



River Valley District

K-STATE RESEARCH AND EXTENSION NEWS

rivervalley.ksu.edu

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EXPANDED CHILD TAX CREDIT

Details continue to be released on the expanded Child Tax Credit that was enacted by the American Rescue Plan Act in March 2021 in an effort to reduce child poverty. The following temporary enhancements to the Child Tax Credit apply for 2021 only.

First, the American Rescue Plan Act increased the Child Tax Credit amount from \$2,000 per eligible child to \$3,600 for those under age 6 and \$3,000 for dependents age 6 through 17. The Child Tax Credit was expanded to include 17-year-old dependents. It was also altered to be fully refundable instead of being limited per child depending on the taxpayer's liability as in past years.

One of the most talked about pieces of the American Rescue Plan Act in reference to the Child Tax Credit is the advance payments that are scheduled to begin July 15th, 2021. From July to December 2021, eligible individuals/families will receive a monthly payment of the advanced Child Tax Credit.

Eligibility requirements, including income thresholds, and additional questions and answers can be found online at <https://www.irs.gov/credits-deductions/advance-child-tax-credit-payments-in-2021>.

The monthly amount is \$300 per eligible child under age 6 and \$250 per eligible child age 6-17. The payment dates are scheduled for July 15, August 13, September 15, October 15, November 15, and December 15 via direct deposit if a bank account is on file with the IRS. The advanced payment of the tax credit will be reconciled when filing your 2021 taxes during the 2022 tax season to claim any additional credit or potentially repay any excess credit received.

The advanced payment will be based on 2020 tax filings or 2019 if 2020 is not available. The IRS created an online sign-up tool to assist those that need to update or provide information. Additional details and the system can be found online at <https://www.irs.gov/credits-deductions/child-tax-credit-non-filer-sign-up-tool>.

Families will have the option to opt out of the advance Child Tax Credit to receive their eligible amount while filing 2021 taxes. This online tool is available at <https://www.irs.gov/credits-deductions/child-tax-credit-update-portal>.

With so many provisions with the Child Tax Credit in 2021 and family situations all varying greatly, if you have questions on your specific situation, please contact Monica Thayer, Family Resource Management Extension Agent at 785-527-5084 or mthayer@ksu.edu.

BABYSITTER RESOURCES

Unfortunately, the River Valley District did not hold our annual "Building Blocks of Babysitting" clinics around the District this year. We look forward to scheduling these events again during spring break in 2022. In the meantime, K-State Research and Extension has a plethora of resources for babysitters and parents/guardians through our "Suddenly in Charge" program.

"Suddenly in Charge" is designed to help teens and tweens with their roles in taking care of younger children. Resources include a babysitter information sheet, home safety checklist, food preparation tips and recipes, and activity sheets, which include a safety tip, activity, and snack around a theme. All of this and more can be found online at <https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/families/suddenly-in-charge/index.html>.

If you need any assistance or have questions on babysitting or child development in general, please contact Monica Thayer, Family Resource Management Extension Agent, at 785-527-5084 or mthayer@ksu.edu

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service

NEED HEALTH INSURANCE? ENROLLMENT PERIOD ENDING SOON!

You may be eligible to enroll in health insurance on the Marketplace (www.healthcare.gov), but only for a limited time. This special enrollment period is only open until August 15, 2021.

The Marketplace was created with the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010. Typically, open enrollment is during the fall, but due to the pandemic, a special enrollment period was opened this spring.

To be eligible for health insurance through the Marketplace, you must live in the U.S., be a U.S. citizen or national (be lawfully present) and cannot be incarcerated. To receive financial assistance with your Marketplace health insurance, you cannot have affordable job-offered insurance or Medicare. Marketplace health insurance cost is based on household income.

Health insurance can be confusing, but free, local help is available. Monica Thayer, Family Resource Management Extension Agent for the River Valley District, is a certified application counselor for the Marketplace and is available to assist with researching options, applying, and selecting health insurance.

Contact Monica in early July if you are interested in checking out your options at 785-527-5084 or mthayer@ksu.edu. She will be scheduling appointments in Belleville, Clay Center, Concordia, and Washington.

HOW DOES MOVING AFFECT YOUR MEDICARE?

If you are enrolled in Medicare and considering a move, you may wonder whether you need to make changes to your health insurance coverage. This really depends on how you get your coverage.

Original Medicare (Parts A & B) – If you are enrolled in Original Medicare, you do not need to make changes when moving within the United States. Original Medicare does not have provider networks so you can visit any doctor or facility in the country that accepts Medicare.

Medicare Advantage Plans (Part C) – Medicare Advantage Plans have coverage areas, so when moving within the United States, you may need to switch plans. You will have a Special Enrollment Period if you move out of your plan's coverage area or if you move to an area still covered but you have other plans available to you. If you move out of the county, you will want to check if you are in the same service area. If you move out of your service area, you may also have guaranteed issue rights to pick up a supplement plan in your new area. You typically have 60 days before the move to 63 days after the move to make these changes.

Part D Prescription Drug Plan – Part D plans also have coverage areas. If you move within the state, you do not need to worry about moving out of your plan's service area. If you move out of Kansas, though, you will have up to 63

days to change to a plan in your new area. Also, moving into a nursing home gives you a special enrollment period to change drug plans.

Medicare Supplement – You do not need to change your Supplement, or Medigap, plan when you move, but you should contact the plan to let them know your new address and see if the premium will change. Also, enrollment rules vary by state, so you may want to talk to a local SHIP counselor in your new area to see if/when you are able to make future changes. You may have different options than available in Kansas.

Medicare Savings Program (MSP) – Eligibility and enrollment are state-specific so if you are moving out of state, you will need to disenroll from your current MSP program and reapply in the new state. If you do not do this, you may find yourself owing back Part B premiums that were paid by Kansas after your move.

Extra Help – The Extra Help program benefits are not affected by a move as they are administered by the Social Security Administration and eligibility requirements do not differ by state. However, if you were automatically enrolled in Extra Help because you qualified for Medicaid or MSP you will need to actively apply for Extra Help for it to continue past the end of the year.

Whether you have Original Medicare or Medicare Advantage, if you ever move, you should update your information with the Social Security Administration to ensure that you continue to receive important communications. If you have questions about Medicare, feel free to contact Monica Thayer at 785-527-5084 or Jordan Schuette at 785-325-2121.

WALK KANSAS SUMMARY

Congratulations to each of you that participated in Walk Kansas 2021. This spring the Walk Kansas newsletters focused on a chronic health condition or disease each week with recommendations for how to prevent, delay, and/or manage each condition.

The newsletters explored mental health, heart disease, osteoporosis, Alzheimer's, obesity, arthritis, diabetes and cancer. Note in each of these health conditions there is consistency in recommendations for management.

Following are key takeaways:

*Move More – Make regular physical activity part of each day. Find activities you enjoy and remember the best activity is the one you will actually do.

*Stop using/don't use tobacco – Smoking harms nearly every organ of the body, leading to disease and disability.

*Eat Well, including lots of fruits and vegetables – Fuel your body with healthful foods and beverages, like fruits and vegetables, whole grains, lean protein and calcium-rich foods. Avoid processed and fast foods when possible. Make every bite count.



- *Maintain strong social connections – Social connections enrich life and improve your health.
- *Get adequate sleep – Sleep is not a waste of time – it is essential for good health.
- *Manage stress – Stress is hard to avoid, so find ways to manage stress to minimize damage to your health.
- *Be safe – Protect your skin against sun exposure.
- *Know your family history of chronic disease – Chronic disease when diagnosed early can be easier to treat and manage.
- *Get regular health checks – Follow the advice of your health care provider for best quality care. You may receive advice for vaccinations, regular health checks, screenings and treatment.

In the River Valley Extension District there were 36 Walk Kansas Teams, 9 Solo Teams with a total of 207 participants. Combining the teams and solo participants in the River Valley District a total of 29,200 miles were walked in the 8 weeks of Walk Kansas.

I thought it would be fun to challenge my mind and research a bit about total miles. First think about the state of Kansas. Kansas is bounded on the north by Nebraska, on the east by Missouri, (with the line in the northeast following the Missouri river), on the south by Oklahoma, and on the west by Colorado, with a total boundary length of 1,219 miles. Next, think about the Contiguous United States (the lower forty-eight adjoining U.S. States plus the District of Columbia. Using the coastline figures the perimeter is close to 11,000 miles. This measurement of the coastline is using a straight line ignoring the jagged areas along the coast. Amazing comparison of miles that were walked in Walk Kansas to geographic areas in the United States. We walk almost 2 1/2 times around the U.S.!

Continue Walking! You can do it. Sonia Cooper, Nutrition, Food Safety, and Health Agent.

MAKING THE MOST OF BERRIES

Choose berries as the fruit to make your menu complete. Fruits are most flavorful and nutritious at their peak of ripeness, and berries don't ripen much after picking. Look for fresh berries that are richly colored, firm, plump, and dry, without mold, bruises, dents, or blemishes.

Proper storage is key as berries are delicate. It's best to refrigerate the berries, unwashed, in a container that allows a little airflow. When ready to eat berries, wash berries by rinsing them under plain running water to remove soil, microbes, and pesticides. If the berry is firmer it can be rubbed gently, if necessary. Air dry, spin dry in a salad spinner, or pat dry with a clean cloth or paper towel.

Berries can be frozen, locking in their nutrients and taste for later use: wash, dry, and freeze on a sheet pan before transferring to a plastic bag or container and sealing. If you don't mind your berries in clumps, you can skip using the sheet pan. When thawed, frozen berries will be mushy, but they are perfect for smoothies, toppings, and purees or mix-ins to plain yogurt or oatmeal.

Following are suggestions of ways to include berries throughout the day:

- *Parfait – layer plain yogurt with berries, granola, nuts, and seeds.
- *Cereals – top hot and cold whole grain cereals or overnight

oats with berries.

- *Pancakes and Waffles – mix berries into whole grain batter and or serve them on top instead of syrup.

- *Salads – add berries to salads for a punch of flavor and color.

- *Fruit Spread – blend or mash into a spread for whole grain toast and sandwiches.

- *Granola – dried berries bring natural sweetness and unique texture to granola, granola bars, and trail mixes.

- *Frozen Yogurt – blend frozen berries with plain yogurt for instant frozen yogurt.

- *Infused Water – put crushed fresh berries in your water pitcher overnight to lend flavor.

- *Plain – berries in any form are great on their own. Remember the “Bountiful Berry”.

Information taken from Tufts University Health & Nutrition Letter. June 2021.

SONIA COOPER RETIRING FROM RVD

Thank you, River Valley Extension District (RVD). I will be retiring July 31st. I have truly enjoyed my years of employment with the District.

My first eleven years as a part of the River Valley Extension District were with the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or SNAP-Education. At that time the program was known as the Family Nutrition Program. I presented Nutrition Education in school classrooms Kindergarten to 4th grade and educating the kids in the school always put a smile on my face. Each class and grade had its own special unique way to welcome me as a part of their class schedule when I would present. I want to thank the school educators for inviting me to be a part of the school year with nutrition education.

Most recently, I was employed in the RVD as Nutrition, Food Safety, and Health Agent.

I want to thank the Office Professionals who organized, coordinated and offered encouragement to me with the Walk Kansas Program. I want to thank my co-workers in the RVD for programming with me, answering my many questions, and working with me on various projects. I want to thank the 4-H Program Managers, I have been excited to be a part of the 4-H projects in Nutrition and Food Safety.

Thank you, River Valley District Board, for the support you provided for different Family and Consumer Science Programs. I will forever be an Extension Supporter. - Sonia

RIVER VALLEY DISTRICT OFFICES

WILL BE CLOSED

MONDAY, JULY 5TH

IN HONOR OF INDEPENDENCE DAY

HAVE A SAFE AND HAPPY HOLIDAY!



AGRICULTURE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM AVAILABLE

Pawnee Mental Health's Agriculture Assistance Program (Ag-AP) is intended to assist self-employed farmers and ranchers, individuals employed by them, and their spouses or dependents with mental health services. This initiative arose out of the need for mental health services in our rural communities as evidenced by the alarming increased rate of suicide among farmers locally and nationally, as well as the unique stressors created from the financial and economic impact of COVID-19.

Those who qualify for the program would be able to access four free mental health therapy sessions with a licensed mental health provider through Pawnee Mental Health. All providers will have received specialized training related to the unique mental health aspects found in the agriculture field. Clients would be able to access services either in person or via telehealth (phone or Zoom).

Contact your local Pawnee Mental Health Office to inquire about their Agriculture Assistance Program or visit their website at www.pawnee.org.

- Clay County – (785) 632-2108
- Cloud County – (785) 243-8900
- Republic County – (785) 527-2549
- Washington County - (785) 325-3252

PASTURE, RANGELAND, FORAGE INSURANCE

Pasture, Rangeland, Forage (PRF) Insurance is designed to provide insurance coverage on pasture, rangeland, or forage acres. The PRF program utilizes a rainfall index to determine precipitation for coverage purposes and does not measure production or loss of products themselves. The Rainfall Index uses National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Climate Prediction Center (NOAA CPC) data, which utilizes a grid system to determine precipitation amounts within an area. Each grid is 0.25 degrees in latitude by 0.25 degrees in longitude, which translates to approximately 17 by 17 miles at the equator. Acres will be assigned to one or more grids based on the location to be insured.

When selecting your PRF insurance there are four main items that need to be input into the program:

- ◆ Whether you are insuring grazing or haying land (you can also indicate if the haying land is irrigated).
- ◆ The coverage level that you want. Coverage is from 70-90% in 5% increments. Depending on which coverage level you select, the USDA will subsidize the premium at 51-59%.

- ◆ The productivity factor of the land relative to the county from 60-150% in 1% increments. 100% would be set at the base value for the county.
- ◆ Which 2-month intervals you want to insure. You must select at least 2 intervals though out the year. For example, you can cover March-April at 40% and May-June at 60% (must be between 10-60%).

PRF insurance is a risk management tool that I believe is underutilized by our cattle producers in the River Valley District. In 2020, only 8,349 acres were enrolled in PRF insurance. That equates to approximately 1.3% of eligible acres enrolled in PRF insurance. If you are interested in PRF insurance for your operations. I encourage you to use the support tool on the RMA website at:

<https://prodwebnlb.rma.usda.gov/apps/prf>. This tool allows you to go back to see how PRF insurance would have paid you in the past all the way back to 1948 (note: PRF has only been available in Kansas since 2009).

You can sign up for PRF insurance through your crop insurance agent. The deadline to sign up for PRF insurance for 2021 is November 15, 2021. The premium (minus indemnity payments) for the insurance will be due September 1, 2022. If you have more questions about PRF insurance contact Brett Melton at the Concordia office in-person or by phone, 785-243-8185, or email at bmelton@ksu.edu.

TANK MIXING ORDER

With everyone getting out in the field and spraying just a reminder to make sure you are mixing in the right order. Following the acronyms WALES/DALES is good, but there are a few more steps that you might be missing especially with new products coming out. If you are using a new product, make sure to read the label and follow the mixing instructions. You might think the product goes in where you normally put a similar product, but it could cause issues with the mix. If you get the order wrong, there are a lot of problems you could have in that tank mix. Also make sure the products you are adding mix with each other. A jar test is the best way to double check.

1. Water: Fill the spray tank with at least ½ of the final required volume and start agitation. Use at least ¼ of the final volume if an inductor will be used for any product additions.
2. Agitation: Maintain continuous and constant agitation throughout mixing.
3. Inductor: If an inductor is used, rinse it thoroughly after each component is added.
4. Buffer pH modifier, compatibility or anti-foam products.
5. Products in PVA bags: Place any product contained in water-soluble PVA bags into the mixing tank. Wait until all water-soluble PVA bags have fully dissolved and the product is

evenly mixed in the spray tank before continuing.

6. Dry dispersible products (such as dispersible dry flowables, granules, powders (WG, WDG, DF, WP, W)).
7. Liquid dispersible products (such as suspension concentrates (SC, F, FL), suspo-emulsions (SE), micro-encapsulated or capsule suspensions (CS, ME)).
8. Dry water-soluble products (such as SP, SG).
9. Liquid water-soluble products (such as SL, S).
10. Emulsifiable products (such as EC, EW).
11. Surfactant and oil concentrate adjuvants, and water conditioners (such as NIS, COC, HSCO and MSO adjuvants).
12. Add remaining quantity of water and continue agitation.

TOXIC POKEWEED

Pokeweed has been popping up more and more in the area and many don't know what it is. Common pokeweed is a large, bushy, herbaceous perennial that sometimes resembles a small tree. It is characterized by an enormous taproot, smooth succulent red-purple stems, large lance-shaped leaves and grape-like clusters of dark purple berries in the fall. The berries it puts off makes it look like an appealing plant, but it actually has a toxic level to it. All parts of the pokeweed plant are toxic to humans, pets and livestock. Roots are the most poisonous, leaves and stems are intermediate in toxicity (toxicity increases with maturity), and berries are the least toxic. Since common pokeweed is not very palatable, most animals avoid eating it unless little else is available, or if it is in contaminated hay.

Children are most frequently poisoned by eating raw berries. Infants are especially sensitive and have died from eating only a few raw berries. Although boiled young shoots have been eaten as greens and berries cooked in pie, ingestion of any part of the plant cannot be recommended. Adults have been poisoned, sometimes fatally, by eating improperly prepared leaves and shoots, especially if part of the root is harvested with the shoot, and by mistaking the root for an edible tuber. The juice of pokeweed can also be absorbed through the skin, contact of plant parts with bare skin should be avoided. When you are outside this summer be aware of the plants around you. If you have any questions or need help identifying it, please call the extension office.



KANSAS MARKET WHEAT SHOWS

With wheat harvest around the corner there is a great opportunity to showcase that crop. You can enter it in the Kansas Market Wheat Show at the North Central Kansas Free Fair in Belleville, August 3-7th. The Market show takes your wheat sample and determines both variety and mill/bake quality. You will get a result on Protein, Test weight, Dockage, and Shrunken and Broken done by the Kansas Grain Inspection Service. All you need to do is bring 5 pounds of wheat grown in the current year straight from the combine (hand-picked will be disqualified). Then bring that sample into the Belleville Extension office by the 29th of July. There will be cash prizes. If you have any questions, please call the Belleville Extension office at 785-527-5084.

If you would like to read more about the Kansas Market Show, go to www.kswheat.com/growers/kansas-market-wheat-shows

2021 Shows sponsored by: Kansas Wheat Commission, K-State Research & Extension, KSU Agronomy, Wheat State District-International Assoc. of Operative Millers, West-Bred, AGSECO LLC, The Wheat Quality Council, Kansas Grain Inspection Service and American Ag Credit Wichita.

HEAT STOPS TOMATOES FROM SETTING FRUIT

Having trouble with your tomato plants not setting fruit this year? When temperatures remain above 75°F at night and are around 95°F during the day, and with dry, hot winds, these conditions will cause poor fruit set on tomatoes.

High temperatures interfere with pollen viability and/or cause excessive style growth leading to a lack of pollination. It usually takes about 3 weeks for tomato flowers to develop into fruit large enough to notice and an additional week before tomatoes are full size and ready to start ripening.

There are "heat-set" tomatoes such as, Florida 91, Sun Leaper, and Sun Master that will set fruit at higher temperatures; the difference is normally only 2 to 3 degrees.



Cooler temperatures will allow flowers to resume fruit set. If you have any questions feel free to stop by or contact me in the Washington office, 785-325-2121 or khatesohl@ksu.edu.

TOMATO LEAF-SPOT DISEASE

This time of year, two common leaf-spot diseases appear on tomato plants. Septoria leaf spot and early blight. Brown spots on the leaves characterize both diseases, so it is important to figure out which disease you have so you can treat it accordingly.

Septoria leaf spot usually appears earlier in the season than early blight and produces small dark spots. Spots made by early blight are much larger and often have distorted “target” pattern of concentric circles. With both diseases, heavily infected leaves eventually turn yellow and drop. Older leaves are more susceptible than younger ones, so these diseases often start at the bottom of the plant and work up.



Mulching, caging, or staking can keep plants off the ground, making them less vulnerable to both these diseases. Better air circulation allows foliage to dry quicker having less of a chance to develop these diseases. Mulching also helps prevent water from splashing up onto the leaves and carrying disease spores to the plant.

In situations where these diseases have been a problem in the past, rotation is a good strategy. It is too late for that now, but keep in mind for next year. Actually, rotation is a good idea even if you have not had problems in the past. Unfortunately, for many gardeners their space is too small to make rotation practical. If you have room, rotate the location of the tomatoes each year to an area that had not had tomatoes or related crops (peppers, potatoes, eggplant) for several years.

If rotation is not feasible, fungicides are often helpful. Be sure to cover both upper and lower leaf surfaces, and reapply fungicide if rainfall removes it. Plants usually become susceptible when the tomato fruit is about the size of a walnut. Chlorothalonil is a good choice for fruiting plants because it has a 0-day waiting period, meaning that fruit can be harvested once the spray is dry. Chlorothalonil can be found in numerous products including Fertilome Broad-Spectrum Landscape and Garden Fungicide, Ortho Garden Disease Control, Garden Tech Daconil and others. Be sure to start protecting plants when the disease is first seen. It is virtually impossible to control this disease on heavily infected plants. If Chlorothalonil doesn't seem to be effective, try mancozeb (Bonide Mancozeb Flowable). Note that there is a five-day waiting period between application and when the fruit can be harvested. You may wish to pick some tomatoes green just before you spray if you use Mancozeb as the tomato fruit will ripen inside.

As with all chemicals make sure to read the label to make sure it is listed for use on both the specific disease you are trying to get rid of and the plant the disease is on. If you have any questions feel free to stop by or contact me in the Washington office, 785-325-2121 or khatesohl@ksu.edu.

DIVIDING IRIS

Bearded Irises are well adapted to Kansas and multiply quickly. After several years, the centers of the clumps tend to lose vigor, and flowering occurs toward the outside. Dividing iris every three to five years will help rejuvenate the plants and increase flowering. Iris may be divided from late July through August, but late July through early August is ideal. Because iris clumps are fairly shallow, it is easy to dig up the entire clump. The root system of the plant consists of thick rhizomes and smaller feeder roots. Use a sharp knife to cut the rhizomes apart so each division consists of a fan of leaves and a section of rhizome. The best divisions are made from a double fan that consists of two small rhizomes each having a fan of leaves. The rhizomes that do not split produce single fans. The double fans are preferred because they produce more flowers the first year after planting. Single fans take a year to build up strength.

Rhizomes that show signs of damage due to iris borers or soft rot may be discarded, but you may want to physically remove borers from rhizomes and replant if the damage is not severe. It is possible to treat mild cases of soft rot by scraping out the affected tissue, allowing it to dry in the sun and dipping it in a 10 percent solution of household bleach. Make the bleach solution by mixing one-part bleach with nine parts water. Rinse the treated rhizomes with water and allow them to dry before replanting. Cut the leaves back by two-thirds before replanting. Prepare the soil by removing weeds and fertilizing. Fertilize according to soil test recommendations or by applying a complete fertilizer, such as a 10-10-10, at the rate of 1 pound per 100 square feet. Mix the fertilizer into the soil to a depth of 6 inches. Be wary of using a complete fertilizer in areas that have been fertilized heavily in the past. A growing number of soil tests show high levels of phosphorus. In such cases, use a fertilizer that has a much higher first number (nitrogen) than second (phosphorus). If you have any questions feel free to stop by or contact me in the Washington office, 785-325-2121 or khatesohl@ksu.edu.



RIVER VALLEY DISTRICT FAIRS

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|-------------------|--|
| July 6-10 | Cloud County Fair-Concordia |
| July 20-25 | Clay County Fair-Clay Center |
| July 20-25 | Washington County Fair-Washington |
| August 3-7 | NCK Free Fair-Belleville |

Staff in the District Extension Offices may be out of the office assisting with Fairs. Every District Office has an answering machine. If it is Fair time, leave a message if we do not answer, a staff member will call you when we return to the office.

HOW TO PICK A RIPE MUSKMELON

One of the hardest things to do when selecting a melon is to make sure you are choosing a ripe melon. Deciding when a melon is ready to be picked can be a challenge. Here are some helpful tips and tricks to help you choose a ripe melon.

Muskmelons are one of those crops that tell you when they are ready to be picked. This can help you not only harvest melons from your own garden at the correct time, but also choose good melons from a store. As a melon ripens, a layer of cells around the stems softens causing the melon to detach from the vine. This is called “slipping” and will leave a dish-shaped scar at the point of stem attachment. When harvesting melons from the garden, put a little pressure on the vine where it attaches to the fruit. If ripe, the melon will release or “slip” right off.

When choosing a melon from the store look for a clean, dish-shaped scar. Ripe melons have a pleasant, musky aroma when stored at room temperature (not refrigerated). I hope these helpful tips and tricks help you enjoy ripe melons all season long. If you have any questions feel free to stop by or contact me in the Washington office, 785-325-2121 or khatesohl@ksu.edu.

STAY COOL IN THE SUMMER

Summer is here and along with this season often comes high temperatures. It is important during the hotter summer months, specifically for older adults, to know how to keep cool and hydrated. There are a few different ways to make sure you stay cool this summer.

Stay in air-conditioned homes or buildings as much as you can. When it is very hot, do not rely only on fans to keep you cool. Try to avoid using your oven and stove as often to cook, as this will warm up your house. If you need a way to cool down, try taking a cool shower or bath.

Other ways to stay cool are associated with your activity level and clothing. Try to get plenty of rest and avoid rigorous activities. During these hot months try to wear lighter colors or clothes which are looser fitting and light weight.

Staying hydrated is extremely important during these hotter summer months. In order to stay hydrated you should drink water more regularly. Do not wait to drink water until you feel thirsty. It can also be helpful to check on your friends and neighbors and have them check on you.

As always stay updated on temperatures and weather in your area. For more information on this topic check out the following link <https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/older-adults-heat.html>.

Source: CDC.gov



FREEZING FOODS

Often, I prepare meals in bulk or purchase food in bulk. At those times I make use of the freezer space that I have available. I want to share with you packaging tips for freezing food.

A walk down the food packaging aisle reveals many choices for storing food. You ask yourself, which ones are best for freezing food? Not all storage items are the same. For freezing, look for the word “freezer” on the package.

Plastic containers for freezing are made of thicker material to resist tearing, moisture migration, and protect from off-flavors and odors that may be in the freezer from other foods. Rigid plastic containers for freezing are also good choices.

Freezer paper is best for wrapping meat products. Use a freezer safe tape to hold the package together. Always label and date the package so that you know the contents and how long a certain food item has been in the freezer. Never use packaging not designated for food storage, such as garbage bags.

For more information go to your local Extension office and ask for the publication: MF3130; Safe Food Storage: The Refrigerator and Freezer. This publication can also be found on the River Valley Extension District website. rved@ksu.edu, click on the Foods, Nutrition, and Health tab on the left-hand side. Scroll down to the bottom of the page and look under Food Safety: Safe Food Storage: The refrigerator and freezer. Also look at; Preserve It Fresh, Preserve It Safe – Freezing. This offers helpful advice for safely freezing all kinds of foods.

If you have questions please contact Sonia Cooper, srcooper@ksu.edu or call 785-632-5335.

HARVESTING ONIONS

The two main questions asked about growing onions in a garden are; when is my onion ready to harvest, and how to store it once it’s harvested. Onions are ready to harvest when about half of the plants have tops that have fallen over. This is a sign that the onions are mature and need to be pulled out of the ground. Onions can get sunburned without the foliage to protect them.

The next question is, what is the best way to store onions? The secret to onions keeping well is to allow the tops to dry completely before storage. This may take two to three weeks. Large-necked onions take more time to dry down than small-necked onions such as the Bermuda types. Move your onions to a shaded, well-ventilated area after harvest and spread them out. After the tops are completely dry, remove the dry foliage. Store the bulbs in a cool, dry location. Avoid storage in plastic bags because the lack of air circulation will shorten the storage life. Try using an open, mesh bag for storage instead.

If you have any questions feel free to stop by or contact me in the Washington office, 785-325-2121 or khatesohl@ksu.edu.

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PERMIT NO. 3****Address Service Requested****RIVER VALLEY DISTRICT****“2021 UP-COMING MEETINGS & EVENTS”**

DATE	TIME	PROGRAM	LOCATION
July 5		River Valley District Offices Closed for Independence Day	
July 6-10		Cloud County Fair	Concordia-Fairgrounds
July 7-10		StoryWalk at the Cloud County Fair	Concordia-Fairgrounds
July 13	8:30am	Fungicide, Stress, and Insects Plot Tour	Belleville- 2 miles west
July 20-25		Clay County Free Fair	Clay Center-Fairgrounds
July 20-25		Washington County Fair	Washington-Fairgrounds
July 21-24		StoryWalk at the Clay County Fair	Clay Center-Fairgrounds
July 21-24		StoryWalk at the Washington Co. Fair	Washington-Fairgrounds
Aug. 3-8		NCK Free Fair (Republic County)	Belleville-Fairgrounds
Aug. 3-7		Kansas Market Wheat Show	Belleville-Fairgrounds
Aug. 4-7		StoryWalk at the NCK Free Fair	Belleville-Fairgrounds
Aug. 18	6pm	KSU Fall Field Day	Belleville- 2 miles west