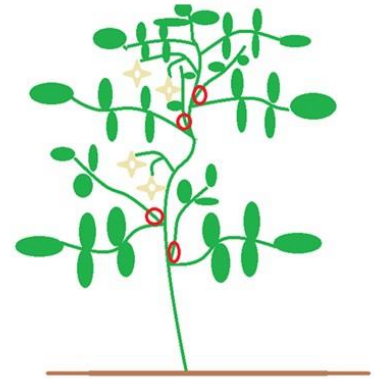


# The Grapevine

## Tomato Support and Pruning

How is your garden growing? By the end of May many of us have most of our gardens planted, except for some of our winter squash and sweet potatoes. Tomatoes are probably the most popular vegetable that people grow in their gardens every year. While tomatoes are pretty easy to grow there are a few things that we need to think of now so our tomatoes can be productive this year. Pruning your tomatoes and providing adequate support for the plants as they grow can make a big difference in how productive, disease free and easy to harvest your plants can be. Before the plants get too big it's time to do some preventative work so the summer can be stress free.

Until a couple years ago I hadn't really given a thought to pruning tomatoes. I would periodically trim the vines back so they didn't get too out of control but beyond that I just let them grow wild. Turns out pruning your tomatoes can help them be more productive and disease free in the long run. Pruning can help balance the ratio of vegetative growth to fruiting growth which can help produce larger fruit and it also allows more air flow through the plants so they are less likely to have disease issues. The first pruning should happen when the tomatoes are planted and that is to remove the bottom leaves that are touching the ground. The second pruning should happen when the plants are approximately 18-24" tall and applies to all types of tomatoes (except the micro sized ones). This time you will remove all the leaves 6-12" above the soil and you will also remove all the suckers up to the first bloom cluster. Removing these leaves helps to reduce the chances of having soil borne diseases on tomatoes and removing the suckers helps keep the tomatoes in check. If you have a determinate variety of tomato your pruning is done for the year. Indeterminate varieties will require a bit more work as you will continue to remove the suckers (like the picture to the right) as the plant grows throughout the season. You can also prune the ends of the tomato vines on indeterminate tomatoes to keep them somewhat in check. Check out this [video](#) from Iowa State on pruning tomatoes and some more tips on how to prune.



Once you have your tomatoes planted and you have removed the bottom leaves the second thing to consider is how are you supporting the tomato plant. I won't spend much time talking about tomato cages because most people know about them but they aren't the only option. For those of us who dislike storing tomato cages there are alternatives. One of the most popular with commercial growers is to use trellises to support the plants. There are two major methods, the first is to use a string trellis suspended from wire that is strung between two posts. You twist the string around the stem of the plant as it grows to support it. With this method you do prune off any side shoots every week or so and leave just the main stem. This system works really well for indeterminate type tomatoes. To learn more about this method of trellising tomatoes check out [this video by the University of Maine](#). The second method of trellis is called the Florida Basket weave. This method is similar to the string trellis except instead of the strings being overhead the strings run parallel to the ground and the tomatoes are woven between the strands as they grow. This method also works well for determinate and indeterminate types of tomatoes. To learn more about how to grow tomatoes using the Florida Basket weave watch [this video by K-State Research and Extension](#). The final option for growing tomatoes is to use a stake for every plant and tie the tomato to it as it grows up. This method works similar to the string trellis method talked about earlier but without the string.

Tomatoes are one of my favorite vegetables to grow but I've always hated storing the cages and how out of control some varieties can get. Hopefully with the above tips you, like me, can keep your tomatoes productive, disease free and under control this growing season. Happy Growing!!

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 Calla Edwards, KSRE – Butler Co. Horticulture Agent, 316-321-9660.

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service  
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## Weed of the Week-



This week's weed is one that I'm sure we have all had run ins with at some point in time, it's poison ivy. Poison Ivy doesn't pose a threat in our gardens to out competing the perennials or vegetables, rather it is mainly an issue because of the reactions it causes. Poison Ivy has three leaflets that can be toothed or lobed and can often be found as a vine growing up trees or as a groundcover if it cannot grow upwards. In the fall poison ivy turns bright red in a beautiful and colorful display. This native vine is often confused with Virginia Creeper which is also a vine and ground cover that has leaflets in groups of five. The issue with poison ivy is the resinous compounds called urushiols that are present in all parts of the plant. The unfortunate part is you don't have to touch poison ivy to have a reaction, the compound can get on tools, clothes, pets or even in the air if the plant is brushed and you can have a reaction from those. Even the dead parts of the plant contain the chemical and it can become airborne if the plant is burned. To control poison ivy, first dress the part. Cover as much skin as possible with long sleeves, long pants, closed toed shoes and gloves. Small plants can be pulled with care but herbicides with triclopyr or glyphosate can be applied when the plant is actively growing for control. You will likely need to make multiple applications in order to achieve full control. If you believe you came in contact with the plant, change clothes and wash immediately. Rubbing Alcohol can help remove the oils and prevent the rash from spreading.

## Insect of the Weed-

The insect of the week are Bagworms. These plant pests have started hatching in our area and moving out of the parent's home to establish a new home of their own. Bagworms are so named because of the "bag" they create around themselves to camouflage them from predators. Young larva hatch typically in about mid-May and leave the bag they hatched from to find foliage to start eating. Larvae will typically feed on the plant they hatched from or one nearby but they can be carried to other plants via the wind and a long thread of silk. Bagworms will eat on just about any plant but prefer junipers or arborvitae. These insects usually will go unnoticed till their bags are 1-2" in size and hang from the plant like little Christmas ornaments. Control is best two to three weeks after they have hatched to ensure all the larvae have started to feed which typically is about the mid to later half of June. There are several active ingredients that can be used to kill bagworms including BT, spinosad, permethrin, acephate, and cyfluthrin. Be sure to thoroughly cover all the foliage to kill the bagworms. If you don't notice the bagworms till August, it's best to just pick the bagworms off since chemical applications at that point are often unsuccessful.



## 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.
- 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](#).
- *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](#).