

K-STATE

Research and Extension

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The Grapevine

Callery Pear Buy-Back Program

The Kansas Forest Service is hosting a buy-back program to raise awareness about the need to remove Bradford or callery pear trees from the landscape. For many years, callery pear (*Pyrus calleryana*) and its cultivars ('Bradford', 'Cleveland Select', 'Aristocrat', etc.) have been widely planted in Kansas. This tree is valued for its adaptability to tough sites, consistent spring flowers, and fall color; however, as multiple cultivars entered the market, the once fruitless pear tree started producing small pears and seeds.

This fall, the Kansas Forest Service will offer 125 trees, one tree per household, to replace pear trees that have been removed from the landscape. The replacement tree options include serviceberry, dogwood, persimmon, Kentucky Coffeetree, and swamp white oak. Individuals will have to provide proof that the tree was removed, either with before and after pictures or a receipt from an arborist. Households will also have to sign up, as the number of trees is limited. The first event will be on October 4th in Manhattan, with more information sent to families who register. Additional buy-back events spread across the state will be announced by the Kansas Forest Service in the spring as they are scheduled. [To sign up for a free replacement tree, click here.](#) Happy Growing!!!





Planting Spring Flowering Bulbs

Some of the first signs of spring, such as tulips, daffodils, crocuses, and grape hyacinths, need to be planted in the fall so they can grace us with their beauty in the future. These bulbs need time to grow roots and must spend a certain amount of time being “chilled” in order to bloom in the spring. The end of September into October is the best time to plant bulbs to meet these requirements.

Bulbs should be planted in a location that receives full sun to partial shade to do their best. Choose a spot with good drainage, as bulbs will rot if they stay wet for extended periods. Bulbs prefer loamy soils; however, if you have soil higher in clay or sand, you can add additional organic material to the soil, and the bulbs will do just fine. Be sure to incorporate fertilizer into the bed as you are planting; typically, a complete fertilizer or one specifically for bulbs will work best. Each species of bulb will need a slightly different planting depth. A general rule of thumb is to plant bulbs 2-3 times as deep as the bulbs are wide. For example, tulips and hyacinths should be planted about 6” deep, while daffodils should be planted 6-8” deep. Be sure to water the bulbs thoroughly after they have been planted, and water them regularly throughout the fall if there is no rainfall.

When planting bulbs, use masses of one type or color rather than spreading them out randomly in a bed, as small, irregular plantings or masses provide a better display than planting bulbs individually. Even though there won’t be any growth above the soil, the bulbs are setting down roots that will help them thrive in the spring. Cover the area with mulch to reduce the amount of moisture lost and to provide insulation for the plants.

Storing Summer Bulbs

As cooler temperatures are in the forecast, it’s time to start thinking about storing those beautiful summer-blooming bulbs such as calla lilies, dahlias, cannas, caladiums, gladiolus, and others. These gorgeous flowers will, unfortunately, not survive our Kansas winters and need to be stored indoors to be replanted next spring. The storage organ of the above plants is not a true bulb. Canna and calla lilies are rhizomes, while caladium and tuberous begonias are tubers, gladiolus is a corm, and dahlias are tuberous-rooted plants. With the exception of tuberous begonias, the bulbs can be dug after the first frost has killed the foliage above the ground.

Tuberous begonias should be dug before the first frost.

Once the bulbs have been dug, allow them to dry in a shady, well-ventilated area for a week. Freezing temperatures should be avoided.

Remove excess soil and pack it in peat moss, vermiculite, shredded newspaper, or perlite. Ensure the bulbs don’t touch so that the rot doesn’t spread if one decays. Dusting them with fungicide before storage will help prevent them from rotting. Place the bulbs in a cool, dry area with temperatures between 45-50 degrees except caladiums, which should be stored between 50- and 60-degrees F. The hardest part of storing bulbs might be finding a place to keep them cool. Some place them against a basement wall farthest from the furnace and insulate them so the wall keeps them cool.



Using Cover Crops in the Garden

Soil structure, fertility, and soil covering are some often overlooked aspects of the vegetable garden that can play a significant role in the success of your gardening season. Why should we care about the soil structure and soil cover? Why is it important? Soil structure impacts how well the plants grow as it affects how water moves into or through the soil and how much oxygen is available for your vegetables. If the soil is uncovered, weeds will likely take advantage of that open ground to grow. We can improve the soil in your vegetable garden by utilizing cover crops through late summer and into the fall or winter.



So why should we spend the time and energy to plant another crop in your garden? Cover crops grown in fall are inexpensive to build better soil for your spring garden and improve soil fertility. Cover crops serve as a living mulch, covering the soil and preventing weeds from germinating in the garden. They consist of grains, grasses, brassicas, or legumes that will grow during fall and winter and that you can mow, spade, or till under in the spring. Cover crops help reduce soil compaction, capture excess nutrients, and prevent erosion during their growth. Their roots penetrate and help loosen heavy-textured soils,

allowing better air and water penetration. Legume cover crops add nitrogen to the soil. When you turn cover crops under, they add organic matter, building better soil structure and fertility, or you can cut them off and use them as mulch to keep the soil covered for the growing season. Three different types of cover crop plants can be planted. The first is the legume or pea family. These plants help to fix nitrogen in conjunction with some soil-borne bacteria through nodules in the legume's roots. When these roots break down, the nitrogen is released into the soil for plants to use in the next growing season. Some examples of this family include clovers, field peas, hairy vetch, and sun hemp. The second group consists of the non-legume broadleaves. These groups are the most diverse and are used to help add nutrients to the soil or, in the case of radish, to improve soil structure. Some examples of these plants include radishes, turnips, kale, mustards, and canola. Keep these from going to seed to prevent them from becoming a weedy mess. The final group of cover crops is the grass group. These cover crops are the best for building organic material and cover for the soil because of their abundant root system and the amount of leaf growth above the ground. They include annual or winter rye, wheat, or oats.

How do you get started? One of the easiest ways to begin with cover crops is to scatter leftover cool-season crop seeds, such as radish, kale, and carrots, in a section of the garden. If this is your first season, I recommend using plants that will winter kill in our area for the first year. Over time, move to a mix of cover crops that includes legumes, grasses, and other broad leaves, depending on your goals and how much money you want to spend on your garden. Most of our cover crops should be planted by mid-October, but some plants, such as winter rye, wheat, or kale, will continue to grow till the soil freezes in the fall.

Ultimately, what species you use will depend on your goals. If you have compacted soil, consider using turnips or radishes to help improve the soil structure; if you have weed issues, consider using winter rye to suppress weeds. Cover crops are valuable in the toolbox to help improve your soil. Depending on your needs, you can make your mix as simple or complicated as you want. I will say the more diverse the mix, usually the better. For more information, check out this publication: <https://www.extension.purdue.edu/extmedia/HO/HO-324-W.pdf>



Upcoming Events

October 1st-Keys to Successful Community Garden Spaces

November 5th- Climate Resilient Gardens

December 3rd- Gifts for Gardeners

Upcoming Events:

October 8th at 12:15 pm- Woody Plant Propagation at the Andover Library

October 20th at 12:15 pm- Adding Color with Bulbs at Lori's EmporiYum

Plant of the Month



Goldenrod

This native is commonly found in the prairies, railroad tracks, roadsides, and old fields. This native is known for its bright golden yellow flowers in large open panicles of flowers. Goldenrod grows on slender stems, either singular or in small bunches of stems that reach approximately 3-4' in height. Several species of Goldenrods are native to the state,

each with a slightly different growth habit and bloom type. Many Goldenrods spread slowly via creeping rhizomes. Goldenrods often get a bad name for causing hay fever and allergies, but ragweeds and pigweeds are the most common cause of those allergies. Goldenrods, such as ragweed and pigweeds, have pollen from insects rather than the wind. Several species of goldenrods are raised and sold as ornamentals and available for sale. Native Americans often used this plant for medicinal purposes, and the sap can be used to make rubber.

Video of the Week



Planting for Spring Color

Fall is the time to plant spring-flowering bulbs such as tulips and daffodils. This segment has tips on what kind of bulbs to buy and includes step-by-step instructions

on how to plant them for a burst of color next spring. Watch the video on the [Kansas Healthy Yards Website](#).

