Horticulture 2025 Newsletter
No. 04 March 18, 2025

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Garden Spotlight

Send in your garden stories! Last year our Hort Newsletter featured six different gardeners/garden programs.

We love learning about our fellow Kansas gardeners and want to feature your home/community/school garden in our newsletter so we can all grow together.

Email hortsupport@ksu.edu to find out more.

Harvey County Home and Garden Show "Birds and Blooms"

March 22 (8:00AM-5:00 PM) – March 23 (Noon-5:00 PM)

Hosted at the 13-acre Dyck Arboretum, the 2025 Harvey County Home and Garden Show has great food, vendors and an amazing speaker line-up addressing this year's theme "Birds and Blooms". For just $1 admission you can spend the weekend enjoying the scenery while getting a great education as you prepare for the growing season.

"Birds and Blooms" Speaker Schedule 2025

Johnson County Healthy Yards Expo

March 29, 2025 (9:00AM – 2:00PM)

A free family and earth-friendly event. Explore and discover sustainable options for your home and garden through expert advice and educational seminars. Plus, a native plant sale and door prizes. Visit: johnson.k-state.edu or call (913)715-7050 for more information

VIDEO OF THE WEEK:

Establishing a Native Prairie Stand at Home

(K-State Garden Hour March, 2025)

Learn how to establish a native prairie habitat at home and the benefits of creating this beautiful ecosystem.

GARDEN CALENDAR

Planting

asparagus	crowns	mid-March to mid-April
beets	seed	late-March to early-April
bok choy	seed/transplant	late-March to early-April
broccoli	transplant	late-March to early-April
cabbage	transplant	late-March to early-April
carrots	seed	late-March to early-April
cauliflower	transplant	late-March to early-April
chicories	seed/transplant	late-March to early-April
collards	seed/transplant	late-March to early-April
kale	seed/transplant	mid-March
fennel	seed	mid-March to early-April
kohlrabi	seed	mid-March to early-April
lettuce	seed	mid-March to early-April
leeks	transplant	mid-March
mustard	seed	late-March to early-April
onion	sets/plants	mid-to late-March
parsnips	seed	mid-March to early-April
peas	seed	mid-March
potatoes	seed	mid-March to early-April
radish	seed	mid- to late-March
rhubarb	crowns	March to April
rutabaga	seed	mid- to late-March
spinach	seed	mid- to late-March
Swiss chard	seed/transplant	late-March to early-April
turnip	seed	mid- to late-March

Pruning

- Ornamental Grasses
- Blackberries and Raspberries
- Deciduous trees
- Summer-Flowering/Non-Flowering Shrubs

Scouting

- Iris Leaf Spot
- Apply fungicide for Peach Leaf Curl prior to bud swell
- Pear Rust

Turfgrass

Cool season grasses:

- Control broadleaf weeds
- Aerate lawn now through April

Warm season grasses

- Control broadleaf weeds

VEGETABLES

Asparagus

Asparagus is a perennial vegetable harvested in the spring. Begin with healthy, disease resistant crowns and plant from mid-March through mid-April. Crowns should be spaced 18 to 24 inches apart with the crown buds seven to eight inches below the soil surface. Once established, asparagus is fairly hardy to stress but it does require full sun and well-drained soil.

During year one, do not harvest asparagus spears. Each year after, harvest regularly before the spears reach 10 inches tall. Snap the spears at about ½ to ¾ inch above the soil surface. Stop harvesting after 6-7 weeks when the spears only reach the diameter of a pencil or smaller. Store the harvested spears in the refrigerator and use soon after harvest.

Asparagus should be fertilized in early spring and weed regularly to reduce competition.

FRUIT

Strawberries

From mid-March through early-April it's strawberry planting time in Kansas. As long as the soil is ready to be worked (not frozen or saturated) you can plant. If your soil hasn't been tested for a few years, it is best to have that done to inform your fertilization practices. Strawberry plants can be purchased from a reputable garden center. https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/mf598.pdf

If you have existing strawberry plantings and they are covered from the winter protection, wait to uncover them until the soil is about 40 degrees F. Measure the soil temperature several inches down at the center of the strawberry bed. Once the soil temperature is warm enough, remove the top layer of straw to allow new growth to emerge. Leave the bottom layer in place so the berries will develop on top and won't have to rest in the soil.

TURF

Crabgrass

Crabgrass is a summer annual. It germinates in spring and dies in the fall. It has a different texture and color than turfgrass creating a non-uniform lawn. It also sets seeds and can spread throughout the landscape. Lawns that are not well maintained are prime targets for crabgrass invasion.

It is easiest to control crabgrass before it germinates using preemergence. May 1 is typically when crabgrass is expected to germinate throughout much of Kansas, but this does vary depending on location and weather patterns. Many homeowners use signals from nature to determine preemergence timing.

A common guideline is to apply crabgrass preemergent when redbuds are in full bloom. While this is an indicator, it's not going to provide 100% accuracy since microclimates exist within each landscape. In warmer areas of the landscape, crabgrass is likely to germinate earlier.

Soil temperature is a useful indicator to predict crabgrass germination. Using the K-State Mesonet you can access the average soil temperature at a two-inch depth over the past seven days. When the daily average is 55 degrees F for about five days, research suggests this is the time to apply crabgrass preemergence. https://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/horticulture-resource-center/common-pest-problems/documents/Crabgrass.pdf

Why Weeds Invade Lawns

Instead of combatting weeds all season, take a proactive approach to prevent weeds. Here are some common reasons why weeds invade lawns.

- Improper Mowing: Mowing too low and too infrequently thins the turf, allowing weeds to get started.
- Improper Watering: Frequent watering encourages weed seed germination, disease, thatch, and a shallow-rooted turf that is less competitive with weeds for soil moisture and nutrients.
- Improper Fertilizing: Fertilizing too much, too little or at the wrong time may benefit weeds more than grass.
- Insect and Disease Injury: Weeds rapidly invade lawns that are thinned by insects and diseases.
- Compacted Soil: Soil compaction is a hidden stress on the turfgrass root system. The grass is unable to compete effectively with weeds.
- Excessive Wear: Turf areas used for recreation and sports are subjected to wear and compaction.

- Wrong Kind of Grass: The wrong kind of grass for the location will gradually decline and be invaded by weeds.
- Environmental Stress: Weeds often take over a lawn after it has been weakened and thinned from weather-related stress.
- Thatch: Excessive thatch causes shallow-rooted grass and contributes to insect and disease problems.

https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/mf2385.pdf

Turf Substitutes

Though a thick, healthy lawn can be a beautiful part of the landscape, if you're ready for change there are several alternatives to traditional turf. Japanese spurge, English ivy and periwinkle are three ground covers that are good options for an alternative lawn.

Certain ground covers perform well in compacted soils that are unsuitable for a traditional lawn. Areas with little sunlight may not be conducive to growing turf but can be a great environment for perennials. Keep in mind that it may take more time to establish a thick groundcover lawn and it won't tolerate heavy foot traffic, but once established it will be less maintenance and can stand up to weeds. Here are a few ground cover options to consider:

- Bugleweed (*Ajuga spp*.)
- Periwinkle (*Vinca minor*)
- English ivy (*Hedera helix*)
- Creeping lily-turf (*Liriope spicata*)
- Lamb's ear (*Stachys byzantina*)
- Japanese spurge (*Pachysandra terminalis*)

Pollinator lawns are designed to provide sustenance for bees and other pollinators by combining turfgrass with flowering ornamentals. Though aesthetically this option lacks the uniformity of a manicured lawn, pollinator lawns require less irrigation, fertilization, mowing and weeding once established. It is important to select turfgrass species that are compatible with the flowering plants and to choose ornamentals that fit the growing conditions.

Here are some plants to consider for a pollinator lawn:

- Dutch white clover (*Trifolium repens*)
- Self-heal (*Prunella vulagris spp. lanceolata*)
- Creeping thyme (*Thymus praecox spp. arcticus*)
- Common violets (*Viola sororia*)
- Dandelions

When selecting a turf substitute beware of invasive growth habits. Lily of the valley and goutweed are two groundcovers that can be problematic if not managed.

MISCELLANEOUS

Right Plant in the Right Place

If you're starting new plants in your lawn and garden this spring think ahead. Choosing the right plant to fill voids in the landscape is essential success.

Know the water needs of the plant and the water availability of your landscape. Understand the growth characteristics of the plant including height and spread at maturity, rate of growth, thorns/fruiting habit, etc. Determine if those qualities will fit within the space you have available. A small, young tree may look nice planted in front of your home, but as it grows will it block your view out the window? Will this still be a desirable location? Likewise, a thorny bush planted next to a sidewalk may be fine when the shrub is small, but as it grows and approaches the sidewalk it may become a hazard requiring regular pruning to contain it.

As you shop for new additions to the landscape keep these points in mind. Informed decisions early in the landscaping process will save you time and money.

QUESTION of the WEEK

"Am I too late to plant potatoes?"

In Kansas the ideal planting time for potatoes ranges from beginning to late March and even into April. If you have seed potatoes to plant, go ahead and get them in the ground within the next two weeks for the best harvest.

Be sure you are using loose soil with good drainage. Provide consistent water and keep up with weeding. Side-dress the rows with nitrogen or an all-purpose fertilizer per label recommendations.

Contributors:
Cynthia Domenghini, Instructor and Horticulture Extension Specialist
Kansas Garden Guide

Division of Horticulture
1712 Claflin, 2021 Throckmorton
Manhattan, KS 66506
(785) 532-6173

For questions or further information, contact your local extension agency.
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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