Organic gardening tips

K-State specialist kicks off fall series focused on growing organic produce

MANHATTAN, Kan. — For many eating homegrown foods is a highlight of summer dining. And for some, there is a desire to grow them organically.

To address this topic, Zac Hoppenstedt, Johnson County extension horticulture agent, shared his tips August 4 as part of the Kansas State University Research and Extension Garden Hour.

“Organic gardening is about improving soil health, encouraging biological diversity and reducing all farm inputs” said Hoppenstedt.

In defining the term organic agriculture, Hoppenstedt said, “it is crop production that is done without synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, hormones and does not allow for genetically modified organisms.”

During the 45-minute presentation, Hoppenstedt shared that organic production is an industry worth more than $8.5 billion.

He offered composting as one way to promote good soil biology by adding organic matter.

“It’s feeding the soil and brining in some organic matter to promote biological activity and a more diverse ecosystem of soil,” Hoppenstedt said.

Weed management is key in promoting fertility of the soil and managing erosion, he said. Ways to control weeds include removing them when they are small and using tarps or mulches to keep the light from reaching them.

In speaking about biodiversity, he said that organic farmers should rotate the plants they grow in the garden.

“Consider trying to diversify crop families growing in your garden space and use plant species that are adapted to your local area,” Hoppenstedt said.

He also offered advice on how to address soil-borne diseases and remove insects organically.
To view a recording of this information session or register for an upcoming program go to Kansas State University Research and Extension Garden Hour. This series broadcasts via Zoom every other Wednesday in August and September. The next session will air August 18 with a focus on gardening with beneficial insects.

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**FOR PRINT PUBLICATIONS:** Links used in this story, [https://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/info-center/k-state-garden-hour-webinar-series/k_state_garden_hour.html](https://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/info-center/k-state-garden-hour-webinar-series/k_state_garden_hour.html)

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