

# The Hoe Truth

newsletter

HELPING YOU GROW!



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## upcoming wheelbarrow classes

all classes begin at 10 AM

### April 10 Jostaberries

Cross between a gooseberry and a current. Class cost is \$20.

### April 17 Stokesia

A native aster with big blooms all summer. Class cost is \$20

### April 24 Beans, beans...

Rattlesnake pole beans, Roma bush bean, Christmas lima bean, Black Turtle soup beans, Python pole bean, Green Crop bush bean, BeSweet edamame. Class cost is \$10.

We'd BEE delighted if you'd join us for Bee Keepers meetings.

The first Monday of each month at 6:30 PM.

Washington County Extension Office

245 Corporate Drive

Jostaberry



Stokesia



Washington County Cooperative Extension Service

Cooperative Extension Service

MARTIN-GATTON COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND ENVIRONMENT

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Disabilities accommodated with prior notification.



April 2025

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

# plant of the month



'Violet Pinwheels'  
Hybrid Phlox

## Perennial

Hardy in USDA Zones 4A - 8B

- ↓ Height: 4-5 in
- ↔ Space: 24-36 in
- ☀ More than 6 Hours of Daily Sun
- 💧 Light to Medium Moisture
- 🕒 Blooms Late Spring

- Intense violet purple flowers
- Blooms completely cover the foliage in late spring
- Excellent in rock gardens
- Easy to grow groundcover
- Prefers full sun and well-drained soil
- Grows best in gritty, alkaline soil
- Pair with Tall Bearded Iris, Bergenia, Sandwort

## April to do's

If you haven't cut your perennials back, do it before the new growth starts.

Pinch off the spent flowers from spring bulbs before they make seed heads.

This will increase the bulb's food storage and increase flower size and productivity for next year.

Don't cut spring flowering bulb foliage back until it turns completely yellow or brown.

Plant trees and shrubs now, spring rain will help them to get established before hot dry weather sets in.

Save money on fertilizer by adding organic matter to your flower and vegetable gardens.

You can plant tender bulbs such as canna, calla, and dahlia later in the month. Apply a slow-release fertilizer at planting.

If you haven't planted your spring vegetable garden due to the wet weather, you still have time. You can plant potatoes, onions, cole crops, lettuce, peas, carrots, beets, etc. now.

If you started seedlings indoors, gradually acclimate them to the outdoors. They will sunburn and windburn easily. Give them 30 minutes to an hour the first day outdoors and gradually increase it in 30-minute to an hour increments for a week or so until they have toughened up.

Uncover your roses! Keep the mulch handy in case we have an extreme late cold snap like last year. Prune out any dead, damaged or diseased tissue.

Spray your lawn for broadleaf weeds. For more information, stop by the Extension Office and pick up the publication AGR-78.

Don't apply nitrogen fertilizer to your lawn in the spring.

Sharpen mower blades and change the oil in your mower before making your first cut of the season.

After flowering, spray fruit trees with an all-purpose fruit tree spray. Never spray while in flower; you will kill the bees that you desperately need for pollination.

Apply a fresh layer of mulch to your landscape beds.

Plant your mail-order or bare-root plants as soon as possible.

If you haven't cut back the blackberry canes that fruited last year, do it now before the new growth begins.

Depending on the Raspberries you are growing you should cut back the canes that fruited last year. If you are growing the varieties that fruit on new and old wood cut them back to the ground if you didn't do it last fall. These will grow all summer and give you a large crop in late summer and fall.

# Garden Club

2025 trip schedule

**April 23rd**

**Sunny Day Greenhouse (Elkhorn) and Country Place Greenhouse**

**May 20th**

**Poppy Festival (Paris)**

**June 17th**

**Bountiful Blooms Cut Flower Farm (Bloomfield)**

**July 1st**

**Willies Daylilies (Lancaster)**

**August 12th**

**Mulberry Orchard and Gallrein Farms (Shelby County)**

**September 23rd**

**Whitehall (Louisville)**

**October 21st**

**Barker Arboretum and Downing Museum (Bowling Green)**



**All trips leave the Extension Office at 9:00 AM.**

**Van space is limited to 12 passengers, so call today to reserve your spot!**

## Fire Blight Alert

Apple and pear trees are approaching bloom.

Infection by the fire blight bacterium occurs during bloom, thus, protectant antibiotics should be applied when risk is high.

Risk for infection can be assessed using the Fire Blight Disease Prediction Model. Growers can assess local risk by selecting their county and orchard history. This model incorporates the previous 4 days of weather data plus adds a 7-day forecast for estimating leaf wetness and temperature (thereby estimating risk for bacterial growth and infection). There are 66 Mesonet weather stations throughout Kentucky, thus, weather information for the model is based on data from the closest weather station. A mobile (phone or tablet) friendly version of this site is here.

Remember that apple and pear trees must be in bloom for predictions to be accurate. The map overview presented here indicates fire blight risk as of March 24, 2025 (Figure 1). According to the current assessment, risk is low for all counties across the state. Growers are encouraged to check the model regularly for the most accurate analyses and county-specific forecasts.

# Recommendations for Starting Disease-Free Vegetable Transplants

Home gardeners and commercial growers likely have placed their seed orders or have last year's seed saved. Over the next few weeks, many will plant those seeds in order to establish transplants for spring and summer gardens. In some cases, those seeds may germinate, wither, and die (Figure 1). In other cases, plants may establish but become diseased shortly after transplanting. This damping-off can be caused by a number of soilborne fungi or fungus-like water molds, often the result of infected seed or from contaminated soil or containers. More information on damping-off diseases can be found in the publication *Damping-off of Vegetables & Herbaceous Ornamentals* (PPFS-GEN-03). Numerous steps can be taken to prevent the occurrence of seedling diseases.

## Purchase Pathogen-Free Seed

When purchasing seeds from suppliers, select seeds that are certified free of disease-causing pathogens. Different sellers may have different seed-testing practices. Information about whether or not seeds are certified disease-free can be found online, in seed catalogs, or on seed packets.

## Heat-Treat Seed

Many home gardeners choose to save seeds from year to year, particularly in the case of heirloom varieties. However, pathogens may be present on the exterior and/or interior of seeds, even if not visible. This may also be true of purchased seeds that are not certified disease-free. Hot water seed treatment may be used for certain types of vegetables to kill pathogens. In this process, seeds are pretreated in a water bath at 100°F for five minutes. Seeds are then transferred to a second water bath set at a specified temperature, typically between 118 and 125°F, for a specified period of time. The temperature and treatment time varies depending on the type of seed being treated. Reference the publication *Disease Management Practices for Saved Vegetable Seeds*. There are certain types of vegetable seeds that cannot be heat treated, such as peas, beans, and most cucurbits; seed pretreated with fungicides also should not be hot water-treated.

## Surface Sterilize Transplant Trays

Reused transplant trays can harbor disease-causing pathogens. If trays are reused, all soil and plant debris should be removed. Trays can then be sterilized using a solution of one part household bleach to nine parts water (10% bleach) or a disinfectant. Pots and metal stakes should be sterilized in a similar way. For additional information on cleaning and disinfection of trays can be found in the *Cleaning & Disinfecting Home Garden Tools & Equipment* and *Cleaning & Sanitizing Commercial Greenhouse Surfaces* publications.

## Pasteurize Planting Media

Planting media can also contain pathogen propagules that may infect seeds or seedlings. Always use new planting media for starting seeds, as most purchased media is typically pathogen-free. If media is suspected of being contaminated, pasteurization (heating up soil) can eliminate pathogens. To pasteurize, put well-moistened soil in a metal container (such as a disposable cake pan) and heat at 200°F for 46 to 60 minutes, or microwave in a glass pan for 30 seconds, mix, and repeat until soil is evenly heated (approximately 3 minutes total time).



# Mini Greenhouses are a Great Tool for Gardeners

Looking to get a jump on your garden this year? Even if the temperatures haven't soared into the typical "planting season" range yet, you don't have to wait to start growing some of your favorite vegetables. Many cool-season veggies like radishes, spinach, cabbage, broccoli, lettuce and onions can be planted in Kentucky from mid-March to early April. These hardy varieties can handle a bit of frost, making them a perfect choice for early spring gardening. However, another useful technique for getting a head start is creating a mini greenhouse in your garden bed.

Before you jump in, make sure to prep your soil by turning it over or lightly tilling it. Next, for a couple of weeks, lay some black plastic film over the area you plan to plant. The black plastic works like a cozy blanket for your soil, soaking up the sun's warmth and helping the earth underneath to heat up faster. By the time you're ready to sow seeds or transplant your young plants, the soil will be a few degrees warmer—just enough to give those early vegetables a significant advantage.

Once the soil is warmed, remove the black plastic and get your plants in the ground. After planting, you'll want to build a simple frame around your garden bed. You can use wood, metal, or even PVC pipe—whatever you have handy. Cover the frame with clear polyethylene film to form your mini greenhouse. Weigh down the edges of the film with boards, bricks or stones so it won't blow away in the wind but will still allow easy access to the plants inside. This clear cover protects tender plants from chilly spring temperatures while still letting in that valuable sunlight.

Of course, plants still need air circulation and watering, so remember that you'll have to check on them regularly. On warm, sunny days, it's crucial to lift part of the plastic cover to let fresh air in; otherwise, your mini greenhouse could overheat. Remember to secure the cover to the ground again on cold nights.

Using this covering strategy can extend your growing season by a month or even six weeks on both ends, meaning you'll start gardening earlier in the spring and keep going later into the fall. (There is no need for the black plastic soil pre-treatment for fall planting.) In fact, if Kentucky's climate stays mild, some tough cool-season crops like spinach may stay alive throughout winter under this protective setup but may be damaged if temperatures drop to the single digits or below. Better yet, once you remove the plastic as warm weather arrives, you can use the same bed for summer crops like tomatoes or peppers—just remember they need plenty of time to mature if you're planning another round of production under plastic in the fall.



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## at the office

April 2 - Sewing Group  
April 7 - Bee Club  
April 7-9 - Super Star Chef  
April 19 - Quilting Club  
April 23 - Greeting Card Workshop  
April 30 - Washington on Wellness

## around town

April 4 - Chamber of Commerce Awards Gala  
April 24 - Cooking Through the Calendar  
April 25 & 27 - I've Got Rhythm at St. Catherine  
May 2-4 - Legally Blonde at the Opera House



Tune in to 100.0 WLSK every Tuesday morning at 8:30 for extension updates and daily farm tips!

We're online! Find us at [washington.ca.uky.edu](http://washington.ca.uky.edu) or stop by our facebook page, just search: Washington County Extension Office.

## Asparagus Tomato Salad

# Recipe

*of the month*

**1 pound** of fresh asparagus, trimmed and cut into 1-inch pieces  
**1** small zucchini, halved and cut into ¼ inch slices  
**3 tablespoons** olive oil  
**2 tablespoons** red wine vinegar  
**1** garlic clove, minced

**¼ teaspoon** seasoned salt  
**¼ teaspoon** honey mustard  
**1 cup** cherry or grape tomatoes, halved  
**¼ cup** sliced green onions  
**¼ cup** shredded fresh mozzarella cheese  
**¼ cup** minced fresh parsley

**Place** the asparagus and zucchini in a steamer basket. **Place** in a saucepan over 1 inch of boiling water. **Cover** and **steam** for 2 minutes. **Rinse** in cold water. In large bowl, **whisk together** olive oil, red wine vinegar, garlic, seasoned salt and honey mustard. **Pour** over asparagus mixture; **toss** to coat. **Toss** in

tomatoes and green onions. **Sprinkle** with mozzarella cheese and parsley.

**Yield:** 6 servings

### Nutritional Analysis:

110 calories, 7 g fat, 1 g saturated fat, 5 mg cholesterol, 35 mg sodium, 5 g carbohydrate, 2 g fiber, 3 g sugar, 4 g protein.



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