

Horticulture Newsletter

November 2024

"From the Ground Up"

1400 Fortune Drive
Winchester, KY 40391

Call Us:
+859-744-4682

More Info:
<https://clark.ca.uky.edu/>
clark.ext@uky.edu



A Word from the Agent . . .



Happy November my nifty neighbors! I hope this finds you doing well and looking forward to the coming holidays! I've been so busy fighting off the stink bugs, that it feels like November snuck up on us! You'll soon need to be preparing yourself for WINTER. Let me tell you, the older I get the more I don't like winter. But every season is there for a reason, so I'll hush up about it!

For now I want you to be cleaning out the veggie gardens to close them up for winter, mowing up the fallen leaves or composting them, and if you have any diseased perennials, you can cut them back so that it lessens the amount of disease sitting there all winter.

Lastly, I would like to wish my hubby a happy birthday! I'll spare him from fully identifying which day in November it is, but I hope it's a great one for you dear!

Ya'll call me or email me with your questions and I'll help you out!

Carrie Spry

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



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Clark / Powell Beekeepers Association Meeting

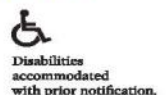
Monday, November 11
6:30 pm

Clark County Extension Service
1400 Fortune Drive, Winchester, Kentucky

~ POT-LUCK MEAL ~

Zoom option available for those who cannot attend in person. Call 859-744-4682 to be added to the email list to receive the link.

We are CLOSED on the following days:
NOVEMBER 5: Presidential Election Day
NOVEMBER 28 & 29: Thanksgiving Holiday



How Bugs Get Ready for Winter

As the season continues to cool, life outside is preparing for the cold. This includes the insects and spiders who must be able to survive exposure to freezing and sub-freezing temperatures. Insect development and survivorship is at the whim of the climate around them, in particular, temperature drives their lives. Some folks may be hoping that Old Man Winter will provide some free pest control in December or January. Unfortunately, insects have adapted many ways of mitigating the effects of cold and will be able to survive thanks to these “overwintering strategies.” When it comes to dealing with cold, there are two main ways for an insect to survive- either get away from the cold area completely or find local shelter that will provide some shielding.



Figure 1: Monarch butterflies are some of the most famous migrating insects. They pack their bags every autumn to fly to Mexico from the northern United States. This extravagant overwintering strategy is something many people enjoy watching as the butterflies fly through town. (Photo: Jonathan Larson, UK)

Migration

Some insects may behave similarly to human “snowbirds” and simply leave when things start to get cold. Migration is a great way to not get cold, as a species you will simply go somewhere warmer! One of the most famous examples of this behavior is the monarch butterfly (Figure 1). In the autumn, these

orange and black beauties will start to fly south from northern states, progressively moving towards Mexico. Once they arrive in Mexico, they fly towards the oyamel fir forests north of Mexico City where they will cluster together until spring. Another butterfly species, the painted lady, also migrates long distances and dragonflies are also noted for logging in a lot of frequent flier miles in response to cold.

Cold Tolerance

If they don’t pack up and go, then insects are still going to need to survive the winter to get populations restarted the next spring. For many species, this will mean finding an area that can protect them from cold air temperatures. It is important to point out that all species of insects have a lower lethal temperature, meaning there is a cold temperature that will kill them. Insects can’t warm their own bodies; their body temperature is dictated by their local climate. However, there is also a set amount of time that they must stay at that

temperature for death to set in. If their temperature rises above that lower lethal temp, then the clock resets and they may survive. This gives scientists a freezing equation of temperature and time to know when bugs might die from cold.

Some insects may prepare for the cold and ultimately can survive being frozen. These species can produce natural anti-freezes that prevent them from freezing solid or lowering the normal lethal temperature. Other species may be able to control where ice crystals ultimately form in their body. They would let their fat bodies freeze for example rather than their digestive system.

If these freeze tolerance methods aren’t in their toolbox, an insect species is going to have to find a way to keep warm in a chilling environment. One trick bugs use is to go into winter as either eggs or pupae, stages of life that require much less food and are already semi protected. Mother bugs may lay their eggs in leaf litter, down in the soil, or provide extra protection. Bagworms and spotted lanternflies are good examples of moms that go the extra mile. Female bagworms never leave their bag-like construction, they lay their eggs inside with them and then perish (Figure 2). The bag then keeps those eggs slightly warmer than they would be outside. Spotted lanternfly females will “spray” a substance on top of their eggs, which helps the eggs to survive the winter.

Pupating insects often burrow into soil or leaf litter to finish the job. Once covered, they have a natural blanket between them and the cold air temps. Wood boring pests can also be highlighted as they are inside of a tree, under the bark and are rarely exposed to the frigid cold that may be hovering just outside their tree.

Some species may go into winter as adults. Brown marmorated stink bugs, multicolored Asian lady beetles, and boxelder bugs are some famous examples. Part of their fame is due to their penchant for using human buildings for their overwintering habitat. Instead of their usual hiding under logs or stones, they have found our homes to be deluxe, heated hideaways! This intersection of insect winter ecology and humanity can be quite annoying.



Figure 2: Bagworm bags are made of insect silk and materials from the host tree (bits of leaves and needles mostly) and provide protection for the caterpillar inside the bug for the summer. In the winter though, some bags will contain eggs that are protected by the bag as well. (Photo: Jonathan Larson, UK)

Pest Proofing Your Home

If you have a history of dealing with winter infestations, your house most likely represents an ideal overwintering site to them. It may be down to the height of your home, its geographic situation, or even the color of the exterior. The best thing you can do for these issues is to pest proof the home as best as you can.

- Inspect your home and check for cracks around windows, doors, pipes, and chimneys and seal openings with silicone or silicone-latex caulk. You can consult another KPN article for more information on pest-proofing and using insecticides on the outside of the home.
- If you find insects congregating on the exterior of your home, you can spray them with soapy

water to kill them before they get inside.

- When stinkbugs or lady beetles are discovered inside, simply vacuum up living specimens and dispose of them outside.
- Using bug bombs or other insecticides in the home will not help to deal with the lady beetles and will only serve to expose the people inside to residues. An exterior application of a perimeter insecticide may help to exclude some of these pests. This should be done with a pest control professional or by using a registered product (for example, Orthro Home Defense) and strictly following the label instructions.

By Jonathan L. Larson, Entomology Extension Specialist



Groundhog Radish Cover Crop

Covered soil is happy soil and happy soil means happy plants! Keeping the soil covered over the winter is very important for maintaining and even improving soil health. Soil that is covered over the winter will be less compacted and maintain more nutrients as it is less prone to experiencing soil runoff or erosion.

As you know, we LOVE cover cropping for winter soil protection and hope that you took advantage of this year's winter kill mix (which should already be planted!). However, we know that several folks opted out of the winter kill cover crop so we want to offer some other options that can be implemented this month:

- **Plant a root-based cover crop:** turnip, groundhog radish or Hakurei Turnips will all cover the soil and send their large tap roots down into the soil helping break up those big clay chunks, naturally decreasing soil compaction over the winter. Plus these crops can either be harvested for food OR turned into the soil for added organic matter in the spring.
- **Cover your soil with fallen leaves:** a heavy layer of chopped-up leaves from your yard can add a good layer of organic matter to your soil. When tilled into your garden in the spring, these leaves will add organic matter that can mix with the clay for added "fluff" to your soil. Just be aware of the leaf type. Pine needles and Walnut leaves can add a lot of acid to your soil making it inhospitable for most vegetables.
- **Cover your soil with wood chips, straw or mulch:** These materials are great at providing cover for your soil to decrease compaction and erosion caused by wet winter weather. Plus they can either be used as a weed barrier (when applied 2-3" thick) in the spring OR be tilled into the soil to add organic matter to your soil. Finally, all of these materials are great insulators so that the soil will stay warmer, meaning you can plant earlier in the spring.
- **Cover your soil with manure:** Animal manure (only from herbivores, like horses, cows, goats, rabbits) can be a great option for soil coverage over the winter. Just like the fallen leaves and mulches, manure adds a lot of great nutrients and organic matter into your garden BUT it comes with extra risks. Manure should be aged at least 6 months to protect both you and your plants from any pathogens. If you plan on adding manure ask how long it has been sitting before applying it to your garden and plan to do your first planting 6 months later. You can also purchase finished manure at many lawn and garden centers which will ensure that the manure is safe for use.

~ Covered soil is happy soil, so be sure to do your garden and favor and cover it up this winter. ~



Getting Trees and Shrubs Ready for Winter

By: Ken Johnson,
Horticulture Educator
with University of Illinois

The leaves are dropping off trees, and many of us are putting our gardens to bed for winter. While preparing the garden for winter, spend a little time preparing your trees and shrubs, too. Doing a few simple things this fall can help protect them from damage this winter and get them off to a good start next spring.

~ Watering doesn't stop when summer is over

Given the dry conditions we've had across much of the state this year, make sure trees and shrubs have adequate water. Continue to water trees and shrubs (if we don't get enough rain) until the ground freezes. Since temperatures are cooling and plants are using less water, they won't need to be watered as frequently as in warmer parts of the year, maybe every other week.

Providing adequate moisture to trees and shrubs will help reduce their stress and damage from winter weather. This is especially important for newly planted trees since they are unlikely to have an extensive root system and evergreens.

Evergreens keep their leaves year-round and are more likely to suffer winter desiccation (also known as winter burn). Desiccation is caused when plants lose moisture faster than they can take it up. This will result in discolored and damaged plant leaves and tip dieback. Having well-watered trees and shrubs and adequate soil moisture can go a long way in preventing winter desiccation. Additionally, roots surrounded by moist soil are less likely to suffer cold injury compared to those in dry soils.

~ Protection from desiccation

In addition to adequate soil moisture, evergreens in very exposed sites may benefit from additional protection to prevent winter desiccation. These plants can be wrapped loosely in burlap, or a windbreak can be constructed.

Anti-transpirants are commonly recommended to help prevent desiccation in evergreen plants. These products are wax-like materials sprayed onto plants'

leaves to slow water loss. In addition to slowing water loss, they can also reduce gas exchange in plants (they're still photosynthesizing), which can negatively affect growth.

Before applying an anti-desiccant product, make sure to read the label. Applying incorrectly can cause plants to be damaged. Additionally, some products should only be used on broadleaf and needled evergreens, not on evergreens with scale-like leaf foliage such as arborvitae.

While anti-transpirants may help a little in preventing winter desiccation, they aren't a replacement for making sure your plants are well-watered and protected if they are in exposed locations.

~ Mulching plants

Mulching trees and shrubs is also beneficial when preparing them for winter. Mulch will help retain soil moisture and help prevent rapid fluctuations in soil temperature. Organic-based mulches, such as wood chips, are preferred because, in addition to the above benefits, they will also slowly break down and add nutrients to the soil.

When applying mulch, put down a 2- to 4-inch-deep layer, ideally out to the tree's drip line. Additionally, make sure it is not piled up on the plant's trunk (mulch should look like a donut, not a volcano). Mulch piled up against a tree trunk creates an ideal environment for diseases, insects, and rodents.

~ Don't be too quick to prune

While cleaning up the garden, there is often a temptation to prune trees and shrubs. Don't be in too big of a hurry, though. Pruning in late summer and fall will often encourage plants to produce new growth. This new growth won't have enough time to harden off before winter arrives and will be damaged or killed. The only pruning that should be done on trees and shrubs in the fall is to remove dead or damaged branches. Otherwise, wait to do any other pruning, such as removing crossing and rubbing branches, until the trees are fully dormant (winter).



Keeping Your Houseplants Happy During Wintertime



Even though your houseplants do not have to deal with the cold like your garden does, you should still change how you care for them this season, ensuring they stay healthy and continue to grow well. Following these tips, your leafy friends will bring lushness and natural beauty into your home, even in winter.

- Decrease watering**
In general, less light means less water. Plants need less water in the winter because they don't get as much sunlight, compared to spring and summer. To test soil moisture, push your finger into the potting soil at least one inch deep. If the soil is dry, water thoroughly. It is better to water plants well less often than water just a little bit every day. In the winter, it is possible that you will only need to water once every two to three weeks.
- Pay attention to the Sun**
If possible, move your plants closer to the windows. If they're on the ground, put them on a plant stand. Every week or two, rotate the pots to ensure all sides of the plants get some sunlight.
- It's okay if a few leaves fall off**
Plants outside over the summer will probably lose some leaves when they come back inside. This is normal because they are getting used to the lower light levels inside. It's normal for plants that stay inside all year to lose a few leaves as winter approaches. This is just their way of getting ready for less light.
- Avoid temperature extremes**
Keep plants away from cold drafts, radiators and hot air vents. Sudden hot or cold drafts can kill plants, stress them out, or dry them out.
- Put the fertilizer on hold**
Winter is a time for most houseplants to rest. They don't need fertilizer because they usually aren't actively growing. In the fall, stop fertilizing and start back up again in the spring when plants get more sunlight and start growing again.
- Scan for pests**
If you are bringing plants inside for the winter, be sure to check the leaves, stems and soil surface for pests. Wipe leaves down with a wet cloth or remove pests by hand before bringing the plants inside. Small bugs that feed on sap, like aphids and scales, tend to show up more in the winter. Another common winter pest is the spider mite which likes warm, dry places to live. When watering, flip the leaves over and look at the undersides and along the stems. If you find bugs, use your fingers or damp cloth to remove them. Neem oil and insecticidal soap may be options for managing houseplant pests. With any product, be sure to read the entire label for application instructions and precautions.
- Increase the humidity**
In the winter, the air inside our heated homes is often drier. Most houseplants, especially those from tropical areas, do best when the humidity is between 40 and 50%. However, in the winter, most homes have humidity levels between 10 and 20%. Putting plants close together is an easy way to make the air around them more humid. Plants can also be put on trays with pebbles and water to make the air more humid. To keep the roots from rotting, pot bottoms should be above the water. As the water evaporates, it makes the air around your houseplants more humid. Keep plants away from vents with blowing air.



Gus'

QUICK TIPS

for

November

1 Although we are past the best time for seeding, lawns will 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 2.5 inches tall. Continue to mow lawns as late as needed, but always wait till the frost has melted!

3 Remove small piles of leaves from lawns by mowing and mulching them. Mulched leaves can be highly beneficial to the lawn, however piles of leaves left on the lawn can damage the turf.

4 Too many leaves to mow and mulch? 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.

5 Winterize your equipment! Clean, sharpen, and oil your tools when you are finished with them for the season. This will have them ready to go for the next year. Also, make sure to drain or add fuel stabilizer to gasoline powered equipment.

6 If you have not dug and stored tender bulbs like dahlias, cannas, and gladiolus, you need to do

so before the ground freezes.

7 Clean up peony foliage if you have had any of the leaf spotting diseases. This will help prevent/lessen the problem for next year.

8 Drain and store garden hoses and irrigation systems.

9 November is an excellent time to plant fall bulbs for next spring. Examples would be daffodils, hyacinth, tulips, and even muscari.

10 Plant paperwhites, amaryllis and other ready to bloom bulbs for the holidays. These plants can make wonderful gifts as well!

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. Once your garden is clean, add a thin layer of compost or some form of organic matter to protect it for the winter.

13 Monitor houseplants for insect problems. Most common pests can be controlled if detected before they become major infestations.

RECIPE

What's Cooking?



Kale and Potato Soup

4 **teaspoons** olive oil
1 **chopped** yellow onion
3 **cloves** garlic, minced
1 **box** (48 ounce) low-sodium chicken broth

6 **red** potatoes, diced
1/2 **cup** chopped carrot
4 **cups** shredded kale
1/2 **pound** cooked chicken breast, shredded

1/4 **teaspoon** black pepper

1. In a large saucepan, **heat** the olive oil over medium heat for 1 minute. **Add** chopped onion and garlic and **cook** uncovered for 5 minutes.

2. **Add** chicken broth, potatoes and carrot; cover and bring to a boil.

3. **Reduce heat** and simmer for 20 minutes.

4. **Mix** in the kale, chicken and black pepper. **Cover and simmer** for 15

minutes or until kale is tender.

Yield: 6, 1 1/2 cup servings.

Nutritional Analysis:
270 calories, 5 g fat, 1 g saturated fat, 25 mg cholesterol, 210 mg sodium, 43 g carbohydrate, 5 g fiber, 15 g protein.

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

