

February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2024

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# The Grapevine

## Preparing Potatoes

It's hard to believe that we are just over two weeks away from St. Patrick's Day, but the seed potatoes have arrived in the local stores so it's almost planting time. While we typically plant potatoes on March 17<sup>th</sup>, it's important to make sure the soil temperature has been at least 50 degrees consistently over the previous week to prevent the potatoes from rotting in the cold soil. Once your soil is warm enough, it's time to buy your potatoes. For a 100-foot row of potatoes, you will need about 10 pounds of potatoes to plant. After you have your seed potatoes it's time to cut them into pieces. You will typically get multiple pieces from each potato. When cutting the tubers the pieces should be about the size of a golf ball and each one should contain at least one "eye" or a location where the potatoes will sprout from. Eyes are typically indentions in the tuber. Use a sharp knife to cut your potato into pieces. I typically let my potatoes "heal" for several days to develop a skin before planting them. I find it helps to prevent rotting in the soil. Store the seed pieces in a warm location for several days to allow them to "heal" or suberize faster. I should note that while we should plant potatoes in March, because of the colder temperatures they may take time to emerge. Don't be surprised if your potatoes don't come up till sometime in April. Potatoes are a fairly easy vegetable to grow and wonderful to eat. Happy Growing!!!



## Iris Leaf Spot Control by Ward Upham

Now is a good time to begin control measures for iris leaf spot by removing old, dead leaves. Iris leaf spot is a fungal disease that attacks the leaves and occasionally the flower stalks and buds of the iris. Infection is favored by wet periods during the spring, and emerging leaves eventually show small (1/8- to 1/4-inch diameter) spots. The borders of these spots are reddish, and the surrounding tissue first appears water-soaked, and then yellows. Spots enlarge after flowering and may coalesce. The disease tends to be worse in wet weather and may kill individual leaves. Though the disease will not kill the plant directly, repeated attacks can reduce plant vigor so that the iris may die from other stresses. Spores are passed to nearby plants by wind or splashing water.

Because this disease overwinters in old leaves, removal and destruction of dead leaves will help with control. For plants that had little infection the previous year, this may be all that is needed. Plants that were heavily infected last year should be sprayed with chlorothalonil (Bravo Fungicide, Fertilome Broad Spectrum Landscape & Garden Fungicide, Ortho Garden Disease Control, GardenTech Daconil, Bonide Fungonil, Bravo Flowable Fungicide) or myclobutanil (Immunox, Fungi-Max, Fertilome F-Stop Lawn & Garden Fungicide) starting when leaves appear in the spring. Repeat sprays every seven to 10 days for four to six sprays. Iris leaves are waxy, so be sure to include a spreader sticker in your spray to ensure good coverage.



## Leaching Houseplants

Everyone knows that someone stranded in the ocean should not drink the water. The salt content of that water will make a bad situation worse. What many people don't realize is that this same principle can harm plants. Fertilizers are salts or are converted to salts before plant take-up. They must be salts for the plant roots to absorb them. However, salt levels can build up over time and eventually may harm plant roots leading

to scorched leaves and unhealthy plants. Though this can happen under field conditions, especially in low rainfall areas, it is particularly critical with houseplants.

Houseplants have a certain soil volume that doesn't change until a plant is repotted. Salt build-up can be a crucial concern especially if the houseplants are fertilized so heavily that the plants can't use all the nutrients and fertilizer salts build up. This is especially common in winter when houseplants do not use much fertilizer due to low levels of light. Leaching an overabundance of salts can be an important practice to ensure the health of our houseplants. Leaching is not a complicated or difficult process. It consists of adding enough water to wash out excess salts. How much water is enough? Add the amount of water that would equal twice the volume of the pot. This, of course, would need to be done outside or in a bathtub or sink. Water must be added slowly so that it doesn't overflow the rim of the pot. If salt has formed a crust on the surface of the soil, remove it but don't take more than 1/4 inch of the underlying media. This may also be a good time to repot the plant.

## Upcoming Events

### Garden Hour Webinars:

March 6<sup>th</sup>- Selecting and Planting Fruit Trees

April 3<sup>rd</sup>- Companion Plants in the Garden

May 1<sup>st</sup>- Understanding Water Sources for the Garden

June 5<sup>th</sup>- Growing Cut Flowers for Home & Farmer's Markets

### Upcoming Classes:

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

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

March 8<sup>th</sup> at 11 am- Container Vegetable Gardening at Douglass Senior Center

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



## Hardening off Seedlings

February is almost over and that means it's almost time to start planting in the vegetable garden (if you haven't started already). If you planted broccoli, cauliflower, or other cole crop seeds indoors this spring it's time to start thinking about hardening those seedlings off before you plant them outside. (**Hardening off**- the process of preparing plants or transplants to be planted outdoors). Typically, you should allow 10 to 14 days to harden seedlings off and acclimate them to the sun a wind. Traditionally

we think of planting those transplants outside around March 17<sup>th</sup> with the potatoes which means we need to start the process (even if you plan to purchase transplants from the greenhouse they need to be hardened off!!!) the first weekend of March.

The first step to preparing seedlings to be planted outdoors is to reduce the amount of water and fertilizer slowly the plants are receiving. We don't want them to wilt but we want to slow down the growth rate so we don't have lush tender foliage being shocked by the change. You can also set a fan to gently blow across the seedlings during this time to get the seedlings ready for windy conditions. On warm, sunny days put the transplants outside in a shady location for a few hours during the day and bring them back indoors at night. Over approximately 10 days, slowly increase the amount of time the plants are outside and move the plants so they receive more light every day till they are in full sun for the entire day. The goal of hardening a plant off is to reduce the amount of transplant shock they have when they are planted outdoors for the spring. If the weather forecast calls for several cold days keep the plants inside and continue the process with warmer weather. Even though it is tempting, don't put the plants in an area where they will receive direct sunlight immediately. Even if they have been grown in a window, you will still burn the plants by sticking them into direct sunlight immediately.



**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



**ANDOVER  
PUBLIC  
LIBRARY**

**K-STATE**  
Research and Extension  
Butler County



**Tuesday**

**March 12th**

**2024**

**5:30 PM**

**7:00 PM**

**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](mailto: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:

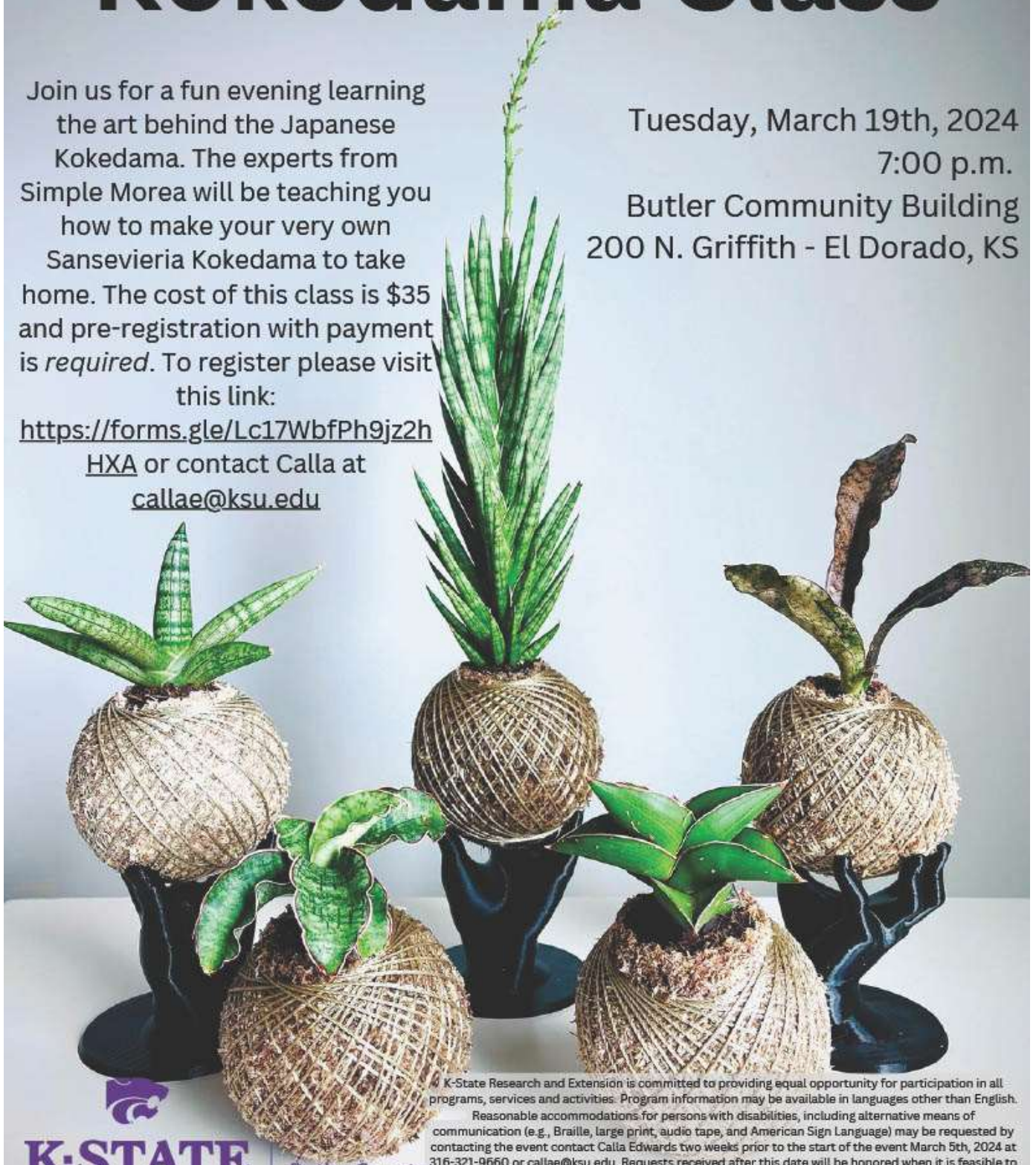
<https://forms.gle/Lc17WbfPh9jz2h>

HXA or contact Calla at [callae@ksu.edu](mailto:callae@ksu.edu)

Tuesday, March 19th, 2024

7:00 p.m.

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



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