

KSU Master Gardener training online

Agent addresses tip dieback on trees, landscape plants, insecticide

Well the occasional cooler temperatures and the calendar indicate that we are nearing the end of the gardening season.

As the outdoor physical work winds down you can now start to focus on the mental preparation and planning for next year. I often get inquiries about the KSU Master Gardener program and how to become a Master Gardener. Well K-State has a deal for you! In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Kansas State University's Extension Master Gardener program is planning to offer a statewide online training option this fall for those wanting to join the popular group. Weekly online sessions are set to begin Sept. 3 and will run through Dec. 17.

The cost for online training is \$45 plus any additional fees set by the county – or about \$1 per hour of educational content, and can be paid at the local Extension office.

For online training, Kansans must sign up through their local Extension office by Aug. 28. More information about the program is available online. Training sessions will be held each Thursday from 1 to 4 p.m. for 15 weeks, Sept. 3 through Dec. 17. Coffey County participation will be limited to 20 people.

Because fall travel is limited for K-State Research and Extension specialists, face-to-face training expectations are restricted. In Coffey County, the Extension Service is also planning to access the online training sessions at community library locations on a rotational basis throughout the series.

Once certified as an Extension Master Gardener, participants are asked to donate time in their community to help others learn more about gardening and horticulture. In 2019, Extension Master Gardeners donated approximately 99,000 hours for a total value of more than \$2.6 million.

This fall's 15-week training schedule will provide up to 50 hours of training on 13 topics delivered by lecture and hands-on activities. The topics will include plant growth and development, soils, turfgrass, annual and perennial flowers, landscape maintenance, woody ornamentals, vegetable gardening, insects, pesticide safety, plant diseases, fruit, landscape design and wildlife management.

The K-State Research and Extension Master Gardener program is available to anyone with an interest in horticulture. If you want to improve your gardening skills and knowledge, and you like to work with people, this program may be for

you. Contact the Extension Office (620) 364-5313 before noon Aug. 28 to sign up.

I often, and have recently, receive calls about tree branch dieback. Branch tip dieback, a progressive death of twigs and branches, can be worrisome to see on trees in summer, especially oak trees as these long-lived shade trees are a valued part of the Kansas landscape. But tip dieback is not always detrimental to the long-term health of the tree.

Officials at the Kansas Forest Service say, "There can be several causes for tip dieback on trees including oaks. Drought or soil compaction can cause trees to respond with dieback at the very top of the tree, but this damage is often temporary, and can be overcome by some simple steps that can be taken to improve the health of the tree."

Specialists say that symptoms can be eased by avoiding further soil compaction, simply waiting for regrowth when more rain arrives, or by being proactive and deep watering trees when it's very dry. Even large, established trees benefit from supplemental water during extreme dry conditions.

Insects including borers, cicadas and twig girdlers may also cause dieback on a number of trees, including oaks. In years with high cicada brood numbers, large numbers of branch tips may experience flagging, browning and even breaking due to cicada egg-laying behavior. Like the cicadas themselves, this is a temporary problem that will not affect long-term health of the tree.

However, branch dieback with associated "oozing" of sap creating a "wet" look can be an indicator of a more serious problem. This symptom is often associated with a disease such as canker infesting a tree of which there is no cure. Pruning of the dead and affected branches can slow disease progression and extend the life of the tree.

Proper pruning to avoid leaving branch "stubs" is critical. These "stubs" will die back to the main branch and that dead wood will be a place to harbor insect and disease infestation therefore creating more problems.

Identifying and reducing sources of stress to trees is beneficial and can help keep your trees healthy and growing in the landscape for as long as possible.

I have also recently received calls and heard comments from people their landscape plants are "looking sick" and they just noticed it after the city of Burlington was out spraying for mosquitos. For general information – the insecticide being used by the city will not cause plants to wilt and die. The equipment being used by the city is dedicated to the spraying of the mosquito insecticide so there is no chance of cross contamination with a herbicide that might do that. The high humidity conditions we have been experiencing this summer are ideal for fungal disease development which could cause wilting and plant decline late in the season.

KRC to host online Future of Farming and Food town halls

TOPEKA — Kansans are invited to attend the Kansas Rural Center's (KRC) "Future of Farming and Food" Town Hall virtual meetings this summer and early fall. Four meetings will facilitate discussion on local/regional food system resiliency, rural revitalization, climate and energy, and farm to school.

Each town hall will be hosted on Zoom from 7 to 8:30 p.m. on the following dates:

- ▶ Aug. 27 - Local and Regional Food System Resiliency
- ▶ Sept. 10 - Rural Revitalization
- ▶ Sept. 24 - Climate and Energy
- ▶ Oct. 8 - Farm to School

Registration is required to receive the meeting links. Registration can be found at www.kansasruralcenter.org/2020townhalls/. The Town Halls will offer opportunities to share information and community dialogue on the unique challenges or opportunities communities face in each topic area, within the context of an election year and the new

realities of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

These come at a time when Kansans are thinking about resiliency and what the future will look like. The ways in which we farm and get food to our plates and our capacity to work together as communities will be critical - perhaps now more than ever.

Based on dialogue and feedback from Town Hall participants last summer, KRC identified components of a shared vision for the future and developed a report and recommendations for a more resilient food, farm and energy future. The recommendations focus on four areas: Local/Regional Food and Agriculture; Rural Revitalization; Water, Conservation and the Environment; and Energy. A free copy of the report can be found on KRC's website.

This year's Town Halls will build on the visions and ideas outlined in the report and recommendations. "We want to revisit what we learned from folks last year because we are

all living in a much different world and many of our priorities have shifted," says Natalie Fullerton, KRC Assistant Director. "We want people to come away from the meetings with a better understanding of common concerns, goals and reasons for hope."

Each Town Hall meeting will feature a pre-recorded farm or local foods industry virtual tour shared ahead of time. During the Town Halls a panel of leaders will share new and old challenges and visions for how we come together to strengthen our resilience around each topic. Attendees will then have time to ask questions, respond to the panelists, and share their experiences or opinions about the issues addressed in order to help identify what is needed to advance opportunities in their communities and/or the region.

KRC has just begun a two-year Farm to School project which includes the opportunity to provide space for community dialogue on what the project entails and how mem-

bers of the community can support it. The final Town Hall will invite panelists who are part of successful farm to school programs to share the unique ways their schools and communities connect kids to fresh local food.

As the November election nears, the Town Halls will also provide an opportunity to explore questions to be asking candidates and ways to ensure that voter tools are accessible to everyone. "As we have seen in the past and are seeing currently, elections have consequences on our food and ag landscape," says Fullerton. "Civic engagement is very much an important part of the conversation when thinking about future resiliency."

Registration is required to receive the meeting links. Registration can be found at www.kansasruralcenter.org/2020townhalls/.

If you have other questions or want to register, contact Ryan Goertzen-Regier at ryangr@kansasruralcenter.org or call (866) 579-5469.



Darl Henson
Coffey County
Extension Agent

Cover crop specialists locate in Iola

IOLA — Green Cover Seed, a family-owned business headquartered in Bladen, Neb., recently chose Iola for its second location, to better serve their customers and to better reach people with the message of hope and change that regenerating soils can deliver. Green Cover Seed specializes in cover crop seed and custom seed mixing with a mission to help farmers and ranchers regenerate God's creation for future generations.

Brothers Keith and Brian Berns utilized their farming experience and a plot of land to begin experimenting with new farming practices. The Berns brothers started Green Cover Seed as a way to share the benefits of cover crops and no-till farming with

the community.

Their work is guided by five principles of a healthy soil ecosystems: Cover the soil and protect it; Use less chemical and physical disturbance as much as possible; Plant diversity and attract beneficial insects; Keep living roots in the soil as long as possible throughout the year; and Integrate animals (livestock) into the system.

The Berns brothers worked hard over the past several years to research and incorporate their methods in their own fields and help others do the same. What they've found are exciting and efficient methods that can offer an increase in soil structure, organic matter, biological life, water infiltration rate, nutrient cycling, and wildlife.

At Iola, Zach Louk, a salesman for Natural Ag Solutions, will be working for Green Cover Seed as the lead salesman and customer service representative. Caleb Berns will be moving from Nebraska to be the site manager.

Green Cover Seed is in the process of establishing seed inventory, equipment and personnel to the Iola site a full-service location. Plans are to stock more than 100 different cover crop seed species.

"Even in times of uncertainty, we are excited to have the opportunity to grow and expand, because we know that no matter what happens, people need to eat and a healthy soil base is one of the keys to that food production," Caleb Berns said.

Emergency haying and grazing changes

MANHATTAN — The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) has announced changes for emergency haying and grazing use of acres enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). This includes changes outlined in the 2018 Farm Bill that streamlines the authorization process for farmers and ranchers.

"Drought conditions are tough for our livestock producers, but emergency haying and grazing use of Conservation Reserve Program acres provides temporary relief to these producers," said David Schemm, State Executive Director in Kansas. "Thanks to a streamlined authorization process, Kansas producers will be able to more quickly obtain emergency use approval to begin emergency haying or grazing of CRP acres."

Program Changes

Previously emergency haying and grazing requests originated with FSA at the county level and required state and

national level approval. Now approval will be based on drought severity as determined by the U.S. Drought Monitor.

To date, 27 counties in Kansas have triggered eligibility for emergency haying and grazing on CRP acres. A list by state and map of eligible counties are updated weekly and available on FSA's website.

Producers located in a county that is designated as severe drought (D2) or greater on or after the last day of the primary nesting season are eligible for emergency haying and grazing on all eligible acres. Additionally, producers located in counties that were in a severe drought (D2) status any single week during the last eight weeks of the primary nesting season may also be eligible for emergency haying and grazing unless the FSA County Committee determines that forage conditions no longer warrant emergency haying and grazing.

Counties that trigger for Livestock Forage Disaster

Program (LFP) payments based on the U.S. Drought Monitor may hay only certain practices on no more than 50 percent of eligible contract acres. Producers should contact their local FSA county office for eligible CRP practices.

Counties that don't meet the drought monitor qualifications but have a 40 percent loss of forage production may also be eligible for emergency haying and grazing outside of the primary nesting season.

CRP Emergency Haying and Grazing Provisions

Before haying or grazing eligible acres, producers must submit a request for CRP emergency haying or grazing to FSA and obtain a modified conservation plan from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Emergency grazing is authorized for up to 90 days and emergency haying is authorized for up to 60 days. Program participants must stop haying and grazing 30 days

before the first freeze date in the fall based on the dates established for LFP.

Under the emergency grazing provisions, producers can use the CRP acreage for their own livestock or may grant another livestock producer use of the CRP acreage. The eligible CRP acreage is limited to acres located within the approved county.

For emergency haying, producers are limited to one cutting and are permitted to sell the hay. Participants must remove all hay from CRP acreage within 15 days after baling and remove all livestock from CRP acreage no later than one day after the end of the emergency grazing period. There will be no CRP annual rental payment reduction for emergency haying and grazing authorizations.

More Information

For more information on CRP emergency haying and grazing visit fsa.usda.gov/crp or contact your FSA county office.

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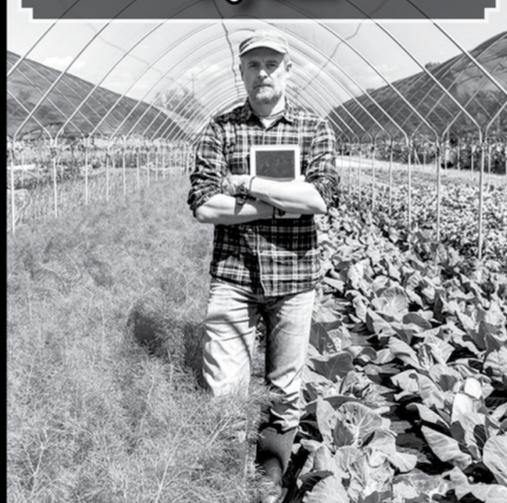
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