

K-STATE

Research and Extension

Butler County

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K-STATE GARDEN HOUR

Join K-State Research and Extension every first Wednesday of the month from 12:00 - 1:00 pm CST

The Grapevine

Brown Patch in Lawns

As many parts of Kansas and the Midwest brace for summer weather – warmer nights and higher humidity – homeowners may need to adjust their strategy for watering tall fescue lawns. Summer's weather patterns often mean the amount of time grass blades stay wet increases, making them more susceptible to the disease, brown patch.



Brown patch is primarily a leaf pathogen, but the fungus can spread down into the crown with a severe outbreak and cause plant death. However, turfgrass typically recovers within 2-3 weeks, depending on the weather. The symptoms of brown patch can be similar to those of drought. But if you look closer at the grass plants, around the edge of the symptomatic area, and if you notice tan spots with a dark halo, then you likely have brown patch." Brown patch exists in the soil. It cannot be eliminated from the lawn, but is also not carried from one lawn to another. Here are some tips to reduce the lawn's susceptibility to brown patch:

- Water in the early morning, rather than the evening, and only as needed. This decreases the number of hours the grass blades stay wet.
- Fertilize according to recommendations for your lawn. Don't fertilize when brown patch is active.
- When seeding, follow recommended rates.
- Grass growing beneath trees does not dry as quickly. Use a mulch ring around trees so grass does not grow beneath the canopy.

Fungicides can effectively prevent brown patches, though the most commonly used products are expensive and typically only available in large quantities. Preventative fungicides are recommended if you want a blemish-free lawn, beginning in mid-June through August, but this does get expensive.

Warm Season Lawn Care

Warm-season grasses are becoming more popular in the area as they are lower maintenance and tolerate drought and heat better than cool-season grasses. However, many people try to care for their warm-season lawn just like they used to with their tall fescue or Kentucky bluegrass yard, when the new lawn requires a different treatment schedule. Let's look at how to maintain your zoysia, bermudagrass, and buffalograss lawn properly.



Bermudagrass often gets a bad rap for invading flowerbeds or being kinda weedy in appearance. However, the newer varieties are less invasive and provide a higher quality lawn than older ones. The best time of year to establish a bermudagrass lawn is from mid-May through July, when the days are warm and there is no danger of frost. Bermudagrass can be established via sod, plugs, sprigs or seed depending on the variety you prefer. One key to a quality lawn is to use a cold-hardy variety to survive our winters, as many varieties are developed in the southern part of the United States. The best time to fertilize is from May to August, with 1 pound of actual nitrogen per 1000 square feet, two to four times during the summer. Bermudagrass can be mowed as low as 1" high once or twice a week, depending on how dense of a lawn stand you want, or 2" every ten days for a low-maintenance lawn. The best time to control weeds is in October, with some spot spraying in the spring to control any stragglers. Bermudagrass only requires water during hot and dry months and prefers the sunniest location you can provide.

One of the lesser known warm season grasses zoysia forms a dense stand of sod through aboveground and underground runners. This grass is drought- and heat-resistant, and it is winter hardy. The one downside is that zoysia is prone to having a buildup of thatch if not properly maintained. Zoysia is best planted via sprigs, sod or plugs as this grass does not produce true to type via seed. The best time to plant is from May through June, which gives enough time for the plants to develop a vigorous root system before the first frost. You can convert a cool-season lawn to zoysia by plugging the current lawn or adding strips of zoysia grass around the yard and then mowing at one inch to facilitate the spreading of the zoysia. This method can take a couple of years to take over the current cool-season lawn completely, but it is less expensive. Zoysia can be mowed anywhere from ½" to 1 ½" tall, depending on how often you want to mow. The taller the mowing height, the less you have to mow. Fertilizer should be applied similarly to bermudagrass with 2-3 pounds of actual nitrogen applied throughout the growing season from May through August in several applications. Zoysia will need to be dethatched regularly for the best health of the grass. Weed control is best in the fall, followed by spot spraying in the spring.



This native prairie grass has been growing in popularity as a lawn grass due to its drought hardiness, low-maintenance nature, needing little fertilizer, and low-growing nature, which means it requires minimal mowing throughout the summer. While buffalograss doesn't need much water, it should be soaked thoroughly when watered. This grass can be planted via seeds, sod or plugs depending on your desire. Seed planting is best from April through June, provided you can water the area regularly to facilitate germination. If you use seed, buy treated seed from a reputable dealer for the best start, as buffalograss has a reputation for being harder to get started. While buffalograss seed is more expensive than other grasses, you use less for the same area, so the cost is the same. The best time to fertilize is in early June, when 1 to 2 pounds of actual nitrogen are

applied, with a second application in mid-July if desired; however, buffalograss doesn't need fertilizer in low-maintenance lawns. Mow buffalograss at 2 ½" to 4" for home lawns, while low-maintenance areas can be mowed higher if desired.

Warm-season lawns are becoming more popular as low-maintenance lawns that are drought- and heat-resistant. One of the downsides I hear from homeowners is that the lawns are brown from first frost till sometime in April or May, depending on the grass, or that they don't have the same deep green color as cool-season lawns; however, for many, the benefits far outweigh the concerns. With proper care, warm-season grasses are an excellent alternative to the traditional cool-season lawn grass. It might take some adjustment on your part or the lawn companies to find the proper treatment schedule for you, but it can be done. Happy Growing.

Renovating June-Bearing Strawberry Beds



Healthy strawberry plantings will be productive for three to four harvest seasons; however, after that, they will need renovation to stay productive. The best time to renovate strawberries is after you have finished harvesting, which is probably right now for June-bearing strawberries. If your strawberry patch was flooded, discard any strawberries, even if they are an everbearing variety.

Everbearing strawberries should not be renovated at this time. The renovation process involves several steps, including reducing the row size, removing leaves, and fertilizing. One of the main goals in renovation is to provide a high level of sunlight to plant leaves so

they can manufacture the food the plant needs. If leaves have disease spots, remove all the leaves in the bed. Removing these diseased leaves and weeds will cause new, non-diseased leaves to develop and remove competition from weedy plants. Till or hoe each row of strawberries, leaving a band of plants about 8 to 10 inches wide, or remove small, weak plants throughout the bed, leaving a healthy plant every four to six inches. You can remove all the leaves about 1 inch above the crowns with a lawn mower or cut them off with hedge shears. Follow the mowing by covering the crowns with about one inch of soil. Care for the plants the rest of the summer as you would a new planting by watering regularly and not letting the strawberries dry out in the heat of the summer. It's best to fertilize strawberries in August to encourage growth. The mother plants will form runners or daughter plants throughout the summer. These daughter plants will root down, storing food and setting bloom buds for the following spring. Remove the flowers of these daughter plants in the spring to allow the plants to produce more fruit the following year. For more information on growing strawberry plants in Kansas, [check out this publication](#).



Question of the Week: Thinning Fruit

Sometimes, too much of a good thing is not a good thing. Such is when your fruit trees (except cherries) are overloaded with fruit. Too much fruit can interfere with fruit bud development this summer, which results in a smaller crop or even no crop the following year, and the heavy fruit can lead to damage to the limbs or breaking limbs in some cases. Extra fruit will also make for smaller, lower-quality fruit, even though you get lots of it. The only fruit tree that doesn't need to be thinned is a cherry tree that can carry the full fruit load. Below are some recommendations for thinning fruits on various species:



- Apples and Pears- Fruit should be 6-8" apart. Apples tend to cluster in groups of five. If that is the case, leave only the biggest fruit from the cluster.
- Peaches- Thin so fruits are 6-8" apart. Peaches also tend to cluster, try to average 7" between fruits.
- Plums and Prunes- Thin to 4-5" apart
- Apricots- Thin to 2-4" apart.

Thin fruit on trees as early as possible to reduce the stress on the trees and increase the size of the fruit that is left. Pinch the excess fruit off with your fingers or use pruners to remove the fruit. Be careful to clean pruners when moving from one tree to another, and try not to break off the fruiting spur when thinning the fruit.

Beating the Heat

The summer heat will arrive this week, and it looks like it will hang around, so we should take some precautions when working outside. The dangers of heat stroke and heat exhaustion come with high temperatures and humidity. Determining the priorities to accomplish during the limited time when the weather is cooler is essential. Try to make a short list of what has to be done, what should be done, and things to do if you have time and the weather allows it.

- Limit activity to early in the morning or late in the evening. Avoid working outside after 10:30 am or before 7:30 pm on hot days so you miss the hottest part of the day. Try to water your gardens during the cooler parts of the day so the moisture is less likely to evaporate before the plants can get to it.
- Be sure to wear lightweight and light-colored clothing when working outside to keep as cool as possible. A wide-brimmed hat will help keep the sun and sweat out of your eyes. Always wear sunscreen when working in the sun to avoid getting a sunburn. Remember to reapply sunscreen according to the directions if you are outside for extended periods.
- Drink plenty of water outside and take breaks often in the shade to cool down. It can also help to alternate water with a drink containing electrolytes if you plan to be outdoors for longer.
- Be sure to know the signs of heat stroke and heat exhaustion. If you start to feel cool and clammy, have nausea, a headache, or feel lethargic, it's time to stop and try to cool off. If you believe you are suffering from heat exhaustion, don't immediately go into a highly air-conditioned room or cold shower, as this can cause disorientation and make you lose consciousness. Use cool clothes on your head and neck to cool off, then go inside. If you think you might have heat stroke, call for help or go to the doctor ASAP to get treatment.

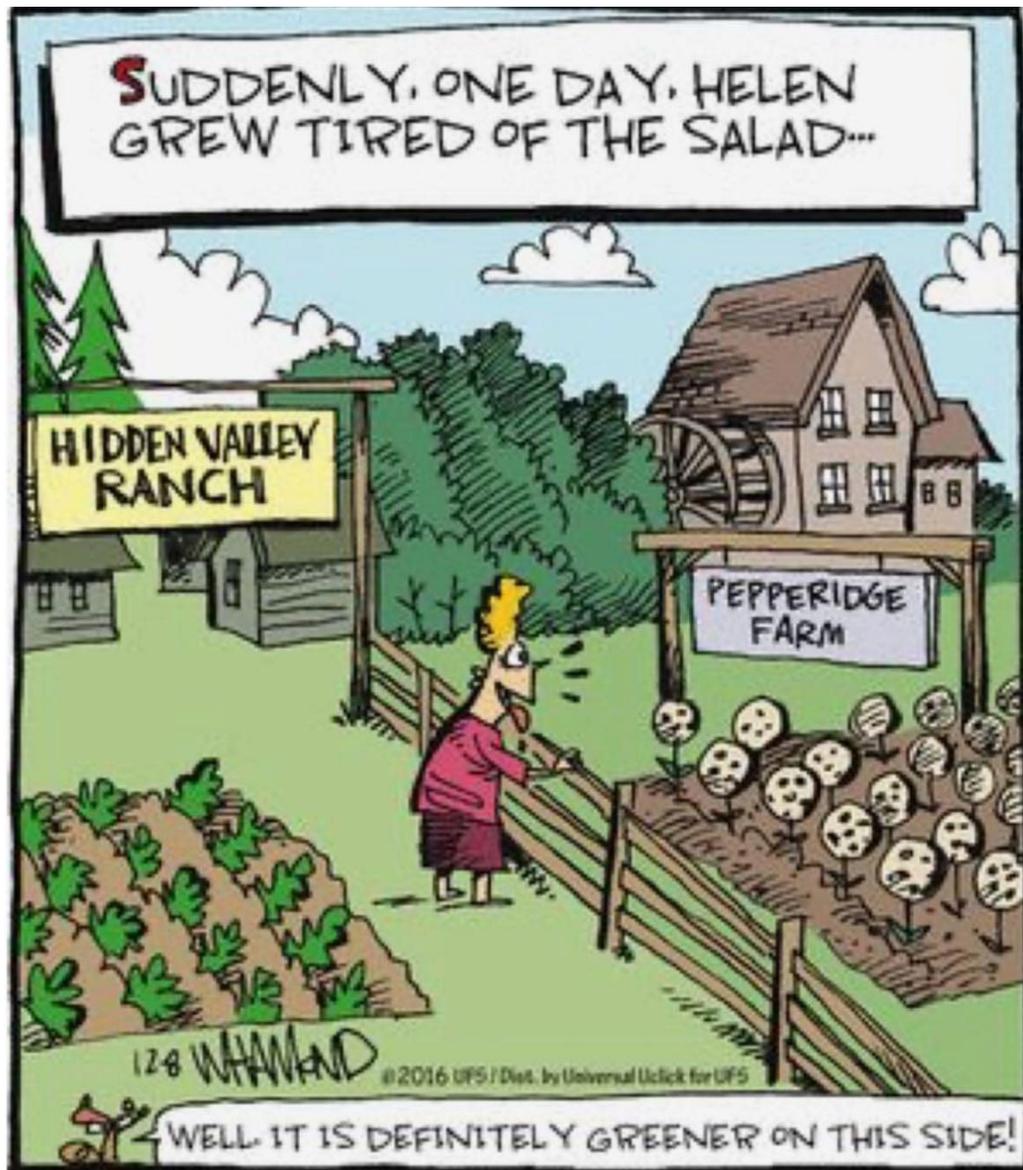
As with any outdoor activity, being aware of the weather and listening to your body's limits is essential. Stay safe and hydrated this summer.

Video of the Week

Companion Plants in the Garden



Many gardeners have heard that marigolds repel pests in vegetable gardens or that beans dislike fennel. These sentiments are often attributed to a practice called "companion planting." But does companion planting really work? Join Pam and Laura for a discussion on the research behind companion planting as we dispel common myths and discuss the benefits companion planting can offer your garden. Watch the video on the [K-State Research and Extension Garden Hour Website](#).



Upcoming Events

Garden Hour Webinars:

July 2nd- Cutting Edge Efforts in Kansas Demo Gardens

August 6th- Innovations in Horticultural Research at Kansas State University

September 3rd- Shrubs that Thrive in Kansas

Upcoming Events:

June 18th at 5:30 pm
Troubleshooting Issues in the Garden at Benton Community Building

Myth of the Month

“Blossom End Rot Cures”

Right now, one of the most common issues in gardening groups is these brownish soft lesions on the bottom of tomatoes. Blossom End Rot, or BER, is a common disorder found in tomatoes and is more common in certain varieties than others. Blossom End Rot can occur in vegetables other than tomatoes, including peppers, squash, eggplant, and



watermelon. This disorder is most common in Roma-type tomatoes and appears on the first fruit round. While BER is most commonly found on tomatoes, it can also impact the garden's peppers, squash, and other vegetables. Unlike other issues commonly found in the garden, BER isn't caused by a disease but rather by a lack of calcium when the fruit is forming.

This is where the myths or misconceptions start to come into play. Many people add supplements to the soil to prevent blossom end rot, including eggshells, Tums, Epsom Salts, and many more. While some “cures” will add calcium to the soil, eggshells will take years to break down, even if crushed. Tums also add unnecessary ingredients to the soil, and Epsom salts contain magnesium and sulfate but no calcium. These additives are usually unnecessary if you plant your garden in the ground. Our soils have enough calcium to prevent Blossom End Rot.



This first fruit set occurs as the temperatures rise in the summer. While the top of the plant grew quickly during the cooler days of late spring, the root system had a slower growth rate due to having to grow through our soils. When the temperature switch happens, the plants don't have the root system to support the top, and nutrients are diverted from the fruit to keep the plant growing. BER can also

occur when the roots of the plants are damaged by tillage or even by rotting from excess moisture. The best way to prevent BER is to mulch the garden to retain moisture in the soil and keep it cooler, water regularly (always factor in how much it has rained as well) to keep the soil damp to reduce stress on the plants and finally try to disturb the root system as little as possible so it can effectively provide moisture and nutrients to the plant.

City of Benton and K-State present:
**BENTON GARDENING
PROGRAM!**

**April 9 - December 17th - 5:30pm at the Community
Building**

**9
APRIL**

**Vegetable Garden Basics/Gearing up
for Gardening**

This beginner class will get you introduced to starting a garden and what you'll need!

**21
MAY**

Gardening for Pollinators

Learn how gardening for pollinators will help with the production of your garden. What to plant/when to plant!

**18
JUNE**

Troubleshooting Issues in the Garden

Learn what to do if something doesn't seem right in your garden. Got the droopies? Got the wilties? Come and learn!

**9
JULY**

Fall Gardening

End of summer doesn't mean the end of gardening! Come and learn about options for growing in the fall.

**17
SEPT**

Season Extension of the Garden

This class teaches you the tips and tricks for getting every bit out of your garden. Show up and grow up!

**19
NOV**

Houseplant Care

Let's take it inside! Houseplants can be the best of friends. Learn how to nourish your friends at this wonderful class.

**17
DEC**

Feeding the Birds

One reviewer stated "This class is for the birds." We took it as a compliment. Come and find out what they like, and what is best for them!

FREE FREE FREE - Let's make Benton beautiful!

This is a program through K-State Research and Extension/Butler County in conjunction with the brand new seed library program at City Hall.. There is no charge for this. Put in on your calendar and show up for some fun times! Refreshments will be provided and there will be enough fun for everyone.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION
CALL LYNELL AT 316-778-1625**