

River Valley District

K-STATE RESEARCH AND EXTENSION NEWS

rivervalley.ksu.edu

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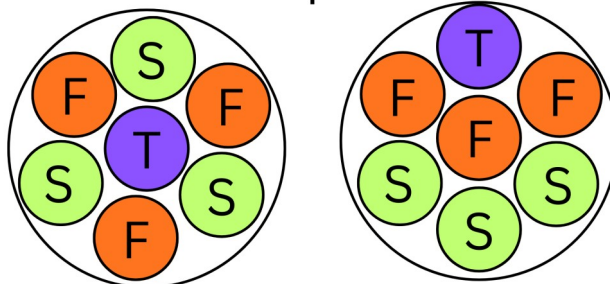
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CONTAINER GARDENING FOR ANNUALS

April showers bring May flowers just in time for plant shopping! Container gardening is a great option for both seasoned and first-time gardeners. The key is knowing the right plants for the right place, the water requirements of the plants you choose, and a few simple design tricks to make your planters stand out. Here are some guidelines to help you achieve your goals in the container garden this year:

- **Lighting** – All plants need the correct lighting to bloom and thrive. Before you even head to the store, determine how much sunlight your container will be getting during the day. Be sure to check the labels before you buy. A full-sun plant will not bloom as it should in the shade, and a full-shade plant is likely to get scorched in too much sun.
- **Watering** – Do you enjoy watering a few times a day? Or do you need something that can survive on one drink per day at the most? These are important questions to ask yourself. Also avoid planting high and low-water plants in the same pot—you’ll have a difficult time keeping both types of plants adequately watered in the same container.
- **Spacing** – Some gardeners prefer to cover every inch of soil when they plant in containers. This makes the pot look fuller and gives instant gratification, but will require heavier watering as the roots continue to grow. Another method is to leave more space between plants. This requires a little more patience up front, but is a better option for those who don’t want to water as frequently. Giving your plants breathing room is also good for disease prevention; excess moisture on the leaves for prolonged periods can lead to issues, especially in the spring.
- **Design** – “Thriller, Filler, Spiller” is a great way to remember what types of plants to aim for in your container design. Start with a thriller, a plant that stands out from the rest. Think of something tall or unique in appearance. Spillers are plants that spill out of the pot and create a cascading effect, such as vines or ivy. Fillers are plants that are a little shorter in height, and fill the space between thrillers and spillers. Below are a few examples of design layouts using this method.

T = Thriller
F = Filler
S = Spiller



Continued on next page

- **Make it Your Own** – This is the most important thing to consider! Choose colors and textures that bring you joy, and don't be afraid of trial and error. Even the most experienced gardeners get stumped from time to time. The beauty of gardening is that each of us can tailor it to our own personal style and preferences.

For more information on container gardening, contact Brooke Ohlde at 785-632-5335 or brooke6@ksu.edu.

HOUSEPLANT TRANSITIONING

As spring arrives, many gardeners are eager to give houseplants a “vacation” outdoors. Increased light, fresh air, and natural rainfall can benefit many indoor plants—but timing and preparation are critical to avoid stress or damage.

Most houseplants are native to tropical regions and can be damaged by cool temperatures. Avoid moving them outdoors until nighttime temperatures are consistently around 45°F or higher. Even then, be prepared to bring plants back indoors if a late cold snap is forecast. Spring weather can change quickly in Kansas!

Moving houseplants directly from a bright window to outdoor sun can cause sunscald, leaf drop, or wilting. Indoor light levels are much lower than natural sunlight, even near a south-facing window.

Start plants outdoors in a highly shaded, protected location such as a covered porch or patio. After several days, plants can gradually be moved to brighter shade or filtered sunlight. Be sure to avoid placing houseplants in direct sunlight unless you are certain it is a sun-loving plant.

Outdoor conditions are much harsher than indoors. Wind can dry out the soil quickly and can damage large or tender leaves. Place plants near walls, fences, or other windbreaks to prevent this from happening.

While many houseplants benefit from outdoor time, some prefer stable indoor conditions. Plants like African violets, orchids, and prayer plants are just a few species that may struggle outdoors or need very specific placement in order to thrive.

The biggest key to success is flexibility. Early in the season, moving plants outside during the day and back in at night is perfectly normal. If severe storms or cooler temperatures are predicted, don't hesitate to temporarily bring plants back indoors.

For more information on houseplant care, reach out to Brooke Ohlde at 785-632-5335 or brooke6@ksu.edu.

MAY IN THE VEGETABLE GARDEN

May is a busy time for Kansas gardeners. With warmer temperatures and longer days, now is the time to stay on top of key tasks that support a productive summer garden.

Succession Planting for Continuous Harvest

To extend your harvest, consider succession planting. Crops like green beans and sweet corn can be planted every 1–2 weeks for a steady supply throughout the summer. This strategy helps avoid having all your produce mature at once.

Water Thoroughly

Kansas temperatures and rainfall can be unpredictable. Aim to water deeply rather than quick, shallow watering, and do so in the morning when possible; early-morning watering reduces evaporation and helps prevent disease.

Mulching Matters

Applying mulch around your plants helps conserve soil moisture, regulate temperature, and suppress weeds. Mulches like straw, grass clippings, or shredded leaves are excellent choices, as they will break down over time, enriching the soil.

Watch for Pests and Diseases

As temperatures warm up, insect activity increases. Keep an eye out for common pests like cutworms, aphids, and squash bugs. Regular scouting allows for early intervention. Consider integrated pest management (IPM) strategies when possible, but reach out to your local extension office for information on pesticide recommendations when needed.

Weed Control Early and Often

Weeds compete with vegetables for water, nutrients, and sunlight. Controlling them early—while they're small—makes a big difference. Hand weeding, hoeing, and mulching are effective methods to keep weeds in check. Weeds can also be a habitat for insects, so get them cleaned out as quickly as possible.

Support and Training

Install cages, stakes, or trellises for crops like tomatoes, cucumbers, and peppers at planting time. Providing support early prevents damage to roots later on, and it keeps plants healthy and productive.

Stay Weather-Aware

Although May is generally frost-free, late cold snaps can still occur in parts of Kansas. Keep row covers or frost cloth handy to protect young plants if temperatures unexpectedly drop.

With thoughtful planting and consistent care, your May efforts will pay off in a productive and rewarding way. Stay attentive, enjoy the process, and don't hesitate to reach out to your local extension office for advice. Happy gardening!

RIVER VALLEY DISTRICT OFFICES

WILL BE CLOSED ON

MONDAY, MAY 25TH

IN HONOR OF MEMORIAL DAY

LAWN MOWING HEIGHT

As we fire up our lawn mowers for spring, many people consider lowering their mowing height. While this can benefit the lawn, it can also create problems. A slightly lower mowing height can speed spring green-up by removing old, dead grass and allowing the soil to warm up more quickly. Regularly cutting the lawn too short, however, can stress the turfgrass, weaken root systems, and encourage weed growth. Understanding when and how much to lower your mowing height is key to setting your lawn up for a healthy growing season.

For cool season lawns, root depth and mowing height go hand-in-hand. The higher the mowing height, the deeper the root system. Taller mowing heights also shade out weeds and create more competition against weed growth. The recommended mowing heights for different types of turfgrass are listed in the chart below.

Type of Turfgrass	Recommended Range Of Mowing Heights
Tall Fescue	2½ – 4 inches
Kentucky Bluegrass	2½ – 3½ inches
Perennial Ryegrass	2 – 3½ inches
Bermudagrass	1 – 2½ inches
Zoysiagrass	1 – 2½ inches
Buffalograss	3 – 4+ inches

SHRUBS IN KANSAS

Shrubs can be an excellent addition to the landscape, but it's not easy knowing when and how to maintain them. Kansas shrubs perform best when they are well-matched to our climate and cared for correctly.

- **Choose adapted shrubs.** Kansas weather extremes and wind make plant selection critical. K-State Extension resources such as **Deciduous Shrubs for Kansas** and **Evergreen Shrubs for Kansas**, along with the **Kansas Roots** plant selection website, are great resources that highlight shrubs proven to perform well across the state.

Deciduous Shrubs for Kansas: https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/deciduous-shrubs-for-kansas_MF3116.pdf

Evergreen Shrubs for Kansas: https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/evergreen-shrubs-for-kansas_MF3117.pdf

Kansas Roots: <https://www.kansasroots.org/>

- **Water wisely.** Newly planted shrubs need deep, thorough watering during the first year to establish strong roots. Established shrubs also benefit from deep watering during dry periods. Mulching is a great way to help conserve soil moisture and reduce plant stress.

Watering Newly Planted and Young Trees and Shrubs: https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/watering-newly-planted-and-young-trees-and-shrubs_MF2800.pdf

Watering Established Trees and Shrubs: https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/watering-established-trees-and-shrubs_MF2801.pdf

- **Prune at the right time.** Pruning timing and methods can make all the difference. These resources are excellent for learning when and how to maintain your plants.

How to Prune Shrubs: https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/pruning-shrubs_MF2998.pdf

Timing of Pruning: <https://www.johnson.k-state.edu/programs/lawn-garden/agent-articles-fact-sheets-and-more/agent-articles/trees-shrubs/Guide%20to%20Successful%20Shrub%20Pruning-REVISED.pdf>

If you would like copies of any of these resources, please reach out to your local extension office. You can also contact Brooke Ohlde for more input on selecting plants and caring for your landscape. Brooke can be reached at the Clay Center office at 785-632-5335 or via email at brooke6@ksu.edu.

CONCORDIA FARMERS MARKET TO OFFER DOUBLE UP FOOD BUCKS PROGRAM

NEW! In 2026, the Concordia Farmers Market will participate in the Double Up Food Bucks (DUFB) program. This program matches SNAP dollars, up to \$25/market day, for SNAP households to spend on local fruits and veggies.

Customers, vendors, and the local economy will benefit from this program, as it helps individuals and families afford healthy food, increases sales for vendors, and keeps food dollars local.

The program has been shown to increase foot traffic at the Farmers Market, which not only increases income for the vendors selling fruits and vegetables, but it can also increase the income for the vendors selling meats, baked goods, and other food products, as SNAP customers will spend their DUFB tokens on fruits and vegetables and their SNAP tokens on these other food items.

Offering incentive programs, such as the DUFB program at the market, will increase community awareness and buy-in of the market, especially with social service agencies and community organizations.

An article posted on the Center for Rural Affairs website titled "How Do SNAP and Double Up Food Bucks Benefit Our Communities?" said that bringing these programs to your market can ultimately promote the growth of small-to medium-sized farms. The article went on to say that of the produce vendors who participated in the DUFB program, 85% increased their revenue.

Accepting SNAP and DUFB at a farmers' market can contribute to the overall health of our communities and create opportunities for local food producers to reach a larger customer base. We hope you'll come see us at the Concordia Farmers Market this summer. Please do not hesitate to stop by the K-State veggie canopy to say hello and ask about how these programs work. We will be accepting credit/debit/SNAP June through September on Thursdays from 4:00 to 6:00 pm at the Concordia City Park, located at the corner of 11th Street and Washington Street.

The Concordia Farmers Market always welcomes new vendors. The vendor fee for 2026 will be \$30 for the season. If you are interested in setting up a booth or have questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to Kaitlin at 785-243-8185.

Questions about this article, or the Double Up Food Bucks program, or accepting SNAP at a Farmers Market can be directed to Kaitlin Moore, K-State Extension Agent, at 785-243-8185.

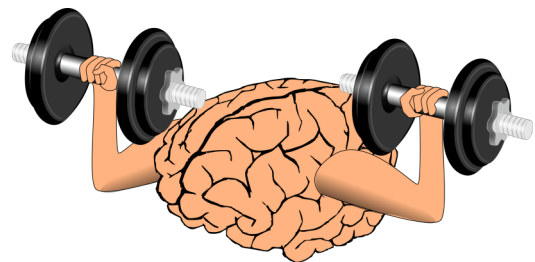
ALZHEIMER'S AND BRAIN AWARENESS MONTH

June is Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness Month. Alzheimer's is a progressive brain disease which over time destroys one's thinking abilities, memories, and ability to carry out simple tasks. Currently, around seven million Americans are living with Alzheimer's disease with this number projected to rise to 16 million by the year 2050.

Researchers believe early detection of Alzheimer's disease will be important to understand how to prevent, slow, and eventually stop it in the future. To detect Alzheimer's early it is important to understand the 10 warning signs of the disease. These have been defined by the Alzheimer's Association as memory loss that disrupts daily life, challenges in planning or solving problems, confusion with place or time, difficulty finishing familiar tasks (at home, work, or leisure), difficulty understanding visual images and spatial relationships, changes in mood and personality, withdrawal from social activities or work, new problems with words in writing or speaking, misplacing things and losing ability to retrace steps and poor or decreased judgement.

Alzheimer's is irreversible and it cannot be prevented, slowed, or cured. However, steps can be taken to live an overall brain-healthy lifestyle. Engaging in a brain-healthy lifestyle can improve your well-being, overall health, and it may reduce the risk of cognitive decline as you age. Some of these steps include engaging in regular exercise (at least 150 minutes per week), stop smoking, wear a helmet to protect your head, eat a healthy diet (emphasis on fruits, vegetables, and whole grains), try to maintain a healthy weight and control your blood pressure, challenge your brain by learning something new, play games or cards, and stay social with family, friends, and your community. These habits are best implemented early and continued throughout your lifetime, but it is never too late to adopt healthy lifestyle practices.

You can learn more about Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness Month by visiting the Alzheimer's Association website at <https://www.alz.org/>. If you have questions about Alzheimer's resources you can contact Jordan Schuette, Adult Development and Aging Agent at 785-325-2121.



STAYING COOL THIS SUMMER

Summer is right around the corner in the River Valley Extension District. It is important during the hotter summer months, specifically for older adults, to know how to keep cool and hydrated.

There are a few different ways to make sure you stay cool this summer. Stay in air-conditioned homes or buildings as much as you can. When it is very hot, do not rely only on fans to keep you cool. Try to avoid using your oven and stove as often to cook, as this will warm up your house. If you need a way to cool down, try taking a cool shower or bath.

Other ways to stay cool are associated with your activity level and clothing. Try to get plenty of rest and avoid rigorous activities. During these hot months try to wear lighter colors or clothes which are looser fitting and light weight.

Staying hydrated is extremely important during the summer months. In order to stay hydrated you should drink water more regularly. Do not wait to drink water until you feel thirsty.

It can also be helpful to check on your friends and neighbors and have them check on you. As always stay updated on temperatures and weather in your area. For more information on this topic check out the following link <https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/older-adults-heat.html>. Source: CDC.gov

JUNE IS ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS MONTH

No one is immune to abuse, and this includes older adults. Elder abuse is defined as an intentional act or failure to act that causes or is likely to cause harm to an adult. It can occur anytime, anywhere, and to anyone. The six most common types of elder abuse are physical, emotional/psychological, sexual, neglect, abandonment, and financial/exploitation.

In Kansas, the most common form of elder abuse is financial abuse. The most common way this abuse is executed is through scams. These financial scams target older adults and can be financially devastating to those with high income or low income. It can be difficult to determine if these scams are legitimate or not because the scam artists are persuasive and work hard to gain your trust.

The top 10 most reported scams targeting older adults are:

1. Telemarketing, phone, charity, or imposter scams
2. Grandparent scams
3. Medicare or health insurance scams
4. Internet fraud
5. Funeral and cemetery scams

6. Sweepstakes, prizes, or lottery scams
7. Home repair or reverse mortgage scams
8. Investment schemes
9. Counterfeit prescription drug sales
10. Fraudulent anti-aging products

These are some steps you can take to prevent becoming a victim of a scam: use caller ID, screen calls or do not answer calls from people you do not know, do not answer a phone call if the caller ID shows your own phone number (this is called spoofing), delete suspicious emails, and hang up on pushy telemarketers or salespeople. Be wary of sharing your personal information and be sure to consult a trusted family member or friend if you feel uncomfortable.

All this information and more can be found in the K-State Research and Extension Handout, "Elder Abuse and Neglect: What You Should Know." Other topics in the hand-out include descriptions of the six most common types of elder abuse, IRS and Health Care Scams, Warning Signs of Abuse, who is at risk for abuse, who perpetrates abuse, how abuse can be prevented, managing the stress of caregiving, how to report suspected elder abuse, and more helpful resources.

SUNFLOWER SUMMER

Sunflower Summer is coming back in 2026! Sunflower Summer encourages Kansas families to visit a variety of participating museums, zoos, historical attractions, and nature centers by offering free admission. With the current cost of fuel, this may be just the time to consider more of a staycation this summer and explore Kansas!

More information regarding the 2026 Sunflower Summer season will be available soon, so make sure to keep an eye out on www.sunflowersummer.org.

GRADUATION AND FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Graduation season marks an exciting milestone. Whether finishing high school, college, or technical training, most likely the new opportunities are coming with increased financial responsibility. Launching financial independence doesn't require having everything figured out right away, but starting with a few key basics can set graduates on a strong path.

One of the first steps is understanding income and expenses. A realistic monthly spending plan helps new graduates manage rent, utilities, transportation, food, and fun without overspending. Tracking where money goes, even for a few

months, can build awareness and confidence. A budget, or a spending plan, is just a tool to help you avoid spending more than you earn.

Building an emergency savings fund is another important foundation. Even small, regular contributions can help cover unexpected expenses like car repairs, medical bills, or job transitions. While eventually it is recommended to have 3-6 months of expenses as an emergency fund, an emergency fund goal of \$500 to \$1,000 and continuing to grow savings over time is a great place to start.

Graduates should also take time to understand credit. Using a credit card wisely, meaning paying balances in full and on time, can help build a positive credit history. At the same time, it's important to be informed with debt, including student loans, auto loans, and credit cards. Knowing interest rates and repayment terms can prevent costly mistakes later. Speaking of graduates, do you know when your repayment period starts on your student loans?

Finally, graduates new to the workforce should review employee benefits when starting a job. Health insurance, retirement plans, and employer matches are valuable tools for long-term financial security. Contributing even small amounts to a retirement plan, while it may seem far away, especially to receive employer matches, can make a big difference over time.

Graduation is a season of change and possibility. By learning basic money skills and asking questions along the way, graduates can take meaningful steps toward financial independence and a secure future.

farmers and non-Deere mechanics from accessing software, tools, and manuals specific to the equipment, they were able to nearly guarantee that farmers only used Deere to perform repairs on their own property, even if they wanted to do the repairs themselves. Deere was also accused in the case of using this practice to charge extra-high prices for repairs and creating delays that furthered farmers' dependency on them.

The ruling states that farmers who paid Deere (or its authorized dealers) to fix "large agricultural equipment" – tractors, combines, etc.— between Jan. 10, 2018, and Apr. 7, 2026, may be eligible to receive part of the \$99 Million in settlement funds that John Deere has been required to pay out. To see if you may be eligible to receive some of these funds, visit the official website of the lawsuit settlement: www.DeereRepairSettlement.com. As of mid-April, the website is still under construction, so make sure you check back at the web address from time to time to see if updates have been made that will allow you to check your payment eligibility.

While it might be nice to consider the possibility of getting a payment from a legal settlement, it's also important to think about the broader impact that this ruling will have on the agricultural industry down the road. There is now a precedent for the justice system to err on the side of farmers when it comes to maintaining their own capital assets, and by opening the door for independent mechanics to repair John Deere equipment, we can reasonably anticipate a more competitive market for ag equipment servicing, to the benefit of farmers, mechanics, and the local community.

“RIGHT TO REPAIR” LAWSUIT ENDS WITH JOHN DEERE OWING FARMERS \$99 MILLION

This article has been adapted from Roger McEowen's April 2026 Ag Law & Taxation Blog article.

For several years, farmers using newer models of John Deere equipment have been required by the company to have their machinery repaired only by authorized John Deere dealerships. On April 7th, a federal court ruled that Deere's exclusive right to repair these tractors and implements was in violation of antitrust law, and that Deere must pay \$99 Million in damages to farmers affected by their policy for preventing them from lawfully getting their equipment repaired by non-Deere mechanics. Because of this ruling, John Deere can no longer force farmers to get their equipment fixed only by John Deere. The same goes for any other ag equipment company who tries to put similar requirements on their equipment sales.

The decision was based on the argument that Deere was engaging in "anticompetitive practices". By preventing

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

*Are you prepared for future care needs
for yourself or a loved one?*



LONG-TERM CARE PLANNING

Long-term care planning helps individuals and families make informed decisions about care options and costs before the need arises.

Monday, May 18th, 2026 at 3pm
Carnegie Library
706 6th Street, Clay Center, KS 67432

**Free to attend but please RSVP
to the Clay Center Extension Office
at 785-632-5335.**

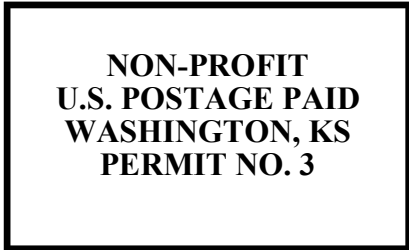
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This institution is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all programs, services, and activities. Program information may be available in languages other than English. Language access requests and reasonable accommodations for 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 (Monica Thayer) four weeks prior to the start of the event (April 20, 2026) at (785-527-5084 or mthayer@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.

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RIVER VALLEY DISTRICT
“2026 UP-COMING MEETINGS & EVENTS”

DATE	TIME	PROGRAM	LOCATION
May 6	12-1pm	Garden Hour: Natives v. Cultivars-Making Informed Choices for your landscape	*See the link below.
May 18	3pm	Long-Term Care Planning	Clay Center-Carnegie Library, 706 6th Street
May 25		Memorial Day-All River Valley District Extension Offices Closed	
June 3	12-1pm	Garden Hour: Maximizing Garden Success with Extension Resources	*See the link below.
July 1	12-1pm	Addressing Food Insecurity Through Extension	*See the link below.

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