

BY THE YARD

HORTICULTURE NEWSLETTER

 Cooperative
Extension Service

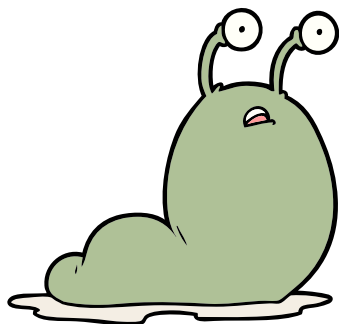
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March

2025

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Be on the lookout for slugs this month! They'll devour new plants!

We are in the final stretch of winter's cold embrace! Spring is coming! Everyone here at the Extension Office is earnestly waiting for the first day of spring. This year the spring equinox falls on March 20th. For us in the horticulture program, that means planting season! Time to dust off our garden boots and see what magic will sprout forth this year.

Much of the next month (or two) might frequently be too wet to plant outdoors. Farmers in Kentucky often must delay planting dates, which can get stressful. When soil is too wet, you can damage the soil structure and create "hard pans" or compacted, crusted layers later in the season. We'll share tips about how to know when's a good time to start digging.

There are many spring vegetables you can start indoors though. Be sure to pick up your copy of the ID-128 Home Vegetable Gardening in Kentucky publication (available at Southern States Cooperative on Palumbo Dr.) to know when a good planting time is. In this issue, we discuss planting and growing blackberries – central Kentucky's easiest fruit! There's also information about which lawn practices we could begin thinking about this month.

Don't miss this month's tree spotlight, the mighty Bur Oak! A native powerhouse of ecological benefits! Also, don't forget to drop off your soil samples anytime Monday – Friday from 8am – 4:30pm. Thanks to the Fayette County Conservation District, sample fees for Fayette County residents are fully covered (for up to 10 samples per residence)!

In appreciation,

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Lexington, KY 40506



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with prior notification.

Christmas Tree Association Plant Auction

Spring is here! It is the perfect time to plant. The Kentucky Christmas Tree Association's 19th Annual Plant Auction will be held 10:00 a.m. until 12 noon, Saturday, April 12, 2025, at the Fayette County Extension Office, 1140 Harry Sykes Way, Lexington, Kentucky 40504. Bid and take home some quality Kentucky grown nursery stock. A variety of annuals, perennials, balled and burlapped trees and shrubs will be for sale. A portion of the proceeds will be used to provide one or more scholarships for students majoring in Forestry or related sciences in the Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment at the University of Kentucky. For further information please call 859 223-1140.

Native Tree Spotlight: The Bur Oak



250-year-old Bur Oak at McConnell Springs Park, Craig Doda, 2022

Bur oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*) is a great native tree choice for urban, alkaline areas like Lexington – if you have the space for it.

Bur oak is very drought resistant and has thick, fire-resistant bark when fully aged. It also has a deep, spreading root system that is able to take advantage of limited soil moisture. A mature bur oak on a dry, well-drained site in Nebraska was found to have a root system that extended at least 16 feet deep and 72 feet across.

It is fairly tolerant of soil compaction, though severe compaction will weaken its root system and make it more susceptible to other problems. Bur oak does not tolerate flooding or saturated soils well. As mentioned earlier, bur oak is very drought tolerant. Bur oak also tolerates urban pollution well. A very good tree for urban and suburban conditions.

This mighty oak is also a great benefit to pollinators. It is a host plant for the larvae of the imperial moth and numerous butterflies, including several hairstreaks and duskywings. Use as a shade tree in a large yard, parks, library or other open areas where it has room to grow. Though naturally a fairly slow growing tree, bur oak can get quite large, reaching a maximum height of 170 feet and trunk diameter of 84 inches in the Ohio Valley. Heights of 80 to 100 feet and diameters of 36 to 48 inches are common on good sites.

Its acorns have a bur or mossy appearance, hence the common name. The acorns are valuable food for wildlife. Though it likes acid soils, it is also tolerant of fairly alkaline (high pH) soils too. The tree has strong branches, drought tolerance, winter hardiness, and freedom from serious insects or diseases. It prefers rich bottomland but is tolerant of poor soil conditions as rocky slopes and dry or clay soils if given full sun conditions. A long taproot makes it difficult to transplant.

Source: "Bur Oak: A Tree for Utah," Michael Kuhns, Utah State University Forestry Extension, accessed 2024



Bur Oak acorn, Matt Lavin, CC BY-SA 2.0

Time to Work the Soil?

Oftentimes a gardener's eagerness to get in the garden means compromised soil structure. Kentucky's wet springs are known to delay farmers in getting plants in the ground. That is because spring soil is easily damaged and compacted if worked too soon after melting snow and spring rains. When soil is wet and worked too soon, large, dense clumps form. The clumps are hard to break up and don't contain the needed air spaces between particles that allow the roots of plants to grow well which leads to compaction.

So, how do you know if the soil is ready? Pick up a handful of soil and form into a ball. Drop from about hip height and if the soil crumbles in many pieces when it hits the ground, you are ready! If the ball doesn't break up or only one or two pieces fall apart, it's best to wait for dryer conditions.



Soil Crusting, Anonymous, University of Minnesota Extension

Some other things to keep in mind when working with spring soils:

- Don't walk on it. Keep your steps along pathways and in between rows.
- Don't overtill. If using a tiller (when soil is ready), be sure to till as minimally as possible. Clumps are fine. You do not need a perfectly powdered grow bed.
- Don't leave soil uncovered. It's best to pull mulch off a spring bed to help it warm up and dry out between rains. However, keeping the soil uncovered too long, especially during wet weather, increases the risk of erosion. If weather allows, uncover to reach proper soil moisture, quickly plant, and cover again with loose mulch, like straw.
- Do get a soil sample. Drop yours off at the Extension Office anytime during business hours.
- Do add compost but only an inch or two. Compost is high in phosphorus and so are our natural soils. Too much phosphorus leaches into the groundwater causing problems in our ecosystems.
- Do add fertilizer according to soil test results. We typically do not need phosphorus, potassium or lime in central Kentucky. Add nitrogen based on the needs of the plants you are planting. And pay attention to timing. Organic fertilizers typically take longer to become available to plants often needing several weeks head start.

Source: "Practice patience when preparing garden soil," Linda Geist, University of Missouri Extension, 2018



A well-aggregated soil,,
Anonymous, University of
Minnesota Extension



Recipe of the Month

Spinach Slaw

2 cups chopped iceberg lettuce	¼ cup hummus, original flavor
2 cups chopped red cabbage	2 tablespoon local honey
2 cups chopped green cabbage	½ teaspoon garlic powder
1½ cups fresh spinach	¼ teaspoon salt
¼ cup canola mayonnaise	¼ teaspoon pepper

1. Wash, quarter, and core lettuce, red cabbage and green cabbage.

2. Thinly slice lettuce and cabbage quarters; chop slices into small pieces.

3. Wash and tear spinach leaves into small pieces.

4. Whisk together mayonnaise, hummus, honey, garlic powder, salt and pepper until ingredients are mixed well. **Toss** dressing with vegetables until coated thoroughly. **Refrigerate** for 30 minutes before serving.

Yield: 8, 1 cup servings.
Nutritional Analysis:
70 calories, 3.5 g fat, 0 mg cholesterol, 135 mg sodium, 11 g carbohydrate, 2 g fiber, 6 g sugar, 2 g protein.



Buying Kentucky Proud is easy. Look for the label at your grocery store, farmers' market, or roadside stand.



Planting Blackberries



*Natchez blackberry, Gary Gao,
Ohio State University*

If you've been thinking about growing small fruit this year, whether for personal use or for sale at a farmers market, now is the time to start scouring nursery catalogs or visit local nurseries.

Raspberries and blackberries, commonly called brambles, grow well in Kentucky, as do highbush blueberries. However, in central Kentucky you will find most success with blackberries. With favorable growing conditions and proper care, blackberry plants usually live longer than raspberries, because as a native plant, they are better adapted to Kentucky's climate. Blueberries require acidic soils that are common in eastern parts of the state. Our limestone based, high pH soils in central Kentucky are not typically suitable for blueberry production.

Blackberries have biennial canes and perennial roots. The roots and crowns live for a number of years and produce a new crop of canes each spring, while the fruit matures on last season's canes. Blackberries should not follow potatoes, tomatoes, peppers, eggplants, strawberries or other brambles for 3-4 years due to susceptibility to *Verticillium* wilt disease.

Deep, fertile soil that is well drained, high in humus and free from compaction will be best. However, almost any well-drained soil can be modified to grow blackberries. The plants will not tolerate free-standing water in the winter. Planting them in raised beds may help reduce root rot and prolong the life of the planting.

Submit a soil sample with the indication of growing blackberries. Apply recommended soil amendments. Before planting, prepare soil to a depth of at least 6-9 inches. Plant as early as possible, typically in March. Trickle irrigation and mulching will help ensure good plant growth and high yield.

Among erect and semi-erect thornless blackberry cultivars that work well in Kentucky are Natchez, Apache, Osage, Ouachita, Triple Crown, Prime-Ark Traveler, Stark and Black Gem. Several of the latter are susceptible to spotted wing fruit fly infestations.

Good cultivars of thorny blackberries are Chickasaw, Kiowa and Prime-Ark 45, the latter of these being susceptible to spotted wing drosophila. Remember to purchase certified, virus-free stock when possible.

Source: "It's time to plant brambles and blueberries," Shawn Wright, UK Department of Horticulture, 2021

Early Spring Lawn Care

Temperatures are rising, the sun is occasionally peeking out of a bluer sky than we've seen for a while, and many of us are itching to start working on lawns that may not look so great after a long, wet winter. Before you spend a lot of money on herbicides, pesticides and fertilizers, realize that less is often more when it comes to spring lawn care. The time to spread pre-emergent grassy weed control is when forsythia blooms. Those bright yellow blooms are the first to emerge in early spring, and they are good indicators that the soil is beginning to warm, and weeds are close to germinating.

Annual weeds such as crabgrass and goosegrass germinate in the spring. Depending on how thick your turf is and the amount of weed seeds in the soil, these weeds can outcompete with your grass and take over your lawn. If you miss the pre-emergent window and weeds start to sprout, your best bet is to apply some post-emergent herbicide to your lawn, when weeds are small.

It's not a good idea to apply nitrogen fertilizer to your lawn in the spring, so avoid applying any weed-and-feed products. The best time to fertilize your lawn is in the fall. Spring feeding promotes the growth of warm-season weeds. Also, high amounts of nitrogen in spring and summer can result in increased damage from white grubs in the soil. High nitrogen levels restrict turf rooting, and that adds to the damage from grubs feeding on them.

Be aware that not all weeds are bad. We love to have pristine lawns, but the herbicides and pesticides needed to acquire those types of lawns are often detrimental to our pollinators. Dandelions are important early spring flowers for bees. If you don't like them, you can mow off the blooms before they go to seed, rather than spray them with herbicide.

Source: "Go light on the lawn care in spring," Gregg Munshaw, UK Department of Plant and Soil Sciences, 2020

What to Plant Now?

Earliest Safe Planting Date*	Planting Method	Vegetables
MARCH 8	Start seeds outdoors	Spinach, mustard, beets, peas
MARCH 15	Start seeds indoors	Peppers, tomatoes, eggplant, sweet potato slips
MARCH 15	Start seed outdoors	Asparagus & rhubarb crowns, beets, carrots, collards, kale, mustard, spinach, peas, early potato pieces, radishes, turnips, green onions, onion sets, endive
MARCH 15	Move transplants outside	Cabbage, kohlrabi

*Dates are approximate for the Central Kentucky region

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!**

- March 1 – Volunteer Morning: Invasive Species Awareness Week @ Raven Run Nature Sanctuary
- March 1 – Composting Class @ The Arboretum
- March 5 – Arboretum “Little Sprouts” Program Begins
- March 6 – Dr. Doug McLaren: The Story That Trees Tell w/ Wild Ones Lexington @ St. Michael’s Church
- March 7 – Spotted Lanternfly: KY Invasive & How to Slow the Spread @ Floracliff Nature Sanctuary
- March 8 – Take a Hike @ Raven Run Nature Sanctuary
- March 8 – Signs of Spring Long Hike @ Floracliff Nature Sanctuary
- March 11 – Gardener’s Toolbox: Zinnia @ Extension Office - CLASS IS FULL - REMINDER ONLY
- March 13 – Golden Hour Hike to Elk Lick Falls @ Floracliff Nature Sanctuary
- March 14 – Full Moon Hike @ Raven Run Nature Sanctuary
- March 19 – Master Gardener “Planting Indoor Bulbs” Youth Class @ Marksbury Library
- March 20 – Gardener’s Toolbox: Early Season Vegetables @ Southern States
- March 20 – Seasonal Sunset Stroll: Spring Equinox @ McConnell Springs Park
- March 20 – Golden Hour Hike to the KY River @ Floracliff Nature Sanctuary
- March 21 – Wildflower Hike @ Floracliff Nature Sanctuary
- March 22 – Volunteer Morning @ McConnell Springs Park
- March 22 – Trees Lexington Spring Tree Giveaway w/ Fayette Co. Conservation District
- March 22 – Earth Hour Hike @ Hisle Farm Park
- March 22-25 – LFUCG Water Week 2025
- March 24 – Wildflower Walk @ Hisle Farm Park
- March 25 – Wildflower Hike @ Floracliff Nature Sanctuary
- March 27 – Seminar: Watershed Scale of Climate Change @ Floracliff Nature Sanctuary
- March 28 – Wildflower Hike @ Floracliff Nature Sanctuary
- March 29 – Wildflower Hike @ Floracliff Nature Sanctuary
- March 29 – Pruning 102 for Tree Stewards w/ Trees Lexington

March Quick Tips

- Feed bulbs a balanced fertilizer now to promote nice blooms next year. Do not cut leaves down after flowering. They provide food for the plant. Let them die naturally.
- Vegetable gardens are awakening. Only work soil when crumbly.
- Remove old stems from rhubarb and asparagus. Fertilize with nitrogen, compost or rotted manure.
- Time to plant cool crops in the garden. These include asparagus, beets, cabbage plants, carrots, chard, collards, kale, lettuce seed and plants, onions, peas, potatoes, radishes, spinach, and turnips.
- Repot houseplants. Increase pot size gradually. Plants may be fed a weak fertilizer solution (one quarter strength).
- Plant pansies and other cold tolerant flowers.
- Use sunny days to begin bed clean up. Be careful not to tread on emerging plants.
- Cut back perennials and ornamental grasses. Most grasses can be divided at this time. Grasses are very woody and may require an ax.
- Prune and fertilize brambles and blueberries.
- Clean out birdhouses or if you don’t have any, now is the perfect time to hang a few.
- Seeds of hardy annuals such as larkspur, bachelor’s buttons, Shirley and California poppies should be direct sown in the garden now.
- Spray peach trees with a fungicide for the control of peach leaf curl diseases. See HO-57 for more info on peaches.
- Register for Gardener’s Toolbox Classes: <https://ukyfayette.pacecommunity.net>



Grandparents As Parents of Kentucky

www.gapofky.org

Wednesday, March 19, 2025

Clarion Hotel
1950 Newtown Pike
Lexington, KY 40511

\$10 for grandparents,
relatives or caregivers

\$75 for professionals
(includes for CEUs)

21st Annual Bluegrass Regional Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Conference

**Registration required:
Deadline - March 5, 2025**
For complete program and
registration forms visit:
<http://gapofky.org>
or call: (859) 257-5582
to have the program packet mailed

Grandparents, caregivers, relatives and professionals are invited to the 21st GAP (Grandparents and relatives As Parents) Conference to acquire relevant information regarding the primary care of children.

8:00 AM-3:30 PM - **Resource & Benefits Fair**
(Limited number of legal consultations available throughout the day)

8:00 AM - Registration

- 8:30 AM **Successfully Raised**
Dr. Demetrus Liggins, Fayette County Public Schools, Superintendent
- 9:00 AM **Cultivating Resilient Seeds: Nurturing Children Through Trauma**
Dr. Clarissa Roan-Belle, Licensed Psychologist Higher Horizons
- 10:45 AM **Workshop Session One**
1. **Legal 101: The Basics of Family Court**
Judge Tiffany Yahr & Hon. Corey Lee
2. **The Impact of Social Media on Mental Health**
Geoff Wilson, Lexington Counseling & Psychiatry
3. **Taking Care of Your Crown**
Maranda Brooks, Fayette County Extension Agent for Family and Consumer Sciences
Montequa Jackson, Posh Salon
- 12:00 PM **Lunch & Door Prizes**

- 1:00 PM **Workshop Session Two**
4. **The Effects of Substance Use on Kids, Parents and the Family System**
Geoff Wilson, Lexington Counseling & Psychiatry
5. **Navigating Financial Uncertainty**
Dale Morgan, CEO & Founder of FOUNDATION47, LLC
6. **Navigating the Journey: Empowering Families and Caregivers of Individual's with Autism and/or Disabilities**
Samantha Fields, A Different World Inc.
- 2:10 PM **Keynote Session**
7. **Tending to the Gardener: Self-Care for Caregivers Raising Trauma Exposed Children**
Dr. Clarissa Roan-Belle, Licensed Psychologist Higher Horizons

*For full workshop descriptions please visit www.gapofky.org



Grandparents As Parents Conference

Online registration available:
Scan the QR code



Grandparents/Relatives Signup for a FREE LEGAL CONSULT

Conference Committee:

Maranda Brooks, Fayette County Cooperative Extension Office
Lynn Byers, East Jessamine Middle School Youth Service Center
Ann D'Ambruoso, Family Law of Kentucky, PLLC
Melissa Dickey, Community Volunteer
Mary Jo Dendy, Meadowthorpe Family Resource Center
Carl Devine, Devine Law Group, PLLC
Kathy Distler, Grandmother
Anna Dominick, Osborne Fletcher, PLLC
Regina Goodman, Bluegrass Area Agency on Aging
Arion Jett-Seals, Council on Post Secondary Education

Kelly Justice, Division of Youth Services
Martha McFarland, LFUCG Aging Services
Lindsay Medley, LFUCG Aging Services & Independent Living
Kate O' Ferral, Deep Springs Family Resource Center
Donna Rash, Raised by Relatives
Sheila Rentfrow, UK College of Social Work
Dale Sanders, Grandfather
Samantha Sheets, Kindred Program Director, The Bair Foundation
Mary West, KET



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