

The Latest Dirt

Horticulture Newsletter ~ Winter 2012



Terrific Plants for Winter Landscapes

By Kathy LaLiberté (amended by Andrea Dee)
Courtesy of Gardener's Supply Company.

As a gardener, it's difficult to imagine looking forward to winter. But what if the coming of winter revealed an entirely new landscape with colors, textures and shapes that can't be seen at any other time of year? What if the coming of winter meant 5 months of beauty without staking, deadheading, pruning or watering a single plant?

There are many wonderful, easy-care shrubs for the winter landscape. Most will keep a low profile from spring through fall, and reappear like old friends when cold weather arrives. Here are a few of my favorites:



Color

When the world fades to grey, these shrubs show their true colors.

- Shubby Dogwood

Tip: To ensure bright color, prune dogwoods each spring to remove some older branches and allow more new growth. The newer branches show better color.

Cornus alba 'Sibirica' (coral-red branches)

Cornus alba 'Bud's Yellow' (yellow)

Cornus sanguinea 'Midwinter Fire' (orange-red)

- Holly

Evergreen holly is adorned with showy, bright-red fruit. Berries. With luck, birds will let you enjoy these berries until late winter.

Winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*)

Beautyberry (*Callicarpa dichotoma*)

Viburnum (*Viburnum dentatum*,

V. dilatatum, *V. lentago*, *V. opulus*,

V. rhytidophyllum and *V. trilobum*).

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- False Cypress
Chamaecyparis pisifera 'Filifera Aurea' (yellow)
C. pisifera 'Boulevard' (blue)
- Creeping Juniper
Juniperus horizontalis 'Wiltoni' (blue)
J. horizontalis 'Mother Lode' (yellow)
- Holly
Ilex x meserveae 'Blue Angel' (blue-green leaves, red berries)
I. x meserveae 'Golden Girl' (green leaves, yellow-orange berries)

A Note from Your Agent...

Wishing everyone good health, good times, and good cheer in the New Year! Extension has a lot on the calendar for 2012, and we certainly hope to see you at one of our upcoming programs. Until then, enjoy reading your favorite gardening magazines and catalogs in the peace of winter!

Andrea Dee

Andrea Dee
Kenton County Horticulture Agent

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Things to Do...

- Sharpen tools
- Share garden tips with friends!
- Plan crop rotation for 2012
- Watch the birds
- Sanitize pruners

Terrific Plants for Winter Landscapes

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Texture

Shiny bark reflects winter light and grasses rustle in the wind.

- River birch (*Betula nigra*)
- Paperbark maple (*Acer griseum*)
- Grasses (*Miscanthus* sp., *Panicum* sp.)

Shapes

Sculptural forms delight the eye and create a foil for frost and snow.

- Boxwood globe (*Buxus*)
- Irish yew (*Taxus baccata* 'Fastigiata')
- Harry Lauder's Walking Stick (*Corylus avellana*)
- Flowering Dogwood (*Cornus alternifolia*, *C. florida* and *C. kousa*)



Can You Dig It?

Reforest Northern Kentucky 2012
Saturday March 24th from 9:30am-12:30pm
Twenhofel Middle School

11846 Taylor Mill Road Independence, KY 41051

Bring your friends, family and shovels to help make a difference planting trees in your community. The first 200 volunteers will receive a FREE T-SHIRT! Beverages and refreshments for all volunteers.

Register online at: www.kentoncountyextension.org

Register by Phone to: 859-356-3155

Presented by the Northern Kentucky Urban and Community Forestry Council

Starting a Home Composting Program

Source: Amanda Gumbert, Extension Water Quality Liaison, College of Agriculture

Late winter is a great time to establish a composting program. Composting reduces household waste and enriches the soil by converting leftovers and yard waste into a rich humus over a period of time. Planning now, while the garden is still fallow, allows you to decide on a method that best suits your family's needs and to settle into a routine before gardening season starts.

Composting works simply: Bacteria and organisms break down organic material and waste to create a humus that can be used to as a soil amendment or top dressing for gardens. Simply stated, proper break-down requires a balance of carbon, nitrogen, oxygen, temperature, moisture, and time.

There are some basic tricks to make household composting easy. Proximity is important, as is engaging all family members to do their part. Try making it a household challenge to reduce the amount of trash your family puts in the landfill by finding as many compostable items as possible.

Compostable items include leaves, grass clippings, coffee grounds, household and outdoor plant clippings, table scrapings (except meat and dairy products), vegetable peelings, tea bags, egg shells, and small amounts of ash from the fireplace, sawdust, and non-glossy newspaper.

Things to keep in mind when establishing a compost bin:

Access. Access should be easy so that everyone in your family can get in the habit of separating compost from trash. It can be useful to keep a small bucket or container in the kitchen, either under the sink or on a countertop, to make scraping plates and filling it with beet tops, burned toast, and coffee refuse simple.

Location. The closer and easier the compost bin is to use, the more the family will fall in line. If the bin is far away or hidden from view, it may not be well tended.

Choose your method. The actual container can be elaborate, simple, or in between. Plans vary from a minimalist round-wire bin, much like a homemade tomato cage, to raised-bed three-compartment bins that are more elaborate. Wire bins are deep enough to accommodate large amounts of leaves, which can be a useful aspect. Composting containers can also be purchased at many garden centers and stores.



Upcoming HOME Horticulture Classes

Now Register Online at
www.kentoncountyextension.org



BEGINNER GARDENING 101

January 26th, Annex, 6pm-8pm

A perfect class for first time gardeners! Learn about the importance of soil prep, understanding growing climates, proper plant selection, basic landscape maintenance including pruning basics, helpful tools, and organic versus conventional methods in the home landscape. Bring your burning horticulture questions!

HOBBY GREENHOUSES & HOOP HOUSES WORKSHOP

February 9th, Durr, 10am-2pm

Join us for this half-day workshop to learn the basics of growing transplants in heated hobby greenhouses and small commercial greenhouses. Also learn how to extend the veggie growing season using unheated hoop houses, and tour our demonstration unheated growing tunnel! We'll cover materials, methods, and maintenance required for success in growing at home and/or for market. \$5 fee per participant; light lunch will be provided. Workshop fee secures registrations and is non-refundable after February 2, 2012. Checks must be written out to Kenton County District Board.

VEGGIE GARDENER'S TOOLBOX PART I

Veggie Garden Basics!

March 22nd, Durr, 6pm-8pm

Are you new to veggie gardening? If you are preparing for your first vegetable garden, big or small, this class is for you! Learn the basics of vegetable gardening; including garden site planning, soil prep, growing climates, growing from seeds versus transplants, irrigation basics, helpful tools, organic vs. conventional methods, and proper maintenance. This class is part I of the Veggie Gardener's Tool Box Series; remaining classes cover growing spring, summer, and fall veggie gardens.

FIRST TIME GARDENERS ARE STRONGLY ENCOURAGED TO ATTEND THIS SESSION BEFORE ATTENDING REMAINING VEGGIE GARDENER TOOLBOX SERIES PROGRAMS!

VEGGIE GARDENER'S TOOLBOX

PART II Spring Gardens!

March 29th, Durr, 6pm-8pm

Join us for part II of the Veggie Gardener's Tool Box to learn about growing a bountiful spring harvest. In this session we'll cover spring garden planning, cold frames and tunnels, variety selection, seed starting, proper maintenance, harvesting, and a few delicious recipes! Best of all FREE SOIL TESTING and FREE SEEDS for all participants!

LITTLE SPROUTS:

Make and Take Natural Dye Egg Basket

April 6th, Annex, 1pm-2pm

Youth of all ages are invited to join us in dying eggs naturally! Participants will learn how to make fun dye colors from vegetables, juices, and spices. Participants under the age of 5 must bring an adult buddy to assist them in this hands-on project. \$3 fee per participant; activity fee secures registration and is non-refundable after March 30, 2012. Checks must be written out to Kenton County District Board.

LANDSCAPING FOR CURB APPEAL

April 12th, Holmes High School, 6pm-8pm

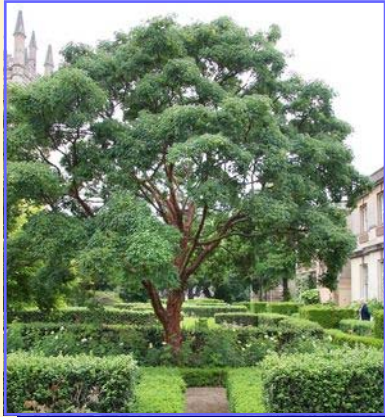
Working on a small landscape budget? Preparing to sell your house? Want your home to look inviting? Join us to learn about affordable and functional landscape techniques for your home including, basic design, mulching, plant selection, lighting, and hardscapes. Learn how to get the most bang for your buck in selecting the right plant for the right place!

**CHECK ONLINE FOR
MORE UPCOMING PROGRAMS!
www.kentoncountyextension.org**

Please pre-register for all classes by calling 859-356-3155!

Winter Plant Spotlight...

Paperbark Maple (*acer griseum*)



The paperbark maple tree is a deciduous, slow-growing maple tree. It prefers full sun to partial shade. Paperbark maple trees grow best in moist, well-drained soil, and are suited for Northern Kentucky winters.

A paperbark maple tree will grow to a height of twenty feet and have an equal mature spread.

The round shape of this maple tree makes it particularly stunning as a species plant.

The paperbark maple tree is beloved for its cinnamon colored bark, which peels off in thin, curly strips.

It is also popular for its crimson red fall foliage. The trunk of a paperbark maple tree is often multi-stemmed.

Paperbark maple trees have non-showy flowers that help fertilize the trees. There are no significant cultivars of paperbark maple trees. Paperbark maple trees make a perfect addition to any small garden or landscape, offering shade in the summer and charm in the winter.



Do you want to be a farmer when you grow up? This program is for you!



What: Beginner Farming Workshop

When: February 15th and 16th,
9am-4pm

Where: Campbell County Extension

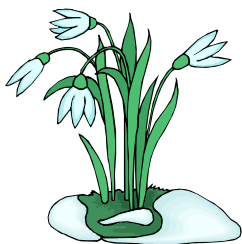
Gain valuable knowledge in irrigation and fertility management, variety selection, post-harvest handling, organic production, weed management, insect management and identification, equipment usage, and marketing, including the farm-to-school program. \$30 fee per participant secures registration. Contact Campbell County Extension at 859-572-2600 to register!

Flower Buds' Fun!

What Early Bloomer Am I?



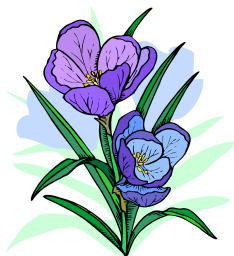
Soon we will begin to see early spring flowers emerging and blooming!
Read the facts below regarding early spring bloomers and
guess which plant it could be!



A.) I am a beautiful flower that is often seen poking out of snows and usually one of the very first bloomers in the garden. I have grass-like leaves and my flower is cup shaped. I come in a wide range of colors, white, mauve, and yellow. What early spring bloomer am I?



B.) My flower is usually shaped like a trumpet. I come in the following shades of yellow: gold, orange, white, pink, green, and red. What early spring bloomer am I?



C.) I am Holland's favorite flower. Besides being planted in the landscape, I am also used as a cut flower. Some people start me indoors, when the snow is falling. I come in almost any color and I have many flower shapes. Some people plant me as an annual, others use me as a perennial, and I can also be planted in a naturalized area. What early spring bloomer am I?



D.) I am a biennial plant. Some varieties of me have small flowers and in other varieties, I am considered to have a large flower. I am one of the oldest cultivated flowering plants around. My blooms are round and some say I have a face. My leaves are oval or heart shaped. I am an edible flower. What early bloomer am I?



E.) I have long narrow leaves that are folded lengthwise. I am a fragrant flower that blooms in dense clusters. I come in shades of white, peach, orange, salmon, yellow, pink, red, lavender, and blue. March 7th is my World Day. What early bloomer am I?

F.) I have small pretty, white flowers, and they are enjoyed for their beauty. If I am blooming it means spring is on its way. I am also one of the first plants to bloom in spring. I produce 2 or 3 outer petal-like sepals and three white inner petals, surrounded by green markings. I have a sweet honey-like scent. What early bloomer am I?

Answer Key: A.) Crocus B.) Daffodil C.) Tulip D.) Pansy E.) Hyacinth F.) Snowdrop

Tips for Starting Seeds Indoors



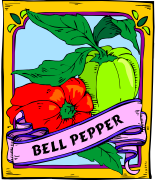
Create an indoor growing environment by providing light, appropriate temperature, moisture control, and proper ventilation. Daytime temperature should be between 60-65°F.



It is suggested to use new seed from a reputable, disease-free source. If old seeds were not properly stored, they may have a reduced germination rate.



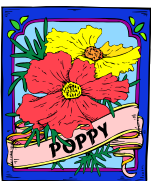
When germinating seeds, always maintain constant soil moisture. Soil should feel as damp as a wrung out sponge. Be careful when watering soil not to splash seeds out of the tray. It is recommended to use a reduced pressure misting nozzle when watering newly planted seeds.



If reusing containers, wash with one part bleach to nine parts water. Completely wash off all soil and root debris and make sure all containers have drain holes.



Follow planting depth instructions on the seed packet. Always use a soilless mix without fertilizer when starting seeds.



Seedlings need good air circulation to grow disease-free. When growing indoors, run a fan to increase air flow and ventilation. Make sure the fan is set on a low setting and rotating, so it does not directly hit fragile seedlings.



Add fertilizer when seedlings get 6 to 8 leaves. If nitrogen is added too soon, seedlings may grow lanky and bolt or young roots may burn.



Seedlings need 6-8 hours of light daily to grow. Homemade light systems made from fluorescent light bars, or grow systems purchased from a catalog, can be used to supply seedlings with light. Place lamps 2 to 3 inches above the top of the plants. As plants grow move the lights up with them to prevent lanky growth.

Orchids Make Popular Houseplants

Source: Rick Durham, Extension Specialist in Consumer Horticulture

Orchids are becoming increasingly popular as houseplants. One orchid you are likely to encounter is the Phalaenopsis, or moth orchid. It gets its name from the shape of the flower that resembles a moth in flight.

Moth orchids thrive in medium light. A window with southern exposure is ideal. You will notice that the pot is filled with a bark-type potting mix. In nature, these plants grow on trees, so they need a potting medium that is light and well drained—regular potting soil is not appropriate. The roots are fleshy and covered with a white spongy material. They may grow into the potting mix, around the pot or simply out into the air. This is natural and healthy for the plant.

Water plants thoroughly once the soil has become light and dry. Allow some water to flow through the pot at each watering—be sure to remove the inner pot to the sink when you are watering and allow the pot to thoroughly drain before you place it back into the outer (often decorative) pot. You may also water by placing a few ice cubes on the surface of the potting medium a couple of times each week, just be sure that the plant does not sit in water for more than a few hours. Liquid fertilizer can be applied with the water every two or three applications—follow label directions for how to dilute the fertilizer.

Plants may flower for many months, and individual flowers may last for several weeks. Do not cut the flower stalk back after flowers fade because in a few months it may branch to form additional flowers. Small plantlets may arise on the flower stalk. These plantlets can be potted up, but they will need to grow for a couple of years before they will flower.



Reduce Humidity for Greenhouse Health

Source: Kenny Seebold, Extension Plant Pathologist

Humidity and condensation in the greenhouse present big challenges especially during winter when moisture tends to build up on roofs and side-walls. Large numbers of plants grown in fairly crowded conditions produce even more moisture which adds to an inviting environment for plant pathogens like fungi and bacteria.

Relative humidity greater than 90-percent slows the drying of foliage and increases the amount of time condensation and overnight dew remain on plants. High humidity also favors plant diseases that thrive on warm air, such as powdery mildew.

Preventive measures can help reduce the threat of diseases on greenhouse-grown vegetables and ornamentals. Careful management of irrigation practices is a good way to cut back on disease potential. Saturated soils and potting mix promote a number of root-rotting fungi, so avoid over-watering and use pots and trays with good drainage systems. Fungi and bacteria thrive on wet leaves and foliage. Prevent this by using trickle irrigation in place of overhead watering systems. If you must water from the top, water early in the day. Foliage dries more quickly during peak daytime hours of light and warmth.

Adequate ventilation and space between plants allows for better air movement which speeds the drying process. Re-circulating fans, vents, and raised benches all stimulate air circulation throughout the greenhouse. Introduce dry air a couple of times during the day by opening doors or vents for a few minutes in the morning and late afternoon. This helps flush out excess humid air. Cover open water containers to prevent evaporation into the greenhouse. Moisture control is a strong ally in the fight against plant diseases.

Calling All Teachers and Youth Educators!!



School Garden Workshop I: Building Successful Youth Horticulture Programs February 20th, Durr/OEC, 10am-2pm

Target Audience:

Grade 3-5 educators, after-school program coordinators, community garden leaders, school administrators, all other interested folks!

If you have an interest in implementing a school garden or an after-school horticulture program, join us for this program to learn the basics of gardening with youth. Acquire essential horticulture knowledge, learn how to tie hands-on horticulture activities into curriculum, and gain resources for funding school garden programs. \$10 fee per participant. Light lunch will be provided. Workshop fee secures registration and is non-refundable after February 13, 2012. Checks must be written out to Kenton County District Board. Contact Andrea Dee at 859-356-3155 with any questions.

If You are a Commercial Horticulturalist, Get these Upcoming Programs on Your Calendar:

Commercial Pesticide Applicator Recertification:

January 30th, Boone County Cooperative Extension Service, 9am-3pm

Receive commercial pesticide applicator CEU credits for attending this all day session. Get annual horticulture updates from UKY Extension Specialists.



Commercial Arborist/Landscaper/Nursery Worker Annual Update:

February 7th, Boone County Cooperative Extension Service, 7:45am-4:00pm

Updates from State Extension Specialists and others on production, insect and disease control, planting, mulching, staking, native plants, invasives, etc. Register by February 2 for free lunch. CEU's have been requested for Commercial Pesticide Applicators & Certified Arborists.

Public Workers' Tree Care Seminar: March 8th, Ft. Thomas Armory, 7am-3pm

Calling all municipal administrators, municipal arborist, public works employees, tree board members, and arborists! This full day workshop provides ISA and Kentucky Pesticide Applicator's CEUs. This well-rounded educational opportunity will cover topics including, replacement trees for EAB, discussion of Asian Long Horn Beetle, common insect and disease cultural problems of the urban forest, specific advice for pesticide application on trees, a practical look at hazard tree evaluation, and methods for collecting information for effective hazard tree evaluation. \$20 fee per participant. Contact Campbell County Extension at 859-572-2600 to register!

Winter Harvest – TURNIP GREENS!



What are turnip greens good for and how do I harvest, store, and prepare them?

SEASON: May through June and September through November.

NUTRITION FACTS: Greens are a source of vitamins A and C. A half-cup serving contains 20 percent of calcium needed daily. Greens are low in calories, with 20 to 30 calories per half-cup serving.

SELECTION: Look for bright green leaves that are fresh, young, moist, and tender.

STORAGE: Store greens in the coldest part of the refrigerator for no more than 2 to 3 days.

PREPARATION: Wash greens well in warm water. Remove roots, rough ribs, and center stalks if they are large or fibrous.

TO COOK Add washed greens to a medium-size saucepan with ¼ inch water. Bring water to a boil. Cover and cook until tender. Leafy greens cook in 1 to 3 minutes. Crisp and tender greens may require 5 to 10 minutes. Seasonings and herbs will enhance the flavor without adding salt. Try allspice, lemon, onion, nutmeg, or vinegar.

TO FREEZE Wash young, tender green leaves thoroughly and cut off woody stems. Blanch greens for 2 to 3 minutes, cool, drain, and package. Leave ½ inch headspace, seal, label, and freeze. Greens can be stored for up to 1 year in the freezer.

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To file a complaint of discrimination, contact Jim Lawson, UK College of Agriculture, 859-257-3879; Terry Allen or Patty Bender, UK Office of Institutional Equity and Equal Opportunity, 859-257-8927; or the USDA, Director Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W Whitten Bldg., 14th & Independence Ave. SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 (202-720-5964).

Turnip Green Soup

Ingredients:

8 ounces, fresh turnip greens, chopped or ½ package, frozen turnip greens, thawed and chopped
8 ounces roasted turkey, chopped
1 medium onion, chopped
½ cup fresh carrot, chopped
1 cup, potato, peeled and diced
½ clove garlic, minced
1 15 ounce can white beans
1 14 ounce can chicken broth
1 teaspoon salt
1 cup water
1 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes

Directions:

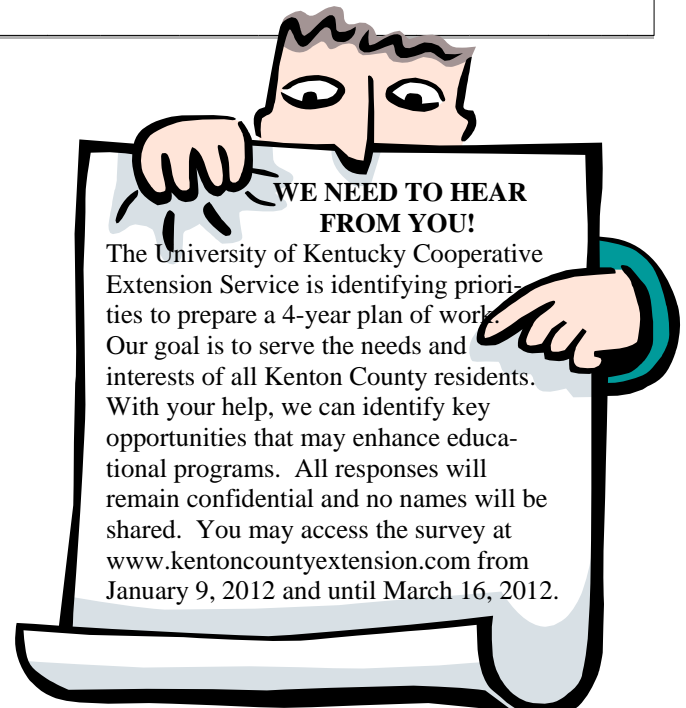
If using fresh greens, cook until tender. Chop fresh or frozen turnip greens, roasted turkey, onion, and carrot. Peel and dice potato and garlic clove. Place chopped vegetables and chopped roasted turkey in a large soup pot. Drain and rinse white beans. Add beans, chicken broth, salt, and 1 cup water or enough to cover all ingredients. Stir well. Place pot on stove and bring to a boil. Add red pepper flakes. Cover, reduce heat, and simmer one hour, stirring frequently.

Yield: 6 one-cup servings.

Nutritional Analysis:

120 calories, 3.5g fat, 12 g protein, 10 g carbohydrate, 3 g fiber, 30 mg cholesterol, 450 mg sodium.

Recipe courtesy of Kentucky Proud and University of Kentucky's Cooperative Extension Service.



Around Town Learning Opportunities...

Boone County Extension Office

Boone County Extension Service: <http://ces.ca.uky.edu/boone/>

Growing Fruits at Home - February 2, 2012, 1:30 p.m.

Yard Art - February 23, 2012, 10 a.m.

Composting for Beginners - March 7, 10 a.m.

Campbell County Extension Office

Campbell County Extension Service: <http://ces.ca.uky.edu/campbell/>

Growing Backyard Tree Fruits, January 24, 2012, 6:30pm

Small Fruit Production, January 31, 2012, 6:30pm

Fruit Pruning Demo, March 3, 2012, 10:00am



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facebook!**

