

Garden Calendar:

- Evaluate ornamental grasses that have been cut back, to see if they need divided. Plan to dig up and divide any ornamental grass with a donut shape (dead or bare in the center, with an outward expanding ring of grass). Divide ornamental grasses every 3-5 years.
- Evergreen trees & shrubs, including broadleaf evergreens, are best planted in the spring.
- Begin mowing cool season lawns 2 inches to 3 inches high.
- Core aerate cool season lawns to reduce compaction and improve soil health. If soil test reports recommend adjusting soil pH, apply the appropriate product immediately after core aerating.
- Evaluate fruit trees to see if dormant oils or fungicide applications are needed. Some of the fruit tree diseases that can be managed by applying a fungicide/dormant spray include peach leaf curl, brown rot, and shot hole disease.
- Plant bare root trees and shrubs before buds break dormancy and growth begins.

Vegetables:

Plant Potatoes Now:

The St. Patrick's Day Holiday, mid-March, is the reminder most gardeners need to plant their potato crops for the spring. While potatoes can be planted from mid-March through early April in Kansas (anytime the soil temperatures are above 45°F), it's important to get potatoes planted early so plants have the best chance of producing large potatoes before the summer heat sets in and stops growth.

To produce the best crop, use certified disease-free seed potatoes, rather than potatoes from the grocery store shelves. Seed potatoes can usually be divided into 4 pieces, as long as each piece contains at least one eye. After dividing seed potatoes, store the cut pieces in a warm, humid location for 2 to 3 days before planting. This allows the freshly cut surface to seal over and prevents the seed piece from rotting when planted.

Try not to plant potatoes in the same space in the garden each year, or where tomatoes, peppers, or eggplant were grown the previous season to reduce pest troubles. Space plants 12 inches apart, and space rows 3 feet apart. Plant the seed potato only 2 inches deep and continually pile soil up against the stem as the plant grows.



For more information on growing potatoes in Kansas, visit our [Irish Potatoes publication](https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/download/irish-potatoes_MF488):
https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/download/irish-potatoes_MF488

Planting Cool Season Vegetables Outside:

Mid-March is an ideal time to start many cool season vegetable crops outside in the garden. Cool season crops will grow in colder temperatures, but generally do not tolerate the summer heat. These vegetables are typically planted before the danger of frost has passed in the spring. Of course, each spring in Kansas is different, so all planting times may need to be adjusted earlier or later depending on the weather, varieties chosen, and your location around the state.

The chart on the right shows some of the most common cool season crops that can be planted outside beginning in mid-March as seeds, transplants, or crowns.

For more information on how to plant and care for each crop, visit [the Kansas Garden Guide](#) (Chapter 15 has crop specific information):

https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/kansas-garden-guide_S51.pdf

Crop	What To Plant	When To Plant
Asparagus	Crowns	Mid-March to mid-April
Beets	Seeds	Late March to early April
Bok choy	Seeds or Transplants	Late March to early April
Broccoli	Transplants	Late March to early April
Cabbage	Transplants	Late March to early April
Carrots	Seeds	Late March to early April
Cauliflower	Transplants	Late March to early April
Chicories	Seeds or Transplants	Late March to early April
Collards	Seeds or Transplants	Late March to early April
Fennel	Seeds	Mid-March to early April
Kale	Seeds or Transplants	Mid-March
Kohlrabi	Seeds	Mid-March to early April
Leeks	Seeds or Transplants	Mid-March
Lettuce	Seeds	Mid-March to early April
Mustard	Seeds	Late March to early April
Onion	Sets or Plants	Mid- to late March
Parsnips	Seeds	Mid-March to early April
Peas	Seeds	Early to mid-March
Potatoes	Seed Potatoes	Mid-March to early April
Radish	Seeds	Mid- to late March
Rhubarb	Crowns	March to April
Spinach	Seeds	Mid- to late March
Swiss Chard	Seeds or Transplants	Late March to early April
Turnip	Seeds	Mid- to late March

Fruit:

The Impact Of Cold Temperatures On Fruit Trees:



With a warmer than average winter, and springtime temperatures on the rise, many trees are starting to break dormancy. For fruit trees, this can be a concern, as temperature fluctuations will continue for many more weeks and can impact fruit production (especially when temperatures dip below freezing).

The closer a tree is to flowering, the more sensitive it becomes to cold injury damaging flowers and buds. When flowers and buds are damaged, the fruit crop the tree produces can be greatly reduced or eliminated.

As flower buds begin to swell and open, they become susceptible to damage and may be killed at temperatures below 24 degrees Fahrenheit. At full bloom, flower buds will start to suffer damage as the temperature reaches 28 degrees. Injured flowers may still appear normal but have internal damage causing the tree not to bear fruit. All fruit trees have this concern, but apricot and peach trees are most vulnerable to late frosts, as they are often the first fruit trees to bloom.

The amount of damage sustained by flowers and buds will depend not only on the temperature, but also the duration of the cold and at what stage of development the tree is in. The table below shows the critical temperatures (in Fahrenheit) at which fruit flower buds are injured.

Type of Fruit	10% Bud Kill	90% Bud Kill	Bud Stage
Apple	28°F	24°F	First White (Pink)
Pear	25°F	19°F	First White (White Bud)
Apricot	24°F	14°F	First White
Cherry (Sweet)	27°F	24°F	First White (White Bud)
Peach	25°F	15°F	First Pink (Pink)
Plum	26°F	22°F	First White

For more information on how temperatures can affect fruit trees at various stages of development, visit the charts and full color photos of the [Critical Temperatures for Frost Damage on Fruit Trees](#) publication from the University of Utah Extension:

<https://extension.usu.edu/productionhort/files/CriticalTemperaturesFrostDamageFruitTrees.pdf>

How To Protect Fruit Trees From Late Frosts Or Cold

Late spring frosts and freezes are the normal part of any spring in Kansas. The damage to fruit trees during such events, however, depends on the time of year, the temperature, length of cold, wind speeds, relative humidity, dew point, cloud coverage, and microclimates on the site.



While it may be difficult to believe, some light frosts or freezes can be beneficial in fruit production. Not all buds open at exactly the same time on fruit trees, so light frosts or freezes, for short periods of time, may act as a form of fruit thinning, leading to larger, more attractive fruit. While fruit thinning is normally accomplished by pruning after the fruit begins to set, frost can have the same effect. Heavy frosts or freezes, on the other hand, can be detrimental to fruit tree yields.

Selecting later blooming trees, planting in locations that are more protected or have a warmer micro-climate, planting on higher ground or on a hillside, and keeping soil moist can all help protect fruit trees from frost damage.

Other methods of protecting trees from cold damage are usually difficult, and its practicality depends upon the size and number of trees. When heavy frost is expected, covering small trees with a bed spread, blanket or similar fabric may prevent bud or blossom injury if temperatures do not fall too low and the cold period is short. Hanging incandescent, or old-style Christmas tree lights that produce small amounts of heat, underneath the cover during frost periods can further protect fruit buds.

Commercial growers can heat their orchards with industrial heaters to protect against frost. Some gardeners will add a heat source under a tree during cold nights, such as heat lamps or charcoal briquettes. Safety and the risk of fire should always be considered when determining whether or not to provide heat.

Overhead sprinklers are effective when temperatures dip below 32 degrees Fahrenheit. As ice forms on the flower buds, heat is released, which protects flower buds until temperatures rise above freezing. Buds will not be harmed as long as unfrozen water remains on the ice. All ice should melt before turning off the sprinklers. Tree limbs can break if ice build-up is excessive.

For more methods of active frost protection in commercial orchards, visit [New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station's website: https://njaes.rutgers.edu/e363/](https://njaes.rutgers.edu/e363/)

Turf:

Apply Preemergence Herbicides To Prevent Crabgrass & Summer Weeds:

The best control of any weed is to have a thick, healthy lawn. While this should always be our goal, sometimes this strategy falls short. Weed preventers (also called preemergence herbicides or pre-emergents), can be a helpful tool to fill in the gap, but only if applied correctly. These products must be applied and watered in before weeds start to grow, in order to kill weed seedlings as they first start to germinate and grow.

If applied too late, these products often have little to no control on already growing weeds. If applied too early, these products may break down too soon and lose their effectiveness, allowing weeds to establish in the late summer. This makes timing of applications critical.

There are several ways to determine when it is time to apply a pre-emergent:

Calendar: For most of Kansas, crabgrass typically begins to germinate around May 1 or a little earlier. April 15 is normally a good target date for applying preventer because it gives the product time to activate in the soil before crabgrass germination starts. However, the spring weather in Kansas is never the same, so this method is imperfect. This year, we may want to go a few weeks early due to the unseasonably warm winter conditions. For southeast Kansas, this week would be appropriate, and for northwest Kansas, early April would be best.

Phenology: A better option, although still imperfect, is to base timing on the bloom of ornamental plants. The Eastern Redbud tree is a good choice for this purpose. When the trees in your area approach full bloom, apply crabgrass preventer. Crabgrass germination soon follows.

Soil Temperature: Soil temperatures can be another predictor of crabgrass germination. Crabgrass begins to germinate when the average daily soil temperatures reach 57 to 64°F at a one-inch depth. Apply pre-emergents when the one-inch soil depth reaches a daily average of 55°F for approximately 5 days. Use a soil thermometer to monitor your soil temperature, or use the [Kansas Mesonet](https://mesonet.k-state.edu/) to check the 7-day average soil temperature at their two-inch depth measurement.



Growing Degree Days (GDD): A newer method of predicting crabgrass germination is using Growing Degree Day models. GDD are a measurement of the growth and development of plants and insects during the growing season using a formula based on minimum air temperatures. This [GDD model from Michigan State University](#) can be another tool to track both pre-emergent timing and crabgrass germination (using your zip code and the “Crabgrass PRE” or “Crab Germination” features on the right of the map): <https://gddtracker.msu.edu/> Using a base measurement of 50°F, crabgrass will start to germinate after about 200 GDD.

Remember all these methods are only tools for planning your lawn care program. No one method is perfect. Each has strengths and weaknesses. Use more than one method to best time crabgrass preemergent applications.

There are many pre-emergent product options available that can control a wide range of annual weeds in the summer, including crabgrass, goosegrass, grassy sandbur, spurge, foxtail, and annual bluegrass. Different products contain active ingredients that may affect weeds differently.



For crabgrass, consider products with the active ingredients prodiamine (Barricade) or dithiopyr (Dimension) for season-long weed control from a single application. These products allow for earlier application timing and often have sufficient residual strength to last the season.

Most other weed preventers become ineffective after about 60 days, but there is considerable variation among products. If using active ingredients such as pendimethalin (Scotts Halts), benefin + trifluralin (Hi-Yield Crabgrass Control, Team), Oryzalin (Surflan), or Isoxaben (Gallery), a follow-up application will be needed about 8 weeks later. Remember, when using any pesticide, read the label and follow all instructions carefully.

Tips For Improving Effectiveness of Weed Preventers:

Weed preventers can be an effective tool in fighting weeds in the lawn and landscape. Once applied to the soil, however, these products don't last forever. Microorganisms and natural processes begin to gradually break down preemergence herbicides soon after they are applied. Soil moisture, soil temperature, organic matter, and weather conditions all further impact the rate at which pre-emergents break down. Our maintenance practices can also have a huge impact on the effectiveness of our preemergence herbicides.

Here are 10 ways you can increase the effectiveness of your preemergence herbicides:

1. Know what weeds you are attempting to prevent. Different preemergence herbicides will have different effectiveness on each specific type of weed.
2. Apply weed preventers at the correct time. Not all weed species emerge at the same time. Weed preventers must be applied before weeds start to germinate. With only a few exceptions, preemergence herbicides will have little to no effect on actively growing weeds.



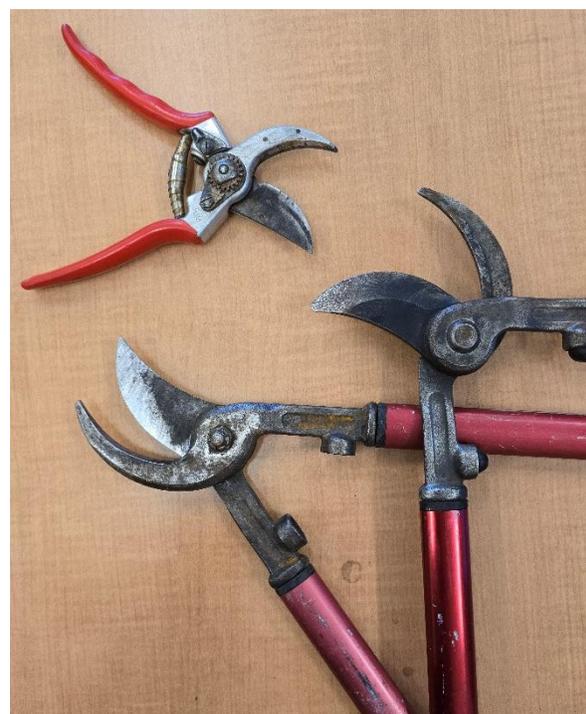
3. Apply the product at the recommended rate. Rates may vary by location, date, or soil type. Insufficient application rates may not completely prevent weeds.
4. Make uniform applications. If an area is not treated or skipped, it's likely you'll see weed emergence there. Overlap each pass slightly. Calibrate spreaders before use. Apply products in at least two directions (applying a partial rate in each direction).
5. Consider making split applications. Instead of applying the full rate in a one-time application, split the total application rate in half, and make two half-applications. Make the first application normally, and a subsequent application 6-8 weeks later. This generally provides better weed suppression by maintaining a higher level of herbicide presence on the soil surface throughout the growing season.
6. Water in the product after application. Most granular preemergence herbicides must be activated by water within 72 hours once applied. Apply the required amount of water, usually at least ¼ to ½ of irrigation water or rainfall.
7. Avoid the urge to dig, cultivate, or till your soil after application. Mixing the soil will weaken the pre-emergent barrier along the soil surface and allow weeds to grow. Aerating lawns is the exception.
8. Do not overwater lawns during the summer months. Warm, moist conditions increase the rate at which soil microbes break down preemergence herbicides.
9. Adjust cultural practices to favor lawn health. Mowing at the upper end of the recommended mowing height range, for example, will further aid in weed prevention by crowding out weeds.
10. Read the entire product label before use and follow the instructions. Not only is this the law, but the label will provide straightforward application procedures. Recommendations and tips for application specific to that product will be made.

Trees & Shrubs:

Selecting The Right Pruning Tool:

When pruning trees, shrubs, and other plant material, it's important to remember that pruning is the act of intentionally damaging a plant, in order to remove a portion of that plant for a specific purpose. That purpose might be to limit size, control growth, encourage flowering or fruit, or address issues with plant health. Whatever reason we prune, it's important that we use the right tool to minimize injury to the plant.

Pruners and loppers usually come in one of two styles: anvil or bypass. Anvil pruners have a blade that is sharp on two sides, and cuts downward against a flat surface, like a knife against a cutting board. This type of pruner has a greater likelihood of crushing plant tissue against the flat (anvil) surface during the cut and should be avoided. Instead select a bypass style pruner, which has a blade sharpened on one side, that cuts downward and past a stationary surface, much like a pair of scissors. Bypass pruners usually make the cleanest cut, minimizing injury to the plant, and making them the better choice of pruners.





When selecting a pruning tool, it's also important to consider the diameter of the cut we need to make. Hand pruners can be used when pruning branches up to ½ inch to ¾ inch in diameter. Loppers should be used when branches reach up to 1½ inches to 2 inches in diameter. Anything larger than 2 inches in diameter should be cut using a saw.

Whatever pruning tool you use, ensure that it has a sharpened blade and is clean from debris or plant sap. For tips on [*How to Select Quality Landscape and Garden Tools*](#), visit:

https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/how-to-select-quality-landscape-and-garden-tools_MF3390.pdf

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