

February 2010

HORTICULTURE



Franklin County Winter School

The Franklin County Winter School is a time honored tradition in Franklin County that provides educational updates and local interaction for farmers, farmers market producers, vegetable and fruit producers, master gardeners, and homeowners. This annual series of free* learning sessions takes place in the winter months of February and March, when much less is going on outside on the farm and in the garden.



This school was developed by former long-term, Franklin County Agriculture Agent, Paul Gray, to address the needs of the farmers and keep them up to date on the best practices for production of agronomic crops and livestock. Over time, as tobacco has become a less viable option in this county, and farming needs have changed,

Winter School has brought new ideas and options for different types of farming and gardening practices to the citizens of Franklin County and the region. Winter School is a joint effort of the Franklin County Agriculture and Natural Resources and Horticulture programs.

Winter School is held every Thursday evening starting February 4th and continuing through March 24th. Beginning at 7:00 p.m. and lasting until around 9:00 pm, we will gather together at the Extension Office for information, fellowship and refreshments. Farmers' Bank & Capitol Trust of Frankfort and Farm Credit Services of Shelbyville graciously sponsor the refreshments for Winter School. Be sure and thank them for their support!

For more information contact the Extension Office. Hope to see YOU at Franklin County Winter School!

*There is a fee of \$5.00 for the March 11th Beef Quality Assurance Certification program.

The Schedule

- ♣ February 4: Ric Bessin, UK Entomolgy; Beneficial Insects and IPM for Farm and Garden
- ♣ February 11, John Strang, UK Horticulture; Small Fruit & Berry Production
- ♣ February 18, Andy McDonald, Ky Solar Partnership; Alternative Energy Solutions
- ♣ February 25, Joel Schrader, Franklin Co Beekeepers Association; Basic Beekeeping (continued on page 2)

Happy Groundhog Day- or Not?

Happy Groundhog day! For many people, this is a nice, little holiday, reminding us that spring may be just around the corner. However, for others, it is a reminder that the cute, furry little animal can be a huge problem! These common creatures are also known as woodchucks or whistle pigs. Woodchucks are members of the squirrel family. When these heavy-bodied rodents are surprised, they emit a loud, shrill whistle and dive into a burrow; hence the name whistle pig.



According to Wikipedia, perhaps the earliest known American reference to Groundhog Day can be found at the Historical Society of Berks County in Reading, Pennsylvania. The reference was made Feb. 4, 1841 in Morgantown, Berks County, Pennsylvania storekeeper James Morris' diary: "Last Tuesday, the 2nd, was Candlemas day, the day on which, according to the Germans, the Groundhog peeps out of his winter quarters and if he sees his shadow he pops back for another six weeks nap, but if the day be cloudy he remains out, as the weather is to be moderate." (The Folklore of American Holidays, ed. H. Cohen and T.P. Coffin (1987), page 57) In the United States the tradition derives from a Scottish poem:


*As the light grows longer
The cold grows stronger
If Candlemas be fair and bright
Winter will have another flight
If Candlemas be cloud and snow
Winter will be gone and not come again
A farmer should on Candlemas day* (continued on page 3)

- ♣ March 4, Tom Priddy, UK Meteorologist; Farm Ag Weather Services
- ♣ March 11, Keenan Bishop, Franklin Co Ag Agent; Beef Quality Assurance Certification
- ♣ March 18 Robert Fehr, UK Biosystems and Ag Engineering; Energy Efficiency In Homes
- ♣ March 25, Delia Scott, UK Horticulture and Ben Abell, UK Sustainable Horticulture; Organic Fruit and Vegetable Production.



Keeping Bees in Kentucky

Thomas Webster, apiculture research and extension specialist, Land Grant Program, Kentucky State University; Phil Craft, Kentucky State Apiarist, Kentucky Department of Agriculture



Honey bees serve a vital role by pollinating fruits, vegetables, nuts and seed crops. Livestock, including horses and cattle, consume bee-pollinated crops such as alfalfa. Up to one-third of the

food we consume depends in some way on honey bees. You can also raise these beneficial insects for the fresh honey and wax they produce. Hives located and managed on farm property help pollinate crops that keep Kentucky agriculture thriving. Some beekeepers raise bees simply as a fun family activity or hobby.

In recent years, reports of disappearing pollinators have fueled a growing interest in beekeeping. The steady increase in the number bee schools each year and the Kentuckians attending them is evidence of that. Beekeeping supply companies have reported an increase in sales. The number of beekeeping associations in Kentucky has doubled over the past ten years.

Whether you are a veteran beekeeper or a beginner eager to get started, bee schools offer you a wealth of information on the subject. Kentucky State University and the Kentucky Department of Agriculture team up each winter and spring to offer bee schools in several different locations around the state.

These daylong educational workshops offer sessions for beginning beekeepers; comprehensive step-by-step programs that include everything from

where to buy equipment to tips on harvesting your first honey crop. Experts from North Carolina State University and University of Georgia will address current issues and deliver talks on a variety of specialized subjects at the Frankfort and Bullitt County events.



Beekeeping schools are scheduled in Scottsville, Whitley City, Morehead, Henderson, Bullitt County and Graves County. The largest event is the Bluegrass Beekeeping School at KSU in Frankfort on

March 13, which drew nearly 400 beekeepers and six vendors last year. For a complete list of dates, log onto the Kentucky State Apiarist website at <http://www.kyagr.com/statevet/bees>.



Forcing Branches of Woody Plants Into Flower.

Rick Durham, Consumer Horticulture Extension Specialist, University of Kentucky


Winter can be dreary at times. A few branches of flowers from the garden would give us hope that spring is just around the corner. Why not force some branches from spring-flowering trees and shrubs into flower early? Some plants well suited to forcing include forsythia, red maple, spirea, and dogwood. Others include apples, pears and peaches, as well as crabapples and ornamental pears.

Follow good pruning practices when you remove branches. Prune back to an outward facing bud or remove branches entirely by cutting back to a natural branch point. A first priority for pruning would be branches that appear diseased, crowded, or growing downward. Once you have brought the branches indoors, make a fresh slanted cut at the base of the branch just before you add it to a vase. Place the branches into slightly warm water containing a floral preservative. You can make your own preservative solution with 2 cups lemon-lime soda, 2 cups water, and ½ teaspoon chlorine bleach. Keep the branches in a cool (60-65F) area, away from direct light, and change the solution every 4 or 5 days. Once flower color is evident the branches can be moved to a well-lit room and arranged to suit the occasion.

*Have half his corn and half his hay
On Candlemas day if thorns hang a drop
You can be sure of a good pea crop*

If you are of the mind that the groundhog is a nuisance animal, then Groundhog Day may not be high on your list of celebration days. According to Dr. Tom Barnes, UK Extension Wildlife Specialist, groundhogs are one of the most abundant animals in Kentucky. Woodchucks' extensive burrowing activity provides homes for other game and fur-bearing animals. In some areas, rabbit populations are directly linked to the number of vacant burrows available as denning sites. When woodchucks move from abandoned pastures and odd areas into fields, gardens and orchards, they can damage home gardens or vegetable crops, especially beans, peas, and squash. They can damage fruit trees by gnawing or clawing on the trunk. Their burrowing activities also create holes and mounds of soil, which present hazards to livestock, farm equipment, and humans.

Control is most effective in the spring, when active burrows are easily located. The most effective types of woodchuck control are shooting, trapping, and fumigation. Fencing may help reduce woodchuck damage; however, woodchucks are excellent climbers and can easily crawl over fences. No poisons are registered for controlling woodchucks in Kentucky. Woodchucks are considered a varmint and may be legally shot anytime of the year if they are damaging your property. You must have a valid Kentucky hunting license to shoot any wild animal. Live traps, Conibear traps and steel leg hold traps are effective in capturing woodchucks. Trapping is the best method to use near buildings or where fumigation may create a poison or fire hazard.

Hopefully you will have a warm and happy Groundhog Day! For more information call the Extension Office and ask for publication FOR-44, Managing Woodchuck Problems in Ky, or log onto <http://www.ca.uky.edu/agc/pubs/for/for44/For44.pdf> or <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/nreos/wild/pdf/wildlife/WOODCHUCKS.PDF> 



Don't Wait Till It's Too Late!

A disaster kit can save your life if power and communications are out for several days and not one is able to get to your location. This can happen with widespread severe weather events such as damaging wind... plus winter weather can wreck havoc on travel... power... and communications.



Each year across America there are on average 10,000 thunderstorms, 5,000 floods, 1,000 tornadoes, and 6 named hurricanes. Additionally, about 90 percent of all presiden-

tially declared disasters are weather related, leading to around 500 deaths per year and nearly \$14 billion in damage.

During those events, many people required immediate assistance because of a lack of planning. Others needed assistance only after several days of the hardship.

You can be much better prepared from now on if you put together a Disaster Kit. Once created you rotate the items to make sure that they are fresh 2 times a year. However, the difficult part is often just getting started.

The National Weather Service Office in Paducah, in conjunction with Emergency Managers and other partners, has provided information to help you put together a kit for you and your family. They are encouraging you to not just talk about doing it - but take action.

There are many different lists out there on what you need. They have looked at most of those lists and attempted to take the best from each one. However, this list is just the beginning. You need to take an inventory of what you have and what you might need. Use the lists to get started.

The list is broken up into 3 sections to help make it
Don't Wait Till It's Too Late! (Continued on Page 5)

Sweet Potato Casserole

It's sweet, it's delicious - it's a VEGETABLE?

Level: Medium

Serves 8

Kids' Tool Kit

- Can opener
- Electric mixer
- Casserole dish
- Mixing bowl
- Spoon
- Measuring spoons
- Measuring cups
- Hot pad
- Rubber spatula

- Ingredients:**
- 40 ounces canned sweet potatoes, drained
 - 2 eggs
 - 1/4 cup sugar
 - 3/4 cup evaporated milk (or a 5-ounce can)
 - 1/4 teaspoon salt
 - 1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
 - 2 tablespoons margarine, melted
 - 1/4 cup brown sugar
 - 1/4 cup chopped walnuts, optional



Directions:

Remember to wash your hands!

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Spray 1-quart casserole dish with cooking spray.
3. In a large bowl, combine sweet potatoes and eggs; mash with an electric mixer.
4. Add sugar, milk, salt, nutmeg and margarine. Mix well.
5. Spoon into casserole dish and top with brown sugar and nuts.
6. Bake for 45 to 55 minutes or until set.

Chef's Choice

- Sweet Potato Casserole
- Ham slice
- Fruit cocktail
- Milk

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 3/4 cup (195g)	
Servings Per Container 8	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 240	Calories from Fat 45
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 5g	7%
Saturated Fat 1.5g	7%
Cholesterol 55mg	19%
Sodium 210mg	9%
Total Carbohydrate 45g	15%
Dietary Fiber 4g	14%
Sugars 34g	
Protein 4g	
Vitamin A 170%	Vitamin C 25%
Calcium 10%	Iron 8%
*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.	
	Calories: 2,000 2,500
Total Fat	Less than 65g 80g
Saturated Fat	Less than 20g 25g
Cholesterol	Less than 300mg 300mg
Sodium	Less than 2,400mg 2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate	300g 375g
Dietary Fiber	25g 30g
Calories per gram:	
Fat 9 • Carbohydrate 4 • Protein 4	

Helpful Hints: This is a great recipe for kids to fix as part of a holiday meal. The fun of mashing the canned potatoes and eggs together will attract kids who may otherwise shy away from kitchen fun. The aroma of sugar and spice as it bakes will bring some great compliments to your young cook. More compliments will follow when everyone tastes how delicious it is!

Safety Tip: The texture of these sweet potatoes makes them perfect for very young children, if the nuts are omitted. If kids under age three are coming to dinner, it is probably a good idea to leave the nuts out of this recipe. Nuts can cause choking in very young children - and may cause an allergic reaction, too.

For more information about this and other fun recipes: contact your county extension office or visit the Web site at www.kidsacookin.ksu.edu, or e-mail kidsacookin@ksu.edu.

This institution is an equal opportunity employer. This material was funded by USDA's Food Stamp Program through a contract awarded by the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services. The Food Stamp Program provides nutrition assistance to people with low income. To find out more, contact your local SRS office or call 1-800-221-5689.

Home Hort Hints: Things to do in the landscape in February

Rick Durham, Consumer Horticulture Extension Specialist, University of Kentucky

- Be careful when applying salt for ice removal to driveways and sidewalks. Such material can damage landscape plants either by direct contact or from runoff into nearby beds or turf. Plants that are particularly susceptible are arborvitae, beech, hollies, dogwood, hemlock, and pines. As an alternative to salt try sand, sawdust, or fertilizer as a remedy to icy areas near plantings.
- Once perennials are dormant, it is fine to apply a thicker layer of mulch (8-12 inches) to protect them during the coldest part of winter. This can be materials such as loose soil, pine branches, pine needles, straw, loose compost, etc. The key is to avoid compacting the mulch so that plants beneath are not suffocated. Also, the material should be removed once the ground has thawed in early spring.
- Keep watering landscape plants throughout the winter when the soil is not frozen. This is especially important for evergreens since they continue to use and lose water through their leaves all winter long.
- Check stored plant material (roots, corms, tubers {such as potatoes}, bulbs) often for damage by rodents or disease. Remove any damaged material quickly and do not allow rot to set in. Rot may quickly spread through the stored material, especially if rodents or insects are present.
- Apply a spray of dormant or horticultural oil to landscape plants that are infected with scale. Follow label directions carefully. It is best to apply the oil when temperatures will be above freezing for a few days, even warmer weather into the 40's is best. The oil acts by suffocating the overwintering insects.
- Start thinking about pruning those fruit trees in the backyard. After severe winter weather is over and just before new growth begins in the best time to prune. That means for Kentucky, anytime from late February to late March is generally the best time to start. Contact your local county agent for more information about pruning.

For more gardening ideas for February, log on to the University of Illinois Gardening Calendar: <http://urbanext.illinois.edu/gardencal/february.html>



more affordable and not so overwhelming. You can do this in just 3 easy steps.

These lists are intended for a family of 4. If you have infants, or elderly living with you, then you need to take that into account. For example, have plenty of formula and diapers for the children. The elderly may have special needs as well. And don't forget your pets' needs!

Log on to: http://www.crh.noaa.gov/news/display_cmsstory.php?wfo=pah&storyid=31504&source=0 to download the lists and other information to make your own disaster kit; or call the Extension Office for a print out.



WE'RE ON FACEBOOK!

Check out the latest info on what is happening at the Cooperative Extension Office. Become a fan and receive up-to-the-minute information on upcoming activities, meetings, and special events. Fans are welcome to let us know what your interests and needs are for the future. Look for us on Facebook—Franklin County Cooperative Extension. BECOME A FAN!

Here's the dirt on soil!

Beginning February 1, 2010, the price of a regular soil sample test will be \$3.00.

Bring in your samples early this year. Beat the Spring rush.



Calendar of Things To Do!

There are so many places to go and things to do in the spring and summer! Choose just one this month and get outdoors with your family and friends!

For Franklin County Extension Calendar, log on to: <http://ces.ca.uky.edu/franklin/UpcomingEvents> or call the Extension Office

Salato Wildlife Education Center; All events must Pre-Register- Contact Kristy Stroud at kristy.stroud@ky.gov; 800-858-1549

2/20, Saturday, 1 - 4 p.m.; Birding 101; Learn how to identify birds with this introductory workshop on the basics of birding. All ages are welcome with a limit of 15. Cost: \$10

2/27, Saturday, 2 - 4 p.m.; Whose Twig is It?; An outdoor adventure hike to test your tree identification skills. Receive a take-home guide to winter tree identification. Limit 15; ages 10 and up. Cost: \$10

Floracliff Nature Preserve: <http://www.floracliff.org/events.html> Registration is required for all events. Programs are limited to 15 participants. All events are \$4 per person or \$10 per family unless otherwise noted. Call 859-351-7770 to register or for more information.

2/13; Saturday, 1pm; Winter Tree Identification; Warm up on this hike to Elk Lick Creek. Preserve Manager Beverly James will discuss how to identify trees by looking at their bark, buds, and leaf scars.

3/13; Saturday, 1pm; Signs of Spring w/ Beverly James; We can't make any guarantees, but hopefully we'll see some of the early risers such as purple cress, trout lilies, and snow trilliums.

The Arboretum http://www.ca.uky.edu/arboretum/cal_events.php Pre-registration required; call 859-257-6955 or dmbast0@uky.edu .

2/23; Tuesday, 1-4pm; Focus on Shrubs; Examine a wide variety of the 70 native shrub species in the collection, including identification, site selection, propagation, pruning, and cultural practices. Participants should dress for the weather and be prepared for a moderate amount of walking (~ 1.5 miles). Cost: \$10 (\$8- Members)

This month we will focus on local Farmers Market websites that you can enjoy!

<http://quarlesdaylilies.com/> **Quarles Daylily Farm-** A diversified family farm located in Waddy, raising a commercial Simmental/Angus cow/calf herd, daylilies, and market vegetables and fruits. Available at the Franklin County Farmers Market, ordering on-line, and on farm visits. Also check us out on Facebook!

<http://www.ayresapples.com/> **Ayres Family Orchard, Owen County.** We have been providing apples, peaches, plums, blackberries and jams to Kentuckians for over 25 years! Available at the Franklin, Owen, and Boone County Farmers Markets.

<http://bluegrassmeadowsbeef.com/> A 5th generation family farming operation, doing business as **Mefford Family Farms, Inc.**, in Peaks Mill. Provides a lean and healthy beef product to local restaurants, health food stores, and at Farmer's Markets.

<http://www.annas-soaps.com/> **Anna's Sweet EsSCENTials**, located in Owenton, features hand-crafted herbal soaps and natural body products. Available on-line, at various retail outlets, and the Franklin County Farmers Market.

<http://porchtimeherbals.com/index.html> **Porch Time Herbals-**A small farm business in Franklin County, specializing in ethically grown vegetable, culinary, and medicinal plants, custom blended herbal teas and balms. Available at the Franklin County Farmers Market and on-line ordering.

<http://www.vitositaliansausage.com/> **Vito's Italian Sausage-** This old family recipe originated in the rolling hills of Eboli, Italy and found its way to the rolling hills of the Bluegrass. Available in Frankfort at the Farmers Market, Pic Pac grocery, and White Light Diner.

<http://brownsbeercheese.com/> **Brown's Tastee Beer Cheese-** is made in Woodford County using a blend of cheeses, spices and beer. It is distributed from their farm in Anderson County and several local Farmers Markets.

<http://www.bleugrasschevre.com/index.html> **Bleugrass Chevre-** We make all of our cheeses by hand with milk from the goats that live on the farm. Available locally at the Farmers Market, and several places in Lexington.

www.Gallreinfarms.com **Gallrein Farms** in scenic Shelby County, brings you the very best of life on a farm: farm fresh produce for sale, berry and pumpkin picking, and much more. Find them at Farmers Markets in the Central Ky area.

It's Lawn Time!

It's now time to start thinking about renovating your lawn, if you missed the window last fall for doing this. This time of year is usually the second most successful time of year to seed. Soil moisture is often good but because soil temperature is usually low, germination is very slow. After germination, however, seedling growth is usually very fast. Conventional seeding on a prepared seedbed is much more successful than slit (no-till) seeding into an undisturbed sod. This is most likely a function of the sod keeping the soil temperature much colder, for a longer period of time.

Some people like to seed when the snow is on the ground, with the thought that the seed will "melt" into the soil. This is fine, but you must know that seedings made after December 1 are considered dormant seeding, i.e. the seed should not germinate until early spring. Dormant seedings can be very effective if you do not get surface disturbance by birds, wind, erosion, water runoff, snow melt, etc. Cold winter weather does not kill ungerminated seed. It is typical for dormant, late winter or early spring seedings to begin a 'slow' germination process about the last week or two weeks in March. Therefore, seedings made during December through early March all germinate about the same time.



Late winter and very early spring also brings very wet weather. You may want to wait for a dryer day to seed. Putting equipment such as a seeder or riding mower on wet lawns can cause compaction to the soil. This will cause damage to your soils that cannot be repaired and will cause problems with seed germination and long term turf growth.

Waiting for April or May, can also pose problems. Mid- to late-spring seeding increases the risk of crabgrass competition, poor root growth prior to hot weather, disease damage, etc. For most spring seasons in Kentucky, it is very difficult to get the soil dry enough to prepare a seedbed. Moving or working wet soil causes unrepairable damage to the soil structure and tilth. Also, because of potential damage to seedlings, most crabgrass control herbicides cannot be used to prevent weed competition.

It is a tricky time to seed your lawn in the spring,


but it can be done with some forethought and planning.

Purchase high quality, fresh seed from a reputable vendor. Remember that ordering from an advertisement that makes promises that sound too good to be true, is generally risky business. You are potentially purchasing seed that is not of good quality, or that may not be well adapted to our Kentucky soils and climate.

Time your seeding to be sure you get good germination and so that you can time any crabgrass and herbicide treatments that may be necessary. Crabgrass controls are usually applied the first part of April and again in mid-May. Some controls can be applied at seeding time- be sure to read the fine print on the weed control label.

Work up a seedbed with a rake, a dethatcher, or use a slit-seeder. You must have good seed to soil contact! Evenly broadcast seed at a rate of 6 pounds per 1,000 square feet for tall fescue, the recommended grass variety for Central Kentucky. Rake the seed lightly into the seedbed or cross the area again with the dethatching machine. Small, bare spots in lawns can be renovated without destroying existing grass or preparing the seedbed. Broadcast seed on the soil surface and then cover the seed with about $\frac{1}{8}$ inch of topsoil or sand. Covering with straw is not necessary unless you are starting a new lawn.

Water deeply, and don't let the new seedbed dry out. Mow as frequently as needed to keep the old grass or weeds from shading the new seedlings. As the new seedlings develop, continue mowing at the height intended for the entire turf area, approximately 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches for tall fescue. Do not let the seedlings grow tall before mowing. Weed control can usually begin, if needed, after the new seedlings have grown enough to have been mowed one or two times. If the area is seeded during the spring when crabgrass encroachment is a potential problem, apply siduron (Tupersan) pre-emergence crabgrass herbicide at the time of seeding (before crabgrass germinates).

If you would like more information on lawns, log onto <http://www.uky.edu/Ag/ukturf/Home%20Lawn%20Care.htm>, UK's Home Lawn website. 

Pruning fruit trees in the home landscape

February is a good time to start thinking about pruning fruit trees. It's best to prune most fruits while the plants are still dormant but after the severe weather of winter has past. This means late February and early March are the ideal times for pruning in Kentucky. Fruit trees are trained and pruned to two basic growth patterns, the central leader, used for apple, pears, and some plums, and the open center, used for peaches, nectarines, and plums. Regardless of growth patterns, there are two main types of pruning cuts used, thinning out and heading back. Thinning out, removes an entire shoot back to a side shoot or scaffold limb. Thinning cuts open up the canopy to sunlight and air penetration and usually do not invigorate growth of the tree. Remove the shoot flush to the side shoot or scaffold limb without leaving a stub. The presence of a stub tends to delay healing and may promote the growth of unwanted suckers. Heading back, removes only the terminal portion of the shoot. Heading back cuts promote the growth of lower buds as well as several buds directly below the cut. Cuts made into one year old wood tend to invigorate growth by promoting branching directly behind the cut. Cuts made into two year old wood tend to be less invigorating and serve to help conform older trees to their allotted space and shape.



The central leader. The central leader tree is charac-

terized by a single, central, upright trunk referred to as the leader. The main branches coming from the central leader are called the scaffold limbs and are positioned so that they are not directly above one another. The lowest 4 to 5 scaffold limbs are usually 24 to 36 inches above the ground to allow ease of movement of lawn and garden tools and equipment under the tree. Scaffold limbs should meet the trunk at an angle of 60-90 degrees. Branch angles at the lower end of this range can be increased by wedging toothpicks (when the limbs are first forming) or wooden spacers (for older branches) between the trunk and branch. Above the first whorl

of scaffold limbs, a space of about 18 to 24 inches is left free of branches to allow light to penetrate into the center of the tree. A second whorl of 3 to 4 scaffold limbs is selected with a second segment of bare trunk left for sunlight penetration. Limbs and bare space alternate up the tree to allow good sunlight penetration all the way up the trunk. The training of a tree to this pattern will require 4 to 5 years or more. Once the basic central leader pattern is established, future pruning will more or less maintain the mature shape of the tree. A modification of the central leader

system (the modified central leader training system) is sometimes used for pears. Instead of a single, central trunk, multiple central trunks are maintained. The modified central leader is used for pears because of their susceptibility to a bacterial disease, fireblight. Once infected with fireblight, diseased branches must be pruned from the tree. In the modified central leader system, an infected leader can be removed without drastically affecting the architec-

ture of the tree.

The open center. The open center tree has no central leader. Rather, a single whorl of 3 to 5 scaffold limbs are established approximately 30 to 36 inches above the soil surface. As with the central leader systems, these scaffold limbs should branch at 60 to 90 degrees from the vertical center of the tree. The open center allows for maximum sunlight penetration into the center of the tree. This is particularly important for vigorously growing fruit trees such as peach. The open center will also allow good air movement into and through the canopy which will help reduce disease pressure.

With both systems, dormant pruning should involve both heading back cuts and thinning out cuts. Thinning out cuts are used to eliminate diseased or unproductive branches. Also remove branches that are crossing and those that shade one another. Water sprouts or suckers that are vigorous upright branches growing from main branches should also be removed by thinning out cuts. Heading back cuts are usually made about one quarter of the way back from the terminus of a branch. Heading back cuts are used to encourage side branches and to stiffen the remaining branch. With apples and pears, fruit buds are produced on two to three year old wood or compact stems called spurs. Heading back cuts strengthen such wood so that it will support a heavy crop load. With peaches and nectarines, flower buds are produced on one year old wood. Heading back cuts on peaches promote new growth that will produce the flower buds for next year's crop. If pruning cuts are made correctly, healing will be fairly rapid. The use of pruning paint or wound dressings spray to the wound may be used for aesthetic reasons but such treatments will not hasten healing. While the dormant season is the most important time to practice pruning, don't forget that some pruning during summer is also appropriate. If growth from heading back cuts is too vigorous, removal of some of the new growth by thinning out may be beneficial. Also, if the canopy is dense, remove some limbs during summer to open the canopy to sunlight and air penetration. And vigorous water sprouts or suckers should be removed as soon as they are noticed.

Another thing that needs to be done during the late dormant season (mid March or so) is an application of dormant or horticultural oil to fruit trees. These oils are specially formulated products and differ

from motor oil or vegetable oils used for cooking. Horticultural or dormant oil is a very good chemical that has minimal impact on the environment and usually has little effect on beneficial insects in the landscape. Dormant oils target overwintering pests such as scale and certain mites. The oil acts by suffocating the pests. One precaution with the use of oil is that it should not be applied during extreme temperatures. Avoid applying oil when the temperature will drop below freezing the day before or the day after application. Also, avoid application if the temperature will rise above 90F - a rare occurrence in mid March. As with all chemicals, be sure to read and follow label directions when applying. 🌱

NOTES FROM KIM

Happy Ground Hog Day! Spring can't be far behind! February is the month when gardeners begin to long for days spent in the outdoors. But don't start too soon, as we can still get winter weather that can damage tender young shoots. On warmer days, begin cleaning up dead limbs, leaves and other winter debris (but don't uncover perennials) to prevent diseases. Also be sure that deicing salts are swept up or removed from lawn areas and plant beds- these can kill plants and do long term harm to your soil. Plan your garden and flowerbeds now- be ready for planting!

Happy Gardening!



Kim Cowherd
CES Agent for Horticulture



COOPERATIVE
EXTENSION
SERVICE



Cooperative Extension Service

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Flowers in a city are like lipstick on a woman- it just makes you look better to have a little color. Lady Bird Johnson

BREAD FEEDS THE BODY INDEED, BUT THE FLOWERS ALSO FEED THE SOUL. The Koran

What is a weed? A plant whose virtues have not yet been discovered. Ralph Waldo Emerson

Just living is not enough . . . One must have sunshine, freedom, and a little flower.  Hans Christian Anderson

Contact the Franklin County Extension Office at (502) 695-9035 if you would like to receive our newsletter via email or email requests to gil.thurman@uky.edu or kim.cowherd@uky.edu
If you **DO NOT** want to receive this newsletter or your address is incorrect, please notify us immediately.