

NEWSPLETTER

# CLARK COUNTY Horticulture

## *From the Ground Up*

 Cooperative Extension Service

JANUARY 2026

Clark County Extension Service; 1400 Fortune Drive; Winchester, KY 40391  
859-744-4682; [clark.ext@uky.edu](mailto:clark.ext@uky.edu); <http://clark.ca.uky.edu/>

Clark County Extension Service will be  
CLOSED Monday, January 19, 2026

### A Word from the Agent



Happy January friends!! I know I'm getting old because time just keeps moving faster. But either way, 2026 is here and let's make it a great year! We do that by first pouring over the seed catalogs to make purchases for next year. Couple of things to keep in mind. AAS winners will about always be great performers, vegetable or flower. And if you're looking for an old classic variety of a vegetable, don't forget your local farm supply stores.

Next we make plans to come to Winter School! This wonderful 4 night event is back with so many great topics. As always, a free meal each night for attendees! Be sure to check out the flyer in this newsletter for more details and then call and register today!

Lastly, get out and enjoy the crisp cold air once in a while. Fresh air, even when cold, is so good for us in so many ways. Call me if you need me, I'm working away at plans for the new year. But I'll see you around the county!

**Carrie Spry**

Clark County Extension Agent for Horticulture  
[carrie.spry@uky.edu](mailto:carrie.spry@uky.edu)

Coming in  
**FEBRUARY 2026**

**Winter School**

*See enclosed Winter School Flyer for details!*



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



[clarkextensionhort](https://www.instagram.com/clarkextensionhort)

### Clark / Powell Beekeepers Association

Monday, **January 12, 2026**

6:30 pm - Meal ● 7:00 pm - Meeting

Clark County Extension Service  
1400 Fortune Drive; Winchester, Kentucky

~Pot luck meal~



*Mable enjoying the crisp cold air*

### 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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University of Kentucky, Kentucky State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Kentucky Counties, Cooperating.  
Lexington, KY 40506



Disabilities  
accommodated  
with prior notification.

# Nature Photography for Long Winter Days



By: **Emily Swihart**,  
*Horticulture Educator with University of Illinois Extension*

It is official, winter is upon us. The holiday season has come and gone, the calendar has turned over to a new year, and much of the Midwest is blanketed in snow. On these long winter days, one of my favorite activities to do is to dream about warm summer days. I do this by reflecting on the past growing season and planning for the upcoming growing season, by enjoying garden produce preserved specifically for these winter days, and thumbing (okay scrolling) through photos of nature I've taken over the past year.

## Benefits of nature photography

Looking through photos of nature is more than a fun thing to do, it can make us feel better. A growing body of evidence continues to expand our understanding that connections with nature improve psychological outcomes. A subset of this field of research offers evidence that direct interaction with nature isn't the only way to achieve benefits, in fact scenes of nature can also produce improved mental and emotional benefits.

While nothing fully replaces a full sensory interaction with nature, viewing photos of natural spaces and elements is a convenient way to access some of the benefits enjoyed through nature interactions. Reduced stress, improved mood, enhanced cognitive capabilities, and overall well-being are some of the benefits observed by looking at photos of nature.

As I look through the hundreds of photos I've taken that feature nature, I observe that there is a wide variety of scenes. I have large-scale landscapes and small-scale vignettes. My photos include a range of subjects and compositions that include insects, petite flowers, large trees, green forests, colorful blooms, kids, adults, dogs, and so much more. According to research (and personal experience), each of these photos has the potential to provide mood-enhancing benefits.

## Photography tips to try this year

If you are interested in nature photography in 2025, or are looking to take your garden photography to the next level, here are a few tips:

1. **Use natural lighting to your advantage.** Lighting is one of the critical factors in photography, plan to photograph your garden during different light conditions.
  - a. **Get up early or stay out late:** Shoot photos around the time of sunrise or sunset to capture golden hour light. The sunlight is softer and casts a warm glow on the landscape.
  - b. **Embrace the clouds:** Overcast days help defuse sunlight, reducing harsh shadows and enhancing the vibrancy of colors.
  - c. **Avoid direct sunlight:** Direct sunlight can wash out colors and create harsh shadows. If shooting when conditions are bright and sunny, look for shaded areas.
2. **Change your perspective.** Moving into a new position or looking at the landscape from a different angle can transform an ordinary scene into an extraordinary one
  - a. **Get low:** Squatting down to the level of plants and insects can highlight their unique qualities.
  - b. **Use lines in the landscape:** Take advantage of lines in the landscape to lead the eye through the landscape is a powerful way to organize a photo. Pathways, rows of plants, fences, or creeks are examples of lines found in the landscape.
  - c. **Focus on the details:** Getting close to the subject of the photograph provides an opportunity to capture intricate details and patterns.

**Use these tips to take some great photos to enter in the 2026 Clark County Fair Home Economics division!**



# WINTER SCHOOL 2026

**February 3, 5, 10, and 12**

**6:00 pm** (A meal will be served each night)

**Clark County Extension Service**

(1400 Fortune Drive; Winchester Kentucky)

**3RD BEEF NIGHT**

**5TH FARM NIGHT**

**10TH ALL PROPERTY OWNERS NIGHT**

**12TH HORT NIGHT**



~ For details, see the back of this flyer ~



**\*\*\* These classes will qualify for  
CAIP Educational Credit\*\*\***

*Register  
Now*



859-744-4682



cynthia.carr@uky.edu

**Cooperative  
Extension Service**

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

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Lexington, KY 40506



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# WINTER SCHOOL 2026

## NIGHTLY TOPICS AND DESCRIPTIONS

### FEBRUARY 3RD: BEEF NIGHT

- **PARASITES IN CATTLE:** Dr. Hannah Tiffin, UK Veterinary Entomologist  
Learn about the new parasites affecting cattle such as new world screw worm and ticks which are creating management hardships for KY Cattle Producers.
- **BEEF BREEDING HEALTH:** Dr. Les Anderson, UK Beef Extension Specialist  
Are your cattle in the right condition for breeding season? Learn how body condition affects breeding for bulls and cows.
- **CLARK COUNTY CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION UPDATE**

Meal provided by:



### FEBRUARY 5TH: FARM NIGHT

- **WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT LAWS:** Jake Ward, Kentucky Fish & Wildlife Game Warden  
Learn what you are legally allowed to do when you have nuisance animals on the farm.
- **FENCING 101:** Jeremy McGill, Hopkins County ANR Extension Agent  
Learn the basics of different types of fencing and how to properly install those fences for years of to come.
- **HAY CONTEST:** Levi Berg, Clark County ANR Extension Agent  
Learn about the winners of the 2025 Clark County Hay Contest and how Clark County fared in the Central KY Hay Contest.
- **CLARK COUNTY FARM BUREAU UPDATE**

Meal provided by:



### FEBRUARY 10TH: ALL PROPERTY OWNERS NIGHT

- **SMALL ENGINE MAINTENANCE:** Kyle Porter, GRCHS Agriculture Teacher/FFA Advisor  
Come learn tricks for keeping that small engine running from year to year. No one likes repairing small engines when work needs to be done.
- **GRUBBY GROUNDHOGS:** Carrie Spry, Clark County Hort Extension Agent  
Groundhogs can be one of the most persistent critters out there. They can cause problems around homes, barns, buildings, pastures, and lawns. We will cover the basics of how a groundhog thinks and how to control them.
- **SOIL TESTING:** Levi Berg, Clark County ANR Extension Agent  
Soil testing should be the first step to building any farm or starting your gardening endeavors. Learn the basics of how and why you should test your soil.
- **CLARK COUNTY FFA UPDATE**

Meal provided by:

Clark  
County



### FEBRUARY 12TH: HORT NIGHT

- **ALL ABOUT ANTS:** Dr. Jonathan Larson, UK Extension Entomologist  
Let's talk about ants! From the home invading ant, general info on ant control, along with some Fire Ant awareness, Dr. Larson is back by popular demand to bring us lots of good information on the mighty ant.
- **THE REALITY OF FRUIT TREES IN KY:** Carrie Spry, Clark County Hort Extension Agent  
Growing tree fruits sounds like a fun and rewarding venture, until reality sets in for some. We will cover some of the most commonly overlooked struggles and misconceptions about growing fruit trees here in Kentucky.
- **EXTENSION SERVICE UPDATE**

Meal provided by:





## CLEARING MISCONCEPTIONS AROUND TREE ROOTS



By: Ryan Pankau,  
University of Illinois Extension Horticulture Educator

temperature for optimal leaf function. On a hot day, stomata are wide open, and the wicking effect is constant, drawing soil moisture upward continually.

When it's a hot and windy day, air blowing across the leaves intensifies the wicking effect further. Under these conditions, an enormous amount of moisture is drawn out of the soil, and a staggering amount of root biomass is required to support the moisture needed to cool leaves. That doesn't account for the water needed to fuel other vital leaf functions, such as photosynthesis.

### How big are tree root systems?

While many figures of roots may show a mirror image of tree branches above ground and roots extending deep below ground in symmetry, that is far from reality. The large majority of tree roots are confined to the upper soil layers where oxygen, water and nutrients are readily available. Over 90% of tree root biomass occurs in the upper 18 inches of soil, with almost 50% of that biomass concentrated into the upper 6 inches of soil. So, the mirror image of branches above ground and roots below is entirely incorrect. Tree root systems are very shallow and wide.

The large width of tree root systems cannot be understated and has been estimated to be up to 3 times the canopy spread, with some studies finding even larger root systems based on soil conditions. Heavy clay soils tend to support a smaller root structure, often only 0.5 times the canopy width. In contrast, looser sandy soils have been noted to support root systems up to 5 times the canopy spread.

These extensive root systems are often hard to imagine in an urban environment, where impervious structures, such as sidewalks, drives, and building footprints, restrict their available space. In addition, urban soils vary widely, even in the space as small as one front yard. So, tree roots have a tough job finding all the moisture and nutrients needed to support a healthy tree.

While tree root systems are primarily wide, some roots extend to great depths, with tap roots being mentioned most often in this context. If you aren't familiar with this term, tap roots extend directly downward in alignment with the trunk to provide stability when a tree is young. However, not all tree species have a tap root at maturity, and the reality is that the majority do not. It is true that every tree has a tap root as a seedling, but it is simply not advantageous to have them at maturity because lateral roots usually provide adequate support, and resources such as oxygen and nutrients become more limited deeper in the soil.

Oaks, hickories, and other nut-producing species are generally deciduous trees that have tap root structures later in life. Pine species comprise most of the evergreens which support a taproot as mature trees. Most other trees develop a lateral root structure from their expanding roots as they gain biomass with age, but, in all cases, taproots will not develop if soils are restrictive or overly disturbed from past human use.

In the case of transplanted trees, which is really any tree that you purchase at a nursery in a pot or balled and burlapped, the tap root is destroyed in the production process. So, most trees in the urban environment lack a taproot from the transplanting process because their species don't support taproots later in life or simply because soil conditions prevent it.

### Roots concentrate at the dripline

Another misconception about tree root distribution is the common assumption that the area under the tree canopy houses most roots. In reality, most of the roots are concentrated around the dripline, which is defined as the area located around the outer circumference of the tree canopy, or the area just outside the branch spread.

This alignment makes a lot of sense because the tree canopy intercepts a large amount of annual rainfall. Think about times you've run under a tree during a rainstorm for shelter. It's bone dry under a tree during the initial few minutes of rainfall. As the leaves and stems slowly become saturated, some rain drips through the canopy, but trees with a dense canopy structure can intercept an amazing amount of rainfall, leaving the roots beneath with little moisture.

### How can I protect tree roots?

There are certainly some practical applications that tree root knowledge can inform. When mulching or watering trees, the most effective location to add or preserve moisture is at or just outside of the dripline. I often explain the optimal mulch alignment as a doughnut, with the empty space in the middle being the tree trunk and the mulch being centered around the dripline.

Construction can have heavy impacts on tree roots, and most folks consider protecting their trees somehow. While it is important to ensure that equipment, materials, or even humans don't contact the trunk of the plant, most of the roots lie at the dripline. I often see trees fenced off in construction sites, but the fencing mostly protects the trunk and doesn't extend out far enough to preserve roots at the dripline.

Understanding tree root distribution can really help us understand the best practices in caring for these long-lived perennial plants. After all, trees are the highest-valued perennials in the landscape, so it really pays to understand their care.

Roots are always underfoot, whether it's a forest or prairie, your yard, or a local park; these all-important plant structures fill the upper layers of soil and quietly do their work to support the plant world. Since they are often "out of sight, out of mind," there are many common misconceptions about these vital plant parts.

### Roots and leaves are connected

Tree roots have always fascinated me when considering the sheer number needed to support a full canopy of tree leaves. Roots are directly connected to leaves by conductive tissue that transports water and soil nutrients upward. Many describe this conductive tissue like a wick that draws moisture upward to exit through minute pores in the leaf epidermis, called stomata.

These stomata open and close depending on the tree's needs, and the moisture they release is used to cool leaf surfaces and regulate



**Gus'**

**Quick Tips**

**for January...**



If you need to melt ice on sidewalks or steps be very careful as most products are harmful to plants. Consider using sand instead, your plants will thank you for it.



Evergreen plants can be seriously damaged by snow accumulation. After heavy snowfall use a broom to sweep snow from branches. Sweep in an upward direction as cold will cause plants to be more brittle than typical.



Winter is an excellent time to prepare pots and planters for next spring. Soak pots in a solution of vinegar and bleach, one cup of each per gallon of water. Heavily soiled pots may require scrubbing. Come spring you will be ready to go.



If you have time this winter paint the handles of garden tools a bright color. This will save lots of time next year when you can't remember where you laid them down in the garden.



Place orders now for asparagus, rhubarb, strawberries, raspberries, and blackberries. Plants can be shipped at the proper planting time, usually mid-March for us.



Have your soil tested now for spring gardens (<http://clark.ca.uky.edu/content/testing-your-soil>).

## ***Your Input Is Needed!***

**I am in the process of planning classes to offer in 2026.  
I would welcome any class suggestions that are of interest to  
you. Contact me by email [carrie.spry@uky.edu](mailto:carrie.spry@uky.edu) or call the office at  
859-744-4682. Your opinion matters!**

## **RECIPE**

### ***Slow Cooker Chicken Santa Fe Soup***

**Servings:** 8 / **Serving Size:** 2 cups

*Source: Connie Duncan, Fayette County Extension Volunteer*

#### ***Ingredients:***

4 thawed boneless, skinless chicken breasts  
1 (7 ounce) can chopped green chilies  
1 (8 ounce) bag frozen corn  
1 (28 ounce) can diced tomatoes, no salt added  
1 (15 ounce) can black beans  
1 (14 ounce) can or box vegetable broth, no salt added  
1 (32 ounce) box low-sodium chicken broth  
3 tablespoons low sodium chili seasoning mix

#### ***Directions:***

Place all ingredients in slow cooker and simmer on low 6-8 hours or 3-4 hours on high.  
Remove cooked chicken and shred with two forks.  
Return chicken to soup and it is ready-to-serve.

*Happy  
New Year*



*Love crock pot soup recipes that are packed full of Mexican flavors? Then this easy chicken Santa Fe soup is sure to become a favorite of the whole family.*

**Nutrition facts per serving:** 180 calories; 2.5g total fat; 0.5g saturated fat; 0g trans fat; 35mg cholesterol; 740mg sodium; 23g carbohydrate; 4g fiber; 6g sugar; 17g protein; 10% Daily Value of vitamin A; 15% Daily Value of vitamin C; 4% Daily Value of calcium; 8% Daily Value of iron