

# NEWSLETTER



#### From the Director's Desk

I listened to a sermon this weekend, and something was said that resonated with me. "Happiness is our thermometer, and Joy is our thermostat." With Thanksgiving behind us and Christmas ahead, this time of year can be tough on people for many different reasons. Family, health, lost loved ones, gray and dreary days, and the list goes on. We don't have to love this time of year or the Holiday season. What we can do, though, to make it less stressful and more manageable is adjust our joy thermostat. Find, or embrace, the items in life that bring you joy. Taking a walk, calling a friend, reading a book, watching a movie, and spending time with people you enjoy are just a few examples of activities that can bring you joy. We are in control of our own thermostat. If you are one of the many who are struggling this Holiday season, I hope you can pause and find that joy.

Speaking of joy, our first snow of the season has arrived! I love snow, although I would rather have it in the nice, big, fluffy, picturesque form, than the tiny flakes that skirt around! Our average first snow of 0.10" or more, according to the National Weather Service Office, Wichita, is December 2<sup>nd</sup>. Looks like we are right on track! I'm hearing that January and February are expected to be colder than last year. It will be fun to watch what 2026 brings.

As we prepare to embrace and welcome 2026, there will be a couple of staff changes in our office.

- Bonnie Brewer, Family and Consumer Sciences agent, will be taking a new position with the Harvey County Extension Office.
- Anna McLaughlin, Office Professional, has accepted a position in the private sector. Her last day in our office will be December 17<sup>th</sup>.

We are sad to see both of these outstanding individuals leave our office, but we know their futures are incredibly bright and wish them nothing but the best! Both positions will be open soon. Position announcements will be posted on our website <a href="www.butler.ksu.edu">www.butler.ksu.edu</a>. If you know someone who is interested and would like either of the applications sent to them when the positions open, please email Charlene at <a href="mailto:cmmiller1@ksu.edu">cmmiller1@ksu.edu</a>.

Happy Holidays and Happy New Year!

See you in 2026!

~Charlene

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Butler County Extension Office 206 North Griffith Suite A El Dorado, Kansas 67042 (316)321-9660

#### Hours

Monday - Thursday 7:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Friday

7:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

#### Coffee Mugs Now Available!

Get yours today at the K-State Research and Extension - Butler County Office 206 North Griffith, Suite A El Dorado, KS 67042



January 2026							
				1 Happy New Year	② Office Closed	3	
4	(5)	Extension Council Board Meeting 6:30 p.m.	Garden Hour 12 p.m.	8 Kansas Corn & Soybean Agronomy Series - Newton	9	0	
$\widehat{\mathbb{H}}$	<b>(</b>	4-H Council 4-H Shooting Sports Begins	Lunch & Learn - Andover Public Library 12:15 p.m.	15	9	17	
13	Lunch & Learn- Lori's EMPORIyum! Augusta 12:15 p.m.	<b>②</b>	2	@	4-H State Horse Judging Contest	<b>4</b>	
<b>2</b> 5	<b>6</b>	27	<b>(3</b> )	<b>(9</b> )	30)	31)	



#### Gifts for Gardeners

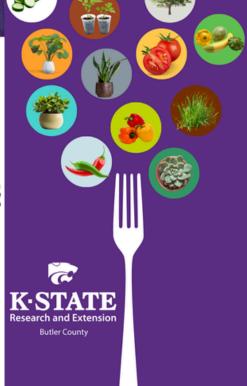
Wednesday, December 3rd 12:00PM -1:00PM CST

Finding the perfect holiday gift for gardeners can be a challenging task. These passionate individuals often spend their time outdoors and typically have an extensive collection of tools and supplies already. To assist you in your gift-giving endeavors, Calla Edwards, the Horticulture Agent for Butler County, conducted a survey among Master Gardeners and gardening enthusiasts. This survey revealed their favorite tools, supplies, and plants, providing you with a wealth of ideas for the gardener in your life. Join Calla for a fun webinar this holiday season!



Register Here!

Please register for this free Zoom Webinar at: ksre-learn.com/KStateGardenHour





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 10<sup>th</sup> 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. Kanas State Unterinity Agricultur Experimed States and Cooperative Intension Service

**Update & Tariff** 

Impacts on Trade



#### Garden Hour Webinars:

These class are offered online via Zoom at Noon. For more information on the Garden Hour series or to register visit here: https://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/consumer-horticulture/garden-hour/

Dr. Sarah Lancaster, Kansas State University Agronomy

Herbicide Strategies for 2026

#### **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





**Butler County** 



Kansas State University is committed to making its services, activities and programs accessible to all participants. If you have special requirements due to a physical, vision, or hearing disability, contact the registration contact LOCAL NAME, PHONE NUMBER or EMAIL Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service K-State Research and Extension is an equal acconduting voroider and emolover.





K-STATE | Cowley County

K-STATE | Harvey County



November 18th, 2025 December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2025

> Light Dinner Served at 6:00 p.m. Program 6:30-8:30 p.m.



K-State Extension Cow-Calf Specialist Topic: Body Condition Scoring & Vaccine Storage

Plant Identification

Guest Speaker: Jason Warner,

November 18<sup>th</sup>

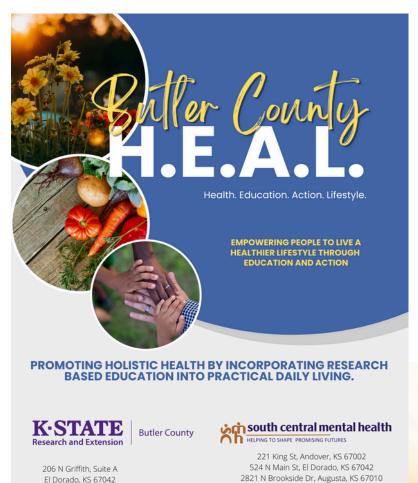
December 9th Guest Speaker: Jaymelynn Farney, K-State Beef Systems Extension Specialist Topic: Land Use, Stocking Rate, &



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







(316) 321-9660

(316) 733-5047 ext 515 OR 528

for more happily, ever afters...

# The Strong Couples Project

- √ Participate in a 6-session online program scientifically shown to strengthen relationships
- √ Video calls with trained coach to help maximize program impact
- √ No cost to enroll and chance to win \$25 Amazon gift card for completing program surveys

To learn more and enroll, please visit go.illinois.edu/StrongCouples





# Available Services

#### Bad Odor?

We have a breath of fresh air for you! K-State Research and Extension - Butler County offers Nilodor cotton balls to help eliminate the odor in your most desperate areas.

Just 1 drop can neutralize the air in a 10'x10' room.

Costing only \$0.10 per cotton ball, this is an extremely cost effective solution to your most smelly situations.





# Soil Testing

Whether you are preparing your garden for spring planting or wanting to make sure your fields are ready to produce a bumper crop, we can help. Bring your soil into the K-State Research and Extension - Butler County Office today and we will ship it to K-State Soil Labs for testing. Each test comes with personal recommendations put together by our Agriculture and Horticulture Professionals. Cost will vary depending on tests requested.

For more information on Horticulture Soil Testing, visit our website here: <a href="https://www.butler.k-">https://www.butler.k-</a> state.edu/horticulture/Soil%20Tests.html

For more information on Agriculture Soil Testing, visit our website here: <a href="https://www.butler.k-">https://www.butler.k-</a>
<a href="mailto:state.edu/agriculture/soiltest/untitled.html">state.edu/agriculture/soiltest/untitled.html</a>



### Outreach





# 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.

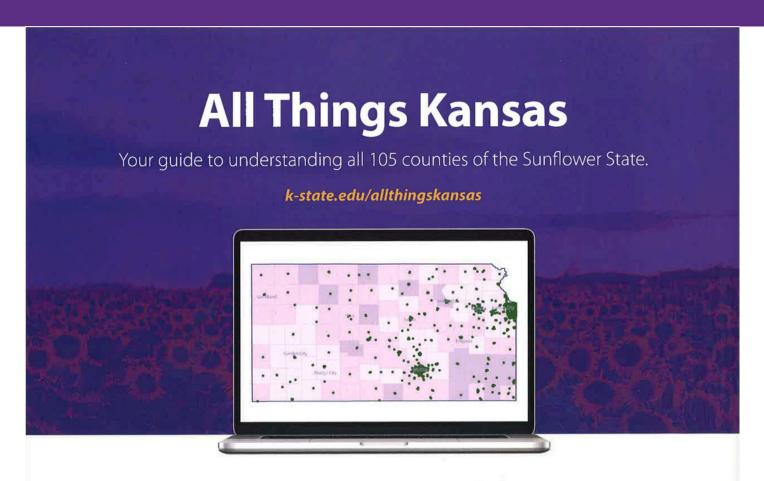
ALL DONATIONS WILL BE RECEIVED UNTIL

12 DEC. 11:30 AM

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

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### Outreach



# **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

KANSAS STATE

LEARN MORE Scan the QR code or visit k-state.edu/allthingskansas



#### **Charlene Miller**

Director/Agriculture Agent <a href="mailto:cmmiller1@ksu.edu">cmmiller1@ksu.edu</a>
<a href="mailto:https://www.butler.k-state.edu/agriculture/">https://www.butler.k-state.edu/agriculture/</a>

#### **BIOSECURITY**

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.





# HPAI:

#### **Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza**

Highly pathogenic avian influenza, or HPAI, is a rapidly spreading viral disease that can infect many types of birds. Avian influenza, often called avian flu or bird flu, can be common, but some strains are highly pathogenic, which means they are more deadly. Introduced by migrating wild birds, HPAI can spread through spring migration and affect all domestic poultry — small and backyard flocks as well as commercial industries.

Poultry with HPAI do not survive the illness. Vaccines for HPAI are not readily available.

#### Signs of Avian Influenza

- · Coughing and sneezing
- · Difficulty breathing
- Extreme depression
- · Lack of energy
- · Decrease in feed or water intake
- Swelling or purple discoloration of head, eyelids, comb, wattle and legs
- · Decrease in egg production
- Sudden unexplained death

Biosecurity is your best option to prevent HPAI from entering your small or backyard poultry flock.

#### Here is what you can do:

#### **Protect Your Small Flock from Avian Influenza**



Limit or halt travel with your birds to sales, shows and swaps. Ensure you have clean hands, clothes, and

footwear before handling your birds if you attend events. Do not allow others to handle your birds.



Limit your birds' visitors.

If someone must visit your birds: discuss where they have been. Have them wash their hands and wear clean clothes and footwear.







Call your veterinarian if your flock shows signs of influenza or you suspect exposure. No veterinarian? Call the Kansas Department of Agriculture's Division of Animal Health at 785-564-6601.







#### Phones Down and Eyes Up!

Scan the road ahead of you and be watching for indicators of -

- 1. Flashing Lights 🎑
- 2. Slow Moving Vehicle Emblem





# Slow Down and Watch For Oncoming Traffic Before Attempting to Pass!

Do not pass illegally, on hills, curves or near intersections.





#### **→** \

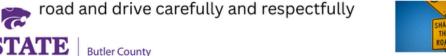
#### Watch For Hand Signals!

Farmers may use hand signals to alert you to their direction of travel/turns



#### Beware of Wide Loads!

Some equipment moving down the road will be wide. Share the

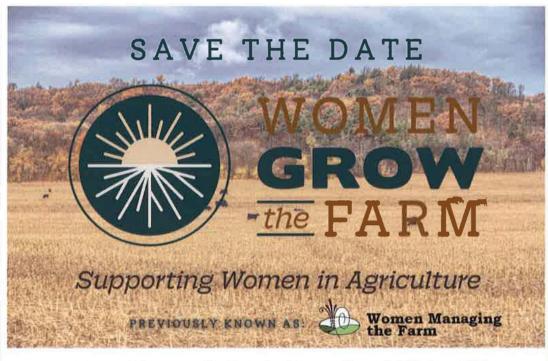


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Changing seasons also bring a change in traffic, especially this time of year. Fall is here, and while the rain keeps falling, harvest will be starting soon! That means, more slow-moving vehicles (tractors, combines, etc) are on the road. Please drive carefully this Harvest season to protect your vehicle occupants and the farmers on the road.

#### **Charlene Miller**

Director/Agriculture Agent <u>cmmiller1@ksu.edu</u> <u>https://www.butler.k-state.edu/agriculture/</u>



MANHATTAN, KS | FEBRUARY 12TH & 13TH



Women don't just manage the farm-we grow it.

Join us **February 12–13, 2026** in **Manhattan, KS** at the Hilton Garden Inn for the Women Grow the Farm Conference.

Two days of keynote speakers, breakout sessions, and powerful connections with women shaping the future of agriculture.

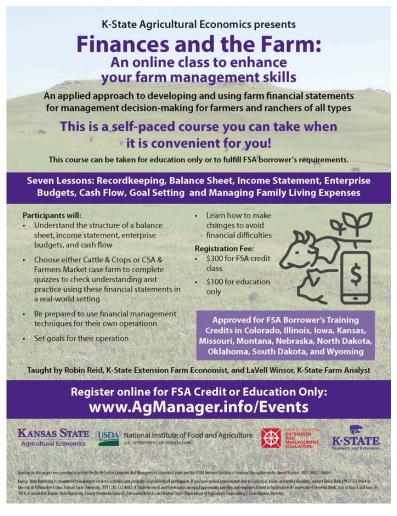


Use this QR Code to learn more and register to secure your spoti

womengrowthefarm.com

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<a href="https://www.butler.k-state.edu/agriculture/">https://www.butler.k-state.edu/agriculture/</a>







### **Assistive Devices for Your Home**

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."





### Assistive Devices for Your Home Cont.

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.

### **Find Your Balance**

# K-State Expert Shares Tips to Budget for the Winter Holidays

#### From Thanksgiving to New Years, winter holidays can be stressful mentally and financially

The beginning of the winter holiday season has begun, filled with food, family, friends and fun.

Kansas State University family resource management specialist Elizabeth Kiss says that as celebrations are planned, it is important to consider the mental and financial stresses of the holiday season.

"One way to approach holidays is managing our time, energy and money," Kiss said. "Things to think about are what's important to us as individuals and what is it that our family most enjoys about the holidays and really focus on those things, which for many families, is being together."



#### Food

Kiss said food is a large part of the holiday budget, including traditional meals such as turkey on Thanksgiving as well as serving food during parties or open houses, baking and eating out.

"Some things that people don't think about when budgeting is the family pictures or having your home cleaned by a service, or getting the carpet cleaned this time of year," Kiss said. "Also adding in services you get on a regular basis, (such as) your hair person, your nail person. This is a time of year when we often make a charitable donation, (which is) another thing to think about in terms of your holiday budget."

Kiss added that holiday decorations -- such as plates, napkins and wrapping paper -- are important to include in the budget, but urges consumers to be cautious of the environmental impact of excessive paper products.

"I think we sometimes have unrealistic expectations of the holidays, and that can not only be stressful from a financial standpoint, but a mental standpoint as well," Kiss said.

She adds: "The perfectionism and high standards that we place on ourselves, especially when it comes to food, can be draining. It is more about being together and less about all of the decorations, all of those things being perfect."

### **Find Your Balance**

# X-State expert shares tips to budget for the winter holidays

#### **Activities and routines**

Kiss said there is a need to keep a normal routine between celebrations, especially for children.

"This is a lot of stimulation for children, and they may be eating differently -- maybe more sweets than usual - so keeping mealtimes at a regular time and keeping bedtime fairly regular is important," Kiss said. "Also consider how much they can handle in terms of events and stimulation, what they're interested in doing or what they most enjoy."

Keeping children physically active helps them stay engaged. Being outdoors or in an indoor atmosphere where it's okay for kids to run around can help, she added.

Board games and outdoor activities don't cost a lot of money, she said.

#### **Gifts**



"I think having a (shopping) list and having a conversation with your family members about what isn't appropriate for the dollar amount can be really helpful (in saving money)," Kiss said.

Kiss recommends making lists for all gifts and browsing before purchasing to be able to take advantage of good prices and not overspending or not following a plan.

"Research has reported already that more than half of shoppers have already started gift shopping so they can recognize the deals, and so

they spread (expenses) out a little bit in their budget," Kiss said.

Different financing plans are popular this year, Kiss said, and "I think we need to understand what the repayment expectations are. It may mean that you make one payment in six months or you will be making payments along the way."

"So, you really must understand the terms and conditions when they say zero percent interest for six months or 12 months or 18 months, because you don't pay interest, but you still have to pay for the gift," she said.

Kiss suggests paying more upfront and financing less to minimize debt in January; pay cash when available. Keeping receipts and minimizing credit card use can help shoppers stick to a budget.

"Have conversations with your co-worker groups about how you would like to celebrate as a group, and maybe not everyone wants to do the gift giving. Maybe people would like to have a potluck or a cookie exchange, go out for dessert, or go out after work," Kiss said. "Just enjoy the time together."

She also advocates for shopping locally and supporting the community.

"Make the holidays what you want the holidays to be and be comfortable with what you decide. Try and keep that stress level -- both mentally and financially -- as low as possible," Kiss said.

### **Find Your Balance**

# SKIP THE "HUMBUG!" 10 TIPS TO RELIEVE HOLIDAY STRESS

Few families will match the idyllic images captured in holiday advertisements, but most can find joy during the holiday season. Everyone is encouraged to extend the thankfulness typically associated with Thanksgiving celebrations throughout the holiday season—and into the new year. Feeling grateful for home, family, friends and life in general spills over into other activities and to others who sense your gratitude. Gratitude itself can have a calming influence. A little planning also can go a long way in relieving family stress—and holiday stresses. The following time- and stress-management tips are offered:

- Start early to plan family and other gatherings.
- Involve others, so everyone will be informed. Surprises can add stress unnecessarily.
- Be responsible. If the family is planning a potluck and you promised to bring the main dish, be on time, with enough food to serve everyone expected.
- Ask adult children what they
  would like to bring, rather than
  making arbitrary assignments.
  Let's face it—a daughter-inlaw
  may enjoy making fruit salad, but
  not pie crust.

- Explain house rules to children.
- Leave disciplining others' children to the childrens' parents.
- Plan age-appropriate activities, such as soccer or touch football, table or board games.
- Keep the peace—try not to bring up touchy topics.
- Don't overstay—everyone needs his or her own space and time for self.
- No family nearby? Call a local chamber of commerce or community service organization and volunteer to help serve a community dinner or give time to a food or toy drive.

Focus on others, rather than yourself by inviting others to join in a potluck, watch a movie or sports event to share the day. Calling family and friends also can help those who are alone stay connected. And, if you like—and can—treat yourself to an afternoon off, new book, video or craft project. The dog might like an extra walk, too.

Bonnie Brewer
Family & Consumer Sciences Agent
bjbrewer@ksu.edu

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#### Calla Edwards

Horticulture Agent

callae@ksu.edu

https://www.butler.k-state.edu/horticulture/

# **Caring for Holiday Plants**

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 who love herbs and the scent of these 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 to help keep your Christmas plants looking beautiful throughout the holiday season, as well as ways to keep your Christmas tree looking great all month long.

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 case 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.

# **Caring for Holiday Plants Cont.**



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. Be sure when you move it outside, you water it well, and surround the tree 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.

#### Calla Edwards

Horticulture Agent

callae@ksu.edu

https://www.butler.k-state.edu/horticulture/



K-State Extension is your number one source of reliable, research-based information in Butler County. If you are looking for a speaker for any of your programs or meetings, Horticulture Agent, Calla Edwards, has vast expertise in all areas of horticulture! Some of her programs include:



Butterfly Gardening Feeding the Birds Houseplants Organic Gardening and Insect Management Vegetable Gardening from Start to Finish

Contact Calla at callae@ksu.edu or 316-321-9660

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### Gifts for Gardeners

Last month, I sent out a survey asking for recommendations for products, tools, and other items that you love to use in your garden. Thank you to everyone who took the time to fill out the survey and give me ideas for this week's Grapevine. I have had a lot of fun exploring the various products! These products are based on recommendations provided by gardeners and are not explicitly endorsed by K-State Extension. I love the diversity of items recommended this year, and I had a hard time narrowing the list down to ten items. I hope you can find the perfect gift for the gardener in your life, or perhaps your partner can use this list to find the ideal gift for you. If you don't see your recommendation this year, it will likely appear on a list in the future. Fellow gardeners make these recommendations, and the products aren't endorsed specifically by K-State Extension.

Hori Hori Knife-The most recommended product in this year's survey was the
Hori Hori Knife. This versatile product is a unique mix of a trowel, a saw, and a
knife. The blade is serrated on one side and can be used to cut roots, dig and
divide plants, remove weeds, and the measurement markings make it easy to
plant bulbs.



• Padded Gardening Kneelers-There are several options available for padded kneeling stools for the garden. I love using knee pads in my garden because they are always with me wherever I go. Other padded gardening kneelers can be as simple as a foam piece, or they can be as complex as a garden kneeler/seat that serves both as a kneeler in the garden with handles to help you push yourself up and as a stool when flipped over.



- Gardening Gloves- Gardening gloves are always a popular gift for any gardener, as they can go through several pairs in a year. There is a wide variety of different types of gloves, depending on what your gardener prefers. This year's recommendation was for flexible gardening gloves that are machine-washable and easy to clean. Last year, we received a recommendation for gardening gloves that were insulated to keep the fingers warm in winter.
- Frost Blankets and Floating Row Covers- These two recommendations are perfect for the vegetable gardener who wants to extend their growing season in the spring or the fall. Frost blankets can range in thickness, depending on the level of cold protection you require. Floating row covers work well for light frost protection, but they can also provide some protection from the sun and wind as plants acclimate to the outdoors. They also offer protection from insects and are perfect for protecting broccoli, cabbage, and cauliflower from caterpillars. Both of these items can be purchased

online or in local stores throughout the season.

• **Heavy Duty Wagon**- Tied for the second most recommended item in this year's survey is a heavy-duty wagon to use around your garden. The gardeners loved it for its usefulness in moving things around, hauling bags of leaves, relocating plants, holding tools, and reducing the need for moving heavy items. There are a variety of different ones on the market, depending on your price point and the size of the wagon you need.

• Corona Snake Tongued Weeding Trowel- This recommendation is also one that I love to use in my home. This weeder has a serrated blade that is six inches long with a forked tip to help dig weeds from the garden. The comfortable grip makes this weeder easy to use, and the one-piece construction prevents it from bending or breaking under normal use. This weeder is perfect for digging dandelions.

# Gifts for Gardeners Cont.



- Lawn Gardening Waste Bags- Every gardener needs a sturdy bag to use in the garden or in flowerbeds to collect weeds, leaves, and other garden debris. These bags are made of ripresistant fabric and feature a plastic loop that holds the top portion of the bag open, preventing it from folding in on itself. The four handles on the bags are designed to help carry them and then dispose of them in your compost pile or trash can. There are many different types of bags available on the market, and they can be found both online and in person at various stores.
- **Shredder** While not a tool we usually think of in the garden, a shredder can be handy to shred paper, cardboard, or paper towel rolls to be used in the compost pile and to use as mulch around the garden. Select a heavy-duty shredder that can handle heavier materials. Some can be placed over the top of any trash can, or can be used over the compost pile rather than having to empty a trash can.
- Ollas- The use of Ollas dates back thousands of years and has been used by cultures all over the world. These unglazed clay containers are buried in the ground or in pots alongside plants. They are filled with water and will slowly release it over a period of days or weeks, watering plants in the process. The water then leeches out of tiny holes or "pores" in the unglazed clay and is pulled through the soil to the roots of your thirsty plants using a process called soil moisture tension. These containers come in a variety of shapes and sizes and are very simple to use.
- Trug Tubs- Whether you're hauling soil, gathering weeds, storing tools, or organizing your garage, these trug tubs are made from high-quality materials that stand up to the demands of everyday use. Food-grade virgin polyethylene tubs are safe for use with children, animals, and food harvesting. In addition to garden chores, these bright colors add a bit of fun to the task at hand.





- Garden Weasel- The Garden Weasel is a rotary cultivator that has a wide range of uses in the flowerbed and garden. This tool can help aerate the soil before planting, can be used to control weeds by digging up small weed seedlings, and the gardener who recommended this product uses it to fluff up the mulch in their flower beds every spring. I love using it in the vegetable garden next to rows of plants to help control small weed seedlings as they start to grow. The long handle of this tool also helps to save your back during use.
- Battery Operated Tools- These tools have been gaining in popularity over the last ten years, with new tools coming on the market every year. There are a variety of different types of battery-operated tools, including pruners, chainsaws of various sizes, tillers, weed eaters, lawn mowers, hedge trimmers, and many, many more. Due to the large number of products on the market, I won't provide any specific recommendations on tools. I recommend researching battery-operated tools, especially larger ones such as tillers or weed eaters, in stores before purchasing. There can be a significant difference in weight from one brand to another, and it's best to feel it in person before making a purchase.

#### Calla Edwards

Horticulture Agent

callae@ksu.edu

https://www.butler.k-state.edu/horticulture/

# December Gardening Calendar

#### **Vegetables and Fruits**

- Store leftover seeds and a cool, dry location, for example, in a sealed jar placed in the refrigerator
- Check vegetables in storage for spoilage
- Mulch strawberries for winter protection
- Clean and oil garden hand tools for winter



- Mulch roses by mounding soil 6 to 8 inches deep over the plants to protect the graft
- Mulch perennial beds with 2 to 4 inches of straw, shredded leaves, or other lightweight material
- Cut tall hybrid tea roses back to 18 to 24 inches to reduce wind whipping and plant damage
- Continue to plant spring flowering bulbs until the ground is frozen. Water and mulch.
- Give plants or gift certificates as holiday gifts for gardening friends
- Empty decorative pots and containers. Store inside or decorate for winter.



#### Miscellaneous

- Start planning for next year by making notes and preparing orders
- Turn compost pile to encourage winter breakdown



# December Gardening Calendar Cont.

#### Lawns

- Pick up fallen leaves, limbs, and other debris from the lawn to prevent suffocation of the turf during winter
- Store any leftover lawn fertilizers in a dry location and out of reach of children and pets
- Store pesticides in a cool (not freezing) dry location for winter, out of reach of children and pets





#### **Trees and Shrubs**

- Keep heavy snowfall from limbs of trees and shrubs by lightly shaking to avoid damage
- To prevent breakage, avoid shoveling snow onto trees and shrubs
- Check and protect the trunks of young trees and branches of shrubs for rabbit damage
- Living Christmas trees are special. Leave in your home no longer than one week, then acclimate to the outdoors and plant in a desirable location.
- Prune damaged branches throughout the winter months
- Water newly planted trees and shrubs in winter to prevent dry soil conditions
- Mulch roots of tender shrubs such as azaleas and rhododendrons to keep vigorous during winter
- Prune branches of junipers, pines, hollies, and other plants to use as holiday decorations

### 4-H

#### **Madeline Wallace**

4-H Youth and Development Agent <a href="mgwallac@ksu.edu">mgwallac@ksu.edu</a>
<a href="https://www.butler.k-state.edu/4-h/">https://www.butler.k-state.edu/4-h/</a>

#### A Minute with Madeline

# Butler County 4-H: A Year of Growth, Leadership, and Being "Beyond Ready"



As we close out another remarkable year, the story of Butler County 4-H shines brighter than ever! The achievements of our youth tell a powerful story of growth, dedication, and possibility—one that truly embodies what it means to be *Beyond Ready*.

Over the past year, more than **270 youth** participated as active 4-H members in community clubs across the county, engaging in hands-on learning through projects, leadership roles, and service. In addition, more than **1,200 young people** experienced 4-H through school enrichment programs, classroom lessons, and camps. Whether they were experimenting with science in a classroom, exploring nature at Rock Springs Ranch, or practicing leadership in their clubs, these youth had meaningful opportunities to discover their spark and build confidence.

Our members explored over **40 different project areas**, ranging from livestock, photography, and shooting sports to robotics, foods, and visual arts. Participation in leadership and STEM-related projects reached new highs, reflecting a growing excitement for innovation and creative problem-solving.

Butler County youth also made an impressive mark beyond our local borders. At the Kansas State Fair, dozens of our members earned purple ribbons, special awards, and top placings across multiple project areas. Our livestock and judging teams represented the county with pride, while photography, foods, and arts exhibits showcased not only talent but countless hours of hard work and personal growth.

### 4-H

# Butler County 4-H: A Year of Growth, Leadership, and Being "Beyond Ready" Cont.

Community service remained a defining theme of the year. Local 4-H clubs contributed over 100 hours of service, supporting food pantries, collecting items for families in need, writing cards to veterans, and enhancing public spaces. Each project—whether big or small demonstrated the compassion and commitment that lie at the heart of 4-H.

Summer experiences added another layer of growth and adventure. Many youth attended Rock Springs Ranch, where they developed teamwork, independence, and leadership skills. For some, it was their first camp experience, and they returned home with new friendships, new confidence, and a deeper understanding of their own potential.

None of this work would be possible without the dedication of our volunteers, parents, and club leaders. Their guidance, encouragement, and willingness to show up—whether teaching a new skill, offering advice, or simply providing snacks—create an environment where youth feel supported, challenged, and inspired.

Looking ahead, we are excited to continue expanding opportunities through new school partnerships, innovative project offerings, and programs that help young people build strong leadership and service skills. Our members are not only ready for the road ahead—they are Beyond Ready to shape their communities and their futures.

As we step into the holiday season, we are grateful for every youth, family, and volunteer who makes 4-H such a vibrant and meaningful part of Butler County. May your holidays be filled with warmth, rest, and the joy of knowing that together, we are building something truly special. Here's to a bright and inspiring new year for all!



#### 4-H





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 activites		
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		

**L** 316-321-9660

butler.k-state.edu

December 2025