

# Pay Dirt

HORTICULTURE  
November 2023



Cooperative Extension Service  
Madison County  
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Richmond, KY 40475  
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<http://extension.ca.uky.edu>

## Hello Horticulturalists!

Happy Fall! I will miss my summer flowers but am glad for a respite from ragweed!

Please help our office know how to better serve you by feeling out this quick ten minute survey:  
<https://psd.ca.uky.edu/communityassessment>.

If you cannot take the online survey, call us at 859-623-4072 for a printed copy.

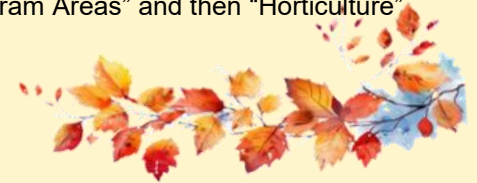
*Amanda Sears*

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County Extension Agent for Horticulture

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



An equal opportunity organization

# MADISON COUNTY

How can we serve you?

Take a ten-minute survey to help us develop programs addressing needs in our community.

[go.uky.edu/serveKY](https://go.uky.edu/serveKY)

KENTUCKY COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

YOU ARE INVITED TO

# Christmas

WITH EXTENSION

Join Jessica & Amanda for a fun class with crafts, food, and a lil learning too!

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2022  
10AM- 12PM

Madison County Extension Office  
RSVP @ (859) 623-4072

## Cooperative Extension Service

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

## MARTIN-GATTON COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND ENVIRONMENT

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Disabilities accommodated with prior notification.



## Check Out the Farmers' Markets!

### Madison County Farmers' Market

To see updates on what the market is doing, check their Facebook page.

### Berea Farmers' Market

The first Saturday in November the market hours will change to 10:00 am to 1:00 pm, at the Pavilion on Chestnut Street. As winter sets in they will move indoors to new location. Check their Facebook page for updates.



## Protect Your Strawberry Plants This Winter!

As winter creeps in, don't forget to mulch your strawberry plants.

During winter, the freezing and thawing of the soil can lift the plants partially out of the ground, causing damage to the roots. This damage will lead to smaller berries and reduced yields. Mulch can reduce the likelihood of this occurring.



Wheat straw is the preferred mulch material, but oat and rye straw also work well. Avoid using leaves from deciduous trees, as they tend to get compacted together and hold to much moisture against the plants.

Apply the mulch when the night temperature is consistently in the 20F's which is usually sometime in mid-December. Be sure to not cover the plants too much. You should still be able to see leaves peeking out from beneath the straw. Excessive mulch can smother plants.

Remove the mulch when the plants have begun to grow and the foliage looks slightly yellow. If the mulch is left on too long, it could substantially reduce your yield.

# Farm City Banquet

Monday, November 13, 2023 ~ 6:00 pm

Madison County Cooperative Extension Service

Come celebrate agriculture in Madison County! In addition to several awards and a great dinner, Dr. Jimmy Henning will discuss how he captures the beauty of farms through his photography.

Tickets are \$20. Purchase online at: <https://madison-4-h.square.site/> or in person by check (payable to "Madison County 4-H Council") at the Madison County Cooperative Extension Office. Tickets on sale now until November 7th, or until sold out. For more information call 859-623-4072.

# Winterizing Your Tools

A little maintenance right now can save you money and a headache come next spring.

Make sure and drain your water hose. Water expands as it freezes and could damage your hose if it is not properly drained. Stretch the hose all the way out with both ends open. Allow all the water to drain out, then coil it up. Store them on hose reels or coiled on the ground. Hanging the hose on a nail could promote kinks in the line.

Inspect your garden tools. Make sure to clean off any dirt or debris. Soil or plant material left on tools could transmit disease to your plants next year. For especially heavy clay soil you may need to use a wire brush for cleaning.

Spray metal parts with a penetrating oil such as WD-40 to prevent rust. Another idea is to place sand and oil (such as motor oil) in a large bucket and then slide your tools in and out of the sand.



Tools such as hoes and spades need to be kept sharp. After cleaning the metal, use a sharpening stone or a file. Keep the file at a slight angle over the beveled edge. That would be the top or front side of shovels or spades. Using a sweeping motion from one side to the other, push the file along the edge in a one-way stroke away from the blade. After sharpening the front, turn the tool over and lightly file the back of the blade to remove any metal burrs that may have formed when the front side was filed. Once finished, wipe the blade with oil. Loppers, pruners, and other cutting utensils also need to be routinely sharpened in a similar fashion to the ones described above.



Check your tools for plant sap. Accumulation of this sticky material can dull and impair usage. Turpentine can be used to clean off gunky material.

Run your mower until it is out of fuel or add a fuel stabilizer; otherwise you could damage your engine. Also, change your oil. Old oil can be corrosive to engine parts, especially if the mower is just sitting idle during the winter. Check the owner's manual for any tips on winterizing the machine. Make sure the blades are sharpened for next spring's first cutting.

## Free Soil Testing

The Madison County Cooperative Extension Service offers free soil testing for Madison County residents (10 sample limit per farm or home per calendar year). These tests check nutrients and pH level of the soil.

For directions on how to collect a horticulture soil for a test, go to <https://madison.ca.uky.edu/horticulture> and click on "Taking and Preparing Soil Samples for Testing". We need at least two cups of dry soil to run a test. If you have questions on how to do a test, please call our office at 859-623-4072.

(Please note: Commercial lawn care companies submitting samples do not qualify for free soil testing; call 859-623-4072 for pricing).



# The Best Way to Store Your Fruits and Vegetables

A federal study found that 96.4 billion pounds of edible food is wasted by retailers, food service businesses and consumers annually. That equates to about 122 pounds of food thrown out monthly by a family of four. Of those 122 pounds, 24 pounds are fruits and vegetables.

It is easy to be wasteful. I think we all buy things with the intention of eating them. But if you are like me, its easy to buy a head of lettuce, put it in the fridge and promptly forget about it. Next thing you know, it has liquified in your produce drawer!

Luckily, there are ways to store produce so it lasts longer.

Keep tomatoes, unripe melons, pears, peaches and nectarines at room temperature for best flavor. They will ripen and become sweeter. Once they have ripened or sliced store them in the refrigerator.

As some fruit ripens it releases ethylene gas. This can cause some fruits and vegetables to ripen more quickly. It is a good idea to keep different fruit separate from one another to maintain freshness, as long as possible and avoid the ripening process taking place too quickly.

Berries last longer if kept refrigerated at or below 40 degrees F. They will also have better flavor if they are consumed within three days of purchase.

Wash in cold, running water just before eating.

Cherries can be handled in this same manner.

Grapes will taste best within the first few days of

purchase, but can be kept refrigerated up to two weeks. Citrus fruits, oranges, lemons and limes can be stored for a few weeks at room temperature, but last longer if stored in the refrigerator.

For vegetables, storage methods vary. Vegetables do not improve in quality after harvest. Corn will taste best when eaten right away. Storing corn in the refrigerator for any length of time turns the naturally occurring sugar into starch. Leafy greens should be refrigerated and eaten within two days. Green and yellow beans should be refrigerated and used within three to four days. Lettuce, broccoli, cauliflower and cucumbers need to be refrigerated and consumed within one week. Celery, cabbage and bell peppers can be kept one to two weeks. Onions, garlic, potatoes and winter squash will last several weeks in a cool, dry place. Keep potatoes away from light to prevent greening on the skin. If kept in a cool, humid spot, they will easily remain good for up to a month.



## One Bad Apple Really Can Spoil the Bunch!

As apples mature and age, they release a gas called ethylene, also known as the ripening hormone.

Some vegetables, such as kale, spinach or broccoli, are sensitive to ethylene. If they are stored with apples (or other ethylene producing vegetables like potatoes) their quality will quickly decline.

