

Meadowlark District Extension News
July 30, 2021

David G. Hallauer, District Extension Agent, Crops & Soils/Horticulture

Fall Crops Tour

It's almost August and time for the annual Meadowlark Extension District Fall Plot Tour. This year, instead of a look at area plots, we'll meet at 4:15 p.m. on Thursday afternoon, August

, at the Colonial Acres Event Center (8998 US 59 Hwy., Oskaloosa) for a welcome and refreshments courtesy of Taylor Insurance Services. At 4:30, we'll hear from Christopher Redmond, Kansas Mesonet Manager. He'll share information about the Kansas Mesonet, which includes a tower located on the Taylor farm south of Oskaloosa. He'll also share a little bit of a weather outlook as we head towards fall.

With fertilizer input prices climbing, you may be evaluating how your fertilizer dollar is spent. KSU Soil Fertility Specialist Dr. Dorivar Ruiz-Diaz will be on hand to share best management practices to consider including in-season nitrogen management and sulfur research.

At the conclusion of the program, we'll have a meal sponsored Tarwater Farm & Home. To help with a meal count, please RSVP by noon on August 17th by contacting the Meadowlark Extension District Oskaloosa office at (785) 863-2212 or e-mail me at dhallaue@ksu.edu. Thank you to Taylor Insurance Services and Tarwater Farm and Home for their generous sponsorship.

We hope to see you August 19th! If you can't get enough of field days, check out the Kansas River Valley Experiment Field 2021 Fall Field Day at the field one mile east of Rossville on August 10th as well. E-mail me at dhallaue@ksu.edu for a program flyer.

Dividing Iris

One of our most popular landscape flowers is the bearded iris. As well adapted as they are here, even they need some 'rejuvenation' at times. If the center of your iris clumps have lost vigor and flowering has declined, consider dividing them. Dividing iris every three to five years can help and should be done from late July through August (earlier in August is better than later).

Start by digging up the entire clump to expose a root system made up of thick rhizomes and smaller feeder roots. Using a sharp knife, cut the rhizomes apart, leaving each division with a fan of leaves and a section of the rhizome. When possible, make divisions from a 'double fan' consisting of two small rhizomes attached to a larger one, which forms a Y-shaped division.

Each of these two rhizomes has a fan of leaves and are preferred because they produce more flowers the first year after planting (single fans take a year to build up strength).

Rhizomes with damage (iris borers or soft rot) can be discarded. Otherwise, physically remove borers from rhizomes and replant if the damage is not severe or treat mild cases of soft rot by scraping out affected tissue, allowing it to dry in the sun and dipping it in a 10 percent solution of household bleach (one-part bleach with nine parts water). Rinse the treated rhizomes with water and allow to dry before replanting.

Before replanting, cut leaves back by two thirds. Remove weeds from the planting area and fertilize according to soil test or by applying a complete fertilizer at the rate of one pound of actual fertilizer per 100 square feet. Mix fertilizer to a depth of six inches.

Extension Master Gardener Applications

Applications to be a part of the 2021 Meadowlark Extension District Master Gardener class are now available. Information is available at <https://www.meadowlark.k-state.edu/lawn-garden/>. Applications are due August 10th. Applicants must be District residents.

Nancy Nelson
Meadowlark Extension District Agent

Freezing Food Safely

Most fresh garden produce can be easily frozen to be enjoyed later. Freezing food is an easy, inexpensive method to preserve food. It takes minimal investment in equipment and time.

Most produce can be frozen for 8-12 months for best quality. Label and date packages of food so you know how long they have been in the freezer.

How food is packaged will affect the quality of frozen goods. There are many types of plastic containers, but not all of them are suitable for freezing food. Look for containers that are designated for the freezer. Reusing cheese or butter containers may be frugal, but those types of plastic containers can crack easily when frozen.

Another good piece of advice: Don't cram the freezer with food. Freeze food in batches so that the freezer does not get overloaded. If the freezer is overloaded with warm food, it can take longer for food to freeze. Space out the packages so that cold air circulates around them.

A refrigerator should be held between 34-40 degrees Fahrenheit and a freezer should be below 0 F. Regularly clean the appliance to reduce food odors and clean up damaged packages.

Care should be taken to prevent freezer burn when storing food. It is characterized by dry, grayish/brown spots on the food's surface. While not harmful, it's not very appetizing. The condition is most notable on frozen meats.

Freezer burn happens when food is not adequately wrapped to remove oxygen, which has a bleaching effect on the food surface. It results in poor texture, color, flavor and aroma.

To prevent freezer burn, package food tightly in packaging designed for freezing. Remove as much air as possible and maintain a temperature of 0 degrees Fahrenheit or lower to freeze food quickly.

If using freezer containers, crumple a piece of wax paper on top of the food to help minimize headspace. This helps prevent freezer burn, ice crystal formation, and keeps food pieces from drying out.