

# BY THE YARD

## HORTICULTURE NEWSLETTER

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## Gardener's Toolbox Classes

**How to Plant Woody Plants ~ Thursday, October 12th at 6:00pm:** Planting a new tree or shrub sounds easy enough. All you need to do is dig a hole and toss the plant in...right? While digging a proper hole is important, it is not the only thing you should consider when planting a new plant. We will teach you how to properly plant a woody plant and give tips on how to ensure it establishes into the landscape. We will also have a handful of Kentucky Native trees as door prizes. Cost: Free, but must register in advance to reserve a seat.

**Diagnosing Problems in Landscape Trees ~ Tuesday, October 17th at 6:00pm:** Trees are a foundational part of the landscape. They are long-lived and provide many benefits in addition to their aesthetic appeal. However, sometimes things can go wrong, and the health of our beloved trees can start to decline. Learn how to diagnose some common problems our landscape trees face, how to address those problems, and ways to prevent them from occurring in the first place. Cost: Free, but must register in advance to reserve a seat.

**Spring Bulbs: Lesser-known Treasures ~ Thursday, October 26th at 6:00pm:** An introduction to wonderful bulbs far less common than the typical tulips, crocus and daffodils. Many of the smaller varieties are ideal for planting in natural areas or mixing into perennial borders. Participants will take home a sampler of several unique bulb varieties to plant at home. Cost: \$20.00

**Stump the Hort Agent: Ask Anything Q&A Session ~ Tuesday, November 7th at 6:00pm:** Question and answer session: an opportunity for the audience to steer the conversation to whatever topics you desire. Put the experts in the hot seat and hopefully we will know the answers. Vegetables to perennials. Cost: Free, but must register in advance to reserve a seat.

**Easy Houseplants ~ Thursday, November 16th at 6:00pm:** We all yearn for lush indoor plants yet often fail to keep them healthy. We will discuss which plants are easier to grow and maintain indoors, and provide basic information about indoor plant care. At the very least, I will try to convince you it is ok to occasionally kill your houseplants. They last for months and are often cheaper than cut flowers. Participants will receive a plant to take home. Cost: \$20.00

Register on-line: <https://fayette.ca.uky.edu/classregistration>



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## Houseplants Insect and Mite Control

Many houseplants enjoy time outdoors during the summer. However, it's a tough world out there and more than a few plants develop insect or mite infestations while they are basking in the summer sun. A few weeks indoors can allow pests to increase while the plants adjust to indoor conditions and symptoms become more apparent.

Common culprits include aphids, mealybugs, scales, spider mites, thrips, and soil-dwelling fungus gnats. Pressure washing, hand picking, and pruning are among the quickest and easiest ways to deal with some problems, others require a long-term approach.

Your options and the likelihood of a happy outcome depend in great part upon the resilience of the plant and the type of pest that is involved. Plants suspected of being infested should be isolated from other plants to reduce the chances of an expanded infestation. Inspect them carefully to determine if an insect or mite is causing the problem and identify it or get help from your county extension office.

In some cases, and insecticide may be the best way to bring an infestation under control. Products with the following active ingredients (and example brand names) are labeled for a variety of houseplant pests: bifenthrin, cyfluthrin (Bayer Rose & Flower Insect Killer Ready-touse, permethrin (Eight , pyrethrins (Spectracide Bug Stop for gardens), Insecticidal soap (Garden Safe Brand Insecticidal Soap), and neem (Bon-Neem).

More information on houseplant insect control can be found in Entfact 406, Houseplant Insect Control. <https://entomology.ca.uky.edu/ef406>.

Submitted by Lee Townsend and Mike Potter, Extension Entomology Specialist's, University of Kentucky, Department of Entomology



## Landscape Sanitation: Clean Up for Clean Plants

Autumn has arrived in Kentucky and, as leaves change color and fall from trees, it is time to focus on landscape sanitation. Good sanitation practices can help reduce disease-causing pathogens. These organisms can survive for months or years on dead plant material or in soil, causing infections in subsequent years. Elimination of disease-causing organisms reduces the need for chemical controls and can improve the effectiveness of disease management practices. Following these sanitation practices both in autumn and throughout the growing season can reduce disease pressure in home and commercial landscapes.

### Sanitation Practices

- Remove diseased plant tissues from infected plants
- Prune cankers (Figure 1) and galls from branches by making cuts well below visible symptoms (Figure 2). Clean tools between each cut with a sanitizer, such as rubbing alcohol or household bleach.
- Rake and remove fallen buds, flowers, twigs, leaves, and needles (Figure 3)
- Discard all above- and below-ground portions of heavily infected perennial and annual plants. Severely infected trees and shrubs should be cut down and stumps removed/destroyed.
- All discarded plant material should be burned, buried, or removed with yard waste. Do not compost diseased plant material. Exercise caution when storing limbs and trunks as fire wood or using for mulch.
- Soil from containers should be discarded and not reused.
- Remove weeds (including roots), which may serve as alternate hosts for pathogens.

When treating infected plants with fungicides, remove infected tissues prior to application.

By Kimberly Leonberger, Extension Associate, and Nicole Ward Gauthier, Extension Plant Pathologist



Figure 1: Cankers can provide an overwintering site for plant pathogens. (Photo: Nicole Ward Gauthier, University of Kentucky)



Figure 2: When removing cankers, make cuts well below visible symptoms or at the base of branches. (Photo: Joseph O'Brien, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org)



Figure 3: Fallen leaves, and other plant parts should be gathered and discarded. (Photo: Nicole Ward Gauthier, University of Kentucky)



## Bulb Planting Time!

October 15 to the end of November (Thanksgiving) is a good time to plant spring flowering bulbs. There are a lot of different spring flowers to choose from including dwarf iris, crocus, daffodil (I call them jonquil), hyacinth, and tulips. Select quality bulbs. Keep them in a cool, dry, dark place until you are able to plant them. Choose an area to plant your bulbs that is sunny and well drained. If your soil is a heavy clay, you may need to amend the area with compost, peat moss or other organic matter.

Another option would be to make a raised bed in the area. When planting, dig a hole four times the height of the bulb. Place the bulb in the hole, pointed end up. Then fill in the hole. After planting, water the area with a gentle stream of water.

Source: Amanda Sears, Madison County Extension Agent for Horticulture



## Disrupt Vegetable Pests with Prompt Fall Sanitation

Although the weather this summer feels like we are moving from summer back into summer, the first frosts of fall are approaching, and production for many vegetable fields has run its course. Producers are wrapping up their field season, and that needs to begin with destruction of any crop residues left in fields. Crop residue that remains in the field after harvest provides food for many of the insect pests we have been combating during the summer months. This provides them with needed nutrition and helps them reach critical stages needed to survive winter.

Prompt sanitation of crop residue is a helpful tactic to interrupt the lifecycle of pests. Most insect pests need to reach a specific stage and build energy reserves in preparation for winter; sanitation reduces or eliminates their food, which interferes with their process of getting to these stages. Methods to eliminate crop residue include shredding, disking, and tilling. Examples of insect pests that can be reduced through sanitation include some of our more difficult to manage vegetable pests, such as cabbageworms, squash vine borer, squash bug, stink bugs, Colorado potato beetle, corn earworm, and squash beetle. Timely sanitation can be a very effective pest management tool and can work well with cover cropping in the off-season.

Producers that have planted Bt sweet corn are required to destroy crop residues within 30 days of the end of harvest. This is done to manage corn earworm resistance to the Bt traits in the corn. But this same tactic used to disrupt corn earworm can be used with many other crops to disrupt other pest lifecycles.

Source: Ric Bessin, University of Kentucky Extension Entomologist



Figure 1. Squash vine borer needs to feed until it reaches the 5th instar stage, then it leaves the stem to pupate and pass the winter in the soil. (Photo: Ric Bessin, UK)

## Pest Proofing Your Home



Many pests seek refuge in homes and buildings in response to changes in weather, such as extended periods of rain or drought, or the onset of cool autumn temperatures. In response to these pest invasions, homeowners often apply liberal amounts of insecticides indoors. Although indoor insecticide application often provides quick results for the pests you see, this strategy is generally ineffective at providing a long-term solution because most of the pests being treated are coming in from outside the home. Therefore, to ensure a pest-free home, it is important that residents focus their attention towards denying pest entry before they make their way indoors, a process better known as “pest-proofing”.

Outlined below are six tips for pest-proofing one’s home or business. Steps 1 to 3 will also conserve energy and increase the comfort level during winter and summer. Equipment and materials can be purchased at most hardware or home improvement stores.

- 1. Install door sweeps or thresholds at the base of all exterior entry doors.** Lie on the floor and check for light visible under doors. Gaps of 1/16 inch or less will permit entry of insects and spiders; 1/4-inch-wide gaps (about the diameter of a pencil) are large enough for entry of mice; 1/2-inch gaps are adequate for rats. Pay particular attention to the bottom corners as this is often where rodents and insects enter. Garage doors should be fitted with a bottom seal constructed of rubber (vinyl seals poorly in cold weather). Gaps under sliding glass doors can be sealed by lining the bottom track with 1/2- to 3/4-inch-wide foam weather stripping. Apply sealant (see #3 below) along bottom outside edge and sides of door thresholds to exclude ants and other small insects.
- 2. Seal utility openings** where pipes and wires enter the foundation and siding, such as around outdoor faucets, receptacles, gas meters, clothes dryer vents, and telephone/cable TV wires. These are common entry points for ants, spiders, wasps, rodents, and other pests. Holes can be plugged with mortar, caulk, urethane expandable foam, copper mesh (like the material in pot scrubbers), or other suitable sealant.
- 3. Seal cracks around windows, doors, fascia boards, etc.** Use a good quality silicone or acrylic latex caulk/sealant. Although somewhat less flexible than pure silicone, latex-type caulks clean up easily with water and can be painted. Caulks that dry clear are often easier to use than pigmented caulks since they don’t show mistakes. Buy a good caulking gun; features to look for include a back-off trigger to halt the flow of caulk when desired, a built-in ‘slicer’ for cutting the tip off of new caulking tubes, and a nail for puncturing the seal within. Prior to sealing, cracks should be cleaned and any peeling caulk removed to aid adhesion. For a professional look, smooth the bead of caulk with a damp rag or a moistened finger after application. A key area to caulk on the inside of basements is along the top of the foundation wall where the wooden sill plate is attached to the concrete foundation. Ants, spiders, and other pests often enter through the resulting crack.

## Pest Proofing Your Home, continued

**4. Repair gaps and tears in window and door screens.** Doing so will help reduce entry of flies, gnats, mosquitoes, and midges during summer, and cluster flies, lady beetles, and other overwintering pests in autumn. Certain insects are small enough to fit through standard mesh window screen. The only way to deny entry of these tiny insects is to keep windows closed during periods of adult fall emergence.

**5. Install 1/4-inch wire mesh (hardware cloth) over attic, roof, and crawl space vents** in order to prevent entry of birds, bats, squirrels, rodents, and other wildlife. Be sure to wear gloves when cutting and installing hardware cloth as the wire edges are razor-sharp. Backing the wire mesh from the inside with screening will further help to prevent insects such as ladybugs, paper wasps and yellow jackets. If not already present, invest in a chimney cap to exclude birds, squirrels, raccoons, and other nuisance wildlife. Raccoons, in particular, are a serious problem throughout Kentucky. Many chimneys become home to a family of raccoons which, in turn, are often infested with fleas.

**6. Consider applying an exterior (barrier) insecticide treatment.** While sealing is the more permanent way to exclude pests originating from outdoors, comprehensive pest-proofing is laborious and sometimes impractical. For clients needing an alternative, pest-proofing can be supplemented by an exterior treatment with an insecticide. Homeowners will get the most for their efforts by applying longer-lasting liquid formulations containing pyrethroids (e.g., cypermethrin, bifenthrin, cyfluthrin, Gamma-Cyhalothrin, etc.). Such products are sold at hardware and lawn and garden shops. For better coverage, it's often best to purchase these products as concentrates so that they can be diluted and applied with a pump up sprayer, hose end sprayer, etc. Treat at the base of all exterior doors, garage and crawl space entrances, around foundation vents and utility openings, and up underneath siding. It also may be useful to treat around the outside perimeter of the foundation. Be sure to follow all label instructions, and use this information only as general guidance. Clients who choose not to tackle these activities may want to hire a professional pest control firm, many of which offering pest-proofing services.

Source: Zachary DeVries, University of Kentucky, Entomology Extension Specialist

## Recipe of the Month



### Baked Apples and Sweet Potatoes

5 medium sweet potatoes  
4 medium apples

½ cup margarine  
½ cup brown sugar  
½ teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon nutmeg  
¼ cup hot water  
2 tablespoons honey

**1. Boil** potatoes in 2 inches of water until almost tender.  
**2. Cool** potatoes, peel and slice. **Peel**, core and slice apples.  
**3. Preheat** the oven to 400°F. **Grease** a casserole dish with a small amount of margarine.  
**4. Layer** potatoes on the bottom of the dish.

**5. Add** a layer of apple slices.  
**6. Sprinkle** some sugar, salt, and tiny pieces of margarine over the apple layer.  
**7. Repeat** layers of potatoes, apples, sugar, salt and margarine.  
**8. Sprinkle** top with nutmeg.  
**9. Mix** the hot water and

honey together.  
**10. Pour** over top of casserole.  
**11. Bake** for 30 minutes.  
**Yield:** 6, 1 cup servings.  
**Nutrition Analysis:** 300 calories, 8 g fat, 59 g carbohydrate, 0 mg cholesterol, 320 mg sodium.  
Source: USDA Food Stamp Nutrition Connection, Recipe finder. June, 2008.

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



## October Quick Tips

- Make it a point to be thorough in cleaning up any diseased plants. Many diseases over-winter in plant debris. Diseased perennials and annuals should be removed from the garden in the fall. Similarly, any trees that have had disease problems should have all the leaves raked and removed from the garden to lessen the chance of infection next year.
- October is prime bulb planting time. Plant tulips, daffodils, crocus and other spring favorites now for a beautiful early display.
- Feeding lawns is best done in the late fall. The end of this month and all of November are great times to fertilize your turf.
- House plants should be treated as necessary for insects before coming indoors for the winter.
- Store any pots or containers that may be damaged by freezing temperatures.
- October is an excellent time to plant most trees and shrubs. Make sure to plant at the proper depth. The root flare of trees (the point where the roots branch off the trunk) should be at soil level.
- Avoid planting broadleaf evergreens in the late fall as winter injury may result. Hollies, Boxwoods, Magnolias and others are best planted in the spring.
- Needled evergreens drop their old needles in the fall. Yellowing, browning, and subsequent needle fall is normal if it is only occurring in the interior of the plant.
- Many insects find their way indoors in the fall. Most are not harmful, just annoying. Your vacuum cleaner is an easy way to get rid of an occasional insect.
- Make notes of your gardening successes and failures for reference next year. It is never too early to start planning next year's garden.
- Clean up around fruit trees by raking leaves and removing dried fruit. This will help control several diseases and insects.
- Remove and burn bagworm cases from evergreens. The cases contain eggs which will hatch in spring to produce next year's population.
- Check tree twigs for egg cases of eastern tent caterpillar. The egg cases are dark and shiny, they look like someone has dabbed lacquer around the stem. They usually occur on branches that are about pencil size in diameter. They will break off the branch easily if rubbed with the hand or fingers.
- Fall is the best time to apply fertilizer to woody plants. It is best to wait until the plants are dormant so don't apply fertilizer before late October. Dividing the fertilizer application into two or three parts is a good idea. Apply 1/3 in late October, 1/3 in November, and the final 1/3 in December. Altogether you should apply 2-3 pound of Nitrogen per 1000 square feet.
- Don't forget to water trees and shrubs during fall and winter. Continue watering (in the absence of adequate rainfall) until the soil freezes. This is particularly true for evergreens since they continue to lose water through their leaves in winter. Keep the soil under your woody plants moist, not wet.
- A layer of mulch applied at this time of year can have many beneficial effects in the home landscape. Mulch moderates the normal freeze/thaw cycle than can force many herbaceous perennial plants out of the ground. Mulch will also help conserve soil moisture and will serve as an insulating agent during severely cold temperatures.