

TREES: Beautiful trees becoming a beast of a peril

FROM PAGE 1

In 2024, Kansas Department of Agriculture announced a quarantine on Callery trees beginning Jan. 1, 2027.

After that date, importing or moving the trees will become illegal.

Jana Dalke, owner of Serenity Gardens in Hillsboro, said she had known the quarantine was coming for a while.

"I haven't bought any in a couple years, knowing that this was coming," she said. "Last year, they highly recommended we stop."

Dalke has worked in greenhouses since 1994, and has sold many Callery trees.

"They've been popular," she said. "But we're just realizing what they do in a rural setting when they're left to their own devices."

She recently dug out five Callery trees growing next to her shop.

"They're heading for the burn pit," she said.

Dalke still has three Callery trees growing in her own yard. One was not intentionally planted.

"They're very nice trees in a homeowner-type space, but when they get out where things aren't being manicured, they get invasive, and that does become a problem," she said.

Natural Resources Conservation Service manager Matt Meyerhoff said his department noticed the trees spreading into pastures seven years ago.

"We're finding them out in large pastures, miles away from any home-



Star-shaped callery pear blossoms resemble small fireworks.

STAFF PHOTO BY FINN HARNETT

stead," he said. "They're spreading pretty good distances."

Because the trees are considered ornamental rather than agricultural, his department doesn't have a say in any future legislation.

He did note he was "not a fan" of wild Callery trees.

"They have some pretty large thorns," he said.

Josh Housman, director of the county's noxious weed department, said he first received reports about Callery trees popping up three years ago from concerned citizens in Marion County, Oregon, who called him by mistake.

Since then, the plants have started posing more problems in Kansas.

"If you go from Newton to Wichita on I-135, you'll see them starting

to take over drainage ditch areas and pastures and fields," Housman said. "If they're out there like that, they need to be taken down."

Because Callery trees are considered invasive, not noxious, Housman's department is not taking action now.

"I can't do anything until they hit the list of what's considered noxious," he said. "That goes to the commissioners, whether or not they want to do anything."

Housman predicted that the county wouldn't take action unless the state became more outspoken about the trees. Indeed, county clerk Tina Spencer said any decision about the trees "has not been stated as a priority of the board."

Housman said other trees, such as

red cedars, present more problems for his department than Callery trees.

Red cedars are native to the Great Plains but can spread rapidly across grassland and lower local biodiversity.

"It doesn't take long before they can take over a pasture," he said.

Marion city administrator Mark McAnarney said last week he had not heard that Callery trees were invasive.

"At different houses I've lived in, I've bought Bradford pears," he said. "They weren't very strong, but they grew quickly."

On Monday, McAnarney said he had done some research and that the issue would be brought to a city council meeting, "probably two or three meetings from now."

Hillsboro city administrator Matt Stiles also said his municipality had no formal plan for dealing with the trees.

"We've talked about it, but we don't have anything on the books," he said.

Stiles said that he was glad the forest service was instituting a buyback plan and that Hillsboro might provide its own return service for Callery trees.

"I have allergies," he said. "Whenever they're blooming, it kills me."

If the trees do come down, it may be better for the local ecosystem, but their white puffy blooms will no doubt be missed.

Dalke said cutting the trees down would be "bittersweet."

"You hate to see all those mature trees being cut down," she said. "But you don't want to cause a problem either."

She recommended a few options for homeowners looking to replace their trees.

If you want a tree that flowers in spring like a Callery, try an eastern redbud (which, despite the name, will give you pink flowers) or a crabapple tree.

If you want a tree that provides a lot of shade, you might try redpointe maples or oak trees.

PEABODY: Chief quits, cites 'slander'

FROM PAGE 1

Watts returned from unexplained personal leave "more than a week ago," according to mayor Catherine Weems.

Weems was not expecting Crom's resignation and said designation of an interim chief was "to be determined."

Asked whether Watts was certified to be chief, Weems said, "potentially."

Crom became chief in July, 2024, having previously worked in Towanda, Benton, and Eastborough as a patrol officer.

His last day will be April 10, after which he plans to return to Eastborough as a patrol officer.

Peabody police, especially Watts, have been the target of criticism regarding the handling of a dispute at the Hub, Peabody's long-time youth center.

Mike Jury, Peabody's new public works director, also

spoke at the Monday's meeting.

Jury started his new role March 24. He previously worked in Hutchinson's public works department for 13 years.

He grew up on a farm south of Peabody and said he took the position in part to be closer to his parents. He is an army veteran and certified as a wastewater operator.

"I'm glad to be home," he said.

Jury's first order of business was to note that the lining on Peabody's municipal pool, which was put in last year, has cracked away.

"We have holes in the pool, so we're in the process of waiting for them to get up here and patch the cracks," Jury said.

Weems said repairing the cracks would be a "top priority."

Nursing student to receive scholarship

Hutchinson Community College nursing student Kelli Christ, daughter of Andrew Christ and Nanci Heath of Goessel, has been named a 2025 New Century Workforce Scholar and will receive a \$1,500 scholarship.

For the Record CONTINUED

FROM PAGE 6

es may be filed by the county attorney about a disturbance in the 1500 block of E. Lawrence St. A resident complained about an animal in the 300 block of N. 3rd St. Police found no problems in checking on a person lying on the ground in the 300 block of W. Main St.

Sunday — A resident complained about an animal in the 600 block of S. Freeborn St. A driver was warned for speeding near US-56 and Timber Rd.

OFFENSES REPORTED

These offense reports were released this past week by law enforcement agencies:

SHERIFF

Aggravated burglary

Two bank cards, four insurance cards, six Social Security cards, and a Kansas Benefits Card were reported stolen between 3:45 and 4 p.m. March 21 by a burglar who broken into Taylor J. Gill's living room on Columbus St. in Tampa. The burglary was reported nine

hours later, according to the lone offense report released Friday. Signs of forced entry were found.

TRAFFIC DIVISION CASES

This information was filed last week in court. Court costs are included in any fines listed. If no hometown is listed, no address was available on court records.

Jessica Huynh, 81 mph in a 55 zone March 22, \$267.

Prasad Kandimalla, 83 mph in a 65 zone Feb. 23, \$201.

Hannah E. Kutz, 81 mph in a 65 zone March 23, \$189.

Virginia A. Martin, 77 mph in a 65 zone March 21, \$165.

Phillip R. Sleeker, failure to wear seatbelt (age 18 or older), \$30.

Kindall A. Smithson, 80 mph in a 65 zone Feb. 2, \$183.

Kaitlyn H. Terzian, 81 mph in a 65 zone March 23, \$189.

Deontay D. Watkins, 84 mph in a 65 zone March 16, \$207.

Wei Yan, 85 mph in a 65 zone March 16, \$213.

FROM PAGE 1

on,' I said, 'How about we go with Lil Melon?'"

The name stuck — with teachers as well as students — and soon enough, Lil Melon was getting requests to perform live at Centre.

Friends set up concerts for the reluctant Spohn, often without his knowledge.

Spohn recalled a teacher asking him what time he was going on stage at a Leadership Day at Centre. He had no idea he was signed up.

Spohn grew to enjoy performing, however. He has performed at Centre "six or seven" different times, he said.

"Our school always supports him and goes all out," Spohn's mother, Barbara, said. "They had fog machines and lights."

Far from being confined to Centre, the Melon name now spans county lines.

At an away basketball game in White City, Barbara recalled Rural Vista students "cheering for Lil Melon and running up to get autographs on their chests."

At a Herington track meet this year, similar chants broke out.

"I looked at my husband; I was like, 'he has a name, I swear!'" Barbara said.

A family friend recently made Lil Melon lanyards and keychains. Hoodies have also been produced. They read "Melon Gang."

Lil Melon's biggest song, 2024's "Leave me Alone!" has 53,741 plays on SoundCloud. He even has some international listeners.

Spohn said his local fame was "more shocking than anything."

While he loves that his songs are popular, he isn't a big fan of the attention.

"It's a double-edged sword," he said.

Lil Melon's music takes inspiration from the emo rap made popular by artists like Juice WRLD and XXXTentacion.

When he started out, it was "the genre that was blowing up more than anything," he said.

Spohn has a simple but ex-

tensive process for making music.

He finds a beat, which takes a long time — 45 minutes or more.

Once he has an instrumental, he begins writing, usually mimicking an artist who "thrives" on that kind of music.

This is mostly what inspires his style of rap.

"Artists like Juice WRLD or X[XXTentacion] or [Lil] Peep or DC the Don, they make a kind of music that I can write more similarly to then Kendrick Lamar or J. Cole," he said.

He tries out lyrics, edits and adds to the song, and repeats the process until he has a two-or three-minute track.

Lil Melon's popularity is perhaps tied to the fact that Spohn hails from rural Tampa.

"I don't really think anybody from a smaller town or a smaller county really ever does stuff like this," he said.

While Marion County doesn't influence the content of his songs — Lil Melon has no tracks about cattle ranch-

ing or tornados, for example — he does try to cater to a local audience.

"I kind of put things in ways that people around here would understand more easily than somebody from Wichita," he said.

His songs often feature love and loss, but, Spohn said he doesn't take inspiration from his actual life, instead writing about things other rappers write about.

Barbara, though, doesn't buy it.

"This kid wears his heart on his sleeve," she said.

Lil Melon will leave town this fall as Spohn heads to McPherson College on a basketball scholarship. He is unsure whether his rap career will survive his college schedule, which he expects will be jam-packed with classes and athletics.

As for trying to rap for a career?

"It's definitely not my No. 1 option," he laughed.

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11 Land	24 Kansas classified
12 Feed & seed	25 Public notices
13 Lawn & garden	

18 HELP WANTED

21 SPECIAL NOTICES

FACED WITH a drinking problem? Perhaps Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) can help. Weekly meetings. Open to the public. Come see us 7 to 8 p.m. Mondays at St. Luke Medical Clinic basement, 537 S. Freeborn St., Marion.

MARION CHAPTER of TOPS (Take Off Pounds Sensibly) 9:30 a.m. Thursdays, Hilltop Manor, 1501 E. Lawrence St., Marion.

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25 PUBLIC NOTICES

First published April 2, 2025, in the Marion County Record, Marion, Kansas (1)

PUBLIC NOTICE Public Hearing

Application for a Variance to allow for an adjusted setback for a Garage at 224 Elm Street, Marion, KS 66861, to be heard at Marion Board of Zoning Appeals Public Hearing to be held in the Marion Community Center, 203 N. 3rd, Marion, KS on April 23, 2025, at 12:00 p.m. Further details of the Variance request are available at City Hall, 208 East Santa Fe Street.

Margo Yates
City Of Marion Interim Zoning Administrator

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