

The Grapevine

Spring Cleaning

We've had some gorgeous weather over the last few weeks and I know I have been itching to get out in the yard and get my flower beds ready for the spring season. Even though it is tempting to take advantage of those warm days it's actually best to wait until the temperatures are consistently above 50 degrees before we start cleaning the flower beds. Hidden beneath all the leaves and vegetation from last fall are eggs, chrysalis and cocoons of many beneficial insects just waiting for the warmer weather to hatch. In addition to the insects, many birds use the old vegetation left over from last year for fibers to build this year's nests. If we remove the vegetation, burn it or throw it away we are discarding all those helpful bugs and nesting material for birds that could benefit us in the garden. The exception to the spring clean-up rule are iris and peony beds. If those beds weren't cleaned up in the fall (I'm guilty of this) they should be cleaned up now. The reason for this is that iris and peonies are prone to leaf spot diseases that overwinter on infected vegetation from last year. Removing the old foliage and discarding it now will reduce the possibility of diseases for this growing season. If you must take advantage of the warmer temperatures early in the winter to clean up flower beds, be sure to place the debris in your compost pile or in a corner of the yard with a branch on top to hold it down until temperatures are consistently warm before discarding to the landfill or city compost pile.



Spring Lawn Care



Spring arrives next week, I'm not really sure where the last few months have gone but winter is officially almost over (at least by the calendar, we all know that winter may make its appearance for several more weeks still). While the warm season grass in my yard is still dormant, the tall fescue in the shade has started to make its appearance with the recent rains and warm weather. It's too early to do much with fertilizing in our lawns but there are still a few things we should be doing in March.

No matter what type of lawn you have mid-March is the ideal time to spot treat any broad leaf weeds that might be showing up in your yard. Henbit, dandelions and chickweed are all starting to sprout and will soon be blooming in yards if they aren't already. Either a liquid or granular product will work, if using a liquid spray make sure the sun is shining and temperatures will be above 50 degrees for several hours after

the herbicide is applied. Be sure to read the label when applying any product to make sure you are following the recommended rate and all safety precautions.

It is still too early in the year to be applying fertilizer to any type of lawn. Cool season lawns are best if fertilized in the fall but you can make an application of slow release fertilizer in May if desired. Warm season lawns should be fertilized starting in mid-May through July for the best results. While you can apply a granular pre-emergent herbicide to your lawns right now it's best to wait till closer to April or when the redbud trees are in full bloom to allow for a longer residual. Spring is also not the best time to be re-seeding cool season lawns. Even though our temperatures might be ideal now, soon summer will come and cool season lawns tend to struggle in the summer heat. If you have a few bare spots that died out over the winter go ahead and fill in those bare spots but any large seeding of cool season grass really should wait till fall. If you must seed, make sure you keep the moisture going into the hot part of the summer to give your grass seeding the best chance at survival. Warm season lawns should be re-seeded starting in mid-May and running through July. Happy Growing every one!

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Insect of the Week- Bagworms

It is still several months till these pesky critters make their appearance but I've had a run of bagworm questions lately so I thought we should talk about them. It's probably because the bags from last year are visible on the trees like tiny, pesky Christmas ornaments. These plant pests won't start hatching in our area until mid-May through June. Once they hatch they start moving out of the parent's home to establish a new home of their own. Bagworms are so named because of the "bag" they create around themselves to camouflage them from predators. Larvae will typically feed on the plant they hatched from or one nearby but they can be carried to other plants via the wind and a long thread of silk. Bagworms will eat on just about any plant but prefer junipers or arborvitae. These insects usually will go unnoticed till their bags are 1-2" in size and hang from the plant like little Christmas ornaments. Control is best two weeks after they have hatched to ensure all the larvae have started to feed which typically is about the mid to later half of June. There are several active ingredients that can be used to kill bagworms including Spinosad, permethrin, acephate, and cyfluthrin. Be sure to thoroughly cover all the foliage to kill the bagworms. If you don't notice the bagworms till August, it's best to just pick the bagworms off since chemical applications at that point are often unsuccessful.



Plant of the Week- Crocus

Last week as I was cleaning up the Sweetgum seeds in my yard I spotted my first blooms of the season in this beautiful crocus that randomly pop up in my yard. Crocus are members of the Iris family and there are about 90 species of spring flowering early bloomers. The name *crocus* is a middle English word for "saffron plant" as saffron comes from the dried stigmas of one of the species. They are native to the Mediterranean and eastern Europe to northwest China. Crocus are actually corms rather than bulbs. Corms are fleshy vertical underground stems that act as food storage structures for some plants. Corms are solid tissue where bulbs are immature layers of leaves. Crocus need full sun to partial shade and well drained soil when possible. They do tolerate drought but prefer to be kept damp during the growing season. Crocus bloom in early spring and have a wide variety of bloom colors. Crocus blooms will actually close at night or on cloudy days to reopen when the sun comes back out again. After a crocus has finished blooming, leave the foliage intact for at least six weeks so the corms can store food for next years growing season. Crocus are planted in the fall and look best in masses, along borders of beds or in naturalized areas. When planting crocus they should be buried about 2.5" deep and 2" apart. The biggest pest issue of Crocus are squirrels and other rodents who will dig up the corms to eat. As a fun fact the corms of crocus can actually be cooked and eaten as a vegetable.



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.
- Spray peach trees for Peach Leaf Curl and plum trees for control of Black Knot.
- 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

- *March 14th at 6 pm- 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 Bradford Memorial Library to learn how to grow your own tomatoes, corn, herbs and any vegetable in a container.
- *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/Qhwn8wpvPCvoh7Yy9> 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/>