K-State unveils expanded Kansas Garden Guide

Popular guide aims to help gardeners in state’s challenging growing conditions

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

MANHATTAN, Kan. – A popular guide to gardening in Kansas has undergone a major makeover that one of its authors said helps to “better reflect the needs and experiences of a wide range of Kansas gardeners, especially our newest gardeners.”

An updated version of the Kansas Garden Guide – which in 2022 was downloaded 35,931 times, or about 100 times a day – will be available to order by early May from the K-State Research and Extension bookstore.

The guide already is available to view online in its entirety. Viewers can print pages that relate to specific information.

“We are always learning new things about growing plants in Kansas and understanding the science of soils, plants, and microorganisms better,” said Rebecca McMahon, administrator of Kansas State University’s local foods systems program.

“So,” she added, “we need to update our publications to reflect changes in practices, as well. Also, the way that people think about and approach gardening changes over time. Gardens today are usually smaller and there are many new gardeners that have started gardening over the past several years.”

McMahon was one of several editors of the new guide, which has expanded to 202 pages complete with full-color pictures and illustrations. The Kansas Garden Guide – originally printed in the early 1980s -- was last printed in 2010, and included 76 full color pages.
New or expanded content includes:

- Starting and planning a garden.
- Raised bed and container gardening.
- Improving soil health and composting.
- Planting and maintaining a garden, including watering, fertilizing and other best practices.
- Fall gardens and extending the garden season.
- Managing insect pests and identifying plant diseases and environmental stressors.
- Taking advantage of pollinators and beneficial insects.
- Harvesting and storing produce.
- Growing herbs, including a wider variety of herbs.
- Growing vegetable crops, including tips on choosing varieties, crop rotation, common concerns, and more.
- Updated planting and harvesting calendars.

Cheryl Boyer, a nursery crop production and marketing specialist for K-State Research and Extension, said she “wouldn’t want to tackle my home garden without this guide.”

“The Kansas Garden Guide is essential for successful edible gardening in Kansas,” she said. “We have excellent demonstration gardens in nearly every Kansas county, showing off what we can accomplish with the knowledge contained in the Kansas Garden Guide.”

Boyer added that while the guide is oriented to home gardeners, commercial growers also will benefit from the updated recommendations: “This would make an excellent resource for every nursery, garden center and hardware store to have on hand.”

McMahon said perhaps the most important aspect of the publication is that the guidelines are specific to Kansas’ growing conditions.

“Most other gardening resources that Kansas gardeners are going to find are more reflective of conditions in other parts of the country,” McMahon said. “The Kansas Garden Guide focuses on what you need to know to have success in our challenging climate.”

In Kansas, home gardeners produce $20 to $25 million worth of vegetables each year, according to information published in the new guide. These vegetables not only help Kansans save money on food costs, but also contribute to overall nutrition and health.

The direct link to the guide is www.bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/S51.pdf.

FOR PRINT PUBLICATIONS: Links used in this story
Local Foods Systems (Kansas State University), https://www.rrc.k-state.edu/localfoods/index.html
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