

BY THE YARD

HORTICULTURE NEWSLETTER

 Cooperative
Extension Service

November

2024

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Gardener's Toolbox Amaryllis class on November 14, 2024 still has openings.

Register and pay online for Gardener's Toolbox Classes:
<https://fayette.ca.uky.edu/class-registration>



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I'm not sure if I'm the only one but it has barely felt like fall to me. Above average temperatures and non-existent precipitation feels like a drawn-out extension of summer – not the beloved and vibrant Kentucky autumn that we all know and love. While the mornings are getting crisper and the nights longer, we've really missed the full impact of fall tree colors. My November gratitude goes to the red maples for really showing up and showing out this year.

Even though the days have been warm, now is the time to bring in all your container and house plants if you haven't already. Nighttime temperatures are getting colder whether we are ready or not. There are a few things to keep in mind to help these plants adjust to life indoors. Insects, humidity and sunlight can all have an impact on your plant's success. We've shared several tips to help you and your beloved plants succeed through the winter.

What about your outdoor bulbs? Most of them will be fine and we encourage you to plant more now to ensure a bloom filled spring. Tulips, daffodils and crocus are the classics but consider incorporating the lovely alliums, native bluebells and hyacinth. There are a few flowering perennials bulbs that are too tender for our winters. You should consider digging them up and storing them until early spring. We'll share all about the best ways to do so.

Lastly, it's true that our lawns are slowly going to rest. However, we need to make sure we provide our cool season grasses with the nutrients they need to ensure a strong stand of turf that can withstand weed competition next year. This is one of the most important lawn tasks that depend on proper timing and the time is now. Keep reading to know exactly what you need to do!

In appreciation,

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accommodated
with prior notification.

Changes to Winter Weather Alerts!

The National Weather Service has retired winter wind chill alerts in hopes to make them easier to understand. The goal is to keep everyone safe during harsh winter weather. Here's what you need to know:

1. Wind Chill Watch is now Extreme Cold Watch. This means you should avoid being outside during the coldest parts of the day and make sure you have at least half a tank of gas and an updated winter survival kit.
2. Wind Chill Warning is now Extreme Cold Warning. Consider avoiding going outside altogether, but if you must, you should dress in layers, cover exposed skin and make sure at least one person knows where you are going and when you arrive at your destination.
3. Wind Chill Advisory is now Cold Weather Advisory. Simply dress appropriately and cover exposed skin when going outdoors.

Source: Amanda Alvarado, "Here is why there won't be any wind chill warnings this winter in the US", WKYT, 2024

Happy Houseplants!

Even though your houseplants do not have to deal with the cold like your garden does, you should still change how you care for them this season, ensuring they stay healthy and continue to grow well. Following these tips, your leafy friends will bring lushness and natural beauty into your home, even in winter.



Jamie's recent addition to the office, a philodendron from his farm.

- Decrease watering. Plants need less water in the winter since they don't get as much sunlight. To test soil moisture, push your finger into the potting soil at least one inch deep. If the soil is dry, water thoroughly. In the winter, it is possible that you will only need to water once every two to three weeks.
- Pay attention to the sun. If possible, move your plants closer to the windows. If they're on the ground, put them on a plant stand. Every week or two, rotate the pots to ensure all sides of the plants get some sunlight.
- It's okay if a few leaves fall off. Plants outside over the summer will probably lose some leaves when they come inside. This is normal as they are getting used to the lower light levels. It's also normal for indoor plants to lose a few leaves as winter approaches. This is just their way of getting ready for less light.
- Avoid temperature extremes. Keep plants away from cold drafts, radiators and hot air vents. Sudden hot or cold drafts can kill plants, stress them out, or dry them out.
- Put the fertilizer on hold. Winter is a time for most houseplants to rest. They don't need fertilizer because they usually aren't actively growing. In the fall, stop fertilizing and start back up again in the spring.
- Scan for pests. Be sure to check the leaves, stems and soil surface for pests. Wipe leaves down with a wet cloth or remove insects before bringing the plants inside. When watering, flip the leaves over and look at the undersides and along the stems. If you find bugs, use your fingers or damp cloth to remove them. Neem oil and insecticidal soap may be options for managing houseplant pests.
- Increase the humidity. Most houseplants do best when the humidity is between 40 and 50%. Most homes have humidity levels between 10 and 20% during the winter. Putting plants close together is an easy way to make the air around them more humid. Plants can also be put on trays with pebbles and water to make the air more humid. Keep plants away from vents with blowing air.

Source: Rachel Rudolph, "Keeping your houseplants happy during wintertime." Agricultural Communication Services Exclusives, University of Kentucky, 2023



Aphids & aphid debris, University of Maryland Extension

Tender Flowering Bulbs

While fall is the time to plant hardy bulbs, it is also the time to dig up tender perennials to save for next year. Some flowering perennials are not hardy in our climate but produce an underground bulb, root or other structure that can be lifted from the soil and stored overwinter. The most common garden plants in this category include gladiolus, caladium, tuberous begonias, canna and dahlia. Although these plants are all collectively called tender perennials, each is best handled a bit differently.



Elephant Ears, Susan Mahr,
University of Wisconsin-
Madison

Several tropical plants grown for foliage rather than flowers are collectively called elephant ears by many gardeners. Caladiums are grown for their brightly colored leaves, while Alocasia and Colocasia are grown for huge, waxy green leaves that are often highlighted with white, purple or another contrasting color. All the elephant ear species are quite sensitive to cold temperatures and should be dug just before, or soon after, light frost. Cut the stems back to 3 to 6 inches, then place the tubers in a warm location for seven to 10 days to remove surface moisture. To prevent excessive drying in storage, pack the tubers between layers of dry vermiculite, peat moss, sawdust or similar material in a strong box. Store at 50-60 degrees F (closer to 60 for Caladiums).

Tuberous begonias should also be dug just before frost. Cut the tops back to 2 inches and air dry the roots for two to three weeks in a warm location. Then, store in boxes, as you would caladiums, but decrease the temperature to about 45-50 degrees F.

Dahlias should be cut back to about 3-4 inches after the first light frost. Then, carefully lift the plants, leaving as much soil attached as possible to prevent breaking the fleshy roots. Because they are susceptible to drying, dahlia roots should be air-dried for only a few hours or so. Then, pack in boxes, as you would caladiums, and store at 35-40 degrees F.

Gladiolus produces underground, compressed-stem structures called corms, which should be dug when the foliage just begins to fade, usually after frost. Use a spading fork to carefully lift the plants and save any of the miniature corms (called cormels). If planted next year, these cormels will grow larger and eventually reach a size that will support flowers as well as foliage.

The corms should be cured before storing to help prevent disease from developing. Cure the corms for two to four weeks in a warm (about 75-80 degrees F) room where air can circulate around the corms. Once cured, the corms should be stored dry in a cold, but non-freezing, location, about 35-40 degrees F. Old nylon stockings or onion bags hung from the wall allow good air circulation throughout storage.

Canna need not be dug until after a hard frost. Cut the tops back to 4 inches, lift with a spading fork and air dry in a warm spot for one to two weeks. Canna roots do not require covering; they can simply be placed in shallow boxes. The roots are best stored at 45-50 degrees F.



Gladiolus corms curing, Susan
Mahr, University of Wisconsin-
Madison

Source: Rosie Lerner, "Tender Perennials Need Indoor Protection", Yard and Garden News, Purdue University Extension Service

The Fayette County Extension Office will
be closed for the Thanksgiving Holiday
November 28 & 29, 2024

Happy
Thanksgiving

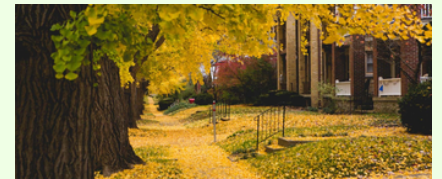
Why Leaves Change Color

Fall is one of the most beautiful seasons of the year, as tree leaves change colors to bright oranges, vibrant reds and eye-popping yellows. Trees that change color in the fall are deciduous trees. They go dormant in the winter to protect the tree from freezing temperatures and will generate new leaves in the spring.

Three factors cause the tree leaves to change color at this time of year: length of night, leaf pigments and weather. Length of night is the only constant of the three. Following the summer solstice in June, the daylight shortens in the Northern Hemisphere and nights become longer. The increasing length of night triggers certain reactions in trees and leaves.

In conjunction with sunlight, chlorophyll, which produces the green color in leaves, and carotenoids, which give us the orange, yellows and browns, are working all summer to produce food for the tree. After the solstice, night length steadily increases, causing excess plant sugars to build up and chlorophyll production to slow down and eventually stop in the leaf. When chlorophyll production ceases, the carotenoid pigments are unmasked, and any anthocyanins in the leaf start producing reddish purple colors in response to bright light, giving the leaves their fall colors.

As time passes, a cell layer between the leaf petiole, which connects to the tree's stem, begins to close. Once that cell layer completely closes, the leaf drops, closing off any openings into the tree and protecting it from winter's freezing temperatures and harsh winds.



Lexington gingko trees dropping leaves, VisitLEX

Fall color vividness depends on temperature and moisture. Sunny, warm days, cool nights and soil moisture in early fall produce the most color. This combination of moisture and temperature produces a vast array of colors. Limited soil moisture can limit the variability in tree color, and that's why no two autumns are ever alike. .

Source: Sharon Flynt, "Why leaves change color in fall" Agricultural Communication Services Exclusives, University of Kentucky, 2024

Fertilize Lawns Now or Never! (until next year)

Lawns require fertilizer to remain healthy. Proper fertilization practices will lead to a thick, uniform lawn that is competitive against weeds and diseases. The nutrients contained in fertilizers are necessary to support many processes occurring within the plants. If any essential nutrient is limited, the plants will not perform at their highest level.

Soil fertility levels vary across Kentucky. Nutrients that may be naturally abundant in central Kentucky may be limited in Eastern or Western Kentucky. Moreso, soil has often been modified by the removal of topsoil or the addition of backfill during construction, so knowing the natural fertility of the area may be of little value. The only way to know the fertility needs of your lawn is to perform a soil test. You can have a soil test completed through your local extension office.

The best time to fertilize cool-season lawns (Kentucky bluegrass, tall fescue, perennial ryegrass, and fine fescue) is during autumn. These grasses grow optimally during cool weather and utilize nutrients easily this time of year. Turf develops a better root system, becomes very dense, and has much better late fall and early spring color if nitrogen is applied now. By eliminating spring fertilization you reduce the frequency of mowing during spring, develop a better root system, promote better drought tolerance in summer, reduce disease pressure and develop a more heat-tolerant, weed-free lawn.

Spring fertilization can cause crabgrass, goosegrass, bermudagrass, and other grassy weeds to grow much more than cool-season grasses. Your lawn will also require more irrigation, thatch control, and chemicals for weed control. Weed and feed products (fertilizers and herbicides in the same product) are usually not recommended since the optimum time to control weeds does not often match up to the optimum time for applying fertilizer.

Mulching leaves and yard waste is another option. Why not use this bountiful resource to enrich your lawn and garden and create less waste and air pollution? A very simple technique is to rake leaves into a line and mow over them with your lawn mower. The mower will chop the leaves into pieces small enough to fall between the blades of grass in your lawn. The chopped leaves will break down and provide nutrients to your lawn and improve the quality of your soil. Nature's fertilizer!

Source: Gregg Munshaw, "AGR-212 Fertilizing Your Lawn", University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension, 2014

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!**

- November 2 – Volunteer Morning at Raven Run Nature Sanctuary
- November 2 – Closing Day at Kentucky Children’s Garden
- November 3 – Gainesway Park Community Garden Workday
- November 3 – UK Arboretum Bird Walk
- November 6 – Beginner’s Botany Course Series begins at UK Arboretum
- November 8 – Second Friday Bird Walk at Raven Run Nature Sanctuary
- November 8 – Intro to Tent Camping at Jacobson Park
- November 15 – Super Moon Hike at McConnell Springs Park
- November 16 – Junior Naturalist: Fungus Among Us at McConnell Springs Park
- November 18 – Intro to Backpacking & Hiking at Raven Run Nature Sanctuary
- November 20 – Tiny Tot Naturalist: Fungus Among Us at McConnell Springs Park
- November 23 – Take A Hike at McConnell Springs Park
- November 23 – Community Tree Planting at Oakdale Apartments with Trees Lexington
- November 23 – McConnell Springs Volunteer Morning
- November 25 – Kids Nature Olympics at McConnell Springs Park
- November 26 – Tree People Meet Up with Trees Lexington

November Quick Tips

- Although we passed the best time for seeding, lawns will benefit from a fall application of nitrogen. October and November are excellent months to feed as you can promote vigor without excessive growth.
- Mow new grass seedlings when they reach 2.5 inches tall. Continue to mow lawns as late as needed.
- When you are finished with tools and equipment for the season clean, sharpen, and oil tools for next year. Make sure to drain, or add fuel stabilizer to, gasoline powered equipment.
- If you have not dug and stored tender bulbs like dahlias, cannas, and gladiolus, do so before the ground freezes.
- Clean up perennial foliage if you had any disease issues this year. This will help prevent the problem next year.
- Drain and store garden hoses and irrigation systems.
- November is an excellent time to plant fall bulbs for next spring.
- Start a compost pile with all those leaves. It doesn’t have to be elaborate or technical. A simple pile will make compost if left long enough.
- Plant paperwhites, amaryllis and other ready-to-bloom bulbs for the holidays.
- Protect the trunks of fruit trees with wire mesh to prevent gnawing damage from rabbits and voles.
- Do a thorough cleanup of the vegetable garden. This will remove many insect and disease problems before they can become a problem next year.
- Monitor houseplants for insect problems. Most common pests can be controlled if detected before they become major infestations.

Recipe of the Month



Chicken and Brussels Sprouts One Pan Meal

<p>2 skinless, boneless chicken breasts (about 1 pound)</p> <p>1 tablespoon olive oil</p> <p>Salt and pepper to taste</p>	<p>12-14 Brussels sprouts, trimmed and quartered</p> <p>1 cup sliced fresh mushrooms</p> <p>1 red bell pepper, diced, about 1 cup</p>	<p>1 medium yellow onion, diced, about 1 cup</p> <p>2 cloves garlic, minced</p> <p>½ cup half-and-half</p> <p>¼ teaspoon nutmeg</p> <p>¾ cup Parmesan cheese</p>
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Preheat oven to 425 degrees F. **Cut** chicken into bite-sized pieces. **Heat** oil in a heavy, oven-safe skillet or pan over medium heat. **Add** chicken and sauté 3-4 minutes. Lightly **season** with salt and pepper. **Add** vegetables and **stir** gently to combine. **Cook** 3-5 minutes until vegetables are tender. **Remove** from heat. If skillet or pan is not oven-safe, transfer mixture to a baking dish. In a small bowl, **combine** half-and-half, nutmeg and salt and

pepper to taste. **Pour** mixture over chicken and vegetables. **Sprinkle** with Parmesan cheese. **Bake** 25-30 minutes until lightly golden on top. **Serve** hot.

Yield: 6, 1 cup servings

Nutritional Analysis:
220 calories, 9 g fat, 3.5 g saturated fat, 0 g trans fat, 70 mg cholesterol, 340 mg sodium, 11 g carbohydrate, 3 g fiber, 4 g sugars, 23 g protein.





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