

The Grapevine

Houseplant Decline

Winter is a stressful time for plants, whether outside dealing with the unpredictable weather conditions or indoors. Indoor plants experience their own form of winter stress, making wintertime one of the most common times of year for the decline or death of houseplants. Like outdoor plants, wintertime brings some challenges with water to our houseplants, although we can do a lot to reduce the impact by paying special attention. When the light is limited, the need for water and nutrients decreases dramatically, and it becomes easy to overwater and over-fertilize during the winter months. Most of our houseplants have been inside for over a month and acclimated to indoor conditions, but as the furnace comes on for the season it's time to adjust your care again.

In the winter plant growth slows down dramatically, even if the plants are under grow lights, and with that comes a reduced need for water. Surprisingly, more houseplants die during winter from over-watering rather than under-watering. It's just not a time of high water demands with dwindling sunlight and often lower indoor temperatures. Overwatering can lead to poor growth and serious root issues since persistent moisture allows root-rotting fungi to become established. It is never wise to water on a set schedule. Rather, allow the potting soil to tell you when watering is needed. With lower growth rates, plants also need fewer nutrients in the winter. Cut back on fertilizer to 1/4 the recommended rate in November and February, and avoid fertilizing in December and January. In March, you can start fertilizing at the regular rate of 1/2 strength every other watering. Continue to flush the soil with extra water every month to flush any salts out of the soil.



Dormant Grass Seeding by Ward Upham



The best time to seed cool-season grasses such as tall fescue and Kentucky bluegrass is September because the turf has more time to mature before spring crabgrass germination and the heat stress of summer. Dormant seeding of turfgrass is sometimes done to fill in bare spots of lawns that weren't overseeded in the fall. Dormant overseeding is done during the winter (December – February) when it is much too cold for germination.

As with any seeding program, good seed-soil contact is vital. Several methods can be used. One method is to seed when there has been a light snowfall of up to one inch. This is shallow enough that bare spots can still be seen. Spread seed by hand on areas that need thickening up. As the snow melts, it puts the seed in good contact with the soil where it will germinate in the spring.

Another method is dependent on the surface of the soil being moist followed by freezing weather. As moist soil freezes and thaws, small pockets are formed on the wet, bare soil that is perfect for catching and holding seed. As the soil dries, the pockets collapse and cover the seed.

A third method involves core aerating, verticutting, or hand raking and broadcasting seed immediately after. Of course, the soil must be dry enough and unfrozen for this to be practical. With any of the above methods, seeds germinate as early as possible in the spring. There will be limitations on what herbicides can be used for weed control. Dithiopyr, found in Hi-Yield Turf and Ornamental Weed and Grass Stopper and Bonide Crabgrass & Weed Preventer, can be used on tall fescue, Kentucky bluegrass, and perennial ryegrass two weeks after germination. Other preemergence herbicides available to homeowners require that the turf be well-established before application.

Reminders-

- Continue to remove leaves from the lawn. Use them in flowerbeds or the vegetable garden
- Plant any spring flowering bulbs if you haven't yet
- Add organic material to the vegetable garden
- Send in a soil test to beat the spring rush

Video of the week: Best Height for Hanging Plants

Hanging basket plants will thrive indoors if they're placed properly in a room. This segment shows how to easily hang your plants at an optimal height for plant growth, and how to increase your enjoyment of the hanging plants. Watch the video here: <https://kansashealthyards.org/all-videos/video/best-height-for-hanging-plants>



Plant Markers for the Garden

Supplies

- wooden spoons
- acrylic paint
- washi or painter tape
- foam brushes
- paper plate
- Mod Podge Outdoor
- stickers or vinyl words

Directions:

1. Wrap washi or painter's tape around the base of each spoon so the paint
2. Use a foam brush to paint each spoon (Choose the paint colors to "match" the vegetable/fruit).
3. Let dry. A tall cup can easily fit six spoons at once! Paint a second coat if necessary.
4. Remove the tape from the spoon and add the plant name. You can either paint it by hand, use a stencil, stickers or if you have a Cricut make vinyl stickers.
5. Add a layer of outdoor Mod Podge to each spoon to seal the paint and wood from damage by water.



Upcoming Events

- *December 6th at Noon- Beekeeping Basics: How to Start Your Own Colony*

Beekeeping is both popular and important for many reasons. Whether it's to produce your own local honey, supplement pollination of nearby plants, promote conservation, or even personal entertainment, there are many reasons to become a beekeeper. Join Ryan Engel, Golden Prairie District Horticulture Extension Agent, as he covers the equipment you will need, how to source your bees, and what it takes to establish a new colony. This class is offered online via Zoom. For more information on the Garden Hour series or to register visit here: <https://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/consumer-horticulture/garden-hour/>

- *December 7th at 6 pm- Winter Feeding of Birds*

Feeding the birds is a popular activity with over 59 million people in the United States feeding birds for well over 100 years. Join us for this class to learn some tips about what food to feed, ways to attract more birds to your home, and some troubleshooting tips on why you aren't having birds at your feeders. This program is free at the Bradford Memorial Library, 611 S Washington St. El Dorado, KS.

- *January 3rd at Noon- A How-to in Floral Design*

Join us for the first K-State Garden Hour of 2024 as we step into the world of floral design and beautiful flowers. Watch a live tutorial of a Valentine's Day arrangement, provided by Irina Sheshukova, Extension Specialist and Instructor in the Department of Horticulture and Natural Resources at Kansas State University. This class is offered online via Zoom. For more information on the Garden Hour series or to register visit here: <https://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/consumer-horticulture/garden-hour/>

- *January 24th at 7 pm- Starting a New Landscape or Garden*

Buying a home can be overwhelming and that is without factoring in that you now have a yard to care for. While we can't help with the house maintenance we can help you figure out what to do outside of the house. This class is designed to help you figure out the basics of lawn and landscape care, determine what plants are currently growing around your home and how to maintain them or create a whole new landscape. This program is free at the Butler County Community/4-H Building, 206 N Griffith St. El Dorado, KS (behind the Health Department).

Don't miss an issue. Sign up to receive the Grapevine directly to your email- <https://forms.gle/qQJo4fBFLET9pGSh7>

To view previous issues, visit our website: https://www.butler.k-state.edu/horticulture/2023_grapevine/untitled.html

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