

K-STATE

Research and Extension

Sedgwick County

September 2025 *eNews*

"Knowledge for Life"

[Click here for all of our Fall 2025 events!](#)

BEST OF WICHITA!



It is time to recognize your favorite for the “Best of” in everything that makes Wichita great! Vote and support K-State Research and Extension Sedgwick County! Vote today:

<https://www.votewichitaks.com/>

Because we are branded by:

- Strengthening families & communities
- Promoting health & wellness
- Empowering youth through 4-H & education
- Supporting financial well-being
- Celebrating culture & differences
- Providing accessible, research-based programs for ALL

(K-State Research and Extension – Sedgwick County is listed under Service/Customer Service, and K-State is listed under Education/University.)



Your vote helps us keep Wichita strong, healthy, and connected! You can vote once a day from today through September 5, 2025, 5:00 pm.

[#BestOfWichita](#) [#KSRE](#) [#SedgwickCounty](#) [#strongertogether](#)

Thank you for your support.

Family Life

Don't Lose What Matters Most



Well, we are in a season of transition: summer break comes to an end, schools open their doors, and households fill with new routines. Between school supply lists, work meetings, and extracurricular activities, quality family time can easily shrink. However, these shared moments are what strengthen bonds, create memories, and give both children and adults a sense of security and belonging. So, how can we balance school, work, and family life without losing what matters most?

[Read More English](#)

[Read More Spanish](#)

4-H and Youth Development

Sedgwick County 4-H Launches 2025-2026 School Enrichment Opportunities

As the school year kicks off, the 4-H Youth Development team is excited to bring hands-on, high-energy learning back into Sedgwick County classrooms! Our School Enrichment programs are designed to spark curiosity and excitement in young learners through engaging, interactive lessons.

This year, we're offering a variety of fun and educational topics, including:

- Screenless Coding – Build problem-solving skills with our robots!
- Mindfulness – Help students develop focus and emotional wellness.
- Seasonal Favorites – Like *Embryology*, Butterfly Life Cycle and Wheat Science, perfect for enhancing classroom curriculum.

Programs are free or low cost and include all supplies, making it easy for teachers to say "yes!" to 4-H.

Want to see what's available? Explore all our offerings at: www.tinyurl.com/school-enrichment

We love partnering with educators and volunteers to inspire youth across Sedgwick County. If you're interested in sharing your time and talents as a School Enrichment volunteer educator, we'd love to hear from you!

Fill out our quick interest form here:

https://kstate.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_afJnmscKgvKBaya

Let's make this school year unforgettable together!



Horticulture

Caterpillar Pests in the Garden



This summer, you don't have to look far to find swarms of caterpillars in the lawn and garden. Just like the story book goes, these caterpillar pests are hungry and looking for their next meal. The larger these caterpillars get, the more they eat and the more damage they can do. Here is what you

need to know about the four most prevalent caterpillar pests this summer:

- **Fall Armyworm:** In the lawn agricultural fields, this caterpillar moves in mass by the hundreds to thousands, and can quickly eat down and brown out an entire lawn in under 24 hours. While Fall Armyworm usually don't kill the lawn, the damage can be severe. We've experienced two large generations so far this summer, and can likely expect one more in September. [Visit our website to learn more about identifying and controlling Fall Armyworms.](#)
- **Fall Webworms:** Up in the trees, large masses of webbing have been visible in trees around South Central Kansas. Protected inside that webbing is the Fall Webworms, actively feeding on the tree leaves. As the caterpillars grow through the month of September, so do the web nests and the amount of trees defoliated. [Visit our website for more information on Fall Webworm.](#)
- **Walnut Caterpillars:** If trees leaves are being eaten, but you don't see large web nests, walnut caterpillars may be to blame. These caterpillars feed on a wide variety of trees, and move in mass, traveling freely down the branch to consume leaves. Often times one of the best signs of Walnut Caterpillar activity is the masses of molted skins that hang from the trunk and lower branches. [Visit our website to learn more about the Walnut Caterpillar.](#)
- **Budworms:** While you're unlikely to see this caterpillar, budworms are caterpillars that actively feed on annual flowers such as petunia and geranium. They eat the flowers from inside the bud, resulting in flowers that never bloom. [Visit our website to learn more about Budworms.](#)

If you have any questions about these or any gardening topics, feel free to contact our free Garden Hotline. You can call us at (316)-660-0190, send an email to sgemghotline@gmail.com, or stop by in person with a plant sample. Our Garden Hotline is staffed Monday-Friday, 9:00 am - 12:00 pm and 1:00-4:00 pm. [Click here for more information on the Garden hotline.](#)



K-STATE GARDEN HOUR

Shrubs That Thrive in Kansas

Wednesday, September 3rd 12:00PM -1:00PM CST

Picking the right plant for the right place is crucial to have plants that will last in our challenging Kansas climate. Learn the best shrub varieties suited for the state's unique climate challenges, including heat and drought tolerance. Join Dr. Jason Griffin, Woody Ornamentals Horticulture Extension Specialist and Director of the John C. Pair Horticulture Center, as he highlights some great shrubs to incorporate into your landscape.



Register Here!



Please register for this free Zoom Webinar at:
ksre-learn.com/KStateGardenHour



September K-State Garden Hour Webinar

Picking the right shrub is a critical step in having a successful landscape. Not only do you have to consider size, sunlight, and moisture requirements of the plant, but the shrubs you select must also be tough enough to handle the extremes of our Kansas climate, including temperature extremes, drought, and flooding. Join the next K-State Garden Hour webinar on Wednesday, September 3, 2025 to learn more about "Shrubs That Thrive in Kansas". Join Dr. Jason Griffin, as he highlights some of the shrub varieties best suited for the state's unique climate challenges. This free webinar will be presented live from Noon to 1pm, and recorded and available online. Register for upcoming webinars or find past recordings online at:

www.ksre-learn.com/KStateGardenHour

Aging and Medicare



Medicare Open Enrollment

Oct. 15 - Dec. 7

To schedule your appointment,

call us at 316.660.0126

Beginning August 1st, 2025



This Project was supported in part by grant numbers 2401KSMISH and 90SAPG0161 from the US Administration for Community Living, Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C. 20201. Grantees undertaking projects with government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their findings and conclusions. Points of view or opinions do not, therefore, necessarily represent official ACL policy.

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Counseling is provided by the
Senior Health Insurance for Kansas
program (SHICK)

Medicare Open Enrollment: Appointments Filling Fast

Medicare's Open Enrollment is just around the corner — October 15 through December 7. This is the one time each year when people with Medicare can review their current coverage and make changes for 2026. At Sedgwick County Extension, our trained SHICK counselors are already booking appointments, and spots are filling quickly. If you want to review your prescription drug plan or Medicare Advantage plan, don't wait — call now to secure a time that works for you.

To make the most of your appointment, bring your Medicare card, a list of your current prescriptions (including dosages), and your MyMedicare.gov login information if you have one.

Remember: Open Enrollment is for people already on Medicare. If you're turning 65 soon or retiring, you may have your own special enrollment period — and we can help with that too. Call **316-660-0126** today.

Local Food



THE DEMO GARDEN BLOG

Gardening & Growing in the Sedgwick County Extension Master Gardeners Demonstration Garden!

Sedgwick County Extension Master Gardener Demo Garden Blog

Did you know that the Sedgwick County Extension Education Center features outdoor demonstration gardens, including a dedicated fruit and vegetable garden? The Demonstration Garden is an excellent way to explore new and interesting plant varieties, learn how to maximize space in your garden, and discover what is currently in season locally. To stay updated on our garden's activities, follow our Master Gardener Demonstration Garden blog at www.thedemogarden.org.

Harvesting Pumpkins, Winter Squash, and Sweet Potatoes

Sedgwick County has received a brief taste of fall in recent weeks, with cooler afternoons in the seventies and a few nights dipping into the mid-fifties. That hint of autumn has many people



turning their thoughts toward fall favorites like pumpkins and winter squash. The weather not only stirs up the seasonal mood, but it also sets the stage for the upcoming harvest season. For pumpkins and winter squash, maturity shows

when the rind has toughened enough that it cannot be punctured easily with a fingernail. The stem should be hard and dry rather than moist or leaky. When these signs are in place, fruit can be cut from the vine with a sharp knife or pruning shears. Harvesting is only the first step, though. To maximize storage life, pumpkins and squash should be cured in a warm, dry location—ideally between seventy and eighty degrees—for two to three weeks. This process allows the rind to toughen and helps seal the fruit against decay. After curing, the fruit can be stored in a cool, dry place such as a basement, where temperatures remain between fifty and sixty degrees. Under those conditions, pumpkins retain their bright color, and winter squash can last four to eight months.

Sweet potatoes develop steadily throughout the season and don't lose quality if they grow larger than expected. Most are ready for harvest between mid-September and mid-October, once the fleshy roots have had time to enlarge. It's important to dig them before the first freeze arrives. Cutting or chopping the vines a few days before harvest makes digging easier, and after the roots are lifted from the soil, they should be left in the field to air dry for a few hours before being gathered. Because the skins are tender, roots should be handled gently and placed in baskets or boxes to avoid bruising.

Curing is just as critical for sweet potatoes as it is for squash and pumpkins, though the process differs slightly. Sweet potatoes need to be kept in a warm, humid environment—about 85 to 90°F with high humidity—for one to two weeks. This treatment improves flavor and significantly extends storage life. After curing, they should be stored at a steady 55°F. Temperatures below 50°F will cause poor flavor, dark colors, and shortened storage life, so it is best to keep them in a space where conditions can remain stable. If the roots are washed before

curing, they must be dried carefully and handled with care. Pumpkins, winter squash, and sweet potatoes not only provide the comfort foods we look forward to each fall, but when harvested and stored properly, they can brighten our tables all the way through winter. For more information on Pumpkins, Winter Squash, and Sweet Potatoes, check out The Kansas Garden Guide.

https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/kansas-garden-guide_S51.pdf

Plant A Row Donations Ending September 14, 2025



Donations for the Plant A Row Program will no longer be accepted after September 14, 2025. However, there are still a few weeks left to donate excess produce to those in our community who lack access to fresh fruits and vegetables. Find a drop-off location nearest you today!

- Botanica, the Wichita Gardens, 701 Amidon St.
- Brady Nursery, 11200 W. Kellogg
- Hillside Feed and Seed, 1805 S. Hillside
- Johnson's Garden Center - East, 6225 E. Shadybrook
- Johnson's Garden Center - West, 2707 W. 13th St.
- Mr. Mc's Market, 1901 E. 21st St.
- Valley Feed & Seed, 1903 S. Meridian
- Woodard Mercantile - Andover, 1313 E. US-54
- Woodard Mercantile - Maize, 4160 N. Maize Rd.

Thank you for supporting our community and K-State Extension programming!

Health and Nutrition

September is National

Fruits and Veggies Month

Submitted by Sara Sawyer. MPH, RD, LD

Do you ever get tired of hearing, “You need to eat more fruits and vegetables”? If broccoli or eggplant don’t exactly excite you, you’re not alone. The good news is there are plenty of ways to enjoy more produce—sometimes it just takes a little creativity.



Here are a few easy ideas to boost your fruit and vegetable intake, even for the pickiest eaters:

- Pair them with foods you already enjoy, like adding a slice of tomato to your burger or mixing mushrooms and peppers into your omelet.
- Not a fan of mushy vegetables? Try them raw, shredded, roasted, or stir-fried for a fresh twist.
- Elevate simple veggies with flavor—think olive oil and garlic, a splash of balsamic vinegar, a squeeze of lemon, or fresh herbs.
- Keep “fast food” on hand—only in the healthy sense. Cherry tomatoes, snap peas, apples, oranges, and bananas make quick, ready-to-go snacks.
- Add fruit or veggies to everyday meals, like avocado on toast or berries in cereal or oatmeal.

For quick recipes and inspiration, visit fruitsandveggies.org. To explore what’s in season locally, check out our [Buying Guide for Kansas-Grown Fruits and Vegetables](#).

Get Involved!

K-State Research and Extension — Sedgwick County exists to serve the people of south central Kansas. Our mission thrives because of community support. We offer many opportunities for volunteers to offer their time

Volunteer Opportunities



and skills, from gardening to youth development to programming support.

[Learn more about ways to support our programming and the needs of the community.](#)

Looking for an event space?



Consider having your next event at the Extension Education Center!

[Read more](#)

ExtensionEducationFoundation.org

Sedgwick County

Please help support Extension community services in Sedgwick County through the Extension Education Foundation, Inc.

When you shop Dillons Food Stores, Dillons will make a donation to the Extension Education Foundation, Inc.

1. Go to Dillons.com/communityrewards
2. Log into your Dillons account
3. Search for NPO number CY612
4. Click enroll



Mail-in donation form

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service

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

K-State Research and Extension - Sedgwick County

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

7001 W. 21st St. N., Wichita, Kansas 67205

K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer. K-State Research and Extension is committed to making its services, activities, and programs accessible to all participants. If you have special requirements due to a physical, vision or hearing disability, please contact:

Dr. Brantley, PhD, Extension Director, Sedgwick County 316-660-0105

K State Research and 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 K State campus in Manhattan. For more information, visit www.ksre.ksu.edu



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