

Gardening on the High Plains

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Growing Greens for Fall Harvest

Quality and nutritional value have always been good justification for raising a garden. With food prices soaring and uncertainties regarding food supplies, it is more important than ever to consider growing food at home.

Greens provide excellent nutrition, and are easy to grow. Now is a good time to plan for a fall crop of greens.

Lettuce and spinach seeds should go about 1/4 inch deep in moist soil. It is best to sow lettuce or spinach seeds thinly in rows spaced about one foot apart or simply scatter the seeds in blocks.

They should be covered lightly with soil, but well enough to hide them from birds. Firm the soil in place and water well.

Keep the soil moist until germination. Once the plants have a grown their true leaves, you can begin to thin the plants to about 6" apart.

Spinach will germinate better in cooler temperatures, so if you are set up for it, starting spinach indoors might give you better results.

Soak Swiss chard and kale seeds overnight in water before planting to ensure strong germination.

Plant chard and kale seeds 1/4 inch deep and three

inches apart. Thin newly germinated seedlings to eight to twelve inches with cuticle scissors instead of pulling them out.

Harvest individual leaves from the outer area but be sure to leave the crown intact.

Frequent picking helps to stimulate the production of new leaves.

Rinse leaves with cool water immediately, shake off the excess moisture, and store in plastic bags in the refrigerator for up to four days.

For best results, be aware of who your greens' neighbors are. Chard and kale do well near beans, cabbage, tomato, onion and roses. Don't grow chard near cucumbers, melons, corn or herbs.

Lettuce does well with beets, broccoli, beans, carrots, cucumbers, onion, radish and strawberries. It grows happily in the shade under sunflowers. Dill and lettuce are a perfect pair. Keep lettuce away from cabbage. Cabbage is a deterrent to the growth and flavor of lettuce.

Plant spinach with peas and beans as they provide natural shade for the spinach. Spinach gets along with cabbage, cauliflower, celery, eggplant, onion, peas, and strawberries.

When weeding, be careful of the roots of the greens. They are very shallow.

Other Ways to Improve Soil Health

By Dale Younker
Soil Health Specialist
Natural Resources
Conservation Service

For several years now there has been a real emphasis on using cover crops or adding livestock into cropping systems to improve soil health, and for some producers using these practices has work very well. But focusing on just a couple of these practices, which seem to get the most media coverage, we may not be paying attention to, or thinking about other ways to improve the resiliency of our soil and continue to grow profitable crops. There are a wide variety of other practices and strategies that can also be utilized to improve the soil.

One of the first things that comes to my mind, after fertilizer prices increased by 200-300% in the last year, is having a balanced fertility

program. Using the 4Rs concept, 1) using the right product, 2) putting on the right rate, 3) applying it at the right time and 4) putting it in right place is good place to start. Given the current price of fertilizer this can pay big dividends in a hurry. I would even suggest taking this a step further and consider implementing grid soil sampling and using variable rate technology to apply the fertilizer. This is where fertilizer is applied based on the specific fertility needs of a certain area in the field, typically about 2.5 to 5 acres in size. Like the advertisement says, "if you don't test, it just a guess", and at today's fertilizer price you can't afford to just guess.

Soil pH also needs to be maintained at optimum levels. Most plant nutrients are readily available when the pH is around neutral, or

in that 6.5 to 7.0 range. So, you could be putting on the right amount of fertilizer the crop needs but if your pH is not within that range the crop can't utilize those nutrients. Most western Kansas soils are inherently alkaline with a pH above 7.0. But in many fields the pH is now significantly lower because of the continued use of acid-based fertilizers, like Anhydrous Ammonia. A composite soil sample and a \$25.00 soil analysis is a good place to start to see where your pH levels are. From there you can come up with a long-term strategy to get everything in balance if you need to.

Consider eliminating or reducing the amount tillage operations that you complete. Tillage destroys stable soil aggregates and disrupts the soil biology that helps form and maintain them. A field with poor

soil aggregate stability will have less pore spaces for water to flow through and be prone to soil erosion. In western Kansas everything is dependent on the amount of moisture we can capture and store in the soil and excessive tillage reduces our soil's ability to do that.

If you aren't already doing some of these simple cost-effective practices, I urge you to consider using them to improve your soil. But more importantly consider using them to increase your farm's profitability. Implementing some of these strategies will cost money, but if you can get a positive return on investment, it may be well worth the money to do it.

For more information about these and other soil health practices you can contact me at dale.younker@ks.usda.gov or any local NRCS office.

Insight: A Sticker of Satisfaction

Glenn Brunkow,
Pottawatomie County farmer and rancher

I am writing this on the day of the primary elections, complete with my "I Voted" sticker on the left pocket of my shirt. I am proud to say that I exercised my right to vote, and, in my mind, I made all the right choices. To my knowledge I have participated in every election since I turned 18, and I intend to exercise it every opportunity I get for the rest of my life.

I don't know if you have

noticed but we are at a serious crossroads in the history of our great nation. That crossroads makes exercising the right to vote even more critical now than ever. That is especially true for those of us in agriculture. We are an ever-shrinking number, and we must take every chance we can get to make our voices heard and that is especially true when it comes to the polls.

That is also why it is so critical for each of us as Farm Bureau members to get involved with Voters Organized To Elect Farm Bureau Friends, or VOTE FBF. First, let me encourage you to support it monetarily. The dollars are used to support candidates friendly to agriculture are only generated through donations from members. It doesn't have to be much if each of us donate every year.

More importantly get involved in the county process to decide which candidates to support. Like everything else in Farm Bureau, the decision of which candidates to support starts at the county level. Increasingly we are seeing candidates recognize this and start to attend county board meetings and this gives us an opportunity to have discussions with them about our views. Those

recommendations along with voting records are heavily considered by the Vote FBF board when deciding which candidates to endorse.

I would also hope that when you do go to the polls you will look at the list of candidates endorsed by VOTE FBF and consider supporting them. They are the candidates who have the best interest of agriculture in mind and most closely align with our policy. In the end you will make up your own mind and vote for the candidates that best represent you, but the list of endorsed candidates is a good place to start.

The most important thing

is to get out and vote in November. It is the best way for us to make our voices heard. It was ingrained in me early on that if you did not participate and vote, you really had no right to complain. I know I still get a feeling of pride every time I go to the polls and cast my vote.

Regardless of how I feel about the slate of candidates or the issues I am voting on, I do get a great deal of satisfaction participating in the process. It isn't perfect, but it is the best in the world. So go cast your vote and wear that sticker with pride, you earned it.

Midge, sorghum aphid found in Kansas

But cases are sparse, say local extension agents

By Pat Melgares, K-State Research and Extension news service

MANHATTAN, Kan. — While there's no reason for alarm, a pair of Kansas extension agents are at least urging the state's sorghum producers to be on the lookout for a couple of pests that have recently shown up in this year's crop.

Anthony Zukoff, the coordinator of the Insect Diagnostics Program at Kansas State University's Southwest Research and Extension Center in Garden City, said the sorghum midge was recently found in the southwest part of the state.

If not for the destruction it causes, the midge is a remarkable insect. The adult lifespan of the fragile, reddish-orange fly is a mere 24-48 hours, but during that time females can lay 50-120 eggs — to the detriment of sorghum plants.

"Heads with severe midge damage take on an overall flattened appearance with blank areas," Zukoff said. "These blank areas are where midge larva feed within the developing seeds and completely consume them."

Zukoff said sorghum is only susceptible to midge damage during the bloom period when flowers are bright yellow. Female midges fly to blooming sorghum and crawl over seed heads, depositing eggs in the open flowers.

"Once the flowers take on a brownish rusty color, they are not attractive to females and are no longer able to be infested," Zukoff said. "Adult midges do not damage sorghum; all yield loss is due to the larvae."

Historically in Kansas, the midge has been considered a minor pest confined to the southeast part of the state, according to Zukoff. Kansas producers have never actively treated fields for the pest.

"However, between 2017 and 2021, there were reports of large infestations resulting in significant losses in southwest and southeast Kansas," Zukoff said. "So far, there is no clear pattern

to these events, and locations that experienced losses one year have not necessarily ended up with problems in the years following."

Zukoff noted there are no treatment or threshold recommendations for sorghum midge in Kansas, though "states south of us recommend treatment at (a threshold) as little as 1 midge per sorghum head."

"There are a variety of treatment options in those states, but cultural practices are shown to help reduce losses from this pest, including planting early in the season," so that fields are blooming before mid-August.

Meanwhile, near Ellsworth, Kan., Midway Extension District agricultural agent Craig Dinkel reported a single case of the sorghum aphid (previously called the sugarcane aphid) in a farmer's sorghum crop last week. Since then, some isolated cases have been found in other parts of

Kansas.

Even so, Dinkel said "I am not foreseeing the sorghum aphid to be a widespread infestation this year." He noted he has "checked multiple fields" and found just the one infestation.

"Right now, producers should just be monitoring their milo fields for the sorghum aphids knowing what varieties they have planted," Dinkel said. "Many seed companies have bred tolerance into milo, but still some varieties — like the one I checked — are susceptible to the aphids."

He adds: "Patience is key. If producers find sorghum aphids in a field, it doesn't mean they will become a problem to spray for. Our beneficial insects have adapted to the sorghum aphids and have controlled them very well."

More information on pests that affect Kansas farm crops is available at local extension offices.

Plainview Child Find

Thursday, August 25, 2022

Attention: Parents of children ages birth through 5



Plainview School will be conducting our Child Find on Thursday, August 25, from 9 a.m. til 2 p.m. Your young children can receive free developmental, speech and language, hearing, vision, and health screenings. These screenings are an opportunity to receive information about your child and discuss any individual developmental concerns with professionals. To make an appointment, please call the office at (719) 729-3331 and Mrs. Pam will schedule an appointment. Please leave your name, your phone number, and your child's name.

-Please bring birth certificate and social security card for your child when attending your appointment.

- On the day of your Child Find, please check in at the entrance way for information on the sequence and location of your child's appointments.

- We look forward to working with you and your child.

Carol Allen, Plainview Preschool
Director and Child Find Coordinator

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