

Grassy reflection



SAM DIETER/Colby Free Press

A city worker was reflected in the water of Villa High Pond as he trimmed the grass around the pond recently.

Talk about tomatoes is negative this year, some methods have always led to success

My ears are burning as I listen to gardeners talk about this year's crop of tomatoes.

Please understand that tomato talk comprises roughly half of all the garden talk I hear all year. It is so obvious that tomatoes are the garden crop of choice, just like last year, and the year before.

This year, the talk is a bit troubling to my aged ears. Most gardeners I talk to aren't very happy with this year's production. But then, tomatoes are so cherished that if the least little bit of trouble prevails, voices are raised. Many of you are raising your voices and there seems to be an unusual redness of the face right now. Some gardeners are not happy with their tomatoes.

I'm happy with my tomato crop this year. I don't apologize for it, nor am I being boastful about it. Very simply, my tomatoes are doing well, and I'll bet you a couple



Kay Melia

• **The Gardener**

of onions that there are many of you out there enjoying a satisfactory crop.

I've never been asked so often about how I plant and care for my tomatoes. So here's what I'm going to do. I'm going to describe as best I can in this limited space, the methods I use for a successful tomato crop. Applaud or disagree — your choice. At your request, I'm just passing along what works for me. Here we go.

I have learned over the past few decades that I must set out my plants as early as I possibly can, which for me, is May 1. My plants get good growth in the cool days

and nights of May, and I always have a way to protect them in case of a cold snap. I get good early growth on my plants before most gardeners have set theirs out.

I remain adamant about the proper variety of tomato. I plant Northern Exposure, Super Tasty, Shady Lady, and a couple of Fourth of Julys. All of those have extremely good resistance to the many problems that hound tomatoes. I absolutely avoid Early Girl, Big Boy, Better Boy, and Beefmaster.

I always cage my plants when I plant them, with two feet of black plastic on the bottom to prevent wind damage. I constructed the cages from concrete reinforcing wire, and they last for years. As for watering, I plant my plants in long rows, and irrigate down the row. A drip system is good, but I don't even think about a lawn sprinkler. I irrigate when I think they need

it, not on Tuesdays and Fridays, or Saturdays and Wednesdays.

I usually fertilize twice, with a liquid pour-on I mix myself. I do it when the first bloom appears, and again three weeks later.

I grow my own plants from seed. However, you can buy the started plants of all four varieties listed above, some locally, some from the mail-order people. I always pick tomatoes just as soon as they begin to turn color. Tests show I lose no flavor and no nutrients as they ripen on the kitchen counter, and I don't have to worry about them out there on the vine.

That's about it. Many of you have asked. If you would like detailed information, write me a note. I promise to respond before planting time next spring. I genuinely love to discuss tomatoes!

State to issue specially-designed license plates

Kansas will be "Driving the Arts" forward with a specially designed license plate to support the creative arts.

The Kansas Creative Arts Industries Commission unveiled the Driving the Arts campaign, hoping to raise at least \$100,000 a year to support programming by the commission.

The goal is to sign up at least 2,000 people for the plates by April 1.

"The license plate is a great way for Kansans to proudly display their support for the arts every time they get in their vehicles," said Lana Gordon, commission chair and Kansas secretary of labor. "I'm excited to see these license plates around the state. It will be

a great sign of the support and positive impact that the arts have on our economy and our state."

To reserve an a plate, go to KansasCommerce.com/ArtsPlate, and fill out a short form.

The annual fee for each plate is \$50, all of which will be used to pay for arts programs. The fee will not be charged until plates are ready for pickup at county treasurer's offices. The plates will go



The 'Driving for the Arts' license plate

into production once 500 have been reserved.

"Kansas is fortunate to have many individuals who support the arts in Kansas," said Commerce Secretary Pat George. "By purchasing this plate, they can help grow the arts, expand economic development and create new jobs."

Commission member Dave Lindstrom of Overland Park was instrumental in creating the program.

"The 'Driving the Arts' license plate campaign will be an important funding source for the Kansas Creative Arts Industries Commission and, ultimately, the arts programs that we support," Lindstrom said. "This campaign will build awareness for the arts, unify arts communities behind a resurgent Kansas Arts program, develop into a reliable and attractive funding source for the Kansas arts and promote economic development in the state."

For information about the program or to reserve a plate, go to KansasCommerce.com/ArtsPlate.



'Frankenfish' sets new record

SPOTSYLVANIA, Va. (AP) — A Virginia man who caught a fish known as "Frankenfish" has set a world record.

Caleb Newton hooked the 17-pound, 6-ounce northern snakehead in a creek in northern Virginia during a fishing tournament on June 1. The "Frankenfish" gets its nickname because of its appearance and adaptability. The invasive species native to Asia is able to breathe air and survive in

very shallow waters or mud. *The Free Lance-Star* (bit.ly/140IvhG) reports the International Game Fish Association confirmed the record catch. It beat a snakehead caught in Japan in 2004 by 2 ounces.

Newton is a 27-year-old plumber in Spotsylvania County. He has said it only took him about a minute to get it into the boat, and the three-foot long fish barely fit into his cooler.



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HaysMed Welcomes

Rebeka Weber, MD, OB/GYN

The newest member of the Center For Women's Health OB/GYN Team



Rebeka L. Weber, MD, a native of Claflin, Kansas, obtained her medical degree from the University of Kansas School of Medicine, Kansas City, Kansas, and her undergraduate degree in biology from Kansas State University in Manhattan where she graduated cum laude.

She completed residencies in obstetrics and gynecology at Exempla Saint Joseph Hospital, in Denver, Colorado, and in minimally invasive gynecologic surgery at the Endo-Surgery Institute, Cincinnati, Ohio.

As an undergraduate, she was named a Howard Hughes Medical Institute Research Scholar and a June Hull Sherrid Basic Cancer Research Center Scholar, among other student

honors. She is a member of the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology, the American Medical Women's Association, and the American Medical Association.

Dr. Weber has published research in peer review publications and presented at national conferences.

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