

TAYLOR COUNTY HORTICULTURE NEWSLETTER

January 2023

Cooperative Extension Service
Taylor County
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University of Kentucky
College of Agriculture,
Food and Environment
Cooperative Extension Service



UPCOMING EVENTS

Eastern Standard Time



Tuesday, January 3— Wednesday, January 4	2023 Fruit and Vegetable Conference in Bowling Green, KY	
Monday, January 9	Busy Bloomer Garden Club—Christmas Cactus & Aloe Vera Plants	1:00 PM Every 2nd Monday
Monday, January 9	Monthly HORT Monday—Wine Bottle Feeder Workshop	5:30 PM Every 2nd Monday
Friday, January 13	TCPL Wine Bottle Bird Feeder Workshop—Please contact the TC Public Library to RSVP (270) 465-2562	10:30 AM Every 2nd Friday
Tuesday, January 17	Monthly 4-H HORT Day—Feathered Friends Bird Feeders & Nest Wreaths	3:30 PM Every 3rd Tuesday
Thursday, January 19	Green River Beekeepers—Taylor County Extension Office	7:00 PM Every 3rd Thursday

Please call the Taylor County Extension Office at (270) 465-4511 to RSVP or if you have any questions!

Kara Bask

County Extension Agent
For Horticulture Education

Cooperative Extension Service
Agriculture and Natural Resources
Family and Consumer Sciences
4-H Youth Development
Community and Economic Development

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Tomatoes

January is the perfect month to begin planning your garden. Of all the produce questions I am asked, tomatoes are by far the winner of the most questions.

Plant in The Right Place. Tomatoes grow best with eight hours or more of direct sunlight each day and when they are planted in soils with good drainage or in raised beds. Prepare your soil before planting by spreading two to four inches of compost, aged manure, ground pine bark, or leaf mold over the surface and tilling it into the top six to eight inches. Remember, organic matter is eaten by the microbes in our soil very quickly – plan on adding organic matter every year for your soil’s health. For our mostly acidic soils, mixing lime in when you till will improve tomato growth and help prevent blossom end rot. Blossom end rot is the black rotting spot found at the bottom of the tomato. The best way to find out if your soil needs lime and other nutrients is to submit a sample for testing to the Taylor County Extension Office. Even in the absence of lime, adding organic matter will help improve soil structure and create a better growing environment for your tomatoes.

Plant Early. Tomatoes grow and produce best when daytime temperatures range from 70 to 80 degrees F, and night temperatures fall between 60 and 70 degrees F. Most of our summer days exceed these spring like temperatures, which causes tomato plants to shed their blossoms without setting fruit. Fruits that do ripen when daytime temperatures reach into the mid-90s have less flavor, ripen unevenly, and may develop hard white areas inside the flesh. Planting tomatoes as early as possible will give plants more time to grow and produce under ideal temperatures before the hottest part of summer. In addition, tomato plants struggle even more with diseases during our hot, humid summer. Early planting allows you to ensure some fruit set before high temperatures or disease get the best of your plants. I usually plant my tomatoes after Derby Day in May, unless we have a warmer spring. If you do plant your tomatoes and they are forecasting a cold snap cover them with a white sheet or row cover to protect them from frost.

Plant Deep. Tomatoes are one of the few vegetables that have the ability to produce roots along their stem. Setting the root ball two or three inches deeper than

soil level at planting time will result in plants with larger, more extensive root systems. Be sure to remove any leaves that would fall below the soil line, and even ones that easily touch the soil. If you have plants with long leggy stems do not bury the root ball several inches deep. Instead, dig a shallow trench and plant them lying sideways, so the leggy part of the stem is planted horizontally two to three inches below soil level. Space tomato plants at least three feet apart and plan for a way to physically support plants as they grow (e.g. cages, trellising, etc.). Mulching the soil underneath and around tomatoes will help keep soil moisture even, soil temperatures cool, and prevent soil (and soil-borne diseases!) from splashing onto lower leaves.

Help Prevent Soil-Borne Diseases. Many of the fungal and bacterial diseases that plague tomatoes start in the soil and are splashed onto leaves by water droplets, either from rain or watering. When planting tomatoes, be sure to remove all lower leaves that easily touch or even rest on the soil. As the plants grow up, continue to remove lower leaves, keeping a healthy buffer between the top of the soil and the lowest leaves. Plants can also be mulched with untreated grass clippings or other organic matter to help prevent soil from splashing onto lower leaves. When watering, water near the soil level to prevent getting leaves wet (creating a perfect environment for diseases) and splashing soil onto lower leaves. At the time of planting and until plants are well-established with a good buffer between the lower leaves and soil level, consider regularly applying a copper fungicide. Copper is an organic option for control of many fungal and bacterial diseases, and is readily available online, at garden centers, and at big box stores. Be sure to always read and follow the label, and to reapply following rain. Properly applied, copper can be one of the single best ways to prevent early leaf-based





Plant Several Varieties. There are hundreds of tomato varieties available, with dozens of new varieties introduced each year. Give yourself the best chances of success by planting several different tomato varieties. Also bear in mind that for many tomato varieties, the larger the fruit the more finicky they are to produce. Heirloom varieties have been in cultivation for generations, with seeds saved and passed on from one year to the next. Many heirlooms are regionally adapted and not all produce well in the south. Some heirlooms adapted to southern heat and humidity include 'German Johnson', 'Marglobe', 'Cherokee Purple' and 'Homestead.' Hybrid varieties offer the benefit of increased disease resistance. 'Celebrity', 'Early Girl' and 'Better Boy' are reliable hybrid tomatoes for the south. All three produce medium to large size fruits and are resistant to fusarium, one of the common soil-dwelling diseases that causes tomato plants to wilt. 'Celebrity' and 'Better Boy' are also resistant to root knot nematodes. Planting disease-resistant hybrid varieties will increase your chance of success, but keep in mind no one tomato variety is resistant to all, or even most, of the diseases that commonly plague this popular crop. Newer disease-resistant hybrids developed by NC State include 'Mountain Pride', 'Mountain Fresh', 'Fletcher' and 'Mountain Magic'. Two other major things to consider are whether to choose heirloom or hybrid varieties, and whether you prefer determinate or indeterminate plants. Determinate varieties stop growing once they reach full size, which is usually three to four feet tall. These plants set all their fruit at once and typically bear tomatoes over a four to five-week period and then are done. Due to their smaller size, determinate varieties work well in containers and are also favored for canning since they bear a heavy crop that ripens in a short period. Many modern hybrids and bush varieties are determinate. For especially small

spaces like patio containers, consider dwarf varieties. Indeterminate varieties continue to grow all season, setting successive crops of fruit all summer and into the fall, if you can keep pests away. Because they keep growing, indeterminate varieties get large, often six feet or more, and need sturdy support systems. They often easily outgrow many commercially-available tomato cages. Indeterminate varieties are popular among home gardeners because they bear over a long season. Many heirloom tomatoes are indeterminate, as are most cherry tomatoes. Cherry tomatoes are some of the easiest to grow and every garden should include at least a few of these highly productive plants that yield dozens of small fruits on long trusses. Gardener's favorites include 'Sungold,' 'Super Sweet 100, and 'Juliet', though to be honest I have never seen a cherry tomato that did not thrive. Practice Crop Rotation If you have room, plant tomatoes in several different spots around your yard, rather than all together in one bed. This will lessen the chance a pest or disease will attack your entire crop. Another practice that helps minimize pest pressure is crop rotation. To practice crop rotation, avoid planting tomatoes in the same location year after year. In addition, do not plant tomatoes in the same location where potatoes, peppers, or eggplant grew the previous year. These crops are in the same family as tomatoes and host the same pests and diseases. If you have had problems with tomato wilt diseases in the past, consider planting in large containers filled with potting soil. Whether you plant in containers or garden beds, apply a slow-release fertilizer according to the label when you plant. Slow-release fertilizers include organic fertilizers such as Plant-tone as well as time-release products such as Osmocote. Supplementing plants with liquid fertilizers such as compost tea for the first few weeks after planting will help them establish quickly, but there is no need to liquid feed plants all season. In fact, over fertilizing with nitrogen reduces fruit set and encourages blossom end rot.

For large planting of tomatoes on bare ground, apply an additional 30 lb. N/A as a sidedress when the first fruits are golf-ball size. A second sidedress application of 30 lb. N/A may also be desirable 2 or 3 weeks later depending on the crop's growing condition.

Source: Ashley Troth <https://durham.ces.ncsu.edu/2020/04/setting-your-tomatoes-up-for-success/>

Gardening In January

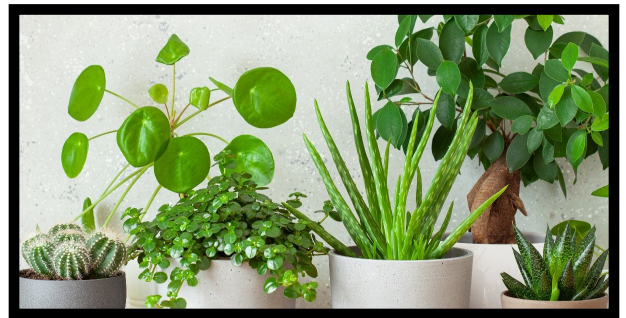
Houseplants

To clean heavily encrusted clay pots, scrub them with a steel wool pad after they have soaked overnight in a solution consisting of one gallon water to which one cup of white vinegar has been added. After the deposits are removed rinse the pots in clear water. A brief soak in a solution of one gallon of water to which one cup household bleach has been added will help sanitize the pots.

- Some plants are sensitive to the fluorine and chlorine in tap water. Water containers should stand overnight to allow these gases to dissipate before using on plants.
- Wash the dust off of houseplant leaves on a regular basis. This allows the leaves to gather light more efficiently and will result in better growth.
- Set the pots of humidity-loving houseplants on trays filled with pebbles and water. Pots should sit on the pebbles, not in the water.
- Allow tap water to warm to room temperature before using on houseplants.
- Fluffy, white mealy bugs on houseplants are easily killed by touching them with a cotton swab soaked in rubbing alcohol.
- Insecticidal soap sprays can be safely applied to most houseplants for the control of many insect pests.
- Quarantine new gift plants to be sure they do not harbor any insect pests.
- Amaryllis aftercare: Remove spent flower after blooming. Set the plant in a bright sunny window to allow the leaves to fully develop. Keep the soil evenly moist, not soggy. Fertilize occasionally with a general purpose houseplant formulation.

Ornamentals

- Gently brush off heavy snows from tree and shrub branches.
- Limbs damaged by ice or snow should be pruned off promptly to prevent bark from tearing.
- Check stored summer bulbs such as dahlias, cannas and gladioli to be sure they are not rotting or drying out.
- To reduce injury, allow ice to melt naturally from plants. Attempting to remove ice may damage plants further.
- Use sand, bird seed, sawdust or vermiculite to gain traction on icy paths. Avoid salt or ice melters as these may injure plants.
- Make an inventory of the plants in your home landscape. Note their location and past performance. Plan changes on paper now.
- Sow pansy seeds indoors now.



Miscellaneous

- Avoid foot traffic on frozen lawns as this may injure turf grasses.
- Make a resolution to keep records of your garden this year.
- Store wood ashes in sealed, fireproof containers. Apply a dusting around lilacs, baby's breath, asters, lilies and roses in spring. Do not apply to acid-loving plants. Excess ashes may be composted.
- Check all fruit trees for evidence of rodent injury to bark. Use baits or traps where necessary.
- Cakes of suet hung in trees will attract insect-hunting woodpeckers to your garden.
- Make tools easier to locate in the garden by applying brightly colored paints to the handles.
- Seed and nursery catalogs arrive. While reviewing garden catalogs, look for plants with improved insect, disease and drought-tolerance.
- Old Christmas trees can be recycled outdoors as a feeding station for birds. String garlands of peanuts, popcorn, cranberries, fruits and suet through their boughs.
- Christmas tree boughs can be used to mulch garden perennials.
- If you didn't get your bulbs planted before the ground froze, plant them immediately in individual peat pots and place the pots in flats. Set them outside where it is cold and bury the bulbs under thick blankets of leaves. Transplant them into the garden any time weather permits.
- Try sprouting a test sample of left over seeds before ordering new seeds for spring. (Roll up 10 seeds in a damp paper towel. Keep moist and warm. Check for germination in a week. If fewer than half sprout, order fresh seed.)
- Swap seeds and plant information with your gardening friends.

Source: Missouri Botanical Gardens

Pruning Neglected Trees

The four primary objectives in pruning neglected trees are:

- Remove no more than one-third of the tree each year; more than that would promote excessive vegetative growth at the expense of fruit production.
- Reduce the tree height.
- Promote air circulation and light penetration by thinning out branches.
- Remove dead, damaged, or diseased branches.

It may take three or more years to bring the tree back into correct condition. It is important to note that no more than one-third of the tree's canopy should be removed in one year. Thin the outer areas of the tree first to improve light penetration of the canopy. Light is needed to develop fruiting wood in any part of the tree.

Step-by-step procedure for pruning a neglected tree:

1. If the tree has become too tall, up to 5 feet of height can be removed each year, as long as no more than one third of the tree height is removed, to achieve the appropriate height.
2. Remove dead, damaged, or diseased branches.
3. Remove vertically growing shoots or broken branches.
4. Remove excessively large branches. This may need to be accomplished over several years. Up to three large branches can be removed in one year as long as no more than one third of the tree's canopy is removed. Remove first the branches with narrow branch angles with the trunk that form weak crotches.
5. Prune upper branches to shorter lengths than those lower on the tree. Cut back lateral branches that are too long to bring the tree back to the desired balance.

While complete renovation of neglected trees can take up to three years of rather severe pruning, peach, plum, and cherry trees can often be pruned back and thinned out in a single year. Follow annual dormant pruning practices once the tree has been renovated.

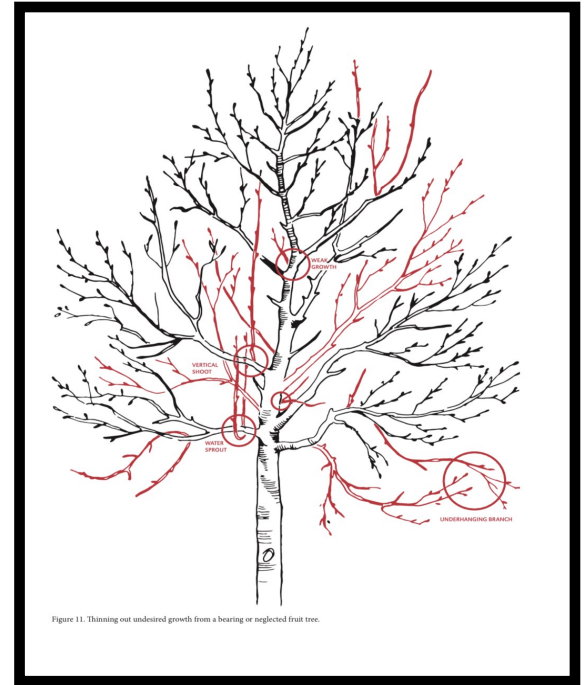


Figure 11. Thinning out undesired growth from a bearing or neglected fruit tree.

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Cheesy Broccoli Potatoes

5 slices turkey bacon
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 clove garlic, minced
2 tablespoons chopped chives
Salt and pepper to taste
4 large potatoes, cubed
2 cups fresh broccoli florets
1 cup fat-free, shredded cheese

Preheat oven to 425° F. **Cook** bacon until crispy, crumble and set aside. **Spray** 9x13-inch baking dish with non-stick cooking spray. In a small bowl, **combine** olive oil, garlic, chives, salt and pepper; **stir** to blend. In a large bowl, **toss** together potatoes and broccoli. **Pour** olive oil blend over potato mixture; **stir** to coat. **Pour** into baking dish and **cover** with foil. **Bake** for 35 minutes or until potatoes are

tender; **remove** from oven. **Sprinkle** cheese and bacon on top and place back in oven until cheese melts.

Yield: 8, ½ cup servings.

Nutritional Analysis: 140 calories, 5 g fat, 1 g saturated fat, 20 mg cholesterol, 470 mg sodium, 15 g carbohydrate, 2 g fiber, 2 g sugar, 10 g protein.



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