

BY THE YARD

HORTICULTURE NEWSLETTER



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Food and Environment
Cooperative Extension Service
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April

2024

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Woodland phlox and many other natives peak in April.



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Hello and Happy Official Spring!

I know we're all busy bees in the garden right now, so I'll try to be relevant but brief. Speaking of bees, we will be sure to talk a bit about some pollinator friendly plants as well as other common questions we've been getting in the office. What should you be doing for your lawn? Your perennials? Your vegetable gardens? We're going to break it all down and hopefully provide useful tips and information along the way.

We are also announcing our annual Growing Community garden event! We are greatly looking forward to sharing information, plants and seeds at the Woodhill Community Center on May 4th. Be sure to look over the flyer at the end of this newsletter for all the details. We have also included a list of other exciting community happenings throughout April as well. Hope to see you around town!

With kindness,

Reena Martin, Fayette County Horticulture Assistant
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Jamie Dockery, Fayette County Extension Agent for Horticulture
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The Kentucky Christmas Tree Association's 18th Annual Plant Auction will be held 10:00 a.m. until 12 noon, Saturday, April 20, 2024, at the Fayette County Extension Office, 1140 Harry Sykes Way, Lexington, Kentucky 40504. Bid and take home some Kentucky grown nursery stock. It is a perfect time to plant. 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.

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University of Kentucky, Kentucky State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Kentucky Counties, Cooperating.
Lexington, KY 40506



Disabilities
accommodated
with prior notification.

Euphorbia Marginata

Snow on the mountain is a flowering annual that is native to the Great Plains area and has been cultivated in gardens and escaped into the wild in many states.

These plants grow on a single stem 1-3 feet tall. They prefer full sun and tolerate poor soil as long as they are well-drained. In hot summer climates some protection from the hot afternoon sun may be needed. Too much shade will cause the plants to be floppy. They are deer and drought resistant. Plants will reseed themselves in the garden.

The attractive gray-green leaves are edged in white near the stem ends and are sometimes all white. The flowers are long-lasting and occur in clusters from summer to fall.

Use this plant in naturalized areas, borders or as an annual ground cover for sunny dry areas. Stems and leaves contain a milky latex sap that can cause contact dermatitis for some. If you have sensitive skin, gloves are recommended.

Source: North Carolina Extension Gardener Plant Toolbox, NC State Extension Service



Euphorbia marginata,
Manu CC-BY-SA 2.0



Joey Williamson, ©2019 HGIC,
Clemson Extension

The Elusive Slug

UGH! My true garden nemesis. If you mulch your vegetable garden, I am sure you have also battled these slimy devils. They can cause serious damage and often remain unseen since they feed at night or on rainy days. Parts of plants that can be affected include leaves, stems, and below-ground parts. They produce large, ragged holes and can completely consume young seedlings. They are especially troublesome on hostas, strawberries, lettuce, basil, and cabbage. These pests are particularly found in wet, damp areas since moisture is required for their survival. During drought conditions, their activity decreases.

You can trap snails and slugs in shallow pans of stale beer sunken so that the lip of the container is even with the soil surface. Replace beer as necessary when it dries up or becomes diluted by rainfall. Snails and slugs can also be attracted with pieces of potato or cabbage placed underneath a board and then collected and destroyed during the day.

Protect young seedlings by sprinkling diatomaceous earth around the plants. Diatomaceous earth is very sharp and scratches the skin of these soft-bodied critters, resulting in dehydration and death. It must be reapplied after rain or watering.

Source: Nancy Doubrava & Dr. Randall P. Griffin, Clemson University Cooperative Extension



Beer Trap for Slugs, Utah State University Extension



Slugs found under a board left overnight.

Time to Mow?

The question that daunts us every spring! When should we start mowing the lawn? Since our cool-season Kentucky lawns (fescue, bluegrass, etc.) love the cool weather of late winter and early spring, you probably have already made the first cut of the season.

More specifically though, you should mow once your lawn type is 1/3 of its height taller than the ideal height for the species. For fescue, which grows best at a height of 3-4 inches, you can mow once the grass is 4-5 inches tall. Bluegrass is a little different. It prefers to remain a little shorter at 2-3 inches tall and can be cut once the grass is 2.5-4 inches tall.



Regardless of species, we recommend a turf height of 3 inches. This height has shown to be an optimal level for reducing weed competition, establishing a deeper root system, increasing drought tolerance and disease resistance and best of all, less mowing and irrigation needs. It's also worth mentioning that it is never in your lawn's best interest to mow when it is excessively hot, in drought, or wet with rain or dew.



What else should you be doing for your yard? We get a lot of questions each spring about fertilizing and weed control for lawns. Although spring is when lawn care reinfests our mind, it's not necessarily the best timing for those cool season grasses. Fertilization and pre-emergent herbicides for broadleaf weeds (i.e. dandelion, chickweed, dead nettle, etc.) are best applied in the fall. Pre-emergent products for grassy weeds (talking about crabgrass here!) are best applied in late winter. A great indicator for using these products is when the forsythia blooms yellow. Usually once actual spring arrives, it is too late.

During spring and summer, you really only need to worry about mowing, irrigating (only 1 inch per week), and optional spot treatments of post-emergent herbicides for any pesky weeds that you can't stand looking at any longer. Lastly, consider leaving those grass clippings on the lawn! They can replace some of the nitrogen lost during the season. If mowing more than an inch though, it's probably best to remove the clippings.

Continued Reading: AGR-209 Mowing Your Kentucky Lawn, ID-154 Low-Maintenance Lawn Care, AGR-55 Turf Care Calendar for Cool-Season Lawns in Kentucky

What to Plant Now?

Earliest Safe Planting Date*	Planting Method	Vegetables
APRIL 8	Transplant into garden	Broccoli, cauliflower, collards, lettuce, Swiss chard, onions from seed
APRIL 8	Start seeds outdoors	Mustard greens, spinach, radishes, lettuce, Swiss chard
APRIL 12	Start seeds indoors	Muskmelons, watermelons, squash
APRIL 12	Start seeds outdoors	Sweet corn, beets, carrots, mustard, spinach, radishes, lettuce

*Dates are approximate for the Central Kentucky region

Busy Bees!

While you might be familiar with European honeybees, fewer people are aware of the vast variety of native bees found in North America. These include bumble bees, sweat bees, and others. Populations of both honeybees and native bees are declining.

Reasons for bee decline include disease and parasite infection, habitat loss, and stress caused by pesticide exposure and malnutrition. As gardeners, we have a critical role to play in reversing this alarming trend. One of the most important things we can do support pollinators is to plant flowers. To stay strong and maintain healthy colonies, bees need a season-long supply of flowers.



Coreopsis tripteris, Rutgers Extension

Including native plants in your landscape will support the widest range of pollinators. When planting to support pollinators, aim to have at least three different types of flowers in bloom during each season.

Here is a brief list of some early blooming spring perennials that might make a great addition to your garden:

- Spiderwort, Tradescantia ohiensis
- Tickseed, Coreopsis species
- Wild Indigo, Baptisia species
- Wild geranium, Geranium maculatum
- Beardtongue, Penstemon species
- Bluestar, Amsonia species



Penstemon digitalis,
Penn State Extension

Source: Faye Tewksbury, Agent for Horticulture, Woodford Co. Cooperative Extension Service

Dividing Perennials

As you consider new native plants for pollinators, it might be a good year to divide existing perennials to spread across your garden. Signs you might want to divide perennials would be when the plant produces fewer, smaller flowers or the center of the plant starts to die out. Divide perennials before or after flowering. The plant should focus its energy on establishing new roots instead of more flowers. Now is a good time to divide fall flowering perennials.

Be sure the plant receives water a day or two before you plan to divide. On a cloudy day, begin to prepare the planting area for the divisions. Be sure any new holes are more than wide and deep enough to accommodate the roots. If you plan to give your divisions to friends and family, a bucket with a few inches of water will work fine.

Now you can follow these steps for the actual division of your perennial:

1. Dig up the parent plant using a spade or fork.
2. Gently lift the plant out of the ground and remove any loose dirt around the roots.
3. Separate the plant into smaller divisions by any of these methods:
 - a. Gently pull or tease the roots apart with your hands,
 - b. Cut them with a sharp knife or spade,
 - c. Or put two forks in the center of the clump, back-to-back, and pull the forks apart.
4. Each division should have three to five vigorous shoots and a healthy supply of roots.
5. Keep these divisions shaded and moist until they are replanted. You do not want them to dry out.



Dividing lungwort, Garden Gate Magazine

After replanting the divisions, be sure to water them well. Also, don't worry about fertilizing them. They need time for the roots to re-establish. Provide temporary shade if there is unexpected hot sun within the first week or two.

Source: Pamela T Hubbard, Master Gardener, Penn State Extension Service

Upcoming Events

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

- April 2 & 3 – Lexington Farmer’s Market Summer Hours & Locations Open
- April 3 – The Arboretum Children’s Garden Opens
- April 4 – Gardener’s Toolbox at Extension: Native Trees to Consider*
- April 10 – Bluegrass Greensource Sustainability Summit
- April 13 – Reforest the Bluegrass
- April 20 – Kentucky Christmas Tree Association Plant Auction
- April 16 – Gardener’s Toolbox at Extension: Vines to Consider*
- April 16 – The Arboretum’s Perennial Garden Series: Intro to Perennial Gardening
- April 20 – Living Arts & Science Center Earth Day Art Fair: Plants & Prints
- April 22 – Earth Day!

* Registration required at fayette.ca.uky.edu/classregistration

Wild Ones Native Plant Exchange

May 2nd from 5:45 pm to 8:30 pm at St. Michael’s Church, 2025 Bellefonte Drive. Everything from seeds, perennials, grasses and sedges, shrubs, trees and vines can be exchanged at this event to benefit the local chapter of Wild Ones. The only stipulation is that the plants must be native to the eastern United States (cultivars of a native plant are acceptable). A raffle of garden-related items will also take place. Participants are encouraged to bring finger food, sodas, beer or wine if they don’t have any plants to offer. The event features a modest entry fee of \$8 for non-members and \$5 for members. Cash or checks only please. More information can be found at Lexington.wildones.org/events.

4-H Camp Scholarship



**SPONSOR A
CAMPER FOR 4-H
CAMP!**



Please consider sponsoring a Fayette County camper for 4-H camp this year! Full camp cost is \$300 and with an Extension District Board contribution the cost will be \$250. Fayette County is looking to take 318 campers this summer.

If you would like to sponsor the Fayette County 4-H camping program by providing a donation you can do so by check (to Fayette County 4-H council) or through online payment: bit.ly/Fayettecountypayment (put scholarship on 4-H program/club line).

Thank you in advance for generosity!

Reach out to Manda at Amanda.clark@uky.edu with any questions.



Horticulture Webinar Wednesdays

2024-2025 Horticulture Webinar Wednesdays
12:30pm ET / 11:30 am CT

APRIL CLASSES
Wednesdays
12:30 p.m. ET / 11:30 a.m. CT

You must register before the class.
<http://tinyurl.com/24APRHHW>

Click on the classes you want to attend.
You will get an email with the class link.

Register at:
<http://tinyurl.com/24APRHHW>

April 3 - Chaos Gardening
April 10 - Hostas: Not What You Think
April 17 - Cicadas
April 24 - Beyond Begonias - New Plants for 2024

Join Kentucky’s horticulture agents for weekly discussions of all things horticulture! Although these informational webinars are free, registration is required.



GROW YOUR OWN FOOD

WOODHILL COMMUNITY CENTER



422 Codell Drive
Lexington, KY 40509
Saturday, May 4th
10:00 am – 1:00 pm



Stop by these info booths & collect FREE plants & seeds along the way!



- Container Gardening
- Soil Prep & Planting
- Watering
- Feeding Plants
- Straw Bale Gardening



FREE SNACKS!
Kid's activities provided by Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Beta Gamma Omega Chapter. All materials while supplies last. First come first served.



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 Disabilities accommodated with prior notification.

April Quick Tips

- If you haven't trimmed back ornamental grasses and perennials, do so now or leave until May for insects.
- Remove flower stalks from bulbs. Apply fertilizer and make sure to leave the foliage to die back naturally. The leaves provide food for next year's flowers.
- Continue planting trees and shrubs.
- You can begin trimming evergreens now through late summer. Pruning after the spring flush of growth will result in less re-growth.
- Add organic matter to flower beds and garden plots. Incorporate into the soil where possible.
- Edge beds for a crisp, clean look. This will also keep creeping weeds from encroaching rapidly.
- Apply new mulch to beds as needed. Total mulch depth should not exceed 2-3" and a 2" layer is usually sufficient. Keep mulch away from tree trunks and bases of shrubs.
- If you have a spray program for fruit trees, begin spraying after flower petals drop. As always, follow label directions very carefully. Better yet, plant fruit trees with natural disease resistance.
- Sharpen mower blades. Clean cuts make for a healthier, more attractive lawn.
- If you start seedlings indoors, gradually toughen them up with brief trips outdoors on nice days. Start with short times in a shady spot at first. They sunburn easily.
- In the vegetable garden you can plant potatoes now. You still have time for peas, lettuce, and onions if you didn't plant in March. In late April you can begin planting beans
- Register for Gardener's Toolbox Classes: <https://fayette.ca.uky.edu/classregistration>

Recipe of the Month



Dijon Chicken Asparagus Roll Ups

3 tablespoons Dijon mustard	2 teaspoons black pepper	4 skinless, boneless chicken breast halves (about 5 ounces each)
½ cup low fat mayonnaise	½ teaspoon salt	4 slices skimmed mozzarella cheese
1 lemon, juiced (approximately 3 tablespoons)	16 spears fresh asparagus, trimmed	1 cup panko bread crumbs

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. **Grease** an 11-by-7-inch baking dish. In a bowl, **mix** together the mustard, mayonnaise, lemon juice, thyme, salt and pepper; set aside. **Place** asparagus in a microwave safe dish and **microwave** on high 1-1½ minutes. **Place** chicken breasts between two sheets of heavy plastic (a re-sealable freezer bag works well) on a firm surface. **Pound** the chicken breasts with the smooth side of a meat mallet to thickness of ¼ inch. **Place** one slice of cheese and four asparagus spears on each breast. Tightly **roll** the chicken breasts around the asparagus

and cheese. **Place** each, seam side down, in the prepared baking dish. **Apply** a coating of the mustard mixture to each chicken breast and **sprinkle** each with the panko crumbs, **pressing** the crumbs into the chicken to secure. **Bake** 35 minutes or until the chicken temperature is 165 degrees F. For crisper chicken, **place** roll-ups under the broiler for 1-2 minutes on high.
Yield: 4 servings
Nutritional Analysis:
370 calories, 10 g fat, 3.5 g saturated fat, 115 mg cholesterol, 1060 mg sodium, 2 g fiber, 2 g sugars, 41 g protein.

