



# Horticulture Newsletter

**June 23, 2026**

**KANSAS STATE  
UNIVERSITY**

Horticulture and  
Natural Resources

## Video of the Week:



As we saw in last week's video, tomato plants can experience many challenges. These problems change throughout the growing season, and in this second video in the two-part series, we'll continue exploring more of the most common tomato problems, including sun scalding, fruit cracking, calcium deficiency, and stink bug damage. [This week's video continues with part two of some of the most common tomato problems in Kansas](#), and in only two minutes, will help you identify more of the common tomato issues to be looking for this summer: <https://kansashealthyyards.org/all-videos/video/common-tomato-problems-part-2>

## Announcements:

### **July K-State Garden Hour:**

Join us next week, on Wednesday, July 1, 2026, for the next K-State Garden Hour webinar on "Addressing Food Insecurity Through Extension". The presentation will be live from Noon to 1pm. Discover how K-State Extension is working to support the many facets of our local food systems, and how you can get involved ensuring sustainable and resilient food access for all. Register to join us live, or view the recording afterwards online at: [www.ksre-learn.com/KStateGardenHour](http://www.ksre-learn.com/KStateGardenHour)

#KSTATEGARDENHOUR

## K-STATE GARDEN HOUR

### Addressing Food Insecurity Through Extension

Wednesday, July 1st 12:00PM -1:00PM CST

While growing produce is a meaningful way to combat food insecurity, navigating the complexities of our food systems is necessary to improve food access for all. Join Anthony Reardon, Johnson County Horticulture - Small Farms Extension Agent, as he explores how Extension is working to support the many facets of our local food systems, ensuring sustainable and resilient practices that create future food access for all.

Register Here!

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

**KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY**  
Extension

### **Get Local Help In Diagnosing Gardening Issues:**

As gardeners reach the peak of the growing season in Kansas, they often encounter an increasing number of unfamiliar issues. Insects, diseases, environmental stresses, and our own gardening practices can all contribute to problems in the lawn, garden, and landscape. Fortunately, every one of Kansas's 105 counties is served by a

local K-State Extension office to help diagnose these issues. Many of these offices have staff on hand with horticulture expertise, and some even offer dedicated gardening hotlines. Be sure to utilize your local extension office for help diagnosing and solving your gardening challenges this summer. [Visit our website to learn more](#) about contacting your local extension office, and to find out which locations offer a dedicated garden hotline: <https://extension.k-state.edu/master-gardener/garden-help/hotlines.html>

## **Garden Calendar:**

- Continue a regular fruit disease and insect control program.
- Plant pumpkins and other summer squash. Late plantings help to avoid some squash bug pressure.
- Remove sucker growth from base of trees and along branches.
- Water and fertilize annual flower plantings regularly to encourage growth and flowering.
- Check annual and perennial plants for insects such as spider mites, aphids, and budworms.
- Let grass clippings fall back to the soil for nutrient recycling. Do not bag grass clippings.
- When mowing, be sure not to damage tree trunks with mowers and string trimmers.
- Repot houseplants as needed in containers that are at least 1" larger than the current pot.

## **Vegetables:**

### **Plant Sweetpotatoes Now:**

Sweetpotatoes are a valuable and nutritious crop that can be successfully grown across Kansas with the proper care. Sweetpotatoes are usually planted from late May to the end of June, in order to avoid any chance of cold injury.

Sweetpotatoes will grow in a wide variety of soil types, but produce best on sandy loam soils with good drainage, which promote good root shape and quality. Avoid planting in heavy or poorly drained soils, which can lead to misshapen roots and increased rot problems. Overly rich soils should also be avoided, as they may reduce yield.

Whenever possible, plant sweetpotatoes on raised ridges 10 to 12 inches high. Doing so improves soil drainage in heavy soils and allows soils to remain loose, improving both the size of potatoes and ease of harvest. Plants should be spaced about 12 inches apart in rows, with rows spaced at least three to four feet apart. Sweetpotato vines can easily spread six to eight feet wide.

Unlike most vegetables, sweetpotato plants are established from “slips,” or transplants, produced from sprouted roots in hotbeds or greenhouse benches. Slips should be 8 to 10 inches long with a strong root system at planting. Slips can often be purchased in bundles from your local garden center. In some cases, slips may be sold without roots, but can still be established successfully. Be sure to provide adequate water to new slips at planting. Plants may wilt dramatically after planting, but usually recover and establish rapidly after a few days.





Sweetpotatoes are adapted to grow well in drier weather, but thorough watering is important while the slips are initially being established. Occasional, deep watering in the summer during dry periods will improve yields. Manage weed development early in the growing season. As plants grow, dense vine growth will help to suppress weeds later in the year.

Sweetpotatoes usually require between 90 to 120 days from planting to harvest, depending on the variety. Harvest before freezing weather, usually from mid September to mid-October. After digging, roots should be cured under warm, humid conditions to improve quality and storage life.

## Fruit:

### **When to Pick Blackberries:**

Blackberries should be harvested at peak maturity for the best flavor. Unlike many fruits, blackberries do not continue to ripen after being harvested. The color of the fruit, ease of separation and testing the flavor will provide the best indications of maturity.

As blackberries ripen, the fruit will soften and produce the characteristic flavor. When evaluating color, wait until the blue-black color develops on the fruit, and the fruit loses its shine, leaving a duller surface. The exact time to harvest blackberries varies by cultivar, with thorny blackberries normally ripening earlier than thornless types.



When the fruit is removed from the plant, the receptacle (or core) should remain attached to the berry, unlike with raspberries which leave the receptacles attached to the plant. The receptacle is the part that attaches to the stem and should remain attached to the interior of the fruit when harvested, however it easily separates from the plant if the fruit is ripe. Full color often develops before the berries separate easily.



Preferably, fruit should be harvested on a dry day during the cool morning hours. Pick the berries by gently lifting with the thumb and fingers. Blackberries should be harvested every two to three days, depending on weather and the cultivar, to harvest at peak maturity. It is best to store excess freshly harvested blackberries in the refrigerator unwashed. Take care not to crush the berries or expose them to the hot sun. Whenever possible, avoid picking berries when they are wet.

Visit the [Raspberries and Blackberries publication](#) for more information on growing and harvesting blackberries in Kansas:

[https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/download/raspberries-and-blackberries\\_MF720](https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/download/raspberries-and-blackberries_MF720)

## Turf:

### **Brown Patch Disease Sets In On Tall Fescue Lawns:**

As summer weather sets in, conditions of warmer nighttime temperatures and increased humidity occur. These conditions are ideal for the development of brown patch disease on tall fescue lawns. Brown patch disease is now beginning to occur around the state, as these weather conditions extend the amount of time grass blades stay wet, favoring disease development.

Brown patch symptoms develop quickly during warm, humid weather. The fungus becomes highly active when conditions are moist (such as from dew or improper irrigation) and night temperatures are above 68°F. In Kansas, these conditions are already present, and common throughout July and August.

Symptoms of brown patch can vary and be similar to those of drought. From a distance, turfgrass develops a light-brown or tan color. Damage can develop as well-defined circular patches, several inches to several feet in diameter, or as a diffuse browning across the lawn.



To confirm the presence of brown patch, look closely at the individual grass blades in the edges of the symptomatic areas. The disease causes irregularly shaped tan spots on the leaf blade that are surrounded by a dark, reddish-brown border. The lesions usually look water soaked but are always surrounded by a dark brown halo.

The fungus that is responsible for brown patch disease is primarily a leaf pathogen. It does not attack the roots. During severe outbreaks, the fungus may invade the lower leaf sheaths and crown and kill plants. In most cases, however, the turfgrass can recover from brown patch disease when weather patterns change. This recovery may take two to three weeks, depending on the weather.

There is no way to eliminate brown patch from a Tall Fescue lawn. It persists indefinitely in the soil. In almost all cases, the limiting factor for brown patch development is the weather, not the amount of fungal inoculum.

Although the brown patch fungus cannot be eliminated, many cultural practices can help manage it:

- The first and most influential factor in managing brown patch is the lawn's irrigation practices. Do not water lawns in the evening. Instead, water early in the morning to decrease the number of hours the turfgrass leaves remain wet and susceptible to infection. The frequency of irrigation is not as important as the time of day when the lawn is watered.
- When dealing with brown patch, it is also critical not to overfertilize and never to fertilize when brown patch is active. In tall fescue lawns, the majority of fertilizer should be applied in fall (September and November), not in early spring.

- When planting new grass seed, or overseeding thin lawns, be sure not to apply seed at too high of rates. Overly thick lawns are more susceptible to brown patch.
- Shady conditions and poor air flow will also increase humidity and leaf wetness. If feasible, adjust site conditions to reduce shade and improve air flow.

Fungicides to manage brown patch are available, however these products do not cure an infection already present in the lawn, but instead only serve as a preventative measure against new infections. Fungicide applications would need to begin in mid-June and continue through August, during weather that favors the disease. As a result, fungicides are not recommended in most cases. Remember that in many cases of brown patch, the turf recovers on its own within a couple of weeks after a change to cooler, drier weather. Efforts should instead be made to adjust cultural practices and promote lawn recovery.



If preventative fungicides are used, keep in mind that there are significant differences in the products available for homeowners and commercial lawn care companies. Most ready-to-use products available for homeowners contain triadimefon, myclobutanil, propiconazole, or thiophanate-methyl as their active ingredients. The effectiveness of these products is often mixed. Instead, consider hiring a commercial lawn care company. The active ingredients in commercial grade products, such as the active ingredients azoxystrobin, fluazinam, penthiopyrad, pyraclostrobin, or trifloxystrobin, will tend to perform better than the active ingredients available to homeowners.

For more information on brown patch disease and its management, visit the following publications:

- [Brown Patch in Tall Fescue Lawns: Information for Homeowners: https://www.plantpath.k-state.edu/extension/turf/documents/Brown-patch-homeowners.pdf](https://www.plantpath.k-state.edu/extension/turf/documents/Brown-patch-homeowners.pdf)
- [Commercial Management of Brown Patch of Cool-season Turfgrasses: https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/commercial-management-of-brown-patch-of-cool-season-turfgrasses\\_EP146.pdf](https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/commercial-management-of-brown-patch-of-cool-season-turfgrasses_EP146.pdf)

## **Trees & Shrubs:**

### **Watering Young Trees And Shrubs for Long-Term Success:**

Proper watering is one of the most important factors in helping newly planted trees and shrubs survive and thrive in Kansas. Unfortunately, many trees fail after transplanting because they receive either too much or too little water.

Before planting, trees and shrubs should be watered thoroughly. Water again at planting and the following day to settle the soil and eliminate air pockets around the plant roots. During the first month after planting,

trees and shrubs will generally need watering one to two times per week when rainfall is lacking. This will be most critical in the first two weeks after planting, which may require additional watering, depending on the time of year and environmental conditions.

After the first month, most newly planted trees and shrubs will benefit from a deep weekly soaking of about 10 gallons of water. Use a tree watering bag or 5-gallon bucket with one or more small holes (1/8 inch diameter) drilled in the side, near the bottom, to help measure the amount of water being applied. Sandy soils may require the water to be split into two partial applications several days apart. Larger trees need additional water based on trunk diameter.



Avoid overwatering. Constantly wet soil can damage roots by limiting oxygen, causing leaves to wilt even when water is available. All parts of the plant require oxygen to survive, so allow soils to dry slightly between waterings. Monitor soil moisture with a trowel, probe, or screwdriver and adjust watering accordingly.



During establishment, young trees and shrubs (planted within the last three to five years) will continue to benefit from supplemental watering during periods of dry weather. Continue to provide at least 10 gallons of water during every soaking but begin to gradually increase the number of days between waterings to every 10 to 14 days if it does not rain.

Building a low berm around the base of these newly planted and young trees and shrubs will help to further retain moisture from waterings. Create a berm 3 to 4 inches high outside the edge of the planting hole using excess soil from planting. This basin will help to retain moisture and avoid runoff, allowing water to soak into the root ball and surrounding soil.



The berm can be further improved by keeping it grass and weed free, and by applying a 2 to 4 inch deep layer of mulch. Mulch will help further conserve soil moisture, moderate soil temperature, and reduce competition from turfgrass and weeds for the available water. All of these will help to increase tree growth. Be sure to always keep mulch a few inches away from the trunk, however. Mulch piled against the tree trunk can eventually kill the tree by developing stem girdling roots.

Visit our [Watering Newly Planted and Young Trees and Shrubs - Best Management Practices publication](https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/watering-newly-planted-and-young-trees-and-shrubs_MF2800.pdf) for more information about watering and caring for young trees and shrubs:  
[https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/watering-newly-planted-and-young-trees-and-shrubs\\_MF2800.pdf](https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/watering-newly-planted-and-young-trees-and-shrubs_MF2800.pdf)

## Miscellaneous:

### National Mosquito Control Awareness Week:

As summer settles in and warmer weather brings mosquitoes into our daily routines, communities are coming together to celebrate **National Mosquito Control Awareness Week (June 21-27, 2026)**. This annual celebration shines a spotlight on prevention and innovation, and this year explores how communities are turning yesterday's threat into today's solution.

<b>Know Your Mosquitos</b>		
<b>Species ID Drives Treatment Decisions</b>		
 <b>Aedes spp.</b>	<b>VS</b>	 <b>Culex spp.</b>
Dark brown to black Bold, white stripes on abdomen White banded legs	<b>PHYSICAL APPEARANCE</b>	Brown Faint, pale stripes on abdomen Unbanded legs
Dusk and Dawn Daytime biter	<b>PEAK ACTIVITY</b>	Dusk to Dawn Night biter
Small, stagnant water	<b>BREEDING HABITS</b>	Open water

It is important to be able to identify mosquitoes to avoid confusion with other insects such as crane flies, gnats, moth flies, and biting midges. Mosquitoes have a long proboscis, scaled wings and a slender body. Mosquitoes can be identified to genera by their body markings, resting posture, activity patterns and breeding habitats. Common mosquito genera found in Kansas includes *Aedes* and *Culex*.

Mosquitoes are more than just a summertime nuisance, they are also a serious public health threat. These tiny insects can spread diseases such as West Nile virus, Zika virus, dengue fever, and malaria, putting people of all ages at risk. Even one neglected bucket of standing water can become a breeding ground for hundreds of mosquitoes in just a short period of time. This is why everyone needs to take responsibility in mosquito prevention.

Protecting yourself, your family and the community starts with a few simple actions:

- Eliminate standing water by dumping bird baths, flower pots, buckets, tarps, tires, and other containers.
- Clean gutters and downspouts, as these can be overlooked breeding sites.
- Irrigate gardens and lawns carefully to prevent standing water for more than a few days.
- Fill in or drain tree holes, stumps, and puddles.
- When standing or stagnant water cannot be drained, use insecticides such as mosquito dunks to manage mosquito larval populations. Effective products contain the active ingredients *Bacillus thuringiensis subsp. israelensis* (Bti), *Bacillus sphaericus* (Bs), or methoprene, and are not harmful to humans or wildlife.
- Avoid outdoor activities at dusk or dawn when mosquitoes are most active.
- Use EPA registered insect repellents containing ingredients such as DEET, Picaridin or IR3535 to protect yourself when outdoors.



Check out the [Mosquitoes in Kansas publication](https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/mosquitoes-in-kansas_MF3668.pdf) to learn additional information about mosquitoes and their control: [https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/mosquitoes-in-kansas\\_MF3668.pdf](https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/mosquitoes-in-kansas_MF3668.pdf)

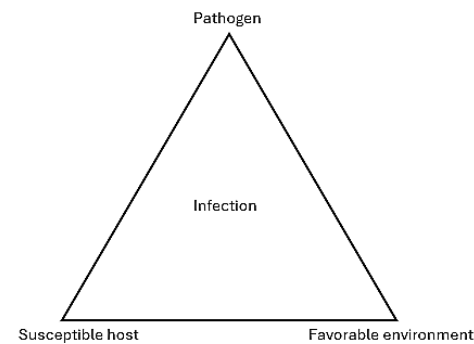
## **Assessing Plant Health Problems:**

Many areas in Kansas have recently received consistent rainfall, a welcome relief from drought conditions that persisted throughout the spring. Warm, wet, and humid conditions, however, are favorable for many different diseases in Kansas. It is important to regularly scout gardens for the onset of disease.

Often it can be tricky to identify the exact cause of symptoms of poor plant health. Environmental issues and disease pressure can present similar symptoms. In most situations, plants often decline because of more than one issue occurring at once.

Here are some tips for determining when a plant is in poor health and how to decide if their decline is the result of a disease:

- **Know your plant:** The first and most important step of diagnosing a plant problem is to know what the plant is and what it is supposed to look like. Most plant diseases are host specific, and only affect a few specific host plants. Knowing what plant you are growing makes it far easier to narrow down the list of possible disease issues. It may also be important to know: the plant name, the native range, preferred soil type and pH, leaf color, variety/cultivar, and age. Without knowing what a healthy plant looks like, there is no basis to determine if it is unhealthy.
- **The disease triangle:** The core principle of plant pathology is that three necessary conditions must all occur for a disease to be present. The disease organism must be present, the susceptible host plant must be present, and environmental conditions must be favorable for the establishment of the disease. If any one of these conditions is not met, there will not be a disease infection. Many disease management practices involve preventing at least one of these conditions so that a disease infection cannot occur.
- **Most issues are abiotic problems:** Abiotic problems are plant health issues which arise because of non-living factors in their environment. This list can get quite extensive, but commonly includes: extreme temperatures, weather patterns, drought, soil/site issues, fertility, and human cultural practices like pruning and watering. Abiotic problems are often chronic, such as a plant ill-suited to a specific site. Event injuries can also occur, such as when a specific incident causes a healthy plant to very rapidly enter a state of decline. Common examples include frosts, hail, severe storms, and extreme heat. These problems show up quickly and usually affect the entire plant. Abiotic problems commonly cause similar symptoms across multiple different plant species in an area.
- **Fewer issues are biotic problems:** Biotic problems are plant health problems which arise because of the action of a living organism. This can include large animals, insects, and microorganisms (like fungi and bacteria). These issues progress over time, starting in one part of the



plant and moving through the rest. This progression can occur over a few days to multiple years. Biotic problems usually display a random distribution of symptoms across the plant, rather than a uniform distribution as seen with abiotic problems. These issues will commonly be specific to only a few host plants on a given site.

- **Determining impact:** When a plant is exhibiting symptoms of any stress, it is important to determine the longterm impacts. This informs the important management decisions that follow. First make an estimate of what percentage of the plant is affected by the problem. With that percentage in mind, think about the recovery potential of the plant. Some questions to ask include: is there any new growth forming to replace the damaged sections, how vigorous is this plant, how much time is left in the growing season, and what are the management objectives for this plant? If the damage is extensive and recovery potential looks low, consider plant removal or replacement. Alternatively, if damage is extensive but recovery potential looks high, management may be as simple as pruning out the affected portions and waiting for regrowth. Always consider the objectives for the plant and the cost of any management options being considered. A historic tree may be worth a higher management cost than a new planting for example.

If you need help with a problem, K-State offers a variety of resources to assist in identification and management:

- Information about many common garden pests in Kansas can be found here: <https://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/horticulture-resource-center/common-pest-problems/>
- Reach out to your local K-State Extension Office - there is a local office in all 105 counties of Kansas: <https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/about/statewide-locations.html>
- For more specific assistance and disease testing, consider submitting samples to the K-State Plant Disease Diagnostic Lab. For information on how to submit a sample, visit: <https://www.plantpath.k-state.edu/extension/plant-disease-diagnostic-lab/collection-guidelines/>
- Not sure where to start? Email [clinic@ksu.edu](mailto:clinic@ksu.edu) or [hortsupport@ksu.edu](mailto:hortsupport@ksu.edu) for assistance.

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