



Horticulture

Caring for Holiday Plants

Calla Edwards – Horticulture Agent

Thanksgiving was last week and Christmas is right around the corner. With the change in the season Christmas plants are becoming common at stores everywhere you look. This weekend when I was out shopping I saw some beautiful Lavender and Rosemary bushes trimmed up in a Christmas Tree shape. For those of you who love herbs and the smell of those plants, these would make a beautiful alternative to smaller trees. Around the area cut Christmas trees are for sale and while they smell wonderful and look even better, there are some dangers with using cut trees in your house. I have a few tips and ideas that can keep your Christmas plants beautiful throughout this holiday season and ways to keep your Christmas tree looking great all through the month of December.

Nothing says Christmas like a fresh-cut Christmas tree, and picking the right one is a major key to success. As you look for your tree, not only should you be looking at the shape but you should also be checking to see how freshly cut the tree is. If the tree isn't frozen, run your finger up and down the branches, or in the cases of a small tree pick it up and shake it. The needles on a fresh tree shouldn't fall off, and if a large number of needles fall off that is a sign the tree is starting to dry out. Store your tree outside or in a cool spot till you are ready to bring it inside. Before you bring the tree in, cut the bottom of the tree off at a diagonal about 1" above the original cut. This allows the tree to draw water up and keep it hydrated throughout the season. Keep your tree away from drafts or hot areas as they dry trees out faster and always keep water in the reservoir. Dry Christmas trees are a fire hazard so keep your tree hydrated and always check your lights before putting them on.

A recent trend is to use a Christmas tree in a pot. This is an excellent way to have a live tree that you can enjoy for years to come. Caring for these trees when they are inside is easy, simply keep the plant watered and keep it in a cooler location. It's best to bring these trees inside only a week before Christmas to reduce the chances that they break dormancy and start growing. You will have to transition the tree to the outdoors once you are done with it for the holidays. Place the tree in a cooler location such as an unheated garage so it can become used to cooler temperatures and be sure when you move it outside you water it well and surround the trunk with mulch or plant material to insulate it. An alternative to a spruce or pine tree, if you want a living tree, is a Norfolk Island Pine. These plants make wonderful houseplants and can be decorated for a variety of holidays. Treat them like other houseplants through the year but be aware they can get big with time.

Poinsettias are another popular Christmas plant, and despite what is commonly thought, they are not poisonous but I wouldn't recommend eating them since they do cause upset stomach and in pets can cause vomiting, drooling and diarrhea. Poinsettias are fairly easy to take care of, they prefer bright direct light so a sunny window is ideal but be sure to keep them away from drafts and temperature fluctuations. Remember that the temperature close to a window will be cooler than in other parts of the room. Be sure to water thoroughly and don't let the poinsettias dry completely out as that will shorten their flowering time. If you would like you can keep your poinsettias and try to get them to bloom next year. Once they have stopped flowering cut the plant back to 4-6 inches tall and water sparingly. Treat your poinsettia like a houseplant till late September.

One final thought when bringing Christmas Trees and other blooming plants into a house is that often these plants bring in tiny visitors which can spread to your houseplants. Try to keep your new plants and tree separated from your current houseplants to prevent bugs from spreading. With a few simple tips your Christmas plants can bring you cheer throughout the Christmas season and all year long.

Agriculture

BIOSECURITY

Charlene Miller – Agriculture Agent/Extension Director

Let's talk Biosecurity! EHV1 is making it rounds through the horse community and wreaking havoc for many. Biosecurity is important for animal producers. Whether you are traveling with your animals or visiting places with animals and then returning to your own operation, biosecurity should be a top priority. In simple terms, biosecurity refers to taking all necessary measures to protect your operation. The Kansas Department of Agriculture has a great website with Biosecurity information. If you have animals, I encourage you to visit their [website](#) and ensure you are taking the necessary steps to protect them. If you have any questions, please contact your local veterinarian.

Family Consumer Sciences

Assistive Devices for Your Home

Bonnie Brewer – FCS Extension Agent

The term, itself, seems to indicate something very high-tech, or exclusive to older adults or those with disabilities.

Assistive technology.

It is true that there are many devices available to assist people as they age – think of canes, prosthetics, wheelchairs, stair lifts, automated pill dispensers and more. Yet, for every high-tech option, there are numerous simple options for everyday living at any age, including eyeglasses, non-skid plates and bowls, motion control lighting, phones with large buttons and others.

"Assistive technology sounds complicated, but really it's not," says K-State adult development and aging specialist Erin Martinez. "The typical definition is any tool or technology that helps a person complete daily tasks with ease and efficiency. It's those things that make our lives easier throughout the day."

For example, a step stool. You may be very capable in your physical mobility, but using a step stool to reach a higher shelf makes it easier and safer to reach the upper shelf. Also, a lever handle to replace a traditional doorknob is another low-cost option that can be "an excellent use of assistive technology."

Other options for assistive devices in many parts of one's life are as follows:

- In the kitchen – Grip foam handles for silverware, cutting boards that hold food in place, a drinking straw holder and more.
- Around the house – Programmable thermostats, robot vacuums, grab bars and handrails and more.
- Dressing and bathing – Buttoning aids and zipper pulls, long shoehorns, one-handed belts and more.
- Communication – Pens and pencils with special grips, talk-to-text devices, electronic screen readers and more.
- Cognition and memory – Audiobooks, identification bracelets, note-taking systems and more.
- At work or on the farm – Ergonomic workstations, anti-fatigue mats, swivel seating and more.

We (K-State Extension) have a lot of new assistive technology devices that you can try out, but you should also talk with your primary care physician and visit a home medical supply shop in your community. If you are interested in learning more, contact me (Bonnie Brewer, bjbrewer@ksu.edu) for a program about assistive technology. Other resources include a physical therapist or occupational therapist.

The goal of assistive technology is to keep people in their homes longer and help them maintain independence and mobility, and maintain their overall emotional wellbeing and safety of being in their own home.

4-H & Youth Development

Madeline Wallace – 4-H & Youth Development Agent

Butler County 4-H had an outstanding year, with **270 community club members** and more than **1,200 youth** reached through enrichment programs and camps. Together, our members explored **over 40 project areas and contributed more than 100 hours of community service** across the county. Youth showcased their talents at the Kansas State Fair, earning top placings and representing Butler County with pride. As we wrap up 2025, we're grateful for our 4-H families and volunteers—wishing you all a warm, joyful, and restful holiday season.

Contact us:

Phone: (316) 321-9660

Web: Butler.K-State.Edu

Address: 206 N Griffith St, Ste. A, El Dorado, KS 67042

Facebook: [@ksrebutlerco](https://www.facebook.com/ksrebutlerco)

Twitter: [@ButlerExtension](https://twitter.com/ButlerExtension)

See our full Newsletter at <https://www.butler.k-state.edu/newsletter.html>

For KSRE publications and information,
visit www.ksre.ksu.edu

Grant Writing Workshop

Grants are a vital piece in your community's funding puzzle...and *you* can do it.

December 10th, 2025

9:30 am to 3:30 pm

200 N. Griffith St.

El Dorado, KS 67042

Registration Fee \$60

What you will learn:

- Sources of data for community needs.
- Where to find grants.
- Elements of a great grant proposal.
- Practicing the grant elements.

Presented by: Nancy Daniels

Community Vitality Specialist

K-State Research and Extension

To register or for more information:

Charlene Miller

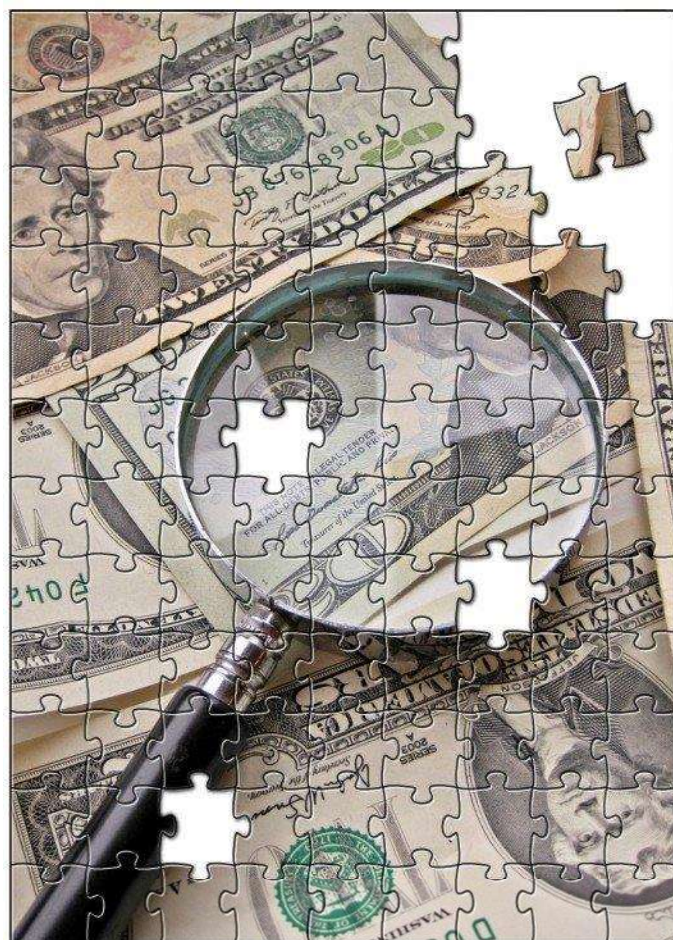
cmmiller1@ksu.edu

(316) 321-9660

Register by Monday, December 8th:

<https://forms.gle/53KHSZeRYH7X1JEv5>

Make checks payable to: Butler County Extension



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2025 CHRISTMAS DRIVE

winter wear & School Supplies

K-State Extension – Butler County is partnering with a local school district to provide new winter clothing—coats, scarves, hats, and gloves—as well as essential school supplies to support the youth of Butler County.

ALL DONATIONS WILL BE RECEIVED UNTIL

12 DEC . 11:30 AM .

K-STATE EXTENSION - BUTLER COUNTY, 206 N. GRIFFITH, EL DORADO

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LUNCH & LEARN

Bring your lunch and join Horticulture Agent, Calla Edwards, over the lunch hour during our monthly Lunch & Learn Program. This will be held over the lunch hour and will cover a variety of horticulture topics.

December 10th
12:15-12:45 p.m.

Andover Public Library
1511 E Central Ave
Andover, KS

December Topic:

Attracting Birds to Your Backyard

Many people enjoy the excitement of birds routinely visiting their yard. Providing food and water is a great start to attracting backyard birds, but what types of food and habitat are going to attract the most birds and make them feel safest? Join us to learn more about what types of food attract the birds, what feeders to use, and what type of cover will keep birds hanging around all winter long.

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2024-2025

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



9 COMMUNITY CLUBS

Benton Busy Bees, Cassoday Boosters, El Dorado Trailblazers, Flinthills, Hickory Helpers, Lily Lake, North Butler, Purple Heart, Towanda Rustlers

1 *NEW* PROJECT CLUB

Butler's 4-H Top Shots - Shooting Sports

262

Enrolled 4-H members (ages 7-18)

20

Cloverbuds (non-competitive for ages 5 & 6)

76

Adult volunteers

1,708

Direct teaching contacts with youth

68

Programs and activities

100+

Hours of community service by 4-H members

120,000+

Indirect educational contacts

2,355

Exhibits by 4-H members at the Butler County Fair



BEGINNING RANCHER SERIES

November 18th, 2025

December 9th, 2025

**Light Dinner Served at 6:00 p.m.
Program 6:30–8:30 p.m.**



November 18th

*Guest Speaker: Jason Warner,
K-State Extension Cow-Calf Specialist
Topic: Body Condition Scoring &
Vaccine Storage*



December 9th

*Guest Speaker: Jaymelynn Farney,
K-State Beef Systems Extension Specialist
Topic: Land Use, Stocking Rate, &
Plant Identification*



Butler County Community/4-H Building
200 N. Griffith
El Dorado, KS



*Register
Today!*

<https://forms.gle/2D18uAjC2iwfGLke6>



All Things Kansas

Your guide to understanding all 105 counties of the Sunflower State.

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Access free interactive tools with data-driven mapping, reports and insights through **30,000+ data layers** and **120+ national and state sources.**

Your one-stop shop for Kansas data about:

- Agriculture
- Broadband access
- Business
- Child care and youth
- Economy
- Education
- Environment
- Food and food systems
- Health and health care
- Housing
- Population trends and profiles
- Water
- Many more topics

How All Things Kansas can help:

- Save time by accessing multiple data sources in one place
- Visualize and map data
- Build geography-based reports
- Identify opportunities across Kansas
- Understand communities and market demands
- Analyze workforce strengths and industry gaps
- Research information to help with grant writing
- Make data-informed decisions

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