

September 2nd, 2025

In this Issue:

- Safety First: Home Canning
- Bringing In Houseplants
- Increasing Bloom on Peonies
- Walnut Caterpillar
- September Calendar

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The Grapevine

Safety First: Be Smart About Home Canning

Canning has been around for more than two centuries as a method of preserving food by placing foods in jars or cans and heating them to a temperature that destroys microorganisms that could be a health hazard or cause the food to spoil. Today's methods often have been passed down and evolved through generations, but they all have one thing in common: Preparation. There's a lot of work and time invested in home preservation; the last thing you want is spoiled food.

Preparation tips:

- Inspect equipment for parts that need replacing, such as rubber seals on pressure canners. Many parts can be ordered from the canner manufacturer.
- Get your pressure gauge checked. Contact your local extension office for a free pressure gauge check.
- Canning jars can be reused, so check for cracks or scratches that could lead to broken or unsealed jars.
- Canning rings can be reused, but once rusty or corroded, they should be replaced.
- Canning lids can be used only once. Buy lids now.
- Many online recipes are not safe or accurate. They increase the risk of foodborne illness, particularly botulism. Safe resources include those from State Extension resources and Ball Mason Canning.

Contact your local extension office if you need access to classes, have canning questions, or want to learn more about the "So Easy to Preserve" canning resource. Butler County Extension Office (316) 321-9660 or bjbrewer@ksu.edu.

Bringing in Houseplants without the Insects

These cool fall-like days have me starting to do some fall tasks around my house. One of the biggest ones is getting my houseplants ready to come indoors for the winter. While we are still several weeks away from the official start to fall and almost two months away from our first expected frost date, we shouldn't wait too long to get started, as the process can take several weeks. Most of our houseplants will want to be inside when the temperatures are consistently around 50 degrees, which occurs well before our frost date arrives. I started this process last week as I have quite a few houseplants to move (yes, I counted, which might have been a mistake). I have the benefit of a sunroom to move plants into if the weather takes an unexpectedly cool turn.



The key to preventing insects from entering your house plants is to start early and use a multi-pronged approach to control the insects. The first step is to inspect your plants for insects and diseases. Remove any diseased or damaged leaves and any visible insects. Discard any plants with a severe insect or disease infestation to prevent them from spreading to other plants. As I get my plants ready, the second step for me is to use a systemic granule on any plants that have been outside. The plant will slowly take up this granule and provide a 2-3-month residual control for any insects that might be brought inside. I would also consider using an insecticidal spray on your

plants a week or so before getting the plants inside to kill any bugs. If you prefer to go the organic route, use an insecticidal soap, while permethrin or pyrethroids are great synthetic chemicals. Right before you bring the plants in, I would wash them and soak the soil (only tropical plants do not soak the pot of any succulent or cacti). A strong stream of water from a garden hose will often remove most of our insect pests from the leaves, and soaking the pot in warm water for 15 minutes should handle any insects in the soil.

Along with ensuring we don't bring in hitchhikers, we must transition houseplants to their new light conditions. Outside plants are exposed to high light levels, even in the shade, which might not be available inside. Move them to areas with less light over a week before moving them inside. Once inside, please place them in an area with as much light as possible, then slowly move them to their final winter spot. If you are using artificial lights to supplement natural light, you can skip the second transition when moving plants inside; however, it is still essential to transition them slowly outside to lower light conditions. No grow light has the same intensity of light as the sun, and the plants need to get used to it. Transitioning plants to lower light levels can prevent leaf drop and yellowing, especially if you transition them slowly. This slow transition also allows you to keep an eye on your plants and take care of any insects or other critters that might have tried to join you in your house.



As houseplants get inside for the winter, it's easy to overlove our plants. When outside, plants needed far more water than inside simply because of warmer temperatures, wind, more light, etc. Once plants get moved inside, it can be easy to overwater them merely because we have habitually watered them more often outside. It's also important to remember that many plants go into a semi-dormant or even dormant period during the winter, even if under grow lights, and their care needs will change drastically. As the fall and winter progress, be sure to monitor the soil moisture of your plants before you water. Getting into a routine of watering on a specific day once a week or every other week is common.

Bringing in Houseplants without the Insects cont.

Still, it may not be what your plant needs, especially as we transition from running the air conditioner to the furnace over time. Watering needs will also change throughout the winter because of the humidity levels in your house. Plants will dry out faster when there are lower humidity levels, so once the furnace comes on for the year, you must adjust your watering again. If possible, run humidifiers, both for your health and your plants, during the winter to combat the drying effect of the furnace on the air.

I love moving my houseplants outside during the summer. They provide a lush green jungle outside, and the extra light also helps them grow and bloom where they might not typically do when inside. With just a few steps and some care, you can easily move your plants outdoors in the spring and back indoors in the fall. Starting early with transitioning plants inside and controlling bugs is essential because we never know what the weather will do from one week to another. It's better to be prepared rather than rush at the last minute—just a reminder, indoor plants require less water and fertilizer during the winter months. Be sure to adjust your care as needed. Follow a few steps to keep your plants happy and healthy in their new environment.

Increase Blom Production of Peonies



While dividing peonies is not required, Kansas State University horticulture expert Cynthia Domenghini said doing so can increase bloom production, reduce disease, and provide more peony plants for the garden. “If you choose to divide your peonies, it needs to be done this time of year,” Domenghini said.

Domenghini said gardeners should cut the stems just above the soil surface to start dividing peonies. Next, dig up the entire root system and remove soil from the roots. “Divide the

root clump into small sections using a sharp knife,” Domenghini said. “Ensure each section has 3-5 buds and healthy roots.”

The planting location should receive sunlight for at least half the day. Dig a hole large enough to fit the roots of the divided peonies so the buds will be covered by 1-2 inches of soil. “Plants buried too deep may not flower,” Domenghini said. After planting, water thoroughly. Space dwarf peonies at least two feet apart, and standard peonies are four feet apart. Add a layer of straw, leaves, or compost after the soil freezes to protect the newly divided peonies in cold weather. Domenghini warns that divided plants may take a couple of years to return to full bloom productivity. Check out this Kansas Healthy Yards video to learn more about dividing peonies.

Video of the Week



Lawn Mower Maintenance

To keep your lawnmower running at peak performance, tune it up several times a year. Learn how to safely drain the oil, change the filter, and replace the spark plug to keep your lawnmower running for many years. Watch the video on the [Kansas Healthy Yards Website](#).

Insect of the Week- Walnut Caterpillar

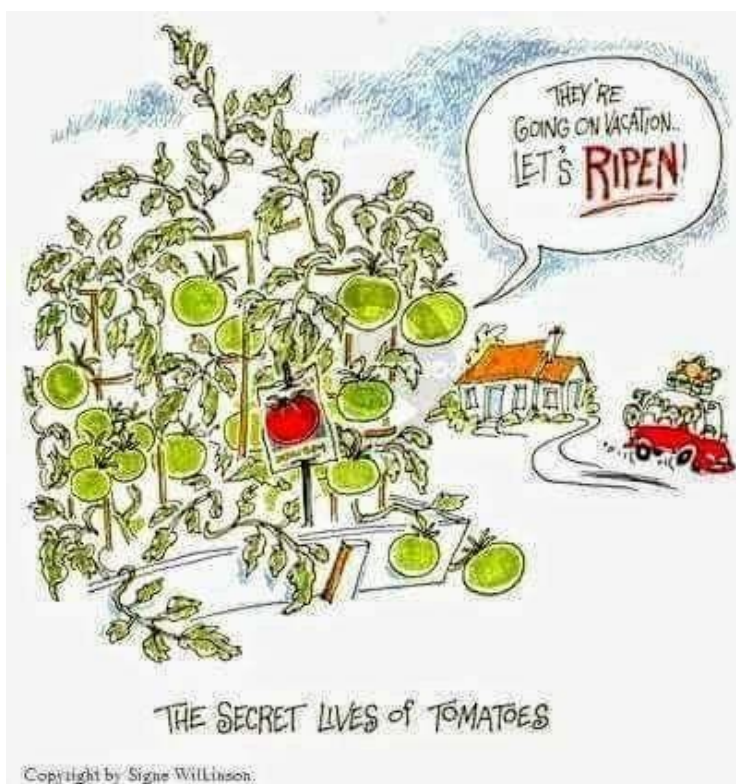


Walnut caterpillars feed only on the foliage of trees in the Juglandaceae family, including walnuts, pecans, and hickory trees. In large numbers, these caterpillars can defoliate large trees and severely affect tree vigor. The larvae feed in groups or clusters, consuming all the leaves on a single branch before moving to another. Depending on the weather, there can be one to two lifecycles yearly. The second lifecycle caterpillars overwinter as pupae to hatch in the spring and lay eggs as adults.

The round eggs are white and loosely laid in groups on the underside of the host plant leaves. Young larvae are yellowish-green and ¼-inch long. As they mature, the larvae turn dark red and almost black with white hairs. At the final larval

stages, they can be two inches long. A larval shed resembling a hairball can be seen on the trunks. The caterpillars feed for approximately one month before reaching maturity. When disturbed, the caterpillars arch their head and the end of the abdomen to ward off predators.

Adult walnut caterpillar moths have approximately a 1 ¾" wingspan, and the wings are light brown with four narrow brown bands on each front wing. The primary effective means of dealing with infestations of walnut caterpillars is to hand-pick caterpillars and place them in a container of soapy water, use a forceful water spray to quickly dislodge caterpillars, or apply insecticides with one of the following active ingredients: acephate, spinosad, malathion, cyfluthrin, permethrin, or bifenthrin.



Upcoming Events

September 3rd- Shrubs that Thrive in Kansas

October 1st-Keys to Successful Community Garden Spaces

November 5th- Climate Resilient Gardens

Upcoming Events:

September 10th at 12:15 pm- Bring your lunch and learn about Composting at the Andover Library

September 15th at 12:15 pm- Cleaning up the Fall Garden at Lori's EmporiYum Laboratory

September 17th at 6 pm- Season Extension in the Garden at the Benton Community Center

Garden Calendar

Vegetables and Fruits

- Continue to harvest vegetables
- Pick apples and pears to store in a cool place to extend freshness
- Harvest pumpkins when the flesh is completely orange and avoid carrying by the stem
- Harvest winter squash when the rind is hard enough to puncture with a fingernail
- Plant lettuce, spinach, and radishes
- Remove weeds from garden plantings before they go to seed
- Herbs can be dug from the garden and placed in pots for indoor use this winter
- Remove small tomatoes from their vines to increase the late development of more mature fruits

Flowers

- Plant spring flowering bulbs, tulips, daffodils, and others
- Dig, divide, or plant peonies
- Divide perennials, especially spring bloomers
- Remove seed heads from perennials to prevent reseeding in the garden
- Plant chrysanthemums or asters for fall color
- Dig gladiolus as the foliage begins to yellow and air dry before storing for winter
- Clean up garden areas to reduce insects and disease as plants die back
- Enrich soil by adding organic matter such as peat moss or compost

Lawns

- Plant or sod new tall fescue lawns
- Renovate tall fescue lawns by verticutting
- Core aerate cool-season turf
- Fertilize cool-season grasses with high-nitrogen sources of fertilizer
- Mow turf at 2 to 3 inches and sharpen the blade for a clean cut

Trees and Shrubs

- Plant trees and shrubs, deciduous and evergreen
- Rake up fallen leaves and compost
- Prune broken and dead branches from trees
- Avoid pruning spring-flowering shrubs such as lilac and forsythia
- Hand-pick bagworms to reduce problems in the future

Houseplants

- Bring plants in before temperatures drop into the fifties
 - Apply systemic at the beginning of the month
 - Clean, wash, and treat plants before moving indoors to reduce insect issues
 - Fertilize before winter conditions arrive and growth slows
- Poinsettias can be forced into Christmas bloom by starting dark treatment during short days.



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.

September 10th
12:15-12:45 p.m.

Andover Public Library
1511 E Central Ave
Andover, KS

September Topic: Compost Pile

Fall means cooler weather, apple cider, and, of course, dealing with all of the falling leaves. What can we do with all of these leaves? Just like anything else that is organic, they can be broken down by composting. Join Calla in learning about what else you can compost, and why everyone should build their own compost pile!

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September 15th
12:15-12:45 p.m.

Lori's EMPORIUM!
1604 Custer Lane
Augusta, KS

September Topic: Putting the Garden to Rest

The gardening season is winding down, but there are still a few steps to take in our lawns, gardens, and flowerbeds to help us be prepared for the spring growing season. Join Calla Edwards to get a jump start on that fall gardening to-do list.

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