

December 2026

THE EXTENSION CONNECTION

Wyandotte County K-State Extension



Director's Note

Denise Dias
Wyandotte County Director

We wish you a joyful holiday season and look forward to continuing to learn, grow, and strengthen our community together in 2027.

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY | Extension Wyandotte County

PIZZA PARTY

Meet the 4-H Agent

COME AND GO FOR PIZZA AND GAMES TO MEET OUR NEW 4-H AGENT, WILL MORRIS!



JANUARY 5, 2027
5:00 PM-7:00 PM
1200 N 79TH ST. KCK 66112

PLEASE CONFIRM ATTENDANCE:

https://bit.ly/4irjAT8

913-299-9300

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY | Extension Wyandotte County

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service. K-State Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Family and Consumer Sciences

HOW TO ENJOY THE HOLIDAYS WITHOUT BLOWING YOUR BUDGET

The holiday season often brings excitement, tradition, and, unfortunately, financial strain for many households. With rising costs and growing expectations, it's easy to fall into the trap of overspending in the name of celebration. But enjoying the season doesn't require draining your bank account or racking up unnecessary credit card debt. A thoughtful plan and realistic mindset can help you stay festive while staying financially grounded.

Set a Maximum Spend Limit-Before you purchase gifts or accept holiday party invitations, decide on a total spending limit. This number should reflect your actual financial capacity, not what you think you "should" spend to keep up with family or friends.

Know Your Must-Buy List and Cut the Rest-Not everyone requires a store-bought gift—your great aunt probably doesn't need another cashmere sweater. Identify the core people you genuinely need to shop for, then remove anyone who may not need a gift from you.

Quality Time Makes a Great Gift-Holiday memories rarely come from expensive gadgets or designer items. Instead, they come from time spent with the people you care about.

Create Better Spending Habits-The holidays are an ideal time to reflect on your broader money habits, especially if your November and December spending tends to get out of control. Start by tracking your holiday expenses throughout the season so you can understand where your money actually goes.

Avoid Emotional Spending Triggers-Holidays often bring social pressure, comparison, and guilt—all of which may push you to spend more than you intended. Recognizing emotional triggers helps you avoid making purchases out of obligation or stress.

Give Back-Giving back can be a powerful alternative to giving physical gifts. Instead of spending money on new items, consider volunteering your time for a local charity or community event during the holidays

Key Takeaways:

- Set a clear spending limit before holiday shopping begins.
- Focus on essential gifts and simplify the rest.
- Be honest about what you can truly afford.
- Prioritize time with loved ones over expensive gifts.
- Build new spending habits that prevent future holiday debt.



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Nutrition and Food Safety

A SEASON OF GOODNESS: HEALTHY, BUDGET-FRIENDLY WINTER EATING

December brings cozy meals, holiday gatherings, and opportunities to share favorite family recipes. With all the festivities, it can be easy to forget about fruits and vegetables. The good news? Adding more produce to your winter meals can be simple, delicious, and budget-friendly!

Make Your Plate Colorful

Fruits and vegetables provide important vitamins, minerals, and fiber to support overall health. Many adults need about 2 cups of fruits and 3 cups of vegetables daily according to the 2025-2030 Dietary Guidelines. An easy way to get started is to fill half your plate with fruits and vegetables at meals.

Shop Smart with Winter Produce

Eating healthy does not have to mean spending more money. In Kansas and Missouri, fall and early winter favorites such as apples, carrots, cabbage, sweet potatoes, and winter squash are great options to look for. Seasonal availability varies, but choosing produce that is in season or on sale can help stretch your grocery budget.

Fresh is not your only option! Frozen and canned fruits and veggies can be nutritious, convenient alternatives. Look for frozen veggies without added sauces and canned options labeled “no salt added” or fruit packed in water or 100% fruit juice.

Simple Ways to Add More Produce

- Warm up with vegetables: Add carrots, cabbage, or spinach to soups, stews, and casseroles.
- Give holiday sides a colorful twist: Roast sweet potatoes, broccoli, or winter squash with a little olive oil and your favorite seasonings.
- Plan ahead: Keep frozen produce on hand and choose affordable produce to reduce waste and make meal prep easier.

Small changes make a difference. You do not have to change everything, try adding one colorful fruit or veggie to a meal you already enjoy!

Looking for More Healthy Holiday Tips?

Want more ideas for making nutritious choices during the holiday season? Check out K-State Extension’s fact sheet focus-on-the-stars-cooking-healthy-for-the-holidays-fact-sheet_MF3087.pdf, for helpful tips and inspiration for preparing healthier holiday meals. And be sure to check out the festive recipe ideas below from our friends at University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension for some more delicious inspiration this holiday season!

A Festive Recipe Idea: Apple Filled Squash & **Bison Sweet Potato Stew**

From your local Extension office: This December, try one new way to add fruits or vegetables to your meals. Your family, and your grocery budget, may thank you!



References:

https://food.unl.edu/winter-healthy-eating-tips/

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Horticulture

WINTER GARDEN CHECKLIST

As temperatures drop and the growing season winds down, our gardens still need some attention. Take some time before winter to help protect plants from cold, wind, and hungry wildlife, and set the stage for a strong start next year. Here are the key tasks to tackle, organized by plant type.

Flowers:

Roses and perennials benefit most from a protective layer before the hardest freezes arrive.

- Protect rose grafts. Mound soil 6 to 8 inches deep over rose plants to shield the graft union, the most cold-sensitive part of the plant.
- Mulch perennial beds. Spread 2 to 4 inches of straw, shredded leaves, or another lightweight material over perennial beds to insulate roots and limit frost heaving.
- Trim tall hybrid tea roses. Cut them back to 18 to 24 inches to reduce wind whipping, which can loosen roots and damage canes over the winter.

Vegetables and Fruits

The harvest may be over, but what you saved and what's still in the ground both need care.

- Store leftover seeds properly. Keep them in a cool, dry location. A sealed jar placed in the refrigerator works well and helps seeds stay viable for next season.
- Check stored vegetables. Look over potatoes, squash, onions, and other stored produce regularly, and remove anything showing signs of spoilage before it spreads.
- Mulch strawberries. Cover strawberry plants with mulch for winter protection to keep crowns from freezing and drying out.

Trees and Shrubs

Woody plants face winter threats from dry soil, storms, and animals, so a little checking goes a long way.

- Guard against rabbits. Check the trunks of young trees and the branches of shrubs for rabbit damage, and protect them with guards or fencing where needed.
- Prune damaged branches. Remove broken or damaged branches throughout the winter months to prevent further tearing and disease.
- Water new plantings. Water newly planted trees and shrubs during winter dry spells to prevent dry soil conditions that stress young roots.
- Gather holiday greenery. Prune branches from junipers, pines, hollies, and other evergreens to use as festive holiday decorations, a practical way to shape plants and decorate at the same time.



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Community Development

LEARN, LEAD, AND GROW IN 2027

As we prepare to welcome 2027, it is a good time to think about how we want to grow in the year ahead. Two ideas worth carrying into the new year are lifelong learning and leadership because the two often go hand in hand.

Being a lifelong learner means recognizing that we are never finished growing. There is always something new to discover, a skill to develop, a perspective to consider, or a person from whom we can learn. Learning keeps us curious and helps us become more confident and willing to adapt when circumstances change.

The same qualities can make us stronger leaders.

Leadership is not simply about having a title or being the person in charge. Leadership happens when we listen, ask good questions, bring people together, share what we know, and help others succeed. Good leaders don't need to have all the answers. They need to be willing to keep learning.

In 2027, consider challenging yourself to do both.

Learn something you have always wanted to know. Take a class or attend a workshop. Read more. Ask questions. Seek out someone with a different perspective. Mentor someone, or find someone who can mentor you. Volunteer for an opportunity that stretches your abilities. Perhaps most importantly, be willing to step outside of your comfort zone.

Then, put what you learn into action.

Share your knowledge. Encourage someone else. Become involved in your neighborhood or community. Volunteer with an organization that matters to you. Invite new voices into the conversation. Sometimes leadership begins with something as simple as seeing a need and being willing to help.

At Extension, education is at the heart of what we do. We believe learning throughout life gives people the knowledge and confidence to make informed decisions, strengthen families, develop leadership skills, and contribute to stronger communities.

As you set your goals for the coming year, don't just ask, "What do I want to accomplish in 2027?"

Ask yourself two additional questions:

1. What do I want to learn?
2. How can I use what I learn to help someone else?

If each of us commits to learning a little more, sharing a little more, and stepping forward when we have an opportunity to lead, imagine what we can accomplish together.

Make 2027 a year to learn, lead, and grow.



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Upcoming Events



November 26- December 25: Luminary Garden at Cooper Foreman Heirloom Garden
December 2: K-State Garden Hour
December 18: Office Closed for Professional Development for Staff
December 21: New Extension Board Orientation
December 25-Jan1: Office Closed for Holiday

Connect with us!

K-State Extension is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all programs, services and activities. Program information may be available in languages other than English. Reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities, including alternative means for communication (e.g., Braille, large print, audio tape, and American Sign Language) may be requested by contacting the event contact Jo McLeland two weeks prior to the start of the event (insert deadline date) at (913-299-9300 or jo1@ksu.edul). Requests received after this date will be honored when it is feasible to do so. Language access services, such as interpretation or translation of vital information will be provided free of charge to limited English proficient individuals upon request.

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