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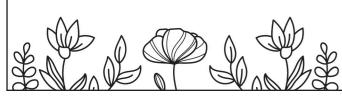
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Spring cleaning: A growing checklist

1. Clear roof & clean gutters

iar with the damage wind and rain

can do to roofs and gutters, but don't

overlook the impact of winter's

snow and ice. The season's harsh

gutters to crack, fill them up with

the last leaves of fall or damage

your shingles, which could lead to a

There's no way to know without

scaling a ladder and taking a look.

If that's not a safe thing for you to

do, call a professional. In the U.S., there are more than 164,000 emer-

gency room-treated injuries and 300

deaths that are caused by falls from

It's important to make sure your

gutters' downspouts are properly

cleared and facing the right direc-

2. Inspect the foundation

a good time to check the foundation

of your home to make sure the

freezing and thawing of winter

Seal all cracks and imperfections

with the necessary tools — or call

a contractor to do the work if you

don't feel comfortable doing it your-

self. It's also important to look for

spots around the house with unlevel

soil that could potentially allow wa-

structure

Speaking of the foundation. Now's

tion – away from the foundation.

leaky roof in the future.

In southeast Kansas, we're famil-

Staff reports news@morningsun.net

Is duct cleaning on your spring cleaning checklist? Some people

think it should be. Chuck Martin of Martin Professional Cleaning and Restoration says it's something homeowners should consider doing every three to five years.

"I believe it's an essential part of home maintenance," Martin said. "It reduces the presence of dust and contaminants. It is surprising how many homes have never had a duct cleaning.'

All the things a homeowner must consider can seem overwhelming. But, before you jump into weekend warrior mode (and from the drone of mowers and blowers in the neighborhood, many of you already have), home maintenance experts advise that you make a project checklist. This allows you to prioritize, plan and budget your work. It's also satisfying every time you're able to cross another item off the list. Here are a few suggestions, starting indoors and then moving

Indoor 1. Check the A/C

We're still having some light-jacket weather and most days are comfortable with the windows open, but now is seriously the time to check you're A/C. Don't wait until it's 90 degrees and HVAC technicians are booked solid. Call a qualified HVAC technician and schedule an inspection and, if needed, a tune-up. Not only will it give you confidence that the system will be ready when needed, it can also extend the life of a nature could potentially cause your the unit.

2. Examine the water heater

A leaky water heater can really ruin your day, so add it to your spring checklist. If you see any water or signs of rust around the water heater, call a professional to

3. Explore for leaks

Basements and attics are places ladders each year. It's not worth the to look for leaks. If you smell or feel risk. musty when you enter the attic or basement, that's a clear sign that water may be making its way inside. Check the walls, ceiling and other materials for discoloration and any signs of water stains. If you find any, you'll want to call a profession-

4. Clean the furnace

If you want your furnace and fire- didn't leave behind any cracks that place to be ready for the first frost may allow water into your home's of the fall, now is the perfect time to give them some attention. Clean the filter system, blower and motor of your furnace system and if you have a fireplace, call a chimney sweep.

Outdoor



Green thumbs up for Lawn and Garden Month **Dan Morris**

undefined

The arrival of spring marks a time when the beauty of nature begins to unfold, inviting us to engage with the outdoors. April, designated as Lawn and Garden Month, celebrates the art and craft of gardening. It was also created to encourage more people into their gardens.

As we enter this month, get ready to don your gardening gloves, breathe in the fresh air and embark on a journey of creation and care in your outdoor spaces. We're sharing tips on how you can celebrate the month and get others involved as well.

The tools of the trade

tivating a thriving garden.

While gardening can be a fun pastime, it is also a science that requires patience, precision and the right equipment. Whether a seasoned gardener or a greenthumbed newbie, the proper tools can make all the difference in cul-

Back to the basics Specific tools are the backbone of every gardener's arsenal. Equip yourself with a sturdy shovel for digging, a dependable rake to clear debris and spread soil, and durable gloves to protect your hands from unexpected thorns and injuries. For those with a lawn, a high-quality and reliable lawn mower is essential to maintain the

neat, well-manicured garden. with a basic toolkit ready to go,

while also protecting soil health.

The practice of companion plant-

ing is rooted in the understanding

that certain plants can enhance

nearby plants. By strategically

pairing plants, gardeners can cre-

ate an ecosystem that promotes

Why we should practice com-

There are so many valuable

biodiversity and sustainability.

panion planting



beautiful hedges or cultivate pe- you use in your garden, ensuring a rennials, a high-quality pair of pruning shears can make all the difference. As your garden goals evolve, further research will help you identify the right equipment to support your gardening jour-

Safety first While the fun of gardening is undeniable, it comes with a set of safety concerns. High-risk equipment like chainsaws, while efficient for trimming branches and shaping trees, demands caution and respect for safety precautions. For example, chainsaw accilength of your grass and keep a dents are not uncommon. The consequences can range from minor For those seasoned gardeners cuts to life-threatening injuries. This reality highlights the need to consider National Garden Month adhere to safety measures, equip the encouragement you need to yourself with the appropriate upgrade to more specialized tools protective gear and understand all needs and gardening goals. For and instructions. Importantly, this and excitement.

instance, if you hope to sculpt holds true for all power equipment safe start to this gardening month and continued well-being for practiced gardeners.

dening

Lawn and Garden Month is a perfect opportunity to introduce children to gardening. Gardening is a great way to connect children to nature, teach them about the environment and help them develop a sense of responsibility. And while there is a wide range of spring activities for kids, gardening can be one of the most rewarding.

Starting simple

At the outset, it is important to prioritize the child's interest rather than their skill or the garden's needs. Having this designated month to promote gardening is tailored to your garden's specific manufacturers' safety guidelines a great way to build anticipation

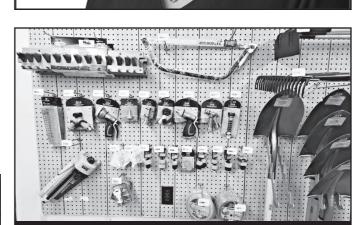


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DO YOU HAVE A PEST PROBLEM?

Did you know mulch can attract millipedes, centipedes, spiders, sowbugs, earwigs, ants, and even cockroaches?

How to Avoid Insect Infestations Remove any dead or decaying wood, including firewood, fallen branches, and stumps. These can attract termites and

provide them with food and shelter. Trim plants away from the house. Ensure there is at least an 18-inch gap between the soil and any wood or siding on your house







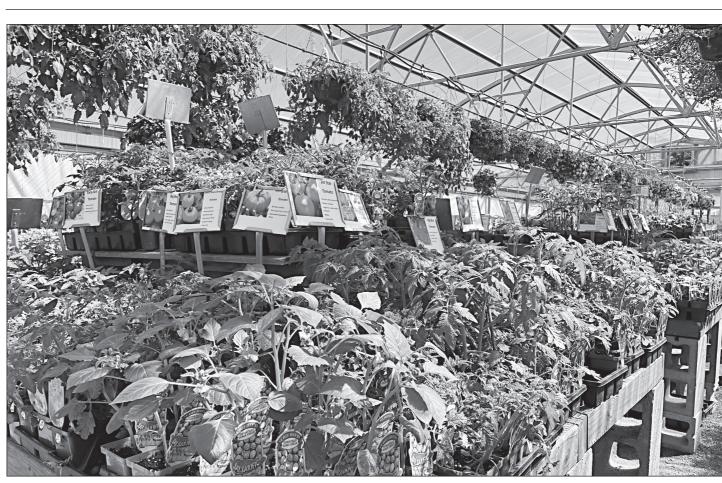
stalks provide a natural trellis for bean vines to climb. Radishes can help repel cucumber beetles and other pests, so planting radishes and cucumbers

the beans fix nitrogen in the soil,

which benefits corn, while corn-

together protects the cucumbers. Planting tall flowers like marigolds or nasturtiums with lettuce can provide shade for the lettuce, which prefers cooler temperatures and can help repel pests. Pigweed can lure away leafminers from pepper plants. Just be sure to remove the pigweed before it seeds.

By no means is that a complete



Grow smarter not harder with companion planting crops and its more eco-friendly to bination is bean plants and corn,

and windows let that fresh spring Laura Sampson air inside and freshen the air in your home. They also keep the bugs undefined out. Carefully scan each screen for Companion planting is a method any holes that shouldn't be there. of gardening that involves placing Screens can be patched pretty easplants close together for mutual ily with a standard repair kit from benefit. It's a permaculture tactic the hardware store. and a practice as old as agriculture itself. Using this method can 7. Dump standing water

Maybe this should be tip #1. It

ter to pool and push up against your

home. If you find any, pack them in

with soil or landscape from areas

3. Reseal woodwork

decks, wood trim and other wood-

en structures on the exterior of

your home to see if they have been

warped, stained or discolored. If

they have, it likely means the wood

seal has worn off and it's time to

4. Survey the hardscape

ter can be hard on concrete, asphalt

and other hardscaped material.

You may be able to patch concrete

(like small cracks in the driveway),

but you may have to replace the

concrete if the cracks are beyond

5. Look for termites

March through June are prime

If there are tiny insects flying out

of the exterior structure of your

home, they could be termites. Call a

licensed pest control professional as

6. Scan screens

In the brief weeks before scorch-

ing summer arrives, screened doors

season for termites to thrive and

begin damaging your home.

soon as possible.

The freezing and thawing of win-

Take a close look at any wooden

that are away from your home.

seems like a no brainer and it's simple to do, but dumping standing water is something many people forget to do. Mosquitoes can spread serious diseases and they can lay eggs in as little as a bottle cap of

8. Paint the exterior

Painting the exterior of your home isn't necessary every spring, but now is the perfect time, if it's needed. Alternatively, do it in the fall to avoid the searing heat of our planet. Dan Morris, an accomplished

gardener and author of Fire and Saw, says, "Companion planting is useful for various purposes. In our garden, we do it primarily for pest control, attracting pollinators, shade and nutrient sharing." vastly improve your harvests

Common companion plant com-

There are a few popular companion plantings you can easily start using right away. Pick and choose the growth, flavor and health of from these popular combinations and increase your garden's output. Plant tomatoes together with basil and the basil will help repel insects and it's believed to improve the flavor of tomatoes. Likewise, carrots and onions work well together because the smell of reasons to practice this gardening onions can deter carrot flies, while technique. The top three benefits carrots are said to repel onion of companion plants include us- flies and aphids, making them a you with more combinations for ing less pesticides, growing better great pair. Another popular com- your specific needs.

list of beneficial companion planting options. There are many more to choose from. Often times a master gardener in your area can help

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