

Pay Dirt

HORTICULTURE
May 2024



Hello Horticulturalists!

This year, try something new! If you've always focused on vegetables, plant some flowers. Love working in your landscape? Put out a couple of tomato plants. It's nice to have a new perspective on things!

Sincerely,

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Visit <https://madison.ca.uky.edu/> and click on "Program Areas" and then "Horticulture"

Slugs

Slugs are slimy, soft bodied creatures that don't have any legs. Generally they are brownish or grayish in color and range in size from 1/4 of an inch to two inches or longer. Their head contains two pairs of feelers. A larger pair above carries the eyes and a lower pair below is used for smelling. Slugs produce slime and use it to move. A dried slime trail indicates slugs are active in your garden. They feed, or rasp, mainly at night on leaves, stems, flowers and roots of plants. They prefer cool, moist hiding places during the day.

Here are a few tips on how to prevent or reduce slug problems:

- Sanitation. Keep the area free of old boards, stones, or tires that provide cool moist hiding places for slugs. Also remove any old plant debris.
- Encourage toads, garter snakes, ground beetles. They are natural predators of slugs.
- Slugs are attracted to the smell of beer. Slightly bury shallow containers so they are even with the ground. Then fill them with beer. Beer should be changed every few days to remain effective. Slugs will drown in the beer bait.
- Barriers of diatomaceous earth, wood ash, lime, sawdust, copper striping, and salt embedded plastic strips can be used around bedded plants.
- There are baits to kill slugs, but they should only be used as a last resort.



For more information on slugs in Kentucky, go to <https://entomology.ca.uky.edu/ef407>

Check Out the Farmers' Market!

Madison County Farmers' Market

The Madison County Farmers' Market is open Saturdays from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm White Oak Pond Christian Church located at 1238 Barnes Mill Road in Richmond.

<https://www.facebook.com/MadisonKYFarmersMarket>

Berea Farmers' Market

The market is open on Saturdays from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm at the Chestnut Street Pavilion, located at 635 Chestnut Street.

<https://www.facebook.com/bereafarmersmarket>

Tips for Growing Great Tomatoes

It's almost time to plant tomatoes! We could still get a late frost, so wait until after Mother's Day to be sure it's safe.

Below are some tips to growing tomatoes.

1. Do not add lime to the garden unless a soil sample shows you need it. I know a lot of gardeners use lime as a way to combat blossom end rot, but our soils have plenty of calcium in them. Liming the area too much can lead to other problems, such as a soil pH that is too high. To combat blossom end rot, be sure soil moisture stays even. Calcium can only be taken up by the plant when there is adequate moisture.

2. Consider using a mulch around your tomato plant. It is best to use something that will break down over the course of the growing season so I would avoid wood chips. In my own garden I use a couple of sheets of newspaper and a few inches of straw. Grass clippings (if your yard has not been treated with herbicides) and pine straw are two other options to use. Mulches keep the ground wet longer after rain or irrigating. They also cut down on weed problems. And because some plant diseases live in the soil, it reduces the risk of infection because when it rains drops of water do not hit the soil and go back up onto the plant.

3. Do not let your tomato plants lay on the ground. Put them up either with a tomato cage or tie them to a stake. Air flow is very important to the health of the plant. The longer a plant stays wet, the more likely it is to have disease problems. This is also the reason you should not plant them too closely together. Allow for about two feet between each plant.

4. Tomatoes, like most garden plants, need an inch of water a week. If you need to irrigate, the best way to do so is to use a soaker hose. That way water is allowed to go directly in the soil where it is needed. There is no benefit to the plant to have overhead watering. If you use a watering can, focus on watering at the base of the plant.



For more information on gardening, check out the Home Vegetable Gardening in Kentucky Publication: <http://www2.ca.uky.edu/agcomm/pubs/id/id128/id128.pdf>.

Planting Vegetables and Flowers

Planting season is nearly here! As we begin to move plants into our gardens, there are some things to keep in mind.

Plants that were started earlier and will be planted in a different location are called transplants. Be sure they are stocky and healthy looking with healthy looking foliage and roots.



1. If you started your own transplants, they will need to be hardened off. That means getting them acclimated to the outdoors. Start by setting plants outside in a shady area for a few days before putting them in a sunnier location.

2. If possible, plant on a shady day in late afternoon or in early evening to prevent wilting.

3. Ensure plants are well watered and their roots are thoroughly damp an hour or two before setting them in the garden. Don't let the roots of the plants dry out.

4. Handle the plants carefully. Avoid disturbing the roots. Try removing plants from their containers by knocking them out in an inverted position rather than tugging on the plants. Plants growing in peat pots may be planted with the pot intact. However to be safe I usually gently break the sides open of the peat pot before I plant it.

5. Dig a hole large enough to hold the roots. The planting hole should be large enough for the entire root ball of the plant. Plants should be set at the same depth they were in their original container. Tomatoes can be set deeper if needed.

6. Once planted, press the soil firmly around the roots.

7. If the weather is very hot, shade the plants for a few days after transplanting. Use newspapers or cardboard on their south sides or cover them with a woven cotton fabric such as cheese cloth.

8. Water the plants every 2-3 days during the next week.

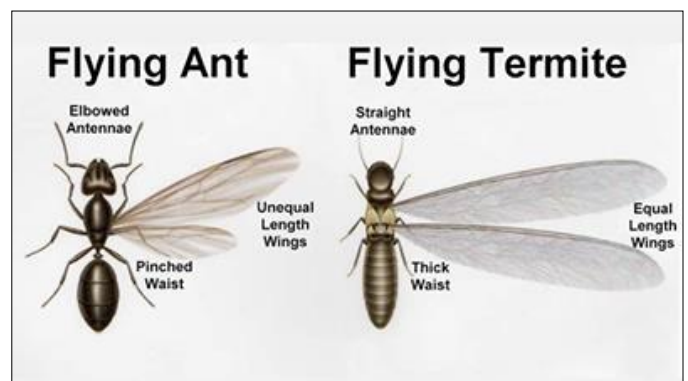


What's the Difference Between Ants and Termites?

While termites swarm in the spring, so do winged ants.

There are a few differences between the two insects, although you may need to get a magnifying glass to tell. Look at the antennae of the insect. Termites have straight antennae while ants have an elbow-like crook. Are the two sets of wings of equal size? If so, you have termites. With ants, the front set of wings is longer.

Finally check the "waist" of the insect. An ant's waist is constricted between the body regions, while a termite's abdomen is uniform.



Sustainable Disease Management Guides

The University of Kentucky's Entomology and Plant Pathology Departments have put together several sustainable disease management guides for different vegetables. They are a great resource! Check them out at:

- Sustainable Disease Management of Cole Crops in the Home Garden
<https://plantpathology.ca.uky.edu/files/ppfs-vg-23.pdf>
- Sustainable Disease Management of Cucurbit Crops (squash, cucumbers) the Home Garden
<https://plantpathology.ca.uky.edu/files/ppfs-vg-19.pdf>
- Sustainable Disease Management of Leafy Green Crops in the Home Garden
<https://plantpathology.ca.uky.edu/files/ppfs-vg-20.pdf>
- Sustainable Disease Management of Legume Vegetable Crops (beans) in the Home Garden
<https://plantpathology.ca.uky.edu/files/ppfs-vg-22.pdf>
- Sustainable Disease Management of Solanaceous Crops (tomatoes, peppers) in the Home Garden
<https://plantpathology.ca.uky.edu/files/ppfs-vg-21.pdf>

How to Use a Rain Gauge

Rain gauges are very helpful tools when managing a healthy lawn, landscape or garden.

What Is a Rain Gauge?

If you remember those graduated cylinders you used back in your middle school science class, a rain gauge serves a pretty similar purpose. Instead of measuring mysterious liquids, however, it is used exclusively for measuring rainfall. Keeping track of the amount of water your lawn and garden receives throughout the week is critical in determining your irrigation routine, and therefore, the health of your plants.

Plants need an inch of water a week. Too much water can lead to disease problems, while too little can cause the plants to wilt and die.

How to Use a Rain Gauge

If you've recently acquired a rain gauge but don't know what to do with it, simply follow the steps below to get the most out of your handy new tool.

1. Find a good spot for your rain gauge. It should be put in an open area that isn't covered by trees or other structures.
2. Many rain gauges can be staked directly into the ground. Some, however, have the option of being mounted to a post or fence. No matter how you install it, make sure you can easily empty it.
3. Wait until after a rainstorm, then check the amount of water in the gauge. When taking measurements, read it at the meniscus. The meniscus is the bottom curve of your collected rainwater.
4. Be sure to record the amount in order to determine if you will need to irrigate your plants.



Information taken from:

<https://blogs.ifas.ufl.edu/sarasotaco/2022/03/22/how-to-use-your-rain-gauge/>