

April 14th, 2025

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The Grapevine

Identify the Issue



After last weekend, I really hope spring has officially arrived, and we can be done with the cold and snow. Yes, I know we live in Kansas, and the weather does what it wants, but standing at the Lawn and Garden show last weekend watching snow flurries was just a bit depressing after the beautiful weather we had been having. With this week's warmer weather, the birds, bees, butterflies, and other insects have started to make their presence known.

While many people's first thoughts when they see insects in the garden are to treat the garden or kill the insects, that should never be our first step.

Most of the insects that we will find in a garden setting are not harmful to the plants that we are growing. Many of them may be helping to control the pests that we have problems with if we let them stay. Before treating an insect, the first step should always be to identify the insect you are concerned about. The insects in the photos might look concerning, but we want to have both insects in the garden because they eat harmful bugs. Treating too early or without correctly identifying the insect you see can often worsen the problem as you can kill the good bugs, keeping the harmful ones at bay. This spring, make sure you take a few minutes to correctly identify the bugs you see in the garden before you start treating them. A spray of water from the garden hose also solves many harmful pest problems.



Gardening With Kids

Some of my earliest memories involve being around plants and helping with gardening. This tradition is one that I want to pass on to my son as he grows up. Gardens can be an excellent place for kids. They provide various opportunities to learn, play, and have fun. Studies have found that introducing youth to gardening encourages them to eat a wider variety of fruits and veggies they haven't tried before, and the garden is a wonderful place to mix education and fun. Teaching youth about gardening doesn't have to be limited to just the outdoors and our normal growing season; teaching youth how to take care of houseplants can also teach a variety of lessons. Here are some tips on involving your kids in the garden and with plants.

One of the first lessons I learned was to start small and set realistic goals with kids and gardening. Break tasks down into smaller chunks, especially with young kids, to fit their attention span and interest levels. That might mean you only plant one row of corn at a time instead of the whole section or you only water a few plants indoors at a time. Setting realistic goals and activities will help you as the adult have fun and the kids have fun. When I first started gardening with my then toddler I skipped this step and the first few times we were in the garden ended in frustration on my part. Once I adjusted my expectations our ventures into the garden became fun for everyone. Your role in the garden should be as a facilitator rather than a dictator telling them how to do everything. Show the kids what you want done then walk them through and let them do it. There will be some messes but both of you will learn more from the messes than anything else.

Give your child a job. Kids, especially young kids love to help and to have a task that is theirs to do. Pick a task that will fit your child's age and abilities, for example planting small seeds is probably not a good choice for a young child while planting potatoes or pumpkin seeds would work. Large seeds could be boring for an older child but smaller seeds can add a challenge that will keep their attention. Pick something that won't impact the garden if they do mess up on accident. Other options of tasks include pulling weeds, shredding paper for mulch, watering or putting dirt in flower pots. At home my little guy loves to water so he has his own watering can and he waters the bigger plants that will tolerate getting a bit too much every once in a while.



As kids get older give them ownership in their garden. An excellent option is to give kids a small portion of the garden that is theirs for the summer. They get to pick what they want to grow then maintain that portion of the garden throughout the growing season. Once the produce is ready to pick they get to choose where it goes once it's harvested or how they want to eat it. Another way to give ownership is to put one kid in charge of a task such as running the wheel barrow or watering. As kids get older remember that gardening may become "uncool" and working with them one on one may work better than in a group.

Gardening should be a fun and educational activity for kids. Be sure to reflect with the kids after completing an activity. Depending on the age group this reflection period could be as simple as asking what was planted or what we did. As you work with your kids try to foster a sense of discovery and hands-on activities. Gardening can become dull and boring, especially toward the end of the growing season but take the time to encourage their natural curiosity. If you don't know the answer to a question, take time to look it up and read books on gardening. Remember that in the garden you are their role model and what you do they will follow. Remember to show them how to be safe in the garden and read the labels of any products you are using. Above all, make gardening fun. Look for the worms when you plant or throw the maple seeds and watch them fly to the ground. Go out and get dirty with your kids this summer because education shouldn't be limited to the classroom. Happy Growing!!!

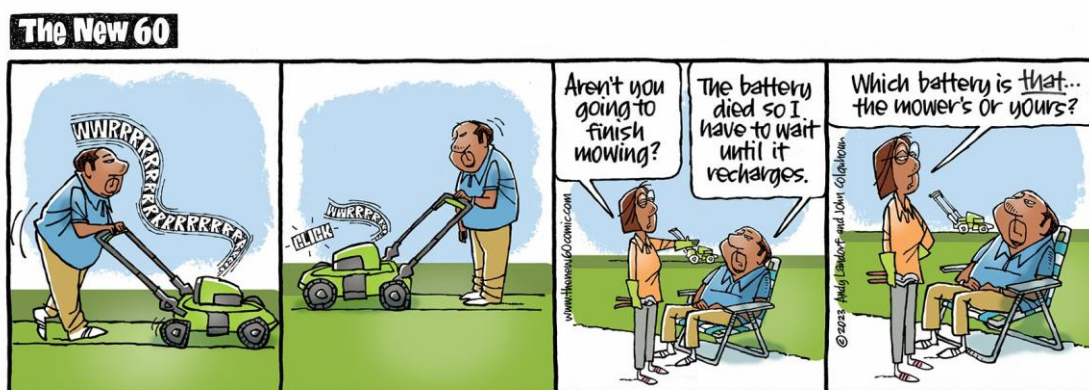
Mowing Safety only takes a Moment

Over the last few weeks, I have heard the lawnmowers singing me the song of their people around our neighborhood. While lawnmowers are a common tool around the garden, they also need to be treated with respect. As spring arrives and it's time to mow the lawn for the first time, I think it's important to remind people that lawn mower accidents are all too common, with 85,000 people going to the ER every year for lawn mower-related accidents, approximately 800 children are run over by lawn mowers every year causing about 600 amputations, and 75 people are killed every year (one in five of those are kids). Here are a few tips that can help keep you and your family safe this lawn mowing season:



- Wear proper clothing: While it can be tempting to work on your tan while mowing, it's important to wear clothes that protect you from any debris that could come flying out. Wear sturdy shoes with good soles and long pants. Lawn mower blades spin at speeds of up to 200 miles per hour, and any debris thrown can fly quickly. Eye protection is also important. Your eyes are sensitive areas, and any debris can quickly cause damage. Be sure to wear ear protection; your hearing will thank you later.
- Keep safety guards in place: While it might be tempting to remove any weight restrictions, disable the seat belt on riding lawnmowers, or remove guards, it is important to keep them in place for your safety. The guards keep debris from flying out and hitting you during mowing, the seat belt keeps you from falling off when you hit a bump, and the weight restriction turns the mower off if you do fall off. All of these safety features are vital to prevent you from being run over by the mower.
- Beware of slopes: Rollovers on riding lawnmowers are the number one killer of people in accidents. Try to mow up and down the slope rather than across it.
- Clear yard of all debris: Clear the yard of all debris, such as sticks, toys, rocks, etc, before you start to mow. While I might have found it fun to send Osage orange fruit flying across the yard for the dog to chase when I was a kid, I now know it isn't very safe. It's easy for a rock or even a branch to be thrown through a window, damage siding, or even hurt a family member in the yard.
- Disconnect spark plug wire: Always disconnect the spark plug wire before changing the oil or doing any work on a lawn mower. This prevents any accidents from happening when the lawn mower starts accidentally.

Whether you have a weed-free green lawn, a bee lawn, or somewhere in between, mowing is a constant throughout the summer months. Just a few minutes of time and care can prevent numerous accidents this mowing season.





Fun in the Sun by Bonnie Brewer

Time outdoors has countless benefits for physical and mental health. Many people enjoy sports or engage in activities to improve their health. Time spent outdoors is known to help relieve stress, anxiety, and boost feelings of happiness and wellbeing. With these benefits of outdoors being well known to many, some may not know how to enjoy the outdoors while practicing sun safety.

Sun safety is important to reduce your risk of skin cancer. One in five Americans will develop skin cancer in their lifetime and nearly 20 Americans die every day from melanoma. Everyone

is at risk for skin cancer, no matter their age, skin color, or gender.

Some helpful everyday preventative measures for practicing sun safety are to stay indoors or in shade between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. when UV rays are strongest: Wearing UPF protective clothing, wide-brimmed hats, UV sunglasses, sunscreen: Seeking shade. Knowing these preventive measures is helpful, but other questions may come to mind as you prepare to be sun safe.

- **What about Vitamin D?**

Strive to focus on foods rich in vitamin D. If you are unsure about your vitamin D levels, talk with your physician about having your levels checked through a blood test.

- **Is my sunscreen safe to store in a vehicle?**

According to the Food and Drug Administration, when exposed to heat, the preservatives found in sunscreen break down, allowing bacteria and fungi to grow faster.

- **I apply a moisturizer with SPF each morning, am I covered?**

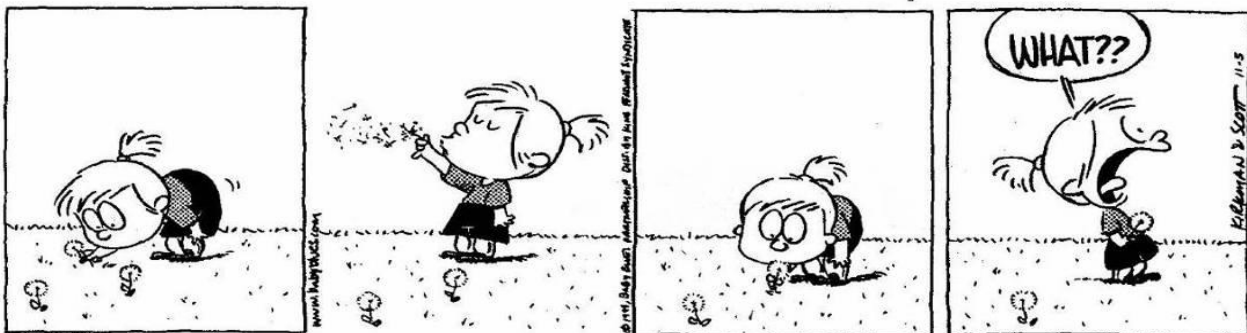
Many moisturizers or foundation now have SPF ratings, but it's important to note that these do not protect all day. Just like sunscreen, to remain protected, you will need to reapply throughout the day.

- **Should I visit a dermatologist or my physician?**

Many physicians will check the body during annual exams or when asked to do so. A physician may refer you to a dermatologist if they come across anything concerning, but it's encouraged to schedule an appointment with a health professional you trust, whether that's your physician or dermatologist.

- **Does a higher SPF mean more protection?**

According to the MD Anderson Cancer Center at the University of Texas, SPF 15 sunscreen blocks 93% of UVB radiation, and SPF 30 blocks 97%. After that, the difference in protection is small. SPF 50 blocks 98%, and SPF 100 stops 99% of UVB rays from reaching your skin. No matter what SPF you choose, be sure to reapply often and use enough to cover all parts of your body thoroughly.



Upcoming Events

Garden Hour Webinars:
May 7th-Methods to
Increasing Vegetable
Yield

June 4th- Native and
Ornamental Grasses for
Kansas

July 2nd- Cutting Edge
Efforts in Kansas Demo
Gardens

Upcoming Events:

April 25th at 10 am
Attracting Pollinators to
the Garden at the
Douglass Senior Center

May 8th at 5:30 pm
Plant Swap and Andover
Library

May 14th at 6 pm
Attracting Pollinators to
the Garden at the
Bradford Memorial
Library

May 21st at 5:30 pm
Gardening with
Pollinators at Benton
Community Building

Milk Carton Fairy Houses

While scrolling Pinterest one day, I found this adorable idea of what to do for a 4-H project for my son that involved plants. We have done several fairy gardens in the past, but we have yet to build a house for my son's fairy garden. I have built stick houses for youth days in the past but I've never used a milk carton for the base. This simple idea is perfect for kids or grandkids of any age and is an inexpensive idea for you to try. Thank you to STL Motherhood for this cute idea to try.

Materials:

- Milk, half and half, or other types of cartons to serve as the base
- Scissors
- Pruners (for cutting branches)
- White glue (hot glue works as well)
- Paintbrush (to paint on the glue)
- Bark, sticks, pebbles, sand, moss, etc, to serve as decorations.

Directions

1. Collect all of your supplies. Be sure to wash the cartons out well to prevent an odor. This also prevents critters from coming and trying to steal the carton.
2. Cut out the doors and windows using scissors (parents might need to help)
3. Trim the sticks down to size (parental help might be needed)
4. Glue your decorations onto the carton. If you use white glue, you must let it dry before turning the carton. Otherwise, the sticks will slide off. Hot glue can speed up the process.
5. Once the first round of décor is on and dried, fill in with sticks, gravel, sand, etc, and add a roof.
6. Place your masterpiece in an indoor or outdoor fairy garden. If going outside, spray down with a sealing spray to protect the fairy house.



Plant Swap

Thursday, May 8th

5:30PM-7PM
in the Art Gallery

Do you have extra garden plants or houseplants? Do you need more variety in your garden? Come to the Plant Swap and trade plants with other gardeners and plant lovers. Gardeners of all skill levels and ages are welcome to join!

Calla Edwards and Master Gardeners will lead the event.



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