

Kansas State University Cooperative Extension Office
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THE GRAPEVINE



March 7th, 2019

Larry Crouse
Extension Horticulture Agent

LANDSCAPING PROGRAM IN EL DORADO!

On Thursday, March 21st, at 6:30 PM there will be a presentation by Travis Carmichael, the Lyon County K-State Research & Extension Horticulture Agent on Residential Landscaping. This program will cover the do's and don'ts of landscaping your home. Travis will share information concerning plant selection and placement and discuss the major components of landscape design such as continuity, theme, unity, and more. Find out the mistakes and pitfalls to avoid when you make those decisions for your home. To register for this program call the Butler County Extension office at (316) 321-9660 by Tuesday, March 19th to register for his presentation. There is a \$5 fee for this program.

Fruit Tree Pruning Workshop on Tap!

On Friday, March 22nd, at 10:00 AM there will be a demonstration and workshop on pruning fruit trees in El Dorado, KS. Larry Crouse, the Butler County K-State Research & Extension Agent will lead Butler County Master Gardeners, and any others who want to participate, through a demonstration on pruning apple trees. Then all participants will have an opportunity to prune a tree to ensure they understand the principles behind pruning for fruit production. Please dress appropriately and bring gloves and pruning implements. No registration is required for this event, just show up with a desire to learn and help!

It's Not Too Late for Dormant Overseeding of Turfgrass

As mentioned in a companion article in this newsletter, the best time to overseed cool-season grasses such as tall fescue and Kentucky bluegrass is September because the turf has more time to mature before crabgrass germination in the spring and the heat stress of summer. However, dormant seeding of turfgrass is sometimes used to help fill in bare spots of lawns that weren't overseeded in the fall. Dormant seeding is normally not used to seed large areas because of the possibility of erosion before the seed emerges and becomes mature enough to hold the soil.

Dormant overseeding is usually done during the winter (December through February) when it is too cold for germination to take place. Spring seeding done in March can be just as successful as dormant seeding, but spring rains may delay plantings. As with any seeding program, it is vital that good seed-soil contact is achieved. There are several methods that are commonly used in dormant seeding. One method is to seed when there has been a light snowfall of up to an inch over unfrozen soil. 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 brings the seed into 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 some freezing weather. As moist soil freezes and thaws, small pockets are formed on the wet, bare soil which are perfect for catching and holding seed. As the soil dries, the pockets collapse and cover the seed. If dry enough and the soil is unfrozen, seed can be applied to bare spots and then raked in to ensure good seed/soil contact. With any of the above methods, seed germinates in the spring as early as possible.

Growing Blueberries

Blueberries are not native to Kansas but will grow in the eastern half of the state with good preparation. They are related to azaleas and rhododendrons and require an acid pH, preferably 4.8 to 5.2. Blueberries do not have root hairs, so watering and mulching is important. It is best to start planting preparations a year ahead of time to allow for pH adjustment, weed control, and the addition of organic matter. The first step is a soil test to determine how much the pH needs to be reduced. For a pH up to 5.5, the addition of sphagnum peat moss at the rate of 2 cubic feet per 100 square feet will be adequate. For a pH 5.5 to 6.0, add 1 pound of

sulfur per 100 square feet of bed in addition to the peat moss. For a pH 6.0 to 6.5, add 1.5 pounds of sulfur per 100 square feet of bed. For pH levels above 6.5, use 2 pounds of sulfur per 100 square feet of bed and double the amount of sphagnum peat moss suggested earlier. Do not use aluminum sulfate to correct a high pH because excessive levels of aluminum can be toxic to blueberries. For each 0.5 movement up the pH scale from 6.5, add an additional pound of sulfur. Sulfur can be applied as a dust, but pelletized sulfur is much easier to spread. Treat only the row. Row width should be 8 feet. Blueberries are normally spaced about 5 feet within the row. Sulfur takes time to react, so allow as much time as possible between sulfur application and planting. Blueberries will bear more if you plant more than one variety. Recommended varieties vary, but you may want to try Bluecrop because it is adaptable. Patriot also seems to do well. You may want to try some other varieties. Blueberries should be mulched. Sawdust is the traditional material, but straw and wood chips will work as well. Mulch to a depth of about 3 inches. Blueberries must be irrigated. Soils should be kept moist but never waterlogged. Adding peat moss to the planting row will elevate the planting bed enough that standing water should not be an issue. An elevated bed will dry out more quickly, so there must be a means of adding water. Trickle irrigation works well. Watering twice a week during the summer with enough water to wet the soil 8 inches deep should be sufficient except under extreme heat. Watering once a week may be enough during the cooler spring and fall weather. As you might guess, there is more to growing blueberries than can be included in a short article. Dr. Art Gaus from the University of Missouri shared this instruction sheet on how to grow blueberries more than 25 years ago. It is still excellent information on blueberry culture. You can access it by going to: >http://hnr.k-state.edu/doc/extension-gardening-tips/Blueberry_Production.pdf<

Blueberries require commitment. Anything less than excellent preparation and care will result in failure.

Establishing a Wildflower Area

Native grasses and many native wildflowers do well within a wide pH range. Any pH between 5.5 and 8 should work. Just make sure the area receives at least 8 hours of sun a day.

It is better to choose a blend of grasses and wildflowers rather than a single species. Companies that provide regional blends include Sharp Brothers, Stock Seed and Wildseed Farms. These plants do not grow well in areas that have established plants. Existing vegetation should be killed before seeding. The following steps increase the chances of success.

- Control perennial weeds by using a product containing glyphosate.
- Using glyphosate the fall before planting makes soil preparation easier the following spring
- Adjust pH and fertilize according to soil test before planting.
- The seedbed should be firm so that a boot heel sinks in no more than 1/2 inch.
- The goal is good seed/soil contact.
- Can mix seed with damp sand (4:1 sand/seed) for more uniform coverage with a drop seeder or whirlybird spreader.
- The seed should be raked in about 1/4" deep. It is best if the seedbed is firmed up by using roller or driving over the area with a riding lawn mower. Don't mulch.
- Keep seed moist while the seed is germinating (3 to 4 times per week, if possible). Slowly back off watering as plants develop.

What about planting dates? Warm-season grasses and most prairie flowers should be seeded between April 1 and May 15. To control any remaining living vegetation, spray with a product containing glyphosate, wait a week and plant. Make sure the soil temperature is at least 60 degrees before planting.

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