

# Horticulture 2024 Newsletter

## No. 16 April 22, 2024

1712 Claflin, 2021 Throckmorton Plant Science Center  
Manhattan, KS 66506 (785) 532-6173

Video of the Week: [Best Plants for a Beginner's Landscape](#)

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Calling ALL Kansas Gardeners!

Share your experiences gardening in Kansas. Whether you are a beginner or life-long gardener you have a story to tell. Answer a few questions and be featured in our Garden Spotlight in an upcoming newsletter. Contact Cynthia at [cdom@ksu.edu](mailto:cdom@ksu.edu) if you'd like to find out more.

### Sedgwick County Spring Garden Fair

**2024 Spring Garden Fair**

**Blooms, Bees & Butterflies**

Saturday May 4th, 2024  
7 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Free, inside The Sedgwick County  
Extension Education Center  
7001 W. 21st Street N, Wichita, KS 67205

Interactive Booths:	Plant Sales	Guided Tours:
See Like An Insect	Make & Take	8am: Demo Garden
Insect Zoo	Youth Activities	9am: Compost
Water-Saving Gardening Techniques	Plant Giveaways	10am: Arboretum Trees
Plants For Pollinators	Food Sales	11am: Hosta & Shade Gardens
	Visit Area Garden Clubs	12pm: Roses

www.sedgwick.ksu.edu/events

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### 2024 Kansas Turf and Ornamentals Field Day

August 1, 2024, at Rocky Ford Turfgrass Research Center in Manhattan, KS.

<https://www.k-state.edu/turf/events/2024TurfFieldDayProgram.pdf>

## GARDEN CALENDAR



Take a look at what can be done in the garden right now.

[April Garden Calendar Fact Sheet](#)

## VEGETABLES

### Fertilizing Cole Crops



Environmental stress such as temperature fluctuations can cause cole crops including cauliflower and broccoli to bolt. “Bolting” refers to premature flowering and negatively affects the taste. Ensure cool season vegetables are receiving consistent moisture, especially with the heat and wind we’ve experienced lately. One-inch of water per week is typically enough for these crops. You can test the moisture of the soil by inserting your finger to a depth of one inch.

Continue fertilizing every two to three weeks until harvest. Fertilizer can be applied on the soil surface next to the rows of plants. This technique is called “side dressing”. Use a high nitrogen source of fertilizer such as blood meal. Lawn fertilizers could be used but cut the rate in half. Do NOT use lawn fertilizers that include weed killers or preventers.

## FRUIT

### Fertilizing Strawberries and Brambles



June-bearing strawberries should not be fertilized until renovation (after harvest) and again in late August or early September.

Everbearing and day-neutral strawberries bear fruit in spring and again in the fall. They benefit from an application of nitrogen-rich fertilizer this time of year.

Unless a soil test suggests otherwise, add a layer of compost or organic fertilizer such as blood meal next to the plant rows. A high nitrogen fertilizer such as 27-3-4 at a rate of 1 ½ tsp per hill can be used but if using a lawn fertilizer, ensure it does not contain weed killers or preventers. Irrigate immediately after adding the fertilizer.

Brambles can be fertilized now as well using the same method as above. For synthetic fertilizers apply ½ cup for every 10 row feet.

## FLOWERS

### Peony Blooms and Ants



I currently have two varieties of peonies growing in my landscape. One is fully leafed out and preparing to bloom, while the other is still small and buds are just starting to develop. I noticed ants crawling on the more developed buds which is common and no cause for concern.

Peonies produce nectar on the outside of buds which attracts ants looking for an early season food source. There is a myth that ants are necessary to get the buds to open. Blooms are not dependent upon ants, rather ants depend on the blooms for sustenance.

Ants are not problematic for the blooms and insecticide is absolutely NOT warranted. In fact, some sources state ants help deter pests that would cause harm to the blooms. As the blooms reach their peak, ants typically move to their next food source.



Gardeners who intend to harvest peony flowers for the home, should cut before the bloom is fully opened, preferably early in the morning. Buds will continue to open once placed in a vase of water. If ants are present when harvesting, hold the stem, upside-down, close to the bloom and gently shake to dislodge ants. The blooms can also be lightly washed to remove ants.

## PESTS

### Asparagus Beetles

Watch for asparagus beetles now to gain control before the problem grows.

*Description:* Adult beetles are ¼ inch long with cream colored markings over the metallic blue-black and red body.



*Life Cycle:* Adult beetles emerge from the soil in early spring and travel to new shoots where they feed and mate. Females secure up to 30 eggs, on end, to the tips of asparagus spears. Eggs are dark-brown in color and positioned in rows. Larvae hatch in about one week and are 1/3 inch long. The larvae resemble slugs and are green to gray in color with black heads and legs. After feeding for a couple of weeks, larvae burrow into the soil and pupate. Within two weeks, adult beetles emerge and begin feeding. Beetles overwinter in plant debris. There are two generations of asparagus beetles each year.

**Damage:** Asparagus beetles feed on spears of asparagus as well as ferns. The black stain left behind the feeding larvae does not make asparagus inedible, but unsightly and perhaps undesirable. Leaves and tender buds near the growing tip are often damaged through feeding.

**Control:** Always begin with prevention in mind. Clean up plant debris at the end of the growing season to remove the overwintering habitat. During the active season, monitor plants regularly, primarily in the afternoon. Remove beetles/larvae/eggs by hand and place in a bucket of soapy water.

Horticultural oil and insecticidal soaps can be used for those who prefer organic methods of control.

Carbaryl (Sevin) and permethrin are two synthetic control options, but note the wait time for harvest after application.

### Termites vs Ants

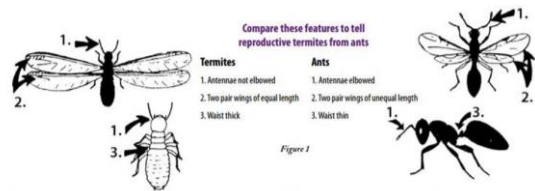
We have received some questions about recognizing the difference between termites and ants. Both may have wings, are able to swarm and are of a similar size. Here are some distinguishing characteristics to help identify each. If you suspect the presence of termites it is important to get professional guidance.

**Ants:**

- Thin waist
- Elbowed antennae
- Two pairs of wings of unequal length

**Termites:**

- Thick waist
- Curved antennae
- Two pairs of wings of equal length



Read more by visiting KSRE Entomology: [Termites vs. Ants](#)

## SCHOOL GARDEN

### Sweet Potatoes – Growing Slips in Classroom



Sweet potatoes are very heat tolerant and low maintenance making them a great crop for the summer garden. Keep in mind the harvest time for sweet potatoes is in September, so areas designated for this crop will not be available to plant until then.

Sweet potato slips (unrooted shoots) can be purchased from a garden center and planted directly into the garden in late May (or right before school gets out.) Slips will develop roots once planted.

Students can help grow slips for the school garden by placing a whole sweet potato in a bucket of sand. Keep the bucket in a warm location under lights. Shoots will begin to emerge from the sand and can be removed to plant in the garden. Another option is to suspend a sweet potato in a jar of water to promote shoot growth. Students can try both methods and make observations.

(KSRE Garden Guide – [Sweet Potato](#))

(KSRE School Garden Guide – [Sweet Potatoes](#))

### Organizing Summer Volunteers

Don't let all of your efforts to establish an outdoor learning lab go to waste during the summer! As the school year winds down here are some tips to get volunteers in order so the school garden will be ready when students return.

[KSRE Planning for Summer Break](#)



### Sustainable Gardening with Kids



“Sustainable” is an important gardening practice. Teaching children how to garden sustainably instills an appreciation for working *with* the environment. This will allow them to experience success growing plants while preserving a harmonious ecosystem. In a school setting, sustainability is even more important because educators are already busy. The school garden has to be low maintenance if it's going to contribute to the education and not just demand attention. Students can get involved with

each step towards sustainability.

One step towards sustainability in any garden space is choosing plants wisely. Understand the planting site before selecting plants. This includes the slope, soil type, water availability, foot traffic and environmental conditions such as sun/shade, wind exposure, etc. Choose plants that tolerate the available conditions.

Native plants are adapted to the natural growing conditions of the area and require minimal supplemental care once established. There are many low maintenance non-natives that can also provide benefits. Growing a diverse collection of plants reduces the risk of severe infestations of diseases and pests. Plant diversity also promotes diverse wildlife. Animals feed on berries, seeds and insects but also use plant materials to create shelter. A variety of woody shrubs, herbaceous perennials and ornamental grasses fulfills the needs of many types of wildlife.



Fortunately, many plants that benefit wildlife are also good choices for a waterwise garden. Drought tolerant plants such as black-eyed Susan, coneflower, coreopsis, sedum, yarrow and lavender will attract pollinators and require little maintenance after establishment.

Rain barrels and rain gauges are great educational tools for a sustainable landscape. Volunteers may be eager to get involved with building a rain barrel over the summer. During the school year, mount a rain gauge and let students track water collection. Use the data to create graphs and better understand water availability locally.

## QUESTION of the WEEK



### What's growing in my lawn?

*There are patches of this lighter colored, fast growing grassy weed growing in the middle of my tall fescue lawn. What is it and how do I get rid of it?*

We are hearing complaints of orchard grass popping up in otherwise uniform tall fescue lawns. This cool-season, bunch-type perennial grass grows more quickly and can easily be identified by the dull green, wide grass blades. It is often used as a forage grass and is sometimes included as a contaminant in low-quality grass seed mixes.



When selecting grass seed, choose certified seed free of orchard grass. Remove clumps from the lawn by hand or with a shovel. Maintain a healthy, dense lawn to prevent weeds from encroaching. Selective herbicides for orchard grass control are not available. Spot treatments with a non-selective could be used, but will kill the desirable turf as well if it comes in contact.

(KSRE Publication [Orchard Grass](#))

## COMING UP NEXT WEEK...

Don't miss the Hort Newsletter next week in which a fellow Kansas gardener shares their story in the Garden Spotlight.

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