

Column Name- The Heartland Minute

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*“Gardening: Good for You in More Ways Than One”*

For most people, putting summer’s hot temperatures in the rearview mirror is a welcome transition. However, as temperatures cool, it also signals the end of the traditional outdoor gardening season. It can lead to a condition known as seasonal affective disorder (SAD). Which is a type of depression in which the symptoms correspond with the seasons.

Fall and winter can bring feelings of lethargy and moodiness to affected individuals. The reduction in hours of sunlight is suspected to be one factor influencing SAD. Other influences may be less time spent outdoors due to colder temperatures, resulting in more isolation and less socialization.

KSU horticulture expert, Cynthia Domenghini, suggests season extension tools to continue growing crops outdoors. Season extension tools provide insulation, making it possible for plants to live beyond the typical growing season for the climate.

Some options include:

Low tunnels. This is a row of plastic or wire hoops to support fabric that blankets the crops. The fabric is commonly made of spun-bonded polyester or polypropylene. Thicker fabrics are used to provide protection at lower temperatures.

Cold frame. This resembles a small greenhouse an

d is often made of wood with framed windows. The small size makes the cold frame portable, so it can be placed on winter plantings, as needed. The top of the cold frame is often built at an angle to allow more light to enter when it’s positioned toward the sun.

Milk jugs. Cut the bottom out of the jug and place the jug over plants. Secure the jug to the ground. There are any number of decorative options, if you don’t like the sight of milk jugs across the garden.

Cool season crops, including, but not limited to, radishes, lettuce and spinach, are great options for growing beneath a season extender. For mental health, try maintaining a healthy diet and exercising. Yes, gardening counts! However, you should also consider seeking professional help for diagnosis and treatment if you believe you are suffering from SAD.

Information comes from Kansas State University horticulture expert, Cynthia Domenghini.

If you are looking for KSRE programs to attend: Deer Processing Workshop on Friday, December 6<sup>th</sup> starting at 6:30 pm near Eureka, Small Ruminant Success: Management to Market on Thursday December 12<sup>th</sup> starting at 5:45 pm in Eureka. Meals will be provided at both. Please contact the office for more information and to register.