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Washington County Cooperative Extension Service

The Hoe Truth Newsletter

Helping You Grow



HORTICULTURE

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 Cooperative Extension Service

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Soil Testing

Soil testing is a soil-management tool we use to determine the fertility of soil as well as the optimum lime and fertilizer requirements for crops. Fall is the best time of year to test your soil. Most nutrients take some time to break down and become available to the plant. If you give them all winter to break down, by the time you are ready to plant in the spring, the plants can better take up the nutrients.



All Kentucky county extension offices offer help with soil testing. Just bring a soil sample to your county extension office and they will send it to UK's Division of Regulatory Services and within a few days you will have the results. Testing doesn't cost much and you may use the results for everything you grow from trees and flowers to fruits and vegetables.

When taking a soil sample, remember plants have shallow roots that lie within the top 6 to 12 inches of soil. Use a trowel to dig down about 6 to 8 inches and collect approximately two cups of soil per sample. Put the sample in a plastic bucket since a metal bucket may taint the results. When you bring the sample to your county extension office, they will put it into a soil test bag along with some information you provide and soon you will have your test results. It will save you some money and it is good for the environment.

As a rule, you should test sandy-textured soils every 2-3 years and clay soils every 3-4 years. However, if problems occur during the growing season, send in a soil sample for analysis.

Contact The Washington County office of the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service for information on soil testing. Soil testing is free through our office as well!

October Is Garlic Planting Time



With ghosts, goblins, and vampires on the prowl in October, it's the perfect time to plant your garlic for next spring. Garlic has long been viewed as a way to ward off vampires, according to European folklore. Whether that is fact or fiction, one thing is for sure, October is the time to plant garlic. Planting in the fall produces larger bulbs and more complex flavors. Garlic enhances food recipes and is seen as a traditional medicine in some cultures.

Garlic is best planted in the fall for harvesting next spring, usually in June. Nothing stores better after harvest than garlic because it is largely not affected by pests or diseases.

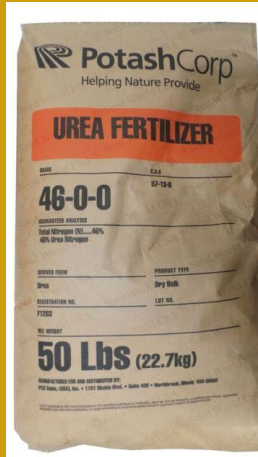
Place your garlic cloves in full sun and a well-drained, fertile site. Mix some organic matter like compost into the soil to provide more nutrients and to increase drainage. Plant cloves about 2 inches deep in the soil with the pointed end of the clove turned up. Prior to planting you should do a soil test to make sure your pH levels are between 6.0 and 6.5. Adding shredded leaves or straw on top will protect the cloves from cold winter and retain soil moisture. Be sure to put your garlic in a corner of your garden or a space where you won't be planting next spring. Each clove of garlic should be planted six inches apart and will produce a new head with six to eight cloves at harvest. You don't need to plant a lot of garlic, because a little will go a long way.

There are three types of garlic, the soft neck, hard neck and elephant garlic. The soft neck has two types, the artichoke and silver skin. Both are common garlic types sold in the supermarket and you have likely used them. The hard neck has large cloves, is easy to peel and has more intense flavor than soft necks. It also has a flower scape or flowering stem. Elephant garlic is a third type but is actually a member of the onion family and is considered a variant of the leek. Source: Adam Leonberger, UK extension horticulture agent

October To-Do's

Lawns

October through November is the best time to fertilize your lawn for a low maintenance approach. Apply no more than 1.5 pounds of actual nitrogen per 1000 sq. ft. This would be about 4.5 pounds of ammonium nitrate or 3 pounds of urea. Don't apply phosphorus and potassium unless your soil test has determined you need it. There is no sense in wasting money on fertilizer that your soil and plants don't need.



Don't let leaves stay on your lawn very long it can smother it out. Its better to chop them up with the mower than to let them lay whole. Raking is the best option as well as a bagger on a lawn mower.

Flowers

Dig tender bulbs before or just after a very light frost. Plants such as cannas, elephant ear, gladiolus, caladium, dahlia, and calla lilies need to be dug to insure you have them next year. Often its not the freezing soil that kills them because usually the soil doesn't freeze deep enough to get them. Actually it's the cold wet soil that causes them to rot.

Gladiolus can actually be cured like an onion and stored in a cool dark place. Other



bulbs such as caladium and dahlia do better if packed in dry peat or vermiculite in a cardboard box. Store them in a cool dark dry place where the temperature remains above freezing.

Trees And Shrubs

October is still a good time to plant many trees and shrubs. Don't fertilize them when you plant them wait until colder weather in November or December.

Remember to keep newly planted trees and shrubs watered even after the leaves fall off.

Their root systems are still growing and they need water. A tree that has a trunk 2 inches in diameter needs 15 gallons of water per week while a tree with 1 inch diameter trunk needs 10 gallons.

If you got a soil test done and you don't want to apply sulfur or lime to lower or raise your pH then you should choose plants that are tolerant to your particular soils. Arborvitae, alders, ash, bald cypress, hawthorn, hornbeam, juniper, honey locust, swamp white oak, sycamore, willows, and redbud are all tolerant of high pH's or those above 7.

Dogwoods, most evergreens, some oaks, hollies, azaleas, and rhododendrons are tolerant or prefer pH's below 7 or even down to 4 or 5.

Vegetables

Harvest winter squash when the rind is hard. This means it is very difficult to penetrate it with your finger nail. Don't allow them to be exposed to frost, they won't keep as long. Store them in a cool place above freezing and out of direct sunlight.

Harvest pumpkin when they turn the color they are supposed to be meaning deep orange usually. Like winter



squash the rind should be hard. Make sure to leave a portion of the stem attached to the pumpkin. This will help it keep longer.

In early October, sow sets of Egyptian tree or multiplier onions.

Harvest carrots before a heavy freeze.

Apply a fresh layer of mulch or leaves over the garden if you didn't sow a cover crop. This will protect your soil during the winter and add nutrients for next years crop.

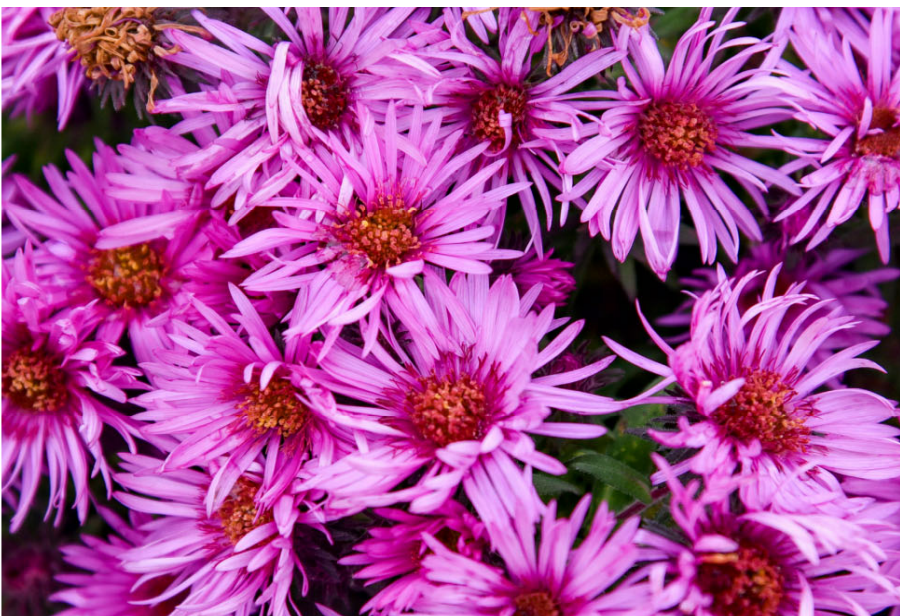
Seven Composting Secrets

Officially composting is a controlled natural biological process where bacteria, fungi (microbes), and other organisms decompose organic wastes. This is a clever scientific definition of composting but basically it's allowing organic material to decompose into humus or compost or basically "dirt".

There are several key steps in making compost and the top 7 are below:

- 1.) **Moisture:** Water content must remain relatively high especially at the beginning of the decomposition process to jump start the bacteria. During dry periods it is imperative to water the compost pile and even cover it with plastic to retain the moisture. Watering the layers as you add them is also a good practice to keep moisture at a premium.
- 2.) **Size:** The smaller the particle size the faster it will decompose because it increases the surface area of the organic matter thus allowing for more bacterial decomposition. Never add anything to the pile over two inches in diameter or thick. Chipping and or shredding material before adding it to the pile is a good idea.
- 3.) **Fertilizer:** Carbon is the energy source for microbes. Nitrogen is also required for the growth and metabolism of microbes. The ideal carbon to nitrogen ratio is 30:1. By adding manure or actual fertilizer such as 10-10-10 or ammonium nitrate you can speed up the decomposition process.
- 4.) **Ingredients:** Materials that are great for composting include grass clippings, leaves, manure, straw, paper, wood ash, kitchen waste such as coffee grounds and vegetable scraps, as well as twigs and branches if they are ground or chipped to 1/4 inch diameter pieces.
- 5.) **Layering:** The quickest, easiest, and least smelly compost is made by layering in dry ingredients followed by wet ingredients and vice versa. This will keep the moisture from becoming too high which will turn the compost into an anaerobic pile (no oxygen) which will cause a smelly slimy mess. This can be accomplished by using dry leaves, straw, or newspaper between layers of kitchen scraps vegetable scraps.
- 6.) **Structure:** A compost bin isn't something that is absolutely needed to make compost however it helps. A structure that can contain the pile or keep it actually in a pile will help retain moisture and keep the "food" or organic material in a pile to allow more bacterial and fungal pathogens to digest the material to turn it into compost.
- 7.) **Aeration:** The key to making quick compost and making sure it heats up adequately is to turn it once per week. This will provide a continued food source for the pathogens which will allow it to get hot enough to kill weed seeds and diseases as well as speed up the process.

Plant of The Month - Aster Pink Crush



Perennial

Hardy in USDA Zones 3A - 8B

↓ Height: 20-24 in

↔ Space: 34-38 in

☀ More than 6 Hours of Daily Sun

🌿 Medium Moisture

🕒 Blooms Early to Mid Fall

🦌 Deer Resistant

- Rose pink flowers
- Round mound of dark green leaves
- Beautiful perennial for late season
- Best in rich, evenly moist soil
- Divide every few years in spring
- Good air circulation required
- Pair with Fountain Grass, Blue Star, Mums

The Rotten Truth About Bitter Rot

While fruit rots have a variety of causes, the most common fungal fruit rot of apple in Kentucky is bitter rot. The disease results in rotten, inedible fruit. Fungicides are available for management; however, sanitation is critical for disease prevention.

Bitter Rot Facts

- Symptoms include small, slightly sunken lesions that eventually develop a bull's-eye pattern (Figure 1). Cutting into infected fruit reveals an internal rot with a V-shaped pattern (Figure 2).
- Symptoms may not appear immediately after infection and may take several months to become visible.
- Initial infection begins as early as bloom and may continue through harvest.
- The pathogen overwinters in fallen fruit, dried fruit (mummies), and in crevices in bark and dead wood.
- Caused by multiple species of the fungus *Colletotrichum*.

Management Options

- Remove and discard diseased fruit immediately.
- At the end of the season, remove fruit from the ground, as well as cankers and dead wood that could harbor fungi.
- Plant cultivars that are less susceptible to bitter rot, including Rome Beauty, Winesap, and Red or Yellow Delicious.

Homeowners can apply fungicides that contain captan or mancozeb beginning soon after petal fall and continuing every 10 to 14 days until harvest. Always follow label directions when utilizing fungicides.



Figure 1: Sunken lesions with bull's-eye appearance are symptoms of bitter rot on apple. (Photo: Nicole Gauthier, UK)



Figure 2: Internal V-shaped rot in apple caused by bitter rot. (Photo: Nicole Gauthier, UK)

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Recipe Of The Month

Greek Style Spaghetti Squash

1 spaghetti squash (2-3 pounds)	2 cloves garlic, minced	¼ teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons olive oil	1 cup fresh spinach leaves	2 tablespoons chopped fresh basil
1 cup chopped onion	1½ cups chopped tomatoes	¾ cup crumbled low- fat feta cheese
¼ cup chopped green bell pepper	1 teaspoon dried oregano	
	1 teaspoon lemon no-salt seasoning blend	

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. **Prepare** the squash by carefully **cutting** it in half lengthwise with a sharp knife and **scooping** out the seeds. **Place** on a lightly greased baking sheet, cut-side down and **bake** for 30 to 35 minutes, or until a sharp knife can be easily inserted into the rind. **Remove** the squash from the oven and allow to **cool**. When cooled, use a fork to **scrape** out the stringy flesh from the shell and **place** in a colander. **Press** out as much liquid as possible. **Place** squash in a medium bowl and keep warm. **Heat** the oil in a skillet over medium heat. **Sauté** the

onion and bell pepper until tender. **Add** the garlic and continue to **cook** 2-3 minutes. **Add** the spinach; allow to wilt. **Stir** in tomatoes and **cook** until tomatoes are heated through. **Toss** the cooked vegetables with the warm spaghetti squash. **Stir** in seasonings, basil, and feta cheese. **Serve** warm.

Yield: 8, ½ cup servings

Nutritional Analysis: 120 calories, 6 g fat, 2 g saturated fat, 5 mg cholesterol, 280 mg sodium, 14 g carbohydrate, 3 g fiber, 6 g sugars, 4 g protein.



Plate it up!

