Time to start Fall Gardening

It’s hard to believe that July 10th has already arrived, I’m not sure where the summer has gone so far but it doesn’t look like it’s going to slow down anytime soon. While our warm season crops are thriving and loving the summer heat, it’s time for our cool season crops to start winding down for the summer. Last week I harvested my garlic and onions and the week before I harvested the last of my broccoli before those 100-degree temperatures hit. As quickly as the summer is going it is time to start thinking about starting our fall garden plants and even start planting some of them right now. In Kansas, fall gardening is an excellent but often overlooked gardening season. In some cases, by the time fall arrives we are tired of being in the garden, but late season crops can extend your gardening season and provide fresh veggies all the way to winter depending on the crop. In many cases fall grown vegetables are of higher quality and better for preservation.

Most of our cool season vegetables can easily be grown in the fall except for peas as they require cooler temperatures to germinate than we get in July or August. Some common vegetables grown in the fall include potatoes, green beans, beets, cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, carrots, kale, lettuce, radish and spinach. Some of those crops can often be overwintered such as kale and spinach by only harvesting the outside leaves and mulching the plant in the garden. Most of the vegetables can be started from seed, however vegetables such as broccoli, cauliflower or cabbage should be started in containers or in a shady spot in the garden to be transplanted in mid-August. When seeding fall crops, plant the seeds slightly deeper than you would in the spring and water them consistently to help keep the soil as cool as possible.

The timing of planting fall vegetables can be critical to their success. Because of the warm soil temperatures seedlings will often germinate faster in the summer than they will in the spring. Here is a brief calendar:

- **Mid-July**- Start planting potatoes. It’s best to use fresh seed potatoes rather than trying to plant the potatoes you just harvested. They have a dormancy requirement and won’t sprout soon enough. It can be hard to find seed potatoes in July so you might have to order them.
- **Late-July** seed your longer season, heat tolerant crops such as carrots, beets and green beans.
- **Late July-Early August**- seed spinach and longer season head lettuce. (Leaf lettuce will be started later in the fall.)
- **Early August**- Transplant broccoli, cabbage and cauliflower seedlings into the garden.
- **Mid to Late August**- Start radishes and leaf lettuce.

Establishing your fall crops might be the hardest part of gardening in the late summer to early fall. The extra watering or heavy rainfalls can form a crust on the top of the soil. If possible, use a soaker hose to prevent the crust build up. You can also sprinkle compost, peat moss, perlite, or vermiculite over the top of the rows to prevent the crust from occurring. Gradually reduce your watering as the seedlings grow to encourage a deeper root system. The vegetables will likely require some fertilizer two to four weeks after they have been planted or transplanted. It’s best to wait to fertilizer after the seedlings are growing so you don’t burn them when they are young.

Fall vegetable gardens can be an excellent extension of your gardening season. The cooler weather as the vegetable’s mature leads to tastier and higher quality vegetables versus the ones that ripen in the heat of the summer. With just a little bit of work you can easily enjoy fresh vegetables all through the growing year and even into the early to mid-winter. I hope your gardens and plants are looking great. Don’t forget to come check out all the cool exhibits at the Butler County Fair or bring your own. Happy Growing!!!
**Squash Bugs**

Last week I talked about the Squash Vine Borer so I thought this week I would highlight one of the other insects that causes damage to squash plants in our area. Squash bugs overwinter as adults in leaf litter, under rocks or boards around the garden. They then are active from late-May through June in search of suitable host plants to lay eggs on. The females will lay eggs from June through mid-August with each female laying up to 250 eggs total. The nymphs will hatch 7 to 14 days after the eggs are laid and develop over 4 to 6 weeks depending on weather and food availability before becoming adults. Squash bug adults will move from one plant to another however the nymphs lack wings and don’t move.

The best management is done by a combination of multiple methods. Scouting is going to be vital to identify when the adults are active and laying eggs. Be sure to check plants every week early in the season and every couple days once the nymphs have started hatching. In the fall, be sure to clean up all crop debris and other plant material to eliminate the overwintering sites for adults. Remove the vines once they start to wilt to reduce the food sources for the overwintering adults. Once you see the eggs and adults on your plants it’s time to start removing them. If you have just a few plants try to remove the leaves with eggs or nymphs on them when possible and discard. I also recommend placing a board on the ground under the plants, the insects will congregate under it over-night and you can dump them into a bucket of soapy water or squish them with another board. If there are just a few adults you can also hand pick them off and drop them in soapy water. Similar to squash vine borers, trap crops have shown some success in reducing the infestation to desirable plants. Hubbard squash are particularly attractive to squash bugs and can be used to lure them away from the desirable plants. Plant the trap crop earlier than your other squash so the squash bugs find them first then remove the plants and the bugs. Insecticides are an option however they are the most effective on the nymph stage before the bugs develop a waxy cuticle that protects them. Insecticidal soaps or mineral based horticultural oils are the most effective, just be sure to apply them early in the morning or late in the evening when bees are less active.

**Grubs in the Lawn**

Over the weekend I was cutting sod out of an area to create a new flower bed in my front yard when I found several grubs of various life stages. While I did not find enough in my small area to warrant an application of herbicide (12 per square foot), now is the time to be on the look out for grubs in your lawn. Grubs are small c-shaped, white worm-like pests that feed on grass roots and the organic material in a home lawn, eventually causing sections of the lawn to die. Grubs also become the target of other critters, such as birds, skunks, raccoons, moles and other animals that damage the turf as they dig for their next meal. In Kansas, white grubs are the larval form of several different insects including Japanese Beetles, Southern masked chafer, May/June beetles and the Green June Beetle and each one has a different life cycle. The Japanese beetle and masked chafer have a one-year life cycle while the May/June beetle has a three-year life cycle and the grubs reside in the soil for two years. The grubs with a one-year life cycle are the more destructive than the others due to their feeding in a shorter period of time. Grub damage is more severe in late summer through early fall when the grubs reach the third instar (stage between each molt) and when turfgrass is exposed to dry and hot conditions. The weather plays a large role in how grubs migrate in the soil. In the fall they migrate deeper into the soil to avoid the winter cold and during dry conditions they will also migrate deeper in the soil which can make it hard to control them. There are two types of treatments to control grubs: preventative treatments or rescue treatments. Preventive treatments are applied from mid-June through early July for the best results. These products have long residuals and control grubs, as they ingest the chemicals when feeding begins in August. Examples of active ingredients in preventative treatments include imidacloprid and chlorantraniprole. Rescue treatments are applied as the grubs are hatching in mid-August. The product that provide the best control is trichlorfon. Whichever type of product you use be sure to water it in thoroughly after application to ensure it reaches the grubs in the soil.
Harvesting Melons
Melons are many people’s favorite plant to grow in the garden. While growing them might not be hard, figuring out when they are ripe can be. There is nothing more disappointing than picking a watermelon only to find it is either too ripe or not ripe at all. Muskmelons (including cantaloupe) are the easiest melon to figure out if they are ripe and ready to pick as a layer of cells around the stem soften so the melon detaches easily from the vine. If your muskmelon doesn’t fall off the vine, it’s not ripe yet. The ripe melons also have a pleasant musky aroma at room temperature. Watermelons can be a bit trickier. Growing up we always used the “thump test” to find a ripe melon but that isn’t always accurate and depends on your definition of a hollow sound. If you are picking the watermelons from your patch you should actually look for the tendril that attaches to the stem at the same point as the melon. If the tendril is brown the melon is ripe but if it’s green the melon needs to ripen some more. Ripe watermelons will also develop a yellow color on the ground spot or where the melon contacts the ground which is useful for picking melons from the store. Honeydew melons are one of the most difficult to tell if they are ripe. They don’t “slip” like muskmelons nor do they have the tendril like watermelon. Instead check the flower end of the fruit (opposite the stem) and see if that area is getting soft. Honeydew may also change color depending on the variety.

Video of the week: Planting a Fall Garden
Cool season vegetables such as lettuces, radishes, beets, and carrots grow well in a fall garden. However, they should be planted in August so they'll be ready to harvest in the fall. Watch the video here: https://kansashealthyyards.org/all-videos/video/planting-a-fall-garden

Reminders-
- Core aerate zoysia to prevent thatch build-up and aerate the soil.
- Side dress tomatoes when they are full sized but still green. Do not over fertilize or you will get less fruit.
- Spray for Bagworms.
- Sharpen your lawn mower blade.
Upcoming Events

- **July 20-25th, 2022: Butler County Fair**
  Don’t forget to stop by the Fairgrounds and check out all the 4-H and other exhibits at the Butler County Fair. Check out the Open class list and bring some of your projects or produce to exhibit at the fair this year!!! For more information, including the schedule and a list of Open class exhibits check out the fair website: [https://www.butler.k-state.edu/4hfair/](https://www.butler.k-state.edu/4hfair/)

- **August 2nd at Noon- Integrating Native Plants into your Home Landscape**
  Native plants are growing in popularity in the home landscape. Dr. Sharon Ashworth, Douglas County Horticulture & Natural Resources Extension Agent, will discuss the ecological benefits of native plants and how to successfully integrate natives into your landscape. Learn about what defines a native plant, which native plants work best, and what maintenance is required to grow a beautiful landscape of natives. 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/](https://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/consumer-horticulture/garden-hour/)

- **September 6th at Noon- Integrating Native Plants into your Home Landscape**
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