Video of the Week:  High Quality Grass Seed

UPCOMING EVENTS

The Commercial Vegetable Research Field Day - August 27 (K-State Olathe Research & Extension Cntr.)

Bring your walking shoes for this event as we will take a comprehensive tour of all our specialty crop research. Projects include tomato grafting, organic sweet potato, high tunnels, postharvest quality, variety trials, cover cropping techniques, and the effects of light on high tunnel crops. Stay for a cookout in the shade hosted by the staff and students. For more information, go to: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/k-state-commercial-vegetable-research-field-day-tickets-47718707940?aff=efbeventtix

TURFGRASS

Kentucky Bluegrass Variety Selection for Cool-Season Lawns

Though Kentucky bluegrass is not as heat and drought tolerant as tall fescue and the warm-season grasses, it is commonly used in northeastern Kansas, where there is sufficient annual rainfall. It is also grown under irrigation in northwestern Kansas where the higher elevation allows for cooler summer night temperatures. The following cultivars have performed well compared to other bluegrasses in this region. Use this list as a guide. Omission does not necessarily mean that a cultivar will not perform well.

Recommended cultivars for high-quality lawns, where visual appearance is the prime concern, include Alexa II, Aura, Award, Bewitched, Barrister, Belissimo, Beyond, Diva, Everest, Everglade, Excursion, Ginney II, Granite, Impact, Midnight, NuChicago, NuGlade, NuDestiny, Rhapsody, Rhythm, Rugby, Skye, Solar Eclipse, STR 2485, Sudden Impact, Washington and Zifandel. Such lawns should receive 4 to 5 pounds nitrogen per 1,000 square feet per year and would typically be irrigated during dry periods to prevent drought stress.

Cultivars that do relatively well under a low-maintenance program with limited watering often
differ from those that do well under higher inputs. Good choices for low maintenance include Baron, Baronie, Caliber, Canterbury, Dragon, Eagleton, Envicta, Kenblue, North Star, and South Dakota.

Instead of the 4 to 5 pounds of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet per year, low-maintenance program would include 1 to 2 pounds of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet per year. Obviously, a low-input lawn will not be as attractive as a higher-input lawn, but you can expect the cultivars listed above to look fairly good in the spring and fall, while going dormant in the summer. (Ward Upham)

Recommended Tall Fescue Cultivars

Though several cool-season grasses are grown in Kansas, tall fescue is considered the best adapted and is recommended for home lawns. The cultivar K-31 is the old standby and has been used for years. However, there is a myriad of newer cultivars that have improved color, density and a finer leaf texture. Most of these newer varieties are very close to one another in quality.

Each year the National Turfgrass Evaluation Trial rates tall fescue varieties for color, green-up, quality and texture. Quality ratings are taken once a month from March through October. The cultivars listed below received an average rating of 5.8 or above when 2012 - 2017 ratings were averaged. The highest rated cultivars were Rebounder, Michelangelo, Traverse 2, Black Tail, Reflection, GTO, Thor, Paramount, Temple, Valkyrie LS, Avenger II, Technique, 4th Millennium SRP, Rockwell, Titanium 2LS, Rowdy, Regenerate, Leonardo, Falcon V, Firebird 2, Terrano, Maestro, Grande 3, Bloodhound and Hot Rod. There are many more that rated nearly as well and should be considered worthy of consideration. See http://newprairiepress.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=7599&context=kaesrr for a complete list of all cultivars trialed. Note that K-31 consistently rates at the bottom. Keep in mind that blends of several varieties may allow you to take advantage of differing strengths.

Though K-31 may still be a good choice for large, open areas, the new cultivars will give better performance for those who desire a high-quality turf. (Ward Upham)

VEGETABLES

Harvesting Winter Squash

Summer squash such as zucchini and scallop are harvested while immature but winter squash such as acorn, hubbard and butternut are harvested later, in the mature stage, after the rind is tough and seeds have developed. We normally think September is the time that winter squash are harvested. Harvesting too early leads to fruit that shrivels and rots.

There are two main characteristics that help tell us when
winter squash are mature: color and rind toughness. Winter squash change color as they become mature. Butternut changes from light beige to deep tan. Acorn is a deep green color but has a ground spot that changes from yellow to orange when ripe. Gray or orange is the mature color for hubbard.

A hard, tough rind is another characteristic of mature winter squash. This is easily checked by trying to puncture the rind with your thumbnail or fingernail. If it easily penetrates the skin, the squash is not yet mature and will lose water through the skin -- causing the fruit to dry and shrivel. Also, immature fruit will be of low quality. The stem should also be dry enough that excessive water doesn’t drip from the stem.

Winter squash should be stored cool with elevated humidity. Ideal conditions would be 55 to 60 degrees F and 50 to 70 percent relative humidity. Under such conditions, acorn squash will usually last about 5 to 8 weeks, butternuts 2 to 3 months and hubbards 5 to 6 months. (Ward Upham)

**FRUIT**

**When Are Apples Ready to Pick?**

Apples mature over a long period of time depending on variety. Some varieties such as Lodi can mature in July and others as late as October or even November. Here are some guides to help you decide when to pick your apples.

*Days from bloom:* The number of days from bloom is a reliable guide for general maturity time, but weather conditions will have some influence. Some kinds of apples and approximate days from bloom to maturity are Jonathan, 135, Delicious, 145, Golden Delicious, 145, and Winesap, 155 days. This process may be quicker than usual due to the hot weather this year.

*Flesh color:* As apples mature and starches change to sugars, the flesh changes from very light green to white. When you cut a thin slice and hold it up to the light you can see the difference.

*Seed color:* The seeds of most apples change from light green to brown as the fruit ripens. This indicator should be combined with other changes since it is not absolute. The flavor of the apples, the change in color of the stem and calyx basins and flesh color are important in deciding if apples are ready to harvest.

*Color change:* As apples mature, the skin color in areas of the stem and the calyx basin at the bottom of the apple turns from an immature green to a light-yellow color. Some apples will develop a red skin color over the majority of the fruit before they are ripe, so this is not a reliable indication of maturity.

*Flavor:* This is a good guide if you are familiar with the apples you have and know how they should taste. Even if you do not know the characteristic flavor of the kind of apple you have, you can still sample slices of a few apples and decide if they have a sweet flavor. If they are not ready to harvest, they will taste starchy or immature. If apples have already fallen and taste a bit
starchy, store them for a period to see if they become sweeter. (Ward Upham)

Pear Harvest

Most pear cultivars should not be allowed to ripen on the tree. They should be picked while still firm and ripened after harvest. Tree-ripened fruits are often of poor quality because of the development of grit cells and the browning and softening of the inner flesh. Pears ripen from the inside out and waiting until the outside is completely ripe will often result in the interior of the fruit being mushy and brown.

Commercial growers determine the best time to harvest pears by measuring the decrease in fruit firmness as the fruit matures. This varies with growing conditions and variety. A Magness meter is used for testing and measures the pressure needed to push a 5/16-inch tip a specified distance into an individual fruit. Home gardeners can use these other indicators:

1. A change in the fruit ground color from a dark green to light green or yellowish green. The ground color is the "background" color of the fruit.

2. Fruit should part easily from the branch when it is lifted up and twisted.

3. Corking over of lenticels. Lenticels are the "breathing pores" of the fruit. They start out as a white to greenish white color and turn brown due to corking as the fruit nears maturity. They look like brown “specks” on the fruit.

4. Development of characteristic pear aroma and taste of sampled fruit.

Pears will actually be of higher quality if they are cooled immediately after harvest. Temperatures between 31 and 50 degrees will work with the warmer temperatures actually reducing the amount of chilling needed. Just don’t go over 50 degrees. Homeowners may want to use a refrigerator, if possible. The amount of chilling required varies by cultivar from 2 days to several weeks.

Pears ripen in one to three weeks after being removed from storage if held at 60 to 65 degrees F. They can then be canned or preserved. If you wish to store some for ripening later, fresh-picked fruit should be placed in cold storage at around 31 degrees F and 90 percent humidity. Placing fruit in unsealed gallon plastic bags can provide the necessary humidity.

Ripen small amounts as needed by moving them to a warmer location and holding them at 60 to 65 degrees F. Ripening at too high a temperature (75 degrees F and higher) may result in the fruit breaking down without ripening. (Ward Upham)

MISCELLANEOUS

Composting - Do’s, Don’ts, and Usage
Composting recycles your kitchen and yard waste, keeping these organic materials out of our landfills, and creates a usable nutrient rich material to put back into our gardens. The key to high-quality compost is the right amounts of carbon and nitrogen. This is known as the C:N ratio. Kansas Healthy Yards explains this ratio perfectly as “browns and greens.” The brown materials, such as dried grass clippings and leaf debris, are a source of carbon. Green materials, such as coffee grounds, kitchen fruit-and-vegetable scraps, or fresh grass clippings, provide a source of nitrogen. Your compost pile should have about 2 to 3 times more browns than greens in it. When starting your compost pile, it is important to layer your browns and greens while adding water to each layer. For your compost pile to work it is important to know what can and cannot be added. Some kitchen scraps are great while others bind up the decomposition process. See the table below for dos and don’ts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DOS</th>
<th>DON’TS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Dried grass clippings</td>
<td>Large woody material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old fruits and vegetables</td>
<td>Fats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaves and small twigs</td>
<td>Weeds that have gone to seed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Garden waste</td>
<td>Meat/Bones</td>
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<tr>
<td>Straw</td>
<td>Diseased plant material</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rinds, peels, cores, and other vegetable and fruit scraps</td>
<td>Materials with long lasting chemical residues (such weed killers)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chicken manure</td>
<td>Oils (salad dressing, cooking oil)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lawn waste</td>
<td>Dairy products</td>
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<td>Egg shells</td>
<td>Pet waste</td>
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Once your compost pile is uniform in consistency, it is time to start reaping the benefits. Compost can be used by simply spreading it across the surface of your garden and flower bed or by incorporating it into the soil through tilling. “Building Better Soils for Better Crops” says that applying compost can substitute for mulch and can even suppress disease is your garden. For more information about composting follow this link, [https://bit.ly/2MtlXV5](https://bit.ly/2MtlXV5), to “Building Better Soils for Better Crops” chapter called Making and Using Compost. For more information about what goes into compost and why, follow these links to videos provides by Kansas Healthy Yards called “Composting: What to Add”, [https://bit.ly/2nnP3dz](https://bit.ly/2nnP3dz), and “Composting: Making Black Gold”, [https://bit.ly/2nnO7G4](https://bit.ly/2nnO7G4). (Chandler Day)

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