

# Horticulture 2024 Newsletter

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### VIDEO OF THE WEEK: [2-Minute K-State Turf Extension Video: Fall Seeding](#)

As we approach Labor Day it's time to think about re-seeding areas of your lawn that have suffered from stress. Kansas State assistant professor of turfgrass, Dr. Ross Braun, shares the benefits and process of seeding in autumn!



### GARDEN TO-DO

- Light pruning of shrubs and trees where 10% or less of the plant is removed can be done any time of year. Heavier pruning should be done in the spring.
- Fertilize strawberry bed for added flower bud development and larger crop next year.
- Too late to spray for bagworms but can pull them off and dispose of them if practical.

### TURF

#### Fall Lawn Tips

September is the best time to seed cool-season grasses.

#### *Seeding New Lawns*

- Use good quality, certified seed; avoid seed with significant levels of “weed” and “other crop.” (See last week’s newsletter - #33 – for an explanation of these terms.)

- Use recommended seeding rates and distribute well. Seeding at a rate higher than recommended can cause issues with disease and environmental stress.
- Good seed to soil contact is critical! Aeration prior to seeding is one way to promote this. Topdressing and raking to cover seed are some other methods of enhancing seed to soil contact. Thatch build-up will hinder seed to soil contact. See core-aerating below if thatch is a problem in your lawn.
- Light, frequent irrigation is necessary the first few weeks after planting and may be required several times daily depending upon weather. Soil should remain moist but not waterlogged.
- Minimize traffic on the area until seedlings are ready to be mowed. Begin mowing once seedlings reach 3-4 inches tall.



#### *Overseeding an Existing Lawn*

- Prior to planting, mow the area low (1 to 1-1/2 inches) to reduce competition with seedlings and help improve seed contact with soil.
- Apply fertilizer based on soil test results or use starter fertilizer at rate recommended on the bag.
- Water light, but often keeping soil moist but not waterlogged.

#### Fertilize cool-season grasses.

- Use a quick-release source of nitrogen.
- Apply 1 to 1-1/2 pounds of actual nitrogen per 1,000 square feet.

#### Core-aerating

- Removes cores of soil to relieve compaction, speed up thatch decomposition and improve water, nutrient and oxygen movement in soil.
- Soil should be moist but not saturated.
- Holes should be 2-3 inches apart and 2.5 to 3 inches deep.
- Cores can be left on the surface and will break down naturally

## VEGETABLES

### Cover Crops for the Off-Season



Cover crops are grown for many benefits including to improve soil quality, reduce weeds and erosion and sometimes to promote the garden ecosystem by providing food sources for pollinators. They are typically not grown for their harvest as the primary benefit.

The best cover crop for your garden depends on the purpose, planting time and planned method of terminating the crop.

Small grains such as wheat should be seeded from mid-September to late October at a rate of 3/4 to 1 pound of seed per 1,000 square feet. Spring oats

can also be seeded until mid-September but the rate should be 2 to 4 pounds per 1,000 square feet. Spring oats will die back in the winter and can be tilled under in the spring. Daikon radishes are another good cover crop because the large taproot penetrates the hardpan. After the radishes die back in the winter, the loosened soil is better able to retain water.

Hairy vetch, alfalfa and sweetclover are legumes which means they fix nitrogen. Seed these cover crops at a rate of  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  pound of seed per 1,000 square feet of garden. Hairy vetch and alfalfa can be seeded from mid-August to late September while sweetclover should be seeded only until early-September. Visit the [Kansas Garden Guide](#) for more cover crop recommendations for home gardeners.

## FLOWERS

### Dividing Peonies



If your peonies didn't bloom as expected this year it's possible they need to be divided. Peonies don't require dividing often, but doing so periodically can promote healthier plants. You also get the benefit of increasing your plant collection.

Cut stems just above the soil surface. Dig up the entire root system and remove the soil from the roots. Divide the root clump into small sections using a sharp knife. Each section should have three to five buds and healthy roots. Sections with fewer buds will take longer to bloom.

Choose a planting location that receives sunlight for at least half of the day. Dig a hole large enough that the roots and buds will be covered by one to two-inches of soil.

Plants buried too deep may not flower. Backfill and water thoroughly. Space dwarf peonies at least two-feet apart and standard peonies four-feet apart.

It may take a couple of years for the divided plants to return to full bloom productivity. Kansas' winters have periods of freezing and thawing which can uproot plants. Protect newly divided peonies, by covering them with a layer of straw, leaves or compost after the soil freezes.



## MISCELLANEOUS

### Composting Tips

Composting at home provides gardeners with a free source of nutrient-rich soil amendment. Knowing what is in your compost is a great way to ensure you are not introducing problems into the garden. Here are a few quick tips for success if you're new to composting.

- Turn the pile at least once a month to rotate materials from the center and promote



decomposition. The pile will heat up as it decomposes and cool as decomposition slows.

- Create a depression in the top of the pile to allow water to collect and slowly seep through the layers of the mound.
- When deciding where to establish a compost pile, look for a water source. Water is essential for efficient decomposition and close proximity to supplemental water will allow you to keep the pile moist even during periods of drought.
- Smaller materials decompose faster. When possible, shred materials before adding them to the heap especially “browns” such as dry leaves and twigs.
- Fats and meats should **not** be added to the compost heap. They will attract wildlife.
- Grass clippings from a lawn treated with crabgrass killer should **not** be composted. If crabgrass preventer or dandelion killer has been used on the lawn, the clippings can be composted after the third mowing.
- Only add fresh plant material that is disease-free.

## GARDEN SPOTLIGHT

### Barclay Flower Farm



Wendy Barclay shares her love for flowers and respect for natural ecosystems through her cut flower farm. She has learned a lot through her years of studying horticulture and freely shares her advice with others to help everyone succeed.

Learn from Wendy in this month's Garden Spotlight: [Barclay Flower Farm](#)

## QUESTION of the WEEK



### Field Bindweed

*I have field bindweed in my planter bed and can't seem to get rid of it. Do you have recommendations for controlling it?*



Kansas Department of Agriculture (KDA) lists field bindweed (*Convolvulus arvensis*) as a category C noxious weed. This means it is well-established across the state and efforts should be made to control the population and prevent further spread.

This perennial weed is a non-native that reproduces by seed but also by root. Field bindweed's root system is extensive reaching up to 20-30 feet deep. Flowering is already well underway and fruiting takes place from

August through October, which means if you have this weed in your garden it's preparing to spread even further.

Controlling field bindweed is the responsibility of all landowners and based on noxious weed laws it's also a requirement. Preventing weeds from establishing/spreading is an important strategy that can be facilitated through crop rotation, cover crops and informed tillage practices. While mechanical methods alone may not eradicate this weed, according to KDA, cultivation can restrict nutrients to the roots and help with controlling the spread, but it must be done every two to three weeks during the growing season. Cultivating now is important to prevent the field bindweed from setting seeds.

Gardeners who are interested in learning more about controlling field bindweed can read best practices provided by KDA here: [Official Control Methods for Field Bindweed](#).

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