K-STATEMeadowlarkResearch and ExtensionDistrictNews

Horticulture



Holton Office

114 W 5th St. Holton, KS 66436-1778 785-364-4125

Oskaloosa Office

P.O. Box 326 100 E Washington Oskaloosa, KS 66066-0326 785-863-2212

Seneca Office

1615 Branch St. Seneca, KS 66538-1504 785-336-2184

District Office Hours:

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Laura Phillips, Extension Agent

Grow Your Own Oak Trees

Oak trees are great additions to many landscapes. However, buying a tree can be expensive. Luckily, there is another option: starting a tree from seed. As we enter fall, it is prime time to collect acorns for your next oak tree. Thad Rhodes with the KS Forest Service shared the following tips on growing oak trees from acorns.

First, collect acorns as soon as the seed is mature. This is typically when the acorns drop from the tree. Other signs include browning of the acorn (turning from green) and

when the acorn slips easily from the cap.

Be selective as you collect seeds. Collect seeds from trees with good form, as they will be more likely to produce higher-quality trees. Consider the landscape location of seed trees and planting locations (e.g. pick hillside trees for planting on hillsides). Select the largest available acorns, as they will have more energy to initially feed the seedling.

Once you have your seeds, keep them from drying out. Try to collect freshly-dropped seeds if possible. Soak acorns in water for 2 days, changing water 1-2 times per day to rehydrate them. Before you start the germination process, test to see which seeds are viable. If you can, remove the cap of the acorn, then place it in water to see if it floats. Those that float are generally bad; those that sink are viable. If caps cannot be removed, collect extra acorns to allow for a certain percentage of "bad" seed.

Depending on the type of oak you are growing, you can plant them in the fall or wait to plant them in the spring. Oaks are divided into 2 groups: white oaks and red oaks. White oaks have rounded leaf tips, like the bur oak and chinkapin oak. White oaks germinate in the fall and can be planted right away. One exception is the bur oak, which can be held over to the spring.

Red oaks, on the other hand, have pointed leaf tips, like the northern red oak and black oak. Red oaks must be exposed to cold and damp conditions in order to "wake up." We call this stratification. This can be done by field planting in the fall and allowing mother nature to provide cold, snowy weather. Keep in mind that your seeds will be at the mercy of animal predation and at risk of drying out if it is a warm/dry winter.

You can also simulate stratification in the refrigerator and plant in the spring. To do this, put fully-hydrated seeds in gallon ziplock bags with dampened peat moss. Soak the peat moss in water and then squeeze out excess moisture. Then place the bag in the crisper drawer. Be sure to label bags with species name, collection date, and landscape setting (or other details that might be important for determining planting location). Monitor seeds in early spring and plant once the root begins emerging (or just before); the main item is that the root not be damaged during planting.

When you are ready to plant the acorns, dig a hole twice as deep as the seed's height. For a larger seed, you will need a deeper hole, and for a smaller seed, a shallower hole. At each planting location, plant three seeds – especially if you are planting in the fall or did not float test. After sprouting, seedlings can be thinned to a single plant. You can protect planting areas from animal damage by installing cages.

For more details, you can find the US Forest Service Woody Plant Seed Manual available on the US Forest Service website. Plants in this manual are listed by scientific name (e.g. Bur oak will be under "Q" for *Quercus macrocarpa*).

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service

Livestock and Natural Resources



Ross Mosteller, Extension Agent

Develop a Forage Utilization Plan

Grow grass, turn ruminants out to graze it, feed harvested forage when you can't graze and supplement as needed - simple enough, any cowboy can follow the equation, right? What happens when grass doesn't green up, hay isn't available and environmental conditions like drought hit? Now is the time to evaluate what forage resources are on hand to get through fall, winter and possibly into a later than normal spring green-up. Take a look at the article in this newsletter from David Hallauer— Crops and Soils Agent—discussing forage stand evaluation and planning to protect the forage resources in your operation.

Feed costs are typically the largest component of annual cow costs in cow-calf operations. Producers can minimize annual feed costs by managing for maximum grazing; with minimal use of hay and supplemental feed to overcome lack of forage quantity and/or quality. If conditions continue to stay dry, how will the cowherd be managed until the conditions become more favorable in another growing season? What forage is available to utilize now, later and in worse case scenarios? What are the nutrient requirements of the cow at various stages of production?

Now is a great time to contemplate how to stretch forage resources, utilize all available options and try not to break the bank or budget while doing it. This is especially true when discussing spring calving cows, in the second trimester of gestation, that no longer have calves at side. This is a great time of year to save on some feed cost with lower quality forage OR add condition now to prepare for next year, with better quality forage.

Often tradeoffs are possible in the efficient use of grazed forage compared to the use of more expensive harvested forages and purchased supplemental feeds. Forage fed as harvested hay costs 2.5 to 5 times more than grazed forage. Before quality declines into the winter months, utilization of stockpiled grass, crop residues, cover crops and other grazing options like alfalfa stands can all be good choices. Not only does this allow harvested forages to be utilized later, but can give some much-needed relief to pastures and range that have been grazed all summer, going into dormancy.

Grazing management must be planned and implemented according to the wide range of forage types as well as climate and soil conditions. In all cases, proper stocking rates are critical to achieve grazing management objectives and maximize efficiency. Economist have calculated that better grazing management and efficient, minimal hay use can reduce costs and add \$150-\$250/head or more to per cow profitability in 2024. It is time to start planning management of all forage resources to match nutritional demands, in addition to potential drought preparation.

Drought Risk Management: Pasture Rangeland Forage Insurance

If it seems like our region has been dry this fall, it is because we have been! Long range weather predictions show an extended period of warmer than normal and drier than normal conditions, which may mean a USDA - Risk Management Agency (RMA) tool might need strong consideration this fall. Pasture Rangeland Forage (PRF) insurance coverage is available on a calendar year basis with a signup deadline of December 1 through local crop insurance agents. Drought risk management planning requires a strategic approach and PRF insurance is no exception.

Insurance premiums and indemnities are based on the level of rainfall insured (70% - 90%) and the dollar value of coverage. A productive value per acre for perennial grazing and haying acres are assigned for each county. Producers can adjust this value up or down through a range from 60% to 150% selected at the time of purchase. The RMA website (<u>http://rma.usda.gov</u>) provides more information and a decision support tool (<u>https://prodwebnlb.rma.usda.gov/apps/prf</u>) to help producers explore different PRF insurance options. Historically it has provided significant financial compensation to producers to alleviate some of the negative impacts of drought. Three important points to consider with PRF insurance:

- PRF insurance must be signed up for by December 1 to lock in coverage for the next calendar year. It is difficult to
 predict production beforehand for any given year and once poor conditions materialize many of the best options
 to mitigate the problem become too expensive or impossible to implement. Using insurance to manage risk
 requires a proactive approach and consistent strategy.
- PRF insurance premiums are subsidized from 51% to 59%, depending on the level of rainfall coverage. Precipitation data is based on NOAA weather stations and premiums are based on past data. Therefore, PRF insurance use should pay out positive results to producers over the long haul but may vary considerably year to year.
- 3. Strategies for which specific months to insure vary by producer. Producers can put up to 60 percent of the dollar value of coverage in a single two-month interval. Other producers prefer to spread the coverage evenly throughout the year, increasing the chance at least some indemnity is paid.

Crops and Soils



David Hallauer, Extension Agent

Thinking Ahead to Next Season

Cool season grasses often tolerate our first cold snap, tolerating some pretty cold temperatures before they call it a year. Even so, much of their 'active' growth is coming to a close, and it's time to start looking ahead to next year. Unfortunately, the view is clouded yet again by fall drought (and other stress) conditions. The Kansas Mesonet Soil Moisture Page (<u>https://mesonet.k-state.edu/agriculture/soilmoist/</u>) provides a graphic reminder of just how dry soils have become across the state.

A perennial grass plant without adequate time for rejuvenation and recovery following harvest (haying or grazing) often requires longer to recover than normal.

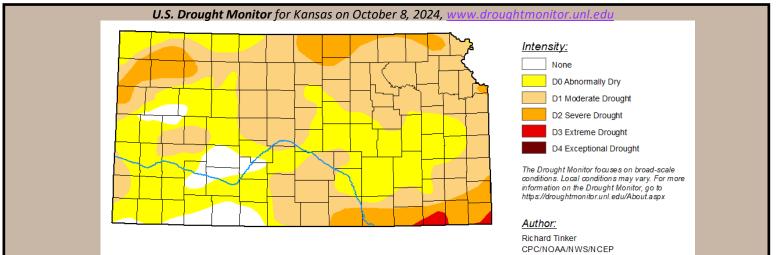
Plants store energy in various plant parts to aid in recovery post harvest. If stressed, the plant may compensate for its ability to capture sunlight for conversion to energy by reducing plant size. This means less top growth and reduced root mass. It's the plant's short-term solution to survive and what we often see during drought...or overgrazing...or even following fall armyworm feeding or other stressors.

Unfortunately, if stressors persist, the plant may go dormant or at the very least will continue to consume energy from plant reserves. As energy reserves decline, the ability of the plant to recover decreases – and maybe as importantly, increases the length of time needed for recovery. Bottom line: the end of season stressors – or combinations thereof – we've seen this year (and in previous years...) could cause stands to recover more slowly than we'd like when regrowth starts next year, and even beyond. In many cases, recovery is measured in years – not months.

What can you do? There aren't any easy or short-term solutions, but consider the following as you look ahead:

- Consider giving stands a 'rest'. District Livestock and Natural Resources Agent Ross Mosteller references the cost of
 forage fed as harvested hay versus grazed in a companion article. That may mean a 'rest period' isn't possible, but
 if you cannot, keep in the back of your mind the potential longer-term effects. Mosteller's article provides
 alternatives you would be wise to consider as you determine your next step.
- Hold fast to good fertility. Yield response to cool season grass fertilization is well documented. While response following stressors may be diminished, cutting fertility could be yet another added stressor. Soil testing is a good way to see if your current program is in line.
- Evaluate stands. Some stands have been stressed repeatedly and reseeding may be in order. In others, consider the 'thinned' stand an opportunity for interseeding legumes (interseed winter annuals with caution to avoid compromising the existing stand). Check stands for weeds and implement herbicide programs to account for increased weed pressure in thin stands. *Note: Not all grass plants are desirable ones. Invasive grasses have been on the increase, and thinning stands are an opportunity for them to gain a foothold.*
- Prepare for reduced forage supplies next season. Consider delayed grazing to help struggling plants get re-established. Stands will likely be more susceptible to heavy grazing pressure (or in the case of hay fields – management that adds stress to already struggling stands) and should be monitored closely. Having a 'backup' forage plan in place is a good idea anyway, but particularly during recovery, stands will need a little extra TLC.

While dry weather OR fall armyworm feeding OR overgrazing Or any number of other factors may have happened this year, in the case of many stressed stands, the stressors have been added over time. In short: this didn't happen overnight and it's unlikely we'll recover overnight. Start planning now knowing recovery is often a multi-year process.



Community Vitality/Economic Development



David Key, Extension Agent/Director

Mistakes New Non-Profits Make

Here is a summary of some of the common observations from nonprofit directors across the country when asked "What are the biggest mistakes you see new nonprofits making?"

- Losing focus on core mission—Too often new non-profits struggle to find their identity. Many wellintentioned non-profits struggle to stay afloat because they spread themselves too thin, attempting to serve too many people in too many ways. If they do something well, they should focus on that and stay in their lane and be the very best at what they do well.
- Creating unnecessary competition—Before seeking non-profit status or starting a new program, new nonprofits fail to do research about what others are already doing. This kind of thinking creates more competition for funding when work in a community should be collaborative in nature for more effectiveness and efficiency. A new non-profit will have a much stronger case for support if it can articulate not why it is better than another non-profit with a similar mission and work but how it is collaborating with those organizations and what gaps in services, programming or resources it provides.
- Lack of focus, fundraising and professionalism— Non-profit organizations are legal entities that deserve the same attention and effort as any profitable business. Non-profits are not social clubs, they have the potential to make significant positive impacts in the communities they serve. Another area of concern that has been observed is not developing strong fundraising processes early and recruiting board members who understand fundraising and who will support and be engaged in this endeavor.
- **Dysfunctional board management**—Having the same board over and over that's completely unaccountable, rigid and makes things personal. Dishonest, unethical board members, who sabotage the rest, are all 100% dependent on management when management consistently fails to do what they're supposed to do. This creates real problems.

- Weak leadership and self-centered fundraising—New non-profits often don't have the correct leadership, whether that be an executive director with no non-profit experience or a board that wasn't put together intentionally.
- Lack of succession planning—Qualified volunteers on your board, who possibly could move up to an officer position, need to make sure that burnout doesn't happen. They need to be looking and moving forward with fresh new blood and ideas. Being burnt out could make changes challenging.
- Weak accounting practices—Not investing in your accounting system enough and soon enough is a costly mistake.
- Staff accountability and volunteer undervaluation— Underpaying and undervaluing staff can be costly but so is not holding their employees accountable for meeting expectations. Too often, non-profits don't address poor performance from a business perspective. Non-profits also rely on volunteers to achieve their mission and undervaluing a volunteer can be detrimental to the success of the organization. Giving too much credit to the dollars saved by using volunteers can be hurtful to an employee especially if the numbers shared are more than the pay rate for the paid staff. Cultivating, nurturing and supporting volunteers is critical to the mission of the organization but so are the employees.
- Closed culture that stifles innovation—Resisting change or trying new ideas discourages new board and employee innovation and non-profit growth. Instead of defaulting to "no", default to let's see how we can try this!



Family and Community Wellness



Teresa Hatfield, Extension Agent

How Artificial Sweeteners Can Be a Safe Alternative to Sugar

Many Americans have been diagnosed with diabetes, so much so that it is a public health crisis. Over 38 million people have diabetes, and 97 million people aged 18 years or older have prediabetes. With that in mind, many people turn to sugar substitutes to solve their sweet tooth cravings. Sugar substitutes can be found in various foods, but people may wonder if they are safe.

Sugar substitutes can be categorized into natural and artificial sweeteners. Artificial sweeteners include saccharin, aspartame, and sucralose. Natural sweeteners like stevia and monk fruit are derived from natural sources.

Karen Blakeslee, a Kansas State University food scientist, notes that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration lists aspartame as a possible human carcinogen. However, the product has not been linked to cancer. Blakslee also notes that the level of aspartame that must be consumed to reach even the acceptable daily intake is very high.

According to the American Diabetes Association, the American Heart Association, and the National Cancer Institute, no significant evidence exists that suggests sugar substitutes cause cancer or other serious health problems. Current research also suggests that they are safe. However, consult with your healthcare provider before making any significant dietary changes, especially if you have chronic health conditions.

For people who are diagnosed with diabetes, artificial sweeteners can be a huge benefit to maintaining healthy blood sugar control. These sugar substitutes don't spike blood glucose levels. Thus, they are a safer option for managing blood sugar levels. For those looking to manage their weight, artificial sweeteners can be a good option for weight loss. When you replace sugar with a sugar substitute, you can reduce your calories.

While artificial sweeteners offer numerous benefits, it's crucial to remember the principle of moderation. These substitutes can be a helpful tool in reducing calorie intake and managing diabetes, but using them in excess can negate their benefits. To learn more about a particular sugar substitute, visit the product's website. These sites can provide additional information and recipes, helping you make informed and responsible choices about your health.

Resources: K-State Press Release: Oct 10, 2024, K-State food scientist: Artificial Sweeteners are safe within reason, Creating Health & Nutrition: Sugar Substitutes, PenState Extension, KSRE, Dining with Diabetes

Peach and Berry Crisp

Ingredients:

- 6 c. fresh or frozen peaches, sliced, peeled and drained
- 2 c. fresh or frozen blueberries, raspberries or blackberries
- 3-4 T Splenda
- ½ tsp. ground nutmeg
- ¼ tsp. cinnamon
- ½ c. oatmeal
- 4 T flour
- 2 T reduced-calorie margarine
- ¹/₄ tsp cinnamon

Directions:

- 1. Wash hands with soap and water. Wash all produce prior to preparation.
- 2. Preheat oven to 375° F.
- 3. Combine peaches and berries in an ungreased 11"x7" baking dish.
- 4. Mix sweetener, nutmeg, and cinnamon in a small bowl; sprinkle over the fruit and stir gently.
- 5. In a medium bowl, mix oatmeal, flour, brown sugar, margarine, and cinnamon together; spread over the fruit.
- 6. Bake uncovered, 35-40 minutes.

Source: Diabetes Education Program WVUES 1999-2000



(81g)
60
Value*
1%
0%
0%
0%
5%
4%
4%
0%
0%
0%
2%

Nutrition Eacts

Food, Nutrition, Health and Safety



Cindy Williams, Extension Agent

Healthy Snacks

Everyone knows holidays are a time for indulgence. Candy, large meals and frequent consumption are part of many of our traditions. While "Everything in moderation" is true, it is important to remember that looking out for our health is important and can often go overlooked in times of celebration.

Here are some suggestions to keep your healthy eating a priority during the upcoming holiday months. First, choose to make healthy alternatives over quick snacks, party treats and potluck foods. Instead of heavy dips, bags of sodiumhigh chips or sugar-filled cupcakes, look into other recipes that feature fruits, vegetables, and healthy grains.

- <u>Try to find treats that are:</u> applethemed; pumpkin-themed; other veggie and fruit treats, whole grain treats such as popcorn; DIY trail mix
- <u>Limit:</u> cookies and other baked sweets; chips and dip; meatballs or other meat items; pasta salads

Second, if you need store-bought prepackaged or single-serve items for school parties or trick-or-treaters, opt for healthy options at the store. Look for snacks and treats that do not contain artificial flavors, synthetic colors, added sugars, trans fat or high fructose corn syrup.

- <u>Try</u>: no sugar added applesauce or other fruit cups; whole-grain snack such as pretzels, popcorn or cereal bars; trail mix
- <u>Limit:</u> snack cakes; Cookies; pudding packs; candy

Managing Holiday Spending

Ready or not, here come the holidays. The annual rush of the holidays begins with Halloween. K-State University family resource management specialist, Elizabeth Kiss, says the annual onslaught begins for many with Halloween and extends to Thanksgiving and Christmas and other December celebrations. She would also a fourth one: New Year's Eve.

Retailers want us to be thinking about the holidays. They're starting to stock holiday merchandise, so it's a really good time to plan ahead and think how you would like to celebrate this year.

To prepare for the end-of-year festivities, Kiss encourages families to save money year-round. If they have not yet done that this year, it's not too late.

"What you could do is decrease your other spending right now and substitute your holiday spending for that." "Then, keep within the total monthly spending that you have been doing." Kiss called routine expenses such as buying a daily cup of coffee or snack at a convenience store or bakery—spending leaks. Instead, for the next few months, she suggests directing that money toward holiday expenses.

Then, she said, plan. To really get a handle on it, it's okay to start by thinking or dreaming big. Then get real. Take a look at the things you might like to do and then really take a good, hard look at what your resources are. How much money do you want to spend, and how much can you really afford to spend? How much can your budget handle?

By outlining a plan in early October, consumers also give themselves an opportunity to take advantage of sales and other price discounts that retailers are offering.

Other tips for managing holiday spending include:

- Pay in cash. Try to use cash because you can keep track of what you are spending and know what you have left. Some people may keep an envelope of cash or they keep their cash separate so that when they're done, they're done.
- **Resist credit card offers**. Some stores may offer a 15% discount upfront, but consumers may not realize that they'll pay more than that in interest if they don't pay off the bill right away.

"My thoughts about opportunities that are presented to save money is to understand what that means," Kiss said. "What are the terms? Are you giving up privacy? How much are you giving to them in return for this discount."

- Shop locally. While there may be great deals---and some time savings---found online, buying in your own community not only helps local businesses, but also potentially saves shipping costs. Planning ahead helps you know what items you can buy in your own town.
- Consider what makes you happy. Kiss said she has had conversations with her own family about decreasing the emphasis on gifts and spend time together instead. "We are at an age where we really don't need gifts anymore," she said. "We like to spend time together; we like to have good food and bake. So, we said, 'why don't we focus on that going forward.""

"I do agree that things can be more enjoyable if we keep them simple and focus on the real point of the holidays," Kiss said. "Ask yourself: Why are we doing it? What brings us the most pleasure? Those things don't always cost money."

Rural Community Health Worker



K-State 105 Project Supporting Rural Healthcare Announced

Community Health Workers are a special part of the health care system that understand the issues local people may be facing. Community Health Workers are trained to help people navigate the health system, identify health challenges and create a plan to overcome those challenges.

The Rural Ag Health Community Worker project is officially underway in the Meadowlark District thanks to support from the K-State 105 Project and K-State Research and Extension. Recently the K-State College of Health and Human Services, K-State Research and Extension, KU COPE, Unite Us and Kansas Community Health

Worker Coalition joined forces to seek funding for pilot project to place community health workers in five local extension offices to form productive partnerships between local extension units, health care and health service providers.

Dawn Seymour, RN of Nortonville, KS was recently hired by the Meadowlark Extension District as a Rural Community Health Worker for this ambitious project. Dawn comes to us with 17 years of nursing experience from Diabetes Management in at-risk communities to experience in the clinical, hospital, surgical, home health and hospice settings. She brings a vast range of nursing knowledge and is excited to begin working with the community.

Working remotely, Dawn will be housed out of the Oskaloosa Office in Jefferson County. She will establish a close working relationship with the Jefferson County Health Department and F.W. Huston Medical Center in Winchester, KS

4-H Youth Development

Why 4-H?

The 4-H Youth Development Program is the largest youth development organization. 4-H provides youth opportunities to improve their knowledge and skills (head, heart, health and hands) and increase the quality of life they experience to help better their local communities. Youth grow and develop knowledge and life skills through hands-on learning. Here are some reasons you should consider enrolling your child in 4-H.

- 1. It's for the family.—Meadowlark District 4-H staff and club volunteers rely on parents to make 4-H programs successful. Parents who encourage their 4-H'er will give their youth a positive experience. There are many ways parents can become involved. They can have roles that include being a club assistant, project leader or volunteer at the county/district level. At the 4-H club, the environment should welcome the entire family and provide opportunities for further engagement to parents. At home, parents can show interest and encourage their child throughout the 4-H year, support the club leaders, and promote 4-H in the community.
- 2. Your children will make friendships and memories that will last a lifetime. The week at camp, club meetings and county/district events are ways to get connected to some of your best friends. Also, the memories made throughout your time in 4-H, will be the foundation of your 4-H experiences. These experiences will vary based on your level of involvement with the 4-H program. The more you put into 4-H, the more you will get out.
- 3. **The opportunities are endless!** There are many approved 4-H projects that your children can complete. The 4-H mission is to give young people opportunities and help them find their "spark".
- 4. Your child will gain life skills that will help them become successful adults.—There are many skills that youth can achieve during their time in 4-H. 4-H'ers can carry these skills into adulthood which will make them more likely to succeed.
- 5. Most importantly, your children will have fun.—4-H teaches a lot of life skills. It will also teach him/her about himself/herself. Completing projects such as livestock, sewing, archery, cooking and gardening will help the child discover their passions. Members can participate in livestock shows, contests, workshops, speaking contest and much more.

If you are interested in joining Meadowlark District 4-H, please check out our website at <u>https://</u> www.meadowlark.k-state.edu/4-h/.





Meadowlark Extension District

114 W 5th St. Holton, KS 66436

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Items to Check Out

Soil & Hay Probes Pesticide Manuals Mole Trap Freeze Branding Irons Buzzers

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Upcoming Events

Oct. 15-Dec. 7: Medicare Open Enrollment Nov. 11: Offices Closed for Veteran's Day Nov. 28 & 29: Offices Closed for Thanksgiving

Remember And Honor

VETERANS

DAY

In observance of the holiday, our offices will be closed on Monday, November 11.

Normal office hours will resume at 8:00 AM on Tuesday, November 12.

Thanksgiving

In observance of the holiday, our offices wil be closed on Thursday November 28 & Friday, November 29.

Normal office hours resume at 8:00 AM Monday, December