

BY THE YARD

HORTICULTURE NEWSLETTER

 **Cooperative
Extension Service**

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Agent's Note

After several years of hot, hot springs, this year's spring has come as somewhat of a relief. Although, my pepper plants surely beg to differ. Because we have had unseasonably cool and wet weather, we are starting to see symptoms of fungal infections in the landscape. There's not a drastic concern yet, but we've shared tips and reminders about how to prevent and manage fungal diseases on your property.

Speaking of fungal diseases, Carrie Spry (previous beloved program assistant turned Clark County horticulture agent) has written a fantastic article about the top 3 leaf disease of tomato in Kentucky. It's a fantastic reference for any backyard gardener. We've included some main points here.

And it's hard to come to terms with it but it is indeed already time to start planning the fall vegetable garden, especially if you're starting plants from seed. Some fall vegetables, like cabbage and head lettuce, need to be planted no later than July 15th. We'll share all those considerations as well.

Despite cooler temperatures, the mosquitos are out and about. We get lots of calls about what you can do to manage mosquito populations without spraying. It really does take an integrated approach of many tactics that we're sharing here to keep yourself and loved ones protected from mosquitoes and mosquito borne diseases.

Lastly, we hope to see you at the Bluegrass Flower & Vegetable Show at the Bluegrass Fair on June 7th & 8th. We are thankful to the Fayette County Master Gardeners and Lexington Council of Garden Clubs for making this opportunity a reality for gardeners in Fayette County and beyond. Consider dropping off your own best grown plants! You never know, it may be ribbon worthy!!

In appreciation,

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What to Plant Now?

Earliest Safe Planting Date*	Planting Method	Vegetables
JUNE 8	Start seeds outdoors	Sweet corn
JUNE 8	Move transplants to garden	Sweet potato
JUNE 22	Start seeds outdoors	Sweet corn, late potatoes, summer squash, bush beans, lettuce, parsnips, beets, carrots

*Dates are approximate for the Central Kentucky region



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My Tomato got the Blight

Tomato leaf diseases are common in Kentucky home gardens. As the weather becomes warm and wet in early summer, disease pressure increases, often resulting in fungal leaf infections. Tomato “blight” diseases can reduce yield and eventually kill plants, particularly when summers are rainy. The term “blight” is used to describe diseases that kill leaves so quickly that they remain attached to plants.

The most common leaf diseases begin as small spots that become brown and necrotic. As long as leaf wetness or high relative humidity (greater than 70%) are present, spots continue to expand and spread, resulting in leaf death (blighting) and complete loss of leaves (defoliation). Leaf diseases often begin in the lower plant canopy, spreading from the bottom of the plant and moving upward. Weakened plants often have smaller and fewer fruits, sun scalded fruits, or poorly ripened fruits, leaving many homeowners disappointed.

Early blight, Septoria leaf spot, and target spot are the three most common fungal leaf diseases found in Kentucky tomatoes. They can appear as early as June if conditions are favorable (long periods of leaf wetness and temperatures approaching 80°F), but they are most common in July and August.

What can you do to prevent tomato blight?

1. Plant cultivars with tolerance or resistance to leaf diseases. Disease resistance is usually referenced on seed packets and plant labels.
2. Maintain good air circulation and air flow around the plants that allows foliage to dry out quicker.
3. Plant in full sun. Stake plants to keep them off the ground and remove any leaves that touch the ground.
4. Do not plant tomatoes in the same growing site 2 years in a row. In the case of early blight, also avoid planting potato, eggplant, or peppers during the 2-year crop rotation, as they are also hosts.
5. Avoid use of overhead irrigation or watering practices. Avoid watering in the evening.
6. Use mulch under plants to reduce contact between foliage and soil. Be sure to use a quality mulch and apply less than 2 inches worth to avoid other unwanted issues.
7. Clean equipment and tools after use; discard anything that cannot be cleaned (e.g., stakes, string). Remove all plant debris at the end of the season. Do not compost diseased plants.
8. Manage weeds that may serve as secondary hosts for pathogens. Weeds can also reduce air circulation and result in increased humidity within plantings.

Source: UK Plant Pathology Fact Sheet PPFS-VG-28, “Tomato ‘Blight’: Leaf Diseases that Cause Blighting in Home Gardens,” Carrie Spry, Clark County Horticulture Agent, 2025



Early blight on tomato leaf.
Kim Leonberger, UK Extension



Septoria leaf spot on tomato foliage. Carrie Spry, UK Extension



Target spot on tomato leaves. Kim Leonberger, UK Extension

Mosquito Terror!

Mosquitoes can ruin outdoor activities this time of year. It may seem like a never-ending battle when you're fighting to control the pesky insects. With mosquito-borne diseases becoming more prevalent, it's even more important to know how to take control of these pests around your home. Learning to do a few simple things could help protect you from more than the itchiness of a mosquito bite.

All mosquitoes need standing water to develop through their larval stages, and that doesn't necessarily mean a lake or pond. It also includes bird baths, kiddie pools and even discarded soda pop cans. The key to controlling them around your home is to stop them from breeding in the first place.

Some things you can do include:

- *Drain and remove trash, bottles and any debris that holds water.*
- *Recycle any unused containers that could collect water, especially old tires.*
- *Change water weekly in bird baths, wading pools, watering troughs and animal bowls.*
- *Fill in holes, depressions and puddles in your yard.*
- *Make sure your culverts and ditches are draining properly.*
- *Check and clean out clogged gutters to ensure drainage.*
- *Keep ornamental ponds stocked with fish.*
- *Fix leaky hoses and faucets.*
- *Drain water from flowerpots and garden containers.*
- *Turn over wheelbarrows, buckets and other items that collect water.*
- *Adjust tarps covering woodpiles, boats and grills to remove standing water.*
- *Encourage natural enemies of mosquitoes, such as warblers, swallows, martins and other insect-feeding birds.*



It's a good idea to start these practices early in the season. Just because the mosquitoes aren't biting yet, it doesn't mean that they're not developing.

Sources: Michael Potter, University of Kentucky, Entomologist

Fungal Infections Everywhere!

We have seen lots of anthracnose on shade trees this spring causing leaf distortion and spotting. While unsightly, this grouping of fungal diseases do not typically cause long term damage to the trees they infect. However, since conditions are right for anthracnose, we suspect lots of other fungal diseases have taken hold this spring that we won't see the effects of until mid-summer. Here are some tips for preventing infections in your gardens.

When choosing plants, prioritize disease-resistant varieties and inspect any transplants for signs of disease before introducing them to your garden. For seeds, consider those that have been treated with fungicide to give them a better chance of thriving. Planting in warm soil and ensuring proper spacing between plants are additional measures that can minimize stress and disease susceptibility.

Crop rotation is an invaluable strategy, especially in smaller gardens. Changing what's planted in a specific area every few years can prevent the buildup of soil-borne diseases. For crops that are particularly disease-prone, consider skipping their cultivation for a few years or growing them in containers separate from the garden. Maintaining a weed-free garden throughout the growing season is essential. Weeds can serve as hosts for pests and diseases, transferring them to your vegetable plants. Proper watering techniques can also make a significant difference; water at the base of plants to avoid wetting foliage, and if overhead watering is necessary, do so early in the day to allow leaves to dry.

Avoiding mechanical injury to plants, such as from gardening tools or rough handling, can prevent openings for pathogens. Furthermore, refraining from working in the garden when plants are wet can reduce the spread of diseases.

By taking these steps, gardeners can effectively manage plant diseases. This approach not only protects the garden from the myriads of pathogens waiting to attack but also leads to a bountiful and healthy harvest.

Source: UK Exclusives, "Effective strategies to prevent plant diseases in your garden," Rick Durham, Extension Professor, Department of Horticulture, 2024



Oak anthracnose. R.
Koetter & M. Grabowski,
University of Minnesota
Extension

Ready for Fall?

Even though summer hasn't technically begun (first day on June 20th), plants can take a long time to grow. It might be beneficial to start thinking about your fall garden now before it's too late. Some of the best quality vegetables are produced during fall's warm days and cool nights. These environmental conditions add sugar to late-season sweet corn and cole crops, such as cauliflower and cabbage and crispness to carrots.

Fall vegetables are harvested after early September. They consist of two types: the last succession plantings of warm-season crops, such as corn and bush beans and cool-season crops that grow well during the cool fall days and withstand frost.

When planting a fall garden, it's important to think about timing and if planting transplants or sowing seeds. Broccoli, brussel sprouts, cauliflower and lettuce would do better if planted by transplants. If starting your own, you need to start those seeds 4-6 weeks before the latest safe planting date (see table). Some of these transplant dates are as early as July 15th.

FALL CROPS	LATEST SAFE PLANTING DATE (central KY only)
Beets	August 10
Broccoli (plants)	July 15
Brussel Sprouts (plants)	July 15
Cabbage	July 15
Carrots	July 15
Cauliflower (plants)	July 20
Collard Greens	August 20
Kale	August 1
Lettuce (leaf)	August 15
Lettuce (bibb)	August 1
Lettuce (head)	July 15
Snow Peas	August 1
Spinach	Spetember 1
Turnips	August 10

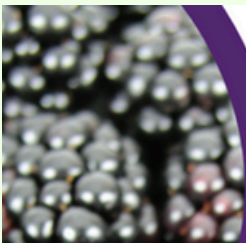


Based on early maturing varieties. Later varieties need to be planted 15-30 days earlier than listed.

You have a lot more flexibility when sowing seeds. However, you should still consider location, spacing and latest planting dates for those as well. And if you are like me with only 7-7.5 hours of full sunlight, you may want to give yourself an extra week or two of growing time as well.

Source: ID-128 Home Vegetable Gardening in Kentucky, R. Durham, R. Rudolph, M. Williams, S. Wright, R. Bessin & B. Lee, UK Extension

Recipe of the Month



Berry and Basil Pizza Crisp with Honey Balsamic

Balsamic Honey Glaze: ½ cup balsamic vinegar 3 tablespoons honey	Flatbread: 6 flatbreads 12 pieces of cheese, such as Havarti (2 per flatbread) 1 cup blackberries, halved	1 ½ cups strawberries, chopped 15 basil leaves, chopped and divided
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Preheat oven to 400°F. **Place** flatbreads on a baking sheet and **add** two slices Havarti cheese, blackberries, and strawberries. **Bake** for 5-7 minutes, or until cheese is melted. After flatbreads are removed from oven, **add** chopped basil and honey balsamic glaze. **Serve** warm.

To make the glaze:
Add balsamic vinegar and honey

to a small sauce pan and **simmer** until reduced by half (10-15 minutes). **Remove** from heat and **set aside**.

Serves: 6 Flatbreads

Nutritional Analysis:
 340 calories, 16 g fat, 9 g saturated fat, 40 mg cholesterol, 520 mg sodium, 34 g carbohydrate, 11 g fiber, 16 g sugar, 20 g protein

Upcoming Events

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

- Lexington Parks' "Nature in Your Neighborhood" throughout the month in various city parks
- June 7 – Bird Walk @ The Arboretum
- June 7 – Wild One's Weird & Rare @ The Arboretum
- June 12 – Golden Hour Hike @ Floracliff Nature Sanctuary
- June 13 & 14 – Firefly Walk @ McConnell Springs Park
- June 14 – Seedleaf Agroforestry Program @ Headwater Farm
- June 14 – Pollinator Week: Kick-Off Event! @ Hisle Farm Park
- June 14 – Bluegrass Land & Nature Symposium @ Floracliff Nature Sanctuary
- June 15 – Bug Hunt @ McConnell Springs Park
- June 17 – Gardener's Toolbox: Favorite Natives for Pollinators @ Extension Office
- June 17 – Gardening for Pollinators @ The Arboretum
- June 18 – Pollinator Celebration @ Raven Run Nature Sanctuary
- June 18 – Tiny Tot Naturalist: Pollinator Pals @ McConnell Springs Park
- June 19 – Pollinators & Pints @ West Sixth Brewing
- June 20 – Butterflies & Host Plants @ Floracliff Nature Sanctuary
- June 20 – Passion for Pollinators Panel Discussion @ Headley-Whitney Museum
- June 21 – Pride Hike @ Raven Run Nature Sanctuary
- June 21 – Junior Naturalist: Pollinator Pals & Bug Zoo
- June 21 – Rotary Club's Coffee & Donuts with Pollinators @ Kenawood Park
- June 21 & 22 – Lexington Garden Council's Tour of Gardens
- June 22 – Garbage to Garden: Composting 101 @ McConnell Springs Park
- June 28 – What it's like to be a bat biologist @ Floracliff Nature Sanctuary
- June 28 – Junior Explorers: Caterpillars & Butterflies @ Raven Run Nature Sanctuary
- June 28 – Volunteer Morning @ McConnell Springs Park
- June 29 – History Walk @ McConnell Springs Park

June Quick Tips

- Prune evergreens 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.
- 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



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