



Cooperative Extension Service

Hopkins County
75 Cornwall Drive
Madisonville, KY 42431
(270) 821-3650
Fax: (270) 825-5011
hopkins.ca.uky.edu

Hopkins County Horticulture Newsletter Summer 2021

Erika Wood, Hopkins County Extension Agent for Horticulture *Erika Wood*

Protect Your Plants During Home Renovations

Rick Durham, Extension Professor, Department of Horticulture

Warm weather brings out the renovators in many of us. New sidewalks, a new deck or porch, new windows, even an addition to the house often happen while the weather is warm and dry. While your home may glow under the extra attention, your plants and trees might take a beating from workers, materials and equipment.

Workers can trample plants without realizing it. Even taking out old trees can damage plants beneath them if it's not done carefully, not to mention removing the shade those understory plants might require. While some plants can survive abuse like this, it's always best to take precautions before the work begins.

If you're having a new roof installed or your house painted, often just covering the plants with a sheet can protect them from toxic chemicals or wayward materials falling on them. Sheets are light enough to allow light and air in. If your plants are particularly delicate, you can set up a temporary scaffold to hold the sheets.

Root damage often happens from heavy machinery, which can compact the soil. Also, getting machinery into a yard with mature landscaping can sometimes pose problems. Always discuss this with your contractor well ahead of the work commencing. It may be necessary to prune plants prior to the work beginning. This could even entail pruning the roots of some plants. Sometimes you might have to remove an entire tree or shrub to allow large machinery to enter the property. A certified arborist can help ensure that these tasks are done correctly. If the plant is too large to be moved, you can cordon it off with stakes and fencing. Try to protect as much of the area around the tree as possible from traffic to avoid damaging the root system.

If you have vines that will be in the work area, either tie them out of the way or, if they're self-attaching like English ivy, cut them back. They'll regrow.

You can dig up smaller plants and bundle their roots in burlap. If you keep the burlap moist, they can survive that way for several weeks. If you need to move larger plants, it's best to bring in professional help to lift the shrub or tree and heel it into a prepared bed out of harm's way.

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Recycle That Garden Waste

William Fountain and Rick Durham, Extension Professors, Department of Horticulture

A little miracle happens when you compost garden waste. In a few months you get rich, crumbly, beautiful organic material filled with microbial life that will improve your soil and make your garden thrive. Composting yard waste is a controlled biological process where bacteria, fungi and other organisms decompose organic materials like leaves, twigs, grass clippings and food wastes. Here are a few tips for creating top-notch compost.

You will speed up the process if you confine your pile within a smallish space; one square yard is about right. You can buy ready-made compost bins, or you can make them from clean wooden pallets. Place one pallet on the ground, drive metal stakes into the corners, then slide four pallets vertically onto the stakes. Or drive four stakes into the ground to form a rectangle and wrap with 3-foot high garden fencing or chicken wire.

You need both green and brown materials in your compost pile. Grass adds necessary nitrogen, but grass alone will begin to compact and stink. Brown materials such as dried leaves and twigs, or even shredded newspaper or plain white paper, add carbon to the mix and will speed up the composting process. However, paper is heavy in carbon and can throw off the nitrogen to carbon ratio, so it's probably better to recycle most of your paper products another way. The ideal grass to leaves ratio is three parts tree leaves (brown material) to one part grass clippings (green material).

There are other acceptable materials to use in your compost pile. Kitchen wastes, such as coffee grounds (your worms will love your coffee grounds), eggshells and vegetable scraps work well. Keep a covered crock or pot under your sink to stash your kitchen parings. That way you can delay your trips to the compost pile until the crock is full.

Sawdust may be added if nitrogen is supplied at the rate of one pound of actual nitrogen (6 cups of ammonium nitrate or 4 cups of urea) per 100 pounds of dry sawdust. Wood ash acts like lime, which is alkaline, and should not be added at more than one cup per bushel of organic matter. Composting works best when the bin is at a neutral pH.

Don't add animal products, pet droppings or fat to your compost pile. They will attract wildlife.

Composting can happen either aerobically (with oxygen) or anaerobically (without oxygen). Microbes need oxygen to efficiently break down organic wastes. Decomposition will occur under anaerobic conditions, but the process is slow and produces foul odors. Your goal should be 100% aerobic decomposition. Oxygen is added to a compost pile by layering bulky brown materials with more solid green materials and by turning the compost with a garden fork. If the compost pile is too large or is turned infrequently, the interior of the compost pile can become anaerobic while the exterior is aerobic.

Finished compost should be dark brown or black and crumbly with an earthy smell. You should not be able to discern the initial materials used for composting, unless there are peach and avocado pits, which break down very slowly and remain as discernable objects that can be removed. The pH will be neutral to slightly alkaline.

Compost may be used as a soil amendment to improve the soil's physical condition and fertility. Compost makes heavy clay soils easier to work and improves aeration, root penetration and water infiltration. Adding compost to sandy soils helps retain water and nutrients.

Although compost contains some nutrients, their is not as high as most synthetic fertilizer. Additional fertilization may be necessary to achieve maximum plant growth and production, unless you are able to spread an inch or more of compost on your planting beds.

Compost makes a good mulching material. It can be used around both garden and landscape plants. It is best to slightly work the compost into the soil, because it tends to cake on the soil surface.

Integrated Pest Management in the Home Garden

Ric Bessin, Extension Professor, UK Department of Entomology

If you're a gardener, at one time or another, you've had pest problems. Insects or animals decide your plants are the best place to dine and reproduce. What's a gardener to do?

Many gardeners are concerned about using pesticides, and rightly so. Some pesticides, if handled improperly, can cause more harm than good on nontarget organisms, which include other plants as well as you, your children, pets and the environment. You can address these concerns by implementing integrated pest management practices in your garden.

Farmers have used integrated pest management successfully for almost 50 years. What works for them can also work for the home gardener. Known as IPM, integrated pest management is a strategy to control pests with minimum impact on other organisms.

You know the old saying about an ounce of prevention. Don't wait for trouble to climb over your garden fence. Check your plants several times a week. Inspect the undersides of leaves and the inner parts of the plant where insects can shelter. Take a flashlight into the garden at night and check for nocturnal pests like slugs and moths.

If you find something, don't panic. Decide if you can live with the damage you're seeing. Sure, you have some holes in your potato leaves, but otherwise, is the plant healthy? Did you just lose a cucumber plant to wilt, and are you afraid of it infecting other plants in the plot?

Identify the cause of the problem. Is it a disease or an insect infestation? Don't assume that because you're seeing bugs on your plants that they're the culprits. Beneficial insects might be dining on or reproducing in other, not-so-beneficial insects. Nature can often take care of itself. If you want to give her a little help, pick off the few pests you find before they can cause major damage.

There are a lot of resource materials on the internet that can help you identify pests and diseases. If you need more help, ask your local extension office. Learn all you can about the pest's life cycle. In doing so, you'll be able to time your "attack" to when the creature is most susceptible.

Keep your plants healthy. A healthy plant can fend off or withstand disease or an insect infestation better. Know your plants' nutrient needs and fertilize accordingly. Without enough fertilizer, a plant is stressed and vulnerable to pest attack, and a plant with too much fertilizer may have excess growth that attracts disease and insect pests.

For the same reason, provide adequate water for your plants. Under- or over-watered plants suffer stress that can reduce their natural resilience.

Keep your garden clean. Remove any plant debris that could harbor pests, and keep your garden weed-free. Allowing weeds to grow provides habitat for insects and diseases. Weeds also compete with garden plants for important resources such as nutrients and water. Regularly clean your garden tools in a solution of one part bleach to nine parts water or wipe them with rubbing alcohol or a disinfecting spray.

Slugs and snails like to hide under boards, plastic sheeting or unused flowerpots. By eliminating those hiding spots, you can cut back on the number of slimy plant predators that show up for a twilight snack.

A useful technique to dislodge aphids, mites, lacebugs, mealybugs and spittlebugs is to hit them with a forceful stream of water. Don't forget to spray the undersides of leaves, as well. Do this early in the day so the plants can dry before evening.

These are just a few of the many useful, non-toxic methods you can use to protect your garden crops. However, if you feel you need to use a pesticide, read the label instructions. The label will tell you if it is the correct pesticide for the plant and the pest and also gives you important information on the number of days you'll need to wait to harvest edible plants after application. The label is the law!

Support Your Local Farmers Market

Mark Williams, Horticulture Professor and Department Chair

Growing season is in full swing, and your local farmers market has the freshest produce, meats and value-added products around.

When you purchase from a farmers market vendor, most of which are small, family operations, it reduces the time it takes for food to travel from a large, commercial farm to a grocery store and onto your dinner plate. This means that local growers can wait to pick the produce and deliver it to you when it is at the peak of freshness. At the same time, you are reducing fuel emissions and transportation costs the growers would have to pay to sell their products outside the county. Many times, farmers markets are closer to your home than a grocery store, so shopping at the markets could cut down on your fuel costs too.

Buying from farmers markets is good for the local economy and one way to preserve agriculture in rural communities. Farmers market purchases keep your money in your community. It allows growers with small-to-medium-sized operations to receive a fair price for their products without having to compete against large commercial growers. With an established, local market to sell their products, new growers have a viable entry into agriculture and an improved chance at success.

With much of the farmers markets products being fresh fruits and vegetables, you also have the opportunity to add more nutrition, vitamins and minerals to your family's plates. This can lead to healthier diets.

Buying from a local vendor can help you connect to the person who is growing your food. It can be a great lesson for your children on where food comes from. Over the course of the season, many repeat farmers market customers develop personal connections and friendships with vendors.

The Hopkins County Farmers Market is open for business from May to October. It is located at Mahr Park Arboretum at the Danny Peyton Education Center and Farmers Market (55 Mahr Park Drive, Madisonville). The market is open on Thursdays from 2:00 to 7:00 P.M. and Saturdays from 8:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M.



Plate it up! Recipes for Summer



Corn and Sweet Potato Confetti Salad

3 cups sweet potato, peeled and diced
3½ cups cut fresh corn kernels (7 ears) or frozen corn kernels
2 green bell peppers, diced
1 red bell pepper, diced
1 small red onion, diced
1 tablespoon olive oil
½ cup cider vinegar
½ teaspoon salt

Bring one cup of water to boil in a 2 quart saucepan; **add** diced sweet potatoes. **Cook** sweet potatoes 10 minutes or until slightly tender. **Drain** and set aside. **Remove** shuck and silk from fresh corn ears; **cut** kernels from cob. **Dice** peppers and red onion. **Heat** olive oil in a large skillet on medium setting; **add** sweet potatoes and **cook** until slightly browned. **Add** peppers; **cook** 5 minutes; **add** corn kernels,

cooking until tender. **Combine** red onion and cider vinegar in large bowl; **add** skillet vegetables; **toss** and salt to taste. **Serve** warm or refrigerate for chilled version.

Yield: 16, ½ cup servings

Nutritional Analysis: 70 calories, 1.5 g fat, 0 g saturated fat, 0 mg cholesterol, 95 mg sodium, 13 g carbohydrate, 2 g fiber, 4 g sugars, 2 g protein.



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



Green Bean Bundles

1 pound fresh green beans
¼ teaspoon black pepper
12 slices turkey bacon
2 tablespoons unsalted butter
2 cloves garlic, minced
⅛ teaspoon ground cinnamon
¼ teaspoon allspice

1. Preheat oven to 400° F.
2. Remove ends and strings from beans. Wash and dry beans thoroughly and season with black pepper.
3. Bundle together 5-8 beans and wrap with a strip of turkey bacon to hold them together.
4. Lay each bundle, seam side down in a large

baking dish. In a small saucepan, heat butter, garlic, cinnamon and allspice over low heat, whisking until butter is melted.

5. Brush the mixture over the top of each green bean bundle with a pastry brush.

6. Cover with foil and bake for 35 minutes.

7. Remove foil and bake for 15 additional minutes, until bacon is crisp.

Yield: 12 bundles

Nutritional Analysis: 60 calories, 5 g fat, 2 g saturated fat, 20 mg cholesterol, 170 mg sodium, 3 g carbohydrate, 1 g fiber, 1 g sugar, 3 g protein.



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

Upcoming Events

July 17th: Pennyroyal Master Gardeners Art in the Garden Event, 5:00—8:00 P.M.

July 17th: Farmers Market Customer Appreciation Day at Hopkins County Farmers Market

August 10th: Plant Identification Part 1, 5:30 P.M.-7:30 P.M.

August 25th: Plant Propagation Workshop, 11:00-1:00 P.M.

August 31st: Plant Identification Part 2, 5:30 P.M.-7:30 P.M.

September 22nd: Build Your Own Terrarium Workshop, 11:00-1:00 P.M.



July Classes

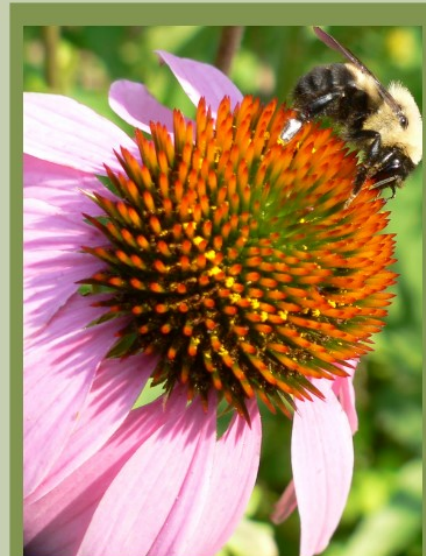
12:30 pm EST/11:30 a.m. CST

July 7
Evergreen Trees for Kentucky

July 14
Organic Gardening Methods and Tips

July 21
Cheap and Easy Worm Bins

July 28
Gardening for Pollinators



Register here:
<https://tinyurl.com/HWWJULY21>

kentuckyhortnews.com

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Hopkins County Farmers Market
Master Gardeners,
Pennyroyal

