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HORTICULTURE NEWSLETTER

From the Ground Up

Inside this issue:

Our office will be **CLOSED** on Thursday and Friday **November 24 & 25** for Thanksgiving!

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A Word from the Agent…

Well, here we are people. I have officially been part of the Clark Extension team for one year now, and what a year it has been!!! It has been so wonderful to be out and about within the county meeting new people, reconnecting with many old friends and acquaintances, learning about our great community, and, most importantly, helping in any way that I can. I've lived in this county my entire life, but have learned more about it in the last year than I ever realized I could. There are many exciting plans in the works to help grow the Horticulture program at Clark Extension, and to provide wonderful and fun educational opportunities for everyone. But I always love to hear what you are wanting to learn more about. So always reach out to me with any ideas or suggestions, but also reach out anytime you are having a horticulture need that I can help with! And be sure to stay tuned for those great things to come!

Carrie Spry
Clark County Extension Agent for Horticulture
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Sunday, November 6

Once you've picked the last of your fruits this season, you may think your work with your fruit plants is over. However, a few tasks can be done in the fall to set yourself up for a successful growing season next year.

Tree Fruit

Sanitation and Disease Management

One of the most important things you can do for your tree fruits is to remove any fruit that is still on your trees, or that has fallen on the ground. Diseases like black rot in apple and brown rot of stone fruit can overwinter on fruit. Come spring, spores of these fungi will be released from the fruit left behind (mummies) and infect your crop. By removing this fruit, you can help reduce the chances of those diseases developing.

Cleaning up fallen leaves can also be helpful with disease management. This is especially important with apples if you've had issues with foliar diseases like apple scab. Apple scab (and some other foliar diseases) overwinter on leaves and infect new leaves in the spring. If you have problems with foliar diseases, leaves can be raked up and burned, buried, or composted. Leaves can also be chopped up with a mulching lawnmower, so they break down faster.

One other disease that can be managed in the fall is peach leaf curl. Peach leaf curl infections happen in early spring, before buds start to swell, so many people miss the window of opportunity to manage this disease. If you've had problems with peach leaf curl on your peach trees, they can be sprayed with a dormant spray of chlorothalonil, lime sulfur, or a copper-based product in late fall after leaves have dropped. Trees can also be sprayed in early spring before the buds begin to swell.

Fertilizing and Pruning

Avoid fertilizing your trees, especially with nitrogen, in the late summer and fall. Fertilizing later in the year can stimulate new growth that is more susceptible to winter injury. You also want to avoid pruning fruit trees (unless you are removing dead wood) until late winter or early spring. Like fertilizing, pruning in late summer and fall can stimulate new growth that is susceptible to winter injury.

Small Fruits

Like with tree fruit, good sanitation is important when trying to manage diseases in small fruits. Make sure to remove or bury any fruit that is left on plants or the ground. If you have problems with disease, make sure to remove diseased plant material.

Strawberries

If you grow strawberries, it's a good idea to mulch them over the winter. As we go through freeze-thaw cycles during the winter, strawberry plants can be heaved out of the ground, and the crowns can be exposed to cold temperatures that will damage or kill them. Mulching strawberries will help moderate the temperatures and protect plants.

Place 3-4 inches of weed-free straw over plants once we have had a few consecutive nights of temperatures in the 20s (F). Depending on the year, this typically ranges from mid-November to mid-December. Once soil temperatures reach 40˚F in the spring, the mulch can be removed.

Blueberries

Blueberries will also benefit from being mulched. Blueberry plants are shallow-rooted, so mulch will help protect roots from heaving. A 4-6 inch layer of

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mulch, such as wood chips or pine needles, can be used. Mulching will also help retain soil moisture and suppress weeds in your plantings.

Mulching blueberries in the fall can also help with management of mummy berry. This disease will also overwinter on old, mummified fruit. The mummies can either be removed or buried under two inches of mulch to help prevent infection of plants in the spring.

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Raspberries and Blackberries

If you grow raspberries and/or blackberries, apply up to three inches of mulch to plants. This will help prevent heaving and retain soil moisture. Pruning is typically done in late winter or early spring.

Wildlife

Wildlife such as voles, rabbits, and deer can be problems in home fruit plantings as they feed on the roots or bark of fruit plants. Fall is a good time to put tree guards around trees to protect them. Hardware cloth or plastic mesh materials can be used.

If voles are a problem, use one-quarter inch or less mesh hardware cloth and make the guards at least 18 inches tall. Make sure they are flush with the ground, or, if possible, try to bury them at least two inches deep into the ground, so voles cannot tunnel underneath. If rabbits are an issue, make guards 24 -36 inches tall. Cleaning up weeds and grass and pulling mulch away from tree trunks that voles can hide in can also help reduce problems.

If you use plastic spiral tree guards, make sure to remove them in the spring. If they are left on trees, they can trap moisture, creating an ideal environment for pests and diseases to develop.

In addition to feeding damage by deer, bucks may also damage woody plants by rubbing their antlers on them. To protect plants from deer, you can try placing a five-foot-tall wire cylinder around the plant. Fencing could also be used, but it needs to be at least 8 feet tall (to prevent deer from jumping over it).

Another option for managing deer and rabbits in your fruit plantings is using repellents. Two types of repellents can be used, contact and area. Contact repellents are applied directly to the plants and repel animals by taste. Area repellents are applied near the plants and repel by smell. **If you choose to use repellents, read the label and make sure it can be used on edible plants.**

Take some time this fall to prepare your fruit plants for winter so you can enjoy the fruits of your labor next year.

Good Growing Tip of the Week: If you grow your fruit in containers, place them in a protected location or an unheated garage, so the roots aren't exposed to extremely cold temperatures. Containers can also be buried in the ground.

Why Is That There?

By Amanda Sears, Madison County Extension Agent for Horticulture

When we see a problem in our home and garden, our first inclination is how do I fix this? But the better question to ask ourselves is why is it there? By thinking about the root cause of the problem, often we can prevent it from happening again in the future.

For example, if an insect is in a place it really should not be, try to figure out why it is there in the first place

- How did this insect get in the house? Could it have come in under a door or in with something I brought from outside such as firewood?
- Is it coming inside because the weather outside is turning cooler? Lady bugs and stink bugs make their way in doors this time of year because they are think our houses look like rock outcroppings, a great place for them to overwinter.
- Is there something here it wants? Is it attracted to something inside, like fruit on the counter or grains in your pantry? Pantry pests such as grain moths can become a problem in kitchens when your stored grains and cereals become infested.

Sealing entry points is a great way to keep insects from entering the home.

Another example of a problem you might encounter is nuisance wildlife

- What is this animal attracted to? Is it hungry? Chipmunks are very common around birdfeeders. Controlling the amount of seed that falls to the ground can help with control of these animals.

If chipmunks are a problem, check your birdfeeders to make sure there are not a lot seeds on the ground.

- Has the environment somehow changed to make things more attractive for this animal? For example, is a porch light causing the area to be darker at night.
- Is there a place that is attractive for it to live? Is there easy access under your deck or an old groundhog den nearby? These can be attractive places for skunks to take up residence.

You can also look at diseases in our lawn, garden and landscape the same way

- If you had blossom end rot on your tomatoes, why might the spot have shown up? We have plenty of calcium in our soils so this problem is often associated with uneven watering.
- What is causing the spots on the leaves of my tree? Have we had strange weather patterns this year? If I look at the leaves, do I see insect damage? Leaf galls, which are irregular plant growths caused by insects have been bad this year, but in most cases are not a serious problem.
- Why are some areas of my landscape showing disease problems and not others? Am I doing anything different in that area? Does that area not drain as well? Is there a down spout in the area contributing the amount of moisture in the soil?

By changing the way we look at problems, we can help prevent them in the future. By being proactive, we do not have to reach for pesticides as often.

Pass the sweet potatoes. Or is it pass the yams? We often use these names interchangeably, but in reality, they are two very different plants. So, what is the difference between sweet potatoes and yams?

True yams are monocots (like grasses and lilies) in the family Dioscoreaceae that are native to Africa and Asia. Sweet potatoes are dicots that are native to Central and South America and are part of the morning glory family (Convolvulaceae). Additionally, sweet potatoes are not related to potatoes (also called Irish or white potatoes) either, which belong to the nightshade family (Solanaceae) along with tomatoes, peppers, and eggplants.

Yams belong to the genus Dioscorea, which contains over 600 species of plants, most of which are tropical. Several different species of yams are cultivated, with the most commonly grown being white yam (*Dioscorea rotundata*) from Africa and water yam (*Dioscorea alata*) from Asia. A majority of yam production takes place in Africa (95% of global production), with Nigeria being the largest producer. Yams that are available in the United States are typically grown in Caribbean countries.

Yams grow as a vine and produce an underground tuber, which vaguely resembles sweet potatoes, that are long and cylindrical. Yams can range in size from the size of a potato to extremely large, up to five feet long and weighing over 100 pounds! Their flesh can be white to bright yellow to purple or pink, and the tuber is covered in a tough, scaly skin that is difficult to remove. They are often boiled and mashed as well as fried, roasted, or baked (like baked potatoes). Yams are starchier and drier when compared to the sweet potato varieties most commonly grown in the United States.

Sweet potatoes (*Ipomoea batatas*) produce storage roots that have smooth thin skin that can range in color from white to yellow, red, purple, or brown. These roots are short and blocky and have tapered ends. The flesh also ranges in color from white to yellow, orange, or orange-red. Sweet potato varieties are classified as either 'firm' or 'soft'. When cooked, 'firm' sweet potatoes remain firm and are dry and crumbly (like a 'regular' potato), while 'soft' varieties become soft, moist, and sweet. 'Soft' types typically have dark orange skin and orange flesh. In the United States, these are the sweet potatoes we usually refer to as yams (they are also the most commonly grown sweet potatoes).

So why do we sometimes call sweet potatoes yams? According to the Library of Congress, the confusion between yams and sweet potatoes began when soft varieties of sweet potato were introduced to the United States: "In the United States, firm varieties of sweet potatoes were produced before soft varieties. When soft varieties were first grown commercially, there was a need to differentiate between the two. African slaves had already been calling the 'soft' sweet potatoes 'yams' because they resembled the yams in Africa. Thus, 'soft' sweet potatoes were referred to as 'yams' to distinguish them from the 'firm' varieties."

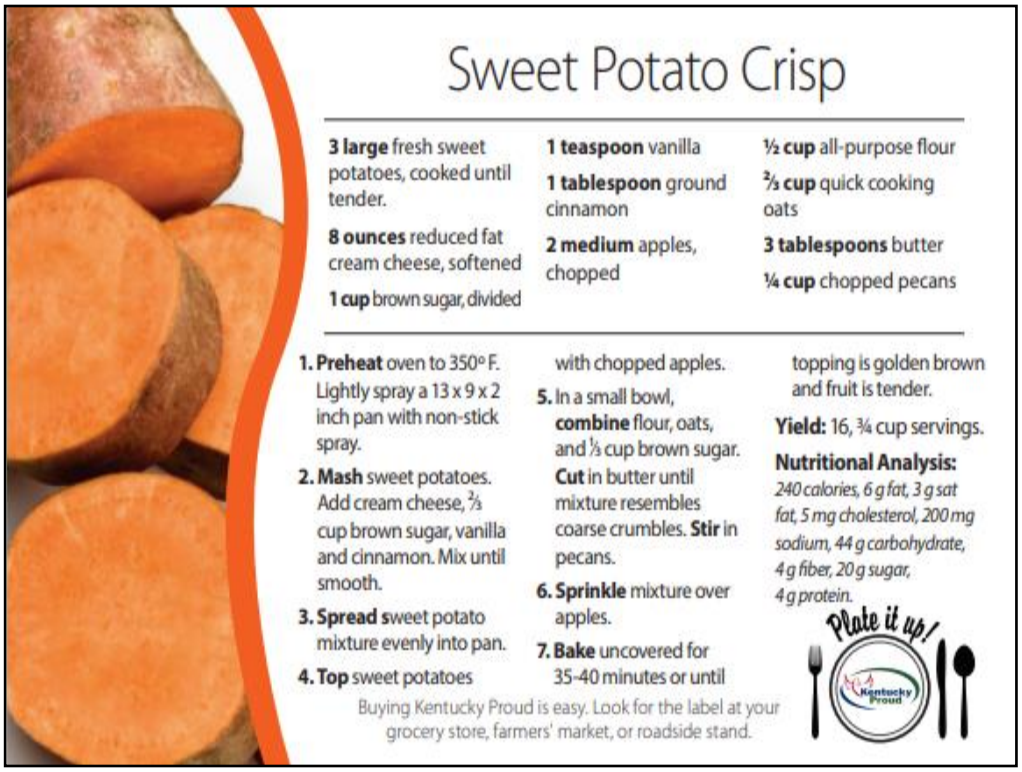
Today the USDA requires that when the term 'yam' is used to describe sweet potatoes, it must also be labeled as a 'sweet potato.' Unless you specifically search for yams, which can often be found at ethnic markets, you are probably eating sweet potatoes.

Armed with this knowledge, you now have a great conversation starter for the Thanksgiving table. Or, if your family is anything like mine, they'll roll their eyes and grumble here they go again.

Good Growing Fact of the Week: In addition to requiring warm moist conditions for growth, edible yams also have a very long time to harvest. Plants often require 6-12 months of growth before their tubers can be harvested. Sweet potatoes, on the other hand, typically take around 100 days to harvest.

QUICK TIPS NOVEMBER

1. Although we are past the best time for seeding, lawns can benefit from a fall application of nitrogen. October and November are excellent months to feed as you can promote vigor without excessive growth.
2. Mow new grass seedlings when they reach two and one half inches tall. Continue to mow lawns as late as needed.
3. Mow and mulch leaves or remove them from lawns, especially new plantings, to prevent grass from being damaged.
4. When you are finished with tools and equipment for the season clean, sharpen, and oil tools for next year. Make sure to drain, or add fuel stabilizer to gasoline powered equipment.
5. If you have not dug and stored tender bulbs like dahlias, cannas, and gladiolus, do so before the ground freezes.
6. Clean up peony foliage if you have had any of the leaf spotting diseases. This will help prevent the problem next year.
7. Drain and store garden hoses and irrigation systems.
8. November is an excellent time to plant fall bulbs for next spring.
9. Start a compost pile with all of those leaves. It doesn't have to be elaborate or technical. A simple pile will make compost if left long enough.
10. Plant paperwhites, amaryllis and other ready to bloom bulbs for the holidays.
11. Protect the trunks of fruit trees with wire mesh to prevent gnawing damage from rabbits and voles.
12. Do a thorough cleanup of the vegetable garden. This will remove many insect and disease problems before they can become a problem next year.
13. Monitor houseplants for insect problems. Most common pests can be controlled if detected before they become major infestations.



Sweet Potato Crisp

3 large fresh sweet potatoes, cooked until tender.
8 ounces reduced fat cream cheese, softened
1 cup brown sugar, divided
1 teaspoon vanilla
1 tablespoon ground cinnamon
2 medium apples, chopped
½ cup all-purpose flour
⅔ cup quick cooking oats
3 tablespoons butter
¼ cup chopped pecans

1. **Preheat** oven to 350° F. Lightly spray a 13 x 9 x 2 inch pan with non-stick spray.
2. **Mash** sweet potatoes. Add cream cheese, ⅔ cup brown sugar, vanilla and cinnamon. Mix until smooth.
3. **Spread** sweet potato mixture evenly into pan.
4. **Top** sweet potatoes with chopped apples.
5. In a small bowl, **combine** flour, oats, and ⅓ cup brown sugar. **Cut** in butter until mixture resembles coarse crumbles. **Stir** in pecans.
6. **Sprinkle** mixture over apples.
7. **Bake** uncovered for 35-40 minutes or until topping is golden brown and fruit is tender.

Yield: 16, ¾ cup servings.

Nutritional Analysis: *240 calories, 6 g fat, 3 g sat fat, 5 mg cholesterol, 200 mg sodium, 44 g carbohydrate, 4 g fiber, 20 g sugar, 4 g protein.*

Plate it up! Kentucky Proud

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