

## The Grapevine

### No-Till Gardening

Growing up, my family's garden provided us with a means of fresh, healthy produce along with a dose of good old-fashioned labor. While I might have disliked the amount of time and work it took to keep the weeds down so our produce could grow, I really enjoyed the fresh produce (except the broccoli, I always seemed to find at least half of a worm. Never the entire worm, only half which always left me wondering where the other half was.....I'm sure many of you can relate). Today I wanted to take some time to talk about an alternative to the traditional tilled garden that is gaining in popularity, No-Till Gardening.



Many of the farmer's in our area utilize no-till farming with their crops, but No-Till Gardening hasn't gained in popularity until recently. One reason it is gaining in popularity is to protect the structure of the soil, which even in a garden is negatively impacted by tillage. This structure is important to water and air movement in your garden along with root growth. Another reason no-till gardens are becoming more popularity is they tend to be lower maintenance and require less equipment to maintain. Let's talk about getting started because the fall is the optimal time to try something new.

Getting started with a no-till garden is relatively similar to starting any new garden plot. Select a garden site that will have plenty of sunlight and is not in a low spot where water might pool and stand. You should also make sure you have easy access to water and that the location is not too far from your house. If the site is in your yard or has weeds growing in it, you will have to kill the current vegetation through a couple options. One option is to use a herbicide to spray the area to kill the weeds. It's best to water the area in well several days before you spray to ensure you kill the weed rather than burning the foliage. A second option is to cover the location with either plastic or cardboard to kill the plants underneath. All of these options can work, especially in the late summer to fall when we have warm days still. If you already have a garden spot you use wait till the garden is finished for the year before you start.



Once you have your spot prepared it's time to develop that layer of mulch that will help improve the soil along with keeping the weeds down. The first step is to cover the ground with a layer of cardboard or newspaper to help suppress weeds that might try to sprout. Then cover that area with a layer of mulch or compost 6-10" thick. This is the key to keeping the weeds down. This layer can be composed of anything but the picture to the left gives a sample of one way you could layer your mulch layer. In the spring before you plant, plan your beds so they are 3-4' wide. Keep your beds narrow so you can weed, plant and harvest without walking in the area and have designated walk ways so you don't have to walk in your planting areas to prevent soil compaction over time. When you go to plant simply scrape the mulch away down to the ground, plant your seeds or plant, then push the mulch back once the seeds have sprouted. Try to maintain at least a 6" layer of mulch on top of the soil at

all times, so it will need to be replenished every year to some degree. That's why fall is a great time to start with all the leaves that will soon be falling.

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I encourage you to give no-till gardening a try. It's an excellent way to have a garden while improving your soil. Some of the benefits I've had are an increased amount of moisture in the soil because it's not evaporating, fewer weeds because my soil is covered so fewer weeds sprout and less erosion again because my soil is protected. Every time I dig in my garden I find multiple worms to help my soil. Even if you don't intend to try utilizing a no-till form of gardening adding mulch to the top of your soil will make a big difference in the number of weeds you have and the quality of your soil. Soil is one of our most valuable resources and anything we can do to protect our soil for the future is an effort worth trying. If you have any questions please feel free to contact our office!! Happy Growing!!

### **Pollinator Plant of the Week-**

This week's pollinator plant of the week is the Goldenrod. This native is commonly found along in the prairies, along railroad tracks, road sides and in old fields. This native is known for its bright golden yellow flowers in large open panicles of flowers. Goldenrod grows on slender stems either singular or in small bunches of stems that reach approximately 3-4' in height. There are several different species of Goldenrods that are native to the state each with a slightly different growth habit and bloom type. Many Goldenrods spread slowly via creeping rhizomes. Goldenrods often get a bad name for causing hay fever and allergies but ragweed's and pigweeds are the most common cause of those allergies. Goldenrods have pollen that is carried by insects rather than the wind like ragweed's and pigweeds.



There are several species of goldenrods that are raised and sold as ornamentals and available for sale. Native Americans often used this plant for various medicinal purposes and the sap can be used to make rubber.

### **Reminders-**

- Plant broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower and similar plants now in their final locations.
- Water lawns and flower beds 1-2 times or approximately ½-1" of moisture every week.
- Scout for Fall Armyworms. They haven't been spotted yet but early detection prevents more damage.
- Spray areas to seed cool season grasses now to plant in September. Water a few days before spraying for the best results.

### **Upcoming Events**

- **September 7, 2022: Recommended Trees for Kansas**  
Often the shade, beauty, and other benefits of a tree aren't fully appreciated until decades after a tree is planted. As a result, picking the right tree for the right place becomes even more critical. Join Dr. Jason Griffin, Woody Ornamentals Horticulture Extension Specialist, as he highlights some of the best trees for Kansas and the surrounding region. The KSRE Garden hour sessions are held via Zoom starting at noon. For more information or to register [click here](#).
- **October 5, 2022: Improving Soil Health in the Landscape and Garden**  
Is your landscape and garden soil healthy? Learn how to measure and improve your soil's health in the home landscape and garden. Dr. DeAnn Presley, Professor and Extension Specialist for Environmental Soil Science and Management, will explore ways to improve your soil, including cover crops and soil amendments. Learn how to build your soil's organic matter, and improve the growing potential of your soil. The KSRE Garden hour sessions are held via Zoom starting at noon. For more information or to register [click here](#).