Greetings! It is hard to believe that May has come and gone! This year is flying by! The Tribal MSU Extension Office has been busy planning and implementing educational workshops, activities, and events for various tribal departments and tribal members! The Tribal MSU Extension Office is here to provide educational, up-to-date, research-based information to all tribal members in all tribal communities.

Spring is here, which means flower beds and vegetable gardens! If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 601-656-9679 or by email at kdf132@msstate.edu. Please enjoy some highlights from the Tribal MSU Extension Office!
Canva Workshop: Lunch and Learn

Who knew Canva was such an easy software to make flyers and graphics? Thanks to the Canva Workshop, which is a lunch and learn, helped participants learn how to maneuver and design within Canva. Participants were able to ask questions and see what all the software Canva offers and how it can be used in their given departments!

A big thank you to all participants for making this first lunch and learn workshop a success! A big thank you to Ms. Lauren Colby Nickels from the Center for Technology Outreach from the MSU Extension Service for coming to teach this workshop.
How to Collect a Soil Sample

Follow these steps to get a representative soil sample:

Step one:
Gather the supplies you need: soil probe, spade or shovel, plastic bucket, and sample boxes. MSU soil testing boxes are available to pick up at your local Extension office. Submitting soil samples in quart-sized zip-top bags is also an option.

Step two:
Take soil from the top 4–6 inches (or 2–4 inches for turf) and place in a plastic bucket.

Step three:
Collect 15–20 different soil plugs from different places in the defined area. Remove vegetation/turf from the ground surface before collecting soil. Mix all plugs from a designated area together in a plastic bucket.

Step four:
Fill a soil sample box with soil from the bucket. If you have multiple areas that need sampling, repeat the entire collection process.

Step five:
Submit your soil sample.
Tips for Growing Tasty Tomatoes
By Ms. Mary Michaela Parker
MSU Extension Service
Tomatoes on a vine.
Photo by MSU Extension

There’s nothing as divine as a homegrown tomato. I’m a sucker for a tomato sandwich or a BLT during summer. When making a sandwich, I must have homegrown tomatoes from either the farmers market or from friends who grow tomatoes. There’s something about a fresh garden tomato that takes it to the next level!

Tomatoes are a popular plant to grow here in Mississippi. If you haven’t already planted tomatoes, it’s not too late! Tomatoes love the heat, making them a perfect plant for summer months. For a fall crop of tomatoes, start the seeds in June and set out plants in July or early August. Here are a few tips to grow tasty tomatoes this summer:

When buying tomatoes, inspect them to ensure they are healthy. Check the leaves to make sure there are no diseases or insects invading them. Buy tomato plants that are small, stocky, and healthy-looking. It’s best to avoid overgrown plants.

The planting site is important to the success of your tomatoes!! Find a spot that receives direct sunlight and does not hold water. When planting seedlings, make sure to bury them deeply in the soil. Keep in mind that this planting method is only true for tomatoes.

Tomatoes need water to succeed, typically an inch to inch and a half of water per week. If you see the leaves drooping, give them a generous watering to perk them back up!

As your plants grow, install a wooden stake system to provide support for them. This is to keep the plants off the ground and growing in an upright position. Installing a staking system isn’t that hard! Check out this blog post on how to install wooden stakes in your home garden!

Be vigilant about checking for insects and diseases that may take over your crop. There are four common ones found in tomatoes:

Buckeye Rot: Buckeye rot develops when humidity is high and temperatures are hot. It’s commonly found on low-hanging fruits that are close to infected soils. Brown, oily circles on the tomatoes are true signs of buckeye rot.

Early Blight: Early blight develops when humidity is high and temperatures are mild. The disease affects the stems, leaves, and fruit. Symptoms first show up on the leaves of the plant. Look for circular or elongated, brown lesions with rings. The lesions grow over time and the area around the lesions appear yellow.

Southern Blight: Southern blight develops in high temperatures and moist conditions. Look for black and brown lesions on the stems of the plant near the soil line. You may also notice a white fungal and round, tan or brown bumps on the stems. If your plants are wilting, it’s a good idea to check for these characteristics.

Bacterial Wilt: Bacteria wilt develops when soil temperatures and moisture levels are high. If you notice your plants wilting or dying without any other symptoms, bacterial wilt may be the culprit. The stem towards the bottom of the plant may have brown lesions and the inside of the stem may be wet and hollow. It’s important to note that it is difficult to manage this pathogen.
June Landscape Tasks

Summertime is officially here! Kids are out of school, and many people are gearing up for summer adventures with the family. You don’t have to go very far to have a fun afternoon adventure with your kids or grandkids. Gardening is a great afternoon adventure, and your backyard is the perfect place to have little fun. Take a trip to the garden store and let them pick out flowers to plant in a patio container!

There’s quite a lot to do in the landscape during June. Here are a few tasks to check off the list:

If you haven’t already, plant crape myrtles that are already blooming to make sure you’re planting a color you’ll like. There are many shades and colors, so purchasing now when they’re in bloom guarantees choosing a color of your liking! Learn more about crape myrtles in Extension Publication 2007, “Crapemyrtle – Flower of the South.”

Looking for a colorful flower to plant in your lawn? Daylilies might be the plant you’re looking for! They come in a variety of shapes, colors, and sizes, making them perfect for every preference! You can plant daylilies in bloom for instant impact on your landscape!

The heat brings out the bugs and diseases! Pay close attention to your plants to make sure they aren’t being affected by diseases or insects. If you have zinnias, check for powdery mildew, mainly appearing on the leaves.

If you’ve been wanting to plant grass in your lawn, now is a great time to do so! Warm-season grasses including Bermuda, centipede, zoysia, and St. Augustine can be planted anytime during June, July, and August. If you have shaded areas where grass won’t grow, you can plant liriope, ajuga, vinca, or pachysandra to help cover the ground and make it look more appealing. For more lawn care tips, check out Publication 1322, “Establish and Manage your Home Lawn.”

Does your lawn have several ornamental shrubs and/or trees in it? Applying a slow-release complete fertilizer to your ornamentals helps them to perform well and be healthy year after year. You can apply fertilizer anytime from now until October. If you’re new to fertilizing, learn more in the fertilizing ornamental trees and shrubs information sheet.

The sun’s harsh rays can do damage to your flowers. Keep your flowers looking their best by adequately watering them and removing any faded blooms from the plant.

If you’re going out of town for vacation, remember to ask a neighbor to water your plants for you while you’re gone! Be sure to return the favor when they head out of town!
Select Lucky lantanas for landscape beauty
Ms. Bonnie A. Coblentz
MSU Extension Service

One of my favorite flowering landscape plants is lantana, and Lucky lantana is no exception.

The Lucky series of lantanas have brightly colored flower clusters that cover compact mounds of dark-green foliage. The foliage contrasts beautifully with bright flower colors and attracts butterflies, bees, hummingbirds and other pollinators.

In many cases, there’s a tie-dye effect on the flower heads, which come is a variety of colors. The flowers generally start as a light color and then darken with age.

I believe Lucky lantanas are fine choices for the garden, but they are also good selections for planting in outdoor containers and hanging baskets.

The plants get 12-16 inches high and 12-14 inches wide. They are often used as a filler selection in the spiller-thriller-filler formula for container combinations. These beautiful plants provide a mass of flowers against which the thriller plants stand out.

Lantanas are cold hardy to 32 degrees, so in most of Mississippi, these plants act as annuals if planted in the ground. Don’t let that discourage you from getting some for your landscape, as they are significant contributors to summertime landscapes.

Lantanas do best in full sun to partial shade. They are very adaptable to both dry and moist growing conditions, but they do not tolerate standing water. The plants are considered drought tolerant and make an ideal choice for a low-water garden or xeriscape application.

Lantanas grown in outdoor containers and baskets usually require more frequent waterings than those grown in the yard or garden. Make sure you check to see if those in containers need water at least once or twice a week.

Lucky Flame is one of my favorites. It has blended tones of orange flower clusters that start in the center as a yellow orange and deepen in color to a fiery red orange.

Another one of my favorites is Lucky Pot of Gold. This selection catches your eye and does not disappoint with its deep-yellow flower clusters that shine like the sun.

Lucky lantanas are great for planting in Mississippi because they stand up well to heat, humidity and other stressful conditions.

The plants are easy to grow and do not require much fertilizer, making it seem as though they thrive on neglect. Keep them watered while they get established, and they will reward you with months of color all summer long.

You can’t go wrong with lantanas, so go out to your local nursery or garden center and pick up some for your patio or landscape.
How to Control Snakes Around Your Home
By Ms. Susan M. Collins-Smith
MSU Extension Service
A diamondback rattlesnake
Removing items that provide shelter and eliminating common food sources for snakes around your house will help reduce the chances of encountering a snake.
Snakes, like other wildlife, need a suitable place to live and enough food to eat. If the area around your home checks these boxes, they may take up residence there.

You can reduce your chances of an unpleasant meeting with a snake around your home by following these tips:

Remove nearby cover, including weedy growth and brushy fence rows. Piles of boards, firewood, rocks, bricks, leaves, and grass should be removed as well.
Keep the lawn mowed to reduce hiding places.
Inspect walkways and porches for cracks or holes that may provide shelter.
Store firewood away from the house. Use a rack to elevate it at least 12 inches off the ground.
Remove vegetation and be mindful of structures that might provide shelter for rodents, a common food source for snakes.
Keep bird and pet food in a closed, sealed container.
Close off access to areas under homes, barns, or storage sheds with packed soil, bricks, sheet metal, or small-mesh hardware cloth. Extend the material at least 6 inches below the soil surface.
Check your home's foundation for cracks or openings where snakes could enter. Seal any openings larger than one-quarter of an inch.
Use latex caulk or insulating foam around wiring or pipes that enter the home from the outside.
Seal cracks in masonry foundations with mortar.
Repair holes in wooden structures with sheet metal or fine-mesh metal hardware cloth.
Cover any open septic or treatment plant drainpipes with ¼-inch mesh hardware cloth.
Even if the area around your house is unattractive to snakes, always be mindful of these creatures as you work around your home. Most snakes that you encounter around your house are nonvenomous. However, it is possible to meet one of Mississippi’s six venomous snakes during your outdoor chores. The risk of a venomous snake bite is low, but it can happen. It’s important to know the difference in venomous and nonvenomous snakes. Extension Publication 3529, “Snakes Alive! How to Identify Hazardous Snakes” can help you learn to identify venomous snakes.

Keep in mind: No fumigants or toxicants are federally registered for snake control. Some repellants, including lime, sulfur, moth balls, and cayenne pepper spray, have been tested to see if they will repel black rat snakes. None of the tested repellants worked.

Extension Publication 2277, “Reducing Snake Problems Around Homes” includes more information about trapping snakes, legal status, removing snakes from inside buildings, and exclusion and habitat management practices.
I do hope that you have enjoyed some highlights and information from the Tribal MSU Extension E-Newsletter.

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If you have any questions or an inquiry about an activity for your tribal department of community, please do not hesitate to call me. My phone number is 601-656-9679 or by email at kdf132@msstate.edu

God Bless and Hail State!
Kaitlyn Ford
MSU Tribal Extension Agent

Upcoming Events:

June 7- Social Media Basics: Etiquette and Outreach Lunch and Learn

August 24- Intro to Canva Lunch and Learn

If you would like to sign up for these lunch and lunch opportunities, please email me at kdf132@msstate.edu or call the Tribal MSU Extension Office at 601-656-9679