

## WINTER GARDENING

Right now is the time to begin planning for a new gardening year. There are several items to consider before planting. Let's look at the first.

During these cold winter days, begin sketching your garden layout on paper. Remember, Kentucky's spring garden contains cool season crops such as broccoli, cabbage, lettuce, radishes, and cauliflower that thrive in cool air temperatures between 50 to 65 F. Some note-worthy information to include in your garden plan is vegetable cultivar selections, plant spacing between both plants and rows, row orientation, planting dates, and number of plants needed.



From the Arboretum State Botanical Garden in Lexington

Other items of interest include caring for roses, taking care of houseplants during the winter, and choosing the right variety. Throughout this issue, we will look at each of these.

*Cam Kenimer*

Cam Kenimer  
Fulton County Extension Agent for  
Agriculture & Natural Resources

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## MINIATURE ROSES

**Q:** How should I care for my miniature roses during the winter?

**A:** Most miniature roses are hardy and will flourish for many years outdoors if cared for properly. Miniature roses given for Valentines Day should be

kept indoors until the threat of frost is past. Even though these plants are quite hardy, they will not withstand frosts when actively growing. For most parts of Kentucky it would be safe to transplant these actively growing roses in early to mid May. The plants will need a sunny location

outdoors but they should be introduced to full sun gradually. First place the pots outdoors in a shady location and each day move it to a slightly sunnier spot. After a week to 10 days, the plants should be exposed to fairly full sun and be ready to transplant.

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## ROSES CONTINUED...

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Keep plants well watered, but water the base of the plant, not the foliage. This reduces problems with disease. Also fertilize regularly with a complete fertilizer according to label directions. Remove faded blooms and trim back longer shoots to encourage bushier growth. In late winter, prune back at least half of the stem length, or even prune back individual stems to the lowest, outward facing bud. If your plants are growing in containers, sink the entire container into the ground during winter, or cover the containers with mulch to insulate the root system from extreme cold.

Diseases such as black spot and powdery mildew may be a problem on miniature roses as they are on the full sized plants. Disease may be less severe if plants are placed in an area where they receive morning sun and good air circulation. Diseases can also be controlled with fungicide applications. Contact your county extension agent for a recommended list of fungicides to use on roses.

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## CROP ROTATION IN THE HOME VEGETABLE GARDEN

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**Q:** Why is it a good idea to implement good rotation practices in my garden?

**A:** Many soil-borne pests can be effectively managed using crop rotation. This means that the same or closely related vegetables are not planted in the same site year after year. By rotating crops, the pests inhabiting the soil are not able to increase in numbers to the point where they cause significant damage to the crop. For crop rotation to be effective, a given crop must be rotated every two to three years and replaced with a crop that is unrelated. For example, members of the Nightshade family, including tomato, potato, eggplant, and pepper, are all very susceptible to certain soil-borne fungi. It is a good idea to move these species around every few years. But one should not replace tomatoes with potato, pepper, or eggplant, since these crops are closely related and may be susceptible to many of the same pests. Rather, replace tomatoes with plants from a different family such as the Legume family (peas and beans), the Brassica family (cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli, collards, brussels sprouts), or the Grass family (corn). Crop rotation works best in a relative large garden. Many people will divide the garden into quadrants of three or four sections, and rotate crops between these quadrants each year. A plant does not return to the same location for three or four years. In smaller gardens, there may be little benefit to moving plants only a few feet from their location during the previous growing season. For small gardens it is a better practice to rotate crops in time. For example, one might choose to grow tomatoes one year, followed by squash, cucumbers or melons the second year, and beans the third year. The fourth year one would return to tomatoes. This doesn't mean, however, that you must do without tomatoes or squash during the off years. These plants do very well in containers in a patio garden, and if you have children, this can be a great activity for them during the summer.

# PRUNING TREES

## When to Prune

(Excerpt from UK publication HO-45. [Click here.](#))

### Flowering Trees

Ornamental trees that flower before June first should be pruned immediately after flowering. These include redbuds, smoke trees, magnolias, flowering and kousa dogwoods, hawthorns, crabapples, flowering cherries, peaches, pears, and plums. Trees that flower after June first should be pruned in winter or spring before new growth begins. These include goldenrain trees, sourwoods, and other late-flowering trees.

### Shade Trees

Trees restore themselves more rapidly if they are pruned in early spring before they leaf out. The framework is bare, and you can easily see which branches need to be removed. When pruning is done in early spring, the plants are soon in full leaf and actively photosynthesizing, thus providing food and energy required for closing or sealing wounds after pruning. Some trees, such as birch, yellowwood, elm, pine, spruce, fir, and maple, will bleed excessively if pruned in the spring. Bleeding, or loss of sap, will not harm the tree, but may be unsightly or messy around the home. Bleeding may be reduced by pruning such trees when they are in full leaf (June).

## What Trees to Prune and How to Do It

### Making Cuts

There are methods for pruning trees to get the best results. Proper pruning involves removing dead, dying, or living branches without damaging or removing the branch collar. (See Fig. 2)

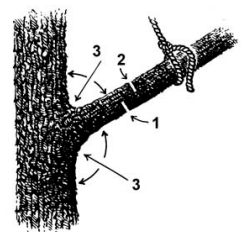
Start at the top of the tree and work down.

- Make the cut at the bark ridge of the branch. This is the point where the branch meets the main stem.
- Don't flush cut. Cuts made into the bark ridge are too close; these "flush cuts" may remove tissue that signals the plant to set boundaries for resisting the spread of infection. Thus, the tree is not able to compartmentalize the injury made at pruning.
- Don't dehorn. Leaving several inches or several feet of branch beyond the bark ridge is an equally serious mistake, called dehorning, pollarding, or topping the tree. Callous tissue will not form from the stub wound. The stub dies back to the bark ridge, and often infection spreads deeper into the tree because the wound was not compartmentalized.
- To make a cut properly, stub the branch on the downstroke (2). Then make an upstroke cut at the branch bark ridge that forms the slightly swollen branch collar, leaving the branch collar intact (1). The cut line should be at an angle downward that is approximately the same as the angle of the branch bark ridge. The final cutting stroke is at the branch collar, matching its angle, and leaving the collar intact (3). (See Fig. 4)

Fig 2. See Branch Collar



Fig 4.



**FULTON COUNTY  
EXTENSION  
HORTICULTURE**

2114 South 7th Street  
Hickman, KY 42050

Tel: 270-236-2351

Mobile: 270-627-1422

Fax: 270-236-1841

E-mail: ckenimer@uky.edu

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**TIDBITS**

- Soil Test your garden
  - Rotate planting locations
  - Cutback liriopse (monkey grass)
  - Remove damaged or diseased rose canes
  - Start seeds indoors for cool season vegetables (i.e. beets, broccoli, cauliflower, carrots, cabbage, lettuce, garlic, onion, peas, potatoes, spinach)
  - Amend soil in garden according to soil test recommendations
  - Divide and replant crowded Summer and Fall perennials
  - How to Soil Test
1. Dig a few spots in your garden with a spade/shovel or use a soil probe. Go 4 inches deep
  2. Mix dirt in bucket and put into a Zip-loc bag
  3. Bring soil to Extension office for submission
  4. Should receive results in 7-10 days