

Fort Hays plans madrigal

“Castles and feasting meet dinner theater” is one way to describe a madrigal feast. During the Middle Ages and continuing into the Renaissance, the Christmas season was a time of great celebration. Modern-day madrigal dinners transport the audience to a medieval or Renaissance ceremonial feast.

Fort Hays State University’s Madrigal Feaste will be held in the Memorial Union on Friday and Saturday, Dec. 3 and 4. Tickets went on sale starting Nov. 1 in the union administrative office, room 208.

“After Advent, a time of introspection and fasting, elaborate preparations were made for a truly festive event,” said Bill Smriga, director of the Memorial Union. “It was a real celebration, with eating, drinking, dancing and even animals parading through the great halls of castles and manor houses.”

The event provided an opportunity to visit and exchange news, he said. After prayers in chapel or at the table, trumpet fanfares signaled the service of the courses and dishes. Guests danced, told stories and sang in enthusiastic outbursts of merrymaking.

Madrigal singing began as entertainment in Renaissance Italy. It quickly spread throughout Europe and reached the height of its popularity in Elizabethan England, where several collections of madrigals were printed in Queen Elizabeth’s honor.

The fun continues today with the Madrigal Feaste produced by the Memorial Union and presented in partnership with the Fort Hays Singers, led by Choral Director Terry Crull, assistant professor of music. The effort began in 1964.

In recent years, audience members have begun to get into the Madrigal Feaste spirit as it has become less formal. The dinner is a family-friendly event, and visitors are encouraged to “come in their best Elizabethan outfit.”

For information, contact Smriga at (785) 628-5307 or wsmriga@fhsu.edu, or Crull at (785) 628-4258 or tacrull@fhsu.edu.

Men in tights!



KEVIN BOTTRELL/Colby Free Press

Colby High School students paused to show off their costumes (complete with tights) before play practice last Thursday. The play, “The Canterbury Tales, Or... Geoffrey Chaucer’s Flying Circus,” opens at 7:30 p.m. tonight at the high school auditorium with a second performance at 7:30 p.m. Friday.

Pruning, cleaning can get rid of iris pests

Taking action after the first hard freeze can be an effective way to limit two common iris pests. Just getting rid of the plants’ dead leaves, however, may not be enough, according to Ward Upham, horticulturist with Kansas State University Research and Extension.

Old iris foliage can and does serve as an over-winter haven for the fungus that causes iris leaf spot disease and the eggs of a destructive insect called the iris borer. As a result, removing irises’ post-season debris can significantly reduce the numbers on hand to attack the following spring, Upham said.

“But, some of the earliest borer research turned up additional facts that we sometimes forget,” he added. “In the 1930s, Cornell University discovered iris borer moths weren’t as selective as first thought. When the females were ready to lay eggs each fall, any roughened surface would do – dead leaves, twigs, rusty nails, cloth, wood chips, even wire screen.”

Iris leaf spot weakens plants and makes them look ugly, Upham said, but iris borers can cause deadly damage. Besides, just one female borer moth can lay hundreds of eggs every night, totaling more than 1,000 eggs before she’s done. And, North Americans’

control efforts since the 1930s haven’t kept the borer population in check.

Iris borers are a multiple threat, he said. When the tiny, new larvae hatch in spring, they chew their way up iris leaf margins. Then they make a pinhead-size hole, enter a leaf and eat their way back down on the inside.

Not every borer makes it to soil level. One theory is that iris borers eat each other, too, Upham said. But, those that do can be more than an inch long. They’re able to bore into and start mining their iris’ rhizome. Often, they’re also carrying the bacterium that causes soft rot, which makes rhizomes soft,

slimy and foul-smelling.

“To limit their activity, as well as iris leaf spot’s spread, we need to be doing a better job of sanitation after freezing weather arrives,” the horticulturist said. “Some commercial growers burn their iris fields every winter. But, I just remove everything near or on my iris beds. I put down some new mulch after the ground freezes.”

His removal includes any green iris leaves that may remain. Contrary to popular opinion, they won’t be making food any more. With the first freeze, iris rhizomes shut down for winter, Upham said.

Farmers may want to consider tillage to relieve soil compaction

With harvest proceeding quickly this fall, farmers have had time to consider some fall tillage.

Since the preceding two fall harvests were fairly wet, many producers might be considering deep tillage to alleviate soil compaction, said DeAnn Presley, a K-State Research and Extension soil management specialist.

Whether deep tillage will help depends on soil conditions, she added, and whether compaction is limiting root development.

“In research studies, it is commonly concluded that deep tillage is only beneficial if the zone of compaction is truly root limiting,”

Presley said. “If it isn’t, deep tillage probably won’t be of much benefit.”

The only way to really know if the compaction is limiting root growth is to leave three to five untilled strips through the field and then compare the yields in those areas to the tilled parts of the field next year, she said.

If tillage is done when the soil is too wet, Presley added, the zone of compaction could be pushed even deeper.

“To know if the soil is too wet for tillage,” she said, “try to make a ribbon out of the soil without wetting it. If you can make a texture ribbon, it is too wet. Alternatively, if you can roll out a ‘snake’ of soil by rubbing it between your palms, it’s too wet.”

This is called plasticity, she added, and if the soil is plastic, or bendable, it can smear and compact easily. Farmers will need to test this to the entire depth they want to till.

“Your goal is to create fracture, so the soil has to be dry enough to shatter, not smear,” she said. “To see if you’re achieving this, dig between the shanks with a spade and see if the soil is loosened. If you bring up huge clods, the soil isn’t shattering, and it would be better to wait until it’s drier. Straight shanks are going to cause the least amount of soil disturbance.”

Also, she said, keep in mind that some areas may be more compacted than others. Those might not be ready for deep tillage at the same time as the rest of the field because compacted areas tend to stay wetter longer. “A case in point is a recent trip that I made to a farm,” Presley said. “I observed soil shattering from deep tillage across the entire 30 inches between the shanks in the average part of the field, but in the end rows where the grain cart was driven, I dug up clods

that were about one cubic foot in size, most likely because the more compacted areas were wetter.”

Is deep tillage economical? “Only if a root-limiting layer is really present,” she said, “and even then, this is a costly operation due to the fact that it requires

a lot of power to go deep. Deep tillage is slow-going and the implementations are not very wide. As a result, deep tillage requires a lot of operator time, diesel fuel and usually a few shear bolts!”



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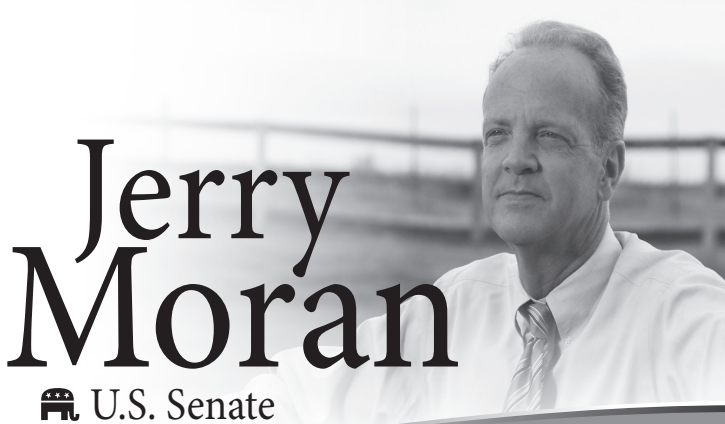


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