

The Grapevine

Walk Kansas is back! Tie on your tennis shoes, gather a team, or go it solo, Walk Kansas is underway! Walk Kansas is an eight-week walking program encouraging family members, schoolmates, co-workers, friends, and neighbors to come together as a team and set goals for health and fitness. This adaptable program is holistically about chronic disease prevention. Those participating will receive weekly newsletters, recipes, tips, and instructions. This year there is also the added opportunity to participate in the weekly webinar titled 'Med' rather than 'meds', a curriculum to help participants learn ways to potentially replace medications with healthy eating. This program kicks off Mar. 26 and runs through May 20. Registration today! Please call Bonnie Brewer at 316-321-9660 for more information. Registration details can be found online at <http://www.walkkansas.org>.



Pruning Brambles

Growing up my parents and I would go and pick blackberries in our pasture every summer. Apparently, that love of berries has passed on to the next generation because raspberries and blackberries are some of my little one's favorite fruits to eat. While we can't go pick berries in the pasture this spring I am planting a raspberry and blackberry bush in my backyard so my son can have the joy of picking his own berries next year when the plants mature. Unlike other perennial fruiting plants, raspberries and blackberries are unique and require special pruning to be productive. While the plants themselves are perennials, the canes they produce are typically biennials meaning they grow one year, produce fruit the next and then die. Because of this they are unique in their pruning requirements. To make things even more complicated it's important to know the variety you have because some berries are everbearing and need to be pruned differently. Let's take a look at each option.

Black or purple raspberries and thornless blackberries.

These fruiting bushes tend to grow in a clump and it's best to remove all but five to seven of the largest and healthiest canes in the clump for the best harvest. Prune out any dead canes at this time as well. Remove any winter damage from the remaining canes. For black raspberries you should also prune the canes back so only 8-10 buds per cane are left while purple raspberries and thornless blackberries are more vigorous growers and you should leave more buds per cane for best harvest. Thornless black berries might produce some suckers a short distance from the main clump that can be dug up to increase the size of the planting.

Red raspberries and thorny blackberries

These bushes tend to sucker badly and will fill the row with new plants. For these plants remove any dead canes, prune the small canes back so you leave the largest canes spaced approximately 4-6" apart then prune those canes back to five feet. Keep the aisles between rows clean by mowing any new suckers that sprout off or cutting them back to the ground.

Everbearing red raspberries and blackberries

These plants are the exception in that they will fruit on first year canes. For these varieties cut all the canes off to the ground in the winter for the best result. Since these varieties fruit best on first year canes you will still get a vigorous yield of berries.



Spraying Fruit Trees

Fruit trees are very popular however they can be prone to several different fungal diseases that can impact the quality of the fruit and the overall health of the tree. Unlike insecticides, fungal treatments work best when applied as a preventative rather than waiting till you see the disease. Peach leaf curl is one such disease as is cedar apple rust and apple scab.



Peach leaf curl is a disease that causes puckered, swollen, distorted and reddish-green color leaves. The disease ultimately weakens the tree by causing untimely leaf drop when the leaves unfurl in the spring. Luckily this disease is easy to control with fungicide applications in the spring prior to bud swell on the tree. The main fungicide labeled for this disease has the active ingredient chlorothalonil which is available in several products. Be sure to cover the tree thoroughly for best results. Peach and plum trees should also be sprayed for black knot prior to the buds swelling if that disease has been an issue in the past. The same active ingredient works for both diseases. Sprays for brown rot should begin right as the buds change

color and continue according to the label for the season. Products that control that disease include the active ingredients captan or myclobutanil.

Cedar apple rust and apple scab are both common diseases that impact varieties that are not resistant. This is another disease that if you wait till you see symptoms you are already too late. Fungicide sprays in April and May are critical to control these diseases. The first treatment should happen when the leaves appear and then additional sprays should be done on a 7 to 10-day schedule through May to protect the developing fruit and leaves. The most effective product available for homeowners is myclobutanil. Apple trees will also need additional insecticide sprays to prevent damage from codling moths. An insecticide should be sprayed with the fungicide spray following petal drop to prevent wormy apples. Do not use any insecticide during the bloom time to protect bees and other pollinators. There are several different fruit tree sprays that are available on the market. Be sure to read the label prior to any application and follow all directions.



Asparagus Bed Spring Care

Asparagus is a well-loved vegetable and is one of the first signs of spring. This vegetable is a perennial and as such has some special care needs compared to most of the other vegetables that we grow in the garden. If properly cared for asparagus can be productive for well over 15 years. In the spring it's important to clean out all the leaves, debris and other plant material that might be left over from last year. Weed control can be one of the biggest issues with an asparagus patch and spring is a vital time to prevent weed issues. If the spears haven't started to sprout you can spray the area with a glyphosate product to kill any weeds and then go back over the area with trifluralin weed preventer granules. There are several products on the market that would work. No matter what product you use check the label to ensure that asparagus is listed as one of the plants the product is safe around. Whatever you do, don't use salt to keep weeds down. That will damage the asparagus just as much as the weeds long term. Spring is not the best time to fertilize asparagus, in fact you might do more harm than good as the fertilizer will help the weeds get ahead of the asparagus. In an established asparagus bed, it's best to wait to apply a fertilizer till after you have finished harvesting for the season.



Insect of the Week- Whiteflies



This week I had a question on Whiteflies. While we traditionally think about whiteflies being a bigger pest of houseplants, especially in the fall when we bring the houseplants indoors, whiteflies are also a pest of container vegetables and other plants. Whiteflies are related to aphids, mealybugs and scale and feed similarly by sucking sap from plants. This insect resembles a white moth or white fly, hence the common name. The nymph or immature form resembles a flat disk on the underside of the leaves. Whiteflies are traditionally found on the undersides of leaves and are most active during the daytime when the temperatures is warm. If there is a heavy infestation and the plant is disturbed the adults fly and look like a white cloud. Heavy infestations can cause stunting, distorted or

discolored leaves and a plant that appears to struggle. Control can be achieved through a couple different methods. The first is to inspect plants regularly and remove any leaves that are heavily infested with the non-mobile nymph and pupal stages. Another option is to use yellow sticky traps in the instances of light infestations to trap the adults (this works best indoors as outside you would need to use 1 trap for every 2 large vegetable plants). In a garden setting there are many natural predators that feed on whiteflies including spiders, lady beetles and lacewings. Lady beetles and lacewings are both available for purchase to use if you have a heavy infestation and would like to avoid using insecticides. Chemical control is an option however it will require repeated applications to kill eggs and pupal stages that would not be impacted by the spray. Organic insecticidal options for control of whiteflies include neem oil, insecticidal soap, horticultural oil and pyrethrins. Synthetic options would include permethrin and malathion. It's best to spray early in the morning or late in the evening when bees or other beneficial insects are less likely to be flying and the whiteflies are likely to be present for the spray. Follow the label directions with any chemical use and be sure to do the follow up controls for full control.

Plant of the Week- Pussy Willow

One of the earliest blooming plants, even though they aren't what we traditionally think of as blooms, in the landscape is the Pussy Willow. This harbinger of spring is a deciduous shrub that is native from Nova Scotia through Maryland, Indiana, Missouri and Iowa. Pussy willows are known for their late winter/early spring display of gray, fuzzy catkins. A catkin is a slim cylindrical flower cluster that is usually wind pollinated. Prior to the foliage emerging in the spring the male trees produce a display of long, pearl-gray silky catkins that are approximately 1-1.5" long. This shrub gets its common name from the catkins that are said to resemble a cat's paw. Pussy willows are dioecious plants, meaning they have male and female plants. Pussy willows are traditionally large multi-stemmed shrubs that range in size from 6-15' tall however they can also be grown in a weeping form on a standard or pruned to maintain a smaller size. This willow prefers moist soils but is more tolerant of dry soils than other willow varieties. Unfortunately, this is a plant that does have numerous issues that can show up including cankers, powdery mildew, scab and other insect issues however they do make a beautiful shrub in a landscape. Like other willows they do need to be kept away from sewers, water lines or drains as the roots will seek the water.



Reminders-

- Sharpen and repair your garden tools. Now is the time to have your lawn mower and other equipment serviced before the gardening season begins.
- Apply Dormant Oil on fruit trees to control scale and mites.

- Check your houseplants for unwanted visitors.
- Work soil for spring planting if it's not too wet.
- Spot treat broadleaf weeds in the yard. It's still too early to apply crabgrass preventer. Wait till the redbud trees are blooming.

Upcoming Events

- *April 1st at 10 am- So you want to grow vegetables in containers?*
Are you interested in growing your own vegetables but live in an apartment, have a shady backyard or have a physical limitation that prevents you from gardening in the ground? Container vegetable gardening is a great way to still grow your own vegetables on your window sill, patio, porch or even your front step. Join us at the Rose Hill Library at 306 N Rose Hill Rd, Rose Hill, KS to learn how to grow your own tomatoes, corn, herbs and any vegetable in a container. Registration is not required but contact the library at (316) 776-3013 to ensure we have enough hand-outs.
- *April 5th at Noon- Growing to New Heights with Vertical Gardening*
Make the most of your garden by growing up, instead of out. Create vertical gardens to get your garden off of the ground, provide more space for plants, and expand your gardening area. Join Amanda Groleau, Frontier District Horticulture Extension Agent, as she shares the benefits of vertical gardening. Learn which fruits, vegetables, and flowers will grow best in a vertical garden and how to get started. For more information on the Garden Hour series or to register visit this website: <https://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/consumer-horticulture/garden-hour/>
- *April 17th at 7 pm- Gardening for Beginners and Beyond*
Gardening has become an extremely popular activity in the United States. Unfortunately for beginning gardeners there is quite a bit of conflicting information or unhelpful information available and it can be hard to sort through it. In this class not only will we talk about how to garden but I will also highlight some valuable resources. Join us to learn the basics of planning the garden, general care and to cover some basic problem solving for the issues that gardeners face. This class will be located at the Butler County Community/4-H Building at 206 N Griffith St. in El Dorado. Registration isn't required but is encouraged. Register here: <https://forms.gle/Qhwn8wpPCvoh7Yy9> or call the office at (316) 321-9660.
- *April 22nd from 9-5 and April 23rd from noon to 5- Grow and Bloom in Butler Lawn and Garden show*
The Butler County Master Gardeners in an effort to promote horticultural activities and to provide educational opportunities are hosting our first Lawn and Garden Show in Butler County. The show will be held at the Butler County Community/4-H Building located at 206 N Griffith St, El Dorado, KS. This event will feature businesses from around the area in our vendor show along with expert speakers both from the area and across the state. Check out our website for more information: <https://www.butler.k-state.edu/horticulture/show/Butlerlawnandgardenshow.html>
- *May 3rd at Noon- Drought Tolerant Plants for a Challenging Kansas Landscape*
The Kansas climate throws numerous extremes at our landscape plants. The most common climate extreme is periods of drought, which are difficult for both plants and gardeners. Join Jason Graves, Central Kansas District Horticulture Extension Agent, and Matthew McKernan, Sedgwick County Horticulture Extension Agent, as they address our climate challenges and provide suggestions for drought tolerant plants that will make gardening easier. For more information on the Garden Hour series or to register visit here: <https://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/consumer-horticulture/garden-hour/>