



**Hoe & Tell**  
By Shirley Butler  
"Master Gardener"  
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February is spoiling us with a warm spell, temperatures are promised in the seventies at times, and plants and trees will wake up with greening buds and hints of life. These warming spells are celebrated with cheer, especially if you are a florist delivering love all over the country. In my florist days many years ago, we watched the weather closely, hoping for a calm and warmish day to get those roses out of the van and into homes without frostbite and blowing away. Those were the days when balloons were popular and they were a challenge to deliver. Fresh flowers in the middle of winter brightens up the season for sure. Keep your flowers cool and hydrated, even putting them to bed each night in a cool room or garage, and they will last longer.

I've been listening to a pair of Great Horned Owls hooting in the row of pines east of my bedroom window. We once had a resident pair for several years, as they nested in our old silo. We named them Oscar and Edna and even got to enjoy them as they brought their young family under the yard light each evening to eat June bugs. They make a dent in the bunny population that nests under our big hedges and worry the skunks that wanted their share of the bugs.

The warm temperatures give a wise gardener good reason to start dragging hoses and getting trees and shrubs watered. So far our winter has been warm and dry. The snow has been a welcomed boost but has done little to hydrate the farm crops and perennial beds. Lawns, trees, landscaping shrubs, perennial beds, asparagus, berries and fruit trees are getting a good drink in the next week. Don't miss this opportunity. It will show next summer if you sleep through this necessity.

February is pruning month. The fall raspberries are pruned back down to the soil line, grapes are snipped back and the daylilies are cleaned up. Leave the roses alone yet for another month at least. We could get some winter yet so the leaves and mulch that protect the perennial bed should not be disturbed.

Starting your own transplants under grow lights is a lot of fun, and my lights are blazing in the basement. One of the biggest mistakes a new gardener can make is sowing seeds too early, and end up with a two foot tomato plant begging for sunlight with freezing temperatures outside. K-State Extension people have a website and also printed pamphlets that give good advice for timing your seeding correctly. The first transplants I plant is broccoli, cabbage and salad greens. Seed potatoes and onion plants are next. We have a long growing season here, and taking advantage of all the seasons puts food on the table for many months. It is time to start thinking "green"!

## KidWind Challenge Begins This Week

The 2026 Kansas KidWind Challenge is expected to be record breaking. This year, 110 teams representing 38 schools from across the state are registered to compete, breaking the previous record of 94 teams in 2023.

The first regional challenge will be held in Dodge City on Tuesday, Feb. 10. Five more regional events are scheduled throughout the month in Colby (Feb. 12), Hutchinson (Feb. 17), Overland Park (Feb. 19), Manhattan (Feb. 25), and Burlington (Feb. 27). All events are open to the public and free to attend.

Student teams work together to design, build and test a wind turbine using the materials of their choice. Each

team's turbine will be put to the test in a wind tunnel at a wind speed of approximately 3.5-5 m/s (meters per second). Scoring is based on turbine performance, a knowledge quiz, a presentation to judges where the team explains its design process, and an instant challenge.

Students compete by age categories: 4<sup>th</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> grade, 6<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> grade and 9<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> grade. The winning teams at regional events advance to the state finals on April 11 in Salina. State winners are invited to participate in the World KidWind Challenge in Madison, WI from May 18-21.

"KidWind is a fantastic hands-on opportunity that allows students to tinker and experiment

## Senator Rick Billinger Newsletter

The first half of the 2026 legislative session is only two weeks away from being complete. On February 19<sup>th</sup>, we will reach Turnaround-which is when most bills need to be passed out of one chamber to be considered in the other chamber. Until this point, most of the heavy legislative work has occurred in committee. In the next two weeks, both chambers will be spending longer days on the floor considering all that hard work. The Senate Ways and Means subcommittees finished all our hearings and reported out all agencies last Thursday. This next week we will be spent assembling our budget.

SB 299: In the past, the Supreme Court Nominating Commission has met in private. SB 299 changes this by restricting the Kansas Supreme Court and Supreme Court Nominating Commission from adopting a rule that prohibits disclosure of the Commission's records and making records of the Commission, including the names and cities of residence of people nominated to serve on the Commission, open and subject to disclosure. The bill would continue to allow background checks and sensitive financial information of applicants or nominees for judicial office to be closed from public disclosure by the Commission.

SB 348 will exempt any electric public utility that is a not for profit, wholly owned subsidiary of an electric cooperative public utility from the jurisdiction, regulation, supervision and control of the Kansas Corporation Commission. The bill would also authorize the KCC to investigate any changes to the electric rates, joint rates, tolls, charges and exactions, and classifications and schedules of rates affecting an exempt electric public utility following a petition filed by customers of the exempt electric public utility to investigate such rates.

HB 2331 would amend laws relating to coroner procedures for the disposition of remains by creating a process that would allow a coroner to relinquish custody or dispose of unclaimed cremated remains and specify whether civil liability would arise from such disposition. The bill would make certain provisions for the remains of veterans, establish requirements for continuing education programs for licensed embalmers and funeral directors, authorize the use of the word "crematory" in the names of certain businesses, and create the crime or aggravated criminal desecration.

SB 327 will eliminate the requirement that the Bob Bethell joint committee on Home and Community based services and KanCare oversight committee's January and April meetings be held during the regular legislative session.

I am honored and grateful to represent the 40<sup>th</sup> Senate District in Kansas. Please do not hesitate to contact me by email: rick.billinger@senate.ks.gov or call me with your questions or concerns. My office number is 785 296-7399 or my cell number is 785 899-4700. If you are in Topeka, stop by my office at 545-S.

with wind turbine designs. They experience the thrill of scientific discovery as their designs are validated through performance testing, and they hone their public speaking skills as they present their turbine design to a panel of judges," explained David Carter, Director of the Kansas Energy Program at K-State Engineering Extension.

Kansas KidWind is an energy-related STEM education event from the Kansas Corporation Commission and K-State Engineering Extension made possible by a grant from the U.S. Department of Energy.

More information about KidWind is available at <https://www.kcc.ks.gov/energy-education/kidwind>.



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## Legal Notices

(First published in The Oakley Graphic on January 28, February 4, and February 11, 2026.)

IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF LOGAN COUNTY, KANSAS

In the Matter of the Estate of STEVEN E. MATZEK, Deceased

Case No.: LG-2025-PR-000005

(Petition Pursuant to K.S.A. Chapter 59) TITLE TO REAL ESTATE INVOLVED

NOTICE OF HEARING

THE STATE OF KANSAS TO ALL PERSONS CONCERNED:

You are notified a Petition has been filed in this Court by Samuel E. Matzek, duly appointed, qualified and acting Administrator of the Estate of Steven E. Matzek, deceased, requesting that Petitioner's acts be approved; account be settled and allowed; the heirs be determined; the Estate be assigned to the persons entitled to it pursuant to the Valid Settlement Agreement; the estate real estate be sold at private sale and the Real Estate Contract confirmed by the Court;

the Administrator be ordered to issue an appropriate deed upon the purchaser's fulfillment of the terms and conditions of the Real Estate Contract; fees and expenses be allowed; costs be determined and ordered paid; the administration of the Estate be closed; the Administrator be discharged and Petitioner be released from further liability.

You are required to file your written defenses to the Petition on or before February 25, 2026, at 2:00 p.m. in the District Court, Colby, Logan County, Kansas, at which time and place the cause will be heard. Should you fail to file your written defenses, judgment and decree will be entered in due course upon the Petition.

Samuel Matzek  
Administrator

SUBMITTED BY:  
Courtney E. Ress, #29378  
Gatz & Ress LLP  
505 N. Franklin Ave., Ste. A  
P.O. Box 346  
Colby, KS 67701  
Phone: 785-460-3383  
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Email: courtney@gatzlaw.net  
Attorney for Administrator

(First published in The Oakley Graphic on February 11, 18, and 25, 2026)

IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF LOGAN COUNTY, KANSAS

In the Matter of the Estate of JANIS MAREE PETRIE, deceased.

Case No. LG-2024-PR-000007

NOTICE OF HEARING

THE STATE OF KANSAS TO ALL PERSONS CONCERNED:

You are hereby notified that a petition has been filed in this Court by Garold W. Petrie, duly appointed, qualified and acting Administrator of the estate of Janis Maree Petrie, deceased, praying petitioner's acts be approved; accounts be settled and allowed; the heirs be determined; the Court find the allowances requested for attorneys' fees and expenses are

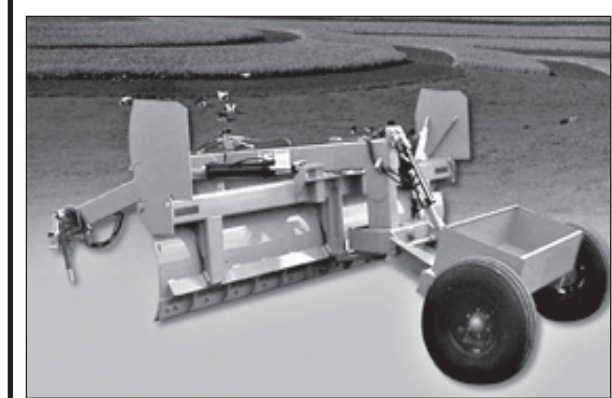
reasonable and should be allowed; the costs be determined and ordered paid; the administration of the estate be closed; upon the filing of receipts the petitioner be finally discharged as the Administrator of the estate of Janis Maree Petrie, deceased, and the petitioner be released from further liability.

You are required to file your written defenses thereto on or before March 5, 2026, at 2:00 o'clock p.m. in the District Court, in Oakley, Logan County, Kansas, at which time and place the cause will be heard. Should you fail therein, judgment and decree will be entered in due course upon the petition.

/s/ Garold W. Petrie  
Petitioner

DREILING, BIEKER & HOFFMAN LLP  
111 W. 13th Street  
P.O. Box 579  
Hays, Kansas 67601  
Attorneys for Petitioners

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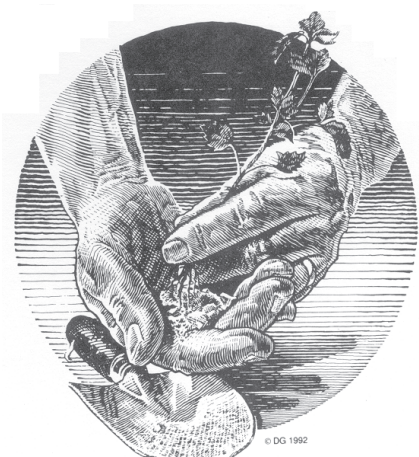
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