



summer 2026 newsletter

K-State Olathe Horticulture Research and Extension Center

Welcome to the K-State Olathe Horticulture Research and Extension Center's newsletter.

Fruit & Vegetable Research Update



**KANSAS STATE
UNIVERSITY**

K-State Olathe Horticulture Research and Extension Center

**Commercial
Fruit & Vegetable
Field Day**

Monday, August 17, 2026

4 - 7 p.m.

35230 W 135th St., Olathe, KS

Research updates followed by cookout dinner
and Growing Growers KC recognition.
Cost is \$15

Register today
<https://commerce.cashnet.com/KSUOHREC>



Fruit and Vegetable Field Day – Monday, August 17, 2026

2026 Commercial Fruit and Vegetable Field Day is scheduled for 4-7 p.m., August 17 at OHREC, 35230 W 135th Street, Olathe, KS 66061. The program features walk-and-talk updates on current and recently-completed research projects from OHREC and K-State Olathe faculty and graduate students, a tour of the Johnson County Extension Master Gardeners Backyard Demonstration Garden, Growing Growers KC apprentice and host farm recognition, and a cookout meal. Registration is encouraged. Cost is \$15 per person to cover handouts and meal. Register at: <https://commerce.cashnet.com/KSUOHREC> Feel free to bring a lawn chair.



Strawberry research plot in November 2025.

Strawberry Trials: Harvest for Year 2 of strawberry trials has wrapped up and now Graduate Student Shubham is analyzing data collected. His study evaluates the effect of planting date on yield and post-harvest quality of commercially available, June-bearing strawberry varieties. A companion research project evaluates using a later planting for one variety to compare differences. As part of the project, he is also conducting a survey of strawberry growers to learn more about strawberry production and plant material needs of growers in Kansas and the Midwest. All interested strawberry growers – regardless of size – are encouraged to take the survey available from this link: https://kstate.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_7afiB1x2QjbzWPs

Organic Soil Amendments in No Till Transition: Graduate student Courtney has begun her second growing season for her research project focused on mitigation options for the yield reduction challenges organic growers often experience when transitioning to no till production. She planted kale into multiple soil treatments and will evaluate each treatment's impact on soil health as measured by fungal bacteria ratio, soil organic matter, and compaction. For over-wintering she used a rye cover crop on some plots.



Season 2 of the organic no-till transition plots in the OHREC solo tunnel - June 2026.



L to R: New walk-in cooler in the OHREC Veggie Shed. Sweet corn growing in a haygrove tunnel.



Post-Harvest Solar Cooler: Solar power experiments continue at OHREC with the addition of a walk-in, Cool-Bot-equipped cooler in the Veggie Shed, powered by roof-mounted solar panels. Graduate student Amy is studying the efficiency of using solar power for a Cool-Bot system to effectively cool produce near the growing fields. And it's not just any produce she's cooling. Her experiment will test the system's ability to cool sweet corn which has an exceptionally high post-harvest respiration rate.

High Tunnel Tomatoes: Graduate student Akshay has begun exploring solutions for soil salinity problems in grafted tomatoes grown in high tunnels by evaluating salt-tolerance of different rootstock varieties. This experiment is being conducted in the Stuppy high tunnels.



One of six replications of tomatoes testing the salt tolerance of various rootstocks.

Variety Trials: Annual variety trials for tomatoes and bell peppers grown under cover have been planted. These trials evaluate popular commercially-available varieties of tomatoes and bell peppers grown in a high tunnel.

Cantaloupe Trials: Year three of commercially-available cantaloupe variety trials grown in a high tunnel is underway. Be sure to attend Field Day on August 17 to learn more about all of the ongoing vegetable and fruit experiments at OHREC.

OHREC Update

OHREC welcomes Claire Barnhart to her new job as Vegetable Technician. Claire graduated in December 2025 from the Urban Food Systems Program with a Master's Degree in Horticulture. She is a familiar face at OHREC, having started working here while she was in high school continuing through her undergraduate studies and most recently as a graduate research assistant.



Claire Barnhart



Akshay Kumar

OHREC welcomes graduate student and summer worker, Akshay Kumar, who is pursuing a Master's Degree in Horticulture through the Urban Food Systems Program at K-State-Olathe. Akshay is conducting soil salinity research on tomatoes in high tunnels described in the previous section's Research Updates.

Backyard Garden Update

The Johnson County Extension Master Gardeners Backyard Demonstration Garden (BYG) opened for 2026 in mid-March. EMGs gather every Wednesday from 8-11 a.m. for Wednesday Workday. In addition to growing fruit, vegetables, and flowers to donate to local food pantries, the Backyard Gardeners are focused on building community this year. Since March they have hosted numerous groups and individuals at the Backyard Garden and have more activities planned for the remainder of the growing season. As of July 1, the Backyard Garden has donated nearly 1,000 pounds of produce and 167 flower bouquets to Johnson County food pantries.