

BY THE YARD

HORTICULTURE NEWSLETTER



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Community Arts Survey

Fayette County Cooperative Extension's newly formed Community Arts program wants to hear from you! Community Arts Agent Treyton Blackburn has designed this survey to guide the programs, classes, workshops, opportunities, and collaborations we plan to pursue in the upcoming year.

This survey invites both individuals and arts organizations to share their experiences, insights, and interests. You can complete the survey by clicking this link: https://uky.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3qQ3yh4NjKF2p7M or by scanning the QR code below



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Agent's Note

Hello and happy summer!

Looking over last year's July newsletter, we were already desperate for rain. This year that is not so much the case. It's an unfamiliar feeling to have dark moody skies roll in and drop an inch of rain each week. My heart rejoices for our stressed Kentucky trees!

We may have been getting plenty of rain, but the heat has definitely started to show up. Each day the June heat wave stretched out, the more my outdoor chores suffered. But it's worth it to stay cool indoors, in the shade or in a pool. We've shared some other heat wave pointers to help prepare for the next round of scorching temperatures.

You know what's thriving in these hot, humid temperatures? Poison ivy. Both of us have already contracted the itchy plague once this season. We'll see how many more nuisance interactions we'll have. For all of our protection, we've included reminders about how to protect yourself and manage poison ivy in your landscape.

Other topics to note include a deep dive into the lovely summer native, the sunflower, and what to know about the soon to emerge cicada killer wasp. (Spoiler: Like cicadas, they're pretty harmless.)

We hope you all are having a fun and safe summer in the sun!

In appreciation,

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What to Plant Now?

Earliest Safe Planting Date*	Planting Method	Vegetables
JULY 8	Start seeds outdoors	Carrots, beets
JULY 18	Start seeds indoors or out in protected area	Fall cole crops like broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage
JULY 22	Start seeds outdoors	Kale, mustard greens, turnips, summer squash

*Dates are approximate for the Central Kentucky region



Cicada Killer Wasps

The first thing most people notice are the large male wasps hovering in the air. Males emerge before females and will stake out areas where they believe females may be. Males will “inspect” humans, hovering at eye level to evaluate you. Because adult cicada killers are very large wasps, this behavior can be extremely intimidating. But fear not! These macho males don’t even have stingers.

Female cicada killers, the larger of the two sexes at 1.5-2 inches long, are equipped with a stinger however. They use their stingers to inject venom into a cicada they catch which is where they will then lay their eggs. Male cicada killers, only about 1.5 inches long, do not have a stinger, instead they have a non-stinging pseudo stinger.

In late June and July, males will begin to emerge and wait for females to arrive. As female wasps emerge, mating occurs and then females begin to dig the tunnels to lay their eggs. Females will hunt for annual cicadas that emerge July and August. They can capture these while in flight and paralyze them with their stinger. Following this, they will transport the cicada back to their nest. This can involve dragging the cicada or carrying it up into tall plants and then jumping and gliding toward the nest. Quite a sight to witness!

Once the cicadas are deposited into the tunnel, the female lays an egg that will hatch, and the resulting larva will feed on the provided cicada.

Even though stingless males will invade your personal space, females are mild mannered compared to other wasps. Stings can occur but are almost always the result of a human directly stepping on or grasping the wasp. Generally, management is unnecessary, cicada killers do not present a true sting hazard and the issues associated with their tunnel building are mostly aesthetic.

Cicada killers also have preferences for where they build. They want well-drained, light-textured soils in full sunlight. Therefore, changing your landscape with wood or stone mulches, creating shade, or increasing irrigation in a specific area can cause them to disperse and try to build elsewhere.

Source: UK Entomology Fact Sheet 004, “Cicada Killer Wasps,” Jonathan L. Larson, Extension Entomologist, 2022



Cicada killer wasp. J. Obermeyer.
Purdue University Extension



Cicada killer with cicada. Ronald F. Billings, Texas Forest Service, Bugwood.org

Sunflowers

Sunflowers (*Helianthus annuus*) are more than just cheerful garden favorites—they are a versatile crop with deep historical roots and significant agricultural value. Native to North America, sunflowers have been cultivated for thousands of years, originally by Indigenous peoples who used them for food, oil, dye, and medicine.

Archaeological evidence suggests that Native Americans began domesticating sunflowers as early as 2300 B.C., possibly predating the cultivation of corn, beans, and squash. The seeds were roasted, ground into meal, or pressed for oil. Sunflower oil was not only a dietary staple but also used for skin and hair care. The plant’s petals and pollen were used for dyes and ceremonial face paint.

Today, sunflowers are grown for several purposes:

- Oilseed varieties are bred for high oil content and are used in cooking oils, biodiesel, and livestock feed.
- Confectionery types produce large seeds for snacks and bird feed.
- Ornamental varieties are popular in home gardens and cut flower markets.



‘Suntastic Bicolor Pink’ Sunflower, University of Minnesota Extension

Sunflowers continued



'Starburst' Sunflower,
University of Minnesota
Extension

Sunflowers are well-suited to Kentucky's climate and can be grown in a variety of soil types, provided they are well-drained. They prefer full sun and are relatively drought-tolerant once established. Plant directly outdoors anytime May – June or can be started indoors as early as late March. Space plants 18-24 inches for most garden types.

They also support pollinators and beneficial insects, making them a valuable addition to any garden or landscape. Whether you're planting a few in your backyard or considering a larger field, sunflowers offer beauty, biodiversity, and economic opportunity. Their resilience and versatility make them a shining star in Kentucky's agricultural landscape.

Sources: Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, "Sunflowers: Their Ancient Roots and Modern Popularity," Sherry Rindels, 1996

Poison Ivy

Poison ivy is a common perennial plant notorious for causing itchy rashes and allergic reactions in humans. It can be challenging to control due to its ability to spread rapidly and its resilience in various environments. With proper knowledge and effective strategies, you can manage and control poison ivy.

Learn how to identify poison ivy. It is a deciduous vining ground cover that typically grows in clusters of three leaflets, although leaf count may vary. Its leaves are glossy, oval-shaped, and may have serrated or smooth edges. The plant's color ranges from light green to reddish orange, depending on age and time of year.

The pesky plant poses health risks through its oily resin called urushiol, which causes allergic reactions. Direct contact with any part of the plant—leaves, stems, roots or even the smoke from burning it—can trigger a rash, accompanied by itching, redness, swelling and blisters. The oil can remain on clothing, pets, or tools that touch it. Avoid unprotected contact with poison ivy and take necessary precautions when attempting to control it. Responses may range from mild to severe depending on the person, the amount of oil contacted, the method of contact (touching, inhalation from burning, etc.) and the time of year.

Here are some effective strategies for controlling poison ivy growth:

1. Wear protective clothing. When dealing with poison ivy, wear long sleeves, long pants, gloves and closed-toe shoes to minimize skin exposure. Eye protection and a hat may be necessary. Use disposable gloves and turn them inside out when removing them. You may need to use disposable garment such as those used by pesticide applicators, or make sure to wash clothing separately from other items to prevent urushiol transfer.
2. You can manually remove small infestations of poison ivy by digging up the roots with a garden trowel or gloved hands. Ensure you remove the entire plant, including the roots, to prevent regrowth.
3. For larger infestations or difficult-to-reach areas, you may find herbicides effective. These herbicides can be selective to broadleaf plants, typically marketed as a "poison ivy killer." Always, always, always carefully read and follow the instructions on the product label.
4. Don't be afraid to call in a professional. In severe cases, or if you are unsure about dealing with poison ivy yourself, consider seeking professional help from landscapers or pest control services experienced in poison ivy removal.
5. Dispose of poison ivy in the general trash waste bin. Please do not put poison ivy in your yard waste collection.

Controlling poison ivy requires a combination of identification, protective measures, and effective removal strategies. By understanding the plant's characteristics and using appropriate methods, you can minimize the risks associated with poison ivy and regain control over your environment. Remember to prioritize safety and, when in doubt, seek professional assistance to ensure effective and long-lasting control.

Source: UK Ag. Communications Exclusive, "Identifying and taming poison ivy," Shawn Wright, UK Extension Specialist, 2023



Poison ivy. Ginny
Williams. University of
Maryland Extension

It's Hot Out There!

As Kentucky summers grow hotter and more unpredictable, gardeners and growers must take extra precautions to protect both plants and themselves during extreme heat events. While plants can suffer from heat stress, the risks to human health—such as heat exhaustion and heat stroke—are even more serious. Fortunately, with a few smart strategies, you can continue gardening safely and effectively through the hottest days.

Heat-related illnesses can develop quickly, especially when working outdoors. Symptoms of heat exhaustion include dizziness, nausea, heavy sweating, and muscle cramps. If untreated, it can progress to heat stroke, a life-threatening condition marked by confusion, rapid pulse, and loss of consciousness. Prevention is key.

Tips for Staying Safe in the Garden

1. **Time Your Tasks Wisely.** Work during the cooler parts of the day—early morning or late evening. Avoid strenuous activity between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., when the sun is most intense
2. **Dress for the Heat.** Wear lightweight, light-colored, and breathable clothing. A wide-brimmed hat and UV-protective sunglasses can shield you from direct sun exposure. Don't forget sunscreen on exposed skin.
3. **Stay Hydrated.** Drink water frequently, even if you don't feel thirsty. Avoid caffeine and alcohol, which can contribute to dehydration. Keep a water bottle nearby and take breaks in the shade every 20–30 minutes.
4. **Use the Right Tools.** Ergonomic tools and kneeling pads can reduce physical strain. Consider using carts or wheelbarrows to avoid heavy lifting during high heat.
5. **Create Shade.** Use umbrellas, shade cloth, or even a pop-up canopy to create shaded work areas. This not only protects you but also helps reduce plant stress.

Protecting Plants During Heat Waves

1. Water early in the morning to reduce evaporation and allow plants to absorb moisture before the heat peaks. Use soaker hoses or drip irrigation to deliver water directly to the roots.
2. Apply 2–4 inches of organic mulch around plants to retain soil moisture and regulate temperature. Mulch also suppresses weeds, which compete for water.
3. Plants may wilt, drop blossoms, or show leaf scorch during extreme heat. Most will recover once temperatures moderate, but consistent care is essential.
4. Potted plants dry out faster than those in the ground. Check them daily—sometimes twice a day—and move them to partial shade if possible.

Gardening is a rewarding activity, but it's important to prioritize safety during extreme weather. By adjusting your routine and staying alert to signs of heat stress, you can continue to enjoy your garden while protecting your health and your harvest.

Source: Oregon State University Extension Service, "Heat wave in the garden: How to identify and prevent heat stress in plants," Nicole Sanchez, 2021

Heat Exhaustion	Heat Stroke
<p>ACT FAST</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move to a cooler area • Loosen clothing • Sip cool water • Seek medical help if symptoms don't improve 	<p>ACT FAST</p> <p>CALL 911</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move person to a cooler area • Loosen clothing and remove extra layers • Cool with water or ice
<p>Dizziness</p> <p>Thirst</p> <p>Heavy Sweating</p> <p>Nausea</p> <p>Weakness</p>	<p>Confusion</p> <p>Dizziness</p> <p>Becomes Unconscious</p>
<p><i>Heat exhaustion can lead to heat stroke.</i></p> <p><i>Heat stroke can cause death or permanent disability if emergency treatment is not given.</i></p>	
<p>Heat Exhaustion CDC NIOSH Stay Cool, Stay Hydrated, Stay Informed! Heat Stroke</p>	

Upcoming Events

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

- July 5 – Butterflies @ Kelley's Landing Park
- July 5 – Volunteer Morning: Invasive species & litter removal @ Raven Run Nature Sanctuary
- July 10 – Wild Ones Picnic @ Wellington Park
- July 11 – Second Friday Bird Walks @ Raven Run Nature Sanctuary
- July 11 – Full Moon Hike @ Raven Run Nature Sanctuary
- July 12 – Volunteer Morning @ Kelley's Landing Park
- July 12 – Bird Walk @ The Arboretum
- July 15 – Gardening with Annuals @ The Arboretum
- July 16 – Tiny Tot Naturalist: Pond Life @ McConnell Springs Park
- July 18 – Bird Walks @ Kelley's Landing Park
- July 19 – Junior Naturalist: Pond Life @ McConnell Springs Park
- July 19 – Moth Week @ Raven Run Nature Sanctuary
- July 23 – Moth Night @ Kelley's Landing Park
- July 24 – Moth Night @ Floracliff Nature Sanctuary
- July 24 - Moth Night @ McConnell Springs Park
- July 26 – Volunteer Morning @ McConnell Springs Park
- July 26 – Junior Explorers: Dragonflies @ Raven Run Nature Sanctuary
- July 29 – Kids Hike: Pond & Stream Discovery @ Floracliff Nature Sanctuary

JulyQuick Tips

- Now is the time to plan and plant a fall garden. Most plants with shorter growing seasons can be grown in the fall and often produce better results. Allow a little more time to mature than the seed package says as cooler nights will slow growth somewhat.
- Clean and replenish hummingbird feeders regularly. The nectar will readily spoil in hot weather.
- Check on newly planted trees and shrubs often. Plants can take a minimum of two years or more to establish into the landscape. Water as needed to assist with transplant shock.
- When watering, try to avoid wetting foliage or watering late in the evening as both can promote disease.
- Garden ponds will need to be topped off regularly in the heat. Make sure to use a de-chlorinator every time to protect your fish.
- Water lilies will benefit from regular feeding. If you aren't getting many blooms feeding may help.
- Do not spray chemicals in the heat of the day. Many plants can be damaged. Spray in the early morning or late evening when temperatures are cooler.
- Monitor evergreens for spider mite damage. Drought stressed plants are particularly at risk. If you see signs of browning shake the branch over a white surface, if you see tiny moving red specks, you likely have mites. Minor infestations can be treated with a daily spray from the hose. Larger problems may need chemical control.
- Remove spent blooms from flowering annuals and perennials to promote more bloom.
- If your late blooming perennials (Asters, Goldenrod, Butterfly bush, Mums, etc.) are already tall and threatening to flop, prune them back to 1' in height. This will result in a fuller, sturdier plant that will bloom slightly later than normal.

Recipe of the Month

Blackberry and Basil Spritzer

2 cups lemon sparkling water	2 tablespoons honey
2 cups ice cubes (6-7 large cubes)	$\frac{1}{2}$ lime, juiced
2 cups blackberries	3 basil leaves

Put all ingredients, except basil, in a blender and **blend** on high speed until completely combined. **Strain** mixture through sieve to separate blackberry seeds. **Pour** in 3 glasses, **add** 1 basil leaf to each drink and **serve** with lime wedge.

Serves: 3, 16 oz. servings

Nutritional Analysis:
90 calories, 0 g fat, 0 g saturated fat, 0 mg cholesterol, 30 mg sodium, 22 g carbohydrate, 5 g fiber, 15 g sugar, 1 g protein





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Newsletter Enclosed *Fayette County* “*By the Yard*”

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