

July 16, 2021

Jody G. Holthaus  
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Jody will not have an article today.

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Crops & Soils/Horticulture

### ***Germination Testing***

Whether you're planting seed to harvest, or just for cover, the effectiveness of the planting is often only as good as the number of seeds you can get to grow. There are a lot of factors that go in to getting that to happen, one of the most important being seed germination.

The Kansas Crop Improvement Association Seed Lab is a great testing option for Kansas producers. Testing can be done for multiple crops, many for under \$25 (pasture grasses and multiple species samples will be higher). All it takes is a two-pound seed sample, a submittal form, and payment for the tests being performed.

Submittal forms, testing fees, and mailing instructions can be found on the Kansas Crop Improvement Association website at: <https://www.kscrop.org/seed-lab.html> . Plan ahead. Allow a minimum of two weeks for germination testing *after* samples are received and processed. Want to try a 'simple' test at home? Check out last week's KSU Agronomy eUpdate for a 'how to': [https://eupdate.agronomy.ksu.edu/article\\_new/germination-testing-of-wheat-seed-452-2](https://eupdate.agronomy.ksu.edu/article_new/germination-testing-of-wheat-seed-452-2) .

While you're on the KCIA site, it's a good time to make sure you are appropriately using the seeds you are testing or planting. You can check out the State Seed Law and Plant Variety Protection Act at: <https://www.kscrop.org/seed-law.html> .

### ***Suckers/Watersprouts on Fruit Trees***

We typically consider the dormant season to be fruit tree pruning time. While (mostly) true, if you have fruit trees that have developed suckers or watersprouts, summer pruning will be needed to best manage them.

There is a difference between suckers and watersprouts. Suckers are growth that arises from the base of the tree or from roots. Watersprouts are the growth that appears on major branches and grows straight up, but both are troublesome and may require removal multiple times during the growing season. Either way – don't delay. Waiting to remove until next spring will only encourage more of them next year.

Where do they come from? Heavily pruned trees are a common culprit as they try to 'compensate' for removed canopy. However, some trees are simply more likely to produce both types of growth even if not heavily pruned.

Cindy Williams  
Meadowlark Extension District  
Food, Nutrition, Health, and Safety

### **Is That Melon Ripe or Not?**

Picking a ripe melon from the field or grocery store can be challenging. But Kansas State University horticulture expert Ward Upham says it can also be fairly easy if you know what to look for.

“Let’s start with the easy one,” Upham said: “Muskmelons (which include cantaloupe) are one of those crops that tell you when they are ready to be picked.”

As muskmelons ripen, a layer of cells around the stem softens so that the melon detaches easily from the vine. This is called ‘slipping.’ Upham said, and it leaves a dish-shaped scar at the point where the stem attaches to the fruit.

“When harvesting these melons, put a little pressure where the vine attaches to the fruit,” Upham said. “if it is ripe, it will release, or ‘slip.’”

In the produce section, a clean, dish-shaped scar is the best indication that a muskmelon is ripe. “Also, ripe melons have a pleasant, musky aroma if the melons have been held at room temperature,” Upham said.

Picking a ripe watermelon is a little more difficult. Many consumers sear by a “thump” test or a gentle knock on the outer rind, but there are better ways to determine ripeness, Upham said.

“In the field, look for the tendril that attaches at the same point as the melon to dry and turn brown.” He said. “on some varieties, this will need to completely dried before the watermelon is ripe. On others, it will only need to be in the process of turning brown.”

When picking in the field, the surface of the ripening melon develops a roughness (sometimes called sugar bumps) near the base of the fruit. Ripe watermelons normally develop a yellow color on the ground spot—the area of the melon that contacts with the ground—when ripe, which is also a good indication for shoppers at the grocery store.

Honeydew melons are the most difficult to tell when they are ripe, Upham said. Except for one variety (Earlidew), “they do not slip like muskmelons,” he said.

Instead, “ripe honeydew melons become soft on the flower end of the fruit,” Upham said, “The flower end is the end opposite where the stem attaches.”

When ripe, honeydew will change to a light or yellowish color, though this may vary by variety.

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Nancy Nelson  
Meadowlark Extension District  
Family Life

No news From Nancy the week.