

McPherson County

K-STATE EXTENSION NEWS

April 2026



Photo Credit: Lauralee Myers, KSE
McPherson County



Shad Marston, Agriculture & Natural Resources, County Agent

April is one of the most refreshing months of the year in Kansas. Warmer days, green pastures and blooming trees remind us that spring has truly arrived. For farmers, gardeners and homeowners alike, April is also a busy month. Whether you are preparing fields, planting a garden, or simply tending to your yard, a little preparation now can lead to a successful growing season ahead.

Across McPherson County, producers are watching winter wheat progress and preparing equipment for spring fieldwork for the planting of corn and soybeans. Calving season is wrapping up for many cattle operations, and grazing management will soon become a focus as native grasses begin to green up. At home, many residents are eager to get their hands back in the soil after a long winter. April is a great time to begin many garden tasks that will set the stage for productive vegetables, colorful flower beds and healthy lawns later in the year. Spring is an exciting time across McPherson County. If you have gardening, lawn, crop or livestock questions, the Extension Office is always here to help. Stop by, call, or visit with us at one of our upcoming programs.

- Shad

Livestock News

April Duties

Shad Marston

For many operations, calving season is still underway or just wrapping up. This is a good time to keep a close eye on young calves and first-calf heifers. Make sure calves are nursing well and watch for signs of scours or respiratory issues that can sometimes appear during the wet, cool days of spring. Tagging, record keeping, and noting any calving difficulties will be valuable information later when making culling and breeding decisions.

As pastures begin to green up, grazing management should move to the top of the priority list. Native and introduced grasses need time to establish growth before heavy grazing pressure is applied. Turning cattle out too early can weaken plants and reduce pasture productivity later in the season. Maintaining a proper stocking rate helps protect grass stands while providing enough forage for the herd. Producers should match animal numbers to the carrying capacity of their pastures to ensure good grass growth throughout the summer.

April is also a great time to walk through pastures and check fences and water systems. Winter weather can damage posts, wire, and gates. Fixing these problems now prevents headaches once cattle are turned out. Water sources should also be inspected to ensure tanks, pipelines, and ponds are working properly and providing clean, reliable water.

Weed control is another early-season task that pays off later. Spring is when many broadleaf weeds and invasive plants begin to emerge. Early control can keep them from competing with desirable grasses. Trees and brush encroachment should also be monitored in pasture areas. Removing unwanted trees and maintaining open grasslands helps preserve forage production.

Nutrition should not be overlooked this time of year. Even as green grass appears, cattle still benefit from a balanced salt and mineral program. Providing free-choice mineral with the proper balance of calcium, phosphorus, and trace minerals supports herd health, reproduction, and calf growth. Placing mineral feeders in convenient pasture locations will help ensure consistent consumption.

April Duties Cont'd

Producers who will begin breeding in late spring or early summer should start evaluating breeding bulls now. Bulls should be in good body condition, sound on their feet and legs, and ready for the upcoming breeding season. Scheduling a breeding soundness exam with a veterinarian can help identify potential problems before turnout.

Farm News

Time to Scout for Alfalfa Weevils

Shad Marston

Alfalfa is one of Kansas' most valuable crops, and with warmer spring temperatures arriving, producers in McPherson County should begin scouting fields for alfalfa weevils. Kansas State University Extension entomologist Anthony Zukoff says fluctuating temperatures and slow alfalfa growth can increase the risk of early-season weevil damage.

Producers should monitor accumulated growing degree days for alfalfa weevils using the Kansas Mesonet calculator. Very small larvae usually do not become active until about 300 degree days have accumulated, and spraying too early may require additional treatments before the first cutting.

Early signs of infestation include tiny pinholes in the leaves at the top of the plant. As larvae grow, feeding can cause skeletonized leaves and give fields a frosted or silvery appearance across the canopy.

Garden & Landscape News

Below is a helpful April Garden Calendar to guide you through some timely tasks.

Vegetables and Fruits

- Start fruit tree spray schedule when growth begins
- Plant carrots, onions, beets and other salad crops in early April
- Thin radishes, beets and carrots as needed
- Harvest asparagus until spear size decreases
- Prune fruit trees if not already done
- Plant new fruit trees
- Plant asparagus and rhubarb
- Remove mulch from strawberry beds
- Prune raspberry and blackberry plantings
- Do not spray insecticides while fruits are flowering in order to protect honeybees
- Plant beans, corn and vine crops in late April
- Cultivate to control seedling weed growth
- Turn the compost pile after a long winter rest
- Transplant broccoli, cauliflower and cabbage into the garden
- Fertilize vegetable garden before planting and incorporate into soil

Spring always brings plenty to do, but the work done in April helps set the stage for a successful grazing and breeding season. Paying attention to calves, pastures, nutrition, and herd management now will help cattle producers make the most of the growing season ahead.

To scout a field, producers can cut 30–50 stems at random and shake them individually in a bucket to count larvae. Treatment may be justified when stems are 3–7 inches tall with 1–2 larvae per stem, or when taller stands show significant feeding with about four larvae per stem.

If the field is close to harvest, early cutting may be an option. Producers should also rotate insecticides when necessary and always check fields after treatment to ensure good control.

Regular scouting this spring will help producers protect yield and quality in their alfalfa stands.

Flowers

- Remove winter mulch from perennial beds
- Cut back last year's growth from perennials
- Remove seed heads from spring bulbs
- Do not remove foliage from spring flowering bulbs, as growth is needed for next year's flowers
- Fertilize spring flowering bulbs
- Add organic matter such as compost before planting new flowers
- Divide perennials
- Plant new roses
- Prune rose bushes
- Fertilize rose bushes for spring growth

Plant annuals from seed and transplants

April Garden Calendar Cont'd

Lawns

- Apply crabgrass control by mid-month
- Mow lawn as needed – bluegrass at 2", tall fescue at 3"
- Fertilize cool-season lawns with a slow-release nitrogen fertilizer
- Do not fertilize zoysia this early in spring; nutrients will feed weeds instead of dormant grass
- Spot treat broadleaf weeds such as dandelions, henbit and chickweed
- Check mower and make needed repairs before the season begins
- Sharpen mower blade
- No need to catch grass clippings if mowing frequently
- Do not water unless conditions are extremely dry; early irrigation can create high water demands in summer

House Plants

- Remove winter dust from leaves by gently rinsing with room-temperature water
- Repot plants as needed, increasing pot size by about one inch
- Leach excess fertilizer salts from soil with water
- Begin summer fertilization of houseplants
- Do not move plants outdoors until nighttime temperatures stay above 60°F
- Propagate houseplants by cuttings or divisions
- Fertilize amaryllis and keep in bright light to encourage new leaves

Trees and Shrubs

- Prune spring flowering shrubs such as forsythia and lilac after flowering
- Prune trees as needed and repair winter storm damage
- Remember: topping is not pruning—never top a tree
- Plant new trees and shrubs
- Remove grass from the base of young trees and shrubs to prevent mower and trimmer damage
- Apply a layer of mulch around plants
- Keep new trees and shrubs watered
- Fertilize young trees to promote growth



Photo Source: Lauralee Myers, KSE, McPherson County

Planting Trees This Spring in McPherson County

Shad Marston

Spring is one of the best times to plant trees in Kansas, and many homeowners across McPherson County are beginning to think about adding shade, beauty, and value to their landscapes. With our Kansas winds, hot summers, and sometimes challenging soils, planting a tree correctly the first time can make all the difference in whether it thrives for decades or struggles to survive.

Kansas State University horticulture expert Matt McKernan offers ten simple rules that can help ensure success when planting trees this spring.



Photo Source: Shad Marston, KSE, McPherson County

- **Select the right tree for the site.**
 - Choose trees adapted to our Kansas climate and consider their mature size. Also think about potential issues such as nuisance fruit or disease problems. Your local extension office or garden center can recommend varieties that perform well in our area.
- **Keep the tree watered before planting.**
 - Store the tree in a shady location and keep the root ball moist until it is planted.
- **Lift the tree properly.**
 - Always move a tree by the root ball or container, never by the trunk, to avoid damaging the plant.
- **Remove wires, labels, and cords.**
 - Anything tied to branches should be removed before planting to prevent girdling as the tree grows.

Planting Trees This Spring in McPherson County Cont'd

- **Dig the proper planting hole.**
 - The hole should be deep enough so the root flare—where the trunk meets the roots—is visible at ground level. The hole should also be about three times the width of the root ball so roots can spread easily.
- **Remove containers and correct circling roots.**
 - Take off plastic or peat pots and loosen or cut any circling roots so they grow outward instead of continuing in a circle.
- **Backfill with the original soil.**
 - Use the same soil that came out of the hole. Avoid adding amendments like peat moss, which can sometimes slow root growth.
- **Minimize pruning at planting.**
 - Only remove dead, damaged, or rubbing branches. Leaves help produce energy the tree needs to establish.
- **Water thoroughly.**
 - Water deeply after planting and continue watering about once a week during the first growing season if rainfall is limited.
- **Mulch and stake only if needed.**
 - Apply 2–4 inches of mulch around the tree, but keep it a few inches away from the trunk. Stake only if the tree is large or in a windy location, and remove staking materials within one to two years.

Planting a tree is an investment in the future of your landscape and community. By following these simple steps, homeowners can give their new trees the best possible start this spring.

Upcoming Events

Master Gardeners and Friends Educational Meeting

April 23, 2026 – 7:00 PM

McPherson County Extension Office



Everyone interested in gardening is welcome to attend and learn from local experts and fellow gardeners.



Photo Source: Shad Marston, KSE, McPherson County Wheat Plot Tour 2025

McPherson County Wheat Plot Tour/Noon Luncheon

May 15, 2026

- Galle Farms – Moundridge

¼ mile north of the intersection of 23rd and Cheyenne

- Schroeder Farms – Inman

¼ mile east of the intersection of 4th and Cheyenne

This annual tour provides a great opportunity to see local wheat varieties in the field and discuss management practices with producers and specialists. More details to follow.



Clover Corner



Laura Savage
4-H Youth Development Extension Agent

Laura's Letter

Happy Spring! As the weather heats up, so does McPherson County 4-H! Before we fully jump into fair season, I would invite y'all to take time to breathe and recuperate. As you know, the last few months of school are a whirlwind, and summer is even crazier! Make sure to take time for yourself and your family to recharge those batteries! April and May bring several notable deadlines to our McPherson County 4-H Program. The one I would particularly like to highlight is the project enrollment deadline of May 1! Please enroll in any project you are remotely interested in by this date so you can show at our 4-H Fair!

-Laura

Stay in the Know!

Want to stay updated with McPherson County

4-H and other Extension Programs?

Follow us on Facebook!

Want to receive text message notifications?

TEXT "ALERT" to 22300



One Call Now--Text "ALERT" to 22300



McPherson County Extension Office



McPherson County 4-H

Schedule of Events

- Apr. 1 Scholarships Due
- Apr. 2 4-H Council Meeting, 7:00 PM**
- Apr. 11 K-State Junior Sheep Producer Day
- Apr. 11 State Shutterbug Photography
- Apr. 20 Market Beef DNA Envelopes Order Deadline
- Apr. 24-25 Small Animal Weigh-In**
- Apr. 25 Spring into Volunteering (Salina)
- May 1 Project Enrollment Deadline**
- May 1 State Market Beef Nominations Due
- May 1 Livestock ID Forms Due to Office

Enrollment Deadline

Enroll in ALL projects by May 1st for 2026 Fair Eligibility!

The project enrollment deadline of May 1 is quickly approaching! If your 4-H member has any interest in a project, please enroll in that project area in 4-H Online. If they are not enrolled in that project area by May 1st, they will not be able to enter projects into the 2026 McPherson County 4-H Fair!

Red, White, and Moo!

The McPherson County 4-H Fair will be held July 25th - July 27th with the theme, “**Red, White, and Moo**”!

Pre-fair events include:

Fashion Revue: Monday, July 20th

Horse Show: Monday, July 20th

Dog Show: Tuesday, July 21st

Fair Book changes are currently in process.

Be on the lookout for exciting updates to the Foods Auction and Round Robin!

Discovery Days

**June 3rd-June 5th
Manhattan, KS**

Youth ages 13-18 years as of January 1st, 2026, are invited to attend 4-H Discovery Days! Registration is not currently open but make sure to check: <https://www.kansas4-h.org/educational-experiences/project-based-events/conferences-events/discovery-days/> for updated information!

National Volunteer Week

National Volunteer Week, April 19th-April 25th

McPherson County 4-H would not be the same without our numerous volunteers. To all of our club and project leaders, superintendents, and other volunteers: THANK YOU! 4-H members, I invite you to take time this week to write a thank you note or thank a volunteer in-person who has impacted your McPherson County 4-H experience!

Small Animal Weigh-In

Friday, April 24th & Saturday, April 25th

Small animal weigh-in will be on Friday, April 24th (SWINE) and Saturday, April 25th (meat goat and sheep). Please mark your calendars and let me know by April 1st how many animals you plan to bring!

Shutterbug Photography

This year's statewide Shutterbug Event will be held on **April 11th** in **Manhattan** at the Midwest Dream Car Museum. Registration link: <https://cvent.me/027Zb9> Cost for each 4-H member will be \$25.00. Youth in attendance will need to be accompanied by an adult. There will be cameras available to check out during this event, but kids are encouraged to bring their own cameras, smartphones and/or tablets to take photos.



The poster features a decorative border of colorful leaves at the top. On the left, the text 'REGISTER TODAY' is written vertically in large, bold, purple letters. Below this is a QR code. The central image shows a person from behind, holding a black Canon camera up to their eye. To the right of the camera are two yellow gear icons. Below the image, the text 'SHUTTERBUG PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOP' is written in large, bold, green letters, followed by 'APRIL 11, 2026 MANHATTAN, KS' in smaller green letters. At the bottom left is the 'K-STATE Research and Extension' logo, and at the bottom right is the text 'Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service. K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer.'

State Livestock Nomination

Nominating your animals for the Kansas State Fair or KJLS? Be aware of these deadlines:

Market Beef:

DNA Envelopes (ordered): April 20th

Nominated by: May 1st

Small Livestock & Commercial Heifers:

DNA Envelopes (ordered): June 5th

Nominated by: June 15th

NEW for 2026: ALL exhibitors must have a ShoWorks account!



Walk Kansas 2026 (Walk 56 in 56) Is Underway—It’s Not Too Late to Join!

Walk Kansas 2026 officially kicked off on March 22 and will continue through May 16—and there’s still plenty of time to get involved!

Walk Kansas is an 8-week (56 days and has a Route 56 trail) health and wellness program designed to help individuals and teams build healthy habits through physical activity, better nutrition, and overall wellness. Whether your goal is to increase daily movement, boost energy, or simply stay motivated with a group, Walk Kansas offers a fun and flexible way to stay on track.

Participants can form teams, track minutes of physical activity, and encourage one another along the way. Activities aren’t limited to walking—gardening, biking, cleaning, and other forms of movement all count toward your daily minutes.

Even though the program has already started, joining now still allows you to:

- Set personal goals and track your progress
- Connect with others for motivation and accountability
- Build healthier habits that last beyond the program

Getting started is simple:

- Sign up, join or create a team, and begin logging your activity. Every step—and every minute—counts.
- Don’t worry about being “behind.” The most important step is getting started today.

Whether you walk Route 56 in 56 days or choose one of the other trails, make the most of spring, get moving, and join Walk Kansas 2026!

The Rise of “Micro-Habits” for Lasting Change

If you’ve struggled to stick with big goals—whether it’s eating healthier, saving money, or exercising more, you’re not alone. A growing trend gaining attention in 2026 is the concept of micro-habits: small, simple actions done consistently that lead to meaningful long-term change.

Unlike major lifestyle overhauls, micro-habits focus on actions that take less than five minutes. Examples include drinking one glass of water first thing in the morning, setting aside \$1 a day, or doing 10 squats while waiting for your coffee to brew. While these actions may seem insignificant, research and real-world success stories show that consistency, not intensity, is what drives results.

Micro-habits work because they reduce resistance. When a task feels easy, we are far more likely to follow through. Over time, these small actions build confidence, create momentum, and often naturally expand into larger habits. For example, someone who commits to a 2-minute walk may eventually increase that to a full workout.

This approach is especially useful for busy families, youth, and individuals balancing multiple responsibilities. It removes the pressure of perfection and replaces it with progress.

Try this:

Choose one micro-habit this week. Make it specific, simple, and tied to something you already do. For example, “After brushing my teeth, I will write down one expense” or “Before dinner, I will stretch for two minutes.”

Small steps taken daily can lead to big results over time.



Photo Source: Canva

Financial Awareness Month: Building Smart Money Habits for All Ages

April is Financial Awareness Month, a perfect time to evaluate spending habits, set goals, and build financial confidence—for both youth and adults.

For Youth: Start Small, Learn Big

Helping young people understand money early sets them up for lifelong success. Financial literacy doesn't have to be complicated.

- Encourage saving with clear goals (a toy, game, or activity)
- Use real-life experiences like grocery shopping to discuss cost comparisons
- Introduce the difference between “wants” and “needs”
- Try a simple three-jar system: Save, Spend, Give

Youth who learn to manage small amounts of money gain confidence in making larger financial decisions later.

For Adults: Reset and Refocus

Financial Awareness Month is a great opportunity to check in on your financial health.

- Review your monthly budget and identify areas to adjust
- Build or replenish an emergency fund (aim for 3–6 months of expenses)
- Check credit reports for accuracy
- Set one realistic financial goal (pay down a debt, increase savings, etc.)

Even small changes—like reducing unused subscriptions or meal planning—can free up funds and reduce stress.

Take Action Together:

Consider making financial awareness a family activity. Open conversations about money help remove stigma and create shared goals.

Financial wellness isn't about perfection—it's about making informed decisions that support your future.

Safe Digging Month: Call Before You Dig

Safe Digging Month: Call Before You Dig

April is recognized nationwide as Safe Digging Month, reminding homeowners, farmers, and contractors of an important step before any digging project: knowing what's below the surface.

Striking an underground utility line can cause serious injury, service disruptions, and costly repairs. Buried lines may include gas, electric, water, sewer, or communication cables—and many are only inches below ground.



Photo Source: Kansas 811

Before starting any project—installing a fence, planting trees, or even digging a mailbox post—take these steps:

- Contact your state's 811 service at least a few days before digging
- Wait for utilities to be marked with flags or paint
- Respect the markings and dig carefully around them
- This free service helps protect you, your property, and your community.

Did You Know?

Many utility lines are not always where you expect them. Even if you've dug in the same spot before, conditions can change over time.

Taking a few minutes to call 811 can prevent injuries, avoid service outages, and save money.

Dig safely.

Volunteer Month: The Power of Giving Your Time

April is Volunteer Month, a time to recognize the individuals who strengthen communities through service and to encourage others to get involved.

Volunteering benefits more than just the recipient—it positively impacts the volunteer as well. Studies show that volunteering can improve mental health, reduce stress, and create a stronger sense of purpose and connection.

Opportunities to volunteer are everywhere:

- *The Extension Office is currently looking for volunteers to help with both the McPherson County Fair and the McPherson County 4-H Fair. There are opportunities available for all levels of involvement, so if you would like a great volunteer opportunity, contact the McPherson County Extension Office.*

Volunteer Month: The Power of Giving Your Time Cont'd

Opportunities to volunteer are everywhere cont'd:

- Youth programs such as 4-H or after-school activities
- Food banks and community meal programs
- Local events, fairs, and festivals
- Libraries, museums, and senior centers

For youth, volunteering builds leadership skills, responsibility, and confidence. For adults, it offers a chance to give back, meet new people, and make a lasting difference.

Getting Started:

- Choose a cause you care about
- Start small—even one hour makes a difference
- Volunteer as a family or group to build shared experiences

Communities thrive when people invest their time and talents. This month, consider how you can contribute—even in a small way.



Photo Source: KSE McPherson County, Robin Johnson

Global Pay It Forward Day

Observed each April, Global Pay It Forward Day encourages simple acts of kindness that create a ripple effect of goodwill.

The idea is simple: do something kind for someone, and instead of expecting repayment, ask them to “pay it forward” to another person.

Ideas include:

- Paying for someone’s coffee
- Writing a thank-you note
- Helping a neighbor with yard work
- Donating items to a local pantry

Small acts can have a big impact, especially when they inspire others to keep the chain going.

Kindness is contagious, start the ripple.

National Drug Take Back Day

National Drug Take Back Day, held each spring, provides a safe and responsible way to dispose of unused or expired medications.

Keeping unused medications at home can increase the risk of accidental misuse, especially among youth. Proper disposal helps protect families and the environment.

During this event:

- Drop off medications at designated collection sites
- No questions asked
- Safe disposal is ensured

Important Reminders:

- Remove personal information from prescription labels
- Do not flush medications unless specifically instructed

Check with local law enforcement or health departments for nearby drop-off locations. The McPherson County Extension Office also has Medication disposal bags available at the office for you to pick up anytime.

Safe disposal is a simple step toward a healthier community.

To schedule time with Chuck follow the link below or scan the QR code.

<https://calendly.com/claughlin-ksu/meeting-with-chuck>



Sign up for our newsletter to stay informed about upcoming events, calendar updates, and exciting webinars happening in your area. See a selection of upcoming grants, discover senior and military discounts, access important county resource phone numbers, and never miss out on local happenings. If you don't see your event listed, use the link provided to add it to the county-wide calendar. Stay engaged and connected—subscribe today! To add events to the community calendar visit: <https://tinyurl.com/MCAddEvent>



<http://eepurl.com/iicSFn>

Upcoming Events

Wednesday, April 1, 2026 at noon to 1 p.m.

K-State Garden Hour Webinar: April Showers, Rain Garden Flowers

The month of April brings spring showers to Kansas, however water availability becomes scarce as the season progresses, making water management especially important. Join Markis Hill, Johnson County Horticulture Agent, to discover how to best utilize rain when it arrives, while also saving some for when the rain disappears. Learn about rain gardens, bioswales, rain barrels and more to help conserve water this growing season.



Wednesday, May 6, 2026 at noon to 1 p.m.

K-State Garden Hour Webinar: Natives vs. Cultivars--Making Informed Choices for Your Landscape

Cultivars of native plants may dominate in the garden centers, but how do they compare to their true native counterparts — and does it really matter which you choose? Join Sharon Ashworth, Douglas County Horticulture Agent, as she answers these questions and shares what current research reveals about the differences in ecological value between natives and cultivars of natives.



Wednesday, April 8, 2026 at noon to 1 p.m.

Wednesday, May 13, 2026 at noon to 1 p.m.

Teach & Taste

Peach Pie Cruffin

<https://tinyurl.com/Cruffin26>



April 8, 2026

6:30 P.M.

McPherson County Extension Office
600 West Woodside, McPherson, KS 67460

XDid You Know?

The cruffin was invented by Kate Reid of Lune Croissanterie in Melbourne, Australia, in 2013.

This Class Is Hands-On & Free!



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McPherson County

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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Radio Every Monday:
7:40 AM-96.7 FM KMPK
7:40 AM-98.9 FM KMCP
7:40 AM-95.5 FM KLBG
Ad Astra Radio Station