

# Sedgwick County EXTENSION NEWSLETTER

*Knowledge for Life*

## May 2026



### Growing Something Good

A few weeks ago, I walked to the back of the Sedgwick County Extension Education Center to verify the size of our large dumpster. Just as the back door closed behind me, I realized I had forgotten my keys. Luckily, it was a gorgeous day, and the walk back to the front of the building gave me the perfect chance to take in the hundreds, probably thousands, of plant varieties beginning to bloom around the Extension Center.

As I walked, I noticed a young couple looking closely at one of the trees on the property. They shared that they had just purchased a house and were walking through the [Sedgwick County Extension Arboretum](#) to help decide which trees would best fit their new home. Using [the interactive tree map on our website](#), they were able to identify tree size, bloom time and color, moisture needs, and other characteristics to guide their decision.

I loved that they were using this tool exactly as it was intended: to make a real-life decision with research-based information, right here in our community.

That small moment was a great reminder of what Extension does best. Sometimes our work happens in classrooms, workshops, 4-H meetings, demonstration gardens, kitchens, fields, or conference rooms. And sometimes, it happens quietly on a sunny afternoon when a couple can walk through an arboretum and feel more confident about planting the right tree in the right place, to avoid a costly mistake in the future.

This month's newsletter highlights just a few of the ways Extension shows up for Sedgwick County residents by helping people make informed decisions and grow something good.

I invite you to explore our [website](#) and [Facebook page](#), and [reach out to us](#) if you are looking for information and resources on any of our topic areas.

***Kelli Anderson, Extension Director***

## Extension in Action

### Spring is the Season of Service for Sedgwick County 4-H

Spring in Sedgwick County brings more than warmer weather, it brings a renewed sense of purpose. For 4-H youth across Sedgwick County, this season is a time to step beyond their projects and into their communities through meaningful acts of service.



Recently, members of the Delano 4-H Club demonstrated what it truly means to give back. During a club meeting, youth worked together to assemble care kits for individuals experiencing homelessness. Each member contributed donated items, carefully putting together kits filled with essentials. But the impact didn't stop there; each youth took a kit home with the intention of personally delivering it to someone in need.

At the same time, the Colwich Clovers 4-H Club has been busy making a visible difference in their community. Club members spent an evening painting a welcome sign and refreshing a 4-H

bench project that will be seen and appreciated by community members for years to come. Earlier one of their members also gave back in a quieter, but equally meaningful way by sorting clothing for a local donation charity.

This simple yet powerful act reflects the heart of 4-H. It's not just about completing projects or preparing for the fair, it's about building compassion, responsibility, and commitment to others. By placing the kits directly into the hands of youth to distribute, members were given the opportunity to connect service with real human impact.

[Read more about the service work being done by 4-H youth in Sedgwick County.](#) >>>



[Click here to view upcoming Sedgwick County 4-H events.](#)

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## Strategic Summertime

As the end of the school year approaches, many families look forward to the arrival of summer.

However, this transition period can also bring important changes in routines, behavior, and the emotional well-being of both children and adults. Research in child development and family well-being shows that changes in daily structure can create stress if not managed intentionally.

During the school year, children benefit from consistent schedules that include set times for sleeping, eating, learning, and socializing. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, predictable routines help children feel secure and support their emotional and behavioral development. When summer arrives, the loss of this structure can lead to irritability, sleep difficulties, and increased screen time.

To support a healthy transition, families are encouraged to maintain some level of structure without fully replicating the school schedule—think flexible but consistent routines. For example, setting regular times for waking up, meals, and bedtime can make a significant difference. Family strengthening programs such as *Survive, Strive, Thrive* emphasize the importance of creating daily structures that promote emotional stability and reduce stress at home.

[Keep reading for more practical solutions to help your family build flexible routines and solid connection.](#) >>>

[Read this article in Spanish.](#) >>>



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## Seasonal Solutions

[Research-Based Answers to Common Canning Myths](#)



That jar on your shelf might look picture-perfect, but is it truly safe? Home canning is a wonderful way to preserve fresh foods and enjoy seasonal flavors year-round. However, not everything you've heard about canning meets today's food safety standards. Before you twist that lid or trust a family recipe, let's take a closer look at common canning myths and the facts that help keep your food safe.

**Myth:** You can safely water-bath can anything.

**Truth:** Low-acid foods, such as meat, vegetables and beans, must be pressure-canned to reach temperatures high enough to kill botulism spores. Water-bath canning is safe only for high-acid foods, such as fruits, tomatoes (with added acid), jams, jellies and pickles.

**Myth:** You can reuse lids if they look fine.

**Truth:** Standard lids should not be reused. The sealing compound is designed for one-time use. Reusing lids increases the risk of seal failure and food spoilage.

**Myth:** If the jar seals, it's safe.

**Truth:** A sealed lid means a vacuum formed, not that the food was processed safely. The heat required to seal a lid is far lower than the heat required to kill harmful bacteria.

**Myth:** My great-grandmother's canning recipe is safe — it's been used for generations.

**Truth:** Many older canning methods and recipes are now considered unsafe. Research-tested recipes ensure proper acidity, density and processing times to keep food safe.

**Myth:** If it looks and smells OK, it is safe to eat.

**Truth:** Harmful bacteria can be present in a canned item without showing any signs of smell or visual spoilage.

For questions or tested recipes, contact Sara Sawyer at 316.660.0118 or [sarasawer@ksu.edu](mailto:sarasawer@ksu.edu).

*Article adapted from the latest volume of Preserve it Fresh, Preserve it Safe, the North Central Food Safety Extension Network Newsletter.*

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## Still Working and Turning 65?

### Here's what you need to know.

Turning 65 doesn't always mean you must enroll in all parts of Medicare right away. If you're still working and covered by an employer's health plan, your options depend largely on the size of your employer and whether that coverage is considered primary.



For many people with coverage through active employment, Medicare Part B can be delayed without penalty as long as the employer plan remains primary. However, enrolling in Medicare Part A at 65 is common since it's usually premium-free. Spouses covered under a working partner's plan may have different considerations.

It's important to understand how Medicare coordinates with employer coverage and what happens when employment ends. Missing the right enrollment window can result in coverage gaps or lifetime penalties.

The **SHICK program** provides free, unbiased Medicare counseling to help you understand your choices and timing. Before making a decision, talk with a trusted counselor to review your specific situation.

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## Sedgwick County Extension to host Tractor Safety Course on May 28

Teens in Cowley, Sedgwick, and Sumner Counties will have the opportunity to complete required tractor safety certification on Thursday, May 28, 2026.

Youth ages 14 and 15 who plan to work on farms for employers other than a parent or guardian must complete this training, as mandated by the U.S. Department of Labor. The certification process includes independent coursework, an employer-administered driving test, and an in-person class focused on safe tractor and machinery operation.

The course is open to youth ages 13 and older; however, certification is not issued until age 14 and all driving requirements are met.



## **TRACTOR SAFETY**

To receive certification, students will be required to complete independent coursework and a driving test administered by their employer, along with the in-person class. The course will cover safe tractor and machine operation.



**Pre-Registration  
Required by  
Tuesday, May 26**

<https://bit.ly/TracSafe26>

The program is offered through a partnership between Cowley, Sedgwick, and Sumner County Extension offices and is designed to prepare young workers for safe and responsible agricultural employment.

**Registration is required by May 26**, and spots are filling up fast.

## **Extension News You Can Use**

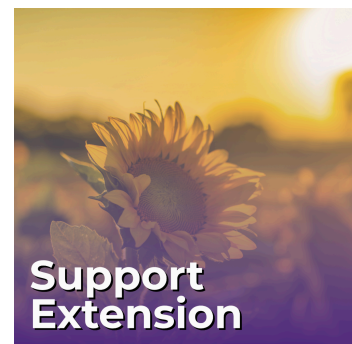
- **Do your kids need downtime from screen time?**
- **Why ants are drawn to peonies each spring**
- **Cattle producers urged to be on the lookout for tick disease**
- **Ladybug populations are abundant across Kansas this spring**
- **K-State food scientist shares tips on safely canning homegrown foods**
- **Winter injury showing in Kansas roses this spring**
- **Managing stress key to protecting health and building resilience**



## **Where You'll Find Us: Extension Events and Opportunities**

- May 6 > K-State Garden Hour: Natives vs. Cultivars**
- May 14 > High Tunnel Workshop for Specialty Crop Production**
- May 19 > Sedgwick County Wheat Plot Tour**
- May 28 > Youth Tractor Safety School and Certification**
- May 28 > Medicare Options Class**
- June 3 > K-State Garden Hour: Maximizing Garden Success**
- June 5 -7 > 2026 Sedgwick County Garden Tour**
- June 26 > Medicare Options Class @ Bel Aire Recreation Complex**

View our full list of events at [sedgwick.k-state.edu/events/](https://sedgwick.k-state.edu/events/).





This monthly e-newsletter is intended to inform citizens of events, activities and research-based information from K-State Extension Sedgwick County.

K-State Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

**K-State Extension** is a short name for the Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service, a program designed to generate and distribute useful knowledge for the well-being of Kansans. Supported by county, state, federal and private funds, the program has county extension offices, experiment fields, area extension offices and regional research centers statewide. Its headquarters is on the Kansas State University campus in Manhattan.



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