

Clark County Horticulture Newsletter

From the Ground Up!

January 2024



Clark County Extension Service • 1400 Fortune Drive • Winchester, KY 40391 • 859-744-4682 • clark.ext@uky.edu • <http://clark.ca.uky.edu/>

A Word from the Agent...



Happy 2024 to all my fellow horticulturally minded friends! I hope the holidays were kind to each of you, and the new year is off to a great start for you. It's about time for the new seed catalogs to start pouring in. Be sure to shop wisely! Make good disease resistance a top requirement when making your selections. Hopefully everyone downloaded and used the SOW gardening app last year to help track all things vegetable gardening in 2023 so that you can reference it while planning your 2024 gardens. The next thing I want to mention is to be sure to check out the flyer for this year's Winter School! While I'm sure all 3 nights will be great, Hort night is looking particularly great in my very biased opinion. I have 2 of my favorite UK Extension specialists coming to speak, and one of them is back by popular demand! Be sure to register and come, as you will not want to miss out on a very informative evening. As always, let me know if I can be of any horticulture assistance!

Carrie Spry

Clark County Extension Agent for Horticulture

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Clark / Powell Beekeepers Association Meeting

Monday, January 8
6:30 pm

Clark County Extension
1400 Fortune Drive
Winchester, Kentucky

~ POT-LUCK MEAL ~



CHECK IT OUT



WINTER SCHOOL

Information

(Inside this newsletter)

Office Closed



Monday, January 15, 2024



Disabilities
accommodated
with prior notification.



10 Nutty Facts to Make You Appreciate Squirrels

Why exactly is **National Squirrel Appreciation Day (January 21)** so popular? Maybe it's because squirrels are adorable, and extremely fun to watch. Maybe it's the many hats they wear (not real hats — please don't put hats on squirrels). What I mean is, they play a variety of roles, like acrobat, bandit, gardener, trickster, and much more. I set out to discover why these creatures are worthy of their own day, and after you read the facts I found, you might just appreciate squirrels a little more.



Squirrels can find food buried beneath a foot of snow.

Food is important during the cold winter months for squirrels. It makes sense, therefore, that some species are able to smell food under a foot of snow. The squirrel will then dig a tunnel under the snow, following the scent to their (or another squirrel's) buried treasure. Photo by *National Wildlife Photo Contest* entrant Christine Haines.



A squirrel's front teeth never stop growing.

This is a common characteristic of other rodents, as well. The word “rodent” actually derives from the Latin “rodere,” which means to gnaw. Squirrels must gnaw to keep their teeth at the right length. Photo by *National Wildlife Photo Contest* entrant Christine Haines.



Squirrels may lose 25 percent of their buried food to thieves.

And that's just from members of their own species! Scatter hoarders (squirrels with multiple caches of food) have a difficult time keeping an eye on all of their hidden food. Fellow squirrels or birds often take advantage of this for a free meal. Squirrels can be rather sneaky, stealing nuts from fellow squirrels. This one spies over a fence in Pennsylvania, taken by Michaela Wolf.



They zigzag to escape predators.

When squirrels feel threatened, they run away in a zigzag pattern. This is an incredibly useful strategy to escape hawks and other predators. Unfortunately, it doesn't work so well on cars. Consider slowing down and giving squirrels a brake! Squirrels may also take cover when threatened. This red-tail hawk tries to get a squirrel out of a knot hole in a log, where it had taken refuge. Photo by *National Wildlife Photo Contest* entrant Cara Litberg.



Squirrels may pretend to bury a nut to throw off potential thieves.

Squirrels have been observed engaging in “deceptive caching.” This is where a squirrel digs a hole and vigorously covers it up again, but without depositing the nut. It seems this is done to throw off potential food thieves. Squirrel digging in the garden by Tom Gill.



Squirrels may pretend to bury a nut to throw off potential thieves.

If you come across one of these itty-bitty baby squirrels, please consult these resources, which will advise you what to do. That will help give the baby squirrel its best chance at survival. Baby gray squirrel at approximately 4 weeks old in the care of wildlife rehabber. Photo by Audrey.



Humans introduced squirrels to most of our major city parks.

The story about why U.S. parks are full of squirrels is truly fascinating and worth a read. Squirrel relaxing in a tree in Michigan. Photo by *National Wildlife Photo Contest* entrant Brian Zingler.



Squirrels are acrobatic, intelligent, and adaptable.

If you're not convinced, try to hang a bird feeder without these bandits giving you a challenge. Acrobatic squirrel by *National Wildlife Photo Contest* entrant William Stayton.



They get bulky to stay warm during the winter.

Putting on some extra weight is one strategy squirrels use to stay warm during the cold winter months. Extra bulk in the cold is one way squirrels stay warm. Photo by *National Wildlife Photo Contest* entrant Kelly Lyon.



Squirrels don't dig up all of their buried nuts, which results in more trees!

They have accidentally contributed countless trees to our nation's forests. If you ask me, that's a pretty great reason to appreciate squirrels. Squirrels play a role in planting many oak trees. This one was photographed in an oak tree in Florida by *National Wildlife Photo Contest* entrant Linda Black.



NO COST!

Meal served each night!

FEBRUARY 6: BEEF NIGHT

- **Reading EPD's and How That Affects Buying Bulls**
Dr. Darrh Bullock, UK Beef Specialist
- **Fertilizer Needs for Pastures and Hay Fields After Drought**
Dr. Ray Smith, UK Forage Specialist
- **Benefits of Storing Hay Inside**
Levi Berg, Clark County Extension Agent for Agriculture and Natural Resources

FEBRUARY 8: FARM NIGHT

- **The In's and Out's of Pond Construction**
Scott Aldridge, NRCS Resource Soil Specialist
- **Farm Planning and Layout for Water and Feed Areas**
Dr. Steve Higgins, UK Biosystems Specialist
- **NRCS Programs for Producers**
Heath Mineer, NRCS-Clark County, NRCS Programs for Producers

FEBRUARY 13: HORT NIGHT

- **Bats in Your Backyard**
Dr. Matt Springer, UK Assistant Extension Professor of Wildlife Management
- **Backyard Bites**
Dr. Jonathan Larson, UK Extension Entomologist

TO REGISTER:



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Disabilities
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Winter is a good time to prepare fruiting crops for the season ahead. Many fruit diseases can be partially controlled by being vigilant with cleanup and fungicidal sprays at proper times. Remember that pruning should take place in late February on fruiting trees. Below is a list of fruit crops along with diseases of concern and some things to do to help you have a successful harvest.

► **Apple diseases of concern: scab, cedar rust, and fire blight.**

- If you are ordering nursery stock, plan on growing disease-resistant apples. Nursery catalogs will indicate varieties that are scab-resistant.
- Prune out old fire blight cankers now, while it is still cold, so new infections won't occur. Prune also to thin the tree canopy to allow good air movement and sunlight penetration.
- Remove and destroy fruit mummies left on the tree from last season. Remove nearby cedar trees, source of rust diseases, if possible.
- Obtain fixed copper or Bordeaux mixture to apply to the apple twigs and branches just as the buds begin to swell next month.
- Obtain a scab fungicide with ingredients such as mancozeb, captan, myclobutanil, or thiophanate-methyl so that sprays can be applied as green foliage (green tips) is just emerging and repeated periodically throughout the spring months. Carefully read fungicide labels before making spray applications.

► **Stone fruit diseases of concern: peach leaf curl, plum black knot, and eventually brown rot and scab.**

- Apply fixed copper or Chlorothalonil sprays now to prevent peach leaf curl. In some parts of the state, it may be already too late because of warm weather, buds may have begun to swell and leaf curl infections may have just begun.
- Prune to thin the tree canopy to allow good air movement and sunlight penetration. Prune out any diseased or cankered twigs and branches from the trees. Prune out black knot disease swellings from plum trees.
- Remove and destroy last year's mummified fruit still hanging in the tree or on the ground.
- Obtain brown rot and scab fungicides with ingredients such as sulfur, captan, or myclobutanil. Read and understand the chemical labels.

► **Grape diseases of concern: black rot, anthracnose, cane and leaf spot, and downy mildew.**

- Prune the grape canopy to allow good sunlight penetration and air movement, as well as to maximize fruit production. Prune out any diseased, dead, or cankered vines.
- Remove and destroy all of last year's fruit mummies hanging on the vine and lying on the ground.
- Apply lime-sulfur sprays to the dormant vines just as buds begin to swell to prevent anthracnose.
- Obtain fungicides with ingredients such as captan, mancozeb, myclobutanil, or thiophanate-methyl to be used for black rot and cane and leaf spot management. Be prepared to apply fungicides as the first green leaves are beginning to appear on the vines and to repeat the applications throughout the spring as called for on the pesticide label.

► **Strawberry diseases of concern: fruit rot diseases.**

- Apply straw mulch to the beds between the rows and under the canopy so that fruits will not have to touch the ground.
- Provide adequate spacing of the strawberry plants to provide good sunlight penetration and air movement to help reduce gray mold fruit rot.
- Hand remove dead leaves and stems from the strawberry bed to reduce the presence of the gray mold fungus.
- If sprays, such as captan, are to be used to prevent fruit rot, the sprays need to be applied to the strawberry flowers in early spring.

► **Blueberry diseases of concern: twig blights and cankers.**

- Prevent twig canker diseases by avoiding stressful growing conditions. Mulch blueberries with organic matter, such as wood chips, and adjust the soil pH if necessary to provide favorable growing conditions.
- Prune out dead and dying twigs and branches from the blueberry plants.
- If, because of wet weather, blueberries are declining and dying due to root rot disease, improve garden soil drainage or grow blueberries on raised beds.



Selecting Disease Resistant Varieties in the Garden

"It was well into January and the garden was long done;
When I read through the choice mail, it made my thoughts run;
They were so slick and colored; volumes of them were there;
The seed and plant catalogs, each one was touting its wares;
Try to top this tomato; do plant our varieties of sweet corn;
You will harvest a bounty and can eat fruit every morn."

Those seed and nursery catalogues do bring visions of your next garden. They offer so many choices it is hard to pick the best varieties. The same catalogues that bring dreams of the perfect garden contain a wealth of information about varieties that will help prevent garden plant diseases caused by fungi, bacteria, viruses and nematodes.

Most catalogues will state what to expect in disease resistance for each variety. Letters often are used as abbreviations in the fine print. An example is tomato disease resistance where F is for Fusarium wilt, V for Verticillium wilt and N for root knot nematode.

Using disease-resistant plants is the safest, most reliable way to control garden diseases. It doesn't matter if pathogen populations are abundant, or conditions are ripe for disease development, because resistant varieties provide strong biological protection from disease. In addition, resistant varieties generate good yields without having to resort to costly chemical or laborious cultural controls.

By selecting varieties that resist disease, you are investing in the safe, biological way to control devastating diseases in the garden.

For more information on plant disease topics, contact the Clark County Cooperative Extension Service at (859) 744-4682

- by Carrie Spry, Clark County Extension Horticulture Agent

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Gus'

QUICK TIPS

for

JANUARY january

- 1 If you need to melt ice on sidewalks or steps be very careful as most products are harmful to plants. Consider using sand instead, your plants will thank you for it.
- 2 Evergreen plants can be seriously damaged by snow accumulation. After heavy snowfall use a broom to sweep snow from branches. Sweep in an upward direction as cold will cause plants to be more brittle than typical.
- 3 Winter is an excellent time to prepare pots and planters for next spring. Soak pots in a solution of vinegar and bleach, one cup of each per gallon of water. Heavily soiled pots may require scrubbing. Come spring you will be ready to go.
- 4 If you have time this winter paint the handles of garden tools a bright color. This will save lots of time next year when you can't remember where you laid them down in the garden.
- 5 Place orders now for asparagus, rhubarb, strawberries, raspberries, and blackberries. Plants can be shipped at the proper planting time, usually mid-March for us.
- 6 Continue to monitor house plants for pest problems.
- 7 Have your soil tested now for spring gardens (<http://clark.ca.uky.edu/content/testing-your-soil>)



I am continuing with the process of working on my program planning for 2024. I would like to hear from you regarding possible classes you would be interested in taking. This would be a great help to me to cover your interests.

Just email me with your ideas at carrie.spry@uky.edu, call the office at 859-744-4682, or drop me a note at 1400 Fortune Drive, Winchester, KY 40391.

What's Cooking?



Country Ham and Broccoli Grits

1 tablespoon olive oil	2 cloves minced garlic	6 ounces country ham, cut into ½ inch pieces
1 pound fresh broccoli florets	4 cups 1% milk	1 large egg, beaten
½ cup minced onion	1 cup uncooked quick grits	Salt and pepper to taste
¾ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes	1 cup 2%, shredded cheddar cheese	

1. Preheat oven to 375°F. **Coat** 13x9x2 inch baking dish with cooking spray. **Heat** olive oil in a frying pan. **Sauté** broccoli, onion, garlic and red pepper flakes until vegetables are tender. About 5 minutes. **Set aside.**

2. Heat milk to a boil in a large saucepan. Slowly, **whisk** in grits. **Reduce heat** and stir continuously until thickened. **Reserve** 2 tablespoons of the cheese.

3. Remove from heat, stir in ham, broccoli mixture, cheese, egg, salt and pepper. **Mix** until well blended. **Pour** into prepared baking dish.

4. Sprinkle with reserved cheese. **Bake**, uncovered for 30 minutes, or until top is set and lightly puffed.

Yield: 16, ½ cup servings.

Nutritional Analysis: 120 calories, 3.5 g fat, 1 g saturated fat, 25 mg cholesterol, 370 mg sodium, 13 g carbohydrate, 1 g fiber, 4 g sugar, 9 g protein.

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

Plate it up!