

# Pay Dirt

HORTICULTURE

January 2020



Cooperative Extension Service

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## Soil Health is Important!

A healthy soil provides plants easy access to air, water, and nutrients. Have you been having problems in your lawn, garden, or landscape? Adopting some of the ideas below may help.

**Add organic matter to the soil.** Organic matter consists of plant and animal residues at various stages of decomposition, cells and tissues of soil organisms, as well as substances they make. Examples of organic matter are crop residues, composted animal manures, compost, or cover crops (also called green manure). Cornell has a great fact sheet with more information on organic matter. Check it out here:

<http://franklin.cce.cornell.edu/resources/soil-organic-matter-fact-sheet>

If you are having problems with your gardens, incorporating one to two inches of compost into the top six inches of soil may help.

**Avoid soil compaction.** Soil is not solid, it is made of lots of pore spaces. These are areas that provide plant roots and soil organisms with air, water, and nutrients. Avoid compaction by not working in the soil when it is too wet. Work includes both using machinery or just walking on the soil. Another way to prevent compaction is to rototill the garden as little as possible.



If compaction is a problem, consider growing in raised beds

One sign you may have soil compaction is if water pools up in areas. Clay soils compact easier than other types.

**Avoid soil erosion.** The top few inches of your topsoil are very important! So be sure it does not leave. To cut down on erosion, use a mulch or cover crop in garden. For more information on erosion, check out this information from Pennsylvania State: <https://extension.psu.edu/cover-crops-in-home-gardens-improve-soil-and-reduce-erosion>

**Do not use fertilizer unless it is needed.** Many people feel that they need to apply things like lime every year to their lawns and garden. But oftentimes it is not needed. Lime raises the pH of the soil and if you use it without needing it, then you may create an area that is not ideal for plant growth. So how do you know what to use? We offer free soil testing for Madison County residents (up to 10 samples per home/farm per year) through our office. Samples are \$6.00 otherwise. Directions on how to take a soil sample can be found here: [https://madison.ca.uky.edu/sites/madison.ca.uky.edu/files/taking\\_soil\\_tests\\_2018.pdf](https://madison.ca.uky.edu/sites/madison.ca.uky.edu/files/taking_soil_tests_2018.pdf)

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# Mark Your Calendars

These programs are held at the Madison County Cooperative Extension Office. If you wish to attend, please call our office at 859-623-4072.

## I Love Veggies!

**February 11th 1:00 to 3:00 pm**

Interested in learning more about gardening? This class will cover basics of starting a garden, but also focus on challenges and solutions. Call to sign up for this class at 859-623-4072.

## Seed Swap

**February 21st 10:30 am**

**In addition to a seed swap, there will be a brief lesson on how to start seeds.**

Please bring seeds to share or swap. Acceptable seeds are those you have saved from open pollinated varieties of plants or any unused seed from packets. If you do not have seeds to share, come on anyway! If you have questions about what types of seeds to bring, contact Amanda Sears. Please call 859-623-4072 if you plan to attend so we will know how many handouts to prepare. Everyone is welcome!

## Trainings for Commercial Growers

### Produce Best Practices Training (for commercial growers)

**Offered twice - March 26th at 1:00 pm or March 31st at 6:00 pm (same material covered in each session)**

The previous GAP (Good Agriculture Practices) curriculum has been updated and now includes some of the basic principles of the Food Safety Modernization Act as well as other updates. Please call to register for one of the trainings listed above, so we will have enough material prepared.

## Vegetable Production Update Webinar

**February 6th from 7:00 to 8:30 pm**

This webinar is presented by specialists at the University of Kentucky and will provide information on updates to insecticides, emerging insect pests, fungicides, spray programs, and commercial vegetable research including cultivars and management practices. Must have at least 10 people sign up for the event to happen. Please call our office if you would like to attend at 859-623-4072. If you would like to receive any handouts from this program, please contact me.

## Farmers' Market News

### Check out the Farmers' Markets Winter Locations in Madison County!

#### Berea Farmers' Market:

Located at the Parrish House at Annex at 101 Fee Street in Berea, on Saturdays from 10 am to 1 pm.

Madison County Farmers' Market: Located at the Richmond Mall at 830 Eastern Bypass in Richmond. Market opened from 9 am to 1 pm.

**To keep up on the latest for each market, check them out on Facebook.**

#### \*\*\*\*\* Snow Policy \*\*\*\*\*

If Madison County Schools are closed due to inclement weather, Horticulture classes and meetings will be cancelled, except where otherwise noted. In some cases, they may be rescheduled.