

BY THE YARD

HORTICULTURE NEWSLETTER

UK Cooperative Extension Service

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September

2025

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Keep gourds and pumpkins watered well during the dry fall season for a spooktacular October!

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Agent's Note

Thank Goodness for September. After the wretched heat of August, the first sign of cooler nights feels like a blessing — not just for us, but for every weary plant in the garden. September is a month of change, while it can still surprise us with scorching afternoons and stubborn dry spells, there's something about the golden light and cooler evenings that revive us.

It's hard to stay motivated in the peak of summer, and standing at the end of a garden hose for hours on end is its own kind of trial. But I do it — we all do it — because we know what's at stake. The asters and goldenrods, waiting to bloom and feed the fall butterflies and bees, depend on us. There's meaning in that kind of caretaking, even if it comes with sore shoulders and sunburned necks.

It's tempting to start slowing down now, but fall is no time to let up completely. Evergreen shrubs and trees still need a deep drink before winter settles in. And while you're out there, hose in hand, glance over your evergreens for bagworms — it's late to spray but removing the bags now will spare you headaches next year.

The vegetable garden is finally coming back to life. I just finished sowing my last round of seeds, and I'm grateful that I managed to tackle the weedy chaos back in July. It felt impossible in the sticky heat, but it gave me the clean slate I needed to start over in August. Now, with the nights cooling just enough, those fall crops are finding strength. The cabbage family — always needy — demands our attention again. Insects are relentless, this time of year, but floating row covers and a little B.t. can make all the difference.

We're tired, sure. Who isn't by late August? But the thought of hearty stews and sweet root vegetables, pulled from soil we've worked and watched over, keeps us going. We continue the chores, but my mind is already thinking pumpkins....

In appreciation,

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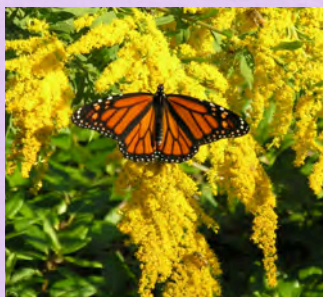


Photo by Michael Barrick, Unsplash

DID YOU KNOW???

Native goldenrod plants support around 115 different butterfly and moth species! It is also a myth that goldenrod contributes to seasonal allergies. That's usually ragweed that blooms around the same time. Plant goldenrod and support pollinators!

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Mums the Word

Mums bring new life to the fall garden and spruce up a front porch. All around Kentucky, garden centers offer many varieties of colorful blooms.

When buying a mum for fall color, look for the plant with tight buds that haven't flowered yet to make the plant last longer. Choose the variety you want based on the ones close to it that have already bloomed.

Water is another key to making your mum last longer. Place the mum in a larger pot when you bring it home to help it retain more water. Check the soil at least every other day by simply putting a finger into the soil, at least to the first knuckle. If the soil is dry, your mum needs water.

Make sure water gets good contact with plant roots and the soil. Either water from the bottom up in a pan or pail of water, or from the sides of the pot with a watering can or garden hose. Watering overhead on the leaves or buds may cause them to quickly deteriorate. To avoid root rot, don't allow mums to stand in water long.

Once flowers begin to fade, "deadhead" or pick off the fading blooms, which will promote new growth and make the plant look healthier. If you want to enjoy garden mums inside, find a good location near a south-facing window, out of direct sunlight. Keep it away from heating or air conditioning vents that tend to dry the flowers. Keep the soil moist, but not soggy.

Mums prefer moderate night temperatures, about 60 degrees Fahrenheit. If you expect frost, protect outdoor mums by moving them under cover overnight.

Once the plants have finished blooming, they will stop growing. You can either add them to your compost pile or plant them in your garden. Be aware, however, even the best gardeners find that mums planted in the fall often fail to establish in our climate.

Source: Rick Durham, "Fall gardens pop with mums," UK Ag Communication Exclusives, 2023



Photo by Cathy Schwamberger, Unsplash

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!**

- Raven Run Nature Sanctuary is hosting Fall Migration Bird Walks throughout the month
- September 4 – Wild One's Backyard Bugs w/ Dr. Jonathan Larson @ The Arboretum
- September 5 – First Friday Birding @ Floracliff Nature Sanctuary
- September 6 – Mulching Trees w/ Trees Lexington @ United Church of Christ
- September 6 – Volunteer Morning @ Raven Run Nature Sanctuary
- September 6 – KY River Watershed Walk @ Kelley's Landing Park
- September 7 – Bird Walk @ The Arboretum
- September 7 – Full Moon Hike @ McConnell Springs Park
- September 9 – Volunteer Day @ Wolf Run Park
- September 12 – KY Water Resources Symposium
- September 12 – Summer's Last Butterflies @ Floracliff Nature Sanctuary
- September 13 – Monarch Fest @ Raven Run Nature Sanctuary
- September 13 – Volunteer Day @ Whitney Young Park
- September 14 – Volunteer Morning @ Kelley's Landing Park
- September 15 – Community Naturalist Seminar @ The Arboretum
- September 16 – Gardening with Fall Vegetables @ The Arboretum
- September 17 – Tiny Tot Naturalist "Seed Exploration" @ McConnell Springs Park
- September 18 – Wild One's EcoBeneficial Landscape Strategies Webinar
- September 18 – Golden Hour Hike @ Floracliff Nature Sanctuary
- September 19 – Take a Hike Scavenger Hunt @ Hisle Farm Park
- September 20 – Junior Tot Naturalist "Seed Exploration" @ McConnell Springs Park
- September 20 – The Aster Family Workshop @ Floracliff Nature Sanctuary
- September 21 – Wildflower Craft @ Hisle Farm Park
- September 22 – Autumn Equinox Hike @ Kelley's Landing Park
- September 23 – OAK's Mechanical Weed Control Field Day
- September 23 – KY's Wildlife Action Plan Seminar @ Floracliff Nature Sanctuary
- September 27 – Scarecrow Parade @ The Arboretum
- September 27 – Junior Explorers "Trees as Habitats" @ Raven Run Nature Sanctuary
- September 27 – Volunteer Morning @ McConnell Springs Park
- September 30 – Volunteer Day @ Woodland Park
- September 30 – Kids Hike "Meet the Trees" @ Floracliff Nature Sanctuary

Fall Webworms

Fall webworms are native tent caterpillars that can be found throughout the United States and southern Canada. This species is distinguished by its "tent" constructed at the ends of tree branches, allowing caterpillars to feed on enclosed foliage. While these insects can cause heavy defoliation, especially during periodic outbreaks, fall webworms by themselves do not cause mortality in healthy trees and are typically not a serious.

The fall webworm web serves as a nursery and defensive shield during the caterpillars development. They are generalists capable of feeding on almost any species of hardwood tree or shrub. In Kentucky, fall webworms most commonly feed on elms, hickories, maples, and sweetgums.



Fall webworm larvae, Bugwood.org

In Kentucky, two generations often occur each year. The first generation of adults emerge in March or April while the second develops in late June or July. Fall webworm females lay their egg masses on the underside of leaves in early to mid-summer. When larvae emerge, they immediately begin to feed on leaves and spin their silken webs to construct a tent. These tents often begin to appear in mid- to late summer. Tents may contain a few hundred larvae feeding together in a single colony. They initially enclose some leaves at the branch tip within their webbing as a source of food, eliminating the need to leave their nests to feed. They will skeletonize the leaves, feeding on the leaf tissue while leaving the veins of the leaves intact.

As the caterpillars develop and require more food, they expand their tent to envelop more leaves. This process of expanding the web may create tents that are two to three feet in length. In cases where many tents exist in one tree, these tents may expand to enclose the entire crown of the tree, completely defoliating it. However, healthy trees can survive such defoliation and do not suffer long-term damage from fall webworm defoliation.

In most cases, active management may not be necessary. While the defoliation may lower the aesthetic value of trees, they rarely cause substantial harm. During most years, the many natural predators of fall webworm, such as birds and other insects, can keep the webworm population in check.



Fall webworm nest on tree, Bugwood.org

Repeated defoliation of young or recently planted trees, typically less than 5 years old, may weaken a tree and require some management. Young trees overall may be more susceptible to damage from insects and diseases. As a general guideline, young trees with over 20% of their canopy covered in fall webworm tents may experience some effects to health and should be monitored.

If you have a young tree that you are concerned about, please contact your extension office for more information and options for management.

Source: Ellen Crocker, Jonathan Larson & Hanna Hollowell, "FOR-174: Fall Webworms," UK Cooperative Extension

September Quick Tips

- Many post-bloom perennial flowers can be found at discounted prices late in the season, and most are suitable for planting now. Avoid late planting for common fall flowering favorites that need a long establishment time. Fall flowers that are best with spring planting include, mums, asters, and Japanese anemone. Most others work great for September planting but try to plant with six weeks' time to establish before freezing weather in late November and December.
- Continue to seed and renovate lawns this month. Good seed to soil contact is critical. Consider renting a power seeder if you are working with a large area.
- Order spring flowering bulbs now or shop garden centers for the best selection. Bulbs may be planted right away or stored in a cool place for later planting.
- Begin early garden cleanup with the removal of diseased plant materials. This will help prevent problems next year. Healthy plants can be left for late fall or early spring clean up.
- Plant fall vegetables. You still have time to direct sow radishes, turnips, spinach and lettuces. You can still succeed with transplants of broccoli, and fast maturing cabbage varieties if planted right away.
- Plant trees and shrubs. Fall is a wonderful time to plant woody ornamentals. Try to allow plants time to establish before the onset of severe weather.
- Divide peonies, iris, and daylilies through the middle of this month.
- Visit a local orchard or farmer's market for apples, pears, fall raspberries and other seasonal treats.

Fall Gardening: The Second Spring

Depending on your garden and landscape endeavors, fall can be just as or sometimes even more busy than spring. To keep things simple, we've created a chart of activities you may be looking to do at home with the ideal timing and any notes or comments we may have. Enjoy!

Activity	Timing	Plant Types	Comments/Notes
Fertilizing	Sept-Nov	Cool season lawns. Fescue, bluegrass, etc.	Only fertilize according to soil test results. Do not add lime unless recommended from soil test.
Planting	Aug-Sept	Flowering perennials as transplants. Aster, goldenrod, cone flower, etc.	
	Aug-Sept	Last of the fall vegetables. Radish, lettuce, spinach.	
	September	Cool season lawn seeding	
	Sept-Nov	Trees and shrubs. All of them.	
	Oct-Nov	Early spring flowers by seed. Poppies, larkspur, calendula, etc.	
	Oct-Nov	Flower bulbs. Tulips, daffodils, hyacinths, etc.	
	Oct-Nov	Garlic	
Transplant or Divide	September	Spring & early summer flowering perennials. Iris, peonies, daylilies, etc.	Be sure there are at least 4 weeks for roots to re-establish before first expected hard freeze (usually late October - early November).
Mulching	Sept-Nov	All perennials.	A fresh layer of mulch at least 3 inches thick will protect overwintering perennials.
Winter Protection	November	Evergreen shrubs. Arborvitae, boxwood, yew, etc.	Water well. Cover with burlap during especially strong winter winds (Jan-Feb)
	November	Young, thin-barked trees. Cherry, crabapple, maple, plum, etc.	Wrap with reflective white tree guards or wrap to prevent sun scald. Remove in spring.



Recipe of the Month



Apple Spinach Salad

5 ounces fresh spinach
4 large Gala apples
2 ounces sharp white cheddar cheese, shredded
½ cup slivered almonds, toasted (see directions below)

½ cup golden raisins
Dressing:
2 tablespoons honey

1 tablespoon olive oil
1 tablespoon cider vinegar
¼ teaspoon dry mustard
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
¼ teaspoon finely chopped garlic

Wash and dry fresh spinach. **Tear** into small pieces. **Core and chop** apples into bite sized pieces. Do not peel. **Mix** together spinach, apples, cheese, almonds and raisins. In a small bowl, **stir** together dressing ingredients and pour over salad mixture. **Toss and serve.** **To toast almonds:** Spread almonds evenly in a small saute pan, over medium high heat for about 30 seconds, **stir.** Continue to **heat** almonds for an additional 3-5 minutes, **stirring** often for even browning. **Remove** from heat when almonds are fragrant and turning golden brown around the edges. Immediately **pour** almonds into a dish to cool.

Yield: 10, 1 cup servings.

Nutritional Analysis: 150 calories, 6 g fat, 1.5 g saturated fat, 5 mg cholesterol, 50 mg sodium, 22 g carbohydrate, 3 g fiber, 17 g sugar, 3 g protein.



Buying Kentucky Proud is easy. Look for the label at your grocery store, farmers' market, or roadside stand.
<http://plateitup.ca.uky.edu>

What about the birds?

Fall is the time many of us start to think about feeding the birds. While some folks provide birds with food all year, others only feed during the colder, food-scarce months. For many people, watching birds through their windows is a fun way to while away a dreary winter.

The food and feeders you choose to set out will depend on the types of birds and wildlife you wish to attract. Consider, too, whether you want to discourage or encourage squirrels from visiting your feeders.

Different birds prefer different foods, so if you want to attract a variety of birds, provide a variety of seeds. Black oil sunflower seed is a favorite of many bird species, including cardinals, blue jays, chickadees, finches, nuthatches and sparrows. If you're new to feeding the birds, this is a good seed to start with. It's inexpensive and available everywhere, from grocery stores to feeder supply outlets.

If you want to dissuade squirrels from plundering your feeders, safflower is a good seed for that. Squirrels will not eat safflower, but cardinals, mourning doves, woodpeckers, blue jays, tufted titmice, finches and chickadees love it. The seed is high in fat, fiber and protein. It's more expensive than sunflower, but you'll get more bang for your buck, because the squirrels won't be gobbling it up.

Goldfinches love thistle or nyjer seed. Because it is so small, it requires a special finch feeder. These are usually clear tubes with small holes and perches. Some come with the perches above the holes, which discourages other small birds from eating the seed. It's also fun to watch finches feed using their unique ability to hang upside down.

Seed mixes, found anywhere seed is sold, are often popular with beginning birders. They're often the least expensive choice and attract many different birds. But be aware that they can cause quite a mess, because birds scatter the seed looking for the type they prefer.

Birds also love other types of food, too, such as pieces of apples and oranges, peanuts, peanut butter and cracked corn. Though if you don't want squirrels, you might want to avoid these.

There are many styles of feeders and the choice often depends on the type of seed you're offering and the birds you want to attract. House or hopper feeders are good, all-purpose feeders that usually have walls, a platform and a roof to keep the rain off. Platform or tray feeders are ideal for ground-feeding birds, such as grosbeaks, cardinals and mourning doves, and are good ways to lay out a buffet of fruit and nuts. Squirrels, however, will find it very easy to feed from tray feeders, but if you use safflower in them, squirrels will move on.

If you live in an apartment or townhouse, there are feeders available that adhere to the outside of your windows or attach to a balcony.

Squirrel-proof feeders are widely available, but keep in mind that squirrels are smart creatures, and they can usually think their way around most obstacles we humans set for them. But that can be fun to watch, too.

You will attract more birds by using more than one feeder and placing them in different areas of your yard. It's a good idea to position feeders near a tree or shrub, so birds have nearby cover in the event a predator appears. On that note, we do not recommend feeding birds, if there are any outdoor or feral cats in the area. Cats are a major driver in the decline of songbirds and will kill upwards of a billion birds a year.

Clean your feeders once a month. Dirty feeders can promote mold and bacterial growth, which can infect birds and spread disease among neighborhood flocks. Goldfinches are particularly discerning when it comes to a clean feeder. Once a thistle feeder becomes damp and moldy inside, the birds will avoid it. A dirty feeder's foul smell can also attract wildlife you might not want, such as insects, mice or rats. Clean with a solution of one-part bleach to nine-parts hot water. You could also use a mild solution of unscented dish soap.

Once you start feeding the birds, it's a good idea to continue doing it regularly throughout winter. Birds need more calories to sustain them through those cold winter nights, so they will depend on your generosity.

Source: Matt Springer, "It's time to think about feeding the birds," UK Ag Communication Exclusives, 2020



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