

BY THE YARD

HORTICULTURE NEWSLETTER



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July

2024

Inside this issue:

- Solidago
- Cucurbits in the Garden
- It's Tick Time!
- Irrigate Everything?
- What to Plant Now
- Upcoming Events
- July Quick Tips
- Recipe of the Month



Hello and happy July!

Shew! June was a scorcher. I'm sure I'm not alone in my lust for rain most days over the past month. I was near the point of performing rain dances and rituals to help open the skies and quench my thirsty gardens. It's only fitting to discuss irrigation in this issue with some considerations to stretches of drought when your rain barrels run dry.

Unsurprisingly, it's also insect season. We've had a variety of pesky pests arrive in our office and email inboxes. Here we will be discussing tick precautions and UK's tick surveillance program. However, there are many more insects affecting our gardens, landscapes and homes right now. If you have an insect question, please feel free to send us a photo or video through email or capture the critter and bring it to the office – in a securely sealed container!

Speaking of gardens, while tomatoes get much of the fanfare each summer, the cucurbits are true workhorses of the garden. Cucumbers, melons, squashes and more put in quite the effort to ensure an endless supply of bounty from now through the end of summer and sometimes up to frost. We have included some growing tips to keep these diverse plants thriving through the next several months.

You will also see the usual planting calendar (fall garden planning!), upcoming local events, and a deep dive into our state flower, the goldenrod. We hope everyone finds great ways to cool down this month, whether it be a shade tree picnic, visiting a city pool, or an adventure to any of Kentucky's beautiful lakes, rivers and nature preserves. Have a happy summer!

In appreciation,

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Solidago

A member of the aster family, the genus of goldenrod provides many wonders to our natural landscape. The genus boasts nearly 120 species native to the Americas.

Despite what some may have heard, goldenrod does not contribute to autumn hay fever. It's often confused for ragweed, which flowers at the same time. Goldenrod pollen is unable to become airborne in the wind and relies on pollinators to reproduce – a lot of pollinators! Goldenrod provides shelter and food to 115 butterfly and moth species. At least 11 native bees feed specifically on goldenrod. The beloved monarch butterfly relies on the nectar to fuel their fall migrations. Even songbirds will feed on goldenrod seeds deep into the winter months.

One species, the tall goldenrod, has been discovered to have a highly unique defense mechanism of “nodding” downward. Emerging flower buds can avoid injury from flies looking to lay gall-producing eggs by ducking downward and avoiding detection. This habit has not been observed in any other plant before, and it was 100% effective in the studies observed.

Goldenrods are easy to grow in full sun and average, well-drained soil. It is a very forgiving plant and tolerates poor, dry soils, clay, and drought. The plant naturalizes quickly, and it's advisable to divide it every couple years to control its spread. It is also deer resistant!

Source: Worth Their Weight in Gold, National Wildlife Federation; Mark Wexler



Photo by Michael Barrick, Unsplash.

Cucurbits in the Garden

The cucurbit family includes a wide range of plants including cucumbers, melons, squash, zucchini, gourds and pumpkins. When cared for and grown free of pests and diseases, these plants will grow a consistent and bountiful harvest from July through September.

Cucurbits are vining plants that ramble and spread needing lots of space to grow. You can train some plants on a trellis or fence along the edge of the garden to help lift fruit off the soil. If trellised, plant four to five seeds/foot in rows spaced 30 inches apart. Untrellised rows need to be spaced 4 feet apart. When plants are 4 to 5 inches high, thin them to stand 2 to 3 feet apart in the row.

Cucumber plants are shallow rooted and require ample moisture at all growth stages. However, melons, pumpkins and winter squash are deep rooted and require less irrigation.

For the flowers to develop into fruit, pollinators are needed. Poor fruit set is common during rainy weather when pollinators are inactive. Be sure to spray insecticides late in the day to avoid harming pollinator populations. It is important to remove fruits for the plant to continue producing.



Photo by South Dakota State University Extension

There are several diseases that can affect cucurbits. Whenever possible, choose newer varieties that have tolerance to serious diseases. Proper crop rotation is essential for reducing the chances of developing soil-borne diseases. Make sure plant spacings are wide enough to allow for good air circulation. Avoid overhead watering at all costs. Overhead watering can create conditions that are favorable for disease development and spread. If you must, overhead water in the morning to allow for adequate time for foliage to dry.

Source: Home Vegetable Gardening in Kentucky ID-128

It's Tick Time!

While there are over 700 species of ticks worldwide, we only have 7 to worry about in Kentucky. Why worry? Well, you've probably heard of some of the common tick-borne illnesses, like Lyme disease or people becoming allergic to red meat after a tick bite. Ticks can pick up pathogens from organisms or a specific environment in which an infectious pathogen resides. When a tick feeds it can pass along these pathogens that can cause disease.

Not all tick species can transmit every pathogen, and not every tick bite results in disease. For example, being bitten by a Lone Star tick poses no threat of developing Lyme disease because it cannot carry the pathogen. In any case, it's important to protect yourself from all ticks to prevent any risk of illness. Here are some tips for when you are outside this summer:

- Avoid walking through uncut fields. Walk in the center of mowed trails to avoid brushing up against vegetation.
- Use a repellent that contains 20 to 30 percent DEET on exposed skin.
- Use products that contain permethrin to treat clothing and gear, such as boots, pants (especially the cuffs), socks and tents.
- Tuck long pants into your socks and boots. Wearing light-colored pants makes ticks easier to see.
- Check yourself and others for ticks every 2-3 hours and upon returning home from hikes and outdoor activities. Examine behind ears, hair, neck, legs and around the waist.
- If you find a tick on you that has already bit into your skin, follow these steps for safe removal:
 1. Use fine-tipped tweezers to grasp the tick as close to the skin's surface as possible.
 2. Pull up and away with steady, even pressure. Do not twist or jerk the tick.
 3. Clean the bite area and your hands with rubbing alcohol, an iodine soap, or soap and water.
 4. If you have any symptoms of illness days or even weeks after the bite, please seek medical care immediately.

The University of Kentucky is monitoring ticks throughout the state to determine what species and diseases are prevalent. If you capture a tick and would like to submit it to UK's Department of Entomology, please follow the steps outlined on this website: <https://entomology.ca.uky.edu/ticksurveillance2022>

Source: UK Entomology Fact Sheet 618; A. Pasternak, J. Larson, M. Cipriani

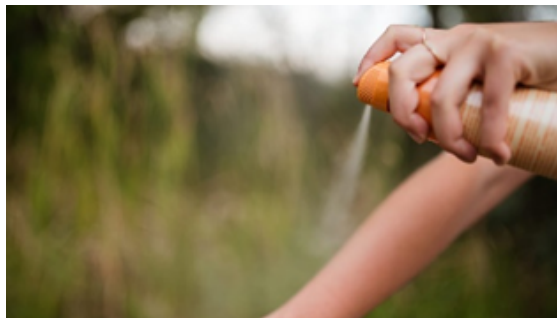


Photo via CDC Tick Prevention

Irrigate Everything?

It's hot and everything around you looks dry. What should you be doing to ensure your plants make it through the dry spell with minimal stress? Here are some things to consider:

- Mature trees need water! Saturate the top 6-9 inches of soil once per week so feeder roots are well-watered.
- New trees need daily watering of 1-1.5 gallons per inch of trunk diameter for the first two weeks after planting.
- Concentrate water and effort on perennials and bulbs over annuals. Water when the top 6 inches of soil are dry.
- Pay extra attention to vegetables that are flowering and fruiting. They need consistent moisture. Watering a little bit every day or two might be needed.
- Storage crops like potatoes and onions can be cut off from water if you will harvest in the next few weeks.
- Deep-rooted vegetables like indeterminate tomatoes, squash and melons can pull moisture from deep in the soil, so they tend to need water only once or twice per week. Sweet corn has very shallow roots and needs water more frequently.
- Cool-season crops like lettuce, broccoli and turnips need frequent water throughout the summer. Vegetables grown in pots need to be watered every day.
- Drip irrigation and soaker hoses use much less water than sprinkler irrigation and puts water directly into the root zones.
- Rain barrels running dry? You can use “grey” water from your home to water plants. This includes dish water, shower water and even laundry water. Do not use toilet water!

Source: *Watering the yard and garden in extreme drought*, University of Minnesota Extension; N. Hoidal & J. Weisenhorn



Photo by David Ballew, Unsplash

What to Plant Now?

Earliest Safe Planting Date*	Planting Method	Vegetables
JULY 8	Start seeds outdoors	Carrots, beets
JULY 18	Start seeds indoors or out in protected area	Fall cole crops like broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage
JULY 22	Start seeds outdoors	Kale, mustard greens, turnips, summer squash

*Dates are approximate for the Central Kentucky region

Upcoming Events

Look out for these events happening at the Extension Office and across Lexington. Several of these require registration. Be sure to look them up ahead of time!

- ALL MONTH: Lexington Parks & Recreation is hosting “Nature in Your Neighborhood”
- Visit lexingtonky.gov/calendar/events to see what’s happening in a park near you!
- July 2 – Trees Lexington: Tree & Pollinator Walk @ STEAM Academy
- July 11 – Arboretum Naturalist Series: Insect-Plant Relationship
- July 13 – Bluegrass Greensource Riverfest
- July 16 – Arboretum Gardening Series: Catmint & Ornamental Onions
- July 17 – Tiny Tots Naturalist: Pond Life @ McConnell Springs
- July 20 – Junior Naturalist: Pond Life @ McConnell Springs
- July 27 – Junior Explorers: Animal Tracks @ Raven Run Nature Sanctuary
- July 28 – Tree ID Walk @ McConnell Springs

July Quick Tips

- Now is the time to plant a fall garden. Most plants with shorter growing seasons can be grown in the fall and often produce better results. Allow more time to mature as cooler nights will slow growth somewhat.
- Clean and replenish hummingbird feeders regularly. The nectar will readily spoil in hot weather.
- Check on newly planted trees and shrubs often. Plants can take a minimum of two years or more to establish into the landscape. Water as needed to assist with transplant shock.
- Garden ponds will need to be topped off regularly in the heat. Make sure to use a de-chlorinator every time to protect your fish.
- Water lilies will benefit from regular feeding. If you aren’t getting many blooms feeding may help.
- Do not spray chemicals in the heat of the day. Many plants can be damaged. Spray in the early morning or late evening when temperatures are cooler.
- Monitor evergreens for spider mite damage. Drought stressed plants are particularly at risk. If you see signs of browning shake the branch over a white surface, if you see tiny moving specks, you likely have mites. Minor infestations can be treated with a daily spray from the hose. Larger problems may need chemical control.
- Remove spent blooms from flowering annuals and perennials to promote more bloom.
- If your late blooming perennials (Asters, Goldenrod, Butterfly bush, Mums, etc.) are already tall and threatening to flop, prune them back to 1’ in height. This will result in a fuller, sturdier plant that will bloom slightly later than normal.
- Register and pay online for Gardener’s Toolbox Classes: <https://fayette.ca.uky.edu/classregistration>

Recipe of the Month



Summer Garden Lasagna

5 medium zucchini	8 ounces plain Greek yogurt	1 medium yellow onion, diced ¼ inch	10 ounces fresh spinach
2 yellow summer squash	2 cups low fat cottage cheese	¼ cup fresh chives, chopped	1 (24 ounce) jar spaghetti sauce
3 tablespoons olive oil	½ cup chopped fresh basil	2 garlic cloves, pressed	8 ounces shredded mozzarella cheese
2 large eggplants, sliced ½ inch	2 teaspoons salt		Garnish with fresh basil leaves

Thinly slice zucchini and summer squash ¼ inch thick and toss with 1 tablespoon olive oil and 1 teaspoon salt. Roast in oven at 400 degrees F for 20 minutes, turn slices after 10 minutes. Slice eggplants, toss with 1 tablespoon olive oil; place on baking sheet. Roast in oven at 400 degrees F for 20 minutes, turn slices after 10 minutes. If needed, place under boiler for 5 minutes to reduce excess moisture. Mix together yogurt, cottage cheese, fresh basil, 1 teaspoon salt, diced onion and chives. Sauté garlic in remaining olive oil until golden. Add spinach to pan and cook until wilted. Spoon half of roasted zucchini,

squash, and sautéed garlic into a greased 9-by-11 inch baking dish. Coat evenly with half of the cottage cheese and yogurt mixture. Place an even layer of eggplants on cottage cheese mixture. Spread a layer of spaghetti sauce on eggplants and sprinkle with mozzarella cheese. Repeat process for one more layer. Bake at 425 degrees F for 40 to 45 minutes. Sprinkle with chopped basil and cheese for garnish. Yield: 10, 1 cup servings. Nutritional Analysis: 240 calories, 10 g fat, 4 g saturated fat, 20 mg cholesterol, 840 mg sodium, 20 g carbohydrate, 6 g fiber, 7 g sugars, 17 g protein.





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