



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

Cooperative Extension Service

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FEBRUARY 2023

HORTICULTURE NEWSLETTER

From the Ground Up

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A Word from the Agent...

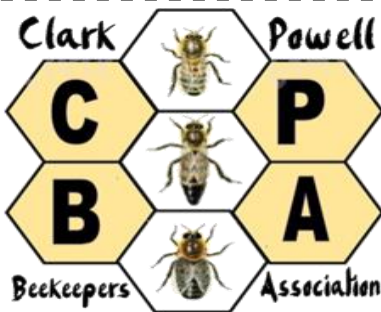


To be completely honesty with you all, I don't like February. For me it's the last longest stretch of winter and it seems to take forever, despite being the shortest month. Yes, we can have ugly weather in March, but it just doesn't seem to linger like it does/can in February. But instead of going on about that, lets look for some positives in February.

The days are getting longer, hallelujah! It's time to order seeds and plan the garden, woohoo! Time to place your order for mailbox chicks, if you're crazy like me and keep chickens! Most importantly, February 1st is National Dark Chocolate Day, yum! *(That last one may or may not be a subtle hint for my husband who may or may not be reading this....we shall see.)*

So hopefully, your February is filled with lots of positives, and a little bit of dark chocolate. Call me with your questions and we'll see you around!

Carrie Spry
Clark County Extension Agent for Horticulture
carrie.spry@uky.edu



**Monday,
February 13, 2023**

6:30 pm

Powell County Extension Service
(169 Maple Street; Stanton)

~ **POT-LUCK MEAL** ~

Using Leftover Vegetable Seeds

By: Carrie Spry, Clark County Extension Agent for Horticulture



tomato



pepper



cabbage



carrot



beet

If you're like me, your eyes are bigger than your garden so you often have seed leftover from previous years. So let's be sure your leftover seeds can germinate before you send in that new seed catalog order, or visit the local garden supply center.

When properly stored, most vegetable seeds will remain viable, or able to germinate, for three or more years, including tomato, carrot, pumpkin, cucumber and cabbage. However, a few vegetables (spinach, onion, and sweet corn) produce seeds that remain viable for less than two to three years. Thus, it's best to buy fresh seeds of these vegetables every year or two.

It's easy to check the viability of vegetable seeds that are more than one year old by using the "rag doll test." Simply wrap 10 to 20 seeds from each packet in a paper towel that's moist, but not dripping wet. Roll or fold the paper towels to enclose the seeds and put towels in a sealed, air-tight plastic bag. Put a label in with the seed-containing paper towels, or mark the outside of the plastic bag.

Put the plastic bags in a warm area where the temperature will range from 70 to 80 degrees Fahrenheit. The refrigerator top is a good storage location, especially if there are cabinets above to hold in heat the refrigerator generates. Viable seed should germinate in one to two weeks.

If 75 percent or more of the seeds germinate from any given packet, plant those normally as you would in the garden. It's still okay to use seeds if about 50 percent germinate from a packet. However, you might want to use twice as many seed as normal to make up for the lower germinate rate. If 30 percent or fewer of the seeds in a packet germinate, it's best to order or buy fresh seeds.

If you depend on a good harvest from some major crops such as snap beans, sweet corn, butternut squash or pickling cucumbers, it's probably wise to plant a mixture of new and old seeds. Buying some extra fresh seed is cheap insurance that you'll have fresh produce available when you're ready to preserve it.

When you purchase seeds, check labels and buy only those packaged for the current growing season. This practice will ensure that you're getting the freshest seeds available.

Storing Vegetable Seeds

If you have some vegetable seeds remaining from this growing season, the following tips will help you keep them viable for next year's garden.

- Storage conditions are very important to maintain high germination rates of leftover seeds. Try to keep seeds as dry as possible. Although refrigeration isn't necessary, keeping seeds cool, but not freezing, also will prolong their lives.
- Enclose seeds in an air-tight container such as a glass jar or plastic food storage box to keep them dry and protect against insect infestations and rodent feeding.
- Periodically check stored seeds for mold. If mold is present, throw away any damaged or decaying seeds. Allow the remaining seeds to air-dry for a few days before resealing the container.





February 16: BEEF NIGHT

- *Beef Health Update*
Dr. Patrick Reister, Boonesboro Animal Clinic
- *Beef Mineral Needs*
Dr. Jeff Lemkuler, UK Beef Specialist
- *Heavy Use Feeding Pads*
Levi Berg, Clark County ANR Agent

~ Meal sponsored by Clark County Cattlemen ~

February 21: FARM NIGHT

- *Fencing Laws*
Clint Quarles, KDA Attorney
- *Drones*
Dr. Josh Jackson, UK Biosystems Engineering
- *Building Structure Water Management*
Dr. Morgan Hayes, UK Biosystems Engineering

~ Meal sponsored by Clark County Farm Bureau ~

February 23: HORT NIGHT

- *Getting Ready for Garden Pests*
Dr. Jonathan Larson, UK Entomologist
- *Perennial Vegetables for Home Garden*
Carrie Spry, Clark County Horticulture Agent

~ Meal sponsored by Clark County Extension ~

**MARK
YOUR
CALENDAR**



College of Agriculture,
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To register, call the Clark County Extension Office at 859-744-4682
or email Cynthia Carr at cynthia.carr@uky.edu

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SKUNKS!

Source: Thomas G. Barnes,
Extension Wildlife Specialist



Sharing the Road with Motorists

In Kentucky skunks are often killed on the roads during February because of their mating habits. The mating season begins in late January and continues through February, resulting in kits in May and June. During breeding season males of this mostly nocturnal species wander between four and five miles each night. These randy raccoons move slowly and resist fleeing from danger, which results in a high incidence of animals being hit by cars. Many motorists note the increase of animals (and odor) on roads and along roadsides during these weeks.

Members of the weasel family, skunks are beneficial, but because of the noxious and unmistakable odor they emit when provoked, they are unpopular and even feared. They can be found in a wide variety of settings, from woodlots to hayfields to cities, throughout Kentucky. They are opportunistic, eating plant and animal material, including insects and small animals such as mice, rats and shrews. Skunks do occasionally kill poultry and eat eggs, but because they mostly consume what are considered vermin (rats, shrews, moles, etc.), the accepted course is to leave them alone in their habitat.

Skunks can become an issue when they take up residence in close proximity to dwellings, for example, under the front porch or start digging underneath foundations. They also can get into trash cans, beehives and henhouses, where they can do damage.

In addition to their offensive odor, skunks are susceptible



to rabies, a serious viral infection they can transmit to other mammals and humans through biting. Great care should be taken to keep children, pets and livestock away from skunks. Pets and livestock should be vaccinated against rabies. If you are bitten by a skunk, capture the animal and submit it, with head intact, to your public health department for testing. Scrub the wound with warm, soapy water for a minimum of 20 minutes. Seek medical attention immediately. Your local public health authorities, physician and veterinarian can provide more information on rabies.

The best option to prevent interaction with skunks is to make your house, barns or farm less attractive to them. Use wire mesh and fencing to keep animals away from dwellings; promptly remove extraneous attractions such as pet food, animal feed, garbage or sheltering debris that will bring skunks to your property.

Skunks are beneficial, eating agricultural and garden pests. Since skunks eat large numbers of grubs and can damage lawns, some folks might want to see if they have a grub problem and if so, treat that problem. Habitat modification can limit problems with skunks, but the recommended method is to leave them alone. Skunk musk, while off-putting, is usually simply a means of self-defense.

For more information on skunks, contact the Clark Cooperative Extension Service at 859-744-4682.



We have several upcoming horticulture classes scheduled in April and May at the Clark County Extension Service. Mark your calendar now, so you won't miss out. **Registration for classes will begin in March!**

April 20: Growing Cut Flowers Class - 6:30 pm (There are several easily grown plants that can provide bouquets over a long season. Discussion will include management tips to ensure your success.)

VEGETABLE GARDEN SERIES:

May 4: Introduction - 6:30 pm (Will learn the very basic concepts of growing vegetables and cover specifics on a few basic crops for cool and warm season vegetables.)

May 11: Maintenance - 6:30 pm (Will dive deeper into the maintenance aspect of vegetable garden plots and answer common questions. Topics will include, watering, pest/weed management, and fertilizing.)

May 18: Harvesting & Storage - 6:30 pm (Will cover details about harvesting vegetables and storage of fresh vegetables.)

Don't Forget ... You Can Still Compost in Winter

Source: Faye Kuosman, UK Extension Horticulture Agent



Now that winter is here, are you continuing to compost? Some people give up the exercise in winter due to cold temperatures and will resume again in the spring when it warms up. Just because it is cold outside, you probably still have plenty of compostable kitchen items, and you can continue to successfully compost in winter regardless of the temperature.

Composting provides you with a rich, organic material to spread on your soil to aid in crop growth. Since many compostable items come from leftover food scraps, you are reducing your environmental footprint by keeping unnecessary trash out of the landfills when you compost.

Even if you are new to composting, you can pick up the practice in winter. The decomposition process obviously slows down when the temperatures drop, but it doesn't completely come to a halt, or at least not for long. Bacteria, fungi and other microbes, as well as large decomposers like earthworms and insects, will survive year-round in compost piles. They will begin to break down organic matter when things warm up again.

Decomposition will completely stop when everything in a compost pile is frozen. But if your compost pile or bin is large enough, the organic matter inside should stay warm enough to avoid freezing and will allow decomposition to occur, even in winter.

You might want to gather leaves or pine needles in the fall for use in composting. Leaves and pine needles are excellent brown, carbon-rich materials that can improve compost pile aeration and reduce odors. Stockpile leaves in yard waste bags or bins throughout the year for use later in compost. Try to keep leaves from getting wet and matting together. If you don't have access to large amounts of leaves, try to stockpile other brown materials such as straw, sawdust, woodchips or shredded paper.

It is important to harvest finished compost to make room for the materials you add in winter. Compost can pile up quickly in winter because decomposition is very slow. It is especially important to harvest if you are composting in small bins or tumblers. Compost is ready to use if the original materials are not recognizable and the compost is dark and crumbly with an earthy odor. Compost can be spread on your garden, or saved for use in the spring. It may be helpful to keep the finished compost in containers with lids or cover with a tarp to keep it from getting wet.

Do not worry about turning the compost pile in winter, like you would in the warmer months. Turning it in winter will result in heat loss in the interior of the pile. It will slow the decomposition process. Instead wait until spring to turn the pile when it is completely thawed.

Contact the Clark County Extension Office at 859-744-4682, for information on composting in winter.

Be a Hero, give the gift of 4-H Summer Camp

Please consider giving the gift of 4-H Summer Camp to a Clark County child this year. Full camp cost is \$275 and with an Extension District Board contribution we will be charging \$240. We anticipate taking over 260 Clark County youth to camp this summer!

If you would like to sponsor the Clark County 4-H Camping program by providing a donation you can do so by check (to Clark County 4-H) or through our online store: <http://clarkcounty4h.square.site/>

Thank you in advance for your generosity and commitment to Clark County youth!





- 1 The spring window for seeding lawns is mid February through mid March.
- 2 Continue to monitor house plants for pest problems.
- 3 Don't forget water for the birds in winter!
- 4 Now is time to start seedlings indoors. Wait until late February to start quick crops like tomatoes. Check your [ID-128](#) for more details.
- 5 Have your soil tested NOW for spring gardens. (Turn around times are expected to be longer this year)
- 6 Bring branches of early blooming spring shrubs indoors for forcing. Good candidates are Forsythia, Flowering Quince, Flowering Cherries, and early blooming Magnolias.
- 7 Prune large shade trees now. If late in the month, some bleeding may occur but this is no cause for concern.
- 8 Plan to prune fruit trees this month. A day with temperatures above 40 degrees will allow you to spray them with dormant oil, which will take care of many overwintering insect pests.
- 9 Shop local garden stores now for best selection of seeds. Complete any mail orders for seeds as newer varieties will sell out quickly. Select varieties with disease resistance where possible.
- 10 Plan to rotate crops in this year's vegetable garden. You want to avoid not only growing the same plant in last year's location but any related plant from that family. Ideally try to set up a four year rotation for each family and plot. (for example, grow other unrelated crops for three years before you plant tomatoes in the same location again) This makes a big difference in the amount of disease pressure.

what's
cooking



Twice-Baked Acorn Squash

- **2 medium** acorn squash (1 - 1 1/2 pounds)
- Nonstick cooking spray
- **2 cups** fresh spinach, chopped
- **4 strips** turkey bacon, cooked and crumbled
- **1/2 cup** grated parmesan cheese
- **1** thinly sliced green onion
- **1 tablespoon** olive oil
- **2 teaspoons** garlic powder
- **1/2 teaspoon** salt
- **1/4 teaspoon** black pepper
- **1/4 teaspoon** nutmeg

Wash hands with warm water and soap, **scrubbing** for at least 20 seconds. **Preheat** oven to 350 degrees F. **Cut** squash in half; **discard** seeds. **Place** squash flesh side down on a baking sheet **coated** with nonstick cooking spray. **Bake** for 50 to 55 minutes or until tender. **Carefully scoop out** squash, leaving a 1/4-inch-thick shell. **In a large bowl, combine** the squash pulp with the remaining ingredients. **Spoon into shells. Bake** at 350 degrees F for 25 to 30 minutes or until heated through and top is golden brown. **Store** leftovers in the refrigerator within two hours.

Yield: 4 servings.
Serving size: 1/2 of an acorn squash.

Nutrition Analysis: 210 calories, 9g total fat, 3g saturated fat, 25mg cholesterol, 710mg sodium, 27g total carbohydrate, 4g fiber, 1g total sugars, 0g added sugars, 9g protein, 0% DV vitamin D, 15% DV calcium, 15% DV iron, 20% DV potassium.

