

Family

Shrinking vines make melons work

I'm just sitting here, wondering how your watermelons are doing out there in the garden. They should be showing quite a few runners by now, and maybe even a bloom or two. If you planted them early enough, you might even see a few little fruit beginning to set on. Wait a minute – what's that you say? You say you didn't plant watermelons again this year? I didn't either.

As a matter of fact, hardly any of us made the decision to plant watermelons this year, and as a result, less than 10 percent of all home gardeners in this country plant watermelons these days despite the fact that I have never visited with anyone who dislikes the taste of a cold crisp juicy watermelon on a hot midwest afternoon in August.

It's another one of those space problems that most of us must consider. Watermelon probably takes more space to mature than any other garden crop with the possible exception of pumpkins. However, it seems that very few of us realize that the new models of watermelon require much less space. I'm referring to the much smaller melons described as "ice box melons," many of which are seedless and weigh no more than 5 or 6 pounds, and whose vines are no longer than those of a cucumber. The taste and quality of these little beauties is terrific!

Still, if I had my druthers, I'd wait until the big truck comes to town that's loaded with big watermelon – you know, the one that parks out near the highway or at the sale barn, if you have one, and was probably driven up from Texas by an enterprising farmer who grows the melons just to transport to places that prefer not to mess with them. He can grow the big ones, not only because he has the space, but because the weather



Kay Melia

The Gardener

is hot and the growing season is long.

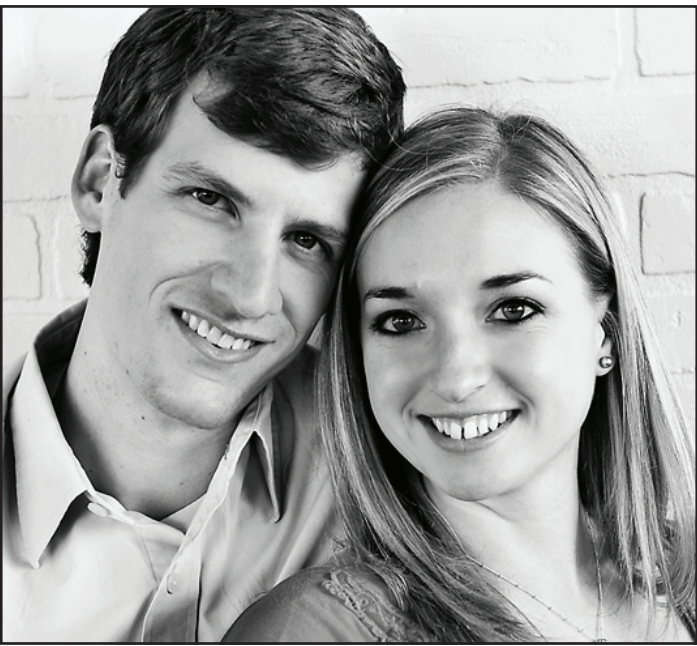
Man, they are good! And they're not cheap, but you have to have one because the truck may not get back until next year.

Indeed, the very small seedless watermelons are the ones that most home gardeners plant these days, but keep in mind that not all small ones are seedless. Check the packet before you plant. Among the most planted seedless varieties are Trillion, Solitaire, or Orange Sunshine. The best of the very small seeded varieties are Secret Beauty and Sugar Baby.

Time was when gardeners with lots of space planted the Crimson Sweet, the Black Diamond, and the Charleston Gray, described in those days as the Striped, the Dark Greens, and the Light Greens, referring of course to their outside color. There were very few other varieties available. All three are available today in seed form in most seed catalogs, as well as the impressive Moon and Stars, adorned with varying sizes of yellow spots on the outside and the true watermelon taste on the inside.

Some of the modern day "big" melons that are very popular around the country today are the Georgia Rattlesnake, and the Carolina Cross which holds the world record for weight, well over 200 pounds. Both need lots of heat, and a long growing season.

Watermelons are good food, big or little, seedy or seedless, from your own garden or from the truck at the sale barn!



Jordon Cranston and Shawna Marie Cox

Colby grads to return for July wedding here

Shawna Marie Cox and Jordon Rex Cranston of Wichita plan to marry Saturday, July 2, 2011, at the Trinity Lutheran Church in Colby.

The bride is the daughter of Butch and Dalene Cox of Colby and granddaughter of Thurman Cox and the late Esther Cox and Victor and Marilyn Rall, all of Colby. She graduated from Colby High School in 2005 and from Wichita State University in 2010 with a Bachelor of Science degree in nursing. She plans to work as a nurse at the Kansas Medical Center in An-

dover after the wedding.

The groom is the son of John and Carla Cranston of Colby and the grandson of Shirley Cranston and the late Rex Cranston and Don Vohs and the late Rosanne Vohs, all of Colby. A 2005 graduate of Colby High School who graduated from the University of Nebraska – Lincoln in 2009 with a Bachelor of Science degree in business management, he is a financial analyst for US AgBank in Wichita.

The couple plans to live in Wichita following the wedding.

Camp gets kudos from creative artists

Shepherd's Staff held the annual Creative Arts Camp this week, with 30 campers attending. Many were local kids, and all took part in a closing program on Friday evening.

During the week the campers worked on drama, puppetry, music, art, illusions, sign language and much more. Other activities included paintball, archery, challenges, skits and a variety of games.



Vicki Wark

Rexford Correspondent

They all worked hard and their closing program was a success. Shepherd's Staff thanks the people of the community who came to support the campers.

Logan museum to show patent model exhibition

The Dane G. Hansen Museum, Logan, will exhibit "The Curious World of Patent Models" from Friday, July 8, through Sunday, Aug. 28. This exhibit will show approximately 50 models with interpretive labels that will include the history of each individual patent and the inventor.

Established in 1790 by Thomas Jefferson, the U.S. Patent Office required inventors to submit a working, scale model of their invention with their application. These models were usually no larger than 12 square inches and range from intricately crafted miniature weaving looms to common swing sets. This continued through the Industrial Revolution, but later ceased when the U.S. Patent Office no longer had room

to store the models.

Most of the models in this collection were made by professional model makers and are more than 130 years old. The oldest model in the Rothschild Collection is from 1809 and is maintained in perfect working order. Some of these models were produced and sold while others made it no farther than the patent model stage.

For information call the museum at (785) 689-4846 or go to www.hansenmuseum.org.

Museum hours are 9 a.m. to noon and 1 to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday; 9 to noon and 1 to 5 on Saturday, and 1 to 5 p.m. Sundays and holidays. There is no admission fee and the museum is handicapped accessible.

Take care when meeting harvesters on roads

Harvest season is nearing and the Kansas Highway Patrol would like to remind motorists to use caution and patience around farm trucks, tractors, and combines.

"Living in the heartland requires Kansans to learn how to safely and effectively share the road with farmers," Colonel Ernest E. Garcia, superintendent of the Patrol, said.

Farm equipment may only be designed to travel 15-25 miles per hour. It is often wider than other vehicles, and sometimes wider than the lane of traffic, so extra room should be allowed when traveling near a farm implement on the road. Extra caution should be practiced on all roads, but especially on rural roads with unmarked intersections.

In 2010 in the state of Kansas, there were 102 crashes involving farm equipment. Two people were killed, and 24 injured in these crashes.

Here are some safety tips to keep in mind when sharing roads with farmers.

- Don't assume the farmer knows you're there. Most regularly check for vehicles behind them, however most of their time must be spent looking ahead to keep the equipment on the road and to watch for oncoming traffic. Farm vehicles are also extremely loud, often hindering the farmer's ability to hear your vehicle.

- Pass with extreme caution. Don't pass unless you can see clearly ahead of both your vehicle and the farm equipment you are passing. If there are curves or hills blocking your view of oncoming traffic, wait until you can see. You should not pass in a "No Passing Zone," even if you are stuck behind a farm vehicle. Do not pass within 100 feet of an intersection, railroad grade crossing, bridge, elevated structure, or tunnel.

- Allow extra room when following farm equipment. Just because a farm vehicle pulls to the right side of the road does not mean it is turning right or allowing you to pass. Due to

the size of some equipment, the farmer must execute wide left turns, so allow it plenty of room and time to turn, and be alert to see if there might be a driveway or field they are turning into.

- Be patient. Don't assume a farmer can move aside to let you pass. Shoulders may be soft, wet, or steep, which can cause the farm vehicle to tip, or the shoulder may not support the weight of a heavy farm vehicle. The farmer understands you are being delayed and will move over at the first safe location available.

- Think of the slow moving vehicle emblem as a warning to adjust your speed. When you see the slow moving vehicle emblem, immediately slow down. While the emblems are visible from a long distance away, it is often difficult to judge the speed at which you are closing in on a vehicle, especially at night.

- Pay attention. When you are not focused on the road, you increase your chances of a collision.

Harvest donations to help children with special needs

The Northwest Kansas Educational Service *tiny-k* Infant and Toddler services is participating in a "Bushels for Babies" campaign to assist families of children with special needs.

The program allows farmers to donate grain to help area families with infants or toddlers who have developmental delays.

To participate, notify the grain

merchandiser at settlement time and ask to donate "x" number of bushels to your local *tiny-k* network. The elevator will do the rest.

Tiny-k takes the donation and uses it to improve the access families have to services for vision, hearing, nutrition, speech and other developmental supports.

Remember rules for mulch

The ideal time to apply mulch in flower and vegetable gardens is late spring after the soil has warmed up. Replenishing beds where existing mulch has thinned is the step after that.

"This can be the best way to protect plants from summer's heat, drought and weeds," said Ward Upham, K-State Research and Extension horticulturist. "Mulching also can reduce soil erosion, compaction and crusting. Unless you know what you're doing, though, it can create as many problems as it solves."

Three hard-and-fast rules apply for both inorganic and organic mulches, he said.

1. No mulch may touch plants' crown, stem or trunk. Contact fosters diseases and provides insect cover. Over time, it can make plants think their soil level has changed. The size of the bare-dirt "doughnut hole" should relate to plant size – an inch or so encircling tomato vines and a foot left uncovered around mature trees.

2. No mulch should touch any building-related wood, from house siding to door frames.

Mulch within six inches of foundations should be less than two inches deep. Many mulches aren't desirable insect food. Whether lava rocks or cedar chips, however, mulches look like moisture-retaining cover to termites.

3. Mulch that's too deep can be as counter-productive as a layer that's too shallow. The most effective depth depends on the material. In general, thin, fine materials (grass clippings, peat moss) are best at one inch deep or less. Big cedar bark chunks need to be three to five inches deep.

Except for these rules, no "best" advice for choosing and using mulch exists, Upham warned. Each mulch material has pros and cons. Mulches vary widely in color, texture, overall appearance, durability and cost.

But, for help in sorting through the factors and facts, homeowners can visit their county or district Extension office or look online for an Extension Master Gardener assessment at www.johnson.ksu.edu/DesktopModules/ViewDocument.aspx?DocumentID=6883.

Montezuma show features eight Thomas County artists


Eight Thomas County artists are showcasing their art in the "Hang-In" art show through Sunday, June 26, at the Stauth Memorial Museum, 111 North Aztec in Montezuma.

The show is featuring artists from around western Kansas. Colby artists included in the show are Nate Schwarz, Jaqueline Shandy, Marlene Carpenter, Mary Brown, Bev Kern, Rebel Jay, Westen McNealy and Margaret Danneler. Their art includes paintings,

sculptures, drawings and mixed media work.

The artists will meet the public at a reception at 3 p.m. Sunday, June 26, at the museum.

The museum is open 9 a.m. to noon and 1 to 4:30 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday and 1 to 4:30 p.m. Sunday. It is closed Mondays and major holidays. Admission is free, but donations are greatly appreciated. www.stauthmemorial-museum.org.



THOMAS COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

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Current Grants Available:
Applications due June 30, 2011

- \$300 available for general public health from the *Pierre C. Henry Foundation General Public Health Fund and the Seele Foundation Fund*
- \$2,260 available for drug and alcohol use prevention from the *Alcohol and Drug Abuse Education Fund*
- \$200 available for a project concerning Thomas County youth from the *TCCF Endowed Youth Fund and KHF Children's Fund*
- \$200 available for beautification projects from the *Weideman Beautification Fund*
- \$150 available for youth outdoor skills projects from the *Directors Fund from Pheasants Forever*
- \$190 available for general community needs from the *Director's Fund, Jennings Family Fund and Ziegler Family Fund*

For more information visit our website at www.thomascountycommunityfoundation.com

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