

fall 2025 newsletter

K-State Olathe Horticulture Research and Extension Center

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

Fruit & Vegetable Research Update

Current Research Projects



Strawberry research plot in November 2025.

Strawberry Trials: Year 2 of strawberry trials are in the ground and growing well. Graduate Student Shubham and Dr. Sandhu planted 12 varieties of strawberries this year. Their study evaluates the effect of planting date on yield and post-harvest quality of commercially available strawberry varieties. A companion research project evaluates using a later planting for one variety to compare differences.

Organic Soil Amendments in No Till Transition: Graduate student Courtney completed her first growing season focused on mitigation options for the challenges growers often experience when transitioning to no till production. She planted kale and nasturtium 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.



Rye cover crop in no-till transition plots in the OHREC solo tunnel in October 2025.

Recent Research Publication

“Effect of Ultraviolet Water Treatment on Survival and Growth of *Escherichia coli* in Recirculating Hydroponic Systems,” Markanna Moore, Teng Yang, Majid Jaber Douraki, Cary Rivard, Eleni Pliakoni, Londa Nwadike, Manreet Bhullar, Journal of Food Protection, Volume 88, Issue 9, 2025, 100575, ISSN0362-028X, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jfp.2025.100575>

OHREC Update



Amy Sawyer

OHREC welcomed new graduate student, Amy Sawyer, who began in the Fall 2025 semester. Amy is a Doctoral student in Horticulture and Natural Resources at the K-State Olathe Campus and a Graduate Research Assistant for Dr. Cary Rivard. She comes to K-State from Arizona State University with a background in plant biology and conservation and her Ph.D. research will focus on the use of solar panels to power a cold storage unit (OHREC's KoolCat trailer) to determine if agrivoltaics can be a viable, in-field, cool storage option for fresh fruits and vegetables.

Summer through Fall growing season brought many visitors to OHREC. In early June members of the K-State Extension Horticulture Program Focus Team toured OHREC as part of their summer educational programming. Later in the month we hosted 40day campers from the Wee Workshop Child Development Center for hands-on learning activities.



L to R: KSU Horticulture PFT members learn about strawberry research from Graduate Student Shubham; Wee Workshop Day Campers learn how to make bouquets of native and seasonal flowers and plants.



Guests at 2025 Commercial Fruit and Vegetable Field Day

August brought more than 90 visitors for the 2025 Commercial Fruit and Vegetable Field Day where faculty and student research projects are shared with the public. Field Day also celebrates the completion of the Growing Growers Apprenticeship year by recognizing 2025 apprentices and host farms.

In September, Johnson County Extension Master Gardeners celebrated the 20th Anniversary of the Backyard Garden by hosting a BYG Public Open House – attended by more than 200 people. A hands-on High Tunnel Repair Workshop was held on September 7. Together with



L to R: The first visitors to the Backyard Garden 20th Anniversary Open House; Participants from the hands-on high tunnel repair workshop.



WyCo EMGs meet at the Backyard Garden with JoCo EMGs.

for a new Garden Produce Handling Safety educational program in the OHREC classroom. OHREC students and staff and BYG volunteers participated in the training.

the Backyard Garden volunteers, we hosted a group of seven Extension Master Gardeners from Wyandotte County for a tour of OHREC and the BYG which was followed by a Johnson County Extension pilot training session



Produce Safety for the Home Garden pilot training.



Members and guests of the Kansas Black Farmers Association.

Events continued in October when we hosted the Kansas Black Farmers Association Quarterly Meeting bringing together farmers from across the state.

Favorable weather in November allowed for the opportunity to film high tunnel repairs that will be used for future educational workshops.



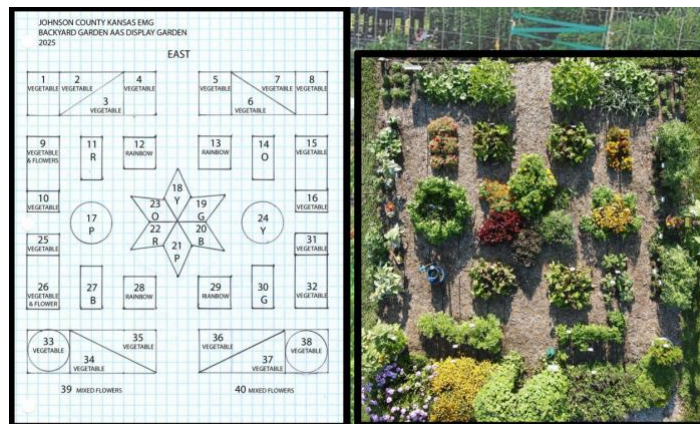
Filming high tunnel repair for educational videos



And as 2025 winds down, we wish everyone Happy Holidays!

Backyard Garden Update

The Backyard Garden (BYG) turned 20 this year. A project of the milestone celebrated twice – first on August 20 for an EMG-only celebration and again on September 6 with a community Open House. Over 200 visitors turned out for the Backyard Garden (BYG) Open House. In addition to celebrating longevity, Backyard Gardeners celebrated abundance and charity by growing and donating 4,909 pounds of produce and 850 flower bouquets. Produce and flower bouquets all were donated to local food pantries.



2025 BYG AAS Display Garden design and actual. The Garden placed 2nd in a national AAS design competition.

To round out a year of celebration, the All American Selection (AAS) Display Garden in the BYG won Second Place in the national 2025 AAS Landscape Design Competition, Category 1: 0-10,000 visitors annually. The demonstration and teaching garden focused on the STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Math) theme by incorporating all five STEAM elements, highlighted by paintbrush sculptures and a central color wheel. A primary goal was creating an easily accessible, self-guided tour using QR codes and a video presentation, limiting verbiage and maximizing photos for all ages. Visitors and fellow Master Gardeners praised the healthy plants, overall aesthetic, and the integrated use of QR codes and AAS plant markers, allowing them to fully understand the educational application of STEAM within the garden space.

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