

HORTICULTURE NEWSLETTER

FROM THE GROUND UP



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Clark County Extension Service will be closed November 27th & 28th. Will reopen December 1st.

A Word from the Agent



Hello everyone and a happy November to you! I hope this finds all of you doing well and enjoying our new weather patterns for the season. It was great to see so many familiar faces and new faces at our Fall Fest! With over 800 in attendance, I didn't get to see you all but I hope everyone had a great time and walked away with some goodies.

It's hard to believe we are starting November already, 2025 has flown by. It was a very hard year for vegetable gardens, so don't be hard on yourself. It was also a stressful year on our trees, so fall color was a little lackluster. But we move ahead! Be sure to clean up the flower beds and gardens, and use this month to get everything tucked in good for winter. If there is a horticulture topic that you struggled with this year or just want to learn more about it, tell me! I've already got a running list of potential class topics for 2026, and I'd love to teach the ones you all want.

Clark County Extension Agent

for Horticulture

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Lastly, Happy Birthday to all the November babies out there! Y'all are plentiful! In our office of 11, there are 4 with birthdays this month!! So make it a great one, and we will see all of you around the county!!



Clark / Powell BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Monday, November 10, 2025
6:30 pm
Clark County Extension Service
1400 Fortune Drive; Winchester, KY
~ POT-LUCK MEAL ~

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

Educational programs of Kentucky Cooperative Extension serve all people regardless of economic or social status and will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, creed, religion, political belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, pregnancy, marital status, genetic information, age, veteran status, physical or mental disability or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity. Reasonable accommodation of disability may be available with prior notice. Program information may be made available in languages other than English. University of Kentucky, Kentucky State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Kentucky Counties, Cooperating.

Lexington, KY 40506



Disabilities accommodated with prior notification.



KENTUCKY KISSING BUGS

By: Jonathan L. Larson, Entomology Extension Specialist

Over the last week or so, kissing bugs have been in the news. In the southwestern and western United States, there are growing concerns about the prevalence of kissing bugs and the possibility that a parasite they vector may be more common in those states than previously believed. That parasite is responsible for Chagas disease, a health issue more common in Central and South America that can become a chronic long-term health issue.

As reporting expands, there have been publications and social media questions about kissing bugs and Kentucky, as well as how at-risk people and animals might be affected. There is one species of kissing bug that dwells here, the eastern bloodsucking conenose, but thus far, it has not posed a distinct human health hazard.

Eastern bloodsucking conenoses are out and about in Kentucky, looking to take blood meals. People can be bitten by conenoses, leaving people to wonder if they were exposed to/contracted Chagas disease. Luckily, the chances of Eastern bloodsucking conenoses vectoring Chagas disease are low due to a variety of circumstances that make the conenose different than their close relatives in the subfamily Triatominae.

Eastern bloodsucking conenose basics



Figure 1: Eastern bloodsucking conenoses are large insects with a distinctive black and orange coloration and patterns on the edge of their bodies. (Photo: Sturgis McKeever, Georgia Southern University, Bugwood.org)

As part of the kissing bug group, these are blood feeding critters (if the name wasn't a giveaway). Kissing bugs belong to the Hemiptera order, also known as true bugs. Hemiptera also includes things like aphids, stink bugs, bed bugs, cicadas, and many more. All true bugs have piercing sucking mouthparts and go through incomplete metamorphosis. Conenoses are specifically a part of the Triatominae and are closely related to assassin bugs and wheel bugs.

Conenoses start life as an egg and progress through eight nymphal instars, or stages, to reach adulthood. To go from one stage to the next, they must take a blood meal. The adults are about 3/4 inch long, dark in coloration, and have distinctive orange or red-orange squares on the border of their body.

Kissing bugs get their common name for their penchant of biting a human host near the mouth. This creepy kiss is done when humans are asleep to minimize chance of detection. Conenoses can also bite on the face. In addition to biting people, eastern bloodsucking conenoses will dine on frogs, rats, raccoons, cats, and dogs. Because of this, they can be found in tree cavities, near doghouses, and by animal enclosures.

Is there anything to be concerned about?

Kissing bugs as a group are responsible for vectoring the parasite that causes Chagas disease. This disease is more commonly associated with Central and South America than Eastern North America. In the acute phase of Chagas, which would occur soon after transmission, the CDC describes that the patient may experience fever and/or swelling around the bite site. In chronic cases, those who suffer from Chagas may have heart and digestive tract issues.

Typical vectoring of the Chagas pathogen comes from a kissing bug biting a person and then defecating on the person's face, often near the bite site. Upon waking, the person may wipe or itch at the bite, which can transfer the parasite into the wound.

The eastern bloodsucking conenose can and will bite humans. In the past, the pest has tested positive for the parasite responsible for Chagas. It is believed that they may acquire the parasite from rats or other wildlife they have fed on; however, they are not classically considered to be competent vectors for Chagas to humans. This

is because, unlike their relatives, these conenoses do not tend to defecate while engaged in feeding or soon after feeding while still on the sleeping human. Without exposure to the infected feces, you should be relatively less likely to acquire Chagas. For this reason, if you find a conenose in your home, it is extremely unlikely you will end up with Chagas disease here in Kentucky. Of course, if you feel concerned or ill, please consult with a medical professional!

Mistaken identities

The eastern bloodsucking conenose can be confused with multiple, more common insects. This can include the ones you see in the diagram below. Pictured are the bloodsucking conenose, a wheel bug, a western conifer seed bug, and then a brown marmorated stinkbug. Wheel bugs have a large cog that projects from the top of their thorax that differentiates them from a conenose. Western conifer seed bugs have flattened legs that resemble an oar or paddle. Brown marmorated stink bugs are much lighter in color than the conenose.



Figure 2: From left to right, the bloodsucking conenose, a wheel bug, a western conifer seed bug, and then a brown marmorated stinkbug..(Photos: Kansas Department of Agriculture, Joseph Berger, David Cappaert, and Susan Ellis, Bugwood.org, respectively).

Management

Even if you are not at distinct risk of infection, few people enjoy the idea of an insect drinking their blood while they are asleep.

Conenoses are best prevented by using pest proofing methods like applying caulk to seal cracks and gaps around windows, walls, roofs, and doors; by repairing screens and windows; and by closing holes and cracks leading to the attic/crawl spaces. Conenoses are also attracted to lights and will fly at houses with outdoor lighting. Turning off outdoor lights or changing to timers/motion detection can reduce light attraction. Finally, checking pet or animal domiciles for bugs is also practical.

Those who live near wooded areas are more at risk and should be proactive. You may also need to perform pest control for things like rats, raccoons, etc. that are acting as hosts to the conenose. Insecticides are generally not necessary but pyrethroid products applied to cracks and crevices can be used for serious infestations.



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

IT'S YOUR REALITY EVENT

We are in search of volunteers to help with our Reality Store event at Robert D. Campbell School on November 24th from 9:00am-3:50pm. This event is a hands-on, real-life simulation activity that gives 8th graders the opportunity to make lifestyle and budget choices similar to those that will be faced as an adult. The youth will visit 20 booths that are manned by community volunteers, local business men and women, and extension staff. When manning a booth you will give youth options on a financial decision and initial their cards (i.e. entertainment, clothing, insurance, etc.).

If you are available and willing to help please email Aubrey Lawson at aubrey.lawson@uky.edu





Tree Surface Roots:

Why they happen and what to do

By: Carrie Spry Clark County Horticulture Agent

them more. Nearly any mature tree can develop surface roots, though poplars, willows, maples (Norway, red, silver), sycamores, aspens, beeches and some ash and pin oaks are frequent culprits.

The worst thing you can do is cut or grind off visible roots. That invites decay and insects, removes thousands of feeder roots that absorb water and nutrients, and can weaken the tree's stability. Piling on lots of soil is risky too; deep fill over the root zone can suffocate roots.

First, consider adding a mulch layer over exposed roots. A two- to three-inch layer of shredded wood or chips cushions the roots, reduces mowing around the tree and holds moisture. Extend the mulch ring as far as you can — ideally to the dripline — and keep it pulled back a few inches from the trunk. Skip "volcano" mulching—don't pile mulch around the trunk. If you want plants under the canopy, hand-dig small pockets within the mulched area for shade-loving perennials or groundcovers between roots; avoid rototillers and do not add thick layers of soil first. Make sure plant roots extend down into the soil and not just into the mulch.

Growing grass under trees is also an option but has its own challenges. Even shade-tolerant species may not provide a thick enough cover to be attractive. The grass and tree roots will constantly compete for moisture and nutrients, and you may find yourself watering the grass under the tree more often than in other parts of the yard. Nevertheless, if you want to try grass, rake away debris of sticks and excess leaves, then add just enough topsoil —a half inch or less — just enough to fill in between roots and smooth the surface. Seed with a shade-tolerant grass and water as needed. When mowing, you may want to set your mower deck a bit higher to avoid damaging any exposed roots. Because roots continue to thicken, expect to repeat this light topdressing every year or two rather than burying everything at once.

Planning and planting choices help prevent the problem. In compacted or clay soils, select trees with deeper root systems such as black gum ginkgo, yellowwood, zelkovas and many oaks are good options. You can also choose smaller ornamental trees whose roots are less likely to grow large enough to cause trouble. Plant slightly high (about two inches above grade), give trees room near pavement, and check local rules before planting along streets. Remember that roots extend well beyond property lines and will follow air, water, and space.

In short, surface roots are mostly an aesthetic and maintenance issue — a response to soil conditions rather than a sign of poor tree health. Treat the soil gently, protect the roots, and manage the area with topdressing or mulch. Your tree will thank you — and your mower will, too.

Big shade trees are a gift — until their roots start showing in the lawn. Surface roots make mowing tough, trip people up and can heave sidewalks. They aren't a sign your tree is failing, though. In most cases, they're a normal response to how roots grow and how soil behaves.

Most tree roots spread outward in the top 4–15 inches of soil because that's where oxygen is available. In heavy, compacted, or poorly drained soil, oxygen is scarce, so roots creep even closer to the surface. Each year those roots thicken, the way a trunk does, and they can push through the turf. Erosion from rain and foot traffic exposes



HELP SUPPORT CLARK COUNTY 4-H MEMBER & STATE SEWING CHAMPION!

We are so proud of Clark County 4-H member Joanna Yates, who won the Kentucky 4-H Fashion Revue this summer with her beautifully handcrafted prom dress! Joanna's hard work, creativity, and dedication have earned her the incredible honor of representing Kentucky at the National 4-H Family & Consumer Sciences (FCS) Competition in San Antonio, Texas, this January.

Now, we need your help to make this dream trip a reality! 

Travel and competition costs add up quickly, and we're seeking community sponsors and donations to help send Joanna to Nationals. We are still needing around \$750. If you'd like to contribute, donations can be made to Clark County 4-H. Every dollar brings Joanna one step closer to representing Kentucky on the national stage - and we couldn't be more grateful for your support.

Open-Pollinated vs. Hybrid: An important distinction when saving seeds



Each year, I try to grow a few different fruits and vegetables. Sometimes the unknown crop turns out to be a dud that produces a lackluster harvest, a pitiful yield, or simply proves to be poorly adapted to my garden. But now and then, we discover a real gem. A plant that thrives in our local climate and soil and tastes delicious. A crop so good, you must grow it again next year.

Instead of pre-ordering the seed packet for next year, you could try to save this year's seed for free. But will those saved seeds grow a crop identical to the previous year?

Step One: Know Your Vegetable

The first step in seed saving is distinguishing between open-pollinated and hybrid vegetables.

Hybrids are the result of crossing specific parent plants to produce offspring with selected traits such as uniformity, disease resistance, enhanced flavor, and more. However, the offspring of hybrid plants grown in your garden won't necessarily carry those desirable traits into the next generation. To maintain those traits, hybrid seed production must be highly controlled.

Open-pollinated vegetables, on the other hand, have traits that reliably carry through to the next generation. That's why many of the unique or experimental plants I grow are open-pollinated. If I like the vegetable or fruit, I can save its seeds and grow them again next year.

The Nuances of Open-Pollination

While open-pollinated crops may seem simple, there are some details to consider. Certain vegetables like tomatoes, peppers, peas, and beans have self-pollinating flowers and need little to no special care for seed saving.

Heirloom vegetables are a type of open-pollinated crop that have traditionally been grown and passed down through generations. They were the foundation of vegetable gardens before hybrids gained popularity and interest in gardening declined with the rise of well-stocked produce sections in grocery stores. (Certainly, there are more reasons for diminished interest in gardening than grocery stores.) While heirlooms tend to be consistent from one generation to the next, there can still be some minor variability even within a single named variety. So when we grow several 'Mortgage Lifter' heirloom tomatoes, we know we'll get a beefsteak slicer, but there will be some differences from plant to plant.

Other crops, such as sweet corn or cucurbits (squash, cucumbers, pumpkins), are cross-pollinated via separate male and female flowers, which may come from entirely different plants. This makes it difficult to control the genetics of the next generation. If you want to save seeds from cross-pollinated crops, distance is one technique to prevent wind or insect pollination from mixing varieties.

For wind-pollinated crops, the minimum separation distances vary:

- **Spinach:** 1,300 feet
- **Sweet corn:** 5,200 feet (in case you were wondering, that's nearly one mile)

For insect-pollinated crops, the minimum separation distances include:

- **Broccoli and onions:** 2,600 feet
- **Kale and collards:** 4,000 to 26,000 feet from certain cole crops
- **Melons, radishes, squash, pumpkins:** 1,300 feet

These distances are quite large, but they're how seed companies maintain stable genetics in their seed lines. Of course, they also use other techniques, such as isolation structures and staggered planting times to ensure flowers bloom at different periods.

Seed Saving for Real World Gardeners

While these guidelines might discourage you from saving seeds, you don't have to be a purist. In my garden, I don't strictly follow these separation distances, but I still save seeds. After all, if I like the parent plant, maybe I'll enjoy the offspring too.

Observing plant genetics in action is fun and can lead to delightful surprises, some of which may become staples in your garden.

By: Chris Enroth is a horticulture educator with University of Illinois Extension

SEED SAVING 101: HOW TO HARVEST AND STORE YOUR OWN GARDEN SEEDS

WHEN TO HARVEST SEEDS

- Dry seeds: beans, peas, lettuce, marigolds, sunflowers
Wait until the seed pods or flower heads are completely brown and dry on plant
- Wet seeds: tomatoes, cucumbers, squash, peppers
Scoop dry seeds from inside, pant and dry



HOW TO HARVEST & SAVE SEEDS

- 1 Choose Your Best Plants
Select the healthiest, most productive plants
- 2 Collect Seeds at Maturity
Dry method: remove seed heads or pods and shake or gently crush to release seeds
- 3 Wet method: scoop seeds from fruit, rinse, and dry thoroughly
- 4 Dry Seeds Completely
Spread seeds in a single layer on a plate or screen in a warm, dry place out of direct sunlight: may take several days to a week
- 5 Store Properly
Place in paper envelopes or small glass jars
always label with plant name and harvest year
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Gus' Quick Tips for November . . .



Although we are past the best time for seeding, lawns will benefit from a fall application of nitrogen. October and November are excellent months to feed as you can promote vigor without excessive growth.



Mow new grass seedlings when they reach 2.5 inches tall. Continue to mow lawns as late as needed, but always wait till the frost has melted!



Remove small piles of leaves from lawns by mowing and mulching them. Mulched leaves can be highly beneficial to the lawn, however piles of leaves left on the lawn can damage the turf.



Too many leaves to mow and mulch? Start a compost pile with all of those leaves. It doesn't have to be elaborate or technical. A simple pile will make compost if left long enough.



Winterize your equipment! Clean, sharpen, and oil your tools when you are finished with them for the season. This will have them ready to go for the next year. Also, make sure to drain or add fuel stabilizer to gasoline powered equipment.



If you have not dug and stored tender bulbs like dahlias, cannas, and gladiolus, you need to do so before the ground freezes.



Clean up peony foliage if you have had any of the leaf spotting diseases. This will help prevent/lessen the problem for next year.



Drain and store garden hoses and irrigation systems.



November is an excellent time to plant fall bulbs for next spring. Examples would be daffodils, hyacinth, tulips, and even muscari.



Plant paperwhites, amaryllis and other ready to bloom bulbs for the holidays. These plants can make wonderful gifts as well!



Protect the trunks of fruit trees with wire mesh to prevent gnawing damage from rabbits and voles.



Do a thorough cleanup of the vegetable garden. This will remove many insect and disease problems before they can become a problem next year. Once your garden is clean, add a thin layer of compost or some form of organic matter to protect it for the winter.



Monitor houseplants for insect problems. Most common pests can be controlled if detected before they become major infestations.



RECIPE

Easy Chicken Pot Pie

Servings: 6 / Serving Size: 1/6 pie

Source: Adapted from Texas Cooperative Extension, The Texas A&M University System, Expanded Nutrition Program

Ingredients:

- ⅓ cup frozen mixed vegetables, thawed
- 1 cup cooked chicken, cut into bite-size pieces
- 1 (10 ¼ ounce) can low fat, condensed, cream of chicken soup
- 1 cup baking mix
- ½ cup skim milk
- 1 egg

Directions:

- 1) Wash hands and any cooking surfaces.
- 2) Pre-heat oven to 400 degrees F.
- 3) Mix vegetables, chicken and soup in ungreased, 9-inch pie plate
- 4) Stir baking mix, milk and egg in a mixing bowl with fork until blended. Pour over vegetables, chicken and soup mixture in pie plate.
- 5) Bake 30 minutes or until golden brown.
- 6) Let cool 5 minutes and serve.



Nutrition Facts per serving: 190 calories; 5g total fat; 1.5g saturated fat; 0g trans fat; 50 mg cholesterol; 630 mg sodium; 24 g carbohydrate; 1g fiber; 4g total sugars; 1g added sugars; 11g protein; 0% Daily Value of vitamin D; 6% Daily Value of calcium; 6% Daily Value of iron; 2% Daily Value of potassium.