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The Grapevine

Peach Leaf Curl

While we most commonly think of pruning peaches during the winter time, it's also important to treat for a springtime disease of peaches and nectarines called peach leaf curl. This disease is caused by a fungus that overwinters on the bark of the tree and causes issues in wet springs after mild winters.

Symptoms of peach leaf curl appear with developing leaves becoming severely distorted (thickened and puckered) with a reddish or purple coloring to the leaves. Later the disease forms spores on the leaves giving them a silvery cast before the leaves fall off. This defoliation slowly weakens the tree over a period of years. This disease only has one cycle per year and will overwinter on the tree before infecting the leaves next year. Once symptoms have occurred, we have passed the window for treatment and nothing can be done for that year. The best time to spray for peach leaf curl is in the spring after pruning but before the buds swell with warmer weather in the spring.

This disease is easy to treat with a single fungicide spray of a product with the active ingredients copper or chlorothalonil thoroughly covering the entire tree before bud break. This will kill the spores and control any infection. Pick a warm day with temperatures above 50 degrees for several hours. If peach leaf curl does occur and cause significant defoliation in the spring, be sure to thin the fruit on the infected trees to reduce the stress the tree is under.

Happy Growing!



Pruning Shrubs

Pruning is an important practice for maintaining the health, size, form, and vigor of shrubs in the landscape. All too often people fail to prune their plants when they are young and end up with overgrown, misshapen shrubs that don't bloom well or last as long as they should. Pruning can be intimidating however it is better to do a little bit at a time rather than do a major corrective pruning after years of neglect. While there are many reasons for pruning, it should not be done indiscriminately. Before you start, you should consider your goals for the plant, the time of year the plant blooms, and what issues you have had in the past.

One of the first steps is to figure out your goals for pruning. Some questions you should ask yourself include do you want to keep the plant's size in check, try to encourage more blooms, thin out the shrub for fewer disease issues, keep unique features of the plant, etc. The first step is figuring out what you want to accomplish before you start pruning rather than just going in and pruning.

Once you figure out your goals for pruning the next step is to figure out when is the best time to prune. While many shrubs can be pruned right now, there are some that we need to wait on. If your shrub blooms first thing in the spring on last year's growth, you should wait till after it blooms before pruning it. Any pruning done now will cut off this year's bloom buds. Some of the most common spring-blooming shrubs include forsythia, lilac, azalea, apricot, chokecherry, flowering plum, flowering cherry, magnolia, viburnum, and early-blooming spirea. Most other shrubs can be pruned now including later blooming spirea, dogwood, ninebark, boxwood, hydrangea, roses, potentilla, and others. The list above is not comprehensive of all species but it covers some of the most common ones.

Here are some general rules of thumb to help you get started.

- Never remove more than 25% of the shrub at any time. The exception would be when you are renovating an oversized shrub. More on that later.
- Cut out any dead or diseased branches. (Dead branches don't count toward the 25%)
- Remove suckers and water sprouts from the middle of the plant to improve airflow.
- Trim out any branches that cross or rub.
- To clear out the middle of the shrub cut out any branches that are growing into the center of the plant not outwards.

Some shrubs require special pruning practices to keep their desirable features such as colored bark. Yellow and red twigged dogwoods for example have the best color on the first year's stems so it's recommended to prune out any stems that are three years old or older to get the color on the bark. I would recommend doing this every year rather than waiting and pruning all at once.



Sometimes shrubs have gotten so overgrown that normal thinning pruning is not adequate to control them. Some shrubs will tolerate what is called "renewal or rejuvenation pruning" where all growth is taken back to about six-inch stubs. This type of pruning should be done early in the spring before new growth starts regardless of when the plant blooms in the year. Regrowth in the spring will be rapid and will soon cover the stubs. If you want a fuller shrub, prune of the tips of the new growth once it reaches 6 to 12 inches tall. Shrubs that will tolerate this method of pruning include lilac, forsythia, barberry, mock orange, spirea, viburnums, weigela, and yew. Most other conifers will not tolerate this method of pruning and should be removed.



Importance of Soil Temperatures

February is almost over and the itch to start gardening is upon us. Many people plan to get in the vegetable garden starting St. Patrick's weekend which, is the traditional time to plant potatoes in Kansas. While March 17th has been the historical start to the gardening season, it's far more important to go off of soil temperatures rather than using a date on the calendar. We all know that our weather doesn't understand how a calendar works, check this week's beautiful weather, and every gardening year is different from the one before. It's best to use a digital meat thermometer to check the soil in your vegetable garden prior to planting to ensure that the seed or potato you put into the ground will grow. If the temperatures are too cold and the soil is wet, you may have just wasted your time and money with rotting seeds. The easiest way to check the soil temperature is to use a digital thermometer (check that the temperature goes low enough) and check the soil temperature at two and four inches in the ground in several spots in your garden. Check the temperature over several days to a week to see what the average is before planting. You can also use the KS Mesonet system (<https://mesonet.k-state.edu/agriculture/soiltemp/>) to get an idea of how soil temperatures are fluctuating across the area. Check the soil temperature for those early plants but also check for those warm-season vegetables as well.



While the trusty potato is often thought of as the first plant to go into the garden several plants can go in the ground when the soil temperatures are even colder. You could be planting in your garden right now with our current soil temperatures if you wanted to. Below are some of the soil temperatures at which various vegetables can be planted and successfully grown.

- **40 Degrees Fahrenheit Group**- arugula, beet, broccoli*, Brussel sprout*, cauliflower*, kale, lettuce, pak choi*, parsnips, peas, radicchio, radishes, and spinach seed. (* indicates transplants, not seeds)
- **50 Degrees Fahrenheit Group**- Chinese cabbage, leeks, onions, swiss chard, potatoes, turnips, and cilantro.
- **60 Degrees Fahrenheit Group**- Beans, corn, cucumber, eggplant*, pepper*, and *tomato. (*indicates plants to transplant outside)
- **70 Degrees Fahrenheit Group**- Basil, okra, melons, pumpkin, squash, and sweet potato.



Fertilizing Spring Blooming Bulbs

If you planted spring flowering bulbs in the fall, you likely fertilized them to encourage root growth. Established bulbs also benefit from an application of fertilizer as new growth emerges in late winter. As a rule of thumb, a small planting of 5 to 10 bulbs should receive about a rounded teaspoon of a balanced fertilizer such as 10-10-10. A larger planting, around 100 square feet of bed, would require about two pounds of fertilizer. Bulbs that have been fertilized for a number of years with a balanced type fertilizer such as 10-10-10 do not necessarily need the additional phosphorus and potassium. If that is the case, then use about one rounded teaspoon of the

organic fertilizer blood meal. While normally I don't recommend moving leaf litter before temperatures are above 50 degrees consistently, if you have bulbs coming up in heavy leaf cover, try to scrape it away from the leaves otherwise the bulbs struggle and won't bloom as well that spring.

Upcoming Events

Garden Hour Webinars:

March 6th- Selecting and Planting Fruit Trees

April 3rd- Companion Plants in the Garden

May 1st- Understanding Water Sources for the Garden

June 5th- Growing Cut Flowers for Home & Farmer's Markets

Upcoming Classes:

February 22nd at 6 pm- Starting Seeds, Augusta Public Library

February 27th at 6 pm- Preparing for the Growing Season, Bradford Memorial Library, El Dorado

March 2nd at 10 am- Preparing for the Growing Season, Rose Hill Public Library

March 12th from 5:30 to 7 Bring seeds to swap with other gardeners at the Andover Public Library



Coffee Mug Bee Hotel

Mason bees are one of the most effective native pollinators as they are twice as effective as honeybees at pollinating native flowers. Mason bees earned their name for their proclivity to cap their nesting materials with clay mud. They usually nest in hollow stems and will create multiple cavities in the stem using mud for each egg that they lay.

Because they are tolerant of cooler nighttime temperatures they are one of the more active bee species in the early spring. For this week's activity, we can make a simple mason bee house using a coffee mug and some bamboo.

Supplies:

- Coffee Mug (straight sides work best)
- Bamboo canes or Alternative
- String or Raffia
- Branches or Clay

Instructions

1. Cut the bamboo into lengths slightly shorter than the coffee mug you are using. Cut enough to fit snugly in the coffee mug.
2. Pack the bamboo canes tightly into the coffee mug. Use the branches or clay to help pack the bamboo so it doesn't move.
3. If your mug is plain you can decorate it with paint or markers (remember mugs will hang by their handle when decorating).
4. Hang the mug from a sturdy branch using the handle or you can use string to hang the mug.



**FUN NIGHT
TUESDAY**

ANDOVER PUBLIC LIBRARY
FRIENDS



**A Gardeners'
Get-Together,
where seeds
are the currency
of connection!**



SEED EXCHANGE

Organized by Master Gardeners & Friends of the Library



Tuesday

5:30 PM

March 12th

7:00 PM

2024



**ANDOVER
PUBLIC
LIBRARY**

K-STATE
Research and Extension
Butler County

Bring a variety of seeds – vegetables, flowers, trees – in small, clearly labeled bags. Also, bring extra bags and markers for labeling the seeds you collect and trade with others. Let's make this exchange diverse and organized!

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT: tlarsen@andoverlibrary.org



YOUTH LAWN MOWING CLINIC

Thursday, March 14th, 2024
Butler Community Building
200 N. Griffith - El Dorado, KS
Registration Begins at 9:20 a.m. Clinic Will Be 9:30 - 11:30 a.m.

You Will Learn:

- ✓ Lawn Mower Safety
- ✓ Lawn Mower Maintenance
- ✓ Proper Care for Various Types of Turfgrass
- ✓ Business Skills Necessary to Run Your Own Lawn Mowing Business

PRE-REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED

CLINIC COST IS \$10

This clinic is designed for youth in 5th through 9th grade

REGISTER NOW

☎ 316-321-9660
✉ callae@ksu.edu



Butler County



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Kokedama Class

Join us for a fun evening learning the art behind the Japanese Kokedama. The experts from Simple Morea will be teaching you how to make your very own Sansevieria Kokedama to take home. The cost of this class is \$35 and pre-registration with payment is *required*. To register please visit this link:

<https://forms.gle/Lc17WbfPh9jz2h>

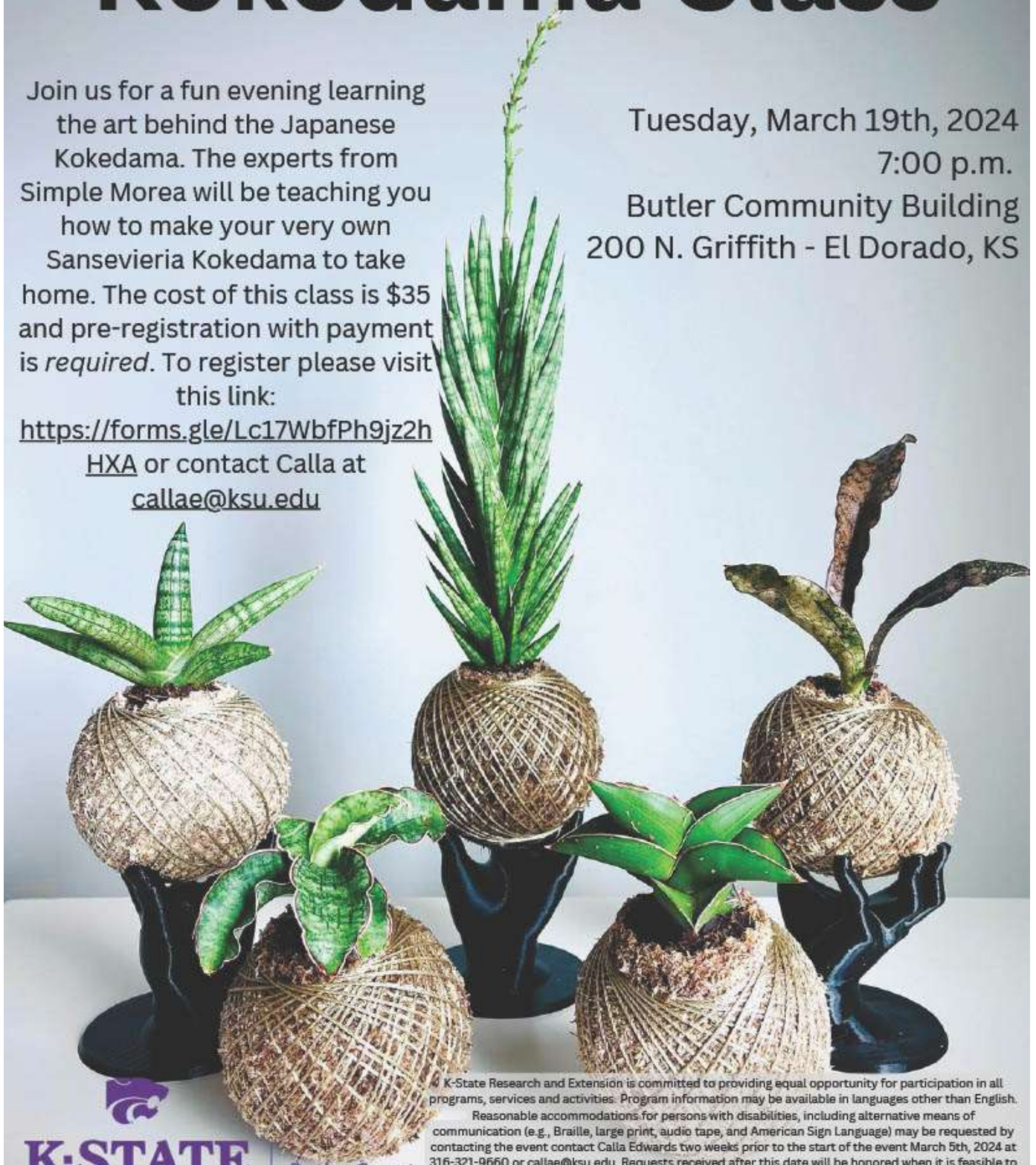
HXA or contact Calla at

callae@ksu.edu

Tuesday, March 19th, 2024

7:00 p.m.

Butler Community Building
200 N. Griffith - El Dorado, KS




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