

BY THE YARD

HORTICULTURE NEWSLETTER



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Agent Note

Hello Gardeners,

The Days are getting longer!!!! This chant begins at my house on December 22nd, but it is only in February that we start to see the earliest signs of awakening. Despite the Punxsutawney Phil fervor, I have never known spring to truly arrive on February 2ND (and if it should we would surely have a late April freeze). Nonetheless, you seasoned gardeners and outdoorsmen know the signs, a dandelion flower on a 40 degree day, birds changing their tune to beautiful, mate attracting song, or skunks smashed on highways in their quest for love. I have already heard the serenade of spring peeper frogs on a warmer evening. Yes, my friends we have a way to go, but the air and earth are warming and we will all be back out in full swing soon.

I just wrapped our first Toolbox class of 2024 and was thrilled to see so many new faces at our programs. It is always fun to engage with highly motivated gardeners, many of whom are just starting their gardening journey. Thanks for all the referrals and friends you have told about our programs. Please keep up the good work. We are here to help you succeed and are always just a phone call or email away.

Just to brighten spirits I scanned my phone for February photos. I hope these help you survive the remaining stretch of winter. Cheers!!!

Jamie Dockery
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Planning for Your Future Garden

Winter is an excellent time for planning next year's garden. Take advantage of the shorter days and cooler weather to create a vision for the upcoming growing season.

The first step is to look back on the previous growing season. Revisit any photos taken to refresh your memory of the plants that brought enjoyment, utility or challenges. What grew well and what did not perform as expected? If you took any notes or recorded activities in your calendar, review those items. If something was done a little late or too early, think about how you could change your approach.

Evaluate the produce your household consumed last year. Consider if you need to grow additional quantities or increase the amount grown. Also ask yourself if there are other varieties that you would like to try.

For your garden, list the plants you intend to grow and consider where they will be planted. Even a rough-draft map can help you better understand what is possible. These records can serve as a shopping list and a reference for later. Digital tools such as spreadsheets are excellent for this purpose as they can be easily located in subsequent seasons and revised. However, the pen-and-paper method can serve the same purpose and be great for mapping out the location of plantings. There are also apps available to digitally plan your garden bed.

Once you have a general idea of the plants you want for your home garden, you can more confidently turn your attention to sourcing seeds. Seed companies can be located online, but if you prefer a physical catalog, call and request one. Reputable seed sources will identify the variety sold as well as a description, germination rate and lot number.

If you're unsure whether a seed company is reputable, don't hesitate to contact your county extension agent. Seeds for popular varieties can sell out quickly, so purchasing things ahead of springtime is a good idea. Extra or unused seeds can be stored in sealed bags or a plastic bin in a cool place and saved for later.

For more information on horticulture success, contact the Fayette County Extension office.

Source: Kathryn Pettigrew, horticulture research analyst, and Rachel Rudolph, horticulture assistant professor



Romance is in the air -- and it smells like a skunk

February not only brings more cold temperatures, but with Valentines day, it also puts romance in the air — even for skunks.

That's right, February marks the start of the skunk breeding season. If you thought they were sleeping the winter away, Skunks do not officially hibernate. They do become “slow” or dormant for approximately a month during the coldest part of the winter right before breeding season.

Skunks are typically nocturnal, but just like deer, daytime activity increases significantly during breeding season, and we should expect to see them on the prowl at any time over the next month to six weeks. And we can expect to see them anywhere — in your yard, behind your barn, on your porch, and even under your tires as you go down the road.

Just like deer in November, you will likely notice more roadkill skunk this month than other critters, and see them in plenty of not-so-normal places. If you have skunks inhabiting your barn or other structure and you want to alleviate the problem, now is the time to do so before they have their young. With a gestation period of seven to 10 weeks, adults have their young during the first part of May, and yearlings during the first part of June.

Typically, they only have one litter a year, with between four to six kittens, or “kits” for short. Since they stay with their mothers until fall you will obviously want to eliminate your skunk problem before the kittens are born.

According to the Ohio Department of natural Resources website, Skunks seldom cause damage to property other than raiding garbage or eating pet food. They sometimes reside under buildings or in rock and wood piles.

A few tips for handling skunks include:

- In confined spaces skunks or opossums may be driven away by placing an ammonia-soaked towel in the den.
- Install a one-way door until you are sure the animal(s) have left, then permanently seal the entrance.
- An animal that becomes trapped in a window well will climb out if you place a rough board in the well that extends to the top.
- Don't chase or excite a skunk, you know what that leads to!

Source: <https://www.thenews-messenger.com/story/news/2022/02/18/master-gardener-february-marks-start-skunk-breeding-season/6795762001/>



Ordering Seeds for Vegetable Gardens

Spring may feel far away, but planning begins during the cold months of winter. Seed catalogs, store displays, and online retailers present a number of different options (Figure 1). However, successful production begins with the selection of the right seeds for each garden. Gardeners often have preferences towards certain cultivars or varieties, but if plant diseases have plagued plants in the past then it may be time to consider a change.

Selection of a disease tolerant or resistant cultivar is one way to prevent or limit the impact of plant diseases in the vegetable garden. A number of cultivars are labeled as tolerant, which means that while plants may become diseased, plants still yield sufficient amounts of produce. Resistant cultivars do not become diseased, and therefore produce higher yields than those that are susceptible to disease.

While no single cultivar is resistant or tolerant to all plant diseases, use of resistant cultivars can often reduce the need for additional plant disease management practices, such as fungicide sprays. Gardeners should choose cultivars that are tolerant/resistant to the diseases of greatest concern in their garden. It is advisable to keep a garden journal of cultivars that have been grown in the past, as well as a record of previous disease issues. Proper diagnosis of plant diseases is important for future disease management. If issues arise in the vegetable garden, contact a local county Extension agent for assistance.

Select a tolerant or resistant cultivar by reviewing information on websites, seed packets, or seed catalogs. Note that disease names may be abbreviated, or a coding system may be used to indicate resistance or tolerance to specific diseases. Varieties with resistance/tolerance to common vegetable disease issues are detailed below. Additional information about resistant/tolerant varieties can be found in *Vegetable Cultivars for Kentucky Gardens (ID-133)* or by contacting a local county Extension agent.

Tomato

- Early blight is the most common disease of tomatoes in Kentucky, and often co-occurs with Septoria leaf spot. Tomatoes with some resistance to early blight are 'Jasper,' 'Matt's Wild Cherry,' 'Mountain Magic,' and 'Sun Gold' (small cherry tomatoes), 'Indigo Rose,' 'Plum Regal,' and 'Verona' (Roma size), and 'Defiant,' 'Iron Lady,' 'Mountain Fresh Plus,' 'Mountain Merit,' and 'Stellar' (slicing size).

Pepper

- The bacterial spot pathogen causes the most common disease of peppers. There are at least ten races of the pathogen, and pepper resistance is race-specific. Commonly occurring races can vary by location, so it is recommended to choose cultivars with resistance to as many races as possible. Some suggested cultivars include: 'Boca,' 'Ninja,' 'Outsider,' 'Playmaker,' 'Samurai,' and 'Tracer.'

Cucurbits (Cucumber, Squashes, Muskmelon, Watermelon, Pumpkin & Zucchini)

- Many powdery mildew resistant cultivars of picklers, slicers, pumpkins, and squash are available.
- Cultivars that are less susceptible to bacterial wilt include the pickle cukes 'Cross Country' and 'County Fair,' 'Howden' pumpkins, and 'Waltham Butternut' squash. Manage cucumber beetles for best management of bacterial wilt. All watermelons have natural resistance to bacterial wilt.



Figure 1: Seeds can be purchased from a variety of sources. Note that inclusion in this image does not indicate endorsement of any brand.

(Photo: Kim Leonberger, UK)

Ordering Seeds for Vegetable Gardens (continued)

Leafy Greens

- Many lettuces have been bred for resistance to downy mildew. Consider head lettuces 'Kweik,' and 'Pirat,' green leafed lettuces 'Black Seeded Simpson,' and 'Nevada,' and red leafed lettuces 'Galactic,' 'Red Zin,' and 'Rustica' for their additional resistance to bacterial disease and/or white mold (drop).
- Powdery mildew-resistant lettuces include 'Jericho' and 'Super Jericho' (romaines), 'Sandy' (oakleaf), 'Loma,' 'Red Salad Bowl,' and 'Skyphos' and 'Red Cross' (red butterheads).
- 'Regal' and 'Samish' spinaches are resistant to downy mildew and white rust.
- Kale, collards, turnip greens, and mustards are naturally resistant/tolerant to many diseases.

Legume Vegetables (Beans & Peas)

- Many French and green beans have been bred for resistance to anthracnose, but resistance in other types of beans is unavailable.
- 'Caprice,' 'Espada,' 'Kentucky Blue,' 'Romano II,' 'Volunteer,' and 'Goldkist' are fungal leaf spot and/or rust resistant bean varieties, with additional resistance to various viral diseases (viruses are not common in KY).
- 'Green Arrow,' 'Cascadia,' 'Sugar Daddy,' and 'Oregon Sugar Pod II' are pea cultivars suggested for their resistance to powdery mildew, Fusarium wilt, and Verticillium wilt.

Cole Crops (Cabbage, Broccoli, Cauliflower, Kohlrabi & Brussels Sprouts)

- Black rot is the most common disease of cole crops in KY. Cabbage cultivars 'Bilko,' 'Blues,' 'China Pride,' 'Blue Vantage,' and 'Bronco' carry resistance to a broad range of diseases, such as downy mildew, Fusarium yellows, and/or black rot.
- Broccoli cultivars 'Emperor,' 'Pinnacle,' and 'Green Magic', as well as cauliflower cultivar 'Majestic' are resistant to downy mildew and/or black rot.
- 'Grand Duke' kohlrabi is resistant to black rot.

Additional Resources

- Sustainable Disease Management of Solanaceous Crops in the Home Garden ([PPFS-VG-21](#))
- Sustainable Disease Management of Cucurbit Crops in the Home Garden ([PPFS-VG-19](#))
- Sustainable Disease Management of Leafy Green Crops in the Home Garden ([PPFS-VG-20](#))
- Sustainable Disease Management of Legume Vegetable Crops in the Home Garden ([PPFS-VG-22](#))
- Sustainable Disease Management of Cole Crops in the Home Garden ([PPFS-VG-23](#))
- Home Vegetable Gardening in Kentucky ([ID-128](#))
- Vegetable Cultivars for Kentucky Gardens ([ID-133](#))

By Kim Leonberger, Plant Pathology Extension Associate, and Nicole Gauthier, Plant Pathology Extension Specialist

UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY TURFGRASS SCIENCE PROGRAM &
KENTUCKY HORTICULTURE COUNCIL INVITE YOU TO ATTEND THE

47th Annual Turf & Landscape Management Short Course

Feb. 20-22, 2024

Hardin County Extension Center
Elizabethtown, KY



TUESDAY

Pesticide
Certification
Course & Exam

WEDNESDAY & THURSDAY

Concurrent sessions:

- Commercial Lawn & Landscape
- Golf
- Sports Turf

**\$55 registration fee if
registered before Feb. 16**

Scan to
register



Full program and conference details:


<https://kyhortcouncil.org/2024-ky-turf-landscape-management-conference/>

Questions: info@kyhortcouncil.org

February Quick Tips

- The spring window for seeding lawns is mid-February through mid-March.
- Continue to monitor house plants for pest problems.
- Don't forget water for the birds in winter!
- Now is time to start cool-season vegetable seedlings indoors. Wait until late March to start quick crops like tomatoes.
- Have your soil tested now for spring gardens.
- Bring branches of early blooming spring shrubs indoors for forcing. Good candidates are Forsythia, Flowering Quince, Flowering Cherries, and early blooming Magnolias.
- Prune large shade trees now. If late in the month, some bleeding may occur. This is no cause for concern.
- Plan to prune fruit trees this month. A day with temperatures above 40 degrees will allow you to spray them with dormant oil, which will take care of many overwintering insect pests.
- Shop local garden stores now for best selection of seeds. Complete any mail orders for seeds as newer varieties will sell out quickly. Select varieties with disease resistance where possible.
- Plan to rotate crops in this year's vegetable garden. You want to avoid not only growing the same plant in last year's location but any related plant from that family. Ideally try to set up a four-year rotation for each family and plot (for example, grow other unrelated crops for three years before you plant tomatoes in the same location again). This makes a significant difference in the amount of disease pressure.
- Register for Gardener's Toolbox Classes: <https://fayette.ca.uky.edu/classregistration>

Recipe of the Month



Jalapeño Poppers

4 ounces reduced fat cream cheese	1 teaspoon garlic powder	8 large jalapeño peppers
1 tablespoon grated Parmesan cheese	¾ cup shredded reduced fat mozzarella cheese	8 pieces , thinly sliced bacon, cut in half

Preheat oven to 425 degrees F. In a small bowl, **mix** together the cream cheese, Parmesan cheese, garlic powder and mozzarella cheese. **Wash** peppers and **cut off** stems. **Cut** peppers lengthwise to make 16 halves. You may want to wear plastic gloves while handling hot peppers. **Scrape** out the seeds and membrane of each pepper. **Stuff** each pepper half with the cream cheese mixture and **wrap** each stuffed pepper with

a half piece of bacon. Lightly grease a broiler pan or pan with a rack. This will allow any grease to fall away from the poppers. **Bake** for 20 minutes or until poppers are hot and juicy and the bacon is browned.

Yield: 16 servings

Nutritional Analysis: 60 calories, 4 g fat, 2.5 g saturated fat, 5 mg cholesterol, 180 mg sodium, 1 g carbohydrate, 0 g fiber, 1 g sugars, 5 g protein.

Plate it up!



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