several inches tall. The female plant produces a flower close to the soil and is not as noticeable. Ultimately, several seeds are produced within the female burr. There are vegetative buffalograss cultivars that can be purchased which are most typically plugged for establishment. They are generally the female plants (no visible seedheads during the growing season).

You can learn more about cultivars, establishment and management here: [Buffalograss Lawns](#) (K-State Turf and Landscape Blog)

## QUESTION of the WEEK



*“Will the drastic temperature drop at the end of February cause damage to fruit trees that have bloomed?”*

Determining how much damage will be done to fruit trees as a result of the cold depends on bloom stage, length of the cold period, how low the temperature was and type of fruit.

During dormancy, fruit tree buds are hardy to winter temperatures. As the buds develop and swell, they lose their hardiness and become more susceptible to cold injury.

Washington State University published a chart that shows the effect of cold temperatures on fruit trees during varying stages of flowering. You can reference that chart here: <https://cpq.treefruit.wsu.edu/critical-temperatures/>

Here is an example to help you understand how to read the chart. For apricot trees in their first bloom period, 10% of the buds would be damaged/killed after 30 minutes at 24 degrees F. 90% of the buds would be damaged/killed at 14 degrees F for 30 minutes at that same flowering stage.

## COMING UP NEXT WEEK...

The **Community Garden Corner** returns with advice from experienced gardeners. More of your questions answered and shared through the “**Question of the Week**” feature.

### **Contributors:**

Cynthia Domenghini, Instructor and Horticulture Extension Specialist  
Kansas Garden Guide  
Kansas Healthy Yards  
K-State Turfgrass Blog

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) 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 [cdom@ksu.edu](mailto:cdom@ksu.edu) or [cdipman@ksu.edu](mailto:cdipman@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.