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#### As You Prepare Your Lease

Tis the season to...negotiate leases! Maybe not something that makes you jolly, but not necessarily something that has to be difficult.

To be clear, there is no perfect lease rate. With the variables have to be considered when determining a fair and equitable lease, landlords and tenants should enter any re-negotiation phase with the goal of open conversation and honest discussion about some of those variables. Both parties need to be willing to share information about their role in the operation and the value that their role plays in the financial success of the arrangement. Conversations can be difficult, no doubt, but as long as both landlord and tenant are take the opportunity to share their goals/wants/needs/etc..., the agreement can/should become one that is mutually appreciated.

Information abounds on leases. None are perfect! I would suggest you start by reviewing your current agreement. If no written agreement is in place, strongly consider getting something down on paper. It just makes things clearer for everyone. Make notes about what needs to be included and updated. Check out sample agreements available either online our through your local Extension Office. Revise them to fit your situation.

Check out rental rate information and tools as well. The K-State Agricultural Economics Department has a very in-depth calculator you can use to evaluate arrangements on their website at [www.agmanager.info](http://www.agmanager.info) (check out the Farm Management tab, then Land and Leasing). They also have specialist publications that can help you sort through the process. Kansas Agricultural Statistics data is also a great source of information.

One very important publication is entitled Kansas Farm Lease Law (c668), available online at the address above or from your local extension office. It outlines the law of leasing in Kansas, particularly as it applies to oral leases. If you are working on an agreement – new or old – it's a good one to take a look at.

Fair and equitable is what you are shooting for. Take some time early this year to make sure that your agreements are just that!

#### Pruning Shrubs

Is now the right time to prune shrubs? Maybe - if you are looking only at light pruning or removal of dead wood. That can work this time of year. Severe pruning, however, should be left until spring.

Keep in mind that even light pruning of spring-blooming shrubs such as lilac and forsythia will reduce flowering next year. Prune spring-bloomers be pruned after flowering.

Not all shrubs are created – or respond to pruning! – equally. Junipers do not break bud from within the plant and therefore should be trimmed lightly if you wish to keep the full shape. Overgrown junipers should be removed. On the other hand, there are certain shrubs that can be pruned back severely during the spring. Rejuvenation is the most severe type of pruning and may be used on multi-stem shrubs that have become too large with too many old branches to justify saving the younger canes. All stems are cut back to 3- to 5-inch stubs. This works well for spirea, forsythia, pyracantha, ninebark, Russian almond, little leaf mock orange, shrub roses, and flowering quince. This pruning should wait until spring.

*December 4, 2015*