

Column Name- *"The Heartland Minute"*

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### *"Mulching Tomatoes"*

It seems like over the last week we have received our fair share of rain in Southeast Kansas. Looking ahead to next week, the forecast looks much more bright. With increased temperatures and nicer days, many gardeners are eager to get back out in the garden!

One of the gardening tasks you may consider during this time of year is mulching your tomatoes. Ward Upham (K-State Horticulture Specialist) suggests the following practices on mulching tomatoes.

Soils are warm enough now that tomatoes can benefit from mulching as long as the soils are not saturated with water. Tomatoes prefer even levels of soil moisture and mulches provide such by preventing excessive evaporation. Other benefits of mulching include weed suppression, moderating soil temperatures and preventing the formation of a hard crust on the soil. Crusted soils restrict air movement into and out of the soil and slow the water infiltration rate.

Hay and straw mulches are very popular for tomatoes but may contain weed or volunteer grain seeds. Grass clippings can also be used but should be applied as a relatively thin layer – only 2 to 3 inches thick. Clippings should also be dry as wet clipping can mold and become so hard that water can't pass through. Also, do not use clippings from lawns that have been treated with a weed killer until some time has passed. With most types of weed killers, clippings from the fourth mowing after treatment may be used. If the lawn was treated with a product containing quinclorac (Drive), the clippings should not be used as mulch. If the weed killer used has a crabgrass killer, it likely contains quinclorac.

If you have any questions regarding Agriculture and Natural Resources (Livestock, agronomy, horticulture, wildlife, etc.) feel free to reach out to the Greenwood County Extension office today for assistance!

**\*\*We know that our world continues to change throughout this time dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, but one thing that will remain the same is K-State Research and Extension's mission to serve and educate our local Kansas communities. Our office remains open and is available via phone (office number is 620-583-7455) or by email at [lindsayshorter@ksu.edu](mailto:lindsayshorter@ksu.edu). If your business cannot be done through telecommunication, we encourage you to call and make an appointment with a staff member. Home or farm visits are still available while practicing social distancing. Be sure to follow K-State Research and Extension- Greenwood County on Facebook for the most up-to-date information on Extension education and our Greenwood County 4-H program.\*\***