January provides opportunity to start vegetables, flowers indoors

K-State horticulture expert offers tips for buying, caring for seed

MANHATTAN — In case cabin fever has Kansas gardeners longing for warmer days, there's good news: January marks an early opportunity to get some vegetables and flowers started.

"January is often a cold and dreary month for many gardeners," said Cynthia Domenghini, a horticulture expert with K-State Research and Extension. "But planning for and starting vegetables and flower transplants from seed can make this a much more interesting time of year."

Domenghini outlined the steps needed to purchase and plant seeds indoors in a recent issue of the Horticulture Newsletter, a weekly publication from Kansas State University that is available online and by email.

Her recommendations include:

• **Purchase recommended, quality seed.** The varieties recommended for Kansas are available in a publication from K-State Research and Extension. "Also, talk to your neighbors, friends and your local garden center about what has worked well for them," Domenghini said.

• **Obtain your seeds from a reputable source.** These may include garden centers and seed catalogs. "If choosing seeds from a business that does not specialize in plants, pay special attention to the package date to make sure the seed was packaged for the current year," Domenghini said. "Though most seed remains viable for about three years, germination decreases as seed ages."

• **Determine the date to seed.** You should know the target date for transplanting outside and the number of weeks needed to grow the transplant indoors.

• **Sowing seed.** Do not use garden soil to germinate seed. It is too heavy and may contain disease organisms. Use a media made especially for seed germination.

Domenghini said additional tips include keeping seed moist and growing the seeds in appropriate lighting and temperature conditions. A little TLC also helps, she said.

"Plants react to movement," Domenghini said. "Brushing over the plants with your hand stimulates them to become more stocky and less leggy. Try 20 brushing strokes per day. However, brushing will not compensate for a lack of light or over-crowding."

Move plants outdoors prior to transplanting so that they will become hardened to the sun and wind. "Start about two weeks before transplanting and gradually expose the plants to outside conditions," Domenghini said. "Increase the number of hours and degree of exposure over a two-week period."
Domenghini and her colleagues in K-State's Department of Horticulture and Natural Resources produce a weekly Horticulture Newsletter with tips for maintaining home landscapes and gardens. The newsletter is available to view online or can be delivered by email each week.

Interested persons can also send their garden and yard-related questions to Domenghini at cdom@k-state.edu or contact their local K-State Research and Extension office.

-30-

FOR PRINT PUBLICATIONS: Links used in this story
K-State Research and Extension local offices, https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/about/statewide-locations.html

K-State Research and Extension is a short name for the Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service, a program designed to generate and distribute useful knowledge for the well-being of Kansans. Supported by county, state, federal and private funds, the program has county extension offices, experiment fields, area extension offices and regional research centers statewide. Its headquarters is on the K-State campus in Manhattan. For more information, visit www.ksre.ksu.edu. K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

###

As the nation's first operational land-grant institution, Kansas State University has served the people of Kansas, the nation and the world since its founding in 1863 — and it continues to set the standard as a next-generation land-grant university. K-State offers an exceptional student experience across three physical campuses and online offerings, meeting students where they are and preparing them to achieve their personal and professional goals. The university is committed to its mission of teaching, research and service through industry-connected programs, impactful research-driven solutions, and a sharp focus on community engagement and economic prosperity.

K-State News and Communications Services
Division of Communications and Marketing
128 Dole Hall
1525 Mid-Campus Drive
Kansas State University
Manhattan, KS 66506
785-532-2535
media@k-state.edu
k-state.edu/media

(If you do not want to receive future news releases from Kansas State University, please email media@k-state.edu to unsubscribe.)