

Fenceline
by Jody G. Holthaus
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Livestock-Natural Resources

None from Jody at this time.

David G. Hallauer
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Crops & Soils/Horticulture
Tomato Fruit Set

Just about the time you think you're going to really start to get some tomatoes, a heat dome sets in over the Midwest! Talk about stopping fruit set right in its tracks!

Even summer crops have their limits, I guess! For tomatoes, that limit to fruit set occurs when temperatures remain above 75 degrees F at night on the lower end. On the upper end, daytime temperatures above 95 degrees F with dry, hot winds will cause poor fruit set on tomatoes as well. High temperatures interfere with pollen viability and/or cause excessive style growth leading to a lack of pollination.

Recovery isn't instantaneous! According to KSU Horticulture Specialist Dr. Ward Upham, it usually takes about three weeks for tomato flowers to develop into fruit large enough to notice that something is wrong plus an additional week before tomatoes are full size and ready to start ripening. That's going to delay your BLT's a little bit!

To help combat extreme temperatures that can reduce fruit set, breeders have developed what are known as 'heat-set' tomatoes like Florida 91, Sun Leaper and Sun Master. These varieties are bred to set fruit at higher temperatures. Just understand that the difference is only about two to three degrees. In other words, good for a little high temperature stress, but maybe not sufficient to fully offset some of the temperatures we've seen in July.

Fortunately, cooler temperatures will allow flowers to resume fruit set and we can look forward to ripe tomatoes once again!

Kansas River Valley Experiment Field Fall Field Day

The annual Kansas River Valley Experiment Field Fall Field day will be held on Tuesday, August 9th at the field near Rossville. The field day program begins at 6:00 p.m.

This year's field day topics will include presentations from four KSU Extension Specialists. Extension Plant Pathologist Dr. Doug Jardine will discuss current disease issues and share an update on seed treatments. Northeast Area Agronomist Dr. Stu Duncan will keep the disease discussion theme as he shares information on when it pays to apply foliar fungicides in the Kaw River Valley. Ajay Sharda, KSU Extension Specialist from Biological and Agricultural Engineering will share some of his research findings from the planter research he has been conducting. Field Agronomist in Charge Dr. Eric Adey will wrap up the evening with a discussion of the causes and cures for tip dieback in corn.

The field is located one mile east of Rossville on U.S. Hwy 24, on the south side of the road. Following the field day, a BBQ meal will be provided courtesy of Wilbur-Ellis. To pre-register, call Joanne Domme at the Shawnee County Extension office at 785-232-0062, ext. 100 by 5 p.m. on Monday, August 8. Commercial pesticide applicator continuing education credits have been applied for. Hope you can attend!

Cindy Williams
Meadowlark Extension District Agent
Food & Nutrition, FNP

The Garden Grocery: Selection at Farmers=Markets

Farmers market offer a variety of fresh, locally-produced fruits, vegetables, bakery and meat products in a festive atmosphere, Get the most from your local farmers=market with the following information.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) estimates over 1,000,000 people visit a farmers=market weekly! The average supermarket produce travels about 2,000 miles to its destination, compared to 50 miles for farmers =market produce. That=s like traveling from Chicago to Los Angeles!

Farmers=markets offer a colorful variety of fruits and vegetablesBwhich provide vitamins, minerals and phytochemicals. Many phytochemicals help the body:

- *stay healthy and energetic,
- *maintain a healthy weight,
- *protect against the effects of aging, and
- *reduce the risk of some cancers and heart disease.

Use MyPlate as your guide: Eat the equivalent of 2 cups of fruits per day (for a 2,000 calorie diet). Note this equivalent: 1/4 cup dried fruit=1/2 cup fruit. Eat the equivalent of 2 2 cups of vegetables per day (for a 2,000 calorie diet). Note this equivalent: 2 cups raw leafy greens=1 cup of vegetables.

Go directly home from the market! Avoid side trips. Foods will decline in quality and perishable foods like meats and eggs can pose food safety problems if left sitting in your car.

Different fruits and vegetables require different temperature and humidity levels for proper storage. Some foods that taste best stored at room temperature include: bananas, melons, onions, potatoes, sweet potatoes, tomatoes and winter squashes. Store them in a clean, dry, well-ventilated place, away from direct sunlight and away from areas where meat is prepared.

Some produce can be ripened on the counter and then stored in the refrigerator. Examples include: nectarines, peaches, pears and plums. Avoid leaving produce in a sealed plastic bag on your countertop. This slows ripening and may increase odors and decay from the accumulation of carbon dioxide and depletion of oxygen inside the bag.

Most other fresh fruits and vegetables keep best stored in a clean refrigerator at a temperature of 40 °F or below. Use your refrigerator crisper drawer for whole produce. Store fruits in a separate refrigerator crisper drawer from vegetables. Fruits give off ethylene gas which can shorten the storage life of vegetables. Some vegetables give off odors that can be absorbed by fruits and affect their quality.

Refrigerate fruits and vegetables in perforated plastic bags to help maintain moisture yet provide air flow. Unperforated plastic bags can lead to the growth of mold and bacteria. If you don=t have access to commercial, food-grade, perforated bags, use a sharp object to make several small holes in a food-grade plastic bag (about 20 holes per medium-size bag).

If fruits and vegetables are placed on refrigerator shelves, store meats on pans or plates below the produce to prevent meat juicesBwhich may contain harmful bacteriaBfrom dripping on them. Wash hands before working with produce.

Wash produce thoroughly. Wash produce before you use it, NOT when you bring it home! Fresh produce has a natural protective coating that helps keep in moisture and freshness. Washing produce before storage cause it to spoil faster. Remove and discard outer leaves. Rinse under clean, running water just before preparing or eating. Don=t use soap or detergent as it can get into produce and make you sick. Rub brisklyBscrubbing with a clean brush or handsBto clean the surface. Dry with a clean cloth or paper towel. Cut away bruised or damaged areas.

Rinse fruits and vegetables even if they have a peel which will be removed (such as melons and citrus fruits). Bacteria on the outside of produce can be transferred to the inside when they are cut or peeled.

Shop early. The most popular items go first. Enjoy the cooler mornings for your market adventure. Avoid overbuying and buy only what you will eat when fresh.

July 22, 2016

MEADOWLARK EXTENSION DISTRICT AGENT NEWS

Nancy C. Nelson
Meadowlark District Agent
Family Life

From Nancy Nelson:

No column this week.