

THE GRAPEVINE



October 4th, 2021

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Extension Horticulture Agent

Lawn Seeding

If you are like me, your lawn has some bare patches going into winter and I'm looking at reseeding those areas before winter hits. We are approaching the last few days to reseed bare spots in your lawn. It is recommended to seed Kentucky Blue grass by the end of September and tall fescue by October 15th. Seedlings done after these cut off dates can be successful, however the success rate goes down the later in the fall you plant. If you do attempt a late seeding take care to keep the seedlings from drying out. Try to prevent anything from slowing the growth of the new seedlings. Fall plantings fail because of desiccation of the roots rather than cold temperatures. The freezing and thawing of poorly rooted seedlings can push them out of the ground which causes them to dry out and die. Keeping those seedlings watered will help maximize root growth before freezing weather arrives.

Consider soil testing in the fall



I recently moved into a new home and from taking a look around the yard this weekend I have quite a bit of work to do. One of my first steps outside is going to be to get a soil test of my yard and future garden spot this fall so I'm ready for planting season in the spring. Spring is the most common time people will soil test but fall can actually be a better time for a few reasons. In the spring the soils are usually water logged or the areas are muddy and that can make taking samples difficult. It is also easier to incorporate organic material into the soil in the fall because those materials are readily available in the form of leaves. You can also incorporate the material into the soil without having to worry about damaging tender garden plants or flowers. Another reason is the soil testing laboratories are not as busy in the fall which can speed up getting your results as compared to the spring.

When doing a soil test be sure to take a representative sample from at least six locations in the garden or lawn. Each sample should have soil from the surface to about eight inches deep in the ground. Our office has a soil sampler available for check out to accomplish this. A garden shovel can also accomplish the same purpose, just make sure you go straight down into the soil. Put all samples into a bucket and mix thoroughly. Pour out about one to one and a half cups of soil in a plastic container or baggie and bring it to the Butler County Extension office to have it tested. There is a small fee to cover the cost of the test and you will receive recommendations on handling fertility problems. Contact our office to check out the soil tester or for more information on soil tests.

Consider lasagna gardening

Despite what the name sounds like, I'm not recommending that you garden with pasta noodles at your house. Lasagna gardening has been known by many names (no-till gardening, sheet gardening, etc) but no matter what the name they all refer to a method of gardening that layers compostable material on top of the soil. This form of gardening also has little to no tillage and instead seeks to build soil fertility and structure through adding organic material.

For most gardeners, tilling the garden in the spring and even the fall is a standard practice. While tillage can have a place in the garden such as incorporating organic material, some gardeners are moving toward no-till or low tillage options for many of the same reasons farmers moved to no-till cropping; to improve soil quality and drainage. Tillage breaks the soil down into smaller pieces, which can create an even soil bed and allow the soil to





warm up in the spring, however it also increases the risk of erosion, reduces the number of microbes in the soil and can impact how the soil infiltrates into the soil. Lasagna gardening helps reduce these risks while improving the soil you garden in.

Now is the perfect time to start a lasagna garden. The first step is to cover the ground with layers of compost. I start with a layer of cardboard (I have plenty this year with moving boxes), then cover that with a layer of green materials such as grass clippings, then repeat the pattern until I have a layer about eight inches thick over my garden spot. Your goal is to have the soil covered at all times to prevent weeds from sprouting and to add organic material to the soil. Any compostable material will work for the layers but be aware that since this is a slow or cold compost method it will take longer for materials to break down. As you garden you will have to continue to add more layers the next year as the current layers break down. Another way to develop this mulch layer is using cover crops in the late summer or fall to create the mulch layer.

In the spring plan your garden so you have beds approximately four feet across with walkways between. The walkways prevent compaction in your growing beds and four foot beds should allow you to reach all the way into the middle without stepping in the bed. Where you plan to plant seeds or plants, scrape the compost away from those areas, plant your seeds or plants, then when the seedlings emerge push the compost back around the plants and seedlings. This helps prevent weeds from growing and helps keep your labor to a minimum.

Upcoming Events-

Kansas Forest Service Tree, Shrub Seedling Sale, September 1 - October 15

Kansas Orchid Society Fall Show and Sale, November 6, 2021

This Month's K-State Garden Hour Webinar:

Embrace your Landscape's Wild Side - Supporting Backyard Birds

Wednesday, October 6; Noon – 1:00pm CST

Presented by: Chuck Otte, Extension Agent in Geary County

Join this free gardening webinar the first and third Wednesday of every month. Recordings are made available online, and a one-time registration is required participate in the live webinar series. To register, see upcoming webinars, and view previous webinars, visit: <http://ksre-learn.com/KStateGardenHour>

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