



Horticulture Newsletter

October 13, 2026

KANSAS STATE
UNIVERSITY

Horticulture and
Natural Resources

Video of the Week:



Fall is an ideal time to plant new trees in the landscape. While it is important to select the right type of tree to fit the growing conditions of your site, it is also critical to pick a strong, healthy tree at the garden center or nursery. This involves evaluating the tree's branch structure, trunk, and root system in order to pick a tree that will thrive once planted. [This week's video covers selecting a tree](https://youtu.be/Vt4QNIQw5Vc?si=kuTOU0f628VuMTXS), and walks you through what key characteristics of a nursery grown tree to look for when purchasing a new tree: <https://youtu.be/Vt4QNIQw5Vc?si=kuTOU0f628VuMTXS>

Garden Calendar:

- Pick pumpkins and winter squash. Keep in a warm area for a couple of weeks, and then store in a cool, dry location.
- Plant garlic cloves for next summer's harvest. Fall planting gets a jump on spring growth.
- Make notes of successes and failures in the garden for next year.
- Pick up and discard fallen fruit to reduce disease pressure next year.
- Take advantage of the cooler weather to plant trees, shrubs, spring-flowering bulbs, and mums.
- Pot up bulbs for indoor forcing over the winter months.
- Finalize all Tall Fescue grass seed planting by October 15th, in order to allow for seedling establishment before winter.
- Continue to mow the lawn if necessary, bluegrass 2 inches, tall fescue 2½ inches.
- Check oil level in your lawn mower.
- Prepare the compost pile for winter. Add new materials and turn.

Vegetables:

Planting Garlic In Kansas:

One of the last vegetable garden crops that can be planted each year is garlic (*Allium sativum*). Garlic is ideally planted in October and overwintered for harvest the following summer. Although October is ideal, garlic can be planted from mid-September through mid-November in Kansas. Garlic is sometimes planted in early spring, however, the later garlic is planted, the smaller the harvest it yields.

There are hundreds of varieties of garlic worldwide, but not all grow well in Kansas. As a result, selecting the right variety is both important and challenging. Despite the wide number of garlic varieties available, garlic is generally broken down into two broad categories, softneck and hardneck garlic.



Softneck garlics (*Allium sativum* var. *sativum*) do not bolt and do not produce a flower stock. They tend to produce a larger number of cloves per bulb and have a longer storage life. As a result, softneck garlics are the most common garlic found on grocery store shelves. Softneck garlics grow best under mild growing conditions. Softneck garlics can be further broken down into two subgroups: Artichoke and Silverskin.

The second type of garlics are our hardneck garlics (*Allium sativum* var. *ophioscorodon*). Hardneck garlics always produce flower stocks (scapes) to some extent, which lends them their name. They produce fewer, but larger cloves and have a shorter storage life. Hardneck garlics can be further broken down into eight main subgroups, including: Porcelain, Purple Stripe, Marbled Purple Stripe, Glazed Purple Stripe, Rocambole, Creole, Asiatic, and Turban.

Different groups of garlic grow best under different combinations of wet, dry, cool, and warm growing conditions. Because winter and spring conditions vary dramatically from year to year in Kansas, it can be tricky to determine what varieties to grow. In general, Purple Stripe and Porcelain hardneck garlic varieties grow most reliably in Kansas. Silverskin and Artichoke softskin garlics can usually grow successfully as well. Often winter conditions are not cold enough for Rocambole hardneck garlic varieties to do well. Alternatively, Creole, Asiatic, Turban, and some softneck garlic varieties may not be cold hardy enough for some Kansas winters.



When purchasing garlic for planting, spend the money buying high-quality, certified garlic stock from a reputable dealer. Typically, one pound of garlic will be enough to plant a 30 foot row, depending on the variety.

To plant garlic, begin by applying 3 pounds of 10-10-10 fertilizer per 100 square feet and mix the fertilizer into the soil before planting. Break the garlic bulb into individual cloves immediately before planting, and do not remove the papery skins. The larger the clove planted, the larger the bulb at harvest. Plant individual cloves with the pointed end directed up and 1 to 3 inches deep (aim for 2 inches). Space cloves 6 inches apart with 12 inches between rows.



Water garlic cloves thoroughly after planting to settle soil and initiate root production. Mulch in the late fall or early winter with straw or leaves to help reduce weed pressure, and keep the soils cooler in spring. Water only as needed during the winter months when the soil is dry. Do not oversaturate soils. Plan to fertilize again in early spring when growth begins.

Garlic will begin root growth this winter, with most noticeable leaf growth occurring next spring. Growth will continue until next summer (June through August) when garlic is ready for harvest.

Elephant garlic (*Allium ampeloprasum*) should also be planted now. Although it develops a mild garlic flavor, elephant garlic is not a true garlic, and instead more closely related to leeks.

Visit the [K-State Garden Hour Webinar video recording on Growing Garlic in Kansas](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4PA9MX4X6NE) to learn everything you need to know about selecting, growing, and harvesting garlic:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4PA9MX4X6NE>

Although different types of garlics perform best in different years, below are some garlic cultivars to try in Kansas:

- Softneck Garlic Cultivars:
 - Artichoke: Inchelium Red*, Early Red Italian, California Early
 - Silverskin: Silver White*, Idaho Silver, Mild French, Nootka Rose
- Hardneck Garlic Cultivars:
 - Standard Purple Stripe: Chesnok Red*, Red Grain
 - Marbled Purple Stripe: Metechi, Russian Red, Brown Rose, Purple Glazer*
 - Porcelain: Music*, Armenian, Romanian Red
 - Rocambole**: Carpathian Mountain, Spanish Roja, German Red
 - Creole**: Ajo Rojo, Creole Red
 - Asiatic**: Asian Tempest, Korean Mountain
 - Turban**: China Stripe, Blossom

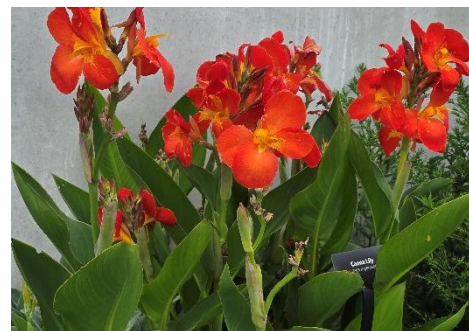
* = Very reliable garlic cultivar for Kansas

** = Generally poor performing garlic types that should be avoided due to limited cold hardiness in Kansas

Flowers:

Digging Summer Flowering Bulbs For Winter Storage:

As winter approaches, freezes and frosts begin to kill off many of our annual and perennial flowers. While many perennials will tolerate cold winter temperatures, there are often many summer flowering bulbs that add color to our landscape that often cannot survive the cold winter temperatures. Canna, elephant ear, dahlia, calla lily, caladium, gladiolus, and tuberous begonia are all common summer bulbs that lack winter hardiness in Kansas.





If left outside over the winter these bulbs will all freeze and die, unless plants are grown in a protected location. Bulbs growing in the soil next to a building foundation, for example, may be able to survive mild winters without digging due to the heat radiated from the building's foundation. In addition, areas that receive full winter sun or bulbs that are mulched deeply may also receive the protection necessary to survive some winters. While microclimates may be helpful in winter bulb survival, tender bulbs should be dug to ensure winter survival and stored until they can be replanted next spring.

To overwinter tender bulbs, wait until the first hard frost has browned the foliage of these plants before digging. While a frost will kill leaf growth, frosts will not be cold enough to reach the underground bulb. Just be sure to dig bulbs shortly after a frost to prevent rot from entering the bulb. Next, prune back the dead foliage to ground level and dig the bulb. Always begin digging several inches away from the base of the plant. Take care not to damage, stab, or injure the bulbs while digging. Carefully loosen the soil around the bulb and remove the bulbs in a large clump. Gently shake the soil from the bulb or use a hose to wash off remaining soil. Avoid separating bulbs until spring if possible, in order to reduce the risk of rotting in storage.



Each underground bulb (storage organ of the plant) will look very different when digging, depending on the plant. Canna and calla lilies are classified as rhizomes, caladium and tuberous begonias are tubers, gladiolus and elephant ear are a corms, and dahlias are a tuberous rooted plant. While none of these tender bulbs are classified as true bulbs (like tulip or daffodil), each of these bulb types contain the complete plant life cycle in their underground structure.



Allow bulbs to cure in a shaded, well-ventilated site, such as a garage or tool shed for about one to three weeks before storage. After curing, remove any excess soil from the roots. At that time, prepare the bulbs for winter storage.

Pack the bulbs in peat moss, vermiculite, or perlite, making sure to space the bulbs so they do not touch in storage. This way, if one bulb decays in storage, it does not spread to the rest of the bulbs. Dusting the bulbs with fungicide before storage may also help prevent them from rotting.

For most summer flowering bulbs, store them in well-ventilated containers with temperatures near 40°F. Ideal storage locations might include a root cellar, an unheated garage that does not freeze, or in a basement, along the wall farthest from the furnace. In most basements, try to insulate the bulbs so that the basement wall helps to keep the bulbs cool. Caladiums are the exception and need slightly warmer storage conditions. Caladiums should be stored between 50°F and 60°F.

Check the bulbs periodically throughout the winter months. Remove rotten bulbs and evaluate bulb moisture. If bulbs begin to shrink or wrinkle in appearance (dehydrate), use a spray bottle to moisten the packing material around the bulbs and re-pack them.



Turf:

Mole Control In The Lawn And Garden:



Although moles spend most of their time underground, the damage they cause in the lawn and garden is all too visible above ground. Meandering paths of upheaved soil are evidence of this small mammal's presence as it forages for food. Moles construct extensive underground passageways in the search for food. In the spring, summer and fall, these tunnels are shallow, near the soil surface. Some of these tunnels are abandoned soon after being dug, while others serve as frequent travel lanes and are used for an extended period of time. During the dead of winter, as soils freeze, moles retreat to deeper, more permanent tunnels underground.

Moles have high energy requirements and eat 70% to 100% of their body weight daily. As a result, they actively feed both day and night, and at all times of the year. In the fall and spring, however, moles are especially active near the soil surface looking for food when soil conditions are damp and following rain events.

Moles are insectivores, feeding on insects and other small invertebrates found in the soil. Earthworms, grubs, ants, spiders, snail larvae, and other small invertebrates are their primary food sources. Although moles may ingest small amounts of vegetation, moles generally do not eat plant roots or bulbs (this type of damage is more often caused by gophers).

Even though moles do not feed on plant matter, they can still cause plant damage by physically disturbing roots and uprooting small plants. Moles create both tunnels (surface burrows used in the search for food) and mounds (also called molehills, are piles of soil created when moles dig deep underground or tunnel under solid objects such as sidewalks). The upheaved ridges of mole tunnels make lawn mowing difficult. Underground tunnels also disturb plant roots, allowing airflow through the tunnels that dries (desiccates) roots. As a result, disturbed turfgrass or other plants may turn brown and unsightly. Even just one mole can create considerable damage to a lawn or garden, as moles can burrow as fast as 1 foot per minute when making surface feeding tunnels.



While mole activity is rarely welcome in the lawn or garden, due to the indirect plant damage they cause, mole activity can be beneficial. Mole feeding on insects and other soil organisms can be beneficial, especially as they target grubs. Moles also help aerate soils, reducing soil compaction. Even though these benefits are not enough to sway most homeowners, these benefits should be weighed when considering mole management strategies.

Through the years, numerous home remedies have been concocted

to control moles including chewing gum, noisemakers, broken glass, bleaches, windmills, and human hair. None have been found to provide consistent and reliable control. Poison baits also fail to work because moles feed on earthworms and grubs, not vegetable matter. Even grub control products are ineffective as they do not control earthworms, and earthworms are the primary food source for moles.

The best control method is the use of traps. There are four types of traps most commonly used to control moles - harpoon, choker, scissor-jawed, and pitfall (live trap). Each trap can be effective, but trap placement takes practice to master. Follow these tips to improve the effectiveness of traps:

- Look for the longest, straightest tunnels, as these are often the tunnels moles frequent most.
- Test tunnel activity by poking holes in several runs and checking the next day to see if holes are "repaired." The most active runs are where traps should be located.
- Center traps over the mole tunnel.
- Pack down soil on either side of the trap so moles are caught as they repair the tunnel.
- Move traps every 2-3 days if no moles are captured.



Visit the [Extension Wildlife Management page on mole control](https://www.wildlife.k-state.edu/species/moles/) for videos, publications, and more information on how to manage moles on your property: <https://www.wildlife.k-state.edu/species/moles/>

Trees & Shrubs:

Spring-Flowering Plants Blooming Out Of Season In The Fall:



While lilacs, magnolias, flowering crabapples, and Callery pears are plants we expect to see bloom in the spring, sometimes these plants flower in the fall too. Many gardeners around Kansas are experiencing this now.

Whenever we have growing conditions that put a lot of stress on plants, blooms may appear on woody plants outside of their normal spring bloom time. Most often this environmental stress is caused by a combination of intense heat and drought. These conditions limit plant growth, and in response, plants may enter a period of summer dormancy as a survival mechanism. In addition to heat and drought stress, heavy pruning, defoliation, severe insect or disease pressure, and plant genetics may also trigger fall flowering.

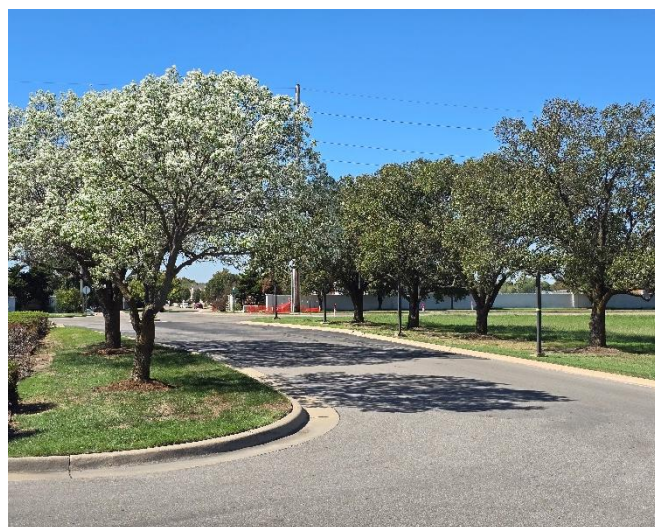
Late season flowers are made possible because spring blooming trees and shrubs develop their flower buds during the summer months. Usually this occurs around June, immediately after flowering ends in the spring. Flower buds normally then remain dormant on the plant throughout the summer, fall, and winter months, until a period of plant dormancy triggers flowering in the spring. Most years, periods of cold weather over the winter months provide this dormancy. Some plants need a long, extended cold period to break dormancy, while other early flowering plants may break dormancy after a short cold snap followed by hot temperatures.



While an end to cold temperatures is usually the signal to break dormancy and initiate flowering, adverse growing conditions can disrupt the plant's physiological processes and trigger flowering outside the normal season.

This year in Kansas, the intense heat and drought conditions from late July through September provided stressful conditions that placed many plants into a dormant-like state. Finally, the end of September and beginning of October brought back cooler temperatures and soaking rains around the state, which caused many spring flowering plants to break their summer dormancy as if it were spring. Along with resuming growth, many plants had flower buds that were also triggered to bloom.

For most spring-blooming plants, fall flowers are normally sparse and sporadic across the plant. Under extreme stress, heavy blooming may occur, as is being experienced by many plants across Kansas. While flowering outside of the normal bloom time should not kill your plant, it will likely impact how many flowers your plant produces in the spring. Plants with sporadic fall blooms will likely not see a noticeable decrease in flowers next spring, however, trees and shrubs that are reblooming heavily this fall will likely see a visible reduction in flowers next spring. This happens because there is not enough time left in the growing season to produce new flower buds to replenish next spring's blooms.



While the beauty of fall blooms can be enjoyed, it is also a sign that the plant is experiencing stress. Although nothing can be done to reverse flowering, it is important to reduce plant stress and improve long term care for the plant to reduce the chances of out-of-season blooms in the future. Most importantly, provide the plant with supplemental irrigation now and during periods of drought. Consider proper mulching around the base of the plants to further retain soil moisture. Ensure all fertilization is applied only at the appropriate times during the growing season. Plan pruning in May, immediately after spring flowering trees and shrubs finish blooming, and limit over pruning plants whenever possible. Also monitor plants regularly during the growing season for insects, diseases, and other pests.

Keep in mind that fall blooms may be normal on some plants cultivars. Reblooming varieties of iris and daylily are common. They often bloom twice a year, with abundant flowers in the late spring to early summer months, and a second, less prolific flowering in the mid- to late fall. While reblooming in both the spring and fall is less common on woody plants, newer cultivars are being developed to increase the number of times plants bloom. Examples of this include Bloomerang® Lilac or Encore® Azalea. Both of these special series of plants have cultivars that are intended to bloom in both the spring and fall, making fall blooms on these varieties normal.

Miscellaneous:

Move Houseplants Indoors For Winter:



As cold fronts move through Kansas this week, much of the state will experience temperatures at or near freezing. While the effects will vary on landscape plants, based on the duration of cold temperatures and microclimates of the site, extra preparations should be taken to protect houseplants that may still be outside.

Cold temperatures become a concern for most houseplants long before frosts and freezes develop. Most houseplants are native to tropical or subtropical climates and can experience cold injury when nighttime low temperatures begin to reach 55°F or below. For any houseplants still outdoors, plants need to be moved indoors as soon as possible to avoid cold temperature injury. If daytime temperatures are still warm even though night temperatures are cold, consider bringing plants indoors overnight and returning plants outdoors when temperatures increase above 55°F.

Before houseplants are moved indoors, thoroughly inspect plants for insects and disease. Be sure to examine stems, points where branches or leaves attach, and the undersides of leaves for pest activity, as these are often locations pests hide and go unnoticed. Some of the most common insects to look for include spider mites, aphids, whiteflies, mealybugs, and scale. If allowed indoors, populations of these insects can increase rapidly and spread to other houseplants.

Use a sharp spray of water from a garden hose to remove insects or mites from houseplant foliage before moving plants indoors. Be sure to thoroughly spray the undersides of leaves and along the stems. Plan to repeat this process several times to eliminate all insect pests from the plant. Consider spraying off plants and moving them into an attached garage or other warm location overnight, and then moving plants outdoors the next day, repeating the process.



Not all insects may be removed by a sharp spray of water alone. Scale insects and other pests that firmly attach to the plant may need to be gently scraped off or wiped off with a damp sponge. If other insects persist on the plant, consider using insecticides such as insecticidal soaps, neem, or pyrethrin to control insect infestations. Be sure to check the label to ensure the product is labeled safe for houseplants, and that both the insect pest and species of plant are listed on the label. Not all insecticides are safe for houseplant use, so read and follow the label instructions carefully.

To help reduce the transfer of insects that may be living in the rootball of the plant, fill a large bucket or bathtub with lukewarm water. Submerge the plant rootball and container underwater for approximately 15 minutes. Insects in the potting soil will be forced out or drown, reducing the likelihood of insects moving indoors in the potting soil. Be sure to allow the plant rootball to drain thoroughly after the process is complete.

To prevent indoor pest outbreaks, it may be best to dispose of plants that are heavily infested with insect or disease pests. Instead, take the opportunity to purchase new, healthy, pest-free plants.

To help further reduce the risk of pest outbreaks indoors, keep relocated houseplants isolated from other indoor plants for several weeks. Monitor plants closely for 3-4 weeks for additional signs of pests that may have been initially overlooked. After that time, if no pests are spotted, it should be safe to move plants together with other houseplants.



When moving houseplants indoors, it is also important to place plants in an indoor location with the brightest light levels possible, and gradually acclimatize them to their darker, permanent winter growing location. This process should take four to eight weeks depending on the degree of difference in light levels between the initial and final location of the plant. The acclimatization process can be shortened by beginning the process outdoors, before plants are moved inside. If houseplants are forced to acclimatize to lower indoor light levels too quickly, leaves tend to yellow and drop. This forces the plant to produce new leaves, requiring significant energy from the plant. By slowly acclimatizing leaves to lower indoor light conditions, there is a decreased risk of plants undergoing leaf drop. Leaf loss can be further prevented by supplementing natural light with light from LED grow lights or fluorescent lightbulbs.

Once indoors, houseplant growth will likely slow down with reduced light conditions. This means that plants require less frequent water and fertilization once indoors. Be sure to adjust your care practices accordingly, and water when the top 1-inch of soil feels dry or the plant begins to wilt slightly.

Continue to monitor plants carefully throughout the winter months for soil moisture levels and pest outbreaks.

Contributors:

Matthew McKernan, Consumer Horticulture Extension Associate

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

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