

# K-STATE

Research and Extension

Butler County

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# The Grapevine

## Growing Mushrooms at Home

I love mushrooms (I might be alone in this with the rest of my family), but they are an excellent addition to any salad and many different dishes. While it may seem intimidating, growing several different types of mushrooms at home is relatively easy. It might surprise you, but the part of the mushroom we eat is the fruiting or reproductive bodies of the fungi. Unlike many plants, mushrooms do not photosynthesize and rely on the substrate or material on which the mushrooms grow for their food. As the substrate decomposes, the mushroom can absorb the nutrients. Mushrooms can be grown on logs, straw, or other sources; the substrate needed will depend on the mushroom you grow.

The Oyster and shiitake mushrooms are the most common to grow at home. Oyster mushrooms are delicate with a mild flavor and are rarely seen in grocery stores because they are hard to ship. Their color ranges from tan to pink to white to yellow, and they are grown on a tower of straw. The mushrooms will typically start to form on the outside of the tower in approximately a month. Shiitake mushrooms have a smoky flavor and can be found in stores, but they are inexpensive to grow. Shiitake mushrooms are grown on hardwood logs, and one log can produce mushrooms for up to 3 to 5 years. Several kits are available for sale to help you start this endeavor, or you could attend a class to make your own. Happy Growing!



# Johnny Appleseed



One of my favorite childhood stories was the tale of Johnny Appleseed spreading apples across the United States. The thought of someone selflessly planting apple trees to help others resonates with many nationwide. If you didn't know, the story of Johnny Appleseed is based on a real-life person who spread apples across the eastern part of the United States. While history remembers him as a wanderer, he was a careful businessman. In honor of his birthday last week, let's explore the history of Johnny Appleseed.

Johnny Chapman, who would later get the nickname Johnny Appleseed, was born on September 26, 1774, on the

family farm in Massachusetts. His adventures didn't start till 1794, when he was 18, and Johnny, with his 11-year-old brother Nathaniel, traveled west following a steady stream of immigrants. He would carry a leather bag of apple seeds he received from cider mills and would use them to plant apple orchards as he traveled around the country. While the story of Johnny Appleseed makes it seem like he planted apple seeds at random to feed communities, he did so with a strategic business plan. For several reasons, Johnny would carefully cultivate his apple "nurseries" to develop as orchards. Orchards were an essential part of establishing the legal ownership of land. To prove their homesteads to be permanent, settlers were required to plant 50 apple trees and 20 peach trees in three years, since an average apple tree took roughly ten years to bear fruit. Johnny would do the difficult work of planting the orchards on the property and then sell them to future settlers. He planted cider apples in his orchards because hard apple cider was an essential part of the American table at the time. They left the alcohol aspect out of my childhood story of Johnny Appleseed.

Johnny planted his orchards along the routes that pioneers used to move west, allowing him to stay ahead of other orchards that might come in later to compete for cider production. Because he was unmarried, he could have a nomadic lifestyle and move with the settlers. Johnny owned much land throughout Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana at his death. Why did he only plant seeds for his orchards instead of grafted plants? Johnny's religious beliefs at the time forbade grafting as his church felt it caused the plants to suffer. Due to his religious beliefs, he was a vegetarian and staunch animal welfare supporter.

Johnny Chapman was not just a good businessman; settlers also loved him because he shared news and information from surrounding communities and served as a missionary for his church. He often gave seedlings to struggling pioneers and was known to give his nice clothes to people he deemed needed more. This generosity is the origin of his story: he wore no shoes, had a tin hat, and wore gunny sacks for clothes. Throughout his life, he would spend 50 years traveling and developing fruit orchards before he retired and moved back in with his brother Nathaniel, who helped him start his remarkable journey. Johnny died in March of 1845 in Indiana, leaving behind a legacy of apples throughout the Midwest.

While my childhood story of Johnny Appleseed is not entirely correct, the history of what Johnny Chapman did and his methods of planting orchards are still just as fascinating now as the original story I heard. Even though he planted cider apples that weren't fit for eating, I hope you will celebrate his birthday by eating an apple in his memory.



## Reblooming Holiday Cacti



Holiday cacti are relatively easy to help rebloom every year and will often bloom twice a year if conditions are right. It's time to provide your holiday cacti with some conditions to get beautiful blooms this winter. Holiday cacti are short-day plants and require long nights to bloom. Like a poinsettia, provide them with 13 hours of darkness over 6-8 weeks to get blooms to initiate. If you want your holiday cacti to bloom for Thanksgiving or Christmas, start providing those hours of darkness in late September or early October to encourage blooms. Unlike poinsettias, there is another way to get holiday cacti to bloom. If holiday cacti have 6-8 weeks of cool night temperatures (55-65 degrees F), that will also encourage our cacti to initiate bloom buds. A cool garage, outside on a covered porch (be sure the temperatures don't get too cold), or a basement can provide the needed temperatures to encourage bloom buds.

Once you have bloom buds initiated, be careful not to "shock" your plants as cool drafts, getting too dry, or too little humidity can cause the plant to drop its buds. The buds will last longer if kept in cooler temperatures; however, they will still provide a beautiful display under most home conditions.

These beautiful tropical cacti can be kept for decades. I have one in my home that is well over 100 years old right now, and it provides a beautiful bloom display year after year. Once they are done blooming, treat them like a houseplant with bright indirect light and water when the top few inches of the soil dry out. Once our temperatures warm up in the spring, move the plants outside in an area that gets partial sun (3-6 hours of sunlight) and fertilize regularly.

## Reblooming Poinsettias

It is never too early to begin preparing for the Christmas season, starting with the floral symbol of the holidays. With proper care, poinsettias can live indoors for years, providing a gorgeous show every year. Poinsettias are considered "short-day" plants, requiring short days and long nights to flower. It was initially thought that poinsettias needed short durations of daylight to flower, but we now know the formation of flowers is actually triggered by long periods of uninterrupted darkness. The red and green plant requires 12 hours of complete darkness at 60-65 degrees Fahrenheit for every 24-hour cycle. There are two ways to provide complete darkness for your plants. You can place the plant in a closet or cover it with a cardboard box or black plastic bag to ensure uninterrupted darkness. If you use a cardboard box, tape all the seams with duct tape to cut off any light.



During the day, poinsettias can be placed in the sunniest part of the house at 65-75°F. Exposing the plant to the sun is necessary for energy conversion, which impacts the color of the flowers. It is recommended to start the dark treatment early, as it takes 8-11 weeks for the poinsettia to flower. I suggest starting in late September or early October. The first six weeks trigger reblooming; the remaining time is when the flowers begin developing. While this can take significant effort and scheduling, or every night you miss during the first six weeks, add two days to the bloom time. After the buds have set, the dark treatment is no longer needed.

## Upcoming Events

**October 1<sup>st</sup>**-Keys to Successful Community Garden Spaces

**November 5<sup>th</sup>**- Climate Resilient Gardens

**December 3<sup>rd</sup>**- Gifts for Gardeners

### Upcoming Events:

**October 8<sup>th</sup> at 12:15 pm-** Woody Plant Propagation at the Andover Library

**October 20<sup>th</sup> at 12:15 pm-** Bringing Color with Bulbs at Lori's EmporiYum

## Lasagna Stuffed Spaghetti Squash

If you have never experienced the magic of spaghetti squash, this recipe will kick off your new obsession. Spaghetti squash has a mild taste and none of the squishy flavor that some people don't like. This recipe combines the flavor of lasagna with the tender spaghetti squash. While this recipe is vegetarian, you can add ground meat if you would like.



### Ingredients

- 1 small spaghetti squash
- ½ cup low-fat cottage cheese
- 2 tablespoons parmesan cheese
- ⅓ cup marinara sauce
- ½ cup mozzarella cheese, divided
- ½ cup spinach
- ½ cup favorite vegetables (peppers, broccoli, etc.)

### Directions

1. Preheat oven to 425°F.
2. Cut spaghetti squash in half lengthwise using a large serrated knife.
3. Use a spoon to scrape out and discard seeds.
4. Place squash halves, cut side down, on a parchment-lined baking sheet.
5. Cook squash for 35-45 minutes or until tender.
6. Place the rack in the middle of the oven and heat to broil.
7. Combine cottage cheese, parmesan, ¼ cup mozzarella, marinara, and spinach in a medium bowl.
8. Use a fork to scrape and separate the squash strands.
9. Divide the filling mixture among the two squash halves.
10. Top with your favorite vegetable and sprinkle with mozzarella.
11. Broil until cheese is golden-brown. Approximately 2-3 minutes.

**Recipe Source:** [North Dakota State University](#)

## Video of the Week- Fertilize for a Healthy Lawn

To have a healthy, lush, green lawn, you'll need to feed it. And, September is an ideal time to help your lawn recover from the long, hot summer. This segment explains what the numbers mean on the fertilizer bag, and looks at the differences between a quick-release and a slow-release fertilizer. Watch the video on the [Kansas Healthy Yards website](#).



## LUNCH & LEARN

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.

**October 8<sup>th</sup>**  
**12:15-12:45 p.m.**

**Andover Public Library**  
1511 E Central Ave  
Andover, KS

**October Topic:**  
**Woody Plant Propagation**

Vegetative propagation, cloning, and asexual propagation are all terms used to describe the process of making new plants that are genetically identical to your existing plants. Learn about the basics of plant propagation for the hobby gardener. With a little knowledge and some simple tools, learn how to be successful in propagating your plants.

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**October 20<sup>th</sup>**  
**12:15-12:45 p.m.**

**Lori's EMPORIUM!**  
1604 Custer Lane  
Augusta, KS

**October Topic:**  
**Bringing Beauty with Bulbs**

Nothing says "Hello Spring" like the cheery smile of a bright yellow daffodil or a bed of colorful tulips. This spring welcome does not just happen, it must be planned. Fall is the ideal time to plant spring flower bulbs in the landscape. Calla will cover everything you need to know to have success with spring-flowering bulbs.

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