

MARCH 2025



HORTICULTURE NEWSLETTER

“FROM THE GROUND UP”

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 March my friends! This is the month that winter MARCHES right on out.....isn't it?? I hope it is at least! I predict winter to show off again in March, but hopefully nothing like it did in January. I don't know about you, but I'm ready to get my garden going and not be chipping ice any more.

Enough of that though! Time change this month, yayy! Now is a great time to seed lawns if it's needed. Turf-type tall fescue is the best option. Also, be sure to watch this newsletter for upcoming classes! I have some highly requested topics on the class list for this year, so be sure to check every month for what the next class is going to be!

Lastly, if you don't already, consider listening to Winchester's local radio show 'Mornings on Main'. Tune in to 102.9FM or 990AM starting at 7:00 am each weekday morning to learn about all the local things going on with Ed Burtner. You might even hear some of your favorite Extension friends on there once in a while! See you around the county



Clark / Powell Beekeepers Association

Monday, March 10
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.

Carrie Spry

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

KEEPING YOU
Informed



March 9, 2025
SET YOUR CLOCKS
Daylight Saving Time begins. Turn clocks ahead one hour.

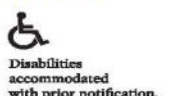
Check batteries in your smoke detectors, too.

Cooperative Extension Service

Agriculture and Natural Resources
Family and Consumer Sciences
4-H Youth Development
Community and Economic Development

MARTIN-GATTON COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND ENVIRONMENT

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Composting with Worms



By: Ken Johnson

Horticulture Educator with University of Illinois

Has this cold, dreary weather been making you wish you could get outside and play in the 'dirt'? Or perhaps you're looking for ways to improve your garden soil during the winter. Worm composting, or vermicomposting, is a good way to accomplish both of these. In addition to producing compost, it's also a great way to put those kitchen scraps to use.

What is vermicomposting?

Vermicomposting uses various species of worms, typically red wigglers (*Eisenia fetida*), to decompose organic waste such as food scraps. As worms eat, they produce castings, aka worm compost, vermicompost, or worm manure. Castings are small, dark clumps that can be used as a soil amendment. It is also a great option for winter composting when our outside pile has become dormant.

Getting started with vermicomposting

Getting started with vermicomposting is relatively easy to do. There are a variety of kits that can be purchased, or you can make your own. All you need to make your own vermicomposting bin is a plastic storage bin (worms don't like light, so do not use a clear container) with holes drilled in the sides. A 10-gallon bin is a good size to start with. Drill ½ inch holes in the sides of the bin and lid so the worms can breathe. Then, cover the holes with window screening so they don't escape.

A bedding material will need to be added to your bin. The bedding should be a nontoxic material that holds moisture but also allows air to circulate. Some materials that can be used include newspaper (make sure not to use glossy paper), paper bags, cardboard, decaying leaves, or coconut coir. If using paper, tear it into half-inch-wide strips and soak in water for several minutes. Then remove the paper and wring it out; it should be slightly wetter than a moist sponge (this goes for any bedding material you may be using). Fluff the paper up and fill the bin halfway.

The worms will eat the bedding, so more will need to be added over time. Keep the bedding moist; using a plant mister is a good way to do this. Finally, add a handful of soil to the newspaper. This will introduce microorganisms that will aid in the composting process.

Adding and feeding your worms

Once your bin is set up, it's time to add some worms. Red wigglers are widely considered the best worms to

use. They burrow horizontally and stay near the soil surface, only burrowing 3-8 inches deep. The worms you typically find in the garden or after a good rainstorm, like night crawlers, burrow deep into the soil and are not good for vermicomposting indoors. You will need around a pound of worms (about 1,000) for your bin.

Worms will eat almost any fruit and vegetable scrap you give them, such as apples, bananas, carrots, coffee grounds, and even eggshells (avoid citrus, though). Do not feed your worms meat, dairy products, or oily foods. They won't eat them, and the food will spoil.

When adding food to your bin, use small pieces; the worms will break them down faster and rotate where you place the food around the bin so it is distributed throughout the bin. It's also helpful to bury the food in the bedding; this gives the worms better access to the food and can help prevent fruit flies from getting into the bin. Covering food with damp paper bedding can also help to prevent fruit flies. Feed your worms as needed; once established, red wigglers can eat up to half their weight in food daily.

Harvesting your worm compost, aka castings

After a few months, you should have some worm compost to harvest. Several methods can be used to harvest worm compost:

- With the divide and sort method, stop feeding the worms, move the old bedding to one side of the bin, and add fresh bedding and food to the other. The worms will move to the new bedding, and you can harvest your compost.
- Dump the bin onto a plastic sheet and place a bright light over it. The worms will try to get away from the light and burrow to the bottom of the pile. Once they have moved the compost from the top and sides of the pile can be harvested.
- Stop feeding the worms; eventually, they will die, and you can harvest your compost.

Once you have your new compost, it can be used in potting soil for your houseplants, outdoor plants, or vegetable garden. It can also be stored in an airtight container to be used later and can last up to six months or more when properly stored (dark, moist but not wet, and avoid temperature fluctuations).



UK Cooperative Extension Service

VEGETABLE GARDENING CLASS

Thursday, March 27
***6:30 pm**
Clark County Extension Service



(*Due to amount of information, class will last longer than 1 hour)



Pre-registered attendees will take home a surprise assortment of things to plant in their vegetable garden!



This year's vegetable class is an all-in-one class. We will cover the basics on every step of vegetable gardening from how to begin, how to plant, proper maintenance, and harvesting. We will also cover some crop specifics if time allows.

To register:  859-744-4682  cynthia.carr@uky.edu

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Disabilities accommodated with prior notification.



Tree Seedling Give-A-Way

The Clark County Conservation District will be holding its annual Tree Seedling Give-A-Way. The seedlings consist of:

- Pawpaw
- Shellbark Hickory
- Hazelnut
- Eastern Redbud
- Red Shumard Oak
- White Pine
- Pin Oak
- Pecan
- Persimmon
- White Oak

Wednesday, March 26

8:30 am to 4:00 pm


(or as supplies last)



Clark County Conservation District

(667 Tech Drive; Winchester, KY)

The seedlings will be given away free on a first come / first serve basis, with a limit of 15 per person. Please bring wet newspaper or cloth and a plastic bat to transport seedlings to ensure that the roots will stay moist.

 Cooperative Extension Service

Cost: \$50.00

HOMEBASED MICROPROCESSING WORKSHOP



Thursday, March 27, 2025

9:30 am - 2:30 pm

Clark County Extension Service

**In-Person
and
Virtual**

REGISTRATION:

<https://ukfcs.net/HBM>

Click on the workshop on the right side, fill out form choosing in-person or virtual.



SOIL TESTING

Prepare for spring planting by getting your soil tested. Nutrient and acidity levels in soil are analyzed so adequate fertilizer and lime recommendations can be made. Your report for a routine soil test will show the amount of Phosphorus, Potassium, Calcium, Magnesium, Zinc, pH and buffer PH.

You may stop by the Extension Office between the hours of 8:00 am to 4:30 pm, Monday thru Friday, to pick up a soil probe and soil bags. There is NO CHARGE for soil testing!

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CORRECTLY PLANT TREES, SHRUBS TO AVOID FUTURE PROBLEMS

By: Carrie Spry, Clark County Horticulture Agent

As spring approaches, many of us have an urge to get out and work in the yard. If you plan to add new trees and shrubs to the landscape, correctly plant them to help ensure that the plants and your investments of money, time and labor thrive for decades to come.

It's important to match the correct plant or tree with the site. There is not a plant that exists that is adaptable to all climates and soil types. If you're not familiar with the growing requirements for a particular shrub or tree, first talk with a professional; then go over the suggestions to make sure these meet your needs. Also, get a professional to help if you lack experience in picking out vigorous, healthy plant materials. All of us plant lovers have been a victim of buying first, then determining if we can meet its needs later.

Having a diverse group of shrubs and trees will slow the spread of diseases and insects and help ensure a healthy plant community.

Now that you've selected the plants and trees, you can do some things to ensure that they become re-established in their new homes and flourish for years to come.

Diameter of the planting hole is especially important. The hole should be at least twice the diameter of the soil ball, even wider if the soil is heavy. And never plant the tree or shrub deeper than it previously grew. Poke around soil at the base of the trunk to be sure the soil hasn't been inadvertently piled up at the base of the plant. You want to see a root flare at the base of the trunk. If the plant is balled and burlapped, use the soil line on the trunk as an indicator of how deeply to plant it.

Although it might be easier on you, never pick up a plant by its trunk because the weight of the soil can put too much strain on roots, causing them to break or tear.

Gently place the plant in the hole at the correct depth. If it's enclosed in natural jute burlap, pull the covering back and remove the twine. It's critical to remove

burlap if you believe any plastic might be in this material. Otherwise, it will be like trying to get the plant to grow in a container for the remainder of its life -- and this will be a short life. For extra safe measures, I like to remove all burlap regardless.

Backfill the hole with soil you removed from it, minus any rocks or other foreign material. Don't add peat moss, compost or other amendments to soil going back into the hole. This is especially important in heavy clay, poor soils. Just break up the soil as best you can before placing it back in the hole. Gently pack soil around the plant ball and water soil in halfway through the planting process; then fill the rest of the hole without packing the soil and water again.

Afterwards, put mulch around the shrub or tree to a depth of 2 inches, but no deeper. Piling mulch around the trunk in a volcano-like fashion will cause bark decay and disease problems.

It's generally not necessary to stake trees, unless they were bought as bare-root plants. Unstaked trees grow better because the trunk diameter develops faster and the tree produces a more vigorous root system. If you do stake trees, be sure the stakes don't come into contact with the trunk because this rubbing will create an entry site for diseases and insects.

Water is the most important thing a newly planted shrub or tree will need to become re-established. So water once a week for the first year. Apply water to a depth of about one inch each time, or enough to wet the soil to a depth of five to six inches.

It's not necessary to fertilize newly transplanted trees and shrubs for the first year or two. Fertilizing too soon causes more vegetative growth than the root system can supply with water and nutrients





Gus'

QUICK TIPS

for

March

- 1 If you need to sow grass seed, first half of the month is ideal but you can seed all month with reasonable results. Turf type tall fescue is THE best choice for our area in all conditions.
- 2 Feed flower bulbs a balanced fertilizer now to promote nice blooms next year. Do not cut leaves down after flowering. They provide food for the plant, so let them die naturally.
- 3 Vegetable gardens are awakening. Only work soil when the conditions are right. To help determine this, squeeze a handful of soil into a ball and drop it from waist height. If it crumbles easily the soil is dry enough to work. If not, wait for drier times as wet soils form hard clods.
- 4 Remove old stems from rhubarb and asparagus and fertilize with nitrogen, compost or rotted manure.
- 5 Time to plant cool crops in the garden. These include: asparagus, beets, broccoli plants, cabbage plants, carrots, chard, collards, kale, lettuce seed and plants, onions, peas, potatoes, radishes, spinach, and turnips.
- 6 Spring is the time to repot houseplants that are in need of it. Do not increase the pot size to drastically though. Also, start feeding houseplants a weak fertilizer solution (one quarter strength).
- 7 Plant pansies and other cold tolerant flowers to help liven up your landscape beds.
- 8 Use sunny days to begin bed clean up, but be careful not to tread on emerging plants.
- 9 Cut back perennials and ornamental grasses before they emerge this year. Most grasses can be divided at this time as well, if needed. But get your muscles ready, grasses can be very woody almost and may require an ax.
- 10 Prune and fertilize brambles and blueberries.
- 11 Clean out birdhouses or if you don't have any, now is the perfect time to hang a few.
- 12 Seeds of hardy annuals such as larkspur, bachelor's buttons, Shirley and California poppies should be direct sown in the garden now.
- 13 Spray peach trees with a fungicide for the control of peach leaf curl diseases. See HO-57 for more info on peaches.



RECIPE

What's Cooking?



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
¾ 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, ¾ 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 ¾ 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.

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

