



River Valley District

K-STATE RESEARCH AND EXTENSION NEWS

rivervalley.ksu.edu

July 2026 Volume 21 #7

BELLEVILLE OFFICE

1815 M Street
Belleville, KS
66935-2242
Phone: (785) 527-5084
rp@listserv.ksu.edu

CLAY CENTER OFFICE

213 South 12th Street
Clay Center, KS
67432-2804
Phone (785) 632-5335
cy@listserv.ksu.edu

CONCORDIA OFFICE

811 Washington—Suite E
Concordia, KS
66901-3415
Phone: (785) 243-8185
cd@listserv.ksu.edu

WASHINGTON OFFICE

214 C Street—Suite 8
Washington, KS
66968-1928
Phone: (785) 325-2121
ws@listserv.ksu.edu

Check us out on the Web at:
www.rivervalley.ksu.edu
or on Facebook @ River Valley
Extension District

K-STATE
Research and Extension

K-State Research and Extension is an equal
opportunity provider and employer.

ksre.k-state.edu

WATCH FOR TICKS WHEN OUTDOORS THIS SPRING

The return of warmer days draws us back outside to our yards, gardens, trails, and pastures, but it also increases our likelihood of encountering ticks. While ticks are active for much of the year in Kansas, the early summer months are when many people begin to encounter more ticks as a result of spending more time outdoors. A simple walk through tall grass or gardening in tall weeds all have the potential to encounter ticks while outdoors. Given the possible long-term health concerns associated with tick bites, vigilance must be an essential part of safe springtime routines outdoors.

In Kansas there are four common tick species, the American dog tick, brown dog tick, lone star tick, and the black legged tick (aka deer tick). The activity and lifecycle of each tick varies by species and time of year, however all four ticks feed on blood as larva, nymphs, and adults. These ticks can be found nearly any time of year outdoors, but they all become most active April through November as they look for animals or humans to provide a blood source for food. Temperatures, moisture, and the amount of tall grasses and weeds for habitat all further influence tick activity.

When spending time outdoors, it is important to know where ticks will be most commonly found. Ticks are wingless and slow crawling insects that most commonly use an ambush technique to find potential food sources. Ticks perch themselves on the ends of tall grass blades, the leaves of tall weeds, or on the foliage of low bushes and wait patiently until an animal comes along and brushes up against that plant. At that time, ticks transfer from the plant to the host, where they crawl around looking for a suitable site to feed. Ticks can also crawl several feet in response to stimuli such as carbon dioxide and host odors, but ticks do not jump or drop from trees.

To protect yourself from ticks while outside this summer, take the following steps:

- Avoid areas of tall grass, high weeds, or brushy plants, as these will be the primary habitats ticks will be found in. Regularly mowing areas can reduce tick habitat and expose ticks to sunlight, which can result in tick desiccation and death.
- Use insect repellents when outdoors, as they are highly effective in keeping ticks away. Use insect repellents that contain DEET or picaridin as the active ingredient. Permethrin-based insect repellents can also be used on clothing but should not be applied directly to the skin.
- Wear light colored clothing so ticks are easily spotted and removed before they reach the skin and feed.
- Wear long sleeved shirts and long pants to reduce exposed skin. Tuck pant legs into socks for additional protection.
- When returning from areas that are potentially infested with ticks, inspect your skin and clothing thoroughly. Shower and change clothes. Wash clothing and dry on a high heat cycle.
- Remove any ticks you find immediately. Preserve ticks in a jar of rubbing alcohol or frozen in a plastic bag in the freezer for at least two weeks. This will allow the opportunity to have the tick identified if medical reactions occur.

(CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE)

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service

- Frequently inspect pets when they return inside from the outdoors as well. Cats, dogs, and other pets can be frequent hosts for ticks as well, and a common way ticks are introduced into homes.

Winter ticks, spinose ear ticks, and other soft ticks are also present in Kansas. These ticks can be avoided using the same recommendations above. Visit our [Ticks In Kansas publication](https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/ticks-in-kansas_MF2653.pdf) for more information about ticks, their lifecycles, and how you can stay safe: https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/ticks-in-kansas_MF2653.pdf

COUNTY FAIR SUCCESS

As we near county fair season, here are some tips and tricks to consider when exhibiting fruits, vegetables, herbs, and flowers:

- **Read the fair book!** You may have the perfect tomatoes, but exhibiting 4 tomatoes instead of 5 could result in a lower ribbon placing. The same goes for flowers.
- **Harvest at proper maturity.** Judges will not be impressed with your exhibit if it hasn't ripened yet. On the flip side, don't bring something that is past its ideal size. There may be exceptions, such as "largest" or "most unique" classes, but stick to the standard otherwise. For flowers, choose a bloom that has opened, but not one that is about to be done blooming.
- **Water consistently in the weeks before judging.** Don't let the heat ruin a good thing! Taking time to water your plants consistently is critical for optimum production, especially during the July heat.
- **Bring clean exhibits.** Be sure to wash away any dirt on produce, plants, and flowers. This can be an easy deciding factor when judges are debating ribbon placings.
- **Remove blemishes.** Whether it's insect damage, blemished leaves, or spent blooms, it is necessary to remove them from your exhibits. Also avoid anything with cuts, scrapes or tears. You want your finished product to look as close to "perfect" as possible.
- **Take care with transportation.** Running late to judging? We've all been there. Do your best to have a plan in place for transporting your horticultural exhibits, so everything is ready to go when you get there. Clean exhibits in advance, and have vases, plates, etc. prepped and ready.
- **Bring extras!** This is perhaps one of the best pieces of advice. You never know what can happen. I would highly recommend having a few backup items, just in case something gets damaged on its way to the fair.

We look forward to seeing what the River Valley District has grown this summer!

HORTICULTURE QUESTIONS

Summer is one of our busiest times of the year in horticulture—and if you've ever found yourself wondering *What's eating my plant?*, *Why are my tomatoes cracking?*, or *What tree is this?*, you're not alone. K-State Extension is here to help answer questions using research-based information and practical recommendations for our area.

Common horticulture questions we help with include:

- Identifying trees, shrubs, flowers, and weeds
- Diagnosing plant problems and diseases
- Insect identification and management
- Lawn care questions
- Vegetable garden troubleshooting
- Houseplant care
- Landscape recommendations
- Watering and plant care guidance

One of the easiest ways to get help is to provide photos. Clear pictures of the entire plant, close-ups of symptoms, insects, or the surrounding area can often help us narrow down what is happening. If photos are not enough, we may recommend bringing a plant sample into the office or scheduling a visit to see the issue in-person.

No question is too small; whether you are managing acres of landscape or just trying to keep one tomato plant alive, we encourage you to reach out! For horticulture questions of any kind, contact Brooke Ohlde at 785-632-5335 or send an email to brooke6@ksu.edu.

CANNING SEASON IS UPON US!

Your local Extension Office is your one-stop shop for safe, tested recipes and current best practice. Please do not hesitate to reach out to them for the following:

- Safe, tested canning recipes
- Current water bath canning and pressure canning best practices
- Questions about any part of the water bath canning or pressure canning process
- Troubleshooting a recipe that perhaps did not turn out
- Food safety questions
- Canning equipment questions
- FREE pressure canner dial gauge testing for Presto, National, Maid of Honor & Magic Seal dial gauges
- Questions about sending a canned product or other food products to the K-State Food Lab for pH testing, or other tests
- Hard-copy publications on a variety of canning topics and other food and food-business related topics

- Current state guidelines for selling food to the end-consumer in Kansas (which foods do or do not require a license, etc.)

THE CONCORDIA FARMERS MARKET WILL OFFER TRIPLE MATCH DAYS FOR SNAP HOUSEHOLDS THIS SUMMER

The Concordia Farmers Market will be accepting SNAP, credit, debit and Double Up Food Bucks during the 2026 season. These card transactions can be processed June through September on Thursdays 4-6 pm at the Concordia City Park located at the corner of Washington St and 11th St.

The second Thursday of each month (June through September) will be Triple Match Days for SNAP households. For example, SNAP households who want to spend \$10 at the market will receive an additional \$10 in Double Up Food Bucks tokens to spend on fruits and veggies AND an additional \$10 in SNAP tokens to spend on any SNAP-eligible food. Triple Match Days for SNAP households will be July 9, August 13, and September 10.

The Concordia Farmers Market always welcomes new vendors, the vendor fee for 2026 will be \$30, that covers the entire season, there are smaller fees for those just wanting to try the market out a few times.

Questions can be directed to Kaitlin Moore, Nutrition, Food Safety & Health Agent at 785-243-8185 or kaitlinmoore@ksu.edu.

RESOURCES FOR JUDGING FOODS AND FOOD PRESERVATION EXHIBITS

For more on judging foods at fairs, see www.rrc.k-state.edu/judging/index.html

Summer is getting closer which means county fair season is here!

Would you like to judge foods or food preservation? Please check out our judging resources on K-State's Rapid Response Center (RCC) webpage. These resources can help you become a more educated judge which better helps exhibitors and ultimately improves exhibits. Judging foods for area county fairs is a great opportunity for you to teach, connect with youth and other judges, connect with area Extension Offices, and perhaps explore an unfamiliar community.

Questions can be directed to Kaitlin Moore, Nutrition, Food Safety & Health Agent at 785-243-8185 or kaitlinmoore@ksu.edu

FOOD BUSINESS START-UP SUMMIT

The Food Business Start-Up Summit is a hands-on, two-day working retreat designed to help Kansas food and farm entrepreneurs make real progress on their businesses. Rather than sitting through presentations, participants work alongside trusted advisors and peers to tackle challenges like licensing, financing, production, distribution, and growth. Bring your key partners (teams of up to three) and step away from daily operations to gain clarity, build confidence, and leave with a practical action plan tailored to your business.

The last summit for 2026 will be August 4–5 in Lawrence. Each event welcomes up to 25 businesses and offers expert guidance, peer learning, and dedicated time to focus. There is no cost to apply; selected teams register for \$300.

Expect two highly interactive days that blend structured guidance, expert “speed-consultations,” and dedicated working time on your business. Registration includes most meals (with one evening designated as dinner on your own). The venue provides coffee and Wi-Fi. Bring your laptop and charger, notes or materials (financials, packaging, drafts, or product samples if relevant), and come dressed comfortably for two focused days — your favorite coffee mug optional but encouraged.

Apply here: <https://extension.k-state.edu/kansaslocalfoods/startup-summit/>

If you need help finding the application or would like to be connected with a member of the K-State Extension Community Food Systems team, you are welcome to reach out to our Nutrition, Food Safety & Health Agent, Kaitlin Moore, at 785-243-8185 or kaitlinmoore@ksu.edu.

CLAY CENTER LIBRARY PROGRAMS

The River Valley Extension District is continuing to host monthly programs at the Clay Center Carnegie Library, 706 6th St. Clay Center, KS 67432.

In August, join Adult Development and Aging Agent, Jordan Schuette to learn about the Building Foundations of Caregiving from the Alzheimer's Association. This program will focus on the role of the caregiver, the changes they may experience, building a support team, and managing stress.

The program will be held on Monday, August 17 at 2:00 pm at the Clay Center Carnegie Library in the basement meeting room.

If you are interested in this free program, please RSVP to the River Valley District – Clay Center Office at 785-632-5335. If you have any questions please give Jordan Schuette a call at 785-325-2121 or email at jschuette@ksu.edu

STAY STRONG, STAY HEALTHY LEVEL 1 IN WASHINGTON

Strength training is no longer just for bodybuilders. **Stay Strong, Stay Healthy** is an eight-week, evidence-based strength training program designed for older adults who want to improve their quality of life and stay active. Join us for a weekly, Stay Strong, Stay Healthy Class in Washington at the Washington Christian Church at 16 C Street. Classes will be held twice a week on Tuesdays and Thursdays for 60 minutes, from 9:00 – 10:00 am. The first week of classes begins Tuesday, August 4th and run until Thursday, September 24th. There will be a total of 16 classes. Please prepare for the first class to be closer to 90 minutes long to accommodate a brief orientation and fitness assessment.

Some benefits of strength training include an increase in muscle strength, improving balance, enhances flexibility, strengthens bones, relieves arthritis, helps control weight, lifts depression, reduces stress, and reduces risk for heart disease. Throughout the program, you will increase your strength and improve your balance. After the eight weeks are over, you can continue the strength training program in the comfort of your home or with a group. Weights will be available on-site, and a trained instructor will help you learn and do these exercises safely.

The cost of the program is \$20. Water and snacks will be provided at each class. The exercises are easy to learn, safe, and effective. No need to wear special clothes—just comfortable, loose-fitting pants and shirt, along with sturdy, closed-toe walking shoes. Stay Strong, Stay Healthy classes include warm-up exercises, eight strengthening exercises, with or without hand and ankle weights, and cool-down stretches. This class will be limited to 15 participants so please register by calling 785-325-2121 or emailing jschuette@ksu.edu.

WITS WORKOUT

Many factors contribute to brain health throughout life. Two of these factors include intellectual challenge and social connectedness. WITS Workout provides a purposeful opportunity to engage intellectually and socially. The WITS Workout was created by Illinois Extension and consists of 24 different themed programs.

Join Jordan Schuette, Adult Development and Aging Agent, for the WITs Workout Program, “Take a Test Drive” at the Washington Public Library on Thursday, August 20th. This session’s activities will utilize the word, “car” or the letters “c, a, r.” It will concentrate on the importance of focus and tips to help pay better attention. This program is free to attend, however we ask that you RSVP to RVED-Washington Office at 785- 325-2121.

“Take a Test Drive”

Thursday, August 20th

11:00 am

Washington Public Library

116 E 2nd St., Washington, KS 66968

MID-YEAR FINANCIAL CHECK

As we move into the second half of 2026, it’s a perfect time to pause and review your household finances. Whether you started the year with a formal budget or simply intended to “spend less,” a mid-year check-in can help you stay on track and adjust to changing conditions.

If you have a budget, begin by comparing your planned budget to actual spending so far. Look at key categories such as groceries, utilities, fuel, and other household expenses. Are there areas where costs are higher than expected? Identifying these trends early can help you make small corrections before they grow into larger issues.

The second half of the year often brings different financial pressures. Back-to-school expenses and holiday spending can all impact your budget. Build these anticipated expenses into your updated plan, so you’re not caught off guard.

If your income varies due to overtime, seasonal schedules, or other changes, now is the time to reassess. Make sure your budget reflects a realistic picture of what you expect to bring in during the remainder of the year.

A good budget is not rigid and flexes to reflect your priorities. Decide what matters most to your household, whether that’s reducing debt, building savings, or planning for future expenses. If necessary, trim spending in less essential areas to support those goals.

Think about what you want to accomplish by December. Do you want to reduce a credit card balance, increase your emergency fund, or prepare for upcoming bills? Break those goals into manageable monthly steps for July through December.

Budgeting doesn’t require drastic changes. Even small adjustments—like tracking expenses more closely, reducing impulse purchases, or setting aside a fixed amount each month—can make a meaningful difference over time.

A mid-year budget review is an opportunity, not a chore. By making thoughtful adjustments now, you can finish 2026 on a stronger financial footing and set yourself up for success in 2027.

If you need assistance or have questions on creating a budget, contact Monica Thayer, Family Resource Management Extension Agent, at 785-527-5084 or mthayer@ksu.edu to schedule a free, private meeting.

STEPS TO REDUCING DEBT AND GAINING FINANCIAL CONTROL

Managing debt can feel overwhelming, but with a clear plan and consistent effort, it is possible to regain control of your finances. Whether your goal is to reduce stress, improve your credit, or free up money for future goals, taking steps now can make a meaningful difference.

Start by listing all your debts, including credit cards, student loans, medical bills, and other balances. Note the interest rates, minimum payments, and total amounts owed. Seeing the full picture may feel daunting, but it is an important first step toward creating a plan.

Choose a repayment strategy. The two common approaches to paying down debt are listed below. Choose the method that best fits your goals and keeps you motivated.

- **Snowball method:** Focus on paying off the smallest balance first while making minimum payments on others. This can build motivation as debts are eliminated one by one.
- **Avalanche method:** Pay off debts with the highest interest rates first, which can save money over time.

A budget is a key tool for debt reduction. Track your income and expenses to identify where your money is going. Look for opportunities to cut back on non-essential spending and redirect those funds toward debt payments. Even small changes can add up over time.

As you work to pay down existing balances, try to avoid taking on additional debt. This may mean limiting credit card use or delaying certain purchases. Staying focused on reduction helps prevent setbacks.

If possible, pay more than the minimum amount due each month. Extra payments, even small ones, can reduce the total interest paid and shorten the time it takes to become debt-free. Consider using tax refunds, bonuses, or other unexpected income to make additional payments.

Reducing debt doesn't happen overnight, but steady, intentional steps can lead to lasting financial improvement. With a clear plan and consistent effort, you can move closer to financial stability and peace of mind.

If you need assistance or have questions on reducing debt, contact Monica Thayer, Family Resource Management Extension Agent, at 785-527-5084 or mthayer@ksu.edu to schedule a free, private meeting.

SERVICES OFFERED BY RVED

Chemical Weed Control Books
Deterra bags— for destroying unused medications
Farm & Household Account Record Books
Neutroleum Alpha –for odor control
Pesticide Certification Testing
Probes to borrow for soil and hay testing
Soil, Feed, Water, and Radon Testing

RIVER VALLEY DISTRICT OFFICES

WILL BE CLOSED ON

FRIDAY, JULY 3, 2026

IN HONOR OF INDEPENDENCE DAY



River Valley District Fair Dates

Cloud County	July 14-July 18
Washington County	July 14-July 18
Clay County	July 21-July 25
Republic/NCK Free Fair	July 27-Aug. 1

Kansas State Fair-Hutchinson

September 11-September 20

JULY GARDEN TO DO LIST

July is often a rewarding month for gardeners. Flowers are blooming, vegetables are producing, and the garden is at its peak. However, the heat, rapid plant growth, and increased pest activity mean there are still important tasks to keep your landscape and vegetable garden looking their best. Here are five jobs to put on your July gardening checklist.

1. Deadhead Annuals and Perennials

Many flowering plants benefit from regular deadheading, or removing spent blooms. This simple task encourages plants to redirect their energy from seed production into producing more flowers.

Annuals such as petunias, zinnias, and marigolds will continue blooming longer when faded flowers are removed. Many perennials, including coneflowers, salvia, and coreopsis, also respond well to deadheading. While you're working, remove any yellowing or diseased foliage to improve air circulation and overall plant appearance.

2. Monitor for Pests and Diseases

July's warm temperatures create ideal conditions for many garden pests and diseases. Take a few minutes each week to inspect plants closely, paying special attention to the undersides of leaves.

Watch for common problems such as aphids, spider mites, squash bugs, and tomato hornworms. Early detection makes management much easier. Also keep an eye out for signs of disease, including leaf spots or wilting. Removing affected plant material promptly can help prevent problems from spreading.

3. Fertilize Container Plants

Container gardens work hard during the summer months. Frequent watering washes nutrients out of potting mixes, leaving plants hungry and less productive.

Flowering annuals in containers and hanging baskets often benefit from a water-soluble fertilizer every one to two weeks; just be sure to follow the label directions. Slow-release fertilizers can also be utilized according to product recommendations. Well-fed container plants will continue producing vibrant blooms and healthy growth through the hottest part of summer.

4. Harvest Regularly

Don't let vegetables stay in the garden too long. Frequent harvesting encourages many crops to continue producing throughout the season.

Pick beans, cucumbers, zucchini, and other vegetables while they are young and tender. Harvesting tomatoes as they ripen reduces the risk of cracking and pest damage. Regular picking also improves the quality of produce and prevents oversized vegetables from slowing future production.

For gardeners planning to enter county fair exhibits, consistent harvesting helps identify plants that are producing high-quality specimens worth saving for competition.

5. Start Planning Your Fall Vegetable Garden

It may feel early to think about fall gardening, but July is the perfect time to begin. Many cool-season crops can be planted in late summer for a productive autumn harvest.

Review available garden space as spring crops finish, and begin gathering seed for vegetables such as lettuce, spinach, kale, radishes, beets, carrots, and turnips. Planning now allows you to take advantage of the excellent growing conditions that arrive as temperatures cool down later in the season.

A Little Work Now Pays Off Later

A few minutes of garden maintenance each week can make a big difference during the heat of summer. By deadheading flowers, scouting for pests, fertilizing containers, harvesting regularly, and preparing for fall planting, you'll keep your garden healthy, productive, and attractive well into the end of summer.

ALL ABOUT HUMMINGBIRDS

TUESDAY, AUGUST 4, 2026

3:30 PM

Washington
Public Library
116 E 2nd Street

Washington, KS 66968



6:30 PM

Clay County 4-H
Conference Center
213 S 12th Street

Clay Center, KS 67432



**Retired Extension Agent, Chuck Otte,
will be discussing:**

- Hummingbird feeding preferences
- Bird feeder maintenance
- Landscape plants that attract hummingbirds
- And so much more!



**Call the Extension Office in Clay Center: 785-632-5335 or
Washington: 785-325-2121 to register for this program.**

**KANSAS STATE
UNIVERSITY**

Extension
River Valley District

This institution is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all programs, services, and activities. Program information may be available in languages other than English. Language access requests and reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities, including alternative means of communication (e.g., Braille, large print, and American Sign Language), may be requested by contacting the event contact (Brooke Ohlde) four weeks prior to the start of the event (July 7) at 785-632-5335 or brooke6@ksu.edu. Requests received after this date will be honored when it is feasible to do so. Language access services, such as interpretation or translation of vital information, will be provided free of charge to limited English proficient individuals upon request.

Kansas State University is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

River Valley Extension DistrictWashington Office
214 C. Street, Courthouse
Washington, KS 66968-1928**NON-PROFIT
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
WASHINGTON, KS
PERMIT NO. 3****Address Service Requested****RIVER VALLEY DISTRICT
“2026 UP-COMING MEETINGS & EVENTS”**

DATE	TIME	PROGRAM	LOCATION
July 1	12-1pm	Garden Hour: “Addressing Food Insecurity Through Extension”	*See the link below
July 3		Independence Day-All River Valley District Extension Offices Closed	
July 14-19		Cloud County Fair	Concordia- Fairgrounds
July 14-19		Washington County Fair	Washington- Fairgrounds
July 21-26		Clay County Fair	Clay Center- Fairgrounds
July 27-Aug 1		NCK Free Fair	Belleville- Fairgrounds
Aug. 4	3:30pm	All About Hummingbirds	Washington-Library 116 E. 2nd
Aug. 4	6:30pm	All About Hummingbirds	Clay Center-4-H Conf. Center, Fairgrounds
Aug. 5	12-1pm	Garden Hour: “Local Food Gardening Projects in Kansas”	*See the link below
Sept. 2	12-1pm	Garden Hour: “Divide & Transplant Like A Pro”	*See the link below
Sept. 29	6pm	Tree Planting & Care	Clyde-TBD
Oct. 7	12-1pm	Garden Hour- “Groundcovers For Kansas”	*See the link below

*Garden Hour link: <https://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/consumer-horticulture/garden-hour/>