

Pike County Agriculture and Natural Resources



A message from your local ANR agent:

Folks,

It isn't long until the new seed catalogs come out and we can start planning for next summer. This is the time of year you need to take a serious look at your garden, lawn, farm, or whatever you've worked with all year. Make notes on what went great and what went wrong. Take a serious look at your home/farm. Figure out what was a success and what went wrong. Were you the cause, the weather, or something else? What would you do again and what would you do differently? Any of you that have worked with me very long, know that I preach—"study & figure out, what happened". Figure out how you can replicate your successes. Rarely does absolutely everything go great. So, what needs improvements? How do you fix the problem for next year? Also, make sure to plan for crop rotations. Rarely do you grow the same crop in the same place every year. If you do not rotate crops, it gives diseases and problems a chance to build up in the soil. You may get by with it for a year to two, but eventually, the problem will build up and destroy your desired crop.

Spend time enjoying your successes and time to figure out improvements for next season. Make decisions on what you wish to grow during the upcoming season. Is there something new you would like to try?

Just remember, agriculture of any kind depends upon a lot of variables.

You cannot control all of them. Use this time to work out details, take soil tests, decide which varieties you wish to grow. Plan for changes to improve your garden, farm, and home life! As life slows down this time of year—think and plan.

Celebrate your successes for 2023 and plan to improve in 2024!



Suzanne Stumbo

Pike County ANR Agent

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CARING FOR CHRISTMAS TREES

Deborah B. Hill, Forestry

If you are going to choose a real Christmas tree as the center of your Christmas celebrations, it will require some special care to ensure a pleasant, and not messy, experience.

Selecting a Tree

Cut Trees

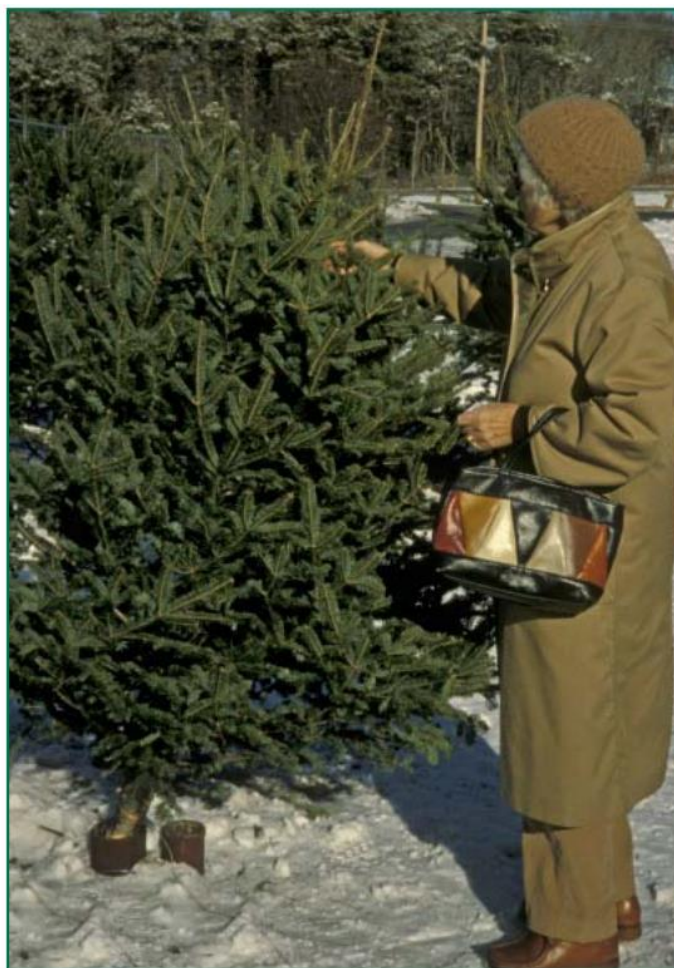
For a cut tree, the ideal choice for a really fresh tree is to cut one yourself from a Christmas tree farm. When that is not an option, two ways to check for tree freshness on a tree lot are:

- 1) bend a green needle between thumb and forefinger – if it snaps rather than bends, the tree may be too dry;
- 2) thump the tree stem firmly on the ground once or twice – if brown needles fall out, that is OK, but if green needles fall out, the tree may be too dry.

Note also how trees are stored and displayed on the lot –

- Are they in full sun?
- Are they exposed to wind?
- Are the trees standing upright and separated from each other?
- Are the stems **not** in water?

These are all factors that may increase the chances of the tree needles drying out and falling off. Also, ask the vendor where the trees came from and when they were cut. Frequently, the further the distance traveled, the earlier the trees were cut – some are cut in October. Pay attention to fall



weather patterns, too. A long, mild fall will delay the time the trees go into winter dormancy and basically shut down all their systems. If the trees are cut before they go into dormancy, they probably will be more susceptible to drying out quickly and dropping their needles.

Balled and Burlapped

For a balled and burlapped tree, many of the same points are useful. Check both the size of the root-ball and whether or not it is damp to the touch. Often balled and burlapped trees are displayed in old tires – the root-ball for any tree over 3 feet tall should completely fill the tire. Again, ask where the trees came from and how long ago they were dug – local sources are probably better for freshness and for compatible soil types. If the root-ball is dry, the tree is probably suffering from drought conditions.

For both types of trees, but especially for the living trees, make sure the foliage is wrapped when you transport it, so that air movement across the needles does not cause further drying. If a cut tree is bound with twine or netting, that will be protection enough.

Species Choices

The most commonly grown Christmas tree species in Kentucky are white pine and Scots pine, followed by Douglas-fir, Colorado blue spruce, and Norway spruce. Scots pine has medium length



needles and short, stubby branches and will hold all kinds of ornaments well. White pine has very soft, fragrant foliage and flexible branches, and will not support heavy ornaments well. Douglas-fir and the spruces are more like Scots pine but have very short needles relative to the pines. Fraser fir is the Cadillac of Christmas trees, with a wonderful, pungent odor, but Kentucky does not have the appropriate conditions for its growth. Firs and spruces may be more expensive than pines because they take longer to grow to the same heights. For balled and burlapped trees, the best choices are probably white pine and the spruces for replanting in Kentucky and for greatest beauty in the home landscape.

Home Care

Preparation

For cut trees from a lot, remove another 1 or 2 inches of the stem to allow the pitch or sap to flow. Place the tree in a bucket of warm water (the heat will help get the sap flowing as well as opening up the water-conducting channels in the wood) and store it somewhere out of direct sunlight and wind (e.g., garage, basement, enclosed porch) until ready to put in the house.

For balled and burlapped trees, once you get the tree, dig a hole in your yard where the tree will be planted. The hole should be **at least** two times the width of the root-ball but the **same** depth. Cover the soil you have removed so it doesn't freeze up on you while the tree is in the house. Place the tree's root-ball in a tub or bucket big enough to hold it and store it out of wind and sun for at least two days before going into the house. Mist down the needles, and water the root-ball just enough to get it damp, not wet.

Installation

Place any real tree in a spot where it is away from a heat source – stoves, registers, fireplaces, radiators, etc. There is a tiny (less than one 1,000th of one percent) chance that a Christmas tree (real or artificial) may be flammable, but keeping it away from flame or heat sources reduces that possibility. Limit the hours that electric lights are lit

on the tree – each bulb is a tiny hot spot on the needles. Keep a cut tree watered (use only tree stands that will hold up to a gallon of water) and a living tree damp.

When the cut tree is installed, fill the reservoir of the tree stand with the following solution: 1 cup of corn syrup plus 3 tablespoons of liquid bleach in one gallon of water. Continue to add solution to the reservoir as needed for as long as the tree remains in the house. If this seems like an odd combination of ingredients, here is the explanation (from one of Kentucky's long-time Christmas tree growers): The bleach tends to thin out or remove the sticky pitch from the tree's water-conducting channels and to allow the water to get into the tree. The corn syrup gives the tree a simple carbohydrate source for food, in addition to the fluid of the water. This combination should help the needles stay on your holiday tree.



Live trees should be inside no more than one week.

Removal

After the Christmas season is over, dispose of a cut tree in a responsible manner. More options are becoming available to the Christmas tree consumer. One option is to put the tree out in the backyard with peanut-buttered pine cones or cups and strings of popcorn and cranberries for wild-life food and habitat. In some parts of the state, Christmas trees are recycled as fish habitats in lakes. In many towns and cities, civic organizations or departments of the municipal government set up chipping stations where trees can be brought to be chipped into mulch (often you can take some of the mulch home for your trees or garden, too). If possible, avoid putting the tree in the trash to go to a landfill.

When a living tree has been enjoyed in the house for a week, return it to a sheltered, but unheated, location as you did before it went into the house. With all the decorations removed, mist the needles down again and make sure the root-ball is still damp. After two or three days, plant the tree, remembering to remove all plastic twine, wire, and burlap from the root-ball. Slightly loosen the soil of the root-ball and use the protected, reserved soil from the hole to fill in around the tree. If temperatures allow, water the tree thoroughly after planting and put mulch (wood chips, sawdust) 2 or 3 inches deep around the tree (but **not** touching the bark of the tree). If there are warm spells during the winter, water the tree again, but otherwise it should just begin growing new needles in the spring.

A real tree can make the whole Christmas tradition memorable, delighting sight, smell, and touch. With appropriate care, it will only enhance your holiday experience.

Winter Can Mean Poor Footing for Horses

Jordan Strickler, agriculture communications specialist

Winter is on the horizon, which means it's time to talk muddy fields.

Those familiar with horses know that cold seasons can make your farm quite muddy. Mud is not ideal ground for a variety of reasons. First off, it can create erosion of topsoil and the loss of organic matter, while increasing soil compaction. Second it can cause weight loss as horses who traverse through mud expend more energy. They also can suffer because mud on the animals' coats makes it more difficult for them to regulate their body temperature. This increases the amount of energy they need to generate heat for warmth in the winter. Mud can also up the risk of slipping and falling. And don't forget lost shoes, the bane of most horse owners.

"In winter you get the same amount of rain as you would in the summer, however, you don't have the temperatures to evaporate it," said Stephen Higgins, PhD, director of environmental compliance for the University of Kentucky College of Agriculture, Food and Environment's Agricultural Experiment Station. "When you mix water, soil and foot traffic, you get a lot of mud."

Fortunately, there is a solution: heavy-use traffic pads.

"Traffic pads are a great solution," Higgins said. "You have many material choices for heavy-use pads. Some of these include concrete, plastic traffic grid and geotextile fabric and rock. However, for horses, I would not recommend concrete as they need softer surfaces. The material you use varies depending on many factors, including material availability, installation costs and the size of your operation."

Pad thickness depends on the type of livestock you have, stocking density and whether the area also gets a lot of equipment traffic. Higgins says with equine traffic, an eight-inch-thick layer of dense grade aggregate placed on a six-to-eight-ounce non-woven geotextile fabric would be the best course of action.

Geotextile fabrics are generally used in road construction projects for subgrade stabilization. The geotextile, which is used to separate the soil from the rock layers, is a key component for effective long-term performance of the traffic pad. If the geotextile is not used, the rock material will sink into the ground over time and mud will seep up through the voids. This would negate all of the work (and money) which had been dedicated toward creating safe footing for horses in the first place. The purpose of geotextile fabric is to separate the rock from the soil, provide reinforcement, and friction, while providing drainage for the rock matrix.

Ideally pads would be located on a summit and not a sloping area. If it must be constructed in a hilly location, the area should be leveled to allow runoff to move across as sheet flow to reduce channeling and erosion of the rock pad.



Photo courtesy Dr. Jimmy Henning

However, like everything else, COVID-19 has thrown an unforeseen wrench in the works. “Some things aren’t as cost effective anymore,” Higgins said. “The price of plastic resins has gone up 30% in the past year. So now we’ve had to look at other ideas. Some are a little inventive, such as cinder blocks.”

Higgins says that one idea is to set the blocks on the ground on filter fabric and then backfill it with rock. In addition to providing infiltration, cinder blocks absorb moisture from the environment. The blocks end up acting like sponge in that they wick moisture. This type of footing surface is an idea for indoor areas. A bench top lab study suggested that each block could actually store an entire gallon of liquid. It’s not without its drawbacks, however. This type of flooring might also draw moisture to the surface near an animal and bedding.

“We all want to take care of our horses,” Higgins said. “One of the best ways to do that in the winter is to take care of their footing. Pads can really save owners plenty of headaches down the road.”

More information for installing pads for horses can be found online at <http://www2.ca.uky.edu/agcomm/pubs/id/id164/id164.pdf>.

UK Forage News

Fescue Foot Can Flare in Cold Weather

Posted on November 1, 2022

The symptoms of a bad case of fescue toxicity are well-documented. One symptom — fescue foot — can become more apparent when temperatures drop during the winter.



Photo: Eldon Cole, University of Missouri

“As the cold weather moves in, you are likely to notice some cows or yearlings on fescue pastures may be slow-moving early in the day,” notes Eldon Cole, a livestock specialist with the Univ. of Missouri. “This might be an early warning sign of fescue foot,” he adds.

Toxic alkaloids in Kentucky 31 tall fescue cause the restriction of blood vessels.

The animals' extremities are especially susceptible to restricted blood flow such as ears, tails, and feet. Calves can lose the tips of their ears or switches from their tails which lowers market value.

“For affected cows, producers may notice slight swelling in the rear ankles and possible breaks in the skin from the top of the hoof to up above the dew claw,” Cole notes. “Early detection of limping is key. By the time hooves on hind feet show red, gangrene may have set in.”

If a limping animal is detected, Cole suggests putting it in a chute and checking its lower leg. “If the animal’s leg feels cooler than the rest of the leg, move the affected animals from that toxic pasture and dry lot them or at least put them on a different pasture,” Cole recommends. The colder extremity is the result of a lack of blood flow.

Don’t graze toxic fescue pastures too short. Research shows that toxins stay in the lower 2 inches of the fescue plant during the fall. Intensive rotational grazing with frequent movement of cattle will help ensure plants are not grazed too short.

Consider feeding stored hay during late fall and early winter cold spells. Toxin levels in stockpiled fescue pastures decline over time. Grazing these pastures in mid- to late winter is rarely a concern. Cows that develop fescue foot have difficulty walking or grazing, which drastically impacts performance. While there is no cure for the condition, preventative measures such as planting a novel endophyte tall fescue variety can essentially eliminate the problem. Other strategies are also available for mitigating the disease, such as including legumes into a toxic tall fescue pasture. ~ Mike Rankin, Hay and Forage Grower. Subscribe today to receive a free online or print copy of this magazine [here](#). See the full article [here](#).

Make Winter Green-Thumb Friendly With an Indoor Garden

Source: Rick Durham, UK extension horticulture professor

Gardening is often thought of as a spring and summer pastime, but you don’t have to give up your gardening hobby just because winter is approaching. Continue working your green thumb this winter with an indoor container garden.

Container gardening refers to planting in containers rather than a traditionally tilled plot of land. Container gardening is a great way to bring your plants in from the cold and utilize small spaces such as windowsills and tabletops.

While the variety of crops you can plant in container gardens isn’t as vast as traditional gardens, there are still a variety of planting options. Here are some easy plants to grow indoors this winter:

- Scallions:** For scallions, also known as green onions, you can cut off the tip with the roots and place it in a glass with about an inch of water. When the roots are 2-3 inches long, plant them in potting soil in a shallow container. You can either harvest the green tops and let the plant continue to grow or use the entire green onion.
- Garlic greens:** Plant a garlic clove in a few inches of potting soil mix for garlic greens. You won’t be able to grow bulbs, but the green portion tastes garlicky and serves as a good substitute, either raw or sauted.

- Microgreens:** Microgreens refer to small edible greens grown from the seeds of vegetables and herbs such as broccoli and beets. Make sure the seeds you use are labeled for use as microgreens so there is no coating that may contaminate the plant. Sow the seeds thickly in new, clean potting soil in shallow containers like disposable aluminum pans with one to two inches of potting soil. Microgreens typically mature after 12-14 days or closer to 21 days for larger seeds and reach an average height of 4-5 inches tall. These can be used in salads, wraps or garnishes once fully grown.
- Carrots:** Small carrots are easy to grow in potting soil. Sprinkle the seeds on top of the soil in a pot or long window box, lightly cover with damp peat moss and water well. And don't throw away those carrot tops. They're edible and nutritious and can be used in soups and sauces and even smoothies.
- Herbs:** Basil, chives and parsley are extremely easy to grow indoors. Parsley demands more humidity, so misting the plants will help them flourish. Use organic fertilizer to help your herbs reach their full potential.

One of the biggest challenges with indoor gardening is the lighting limitations. While you should utilize as much natural light from windows as possible, some plants may need additional light from grow lights. Grow lights come in all price ranges and styles, from full-spectrum fluorescent lights to LED plant lights that are a bit more expensive but use less electricity than fluorescent lights. Incandescent bulbs do not emit the right spectrum of light for plant growth.

Another issue you may come across is ensuring your containers have proper drainage. You should use potting soil, which has better drainage, rather than garden soil. Be sure your containers have a hole for drainage and are placed atop a detachable saucer or in a tray to catch extra water. After the water has drained into this catching device, empty excess water to lower the risk of root rot.

Even though you are using clean, presumably "sterile" potting soil, you should wash any plant parts thoroughly before consuming, especially if you are using them raw.

Timely Garden Tips

Trees & Shrubs

- Prune dead branches. You never want to prune much in winter, as this could stimulate new growth, but you can remove torn or hanging branches that could attract pests or cause further injury.
- Remove snow from plants gently. Although tree branches usually can handle a lot, if they do get overloaded with snow or ice, remember: don't shake the branches to dump the snow/ice. If you can, gently brush off snow as it

falls onto the plants. If snow has already frozen on the branch, let the ice melt naturally.

General Gardening

- Bring in garden hoses.
- Drain outdoor faucets.
- Clean and store garden hand tools.
- Winterize power tools — mower, chainsaw, rototiller.
- Store pesticides in a safe place, away from children and pets.
- Provide food, water, and

shelter to attract wildlife.

- Start shopping for seeds and plants. All horticulture companies now have nice online shopping options. They usually give excellent descriptions of the plants. The earlier you buy, the better selection you will have!
- Late winter is a perfect time to take soil samples from you landscape. UK does FREE soil testing for KY residents. Call or stop by the extension office and Cindy can give you written directions for collecting samples.





- Choose a plant with small tightly clustered yellow buds in the center
- Look for crisp, bright, undamaged foliage
- At home, water the plant when dry. Discard excess water in the saucer
- Place in a room with bright, natural light. Ideally, direct sunlight should fall on the foliage for 1 or more hours each day
- Keep out of drafts and away from appliances and radiators; do not put the plant on the television set
- After a few weeks, fertilize with ordinary house plant fertilizer

Make Your Plant Bloom Again

You can make that festive holiday spirit last all year. Coaxing your poinsettia to bloom again is a fun project when you tie it in with holidays during the calendar year.

Christmas—Select plants with tightly clustered, yellow buds. Protect them from hot or cold drafts, water when dry, and put them in a room with bright natural light.

New Years—Use an all-purpose house-plant fertilizer. Keep plants in a sunny window, water regularly, fertilize monthly. Plants will stay colorful for many weeks.

St. Patrick's Day—Remove faded flowers and bracts and dried leaves from the plants. Add more soil, preferably a commercially available sterile mix.

Memorial Day—Your plant should be approaching 3 ft. tall. Trim off 2 to 6 inches of the branches to promote side branching. Repot to a larger container. Move the plant outside; first to indirect, then direct light.

4th of July—Trim the plant again. Make sure it has full sunlight. Slightly increase the amount of fertilizer.

Labor Day—Your plant may have grown to 5 ft. or more. It can be pruned to a height of 18-24 inches. Move it indoors but make sure it has 6 hours of direct sunlight from a curtain-free window. Continue regular water and fertilizer.

First Day of Autumn—Starting on or near September 21, give your plant 14 hours of uninterrupted darkness and 10 hours of bright sun each day. For example, put the plant in a light-free closet or under a box at 6 p.m. each afternoon and return it to a sunny window at 8 a.m. the next morning. Keep watering and fertilizing it. Rotate it each day to give all sides even light.

Halloween—Discontinue the day/night treatment. Keep the plant in a sunny area. Reduce fertilizer applications.

Christmas—Enjoy your “new” poinsettia!

Source: Boyd County Extension Horticulture

Winter Garden Chores

There is always something that needs to be done in the garden—**EVEN IN WINTER!** Here is a list of chores to get done now so you don't feel so overwhelmed come spring:

- Clean all your flowerpots. Use a couple drops of bleach in warm water. This will help kill any diseases or insects that may be overwintering in last years potting mix.

- Recycle your Christmas tree by shredding it for mulch or standing it in the backyard for birds to visit during the cold weather. Leave birdseed underneath or hang birdfeeders among the branches.

- Pre-order your seeds and/or plants. This helps assure the ones you want are still available.

- Design a new garden bed.

Completing this now, gives you plenty of time to make decisions—location, plant choices, timeline, etc.

- Organize your shed and/or garage, tool storage area. Come spring, you'll be glad you did!

- Clean, sharpen, and oil your tools so they are ready to use on the first warm days.

- Dream, Scheme, and Plan for next gardening season!

- Plan your vegetable garden crop rotations.

- Put out water and food for the birds

- Inventory your saved seeds, test for viability.

- Remember to continue to turn your compost pile.

- Start saving coffee grounds

- Start saving eggshells to use in the garden. The next newsletter will have an article explaining how to use them

- Make new or fix old tomato cages



*Every gardener
knows that
under the cloak
of winter lies a
miracle.*

Barbara Winkler

December Updates

PIKEVILLE
Farmers Market

Thank you for a successful 2023 season! Come see us at Winterfest!

Find us on Facebook!




OFFICE CLOSINGS

Our office will be closed on the following dates:

- Thursday, November 23, 2023 Thanksgiving Day
- Friday, November 24, 2023 Thanksgiving Holiday
- December 23- Jan.1 Christmas/New Year Holiday Break

PIKEVILLE
FARMER'S MARKET

 Cooperative
Extension Service

BECOME A 2024 VENDOR

Saturdays 9am-1pm
Tuesdays 4:30-7pm
May-November
130 Adams Lane

PROVIDED TO YOU:
Tables, chairs, booth in an attractive location, bags & bag holders, scales, price cards
Access to water, electricity, restroom
Collaborative Facebook group

Free advertising provided through our Pikeville Farmers Market Facebook Page

REQUIREMENTS

Safety training (21 minute video, 10 question assessment)

Schedule a safety training:
(606) 432-2534
Pike Co. Extension Office
148 Trivette Dr.

Fee of \$25 per day or become a member for \$50 and set up all season (May - November)

GET A GOOD PRICE FOR YOUR LEFTOVER PRODUCE

Pike County Extension ANR wishes you a very Happy Holiday season and a peaceful and prosperous New Year!



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Whimsical
WINTERFEST
Craft & Gift Fair
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 2ND, 2023
10:00 am - 6:00 pm
Appalachian Wireless Arena
Featuring Pikeville
Farmers Market

Pikeville City Tourism

Pike County Extension Service

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