Unsolicited Seeds in the Mail

Have you received a package of unsolicited seeds in the mail? The U.S. Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA–APHIS) has now provided us with instructions regarding what individuals should do with the unsolicited seed packages. Below is a procedure for you to follow for submitting your seed packages to USDA–APHIS. They will analyze the seed and determine the species and whether any pathogens or insect pests are present and they will be able to work with other federal agencies to try to determine where these packages are coming from and how to stop them.

Remember: Do not plant the seeds, and please limit handling of the seeds if you have opened the package. If you have already planted the seed, please report it to KDA at 785-564-6698 or KDA.PPWC@ks.gov, even if you have already called or sent an email.

Option 1 (PREFERRED): Double-bag the seeds and all of the original mailing packaging (if you still have it) in sealable plastic bags (e.g., ziplock bags), and complete and include the attached form. Unsolicited Seeds Submission Form

Place everything in a padded mailing envelope, and mail the package to:

USDA-APHIS
1131 SW Winding Rd, Suite A
Topeka, KS 66615

Option 2: Using duct tape, completely cover the seed packet from all sides with tape. Double-bag the seed packet into two sealable bags (e.g., ziplock bags), removing air pockets. Fold over to reduce size, and completely cover the folded-over bag with duct tape. This minimizes risk by preventing bag breakage and preventing water and sun reaching the seeds. Discard in the trash.

Following this procedure will help reduce the chance of an exotic invasive species of plant or plant pest from being introduced into our environment. At this time, we have been given no reason to believe the seeds being sent pose a health danger to people or animals; if you or your pets exhibit any symptoms of concern, contact a medical professional.

We appreciate your assistance and cooperation.
If you have additional questions: call USDA–APHIS: 1-844-820-2234 or KDA Plant Protection and Weed Control program: 785-564-6698

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K-State’s Risk & Profit Conference to be offered completely online Aug. 10-14

Agricultural producers in Kansas and other states this year can participate in Kansas State University’s Risk & Profit Conference from wherever they are as the university takes the entire conference online. The conference is set for Aug. 10-14.

From producers to processors to consumers, the new coronavirus has affected every aspect of life, so this year’s conference will focus on the economics of agriculture during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Different sessions are scheduled for each day, including the popular livestock and grain market outlooks. Sessions run from noon to 1:30 p.m. each day except Thursday, when an expanded schedule runs from 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. That day also features an open chat at lunchtime with extension specialists.

A complete schedule and registration is available online at https://agmanager.info/events/risk-and-profit-conference. Questions can be directed to Rich Llewelyn at rvl@ksu.edu.

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Kansas Wheat estimated the just-harvested 2020 wheat production at slightly more than 307 million bushels, with an average yield of 48 bushels per acre. That compares with a 10-year average of 334 million bushels with an average yield of 42.1 bushels per acre. The data show that fewer acres have been planted to wheat in recent years than earlier in the past 10 years.

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2019 Kansas Summer Annual Forage Hay and Silage Variety Trial final report

In 2019, summer annual forage variety trials were conducted across Kansas near Garden City, Hays, and Scandia. All sites evaluated hay and silage entries. Companies were able to enter varieties into any possible combinations of research sites, so not all sites had all varieties. Across the sites, a total of 95 hay varieties, 99 sorghum silage varieties, and 12 corn silage varieties were evaluated. The full 2019 Kansas Forage Report can be accessed online at https://newprairiepress.org/kaesrr/vol6/iss6/1/.

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Updated 2020 Wheat Variety Disease and Insect Rating publication

Variety selection is one of the most important decisions that a grower can make to ensure success on their farm. Now is the time when wheat producers across Kansas are reviewing yield data and making decisions about the varieties they will plant in the fall. Although yield is always a top priority, disease and insect resistance, along with appropriate agronomic traits, can buffer against crop losses. In addition, genetic resistance
to diseases and insect pests can be the most effective, economical, and environmentally sound method for control.

*Wheat Variety Disease and Insect Ratings 2020*, from K-State Research and Extension, has now been released for this year. Agronomic characteristics, disease, and pest resistance information is included, as well as profiles that highlight some more common or new varieties for the state of Kansas.

Updates this year include the addition of variety profiles for varieties KS Dallas, KS Western Star, Showdown, WB4267, and WB4792, as well as disease, insect, and agronomic ratings for several other new varieties. As many producers are looking for tools to manage weed pressure, we have added a section to the document with information specifically about varieties with Clearfield and CoAXium herbicide resistance traits.

Ratings in this publication represent results from field and greenhouse evaluations by public and private wheat researchers at multiple locations over multiple years.


The new disease and insect ratings are complementary to data in the Winter Wheat Performance Tests available at [https://www.agronomy.k-state.edu/services/crop-performance-tests/winter-wheat/index.html](https://www.agronomy.k-state.edu/services/crop-performance-tests/winter-wheat/index.html). Together, they offer growers across the state valuable information when choosing varieties to plant this fall.

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**Think safety first when canning food at home**

Americans have been canning foods at home for more than 100 years. Yet still, says Kansas State University food safety specialist Karen Blakeslee, there’s always something new to learn.

“There are many older methods that are not safe to use,” Blakeslee said. “So, it’s important to stay up to date. There are a variety of mistakes that can lead to serious food safety problems when preserving food at home by canning. A vast majority of canning or sealing failures are due to user error. Just because the jar is sealed, that doesn’t mean the food is safe.”

Some common mistakes that Blakeslee listed include:

- Following old and unsafe recipes, some of which may have been passed down through generations of families.
- Following recipes that have not been tested and approved, or adhere to current USDA guidelines. The Internet is full of untested and unapproved recipes.
- Using an incorrect jar size.
- Using improper processing methods.
- Storing food in an unsafe location, such as a place where it is too hot, cold or moist.
- Adjusting the band too tightly.
• Not adjusting processing times for altitude.

Blakeslee, coordinator of K-State’s Rapid Response Center for Food Safety, maintains a website, *Preserve it Fresh, Preserve it Safe* (https://www.rrc.k-state.edu/preservation/index.html), with current guidelines for canning.

"In canning, the goal is to produce a safe product and reduce risks of botulism," Blakeslee said. "Instances of botulism occur most often in home canned foods. Before canning any food, be sure to have all equipment ready to go."

Some examples of preparing for home canning include examining canning jars so that they are clean and free of cracks or chips; ensuring that you have new lids – “never re-use canning lids as they may not seal,” Blakeslee said – and if using a dial gauge pressure canner, get it tested every year.

Contact the Hodgeman County Extension Office to ask about testing a dial gauge pressure canner. Blakeslee said local offices can test four brands: National, Presto, Magic Seal and Maid of Honor pressure canners.

“Be sure that canning equipment is maintained and ready to use,” Blakeslee said. “Use the correct processing method for the type of food. Water bath canning (a lower-temperature process) will safely process high acid foods, such as jelly and fruit. Pressure canning (temperatures of 240 degrees Fahrenheit or higher) must be used for plain vegetables and all meats.”

“Along with using the correct processing method, be sure to adjust processing for your elevation,” she added. More information can be found in the publication, *What’s Your Elevation* (https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/MF3172.pdf).

According to Newell Brands, Inc., a parent company of Ball brands, 35.1% of Americans who can foods do so one to two times per year, while 27.3% can seven or more times per year. “Most canning occurs between June and October, and picks up again during the holiday season,” Blakeslee said.

“Food preservation is a great family activity and can be very rewarding,” she added. It is a great way to preserve home grown food or food from a farmers market and then share the bounty with family and friends. Be smart about home canning for success.”

More food safety tips are available online from the K-State Rapid Response Center at https://www.rrc.k-state.edu/.

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**Plants for Late Season Bloom**

Landscapes are often drab this time of year. You can add interest to your home by planting shrubs this fall or next spring that flower later in the growing season. Consider one or more of the following.

Rose of Sharon (*Hibiscus syriacus*) is a tall shrub that produces single or double flowers. Colors range from white to red, purple or violet, or combinations, depending on the variety.
Crape myrtle (Lagerstroemia indica) are dwarf-to-tall shrubs or trees. They are not reliably winter hardy in Kansas and often die back to the ground. Crape myrtle flowers on new wood, so plants pruned (or killed) to the ground while dormant in late winter or early spring will bloom later the same year. Flower color varies from white, pink, to purple or deep red on different plants.

Bluebeard (Caryopteris x clandonensis) is also known as blue-spires, blue-mist shrub, or caryopteris. It usually is found with blue flowers, but some cultivars have a bluish-violet to violet flower color. Plants are usually cut back in late winter or early spring. Flowers are borne on the current season’s growth.

Sweet Autumn clematis (Clematis terniflora) is a vigorous vine with large masses of small, white flowers that have a wonderful fragrance. Be careful with this one; it can easily outgrow its bounds. It is often a good idea to cut it back to the ground in early spring.

Davidiana clematis (Clematis heracleifolia var. Davidiana) is a bush-type clematis with small but interesting violet-blue flowers. Female plants bear interesting fluffy seed heads into the winter. This clematis needs to be cut back to the ground each year to help maintain the shape of the plant.

The PeeGee hydrangea (Hydrangea paniculata Grandiflora) is a somewhat coarse plant that develops large clusters of white flowers. It can be trained into a tree-like form. (Ward Upham)

Do you have something black on your grass?

I have seen and heard of some yards having something on their grass in Hodgeman County. It is probably slime mold.

Slime molds are common in lawns and landscape plantings. They are particularly common in mulch and on dead wood. Slime molds are not true fungi. They are primitive microorganisms that come in many shapes, colors, and sizes. They can appear like slime or ooze when wet. When they dry out they are more crusty or puffy, and if you bump or kick them you might send up a plume of dusty spores.

Slime molds grow and thrive in wet conditions, and they consume other microbes such as bacteria. They are not plant pathogens, and they don’t damage plants. No management is required. However, they do look strange and can cause concern. If they are a nuisance, slime molds can be physically broken apart up with a rake, broom, or hose.

Watering Newly Planted Trees and Shrubs
Newly planted trees have not established the extensive root system needed to absorb enough water during hot, dry, windy summers. Even trees two or three years old should receive special care.

Deep, infrequent watering and mulching can help trees become established. Newly transplanted trees need at least 10 gallons of water per week, and on sandy soils they will need that much applied twice a week. The secret is getting that water to soak deeply into the soil, so it evaporates more slowly and is available to the tree’s roots longer. One way to do this is to drill a 1/8” hole in the side of a 5-gallon bucket and fill it with water. The hole should be near the bottom of the bucket. Let the water dribble out slowly next to the tree. Refill the bucket once after moving it to the opposite side of the tree. After this bucket empties, you have applied 10 gallons. Very large transplanted trees and trees that were transplanted two to three years ago will require more water.

A perforated soaker hose or drip irrigation can be used to water a newly established bed or foundation planting. In sunbaked soil, you may need to rough up the surface with a hoe or tiller to get water to infiltrate easily. It may be helpful to set the kitchen oven timer, so you remember to move the hose or shut off the faucet. If you are seeing surface runoff, reduce the flow, or build a berm with at least a 4-foot diameter around the base of the tree to allow the water to percolate down through the soil, instead of spreading out.

Regardless of method used, soil should be wet at least 12 inches deep. Use a metal rod, wooden dowel, electric fence post or something similar to check depth. Dry soil is much harder to push through than wet. (Ward Upham)

Inexpensive Method of Watering Trees
We mentioned in an accompanying article about using a soaker hose to water trees. We thought it might be helpful to provide more details.

Soaker hoses are notorious for non-uniform watering. In other words, you often receive too much water from one part of the hose and not enough from another. On small trees, circling the tree several time with the soaker hoses will even out the amount of water applied but this isn’t practical for larger trees. Hooking both the beginning and the end of the soaker hose to a Y-adapter helps equalize the pressure and therefore provide a more uniform watering. The specific parts you need are shown in the photo above and include the soaker hose, Y-adapter and female to female connector.

It is also helpful if the Y-adapter has shut off valves so the volume of flow can be controlled. Too high a flow rate can allow water to run off rather than soak in.

On larger trees, the soaker hose can circle the trunk at a distance within the dripline of the tree but at least ½ the distance to the dripline. The dripline of the tree is outermost reach of the branches. On smaller trees, you may circle the tree several times so that only soil which has tree roots will be watered.

Soil should be wet at least 12 inches deep as 80% of a trees roots are in the top foot of soil. Use a metal rod, wooden dowel, electric fence post or something similar to
check depth. Dry soil is much harder to push through than wet and your probe will stop when it hits dry soil. How long it takes water to reach a 12 inch depth varies depending on the rate of water flow and soil. Record the amount of time it takes to reach 12 inches the first time the tree is watered. After that, simply water for that same amount of time. (Ward Upham)

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Watering Fruit Plants During the Summer
When temperatures exceed 90 degrees F, fruit plants lose water quickly. When this happens, moisture is withdrawn from the fruit to supply the tree. Stress from high temperatures, along with a moisture deficit in the root environment, may cause fruit to drop or fail to increase in size. The stress may also reduce the development of fruit buds for next year's fruit crop.

If you have fruit plants such as trees, vines, canes, and such, check soil moisture at the roots. Insert a pointed metal or wood probe such as a wooden dowel, piece of rebar or a electric fence post to check the depth of watering. Even a long screwdriver works well for this. Push these into the soil with the goal of reaching 8 to 12 inches. This may not be possible if the soil is hard and dry. If you cannot reach the recommended depth, the plants should be irrigated to prevent drooping and promote fruit enlargement. Water can be added to the soil using sprinklers, soaker hose, drip irrigation, or even a small trickle of water running from the hose for a few hours. The amount of time you irrigate should depend upon the size of plants and the volume of water you are applying. Add enough moisture so you can easily penetrate the soil in the root area to the recommended depth. When hot, dry weather continues, continue to check soil moisture at least once a week.

Strawberries have a shallow root system and may need to be watered more often – maybe twice a week during extreme weather. Also, newly planted fruit trees sited on sandy soils may also need water twice a week. (Ward Upham)

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Wood Chips As Mulch
With many municipalities and tree service companies having wood chippers now, gardeners often are able to get chips free. We are sometimes asked our opinion about whether these make a good mulch.

Some people have heard that these chips will tie up nitrogen so that the garden plants won't grow as well. If wood chips are used as a mulch, there is no cause for concern. However, if the chips are mixed with the soil, there can be a problem during the breakdown process. The microorganisms that break down the chips need a certain amount of nitrogen during the process. With most green material, there is enough nitrogen in the material itself to meet the needs of the microorganisms. However, nitrogen levels in wood chips are so low, the microorganisms must borrow it from the surrounding soil. This results in less nitrogen being available to the plants. However, when the raw organic
material has been digested, the microorganisms die and release the nitrogen. Therefore, the nitrogen is not lost but is simply unavailable for plant use for a period of time. Again, this is only a concern if the wood chips are mixed into the soil. There is no problem with nitrogen tie-up if the chips are used as a mulch.

However, one point should be kept in mind. These chips can be used by foraging termites as a bridge to homes and other structures. Termites are light and heat sensitive and will not bother the chips themselves if they are 3 inches deep or less. Therefore, watch the depth of these chips near the house or other buildings. Also leave a bare area several inches wide next to the house so that any termite activity is noticeable. (Ward Upham)

Crabgrass Control

This is the time of year when people really notice crabgrass infestations. By far the best way to control crabgrass is to prevent it by maintaining a good, thick lawn. Crabgrass is an annual that must come up from seed each year and the seed must have light in order to germinate. If a lawn is thick enough that sunlight does not reach the soil, the crabgrass will not germinate. Under Kansas conditions it is not easy to maintain such a lawn; so many gardeners do the next best thing and apply a crabgrass preventer in the spring. Crabgrass preventers kill the seed as it germinates. Most do not have any effect on crabgrass that has already come up. If we are too late to apply a preventer, we do have other herbicides that will kill crabgrass plants including Ortho Weed-B-Gon Max +Crabgrass Control, Fertilome Weed-Out with Crabgrass Control, Monterey Crab-E-Rad and BioAdvanced Lawn Weed & Crabgrass Killer. Each contains quinclorac, which is a crabgrass herbicide, as well as other active ingredients that control broadleaf weeds. Quinclorac is an excellent crabgrass killer that controls not only crabgrass but also has good activity on foxtail and certain broadleaves such as field bindweed, black medic and clover. However, it does little to nothing to goosegrass.

Fortunately, crabgrass starts declining about the middle of August. This is about the same time that cool-season grasses such as tall fescue and Kentucky bluegrass start to come out of their summer doldrums. By the first of September, the crabgrass will be less noticeable. Therefore, a small infestation is best ignored. Remember that crabgrass is a warm-season annual and will be killed by the first frost. (Ward Upham)

Brand names appearing in this article are for product identification purposes only. No endorsement is intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products not mentioned.

Hodgeman County Extension is committed to making its services, activities and programs accessible to all participants. If you have special requirements due to a physical, vision or hearing disability, or a dietary restriction please contact Hodgeman County Extension Horticulture at (620) 357-8321.