

## INSIGHT – Pioneer Lessons

By Kim Baldwin, McPherson  
County farmer and rancher

As the end of the school year is quickly coming into sight for my children, the end-of-year activities are beginning to ramp up. State assessments have been completed, count-downs have begun and field trips have picked up.

I recently joined my daughter's elementary class as they expanded on their classroom lessons about pioneers and experienced a different time period for a day. Students dressed up as pioneer children, wrapped their lunch in parchment paper, packed it into metal pails and headed to Wichita to participate in a day of experiential learning.

Their earlier lessons truly came to life as these students experienced multiple aspects of what life was like for a child in Kansas more than 150 years ago.

For a portion of the morning, the students entered a restored farmhouse and learned about a variety of chores required to churn butter, fire up the kitchen stove, wash dishes and make toast. Afterwards, the students moved outside to learn about some of the tasks they would have helped with had they lived on a farm. From cutting grass using a scythe, tossing hay using pitchforks, utilizing pulley systems to move heavy objects to planting rows and rows of seed on foot, the kids soon realized that there was a lot of work involved in running a farm back in the day.

While walking by some antique farm machinery that was being explained to the kids, I couldn't help but think that I sure was glad I live in 2025 and can utilize advanced technology and practices from planting seeds to harvesting crops.

I was soon reminded that while there have been major advancements in technology, some things still remain the same.

As the students wrapped up their lesson about all of the work required of a pioneer family to prepare for planting to harvest, we rounded a corner to discover a large display board with pegs.

The students were asked what was one

thing completely out of their control that still needed to happen to increase the odds of growing a successful crop to harvest. While there were some interesting answers presented by these third graders, the main answer was rain.

The students were then each handed a hockey puck and one by one they were prompted to select a space on the peg board to release their puck. Where the puck would land would determine the crop they would have, ranging from a bumper crop all the way to a total failure.

Students cheered one another on as each child would approach the board and chose where to place their puck before releasing it to watch as it bounced from peg to peg before arriving at its final spot.

High fives and cheers were given when a puck landed on average or bumper harvests and audible sighs were heard when a puck would land in the zones deemed below average and crop failure.

You could actually see some students were quite anxious as they approached the board to find out the results of their crop. Sometimes a student would second guess their initial placement of their puck and quickly select another area of the board before releasing hoping their luck would be better by making an adjustment.

Overall, there were more successful harvests than crop failures with this group of students. Nonetheless, the exercise allowed students to briefly experience the feelings and concerns a farmer living in the late 1800s would potentially have as they grew a crop.

The day I spent with a group of pioneer kids is one I will soon not forget as it was a great reminder of the realities and concerns of farmers back then that are still present for us today.

Sometimes it takes a day in third grade to help me realize that while there have been major advancements, there are still plenty of areas that impact the success of our farms today just like those from years past.

## Students Do Well At State Music Contest



State Musicians who traveled to Hesston College on Saturday, April 26th, — Lillie Weiser (left) and Carmela Garcia-Losada. Lillie is the daughter of Marcus and Meghan Weiser. Carmela, foreign exchange student from Spain, is the host daughter of Brandon and Andrea Merriman. Lillie received an Excellent (2) rating for her alto saxophone solo and Carmela received a Superior (1) rating for her vocal solo.

## Lawn Maintenance Should Start Now

K-State horticulture expert explains mowing frequency and height

K-State Research and Extension news service

It is time to resume lawn maintenance as spring weather arrives and grass begins to grow more quickly.

Kansas State University horticulture expert Cynthia Domenghini says proper maintenance is a proactive approach to reduce weed growth and other stresses to the lawn while minimizing costs and the environmental impact.

### Mowing

The optimal mowing height for a home lawn depends on the type of grass, lawn use and time of year, Domenghini said.

"Mow at the high end of the recommended range for each species to improve drought resistance by encouraging deeper roots," Domenghini said. "Only one-third of the grass leaf should be cut at a time."

Removing more by lowering the mowing height results in physiological stress and possible heat or cold injury. If the lawn has become overgrown and needs more than one-third removed it will need to be done gradually with a few days between each mowing.

"Mowing frequency should be based on the growth rate of the lawn," Domenghini said. She suggests not following a set schedule that may result in excessive clippings left on the grass.

"Proper timing of mowing means the grass clippings are shorter and can be returned to the lawn," Domenghini said. "This contributes nitrogen back to the lawn."

Long clippings can block sunlight to the live turf and promote disease, so they should be bagged and removed.

Maintaining a sharp blade on the mower is essential for a clean cut,

Domenghini added. She said a dull mower blade tears the grass and causes the tips to turn whitish.

"Mow using a different pattern each time to prevent soil compaction and turf wear from the mower wheels. The grass blades lean the direction of the mower's path so changing the pattern each time allows the grass to stand more upright," Domenghini said.

Trees can be severely damaged if bumped by the mower, she warned. Even what appears to be a minor wound can result in death for the tree, so she recommends cultivating the soil surrounding trees to prevent grass and weeds from growing up close to the trunk.

### Watering

Apply water in the early morning, and wait as long as possible between watering, Domenghini said. Nighttime watering promotes disease development.

"Some signs indicating that the turf needs water include darker bluish-green color, and when footprints remain in the lawn when someone walks across rather than leaf blades bouncing back in place," Domenghini said. "Soak the soil to a depth of 6-8 inches and wait for signs that more water is needed."

### Fertilizing

Fertilize only to maintain a moderately green color during favorable weather, and minimally or not at all during times of weather stress, Domenghini said.

Over-fertilizing increases the water and mowing requirements. Domenghini suggests not fertilizing when heavy rain is expected, and never dump excess fertilizer into storm drains or sewers.

The timing of fertilizer applications should be based on turfgrass species:

\*Fescue and bluegrass - September and November (optional in May).

\*Bermudagrass and zoysiagrass - between May and August.

\*Buffalograss - June. Domenghini and her colleagues in K-State's Department of Horticulture and Natural Resources produce a weekly Horticulture Newsletter with tips for maintaining

home landscapes and gardens.

Interested persons can subscribe to the newsletter, as well as send their garden and yard-related questions to hortsupport@ksu.edu, or contact your local K-State Research and Extension office.

## Local News Items

By Teresa Kathke

Tuesday, Ed Bryan's sister and brother-in-law Fran and Larry from Ray, Colorado came to visit and went home this past Monday.

On Wednesday, they all went out for supper in Onaga. On Thursday, they all went to watch Donna and Ed's grandson, Jacob play baseball in Onaga. Friday Donna and Ed went with Fran and Larry to Lincoln, Nebraska to see some of their friends. On Saturday they went to church and then out for supper in Onaga. On Sunday, all of Donna and Ed's children, grandchildren and great grandchildren came to visit with their aunt and uncle. Donna fixed dinner for them all and they helped their grandson Wyatt celebrate his 33rd birthday.

The Ed Ringel family traveled to Blue Valley High School in Randolph to watch Abbie and Emilie play softball on Thursday. Happy to report they won both games (20-5 and 16-0) and Abbie hit an out of the park home run! Lois Kraushaar enjoyed visiting with friends at HRHS coffee group Friday morning. It is a bonus that the group meets in the library so it is easy to return books and take some different ones

home.

Friday afternoon Lois drove to Alma to a fundraiser at St. John's Lutheran School, attended by her great granddaughters. Kelli and Kirk Bryant from Fort Scott met her there, as well as Gary and Linda Kraushaar from Frankfort. After fundraiser shut down for the evening everyone had dinner with Samantha Henderson, Charlotte, Riley and Patty before heading home.

Overnight guests in the home of Joe and Karen Harder were Rory, Ellie and Zoey Starns and Austyn and Chloe Baum. They all had breakfast at the Wheaton Center on Sunday morning.

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