

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For more information, contact Kenny Dodson
Horticulture Agent, Wildcat Extension District
dodsonke@ksu.edu, 620-670-5018

Turning Up the Heat on Perennials

Summer sun is great at the pool, but it might turn a garden bed into a pizza oven. While almost all plants need the sun, it's important to take special care or to put the right plants in the right place. Detailed in this article are some plants that tolerate heat and drought, along with practices to help plants thrive in those conditions.

When temperatures rise, so do water needs. Water conservation practices can help keep the moisture in the ground and hopefully reduce water use. This includes mulching for trees and garden beds and raising the mower height. Mulch is great for conserving water because it helps insulate the soil from hot, dry winds. It also stops the sun from beating down on bare soil. Straw and woodchips are great options, while painted mulches and rock can be more expensive.

Along with mulch, it's important to water plants deeply and infrequently to encourage good root systems. Allowing soil to dry out a bit encourages the plant to search for water and push its roots deeper. If it always receives half an inch of water every day, or water throughout the day, then the root system will probably be shallow. Even a sturdy native plant needs a little help getting established. On the flip side, a new planting should get a little extra care. Even though native plants are able to withstand Kansas weather, they are still new transplants without established root systems.

Now, on to some plants that love the Kansas summer. Natives like echinacea, black-eyed susan, liatris, and yarrow. Russian sage and lamb's ear are also great plants that can take the heat. Typically, plants with adaptations like light-colored or fuzzy leaves will have an easier time combating heat. Of course, succulent plants and arid plants like hen-and-chicks, stonecrop sedum, and yarrow perform well in heat, too! Lastly, don't forget the grass! Indiangrass, switchgrass, and bluestem are native grasses that can be a great addition, once established. Grass also translates to lawns, where warm-season grasses like buffalo, bermuda, and zoysia will be growing much better in summer than fescue.

To beat the heat, make sure that plants are prepared. Good mulching, watering strategies, and plant selection will all help to support a garden that can handle hot, dry summers.

For more information, please contact Kenny Dodson, Horticulture Agent, Wildcat District, dodsonke@ksu.edu, or 620-670-5018.

#

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service

K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director of K-State Research and Extension, Kansas State University, County Extension Councils, Extension Districts.