

**March 4th, 2024**

**In this Issue:**

- Planting Asparagus
- Spring Lawn Care
- Frost Tolerance of Fruit Trees
- March Garden Calendar

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# The Grapevine

## Planting Asparagus

Asparagus is a popular perennial vegetable plant throughout the state of Kansas. It is generally the first fresh vegetable harvest of the spring which makes a welcome addition to the garden. If you plan to start a new asparagus bed it should be planted from March 15<sup>th</sup> to April 15<sup>th</sup>, so if you plan to plant it this spring, it's time to get started. In reality, we probably should have started to prepare the planting area in the fall by killing any weeds or foliage that was growing there but we can still be successful. Now that the soil has thawed it is the perfect time to prepare the site. Before tilling add compost, rotted manure, or any good organic material source to the bed along with 4 to 5 pounds of a 5-10-5 fertilizer per 1000 square feet. Till all the amendments into the soil and work them in well.

Asparagus will come as one-year-old crowns that you will plant in a trench as wide as your garden spade and approximately 8 inches deep. If you plan to plant more than one row, space the trenches approximately four feet apart. Place the crowns in the bottom of the trenches and cover them with about 3 inches of soil. Over the growing season, you will slowly fill the trench over several weeks. The crowns should not be covered all at once. Keep the weeds under control and water the crowns regularly to help them establish. Popular varieties include Jersey Giant, Jersey King, Jersey Knight, Jersey Supreme, and Purple Passion. Let them grow this year and start harvesting next spring.



# Spring Lawn Care

Spring is a time of warming temperatures, blooming flowers, and the smell of fresh-cut grass. On those warm days, it can be tough not to spend time in your yard, watering, fertilizing, mowing, repeating the previous steps, and it brings up a question. Is all this work really necessary right now? The answer is, not at all!!! Here are a few “lawn commandments” to follow.

## Thou Shalt not Fertilize Heavily

The use of fertilizers in the spring is not necessary and could be eliminated. Fertilizer, if applied incorrectly can run off down the road during those heavy spring rains and pollute streams, rivers, and other bodies of water. The only lawns that need to be fertilized are those that will be on a regular watering schedule during the summer. Spring fertilizer applications can lead to fast shoot growth at the expense of your roots which reduces drought tolerance. The best time to fertilize is in September and November before the grass goes dormant to build up the root system. Not applying fertilizer will reduce the amount you have to water in the summer since you don't have to support the lush top growth. One downside to not applying fertilizer in the spring is that many times crabgrass preventer is mixed in with fertilizer and it can be hard to find just plain crabgrass preventer. You can find it, but you may have to look outside your local stores. If your local garden center doesn't carry it, you could ask that they carry it in the future. If you can't find a crabgrass preventer without fertilizer, you should still apply that product, but make it your only fertilizer application for late spring/early summer. For best crabgrass control, you do need rain within a couple of days of application or you will need to water the preventer in.

## Thou Shalt Not Water (Unless it is Necessary)

In the spring, our yards will put out a big flush of growth so you will mow, but that doesn't mean you need to be watering! Most soils still have enough water to support the grass at this time and rain is in the forecast this week. Another factor is that allowing your grass to get a bit dry in the spring is good for it. Being dry will help the grass tolerate drought and heat in the summer. Grit your teeth and leave the hose coiled up, you will be doing your lawn a favor by providing tough love. When you do need to water, the key is to water deeply and infrequently. Try to put down  $\frac{3}{4}$ " to 1" of water each time you water, your soil should be moist down 6-8" from the surface. This type of watering encourages deep root systems which help the plant survive drought times. This type of watering also helps keep weeds at bay since the top layer dries and weed seeds don't sprout.

## Thou Shalt Not Scalp Your Lawn

I know, it is very tempting to lower your lawn mower and take off all of that dead material from your lawn, but don't. Scalping your lawn at any time sets your lawn back in several ways. First, it opens the canopy so light hits the weed seeds and they start to germinate. (A bit counterproductive if you are trying to keep weeds out.) Low mowing also damages the growing points of the grass and can potentially cause harm if a late spring freeze comes along. Instead of mowing short, only drop the mower one notch for the first mowing of the season. This will help remove some of that top unsightly layer. After that mowing, return your mower blades to the recommended height for your grass. Be sure to sharpen your mower blades before mowing this spring.

## Thou Shalt not be Annoyed by Lush Spring Growth

Spring is a time when the temperatures are conducive to growth in our lawns and they will grow by leaps and bounds. Don't let it stress you out or get you down. Be sure your mower blades are sharp and always follow the 1/3 rule. Never remove more than 1/3 of your grass leaf at any time, no matter what time of year. If you have a fescue or bluegrass yard, keep your mower blades set at 3" for most of your spring mowing. Don't let your spring mowing regimen become too complicated, keep it simple. Spring lawn care doesn't have to be difficult.

# Frost Tolerance of Fruit Trees

February was a wild ride of a weather month with very cold temperatures early that morphed into one of the warmest months on record toward the end. All that warmth led to some of our plants starting to try to leaf out and even start blooming before the cold front hit on Tuesday. If your fruit trees were among the ones that had started to bud out last week, you might be wondering if you will still get fruit this spring. Apricots and Peaches are the most common fruit plants to try to bloom early and get caught by a frost. It is important to note that an extended warm spell before the cold snap may result in more damage due to a loss in cold hardiness. Below are some tables to give you an idea of how cold hardy fruit tree buds are at various stages of bud development for apricots and peaches.

## Apricots

Stage	10% Kill (Degrees F)	90% Kill (Degrees F)
First White	24	14
First Bloom	25	19
Full Bloom	27	22
In the Shuck	27	24
Green Fruit	28	25

## Peaches

Stage	10% Kill (Degrees F)	90% Kill (Degrees F)
Swollen Bud	18	2
Half-inch Green	23	5
Pink	25	18
Bloom	27	24
Petal Fall	28	25
Fruit Set	28	25

Based on the temperature chart, most of our peach and apricot buds should have survived the cold temperatures that we had last week, but if we continue to stay warm with periodic cold spells the bloom buds may be in danger again in the future. It is possible to give some protection to blossoms from freezing by covering the tree with a bedspread, blanket, or similar fabric. The material should reach the ground so that heat given off from the soil is captured to keep the buds warm. Old-fashioned Christmas lights distributed through the tree either by themselves or under a blanket will help to give added protection. Sprinkling the tree with water throughout the freezing period can also protect the blossoms but is a dangerous option. Sprinklers should be started before the temperature drops to freezing to be sure ice does not block the garden hose or water line. Continue until the temperature warms. With this protection method, there is the potential to create an ice storm. If temperatures remain below freezing for several hours, ice will accumulate on the branches and limbs. While using sprinklers is effective the ice buildup on the branches might cause more damage to the tree than the cold temperatures. If you are concerned that your buds might have been damaged by cold temperatures you can check the buds for damage. To check for low-temperature injury to fruit buds or blossoms, use a sharp knife and cut them in half longitudinally (from top to bottom). If the tiny seed in the center is white to cream color no damage has been done. But if the seed in several buds or blossoms is dark brown or black, it has been killed.

## Upcoming Events

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### Garden Hour Webinars:

March 6<sup>th</sup>- Selecting and Planting Fruit Trees

April 3<sup>rd</sup>- Companion Plants in the Garden

May 1<sup>st</sup>- Understanding Water Sources for the Garden

June 5<sup>th</sup>- Growing Cut Flowers for Home & Farmer's Markets

### Upcoming Classes:

March 8<sup>th</sup> at 11 am- Container Vegetable Gardening at Douglass Senior Center

March 12<sup>th</sup> from 5:30 to 7 Bring seeds to swap with other gardeners at the Andover Public Library

March 14<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 am Youth Lawn Mowing Clinic in El Dorado

March 23<sup>rd</sup> & 24<sup>th</sup> Harvey County Home and Garden Show at Dyck Arboretum in Hesston

## March Gardening Calendar

### Vegetables and Fruits

- Perform a soil test if you haven't in the last five years.
- Prepare the soil, if dry, by adding compost or organic matter and tilling if desired.
- Plant peas, onions, lettuce, broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, and salad crops.
- Start seeds for tomatoes, peppers, and other warm-season vegetables.
- Apply dormant oil to fruit plantings to reduce scale and mites.
- Remove mulch from strawberries when growth begins.

### Flowers

- Plant pansies, snapdragons, calendulas, and other cool-loving annuals.
- Divide and plant perennials in the garden.
- Clean up flower beds once temperatures are consistently above 55 degrees.
- Cut ornamental grasses back to within 3 to 5 inches of the ground.
- Fertilize flower beds with a balanced fertilizer as needed.
- Cut seed pods from spent bulbs.

### Lawns

- Spot spray for dandelions, henbit, and chickweed.
- Apply crabgrass preventer when redbuds are in full bloom.
- Seed thin areas of tall fescue lawns
- Mow grass ½ inch lower to remove winter debris.

### Trees and Shrubs

- Prune trees, except for birch, maple, and walnut, these should be pruned after leafing out.
- Prune shrubs except spring flowering shrubs.
- Mulch tree and shrub plantings up to 4 inches deep, keep mulch away from trunks.
- Fertilize newly planted trees and shrubs.
- Remove tree wraps from young trees for summer growth.
- Rake and clean groundcover plantings.

### Miscellaneous

- Sharpen and repair garden tools.
- Service lawnmowers and tillers before use.

**FUN NIGHT  
TUESDAY**

ANDOVER PUBLIC LIBRARY  
**FRIENDS**



**A Gardeners'  
Get-Together,  
where seeds  
are the currency  
of connection!**



# SEED EXCHANGE

Organized by Master Gardeners & Friends of the Library



ANDOVER  
PUBLIC  
LIBRARY

**K-STATE**  
Research and Extension  
Butler County

**Tuesday**

**March 12th**

**2024**

**5:30 PM**

**7:00 PM**

**Bring a variety of seeds – vegetables, flowers, trees – in small, clearly labeled bags. Also, bring extra bags and markers for labeling the seeds you collect and trade with others. Let's make this exchange diverse and organized!**

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT: [tlarsen@andoverlibrary.org](mailto:tlarsen@andoverlibrary.org)



# YOUTH LAWN MOWING CLINIC

Thursday, March 14th, 2024  
Butler Community Building  
200 N. Griffith - El Dorado, KS  
Registration Begins at 9:20 a.m. Clinic Will Be 9:30 - 11:30 a.m.

## You Will Learn:

- ✓ Lawn Mower Safety
- ✓ Lawn Mower Maintenance
- ✓ Proper Care for Various Types of Turfgrass
- ✓ Business Skills Necessary to Run Your Own Lawn Mowing Business

**PRE-REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED**

**CLINIC COST IS \$10**

This clinic is designed for youth in 5th through 9th grade

**REGISTER NOW**

☎ 316-321-9660  
✉ callae@ksu.edu

  
**K-STATE**  
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K-STATE RESEARCH & EXTENSION  
  
**Master Gardener**

K-State Research and Extension is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all programs, services and activities. Program information may be available in languages other than English. Reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities, including alternative means of communication (e.g., Braille, large print, audio tape, and American Sign Language) may be requested by contacting the event contact Calla Edwards two weeks prior to the start of the event February 29th, 2024 at 316-321-9660 or callae@ksu.edu. Requests received after this date will be honored when it is feasible to do so. Language access services, such as interpretation or translation of vital information, will be provided free of charge to limited English proficient individuals upon request. Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

# Kokedama Class

Join us for a fun evening learning the art behind the Japanese Kokedama. The experts from Simple Morea will be teaching you how to make your very own Sansevieria Kokedama to take home. The cost of this class is \$35 and pre-registration with payment is *required*. To register please visit this link:

<https://forms.gle/Lc17WbfPh9jz2h>

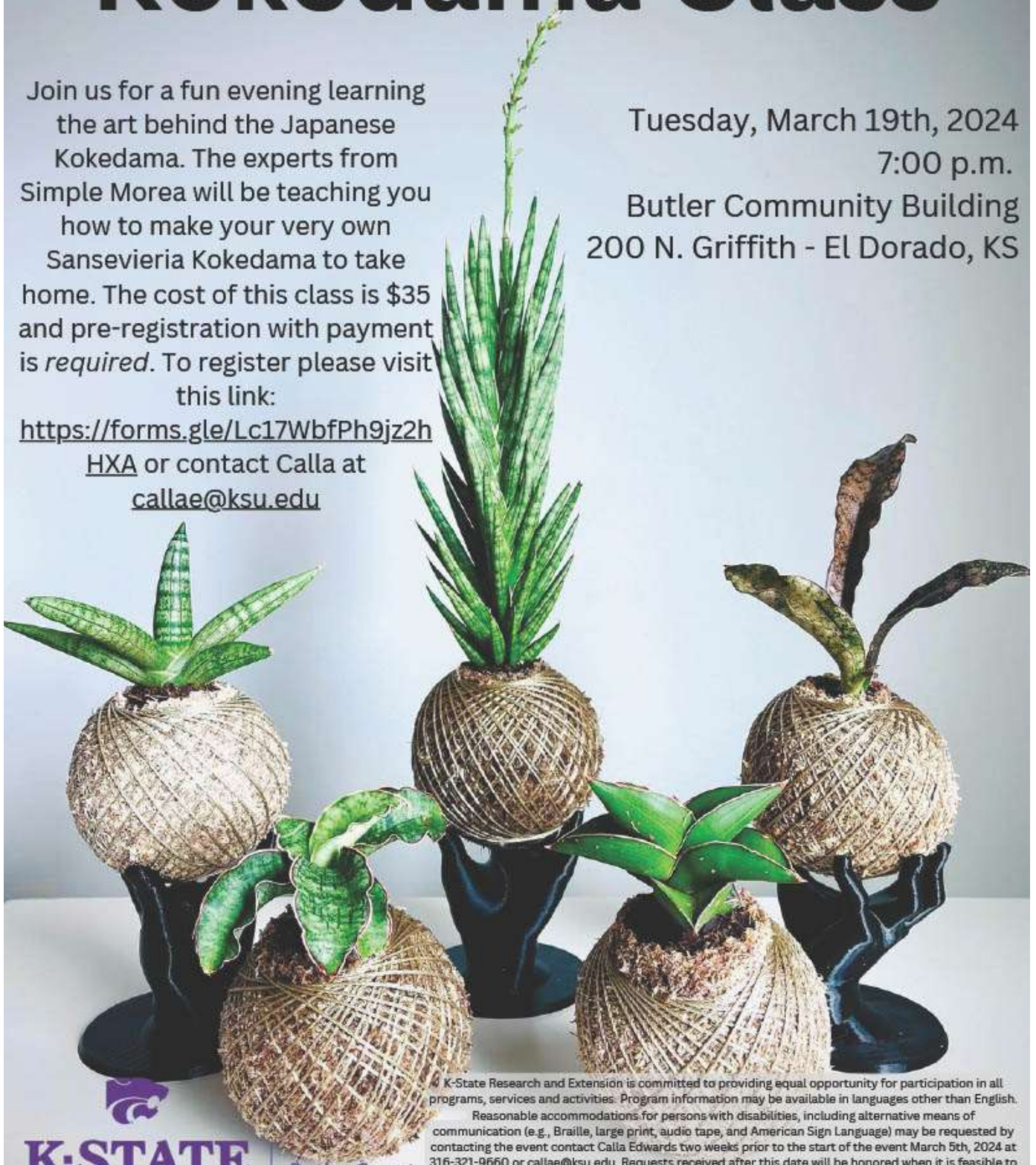
HXA or contact Calla at

[callae@ksu.edu](mailto:callae@ksu.edu)

Tuesday, March 19th, 2024

7:00 p.m.

Butler Community Building  
200 N. Griffith - El Dorado, KS



  
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