

# The Grapevine

## Growing Beautiful Annuals

Annual flowers are unmatched in their ability to provide a plethora of blooms throughout the growing season. No matter what color, size or shape of flower you want there is likely an annual that will fit that location. Annuals are plants that sprout, grow, flower and set seed all in one growing season. Some plants that we consider annuals are actually perennials in other locations but that's a conversation for another time. For some, growing annuals can be a frustrating task but with a few tips you can have beautiful blooms all summer long. The first key is to pick the right plant for the right location. A sun loving plant will never be happy or perform well in a full shade location no matter what type of care you give. Be sure to check the tag to see what the growing requirements are for the plant before you buy it. The second tip is to encourage bushy plants. Annuals can become leggy and slow down on blooming if not trimmed, especially right when they are first planted.

The third tip is to fertilize. Annuals are heavy feeders and need fertilizer throughout the growing season to keep up with the growth and blooms they produce. Plants in the ground should be fertilized every 4-6 weeks through the growing season with a general-purpose fertilizer while plants in pots should be fertilized weekly with a water-soluble fertilizer. Along with fertilizer, be sure the flowers are getting watered on a regular basis and don't allow them to dry out for too long. My final tip is to dead head the plants occasionally. Many of the new varieties don't require deadheading like some of the older varieties but they can still do with an occasional haircut once in a while.



## Lawn Mower Tips



With the rain we had last week and with rain forecasted this week our lawns are really looking and growing their best right now. In order to keep them looking great here are a few tips for the summer.

- *Mow your grass at the proper height.* Mowing your yard at the best height for your grass type will help keep the lawn healthy and thick. Tall fescue and Kentucky Bluegrass should be mowed between 2-3.5", Buffalograss should be mowed at a height between 2-3" while Bermudagrass and Zoysiagrass should be mowed between 1-2".
- *Only remove 1/3 of the leaf blade at a time when mowing.* Letting your grass get really tall, then cutting it short is damaging to the grass plant and overtime can reduce the grass stand in your yard. Scalping your yard is very hard on the grass and should be avoided whenever possible
- *Fertilize warm season lawns.* Now is the time to be fertilizing your warm season lawns (Buffalograss, Bermudagrass and Zoysiagrass). The best month to fertilize warm season lawns is June if you are only applying one round of fertilizer but anytime from May to August will work. Just remember, the more you fertilize, the more you will have to water and mow as the grass will grow more with more fertilizer. Cool season lawns shouldn't be fertilized till September unless you are following an intensive management system.
- *Sharpen your mower blades.* Lawn mower blades should be sharpened after every 10-12 hours of use to keep them cutting their best. If your grass is starting to look a bit frayed on the edges after you mow, it's time to sharpen or replace the blades.
- *Seed warm season lawns.* June is the ideal time to re-seed warm season lawns, especially if you can water the grass seedlings regularly during the germination time. Warm season grasses need warmer temperatures to germinate, for example Buffalograss will germinate in a week during mid-June where it can take 2-3 weeks if seeded in April or May.



### Weed of the Week-

This week's weed is poison hemlock. This member of the carrot family is often mistaken for Queen Anne's Lace, carrots and parsnips but should not be eaten under any circumstances. Poison hemlock is a tall, invasive and as the name suggests poisonous weed that can cause severe reactions in people and animals. Poison hemlock has lacy, fern like leaves with purple blotches on the stem and white, flat bloom clusters. It is a biennial, which forms a rosette the first year and will bolt with a bloom stalk the second year. Plants typically grow 2 to 6 feet tall with multi branched stems. All parts of this plant are poisonous but the seeds are the worst with the sap causing rashes on the skin and if ingested can lead to muscle paralysis and suffocation. Poison hemlock can often be found in roadside ditches and in damp locations. When working with this weed be sure to wear long sleeves and gloves to

prevent contact with the sap. Control can be found by either removing the plants with a hoe or shovel or spraying them with a herbicide.

### Issue of the Week-



One of my most common questions during the summer months, especially if it is a hot dry summer is "Why are my (insert plant) leaves all twisted and curled?" Herbicide drift injury happens far to often with the saddest part that this issue is usually preventable and, in some cases, not caused by the homeowner. Unfortunately, many of our bedding and vegetable plants are very sensitive to herbicides and it doesn't take much to cause the damage as shown on the left. Herbicide drift can be caused by a variety of factors including temperature and wind speed. It's best to spray when wind speeds are below 10 mph but not completely still (no air flow can actually make things worse) and when the temperature is below 80 degrees. Several common lawn and weed killer products contain 2,4-D which can volatilize at warm temperatures before it dries and spread where we don't want it. Always check the weather and read the label prior

to applying any chemical to ensure you are using it safely. Once a vegetable has been hit with a herbicide it's ultimately up to the homeowner of if they want to eat the produce. There is not much information on how much chemical moves into the fruit from the leaves. It's best to prevent drift when possible and replant if you can.

### Reminders-

- Prune off the foliage from spring blooming bulbs as it dies back. By this point in the year they have stored enough food to bloom the following spring. Pruning them back now cleans up the bed.
- Fertilize hanging baskets and annual plants as needed.
- The [Great Plains Bumble Bee Atlas](#) is a new region-wide community science project aimed at tracking and conserving bumble bees native to North Dakota, South Dakota, and Kansas. Community science means anyone can get involved, no experience is necessary. Click on the link highlighted above and choose "Events."
- Thin excessive fruit on fruit trees to encourage larger fruit and reduce the chances of breaking branches due to fruit load. The distances listed are the recommendations, try to keep fruit to these distances apart on each branch. Cherries do not need thinned. Thin fruit according to species below:
  - Apples and Pears- 6 to 8" apart. Pick the nicest fruit in the cluster and remove the rest
  - Peaches- 6-8" apart. Try for an average of 7" apart
  - Plums and Prunes- 4-5" apart
  - Apricots- 2-4" apart

## Upcoming Events

- *June 1, 2022: Organic Pest Management for Vegetable Gardens*  
The ideal weather conditions for peak vegetable crop production will also generate a rise in garden pests, weeds, and disease. As these pests plague the garden, even the most avid organic grower may become disheartened. Join Zac Hoppenstedt, Johnson County Horticulture Extension Agent, to learn about organic controls available to the home gardener, as well as strategic approaches to help prevent garden problems. For more information on KSRE Garden Hour [click here](#).
- *June 12<sup>th</sup>: El Dorado Garden Tour- 1 pm to 7 pm*  
The El Dorado Main Street along with Walter's Flowers, Prairie Blossom Nursery and Sutherlands are proud to present the 2022 Garden Tour. You will have the opportunity to tour an English style garden, Butterfly Garden, Sculpture Garden and a Waterfall Garden. Tickets are \$20 and you can purchase them at some Downtown El Dorado Businesses.
- *July 6, 2022: Growing Culinary Mushrooms at Home*  
Mushrooms can be a fun and tasty addition to your garden and dinner table. Pam Paulsen, Reno County Horticulture Extension Agent, will cover some of the most commonly cultivated mushroom species and walk through the steps of how to grow them successfully at home. The KSRE Garden hour sessions are held via Zoom starting at noon. For more information or to register [click here](#).