

January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2025

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# The Grapevine

## Garden Catalogs

As I thumb through my first catalog I love to look at the trees and shrubs looking for that perfect flowering or shade tree for my yard. Often the catalogs we receive are sent out nationwide and they offer plants that won't survive overwinter in our area. Double check the USDA Hardiness zone number to make sure your plant will survive in our area. Butler County is divided into two different hardiness zones, 6a for the North East corner and Zone 6b for the rest of the county. As I plan my landscaping in the backyard I will be paying close attention to the hardiness zones to make sure I pick the right plant for the right place. Along with hardiness zones, keep an eye on the frost dates in your area. Some catalogs advertise "earliest blooming" which means your plant could lose its blooms or fruit to frost.

Growing up I loved the fresh peaches and cherries that we picked in our "orchard" every year. Some years the frost prevented us from having many peaches but we always had cherries. As you flip through the fruit section of your catalog remember to check if you will need a second tree to ensure pollination. Apples, sweet cherries, plums, and pears all need a second variety to ensure pollination. Make sure you choose varieties that bloom during the same time frame, otherwise you might not get any apples.

As spring arrives, gardeners and plant lovers alike prepare for the green growing season. A little preparation before the growing season arrives can make a big difference in how your growing season goes. The catalogs are great places to purchase seeds for your garden, however I recommend visiting your local nursery or garden center and visiting with them about which trees or shrubs are reliably hardy in your area. They have years of experience and can give a great recommendation of a plant to fill your need that will be there for years to come.

## Summer Dreaming

Over the last couple of weeks, the gardening catalogs have started to arrive at my house. While early January is still too early to start most things it's also the best time to start doing some planning for your vegetable garden. Here are some steps for planning your garden this year.

One of the first steps to planning your garden for 2025 is to remember your garden from 2024. I know the drought the last couple of years wreaked havoc with our vegetable gardens but we can still gain some valuable insight for this year. Make sure you remember where you had your vegetables planted last year. Rotating your vegetable families around the garden rather than planting them in the same spot year after year is very important to the success of your garden. The goal should be to rotate your vegetables so there are three years between when a specific vegetable was planted in that spot. For example, if I planted tomatoes in one corner of my garden in 2022 I should not plant any other member of the nightshade family in that spot till 2025. Something else you should remember were any disease or insect issues that might have happened in your garden. One way to keep a record of this over several years is to create a garden journal with drawings of where things were planted and also any records of issues. It can also be helpful to keep track of what varieties did well and what didn't to help for future planning.



The second step to planning any garden is figuring out what you want to plant. I love this step because this is where I get to dream and look through all the pretty catalogs at the different options. Over the last couple of years I have expanded my garden which has allowed me to plant more vegetables. I'm going to try to do more succession plantings which will help me utilize the space I do have more efficiently. I intend to plant some cool-season crops this year in the ground and then transition them to warm-season crops as they mature. Be sure to pick vegetables that fit what you want to get out of your garden. This year I'm going to try a miniature cherry tomato because while I love cherry tomatoes I cannot keep up with the larger varieties. If you are planning on starting seeds sort through what you already have and make a list of what you need. I would also do a test germination on your seeds to see if they are still viable.

If you are planning on starting seeds pay attention to the seeding dates based on your frost-free date. Those dates should also be noted in your plan so you don't end up with too big or too small plants. (I might have been guilty of both of those in the past, oops.) A side note, January is the time to start onion seeds and toward the end of the month start cole crops. It takes 6-8 weeks for onions and cole crops to grow to a size to transplant. To figure out when you need to start your seeds first find your frost-free date, then read on the seed packet to find how many weeks before that frost-free date to start seeds. In El Dorado, the last frost date is typically April 20th but be aware

that we can have frosts after that depending on the year.

The gardening season truly starts well before we can work the ground. I don't know yet what this winter is going to be like but summer dreaming definitely helped get me through the snow and cold over the weekend. If you are new to gardening your plan doesn't have to be very specific but the basics will help to give you a guide when it comes time to start planting. Happy growing everyone and I hope you are having a wonderful winter season.

## Pruning Ice Damaged Trees

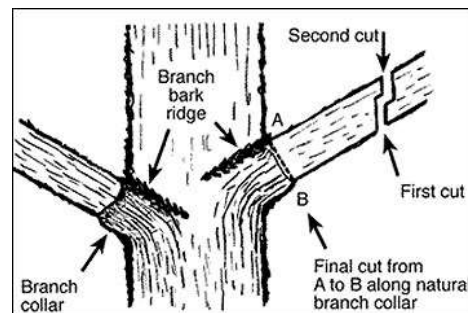
What a weather switch from the warmer temperatures we enjoyed over the holidays to this past weekend and the upcoming week. Winter has arrived and with it came some icy precipitation and cold temperatures. Unfortunately, the meteorologists were correct with our weather forecast and there is another chance of snow coming up later this week.

With the icy weather comes the chance that your trees may have suffered damage over the weekend. Before you do anything outside or work with the trees you must look for power lines above your head or could be impacted by the trees you will be working with. I would also look for dangling limbs that could fall on you while you are working. Safety is essential when working with any tree. Don't venture under the tree until it is safe. If large limbs are hanging precariously, a certified arborist has the tools, training, and knowledge to do the work safely. I also recommend picking up any limbs that have already fallen before starting to prune branches from the tree. Removing those branches makes it easier to move around the yard and reduces the objects you might trip over when you are working.



After that, a careful examination of the tree is necessary to decide if saving the tree is feasible. Below is a checklist of steps to make that decision and give surviving trees the best chance to thrive:

- Decide whether you can save the tree. If the bark on the trunk has been split so the cambium is exposed or the main trunk split open, the tree probably will not survive and should be removed. If there are so many broken limbs that the tree's form is destroyed, replacement is the best option. Topping, where all the main branches are cut and there are only stubs left, is not a recommended pruning procedure. Though new branches will normally arise from the stubs, they are not as firmly attached as the original branches and are more likely to break in subsequent storms. Also, the tree must use a lot of energy to develop new branches, leaving less to fight off diseases and insect attacks. Often, the topped tree's life is shortened.
- Prune broken branches to the next larger branch or to the trunk. It's best to wait till the ice is off the trees before doing any pruning because you can cause more damage by pruning frozen wood versus waiting for warmer weather. When cutting the branch back to the trunk, do not cut flush with the trunk but rather at the collar area between the branch and the trunk. (See the photo to the right) Cutting flush with the trunk leaves a much larger wound than cutting at the collar and takes longer to heal. Middle-aged or younger, vigorous trees can have up to one-third of the crown removed and still make a surprisingly swift comeback.
- Take large limbs off in stages. If you try to take off a large limb in one cut, it will often break before the cut is finished and strip bark from the tree. Instead, first, cut about 15 inches from the trunk. Start from the bottom and cut one-third of the way up through the limb. Make the second cut from the top down but start 2 inches further away from the trunk than the first. The branch will break away as you make the second cut. The third cut, made at the collar area, removes the stub that is left.



I'm grateful this ice storm didn't end up being as bad as storms in the past. Hopefully, this checklist isn't needed in your yard, but if it is I will hazard a guess that you might need this checklist in the future.

## Upcoming Events

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### Garden Hour Webinars:

January 8<sup>th</sup> - A Beginners Guide to Gardening in Kansas

February 5<sup>th</sup> - Maximizing Irrigation Efficiency with Drip Irrigation

### Upcoming Events:

February 8<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 am  
Sustainable Landscaping with Rain Barrel Clinic at Andover Library

February 12<sup>th</sup> at 6 pm  
Seed Starting Success at the Bradford Memorial Library

February 13<sup>th</sup> at 6 pm  
Winter Blues and Winter Greens at the Andover Library

February 22<sup>nd</sup> at 9 am  
Sustainable Landscaping with Rain Barrel Clinic at Butler Community Building

## January Garden Calendar

### Vegetables and Fruits

- Pick up and discard fallen fruit before spring arrives
- As nursery catalogs arrive, look for plants with improved insect and disease resistance
- Order fruit trees

### Flowers

- Peruse seed catalogs and prepare your seed order
- Things you can start: get unplanted spring bulbs in the ground as soon as possible
- Start seeds throughout the winter, depending on growing requirements
- Water fall planted perennials to prevent dry soil conditions
- Watch for signs of frost heaving and cover tender roots
- Replace mulch layers
- Check bulbs in storage for rot and decay. Discard damaged ones
- Curl up with a good book and learn more about gardening

### Lawns

- Avoid walking on frozen lawns. It may injure the grass
- Rake fallen leaves that pile up on the lawn to prevent suffocation of grass
- Scatter snow instead of piling it up on the lawn next to drives and walks

### Trees and Shrubs

- **Snow and ice on limbs:**
  - Gently brush heavy snow from tree and shrub limbs to reduce damage
  - Allow ice to melt naturally from limbs. Do not use water to melt the ice or attempt to knock it off
- **Pruning:**
  - Prune storm-damaged limbs quickly to reduce damage and prevent tearing of bark
  - Avoid the temptation to prune on warm winter days. You'll prevent further damage
  - Bring twigs of flowering trees and shrubs indoors to force blossoms
  - Water the fall-planted trees and shrubs when the soil is dry but not frozen
  - Watch out for rabbit damage to the bark of trees and shrubs

### Miscellaneous

- Clean and repair garden tools during the winter
- Sand and seal tool handles to prevent splinter. Apply brightly colored paint to handles. It makes them easier to spot in the garden
- Keep bird feeders and water supplies filled for the feathered friends
- Evaluate the garden and make notes to assist in next year's planning
- Take photos of the garden and analyze for year-round interest



#KSTATEGARDENHOUR

# K-STATE GARDEN HOUR

## 2025 New Year Launch

First Wednesday of the Month

12:00 PM- 1:00 PM CST

**January 8th\***- Sowing Success: Research-Based Gardening for Beginners *\*(second Wednesday)*

**February 5th-** Maximizing Water Efficiency Through Drip Irrigation

**March 5th-** Establishing a Native Prairie Stand at Home

The K-State Garden Hour is a free webinar series hosted by K-State Research and Extension horticulture staff across the state. We hope you'll join us on the first Wednesday of each month as we discuss new and relevant gardening topics. The presentations will be given live from Noon to 1:00 pm CST with a 45-minute presentation and 10-15 minutes for questions and answers. Sessions will be recorded and posted to the website after each event. Your one-time registration will allow you to participate live in any of the featured presentations within the 2025 K-State Garden Hour series.

**\*January Webinar postponed one week, until January 8th, due to the federal holiday.**



Register Here!

Please register for this free Zoom Webinar at:  
[ksre-learn.com/KStateGardenHour](https://ksre-learn.com/KStateGardenHour)

