Hope you are having a blessed day today! There are several opportunities to help out your community, youth, or your farming business in this week's information.

**Sheep/Goat Survey**
The first item in this week: Kansas Dept. of AG is conducting a survey on sheep and goats. This is the final week the survey will be open. This really will be important for the industry; not just on a state level, but members of national and international organizations will be able to use the results when working towards product development and legislation that will be helpful to the growth of the industry. The link to the survey is https://kstate.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_cGFq1t4B0UZeWWh

Thank you all so much for responding.

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**Kansas weed survey - Reminder to participate before August 31**
Herbicide-resistant weeds are threatening the profitability and long-term sustainability of Kansas cropping systems. To help develop innovative, cost-effective, and integrated weed management practices for controlling herbicide-resistant weeds and to further improve the outreach programs for various regions of the state, the Weed Science group at the K-State Ag Research Center in Hays seeks input from Kansas producers and ag professionals (crop consultants, county agents, certified crop advisors). We invite you to please complete a brief survey related to weed management practices and herbicide-resistant weed problems.

The survey will take 5-8 minutes. The survey will close at the end of August.
If you have further questions on the survey, please contact Dr. Vipan Kumar, Weed Management Specialist at vkumar@ksu.edu. Survey Link: Kansas Weeds Survey at https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=cfqi2X3Wtky1QQbMqoAT-zozFhtndOxNiBZfihPfKAJUNTRJTFVGVDZHNDFKWjQ5ODRFWkVZTFFROC4u

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**4-H Shooting Sports Instructor Training**
4-H Shooting Sports Instructor Training has been scheduled for November 7-8, 2020, at the Gray County Fairgrounds in Cimarron. To help with our planning process, we are gathering interest from potential trainees. If you are interested call the Hodgeman County Extension Office (620) 357-8321 as soon as possible.

Training will begin at 8 am Saturday, November 7, and conclude Sunday, November 8, after lunch.

The general session will be held online and will need to be completed prior to final registration. Instructions and details will be released along with registration information.
The estimated cost will be $225 per registrant, which includes two nights (Friday and Saturday), five meals, and training materials. Two people per room will be required. Options will be available for local individuals to register for a reduced rate without lodging.

Schedules and further information will be released soon. Details may change due to COVID-19 restrictions.

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**K-State adds online training for Extension Master Gardeners**

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Kansas State University’s Extension Master Gardener program is planning to offer a statewide online training option this fall for those wanting to join the popular group.

Cheryl Boyer, an associate professor in the Department of Horticulture and Natural Resources and interim coordinator of the state’s Master Gardener program, said weekly online sessions begin Sept. 3 and will run through Dec. 17.

The cost for online training is $45 plus any additional fees set by the county – or about $1 per hour of educational content, she said -- and can be paid at Hodgeman County Extension Office.

For online training, Kansans must sign up through at the Hodgeman County Extension Office, by August 28. More information about the program is available online at https://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/master-gardeners/. Training sessions will be held each Thursday from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. for 15 weeks.

“This online choice is optional and local units are not required to use this training in place of their own programming plans,” Boyer said. “However, because fall travel is limited for K-State Research and Extension educators, face-to-face training can not be expected or required.”

The K-State Research and Extension Master Gardener program is available to anyone with an interest in horticulture. “If you want to improve your gardening skills and knowledge, and you like to work with people, this program may be for you,” Boyer said.

Once certified as an Extension Master Gardener, participants are asked to donate time in their community to help others learn more about gardening and horticulture. Boyer noted that in 2019, Extension Master Gardeners donated approximately 99,000 hours for a total value of more than $2.6 million.

This fall’s 15-week training schedule will provide up to 50 hours of training on 13 topics delivered by lecture and hands-on activities. Boyer said the topics include plant growth and development, soils, turfgrass, annual and perennial flowers, landscape maintenance, woody ornamentals, vegetable gardening, insects, pesticide safety, plant diseases, fruit, landscape design and wildlife management.

For more information and to sign up contact the Hodgeman County Extension Office, 620-357-8321.

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**Garden Reminders**
a. Plant salad crops such as lettuce, radishes, spinach, turnips, mustard and other greens from mid-August to early September for a fall harvest.

b. Harvest vegetable crops on a regular basis for season long production
c. Transplant cabbage, broccoli and cauliflower to their final location.

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Recommended Tall Fescue Cultivars

Though several cool-season grasses are grown in Kansas, tall fescue is considered the best adapted and is recommended for home lawns. The cultivar K-31 is the old standby and has been used for years. However, there are a myriad of newer cultivars that have improved color, density and a finer leaf texture. Most of these newer varieties are very close to one another in quality.

Each year the National Turfgrass Evaluation Trial rates tall fescue varieties for color, greenup, quality and texture. Quality ratings are taken once a month from March through October. The cultivars listed below received an average rating of 5.8 or above when 2012-2017 ratings were averaged. The highest rated cultivars were Rebounder, Michelangelo, Traverse 2, Black Tail, Reflection, GTO, Thor, Paramount, Temple, Valkyrie LS, Avenger II, Technique, 4th Millennium SRP, Rockwell, Titanium 2LS, Rowdy, Regenerate, Leonardo, Falcon V, Firebird 2, Terrano, Maestro, Grande 3, Bloodhound and Hot Rod. There are many more that rated nearly as well and should be considered worthy of consideration. See http://newprairiepress.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=7599&context=kaesrr for a complete list of all cultivars trialed. Note that K-31 consistently rates at the bottom. Keep in mind that blends of several varieties may allow you to take advantage of differing strengths.

Though K-31 may still be a good choice for large, open areas, the new cultivars will give better performance for those who desire a high-quality turf. (Ward Upham)

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When Are Apples Ready to Pick?

Apples mature over a long period of time depending on variety. Some varieties such as Lodi can mature in July and others as late as October or even November. Here are some guides to help you decide when to pick your apples.

Days from bloom: The number of days from bloom is a reliable guide for general maturity time, but weather conditions will have some influence. Some kinds of apples and approximate days from bloom to maturity are Jonathan, 135, Delicious, 145, Golden Delicious, 145, and Winesap, 155 days.

Flesh color: As apples mature and starches change to sugars, the flesh changes from very light green to white. When you cut a thin slice and hold it up to the light you can see the difference.

Seed color: The seeds of most apples change from light green to brown as the fruit ripens. This indicator should be combined with other changes since it is not absolute. The
flavor of the apples, the change in color of the stem and calyx basins and flesh color are important in deciding if apples are ready to harvest.

*Color change:* As apples mature, the skin color in areas of the stem and the calyx basin at the bottom of the apple turns from an immature green to a light-yellow color. Some apples will develop a red skin color over the majority of the fruit before they are ripe, so this is not a reliable indication of maturity.

*Flavor:* This is a good guide if you are familiar with the apples you have and know how they should taste. Even if you do not know the characteristic flavor of the kind of apple you have, you can still sample slices of a few apples and decide if they have a sweet flavor. If they are not ready to harvest, they will taste starchy or immature. If apples have already fallen and taste a bit starchy, store them for a period to see if they become sweeter. (Ward Upham)

Harvesting Winter Squash

Summer squash such as zucchini and scallop are harvested while immature but winter squash such as acorn, hubbard and butternut are harvested later, in the mature stage, after the rind is tough and seeds have developed. We normally think September is the time that winter squash are harvested. Harvesting too early leads to fruit that shrivels and rots.

There are two main characteristics that help tell us when winter squash are mature: color and rind toughness. Winter squash change color as they become mature. Butternut changes from light beige to deep tan. Acorn is a deep green color but has a ground spot that changes from yellow to orange when ripe. Gray or orange is the mature color for hubbard.

A hard, tough rind is another characteristic of mature winter squash. This is easily checked by trying to puncture the rind with your thumbnail or fingernail. If it easily penetrates the skin, the squash is not yet mature and will lose water through the skin -- causing the fruit to dry and shrivel. Also, immature fruit will be of low quality. The stem should also be dry enough that excessive water doesn’t drip from the stem.

Winter squash should be stored cool with elevated humidity. Ideal conditions would be 55 to 60 degrees F and 50 to 70 percent relative humidity. Under such conditions, acorn squash will usually last about 5 to 8 weeks, butternuts 2 to 3 months and hubbards 5 to 6 months. (Ward Upham)

Twig Dieback on Oaks

Recently we have seen twig dieback on pin and other oaks caused by a fungal disease called Botryosphaeria canker. Affected trees show wilting or “flagging” of terminal growth on the ends of branches. Dieback usually extends 4 to 6 inches down the twig with leaves bending back toward the twig before turning brown. Dead leaves remain attached to the tree. If you look closely at the twig, you should see a rather marked transition from healthy to diseased tissue. Take a knife and scrape away some of the outer bark tissue. Healthy tissue is light green. Diseased tissue tends to be brown to black.
Botryosphaeria canker affects only the tips of branches. This disease causes such minor damage that chemical control measures are unwarranted. Dead twigs on small trees may be pruned off if desired. (Ward Upham)

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**Composting: Choosing a Bin**

Though raw organic materials will eventually compost if given moisture and access to the microorganisms that break organic materials down, building a compost pile can greatly speed up the process. Also, a properly constructed compost pile will produce enough heat to destroy insect pests and disease organisms.

A number of things are needed for building a compost pile including a bin, a source of water, “green” materials and “brown” materials. This week we will cover bins.

Our goal is to have a bin that will hold at least a 3 foot x 3 foot x 3 foot high mound of material. Anything less than this and the process will be slow and will not produce sufficient heat to kill insect and disease pests. For home gardeners, a 5 x 5 x 5 bin would be about the largest that can be easily handled. Though there are a number of compost bins that can be purchased, gardeners can build their own. A simple bin can be made from discarded pallets or a ring of woven wire. Plans are available for a variety of bins at [https://extension2.missouri.edu/g6957](https://extension2.missouri.edu/g6957). You may want to consider having a 3 bin system which consists of a holding bin to hold materials until enough materials have been collected to compost, a composting bin for a actual compost process and a third bin to hold the finished compost. For a video on choosing a bin, see [https://bit.ly/2AwhCPy](https://bit.ly/2AwhCPy). (Ward Upham)