

A vibrant garden scene featuring a stone path that winds through various plants. In the foreground, there are large, lush purple hydrangea flowers. To the right, a tall, spiky blue grass-like plant stands out. The background is filled with more greenery and colorful flowers, including purple and yellow blooms. The overall atmosphere is bright and fresh, typical of a spring garden.

Spring

Home &

Garden

April 27, 2022 | A SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT TO THE

MARIES
COUNTY

Advocate

PAGES 1B - 24B

If your yard could talk: Six things it wants you to know

Backyarding is the trend born out of necessity during the pandemic as people moved indoor activities including working, entertaining, exercising and vacationing into their family backyards. Homeowners invested in their outdoor areas in record amounts, spending time, sweat equity and money to ensure they utilized every square inch of their yards for expanded living space and an oasis for relaxation and stress relief.

According to the recent “Yards Study” Harris Poll, more than two-thirds of Americans who have a yard (69 percent) say doing yard work — either maintaining it or adding/updating features — is one of the ways they like to de-stress these days. This is especially true among parents of kids under 18.

“Over the last few years, families have used their yards more than ever before, and the Harris Poll indicates a vast majority of those who have a yard plan to invest even more in their yard in the coming year,” says Kris Kiser, president & CEO of the TurfMutt Foundation. “Since backyarding is now part of our everyday

lives, we have some advice — from the yard, if you will — for families to take into account this spring.”

The TurfMutt Foundation offers these messages from your yard — if your lawn and landscape could talk.

Plant more, early and often

Adding trees, bushes, grass and flowering plants is a good yard investment, but they often take time to grow. Plant as early as recommended to enjoy the benefits faster.

Remember the Golden Rule of backyarding: “right plant, right place.” Location, maintenance, sunlight and watering needs should all be considered, as well as your climate zone.

You work on me, and I work for you

The more time you spend in your yard, the more health and well-being benefits gained. Backyarding means exploring, appreciating and spending time in your own personal patch of nature, which reduces stress, improves memory, boosts heart health, and offers a host of other benefits



for our minds and bodies.

I have environmental superpowers

Family yards are environmental superheroes — producing oxygen, absorbing carbon, and capturing and filtering rainwater. By becoming a steward of your living landscapes, you can have a positive impact on our environment and help mitigate the effects of climate change on a micro level.

You’re not the only one who depends on me

Your yard is an important part of the connected ecosystem, and adding flowering plants, trees and shrubs give wildlife and pollinators food and shelter. Check your climate zone for landscaping options that support the birds, bees, butterflies and other wildlife that call your neighborhood home.

Please care for me properly

Only water when necessary. Over-watered grass gets lazy, growing roots in a horizontal pattern. With less water, grass sends its roots deeper — vertically — seeking water. By working harder, grass does a better job of sequestering carbon and releasing oxygen. Install watering solutions — like smart controllers on irrigation systems — that helps conserve water while maintaining your backyard.

Cutting height

Additionally, find the just-right length to cut your turfgrass (typically between 2-3 inches).

Sign up for Mutt Mail, a monthly e-newsletter with backyarding tips and all the news from the TurfMutt Foundation. To learn more about creating the yard of your dreams, visit TurfMutt.com.

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The basics of container gardening

Gardening is a rewarding hobby that has been linked to health benefits like reduced stress and improved mental well-being.

Gardening also can lead to an inviting home landscape full of attractive blooms and/or delicious foods.

Backyard gardens have long been planted after clearing a plot of land, tilling and amending the soil, and planting rows of favorite crops. However, gardening can be less labor-intensive and even more successful when people consider the many benefits of container gardening.

What is container gardening?

As its name implies, container gardening is growing plants inside of containers. These containers can be flower pots, rectangular deck boxes or even large raised garden beds.

Pros to container gardening

One of the advantages of container

See **Container Gardening**, Page 5B



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Container Gardening • from page 4B

gardening is that plants can be moved in and out of sunlight to ensure the right growing conditions. This isn't as easily achieved when gardens are stationary. Also, beginner gardeners may be more able to control soil conditions inside of a small container rather than a vast ground-based garden, which will require a good deal of manual labor. Pots and boxes also can be grouped together to create eye-popping displays, usually at lower costs than the sheer volume of plants that would be needed to fill out an expansive landscape.

Cons to container gardening

Container garden plants will not have direct access to the ground, so they need gardeners to create the ideal growing conditions. Developing the right care formula can be challenging. The home and garden resource The Spruce says that drainage is an important factor in container gardening, and most containers do not offer enough drainage holes. If water cannot escape the soil, the roots of the plants can rot and die. It's not enough to add stones or gravel to the bottom of containers. Drill additional holes in the bottom (1/2-inch in diameter for small or medium-sized pots; one inch in diameter for larger pots). Also, be sure to check

on soil moisture so that watering can be adjusted. During hot stretches, plants may need to be watered more frequently.

Plan for plants that play well

Grouping plants together can create visually stunning combinations. However, it is important to choose plants that require the same amount of light and moisture. Look at plant tags when visiting the garden center and select complementary plants, or ask a store employee. Mixing different plant shapes, colors and leaf textures, as well as plants of various heights, can help containers look filled out.

Feed plants accordingly

Plants need nutrition to thrive in containers. Quality potting mixes will contain fertilizers, but nutrition will wane over time. Every couple of weeks, container plants will need either fresh potting mix or granular fertilizer added to feed them. Oregon State University Extension Services suggests using a slow-release fertilizer or worm castings several times throughout the season.

Container gardening is a great way to add plants to smaller patios, reduce the workload involved in maintaining expansive gardens, and customize conditions for optimal growth.

“Love is the flower of life, and blossoms unexpectedly and without law, and must be plucked where it is found, and enjoyed for the brief hour of its duration.”

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Tech to make gardening more fun

Many people take to the great outdoors to escape the increasingly tech-driven daily grind. Though that's an understandable perspective, gardeners who aren't deploying tech in their home gardens could be missing out on a host of benefits that could help their plants, flowers and vegetables thrive.

Devices like smartphones and tablets have made many aspects of life easier and more efficient, and various tech products can do the same when working in the garden.

- **Plant monitor:** Plant monitors are sensors that can keep tabs on the health of plants and deliver that information to gardeners. Plant monitors often connect to smartphones via Bluetooth and can deliver information on the amount of heat, light and water a plant is getting. Sensors vary in price, and some will provide more information than others. But these sensors are ideal for gardeners who love their plants but often forget to check up on them each day.

- **Garden camera:** Critters and insects are the bane of many gardeners' existence. Determining just what is nibbling away at flowers and plants isn't always so easy, as many animals are savvy enough to restrict their dining to the middle of the night and insects are so small they can be hard to spot. Garden cameras can serve as the watchmen of a garden and gardeners can review footage to determine just who

is compromising all of their hard work. They can then use that knowledge to remedy the situation and give their plants a better chance to thrive.

- **Weather station:** Even the most seasoned gardeners cannot document the conditions outside as effectively as a good weather sensor. Weather sensors track conditions such as temperature, relative humidity and air quality. This information can then be paired with irrigation devices to ensure plants get all the care they need to thrive throughout the season.

- **Garden hub:** Avid gardeners have traditionally had to arrange for neighbors or loved ones to tend to their plants when they leave home for vacation or weekend getaways. Garden hubs can take care of that by pairing with smart irrigation systems that ensure plants are watered even when no one is home. Certain hubs even gather and analyze local weather conditions to develop a watering schedule to ensure plants thrive. These hubs aren't just handy when on vacation, as they can be great for gardeners who want to know things about their plants that are not apparent to the naked eye.

People may see their gardens as welcome respites from their devices. But garden gadgets can help plants thrive and make time in the garden that much more enjoyable.





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The buzz about bees

Warm weather and extra hours of sunlight spark flowering trees and plants to bloom anew. This is the time of year when the air is sweet with the aroma of blossoms and the familiar hum of insects can be heard all around.

Not all “bugs” are the same this time of year. While you probably won’t want ants invading your backyard grill fest, the presence of bees nearby can be a good thing — even if those curious yellow-and-black critters get a little close for comfort from time to time. That’s because almost

90 percent of wild plants and 75 percent of the leading global crops depend on animal pollination, indicates the World Wildlife Federation.

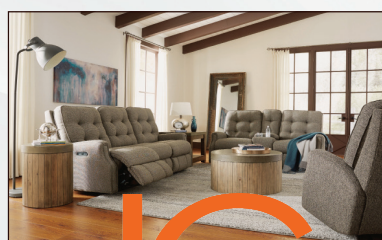
Bees are remarkable creatures in small packages. The following are some bee facts to buzz about, courtesy of the WWF, Save the Bees™, NASA, and the Texas A&M University Honey Bee Information Site.

- There are roughly 20,000 species of bees around the world. Most of them are solitary bees.
- Bees have five eyes. Two of the eyes are large compound eyes with hexagonal facets. The other three are small, simple eyes.
- Honeybees have a move called the “waggle dance.” It is a clever way of communicating to tell them where to go to find the best sources of food.
- Bees can carry up to 122 times their body weight in pollen and nectar.
- Bumblebees leave footprint scents behind. They are able to distinguish between their own scents, the scent of a relative and the scent of a stranger as they look for food. They also can avoid flowers already visited.
- Should a queen bee perish, the hive workers will select a new young larva

and feed it a special food called “royal jelly.” The larva will develop into a fertile queen.

- Bees flap their wings 190 to 200 times per second. They can fly up to 15 miles per hour.
 - Female bees can sting; males do not. Losing the stinger will cause the bee to die. The honeybee only can sting once because its stinger is barbed. Bumblebees and hornets can sting multiple times because they have smooth stingers.
 - It can require nectar from two million flowers to make one pound of honey.
 - Many bees are not aggressive. Simply moving away from them can prevent a person from being stung. Generally, bumblebees and honey bees will only sting by accident or if a nest is being disrupted.
 - Wasps are different from bees in that they are mostly known to be predators. They eat other insects and often food that people eat, which is why wasps are more likely to be found around your cookout. Bees tend to be covered in hair, while wasps (which include yellow jackets) are smooth.
- Bees are remarkable creatures and should be celebrated as the weather warms up.

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Solar energy's growing popularity draws more homeowners with questions



BY EDWARD GEHLERT
REPUBLICAN STAFF WRITER
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Solar energy as an alternative source to traditional power generation is becoming more popular in the United States, primarily due to the long-term savings it brings to the average household and the sense of self-reliance it imparts to those utilizing the technology.

Three Rivers Electric Cooperative Manager of Member Services Rich Eisterhold noted that the government is talking about alternative energies, including solar and wind.

"I think that puts it at the front of people's minds, and prices have fallen within the last several years," said Eisterhold, a solar power enthusiast who has been with Three Rivers for 34 years.

The dropping cost of equipment and installation of solar energy systems is one of the deciding factors for people who have been toying with the idea of using solar panels to supplement their energy needs.

"One of the earlier systems installed on a home east of here, after a Department of Agriculture grant, came to a net cost of \$5.50 per watt," said Eisterhold. "So, a 10,000-watt

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system cost them \$55,000. Today, that same system costs less than \$3 per watt.”

Damage to such expensive equipment is a concern for many homeowners. Though modern solar panels are durable, damage can still occur, but homeowner’s insurance will cover this in many cases. “Solar panels are pretty tough,” said Eisterhold. “They have a tempered glass cover. Solar panels are 100 percent capacity at day one. There is a linear depreciation, so they depreciate half to one percent annually. After so many years of depreciation, if hail destroys them, your homeowner’s insurance will replace them.”

According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA), solar power accounted for 3 percent of U.S. electricity generation from all sources in 2021 and is expected to increase to 20 percent by 2050. For perspective, according to the Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA), roughly 4 percent of homes in the U.S. are powered by solar energy.

Renewable sources of electricity generation accounted for almost 20 percent of the total amount produced in 2021. These sources included solar, wind, hydro, biomass, and geothermal. By comparison, other traditional sources of power generation measured were nuclear (19 percent), coal (22 percent), and natural gas (38 percent). Petroleum sources came in at .5 percent and included petroleum liquids, petroleum coke, other gases, and hydroelectric pumped storage.

When homeowners are researching what system is best for them, Eisterhold advises them first to decide if they want an on-grid or off-grid connection.

“When you’re off-grid, your solar is completely independent of anything Three Rivers Electric,” he said. “You put your solar system in, put some outlets in, and whatever you plug into those outlets only works when the solar is there or if you have solar and battery.

“If you grid-tie, which is the other option, you buy a special inverter that has the ratings we require,” Eisterhold continued. “Once it’s installed, you’ll connect it directly to your electrical system, the electrical panel at your house.

“When the inverter is connected to the grid, it provides everything to the house first,” Eisterhold added. “If your house needs more, it will get solar and Three Rivers at the same time. If your house needs less than what solar’s producing, it will go backward through a special meter that calculates on a monthly basis what you take from the grid and what you send to the grid via excess power. At the end of the month, we’ll bill you the difference between what you used and what you generated.”

Eisterhold noted the inverter is smart enough to know that it’s tied to the grid. “If the grid fails, quits, or goes on outage, the inverter shuts down in three cycles,” he explained. “It does this in a blink. It shuts off, so it’s not generating while we’re on outage. This protects us, it protects the linemen ... it protects everybody.”

However, being on-grid and pushing power back to your electric company does not mean you will get a check each month if you generate more energy than you use.

“Homeowners will never get a check in the state of Missouri,” said Eisterhold. “We follow state statutes. That statute says we will give you a credit. If you have excess energy, we’ll take the avoided cost — the average cost of fuel spent by our generators, typically two-and-a-half cents — at the end of the month, if you’ve generated 100 more than your house needed, we will give you a credit of \$2.50 that will stay on that account for that month and will expire if you haven’t used it after 12 billing periods.”

Eisterhold is referring to Missouri State Statute 386.890, commonly called the “Net Metering and Easy Connection Act,” which outlines that when a renewable energy system is connected to the grid, the customer receives full retail credit for their generation to offset their electricity bill. Any excess generation beyond their monthly usage is credited to the customer at a wholesale rate.

Another deciding factor for those contemplating solar energy is the tax rebate that is still available from the government.

“Through the end of 2022, the rebate is 26 percent,” said Eisterhold of the investment tax credit (ITC), also known as the federal solar tax credit, adding that in 2023, that number will drop down to 22 percent.

In 2024, the credit will only be available to owners of new commercial solar energy systems, with credit being phased out for residential solar energy systems.

In December 2020, Eisterhold installed solar panels on his home. He decided on a solar system because he had always been fascinated by solar technology and wanted to experiment with it.

“In my particular case, it was new, and it was cool, and I was interested,” he said. “I also knew if I spent the money, I would get some kind of return out of it. For me, it was an experiment.”

Eisterhold’s solar energy system is capable of supplying his home with 100 percent

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Signs a roof needs repair or replacement

Many homeowners believe a roof is a once-in-a-lifetime investment. But roof damage can force homeowners to replace a roof regardless of how much time has lapsed since the roof was installed.

The average life span of a roof depends on when the roof was installed and the materials it is made from. According to Central Homes Roofing, three-tab shingles may last between 10 and 15 years, architectural shingles can endure for 15 to 20 years, and tile may last between 35 and 50 years. RPS Metal Roofing indicates a metal roof may last as long as 70 years. However, climate and color of the roof also will affect its longevity.

Homeowners would be wise to consider these factors when determining if a roof is in need of repairs or replacement.

- **Roof age:** The age of the roof is a major factor in determining if it will need to be replaced or if repairs can be made to isolated damage. Individuals who live in neighborhoods where neighbors are now replacing roofs will likely find it is time to

consult a roofing company. Homeowners also can check to see if they have any receipts that indicate the roof's installation date so they have an idea about its age.

- **Grain in gutters:** Roofing shingles are designed to overlap, and sealant keeps them steady. Friction, weather and atmospheric changes can impact sealant and cause degradation. Gutters with grainy material in them could indicate worn out sealant and shingles.

- **Ridge damage:** Ridges are spots where two separate areas meet and often are important to the structural integrity of the roof. If the roof ridge is showing signs of wear, it could be time to repair or replace it.

- **Curled shingle edges:** If shingle tabs are curled or cupped, the shingles may need to be replaced. But if curling is extensive, a whole new roof may need to be installed.

- **Bald spots or lost portions of the roof:** Missing granules and missing shingles are reasons to consult a pro for a roof evaluation.

- **Leaks indoors:** Homeowners who



find dark streaks or moisture in the attic may discover that water is penetrating the roof underlay. Water often comes in around chimney flashing. Other water signs are blistering and bubbling in walls.

- **Incoming light:** Look up through the attic and see if any light is coming through the roof, which may indicate

there are cracks or holes in the roof.

- **Aesthetics:** If a homeowner doesn't like the look of the roof from a design standpoint, a replacement also may be warranted.

Roofs can last many years, but the presence of certain signs indicates replacement or repairs will be necessary.

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of its power needs. For the average home to achieve this feat, the cost may seem daunting to many.

“Without a lifestyle change, it’s well over \$100,000 because of the batteries, which are very costly,” said Eisterhold. “With a lifestyle change, and if you’re willing to live without backup heating means, etc., I would guess a system that was \$50,000 with some batteries would accomplish a lot for your home.”

These up-front costs make most people nervous about installing solar energy in their homes or business. Still, Eisterhold says that if the systems are sized correctly with the right specifications, they will eventually more than cover the initial investment.

“Essentially, we charge \$.085,” he said. “We have to make some assumptions, but if you use everything your system generates, and the system is 10,000 watts, and your net cost after the tax credit is \$20,000, that system will generate about \$1,100 per year. So, that’s 16-18 years, and it’s paid for itself.”

Eisterhold cautions everyone to do their research before deciding on the system they feel is right for them and encourages people to visit www.threeriverselectric.com, where a lot of information is already provided.

“Solar works great if it is done correctly,” Eisterhold. “There are rules to follow. We have a list of rules on our website. We have a lot of information under Net Metering in the Programs tab. It tells you how to do your research and what considerations you want to make. If

you follow these steps, it will give you a lot of information. We are always here to help.”

Eisterhold also recommends pwwatts.nrel.gov (without www), which is operated by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL), a national laboratory of the U.S. Department of Energy, Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, operated by the Alliance for Sustainable Energy, LLC.

The website allows users to pinpoint their exact location and provides information on the type of system specifications that should be used and the estimated power generation per year.

“Our experience with the NREL website shows that it is pretty accurate,” said Eisterhold. “Typically, I would just use the zip code for the location. Generally, you’re just looking for the latitude, which we’re at 38 degrees.”

It is important to note that Three Rivers Electric does not install solar panels or any equipment for the system, including the inverters.

“If you are tying to the grid, our involvement is compliance,” said Eisterhold. “You send us your information, and we review your application and your drawings. If they meet our criteria, we’ll approve the installation. Once we approve, the installer goes out and does his work with the homeowner. When it’s all finished, they’ll call us back for a final review. We go out to the site and review that what you told us you were going to do you actually did, and if they match, we will set a special me-

ter that measures both power sources.”

One of the most important choices a property owner will make is selecting who will be the installer of their system. Eisterhold warns that there are a lot of “fly-by-night” companies and strongly encourages using local installers.

Currently, there are just over 100 users of solar energy across Cole, Franklin, Gasconade, Maries, Miller, Moniteau, and Osage, the seven counties serviced by Three Rivers Electric Cooperative. This number is only for Three Rivers accounts and does not include Ameren customers.

The first modern silicon photovoltaic (PV) cell was developed by Gerald Pearson, Daryl Chapin, and Calvin Fuller in 1954 at Bell Labs in the United States. These were the first solar cells that had the ability to convert enough energy from the sun into electrical power to run common equipment of the time period.

Today, solar energy continues to see advancements in the field. New materials are constantly being developed and integrated with emerging technologies to create systems that are affordable, efficient, and durable.

Though the technology has been around for more than 65 years, there has been a resurgence of interest lately in solar energy as a cheap and renewable resource.

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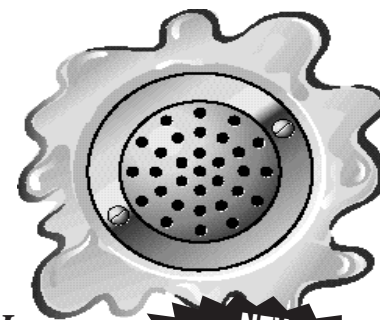
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Missouri Tomato School set for May 19, 20

The Missouri Tomato School will be Thursday and Friday, May 19 and 20, at Woods Chapel United Methodist Church, 4725 NE Lakewood Way, Lee's Summit, Mo.

This state-wide tomato school brings together top experts in the field with regional experts and successful local tomato farmers to teach growers and serious hobbyists how to better grow Missouri's top selling vegetable. Out-of-state growers and ag educators are welcome.

Day one begins at 8:45 and will be in a socially-distanced classroom format. Day 1 presentations include: Tomato nutrient management, top ten best practices for tomato harvest and postharvest storage, tomato disease management, hydroponic tomato cultivation, beneficial insects vs pests, growing tomatoes in protective structures, using essential oils to control pests and comparing yields of grafted and non-grafted tomatoes

Day two will be a farm tour with on-site education at Redfearn Farm in Independence from 9 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. This conference features national and regional presenters including:

See **Tomatoes**, Page 13B

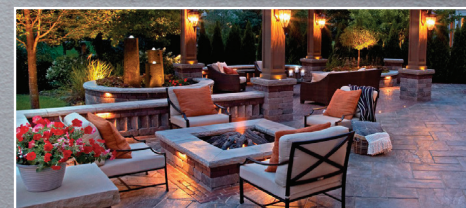
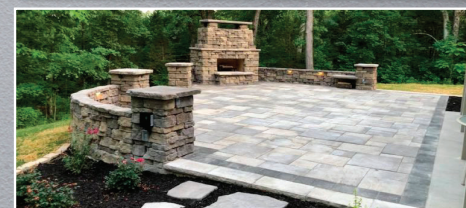
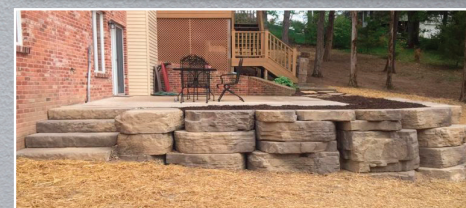
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Tomotes • from page 12B

Dr. Rick Snyder, Mississippi State University — Dr. Snyder recently retired after serving 33 years as Extension/ Research Professor at the Truck Crops Experiment Station in Crystal Springs, Miss. His educational background includes a B.S. from the University of Connecticut, an M.S. from Ohio State University, and Ph.D. from Cornell University, all in horticulture. His areas of specialty include commercial production of greenhouse tomatoes and other vegetables, as well field vegetables. Dr. Snyder hosted the well-known Mississippi Greenhouse Tomato Short Course for 28 years and is a highly sought speaker on all aspects of greenhouse tomato production. He continues to be a greenhouse columnist for American Vegetable Grower Magazine after 29 years and still enjoys speaking to growers' groups and doing some greenhouse consulting during his retirement.

Dr. T. Casey Barickman — Dr. Barickman is an Associate Research Professor at Mississippi State University's North Mississippi Research and Extension Center specializing in plant physiology and vegetable production systems. Dr. Barickman has over 16 years of experience in horticulture research studying plant physiology. His research focuses on environmental stress and genetic interactions that affect plant growth and development, vegetable nutritional quality, and nutrient management for vegetable production systems. Dr. Barickman's lab blends applied and basic research to provide science-based management recommendations to vegetable growers in Mississippi.

Registration for the in person program is \$30. Registration includes lunch on day one, all presentations and handouts, and the farm tour on day two.

Complete conference information and a registration form are available at <http://www.webbcityfarmersmarket.com/training> or by calling 417 483-8139.

The Missouri Tomato Conference is sponsored by the Webb City Farmers Market, University of Missouri Extension, and Lincoln University Co-operative Extension. It is underwritten by a specialty crops grant from the Missouri Department of Agriculture.



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All-natural ways to protect food gardens from pests

Homeowners frequently enhance their outdoor living spaces with attractive plants and trees. When that greenery also produces food, the results can be both beauty and bounty.

People who plant vegetable gardens and fruit trees in their yards can be blessed with an abundance of fresh pickings once it's time to harvest. In fact, many home gardeners may have visions of warm evenings pulling vegetables right out of the garden and tossing them on the grill or in salads. But insects and animals enjoy fresh produce just as people do. The joy of harvesting from a garden can be diminished when unwanted guests have gotten there first.

Homeowners can employ these all-natural strategies to protect their fruits and vegetables from lawn pests and critters.

- Plant gardens in raised beds. Though they're not a fool-proof deterrent, raised beds can eliminate some garden infiltration by small critters that come up and under from the ground. A raised garden bed can deter rabbits, gophers, groundhogs, slugs, and some other crawling



pests. Raised beds also are ergonomical and easily accessible.

- Prepare homemade insecticide. The environmental information site Treehugger provides information on making a homemade insecticide from vegetable oil and a mild soap. Use one cup of oil with one tablespoon of soap (such as Dr Bronner's castile soap). Add this mixture to one quart of water in a spray bottle. This concoction can eradicate aphids, mites, thrips, and more by coating insects' bodies and effectively suffocating them.

Soap-and-water sprays or even neem oil sprays work similarly.

- Sprinkle diatomaceous earth. Diatomaceous earth, commonly known as DE, is an abrasive powder comprised of fossilized algae diatoms. It's commonly used as a filter medium in swimming pools, but also makes an effective pesticide. The material's abrasive and absorbent qualities draw moisture out of insects, essentially dehydrating them to death. DE can be sprinkled around the base of plants, but will need to be reapplied after rain and

watering.

- Space out plants. One way to reduce insect or animal pest numbers is to ensure ample space between plants. Tightly planted crops create a breeding ground for fungal diseases and also provide hiding spots and warmth for pests. Leaving room between plants can help avoid these issues, according to Gardening Channel.

- Use row covers or garden mesh. Specialized covers and meshes protect fruit and vegetables against insects and animals. Many plants can be covered all year long as long as the covers are lifted during flowering if the crops depend on pollination by bees. Veggiemesh® is a cover that can be laid over plants.

- Interplant crops in the garden. Interplanting is a technique that involves alternating crops, herbs and flowers to confuse the pests so they have a difficult time finding what they want to eat. Alternate rows of vegetables with herbs and flowers that appeal to beneficial insects.

Keeping pesky insects and animals from damaging food gardens can involve techniques that are safe and natural.

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How to corral a crabgrass infestation

A well-manicured lawn adds undeniable curb appeal to a property. Homeowners who take pride in their lawns should know that they can take that pride all the way to the bank, as investing in a pristine lawn can provide a significant return at resale.

A 2019 report from the real estate experts at HomeLight found that a \$268 investment in lawn care service can add \$1,211 at resale. That's a 352 percent return on investment.

Homeowners can capitalize on a pristine lawn even further by tending to their own lawns. Crabgrass is one lawn problem that can compromise the look of an otherwise lush lawn. Thankfully, crabgrass can be controlled without much effort.



Identifying crabgrass

Crabgrass is a weed that grows in areas of a lawn that are bare or where the grass is thin. Crabgrass gets its name from its appearance, as it grows from the center outward and mimics the look of crab legs emerging from the center shell.

The growth of crabgrass

The University of Minnesota Extension notes that crabgrass is an annual plant. That means a crabgrass infestation that's problematic once the mercury rises in the summer will die out in late fall or early winter. But crabgrass germinates in the spring, so homeowners will want to take steps to prevent it long before it becomes an eyesore in summer.

How to corral crabgrass

The UME notes that application of a pre-emergent herbicide before crabgrass seeds can germinate is an effective way to eliminate it. The timing of that application can be tricky, as jumping the gun and applying the herbicide too early can prove fruitless. The same goes for applying herbicides too late. Crabgrass will likely still grow if the herbicide is applied too early or too late. UME recommends applying a pre-emergent herbicide when soil temperatures approach 55 F.

Home Depot notes that a chemical treatment may be applied after crabgrass has already grown in, but this option requires careful application to avoid killing surrounding healthy grass.

Crabgrass can be pulled out by hand, but such an approach can be physically daunting. That's especially so because crabgrass thrives when the weather is hot and dry. So homeowners who intend to pull crabgrass by hand can decrease their risk of dehydration or heat-related illness by drinking plenty of water and pulling the grass during early morning or evening hours when the sun is

lower and temperatures are more mild.

Crabgrass can compromise the look of an otherwise healthy lawn. But various strategies can

eliminate crabgrass and restore a lawn without much effort on the part of homeowners.

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“The love of gardening is a seed once sown that never dies.” — Gertrude Jekyll

From “yard” to “favorite gathering place”



Customize your outdoor living space and enhance your home’s curb appeal with a new landscaping plan, colorful door treatments, more furniture, or a fresh coat of paint for outdoor structures. Woodcraft can help you with tools, supplies and how-to resources to create an appealing and functional family “hangout.”

Build a potting bench to be headquarters for designing and planting flower gardens and bushes at strategic locations to mark dining, relaxing and playing sections of the yard. Build more outdoor furniture and game boards if needed to “furnish” these areas. Paint exterior doors to add a touch of color. Accent door/entryway areas with benches or garden planters. Repair, clean, and finish or paint porches, railings and fences to refresh their look.

Products for building

- Woodcraft Magazine Classic Project Plans are detailed guides for building furniture and accessories, including the Full Service Potting Bench pictured here, along with chairs, tables, benches, planters, and more. For a different Adirondack chair design, see “The Haycock Adirondack” project in Woodcraft Magazine

Issue 101 (June/July 2021). Plans and Issue 101 are available at woodcraft.com.

Helpful how-to articles on woodcraft.com include <https://bit.ly/RestoreOutdoor> and <https://bit.ly/OutdoorWoodProjects>.

- Kreg 720PRO Pocket-Hole Jig — The latest innovation in pocket-hole joinery, this jig was engineered with features like one-motion Automaxx clamping, which automatically clamps and sets the material thickness setting for pieces 1/2”- to 1 1/2”-thick, GripMaxx anti-slip material construction and a steel-reinforced spine.

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See **Gathering place** Page 23B



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How to pick the right trees for your property

Trees benefit a landscape by serving both aesthetic and utilitarian functions. A home surrounded by healthy green trees can be a sight to behold, and those same trees can benefit surrounding plants and wildlife at the same time.

As appealing as trees are, not all trees and landscapes make for the perfect match. The Arbor Day Foundation notes the importance of planning when designing a landscape. Planning ensures the trees homeowners ultimately choose for their properties will grow well in the soil and moisture present in their yards.

Careful consideration of a handful of variables can help homeowners determine which trees will make the best fit for their properties.

- **Height:** Homeowners must consider the projected height of a tree before planting it. Avoid trees that will bump into anything when fully grown, as that can adversely affect surrounding greenery and pose a safety hazard. The ADF's tree sizing guide can be accessed at <https://www.arborday.org/trees/rightTreeAndPlace/size.cfm> and serves as an invaluable resource for homeowners who want to plant new trees around their properties.

- **Canopy spread:** Trees grow out as well as up, so it's important to consider their potential width at maturity as well. The ADF sizing guide can help homeowners get an idea of how wide a tree is likely to be at maturity. Trees that spread out quite a bit don't necessarily need to be avoided, but it's important that they're planted far enough apart so they don't adversely affect surrounding plants. In addition, wide trees that are planted too close together can make the landscape appear crowded, taking something away from its aesthetic appeal.

- **Growth rate:** Growth rate is an important variable because it can affect how quickly homeowners will see changes in their landscapes. Homeowners who want to plant for privacy can consider trees with quick growth rates or purchase more mature trees that are already near full growth. Those who are not in need of instant transformation can try trees with slower growth rates, which the ADF notes typically live longer than fast-growing species.

- **Requirements:** Different trees require different amounts of sun and moisture and different soil components to thrive. Homeowners can have their soil tested to determine which trees will thrive in it. Local garden centers can be a great resource for homeowners who want insight as to which trees will thrive in their local climates.

Trees serve many functions on a property. Choosing the right trees for a landscape requires careful consideration of a host of variables.

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How to prepare landscapes for new plants



New plants can add much to a landscape. Whether they're replacing plants that are no longer thriving or being added to supplement an existing landscape, new plants are an affordable way to give a home's exterior a whole new look.

Much consideration is given to which plants to add to a landscape. That's understandable, as homeowners want to choose plants that will thrive and won't compromise the health of surrounding plants and trees. Before planting or even choosing plants, it's important to plan for new additions to a landscape. Preparing the landscape can inform homeowners about which plants to purchase and can ensure they thrive after planting.

- Document sunlight exposure. Plants have different needs, and one of the biggest differences between species is the amount of sunlight they need to thrive. According to Penn State Extension, plants characterized as "full sun" require six or more hours of sunlight per day, while those considered "partial sun" need between four and six hours of sunlight per day. Plants designated as "partial shade" need two to four hours of sun per day, while "shade" plants need less than two hours of sunlight a day. Documenting sunlight exposure in advance gives homeowners an idea of which plants should be planted and where they should be planted. Jot down these observations in a journal over several weeks and then choose plants.

- Test the soil. A soil pH test is a simple and quick way

to determine the acidity of soil. Soil pH levels will indicate how likely a plant is to thrive in a given spot. High levels won't necessarily mean an area should be avoided, as some plants thrive in acidic soils. Additional soil tests can determine other characteristics, such as the nutrient levels of soil and the amount of organic matter it contains. Each of these variables can help homeowners make the right choices as they introduce new plants to their properties.

- Consider local wildlife. If local wildlife makes its presence known on a property, homeowners may want to take proactive steps prior to planting anything new. A new fence might prevent animals like deer from getting in, but that likely won't do much to repel smaller animals like squirrels, rabbits or foxes. If wildlife is a concern, homeowners can seek advice at their local garden center about which plants certain animals are likely to ignore. Homeowners who want to attract wildlife can do the same in reverse, choosing plants wildlife will be drawn to. Homeowners who want to deter wildlife should erect fencing or other barriers prior to planting.

- Clear space if necessary. Plants grow up and out, and cramped quarters can make it hard for new plants to thrive. Some may thrive but only at the expense of other plants. If necessary, clear space prior to planting to ensure plants have ample space to grow.

Some pre-planting landscape preparation can ensure new plants thrive.

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Seven things to know before replacing windows

The decision to replace windows often comes down to aesthetics and necessity. Drafty windows can reduce energy efficiency in a home, requiring HVAC systems to work harder to keep interiors comfortable. The harder the HVAC must work, the more homeowners will pay in energy costs.

Old windows also may be points of entry for water and insects. Despite the importance of windows, Money magazine advises that new windows make up only a fraction of the home's total exterior "envelope," resulting in only about 5 to 15 percent of total energy savings.

But there are still plenty of reasons to invest in new windows.

1. Vinyl or aluminum may be best. Lumber is farmed rather quickly today and solid wood products may not stand up to elements as well as wood used a half-century ago. To avoid rot, vinyl windows often are an affordable and durable choice. Homeowners also have the option of wood windows with aluminum cladding, which are long-lasting.

2. Moisture problems indicate windows need to be replaced. Condensation that shows

up as fogging between double-pane windows or on the inside of windows indicates that the windows are starting to fail. If installing a vapor barrier in the basement or crawl space, ventilating properly when showering or cooking, or using a dehumidifier indoors does not remedy the situation, it might be time to replace windows.

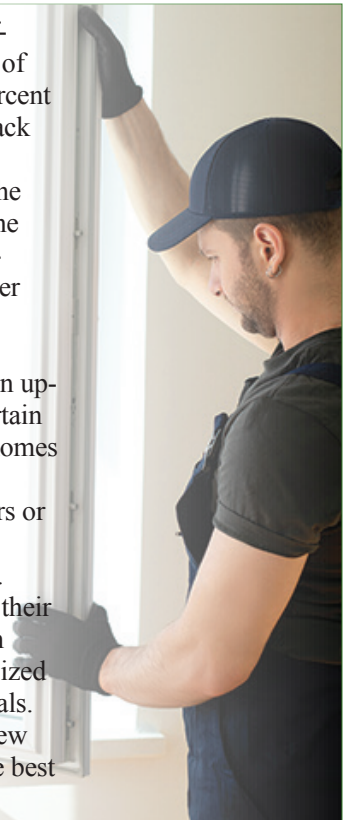
3. Windows add curb appeal. Beyond functionality, replacement windows immediately update the look of the home and can improve curb appeal since they are one of the most prominent features on the exterior of a home. If a house needs an update, replacing windows can be a quick and affordable update.

4. Consider other energy-efficient upgrades. Sometimes older windows can be salvaged, especially if they are not damaged and only moderately drafty. Replacing panes, sash cords, weather stripping, and even glazing may be less expensive than replacing a window. Plus, older homes with attractive windows complement one another. To keep energy bills down, think about adding insulation to the attic and basement — which is a good idea even if you are replacing windows.

5. The wrong windows can adversely affect home value. The National Association of Realtors says homeowners get about 73 percent of their replacement window investment back when they resell a home. But choosing the wrong windows might lower the value of the home. It's important to match the look of the original windows, including window material and the divided light pattern (the number of panes in each window) with the original windows.

6. Think about soundproofing, too. When upgrading windows, also think about how certain windows can cancel out noises and make homes more soundproof. Some windows can help reduce outdoor distractions like leaf blowers or lawn mowers.

7. Proper installation is key to longevity. Replacement windows are only as good as their installation in many cases. Poor installation and orders of standard rather than custom sized windows could result in poor fitting and seals. Homeowners should carefully vet and review window replacement contractors to find the best professionals for the job.



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What to know before planting around your property



When planning a landscape, it's tempting to pick the most colorful, vibrant plants. An eye-popping property filled with yellows, purples, pinks, and other bold colors is sure to catch anyone's eye. However, the right plant for a property is not always the most colorful.

Gardening novices can easily be overwhelmed on a trip to their local garden center, where employees may ask a host of questions that have little to do with homeowners' preferences and everything to do with the growing conditions around their properties. Those questions may seem a little intense, but they're well-intentioned. Successful gardening is more about soil conditions and access to sunlight than it is about the plants themselves. An awe-inspiring hydrangea bush will only impress if it's planted in a location where it can thrive.

The Landscape, Nursery and Urban Forestry program at UMass Amherst Extension advises homeowners to learn about the following site conditions, and ultimately share that knowledge with local garden center representatives, before they pick and plant anything around their properties.

- **Hardiness zone:** The Plant Hardiness Zone Map from the U.S. Department of Agriculture is designed to help gardeners determine which plants are most likely

See **Planting**, Page 21B

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Planting • from page 20B

to thrive where they live. The map can be found on the USDA website at www.usda.gov.

- Light availability, intensity, and duration, from full sun to deep shade: Prior to planting, homeowners can document this information in a notebook or on their smartphones. Do so for a long enough period of time that you can get an accurate idea of the conditions in which plants will have to grow, and then take that information with you to the garden center where you will buy your plants. Employees can then use this info to help you find the right fit given the light conditions.

- Water availability, both quantity and quality, as well as ease of access

- Exposure to wind and temperature extremes

- Exposure to weather events, snow loads, erosion, and flooding: Garden center employees can likely recommend plants based on traditional weather pat-

terns in a given area.

- Soil type, drainage and compaction: Homeowners can take note of any areas of their property where water pools or the ground feels especially soggy after rainfall. Share this information with garden center employees prior to picking plants for such areas. If soil appears compacted, aeration prior to planting may be necessary.

- Competition from existing vegetation, keeping in mind the roots underground that you can't see

- Above ground wires or obstructions: Trees will grow up, and the presence of power lines or other obstructions may threaten the trees or prove dangerous if trees eventually grow into or hang over power lines.

Knowledge of various conditions prior to planting can save homeowners the cost of replacing plants and the hassle of dealing with plants that don't take.

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- | | |
|--------------|-----------------|
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Six ways to make your garden more successful



Homeowners enjoy gardening for many different reasons. In addition to adding beauty to a property, gardens can offset grocery costs by yielding tasty produce. They also offer important habitats and food sources for both insects and animals.

While growing a vegetable or flower garden can turn into a rewarding hobby, or even a passion, gardening also can be overwhelming — particularly when the results are less than stellar. Novice gardeners have scores of resources at their disposal, including the advice of gardeners who have made mistakes and learned from them. The following guidance can make home gardens that much more successful.

1. Start small.

You may have visions of an expansive garden growing rows of crops or acres of flowers. But it is smart to start small and build on what you find successful, which includes plants that thrive in your lawn and garden.

This also is beneficial if you are unsure of vegetable yields. Several blooming plants producing bushels of crops can be overwhelming, especially if you can't

See **Six ways** Page 23B

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get to harvesting or cooking them in a timely fashion.

2. Assess the soil.

Plants need nutrient-rich soil to encourage extensive root systems and produce strong, hardy plants, according to the gardening resource GrowVeg. Nourish soil with organic matter, such as manure, compost, shredded leaves, and natural mulch. Add this organic matter in the off-season to give it enough time to be incorporated into the ground before spring. You can have your soil tested for pH and other characteristics that make it friendly or averse to plants at a local garden center.

3. Arm yourself with knowledge.

Do you know how deeply to plant seeds and how far apart to space plants? Are you aware of the sunlight needs of certain flowers or plants? If not, read the packaging and do your research so your plants have the best chance of not only sprouting, but also surviving. Many people prefer to start seedlings indoors in late winter and then transfer those plants outdoors when they are stronger and more established.

4. Sit in your yard and observe.

Watch the way the sunlight dances over areas of your landscape. Take note of which areas get the most sun and shade. This will help you plan what to plant and where to plant it. Vegetable gardens tend to need ample sunlight to bear pick-worthy produce. You can give plants a leg up by growing them in optimal conditions.

5. Choose hardy varieties.

Certain plants have been bred to thrive in your climate, including heat-tolerant plants for climates with sweltering summer sun. Consult with a local gardening center to figure out which plant zone you are in and which plants will do best within that zone.

6. Use rainwater.

Rainwater contains fewer contaminants and additives than tap water, which can benefit garden plants. Collect rainwater in rain barrels and use irrigation systems to deliver it to the garden.

Home gardens can yield many gifts, from flowers to fruit. Beginners can utilize some time-tested strategies to increase their chances of planting a successful garden.

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Gathering place • from page 16B

most drill bits, from 1/16"- to 1/2"-diameter.

- Porter-Cable 5" Random Orbit Sander — This lightweight sander is ideal for surface preparation for smoothing seams and for removing paint, varnish and old coatings. Accepts 5" 8-hole hook-and-loop paper.

- WoodRiver Panel Cart — Move large sheets of material from a truck bed or trailer to your table saw with minimal effort using this handy cart. Tilting carriage and frame are adjustable.

Doors and other finishing options

Make exterior home doors and furniture the center of attention with colorful paint that brightens even cloudy days. Refresh the look of garage doors, porches, shutters, railings, fences, and storage buildings with a new coat (and maybe color) of paint.

- GENERAL FINISHES Milk Paint in 33 premixed colors works well for wood doors and furniture, as well as other structures. Be sure to add GENERAL FINISHES Exterior 450 Varnish in satin, gloss, semi-gloss, or flat to enhance the milk paint's durability.

- GENERAL FINISHES Outdoor Oil Finish is ideal for exterior weather conditions and may be used over other brands of exterior oil stain or exterior clear oil finishes for additional protection.

- System Three Marine Spar Varnish is designed for exterior

surfaces and provides long-lasting protection against water and marine environments.

- System Three Clear Epoxy Sealer S-1 is a two-part clear, penetrating, waterproof, epoxy sealer. It is completely waterproof and suitable for use above and below the waterline.

- Waterlox Original Marine Finish and Original Marine Sealer: These premium tung oil-based products work together to penetrate and waterproof wood that lives in the outdoors. Both go on easily with brush, lamb's wool applicator, cloth roller, or a sprayer.

- U.C. Coatings Corporation Nano-Guard Premium Wood Sealer is a clear, non-film forming sealer that allows the wood to age naturally without decay. It deeply penetrates the wood's surface to protect and stabilize wood against weather and caustic conditions.

- To apply coverings by hand, consider Redtree Onyx White China Bristle Brushes (solvent-based finishes) or Redtree Matey Synthetic Bristle Brushes (water-based finishes) available in three sizes.

- For spraying, the EARLEX® Super Finish Max features a built-in 450-watt sprayer, eliminating the need for a hose or motor to move around. Spray milk paint, chalk-style paint, latex paint, enamels, primers, urethanes, stains, and varnishes.

To learn more about these and other products, visit your local Woodcraft store, call (800) 535-4482 or visit www.woodcraft.com.

"Love is the flower of life, and blossoms unexpectedly and without law, and must be plucked where it is found, and enjoyed for the brief hour of its duration."

— D. H. Lawrence



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