Harvesting Blueberries and Blackberries for Full Flavor

It’s almost summer, and that is prime harvest season for blueberries and blackberries, both of which have the potential to grow very well in Kentucky. Blueberries, which are native to North America, are ready to harvest from early June through early August. Blackberries are ready to harvest from mid-June to early October. These delicious fruits offer health benefits, but best of all, they capture the essence of summer in their sweetness.

Blueberries can be excellent choices for both home and commercial growing. They have the advantage of being as long-lived as fruit trees, with few pests or diseases. They also have a late blossom time, so frost rarely causes damage on well-chosen sites. Blackberries also have a long fruit-bearing life and will produce for a decade or longer in Kentucky.

Blueberries require an acidic soil, which means that most soils in Kentucky will need to be amended to properly suit their needs. They also require a high organic material content, so peat moss should be mixed with the soil at the time of planting. Do not substitute with other materials. Irrigation is necessary during the summer because blueberries have a shallow, limited root system. Insufficient irrigation can compromise both this year’s and next year’s crops.

Blackberries need to be pruned, fertilized and irrigated. Pruning varies, depending on the type of bramble; for specific information on the proper pruning for your blackberry canes, see the University...
Harvesting Blueberries and Blackberries For Full Flavor, Continued


Blueberries in a cluster do not ripen at the same time, and only fully ripe berries should be picked. Fruit need at least one to two days after turning blue to develop full flavor and can be left on the bush for up to 10 days without a loss in size. Flavor does not improve once the fruit is picked; consequently, blueberries should be left on the bush for as long as possible to develop sweetness and flavor.

For best results at harvest, pick carefully, rolling blueberries from the cluster with the thumb into the palm of the hand. Handle as little as possible to avoid rubbing off the bloom (the light waxy finish on the skin) and reduce bruising. Harvest only when berries are dry. Refrigerate promptly to slow ripening and decay.

Blackberries picked for commercial sale are picked “firm ripe,” but home growers have the luxury of picking soft, fully ripe and juicy fruit. Pick fruit twice a week, and during hot, rainy weeks, every other day. Harvest after the morning dew has dried. Pick carefully to avoid bruising the fruit, and, as with blueberries, refrigerate quickly to limit fruit rot. The sweetest, best tasting fruit is produced during dry, sunny weather when nights are cooler.

For more information, see UK’s publications on growing blueberries and blackberries available online at http://www.ca.uky.edu/agc/pubs/ho/ho60/HO60.PDF and http://www.ca.uky.edu/agc/pubs/ho/ho15/ho15.pdf, or contact the Fayette County Cooperative Extension Service.

Source: John Strang, University of Kentucky Extension Fruit and Vegetable Specialist

2019 Perennial Plant of the Year

**Stachys “Hummelo”**

**Hardiness:** USDA Zones 4 to 8, foliage may remain evergreen in warmer climates.

**Light:** Full sun to part shade.

**Soil:** Well drained soil; water as necessary.

**Uses:** This colorful and compact winner makes an excellent addition to the full sun perennial border. Terrific in combination with ornamental grasses, Echinacea purpurea, and Asclepias tuberosa (2018 Perennial Plant of the Year®). Wiry stems make for a great cut flower as well.

**Unique Qualities:** Pollinators can’t resist the striking midsummer spikes of magenta flowers rising above bright green, trouble-free foliage. ‘Hummelo’ was the highest rated Stachys in the Chicago Botanic Garden Evaluation Trials for its strong flower production, vigor, habit, quality and winter hardiness.

**Maintenance:** Spreads slowly by creeping rhizomes. May benefit from division every few years. Strong stems and seed heads add to winter interest. Considered deer-resistant!

PPA members can login to the website to download a PDF of the 2019 PPOY brochure and poster.

Let Fireflies Brighten Your Evenings

Whether you call them fireflies or lightningbugs, seeing them in the evening is a pleasant reminder that we are moving into the early summer months. It is fascinating to watch their periodic flashes and the patterns they make with their lights. This phenomenon is called bioluminescence, which produces light without heat; this is very different from an incandescent light bulb. Some species, particularly those in western states, do not flash, or when they do, it is uncommon.

Even in Kentucky, there are a number of different species, and if you watch them carefully, each species is a bit different in how it flashes. The timing and patterns of the flashes is unique to each species. Fireflies use these unique flash patterns to recognize members of their species and identify members of the opposite sex. Studies have shown that a female firefly selects mates based on the male’s flash patterns. Higher flash rates and flash intensity are more attractive to female fireflies.

Fireflies are actually beetles, not flies or bugs, and belong to the Family Lampyridae. Adult males produce the flash near the tip of their abdomen. They use a protein called luciferin and an enzyme called luciferase to produce cold light. This is a very efficient process. Fireflies are luminescent in all their life stages, not just as adults. Larvae crawling on the ground can be observed flashing at times while they search for slugs and snails to eat.

Females located on the ground or on other objects watch for the appropriate coded flashes of males and respond with a single flash if they spot a suitable male. Some firefly species may also synchronize their flashes—males flash as a large group followed by 5 to 10 seconds without flashes. One of the fireflies that I watch for is the big dipper firefly, Photinus pyralis. These males move upward while flashing and tracing the letter ‘J’ in the air.

Females of one genus of firefly, Photuris, may send out false flash codes to attract males of another genus. They do this to lure males of other species close enough so that they can capture and eat them. This has been referred to as the ‘femme fatale of fireflies.’ In doing so, these female fireflies harvest a defensive chemical from their unwitting meals that they use to avoid being eaten by certain spiders and birds.

Generally, during the last couple of decades, firefly numbers appear to be declining. While we may not know why this is happening or if this a just cycle in firefly populations, seeing fireflies in the evening will always remain a treat.

Source: Ric Bessin, University of Kentucky, Extension Entomologist

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Summer Veggie Word Jumble

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June Quick Tips

• Prune evergreen shrubs now through late August.
• Mound soil around potato plants to improve quality.
• Thin fruits on fruit trees when they reach the size of a dime. Leave one fruit for every 6-8” of branch.
• Mow grass at three inches for a healthier lawn. Leave clippings on lawn for a natural source of fertilizer.
• Use chemical controls as a last resort. Patrol plants regularly for insects and hand pick before populations explode. If you must resort to chemicals avoid spraying during the heat of the day and ALWAYS read and follow label directions.
• Remove flower buds from culinary herbs to keep them growing and productive.
• Keep mower blades sharpened. Clean cuts make for less disease problems and easier mowing for you.
• Mulch plants for the summer. It will conserve moisture in hot weather and prevent weeds from growing.
• Keep gardens and beds well weeded. Weeds compete for light and nutrients, reducing yields. By preventing weeds from setting seed you will lessen weed problems in future years.
• Pinch chrysanthemums back every few weeks until mid July. This will promote fuller bushier plants that are less likely to fall over when in bloom.
• Start planning your fall vegetable plantings now. Many cool season crops like lettuce, peas, and cole crops will be finished from the spring planting and can be planted again in late July and August for a fall crop.

Don’t forget to register for 2019 Gardener Toolbox Classes.

A condensed registration form is enclosed in this edition of “By The Yard” newsletter. For a detailed listing of the 2019 Gardener’s Toolbox class, visit: http://fayette.ca.uky.edu/files/gardeners_toolbox_2019pdf or call (859) 257-5582 to have a copy mailed to you.

Blackberry Basil Grilled Cheese

1 ½ cups fresh blackberries
12-14 fresh basil leaves, chopped
2 tablespoons olive oil
8 slices of multigrain bread
4 slices cheese, such as Munster

In a large bowl, mash blackberries and basil with a fork. Heat an electric griddle or large skillet over medium-low heat. Sprinkle griddle or skillet with olive oil. Place bread on skillet. Add a slice of cheese and blackberry mixture. Place a second piece of bread on top of cheese and blackberries. Cook 3-5 minutes on one side. Flip. Cook 3-5 minutes or until both sides are brown and cheese has melted.

Serves: 4 sandwiches
Nutritional Analysis:
250 calories, 15 g fat, 6 g saturated fat, 20 mg cholesterol, 310 mg sodium, 23 g carbohydrate, 8 g fiber, 4 g sugar, 12 g protein

For More Plate It Up Recipes, Visit:
http://fcs-hes.ca.uky.edu/content/plate-it-kentucky-proud

WORD JUMBLE KEY
TOMATO PEPPERS
CORN CARROTS
BEANS SQUASH
WATERMELON OKRA
Choosing the right sunscreen can help reduce the risk of skin cancer and early skin aging caused by the sun.

**SUNSCREEN IS AN IMPORTANT TOOL**
in the fight against skin cancer, including melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer.

**1 in 5** Americans will develop skin cancer in their lifetime.

The American Academy of Dermatology recommends choosing a sunscreen that states the following on the label:

- **BROAD SPECTRUM**
  This means a sunscreen protects the skin from ultraviolet A (UVA) and ultraviolet B (UVB) rays, both of which can cause skin cancer.

- **SPF 30 OR HIGHER**
  This indicates how well a sunscreen protects you from sunburn.

- **WATER RESISTANT**
  While sunscreens can be “water resistant” (for 40 minutes) or “very water resistant” (for 80 minutes), sunscreens are not waterproof or sweatproof and need to be reapplied.

Most adults need about one ounce of sunscreen, **ENOUGH TO FILL A SHOT GLASS**, to fully cover their body.

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Become a Kentucky Master Naturalist

Classes begin July 18, 2019

This 40-hour course will provide participants with a solid foundation for serving as part of a community of well-informed citizen volunteers with the goal of advancing education, research, and outreach efforts dedicated to the conservation and management of Kentucky’s natural resources areas. Upon successful completion of course requirements, participants will become a certified Kentucky Master Naturalist (KYMN). During the course, participants will volunteer a minimum of 40 hours with a local organization focused on natural resource conservation and management and will complete a capstone project and reflective report.

The cost of the training is $250.

Topics Covered: Ecology, water resources, wildlife, soils, invasive species, entomology, botany, safety & health, geology, weather & climate, environmental education, citizen science, and more.


When: July 18th to November 14th

Meeting Times: Classes will meet Thursday evenings (6:00 pm – 8:30 pm).

Where: Lexington, Kentucky (exact locations will vary)

Registration: Register online at https://forms.gle/WGf3k44CtLgjJmjF9

Interested? Contact Carmen Agouridis, 859-218-4344 or carmen.agouridis@uky.edu to learn more.
2019 GARDENER’S TOOLBOX
REGISTRATION FORM

Name: ___________________ Phone: _____________ E-Mail: ________________________
Address: ___________________ City: ______________ State: ____ Zip: ____________

TOTAL Amount Enclosed $ ________

IMPORTANT REMINDERS!

- **Sign up early for classes to avoid being turned away because class is full.**
- **ALL** classes, including the “Free” ones are “PRE-REGISTRATION” only.
- If you need to cancel, you must do so 2 weeks prior to the class time to receive a refund or credit for a different class.
- If handouts and/or plants are not picked up 3 days after class, items will be donated.

Please make check payable to:

**Fayette County Master Gardener Association**

Mail To:

**Gardener’s Toolbox ~ Fayette County Extension Office**
1140 Harry Sykes Way ~ Lexington, KY 40504
**For more information, call (859) 257-5582**

~ 2019 GARDENER’S TOOLBOX CLASSES ~
All classes will meet promptly at 6:00 p.m. at the Fayette County Extension Office

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<tr>
<td>Tuesday, 6/25:</td>
<td>Primocane Blackberries, <strong>Cost: $15.00</strong></td>
<td>Thursday, 6/27:</td>
<td>Growing Blueberries in Kentucky, <strong>Cost: $20.00</strong></td>
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<td>Tuesday, 7/9:</td>
<td>Starting New Plants from Cuttings, <strong>Cost: Free</strong></td>
<td>Thursday, 7/18:</td>
<td>Perennial Plants of the Year, <strong>Cost: $5.00</strong></td>
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<td>Tuesday, 7/30:</td>
<td>Hydrangeas, <strong>Cost: $20.00</strong></td>
<td><strong>CLASS FULL</strong></td>
<td>Thursday, 8/8: Low Input Lawn Care: Seeding and Renovation, <strong>Cost: Free</strong></td>
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<td>Tuesday, 8/27:</td>
<td>Harvesting and Storing Herbs, <strong>Cost: Free</strong></td>
<td>Tuesday, 9/17:</td>
<td>African Violets, <strong>Cost: $10.00</strong></td>
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<td>Thursday, 9/26:</td>
<td>Peonies, <strong>Cost: $20.00</strong></td>
<td>Thursday, 10/10:</td>
<td>Tulips, <strong>Cost: $20.00</strong></td>
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<td>Tuesday, 10/22:</td>
<td>Unique Daffodils, <strong>Cost: $15.00</strong></td>
<td>Tuesday, 10/29:</td>
<td>Garden Clean Up with Emphasis on More Natural Approaches, <strong>Cost: Free</strong></td>
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<td>Thursday, 11/7:</td>
<td>Jamie’s Farm and Garden - A Virtual Tour, <strong>Cost: $25.00</strong></td>
<td>Tuesday, 11/19:</td>
<td>Attracting Pollinators and Beneficial Insects, <strong>Cost: Free</strong></td>
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<td>Thursday, 11/21:</td>
<td>Holiday Gift Ideas From Your Herb Garden, <strong>Cost: $5.00</strong></td>
<td>Tuesday, 12/3:</td>
<td>Tips for Decorating with Fresh Greenery, <strong>Cost: $10.00</strong></td>
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