Knowledge for Life

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Walk Kansas

The Walk Kansas program is extended (for those who want it) until May 22 with the finale anticipated for May 29 — dependent upon the removal of the social distancing restrictions. Participant dash boards will remain open for you to continue entering your minutes of walking and exercise. Please check your email messages and Thomas County/4-H Facebook page for more information, at a later date. Incentive prizes have been purchased so I am anxious to share them!  Sheryl Carson, FCS Agent

Summer Help

Thomas County Extension is accepting applications for a temporary summer employee. Employment involves the assistance of summer events and activities. Normal work hours will be from 8 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. Applicants must be 18 years old and be a high school graduate or have GED equivalent. This is a temporary summer position from June 8 through August 7. Application deadline is May 18, 2020, at 5 p.m. For questions or to return an application, contact Sheryl Carson, Local Unit Director at scarson@ksu.edu, or the Extension office (785) 460-4582. Thomas County Extension is an equal opportunity employer.

At a Crossroad

Hey, Extension/4-H family,

I am sure that you’ve heard by now that I am retiring. I can’t believe that July, my birthday month, is just around the corner which signals to me an adventure in a new vocation and a new direction —wherever that takes me. I’ve had 20 years in Cooperative Extension as an Extension Agent and 16 years as a high school and middle school teacher and few other years doing a variety of jobs as a kid and college student. I’ve learned a lot and I am still learning—after all “Knowledge is for Life.” I don’t know my last day but it will be in June. Then I am hitting the road to visit family and spend time with my daughter. I am sure that I will still be seeing all of you around town, though, so please say hi and visit for a while!  Sheryl

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service
**Fertilize Cool-Season Grasses in May**

May is a wonderful time to start fertilizing your lawns to make them green and full this year. If you have or are planning on having cool-season lawns such as tall fescue and Kentucky bluegrass, now would be the time to fertilize them if they will be irrigated throughout the summer.

If the lawn is not on a sprinkler system Ward Upham, a horticultural specialist with K-State Research and Extension, suggests not fertilizing your yard in May because the plant often goes through a period of summer dormancy because of drought. If you are planning on having an irrigated lawn he suggests fertilizing in May because the springtime flush of growth in these greases has worn off. The fertilizer you apply will be less likely to cause excessive shoots than if you had fertilized at a full rate in April.

Upham suggests that homeowners use slow-release, nitrogen fertilizers, which promote controlled growth throughout the summer.

Unfortunately there are few fertilizers available to homeowners that supply all of the nitrogen in a slowly-available form. One product that is commonly available is Milorganite. Other fertilizers in the retail market are cottonseed meal, alfalfa-based fertilizers and any other products that are from plants or animals. Upham also suggested using bloodmeal. Contrary to popular belief, the nitrogen supplied by bloodmeal is quickly available.

Upham urges homeowners to follow label directions, but in general, you should plan to apply one pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet. “If the fertilizer is 6 percent nitrogen by weight, you will need to apply almost 17 pounds of fertilizer per 1,000 square feet,” he said.

Homeowners who would like to save money and instead apply quick-release fertilizers should plan to split the application into two doses – one-half pound of nitrogen, not fertilizer, per 1,000 square feet in May, and again in early June.

**Landscape Insects that are Turning Up**

If you are out walking around and start to see some small nests in plum, apple, willow or other rosacea trees. You will probably see a caterpillar known as a tent caterpillar. These small caterpillars live in the trees in the nests then come out during the day to eat the small leaves on the trees. Unfortunately, these caterpillars could cause more harm to your trees and possibly cause them to die. Insecticides will not protect your tree from these little creatures because the nest they live in is covered so they can’t be harmed. If you would like to take care of them wait for them to come out to eat and spray them or you can let the birds take care of the problem.
How Safe is Grocery Shopping?
Plan ahead! Shop your kitchen first. Make a list to make your shopping trip efficient.

We have to give grocery stores a lot of credit for going above and beyond to keep their doors open these days. So, while they do their part to keep food safe, we must do the same.

Do you need to let groceries sit in the garage for a few days after bringing them home? This can have some other serious food safety implications for perishable foods such as milk and meat. There is some indication that COVID-19 can inactivate at room temperature. But all groceries would have to be contaminated to be an issue. Simply wash your hands after shopping, put away groceries safely, then wash your hands again.

Cleaning food packages or washing fresh produce with soap is not recommended. Fresh produce can be safely washed and scrubbed in plain water. After handling packages, simply wash your hands again before food preparation.

Reusable bags are not recommended for use in some stores. Wash these bags often to keep them clean. Throw away plastic bags.

Food Preservation Online
Looking for ways to learn about food preservation? Videos can help! There are several available to help guide you.

From selecting recipes to storage, the process of preserving food safely is in your hands! Start with reliable, tested recipes and follow them exactly. A lot of science goes into food preservation, so using researched recipes is the best choice. Using untested recipes, methods or outdated equipment can lead to spoiled food or foodborne illness.

So let us help! See the video selections at www.rrc.k-state.edu/preservation/videos.html

Many publications are also available at your fingertips! Learn more at www.rrc.k-state.edu/preservation/index.html

Virtual Baking Instruction
The Home Baking Association strives to teach essential living skills while connecting with agricultural and food science, retail baking, milling and baking engineering and technology.

Learn more at www.homebaking.org/distance-learning/.
Office Reminder
The Thomas County Extension Office is closed to the public until further notice. We are available by appointment only. You can leave a message on the office phone or send one of us an email. We are still here for you and will continue to take care of you as we have before!

Small Animal Check-in
Small animal check-in has been changed. Ear tag requests were due to Emily by May 1st. Please take photos of your animals with their ear tags and send them to Emily. We would like photos of front, back and both sides of each animal.

After-Fair Locker Information
Many of you may already be aware that area lockers are becoming increasingly busy. Therefore, if you know a potential livestock auction buyer, please tell them to schedule a processing appointment as soon as possible. Available processing dates are moving further in the future. Also, lockers will NOT be picking up animals after Fair as they have in the past. In order to reduce confusion after the auction, we are asking that 4-H families do not schedule a processing appointment for your potential buyer.

Horse Level Testing
4-H Horse Project members who would like to compete at the State level, must complete the Level 1 workbook, do some community service work, attend an educational seminar, take & pass the Level 1 written exam, as well as take & pass the Level 1 riding exam. More information can be found on the 4-H Horse page.

Weekly Challenge
Hello Everyone! We are going to continue our Weekly Challenge! This is to keep everyone involved in our community and to see what everyone is up to. We are mostly posting on our Facebook pages including the private Thomas County 4-H Clubs group and the Extension Facebook page. Please let Emily know if you are still needing to be added to the private Facebook group. Please note, the private group is for active 4-H members and parents only.

Community Vitality Club Opportunities
Fairview Estates Retirement Community and Prairie Senior Living Complex have decided that our clubs would be able to go draw on the sidewalks outside of the homes for the residents and talk to them through the windows. They are feeling extremely lonely during this time and love to watch people draw and color. The bright pictures make them very happy.

Helping Paws
The Colby United Methodist Church is hosting a donation for animal supplies. The food bank is not able to collect these supplies so Colby UMC has set up a drop off location on 950 S. Franklin in the little cabin on the South side of the church. They are accepting unopened bags of pet food, unopened bags of cat littler and monetary donations. They are open Wednesdays from 11:00-1:00 and 5:00-6:00pm.
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**ABBREVIATIONS:****
- AH = Abilene Hustlers
- BPG = Brewster Prairie Gem
- CC = Colby Comets
- Gem = Gem 4-H
- SS = Shooting Sports
- SV = Solomon Valley