Horticulture Newsletter

May 26, 2026

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Horticulture and Natural Resources

Video of the Week:

Garden space is often limited, which can make growing large plants such as cantaloupe and watermelon difficult. Smaller plants typically will produce less fruit per vine, but still produce regular sized fruit. This week's video discusses the benefits of cantaloupe varieties that will grow well in small spaces, in order to help maximize your garden's productivity this summer: https://kansashealthyyards.org/all-videos/video/cantaloupe-varieties-for-small-spaces

Announcements:

June K-State Garden Hour:

Join us next week, on Wednesday, June 3, 2026, for the next K-State Garden Hour webinar on "Maximizing Garden Success with Extension Resources". The presentation will be live from Noon to 1pm. Discover how to leverage Extension resources effectively to plan, manage, and troubleshoot problems in your landscape & garden. Learn about the newsletters, websites, books, landscape designs, and apps available to help improve your success as a Kansas gardener. Register to join us live, or view the recording afterwards online at: www.ksre-learn.com/KStateGardenHour

Garden Tours In Kansas:

With June just around the corner, it's time to start planning to attend Garden Tours across Kansas. Explore private gardens across the state to discover inspiration for your own garden. Visit unique landscapes, chat with passionate gardeners, and come across new plants to try in your own green spaces. There will be plenty to

learn from the Extension Master Gardener Volunteers who have organized these Garden Tours all throughout the state. See the full list of Garden Tours in Kansas online, at the bottom of our website: https://extension.k-state.edu/master-gardener/explore-locally/gardens.html

Garden Calendar:

- Treat fruit trees with needed pesticides to control insects and disease.
- Mulch perennial and annual gardens for weed control and moisture retention.
- Reduce thatch layers from Zoysia & Bermuda lawns by verticutting or core aerating.
- Spot treat broadleaf weeds.
- Water young trees and shrubs as needed. Ten gallons of water per 1 inch of trunk diameter is recommended per week.
- Remove tree stakes that have been in place more than one growing season.
- Due not use string trimmers or mowers around the base of trees and shrubs. These tools can cause serious damage to bark. Instead install mulch rings to reduce weeds and buffer plants from equipment.
- Check houseplants for insects.

Vegetables:

Asparagus Beetles:

The asparagus beetle is a common early-season pest that can significantly impact asparagus spear quality. Adults overwinter in garden debris and emerge in spring as distinctive blue-black beetles with a red thorax marked by yellow spots. Their larvae are soft, gray-green grubs. Both life stages feed on asparagus by chewing on spear tips and surfaces, causing scarring, staining, and reduced spear quality. Females lay small, elongated black eggs on developing spears, which are often visible standing upright along the stalk.

Early detection and management are key to preventing asparagus beetle damage. In small plantings, handpick adults and larvae, placing them into soapy water. For larger infestations, insecticides may be necessary. Products containing the active ingredient malathion provide effective control with a one-day pre-harvest interval. Permethrin-based products can also be effective but require a three-day waiting period before harvest. Always follow label directions to ensure safe and effective use. Be sure to maintain good garden sanitation at the end of the growing season by removing residue where beetles overwinter to help reduce populations.

Visit our Common Asparagus Beetle publication to learn more about this insect pest: https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/common-asparagus-beetle_MF3231.pdf

Flowers:

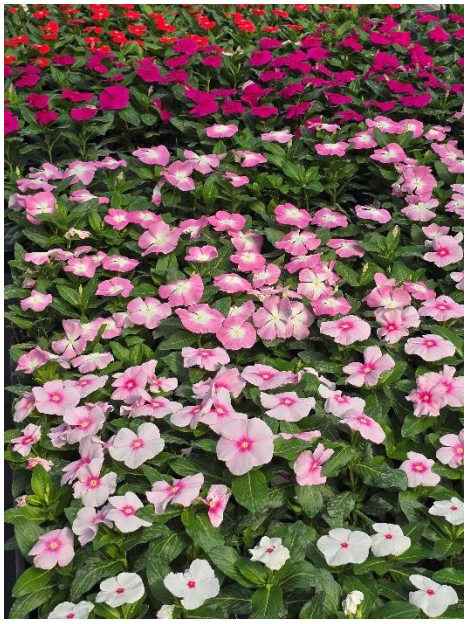
Heat & Drought Tolerant Annuals For Summer Color:

The Kansas climate throws numerous extremes at our landscape plants. Most Kansas summers are commonly filled with hot, dry conditions, and even periods of drought. With these environmental extremes, it is important to select annual flowers that thrive in hot, dry conditions, in order to bring vibrant color to the landscape while also conserving water. Here are ten suggestions for drought-tolerant annual flowers to plant this summer:

1. Mexican Heather (*Cuphea hyssopifolia*)
2. Lantana (*Lantana camara*)
3. Pentas (*Pentas lanceolate*)
4. Angelonia (*Angelonia angustifolia*)
5. Annual Vinca (*Catharanthus roseus*)
6. Ornamental Sweet Potato Vine (*Ipomoea batatas*)
7. Zinnia (*Zinnia angustifolia*)
8. Gomphrena (*Gomphrena* spp.)
9. Tall Verbena (*Verbena bonariensis*)
10. Texas Primrose (*Calylophus hybrid*)

Be sure to keep in mind that all newly planted annual flowers will require supplemental water to get established. Once plants are well rooted, however, they will require less frequent irrigation. By incorporating drought-tolerant selections into garden beds, containers, and landscapes, gardeners can maintain seasonal beauty while promoting efficient water use and reducing overall maintenance.

Lantana



Annual Vinca

Texas Primrose

Turf:

Healthy Lawns Are The Best Self Defense Against Weeds:

Keeping weeds out of your home lawn can feel like an ongoing battle. Instead of constantly applying chemical

treatments, take a proactive approach to prevent weeds from growing in the first place. Maintaining a strong, vigorously growing turfgrass will be the best way to crowd out and prevent the invasion weeds in the first place.

Some of the most common reasons why weeds invade home lawns, and how you can avoid each problem, include:

- **Improper mowing.** Mowing too low and too infrequently thins the turf, allowing weeds to get started. Raise mower decks to the appropriate heights, ensure mower blades remain sharp, and never mow when the turf is wet.

- **Improper watering.** Frequent watering encourages weed seed germination, disease, thatch, and shallow-rooted turf that is less competitive with weeds for soil moisture and nutrients. Minimize early spring watering, and only water as needed during the growing season. Water deeply, slowly, and infrequently to encourage deep root growth of turf, and increase its drought tolerance.

- **Improper fertilizing.** Fertilizing too much or too little or at the wrong time may benefit weeds more than grass. Only fertilize during the recommended months, only apply what is needed, and conduct a soil test to better understand fertilizer needs.

- **Compacted soil.** Soil compaction is a hidden stress on the turfgrass root system. The grass is unable to compete effectively with weeds. Core aerate lawns at least once per year to reduce compaction.

- **Excessive wear.** Turf areas used for recreation, sports and pets are subject to wear and compaction. Core aerate to reduce compaction in these areas, and temporarily fence off areas when establishing new grass seed.

- **Wrong kind of grass.** The wrong variety for the location will gradually decline and be invaded by weeds. Always check the grass seed label before purchasing to evaluate the types of grass seeds included in the bag. Purchase only recommended types of turf, avoiding cheap fillers.

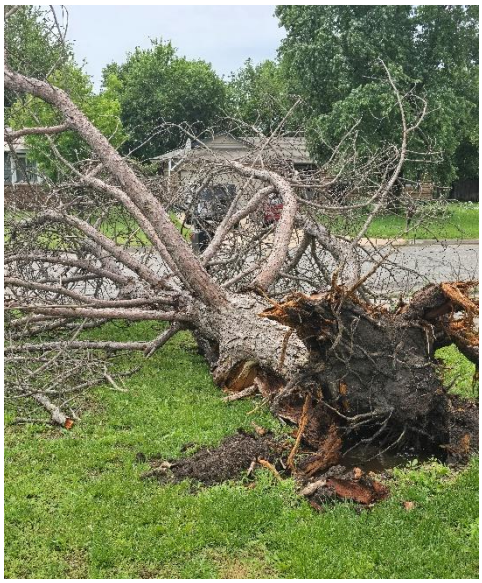
- **Environmental stress.** Weeds often take over a lawn after it has been weakened and thinned from weather-related stress. Water appropriately during times of drought and avoid overwatering in the spring and fall. Evaluate irrigation water quality and soil nutrient levels by testing.

- **Thatch.** Excessive thatch causes shallow-rooted grass, limits water infiltration and contributes to insect and disease problems. Regularly monitor thatch accumulation and remove excessive thatch when necessary.

Learn more about the proper care for each type of turfgrass common to Kansas, by visiting the corresponding publication below:

- **Tall Fescue**: https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/download/tall-fescue-lawns_MF736
- **Kentucky Bluegrass**: https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/kentucky-bluegrass-lawns_MF2262.pdf
- **Buffalograss**: https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/download/buffalograss-lawns_MF658
- **Bermudagrass**: https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/bermudagrass-in-kansas_MF1112.pdf
- **Zoysiagrass**: https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/zoysiagrass-in-kansas_MF683.pdf

Trees & Shrubs:



Cleaning Up Tree Damage From Recent Storms:

Recent storms and strong winds around the state have caused significant tree damage in some areas. From dead limbs and broken branches falling from trees, to entire trees being blown over at ground level, the extent of the tree damage is varied. To help in cleaning up storm damaged trees, we want to offer these tips:

1) Be safe – check for downed power lines or broken branches still hanging in the tree canopy before starting cleanup efforts.

2) Start by removing small debris – tree damage can look worse than it actually is.

3) Prune broken branches back to the next branch or to the trunk – cut just outside the branch collar and branch bark ridge area, do not make flush cuts. Young to middle aged trees that have up to one-third of the crown damaged and removed can likely make a surprisingly swift recovery.

4) Don't be afraid to remove the entire tree if necessary – severely damaged trees may pose a future safety risk. If the main trunk is split, if there is significant bark damage, or if the inner wood is exposed, removal of the tree may be necessary.

5) Consult an expert if the tree is too big or the damage is too extensive. Look for an arborist who is both insured and certified. Arborists can be certified through either the Kansas Arborists Association or the International Society of Arboriculture.

Remember, topping trees should be avoided whenever possible. Be sure to cut back large limbs progressively in order to prevent further damage to the tree. When cutting back branches in stages, the first cut should be made on the underside of the branch about 15 inches away from the final cut. This cut should be about one-third of the way up through the underside of the limb to prevent bark peeling when the weight of the branch is removed. The second cut should be made a few inches out past the first cut, further away from the trunk of the tree. The second cut will begin on the top side of the branch and cut all the way through the branch, removing the weight of the limb. A third and final cut should be made at the correct pruning point, just outside the branch collar, removing the remaining stub.

For more information on dealing with storm damaged trees, visit this article from our Shawnee County Extension Office.

Miscellaneous:

Moving Houseplants Outside for the Summer:

It is often helpful to set many houseplants outside for the summer so they can recover from the low light levels endured during the winter months. As soon as nighttime temperatures remain consistently above 55°F, houseplants can be moved to their summer home.

Start by locating house plants outside in an area with dense to dappled shade. It will help if the area is also protected from the wind and close to water. A covered porch or a spot that receives shade from trees or buildings will work well.

Avoid putting houseplants in the full sun too quickly. This will cause the leaves to photooxidize or sunburn because the leaves have become adapted to low light levels inside the house. Gradually increase the plant's exposure to sunlight and wind every 10-14 days, until the light levels of their outdoor summer location are matched. Make this transition gradually, over a 4-8 week period, to prevent leaf scorch and leaf drop. Even with the gentlest of transitions, some indoor plants may drop their leaves when moved into a new location. If this occurs, continue normal care, and look for new leaves to emerge in a couple of weeks.

Sinking pots into the ground can help to moderate root temperatures and reduce watering frequency during this transition period. If you have a number of plants, dig a trench 6 to 8 inches deep (or deeper if you have larger pots) and long enough to accommodate all of your plants without crowding. Place peat moss under and around the pots. Peat moss holds water, helps keep the pots cool and reduces evaporation from clay pots. About every two weeks, rotate the pots a quarter turn to break off any roots that have penetrated the peat moss surrounding the pot and to equalize the light received on all sides of the pot.

Water plants as needed. Plants will likely dry out much more quickly outside than indoors, so more frequent watering will likely be needed. If the potting soil is dry a half inch deep in the pot, it is time to water.

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For questions or additional information, contact: hortsupport@ksu.edu

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