

# Horticulture Newsletter



University of Kentucky  
College of Agriculture,  
Food and Environment  
Cooperative Extension Service

## Cooperative Extension Service

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**MARCH**

**2023**

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## Bring in Your Soil to the Extension Office to be Tested

### Testing Your Soil

The McCracken County Extension District Board (EDB) has voted to allow for residents of McCracken County to submit soil from their property in the county to be tested at no charge (up to 7 samples) starting June 2020.

Each soil test will reveal the 1.) pH of the site and 2.) recommendations for use of nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P) and potassium (K).

1.) It is important to have the pH at the correct level for the plant to be able to take up the nutrients. In the soil pH can be either too low (adding lime to correct this) or too high (adding elemental sulfur to correct this.) The soil pH is hard to change and takes time for either the use of lime or the use of sulfur to make the changes. For example, a vegetable garden in most cases requires a pH of about 6.5 while a blueberry patch requires a much lower pH of about 4.5.

2.) These elements of N, P, and K, are the most needed elements in annual production of a plant. They are applied in the fertilizer. On a container of fertilizer, the three numbers on the label separated by dashes correspond to N-P-K in that order. So, for example, 8-4-6 would be a blend of 8 parts of N to 4 parts of P to 6 parts of K.

Why is the EDB offering this? It is a way to help our residents to save money by applying the correct inputs of nutrients. Such a test of the soil before adding inputs can also have the potential to reduce damage to the environment from over application of N, P or K and lime.

### To submit a soil sample:

Gather soil in the amount of about 2 cups, from several locations where plant(s) will grow with the same purpose: garden, lawn, orchard, farm-field or landscaped site (from the top 6 - 8 inches of soil.) Place soil on a paper plate or piece of cardboard to allow it to dry out a bit. Put the soil in a zip-top bag, or similar container and label it with your contact information. Repeat this for the next soil sample from a site that is different in purpose.

Bring the soil sample(s) to the McCracken County Extension office. Office hours are 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. You will receive your Soil Test Results within 10 to 30 days. Masks and social-distancing guidelines apply.

With so many issues related to Covid-19, sometimes our building has had to be accessible by appointment only. We have been open all days, except for weekends and holidays, but some days have had different guidelines.



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LEXINGTON, KY 40546



Disabilities  
accommodated  
with prior notification.

## Common Problems and Pests of Popular Garden Vegetables and How to Manage Them

Source: Ric Bessin, UK Extension Entomologist, Nicole Gauthier, UK Extension Plant Pathologist

Many Kentucky gardeners grow tomatoes, peppers, eggplant and potatoes for their own use or for sale in local farmer's markets. Pests are sometimes challenging to identify and even more challenging to manage.

The University of Kentucky College of Agriculture, Food and Environment advocates for a sustainable approach to managing pests by combining biological, cultural, physical and chemical tools in a way that minimizes economic, health and environmental risks. A key part of that is to continually scout and monitor your garden to identify problems before they result in a significant loss.

The UK Cooperative Extension publication ID172—An IPM Scouting Guide for Common Pests of Solanaceous Crops in Kentucky—may help you identify common pests. The publication has a variety of photographs that show exactly what to look for in your crop.

Some of the items the publication covers include:

1. Physiological and nutrient disorders such as vivipary, gold fleck, catfacing, zippering, sunscald, blossom end rot, blotchy ripening, yellow shoulder, white core.
2. Insect pests such as aphids, leafminer, greenhouse whitefly, silverleaf whitefly, tobacco flea beetle, potato flea beetle, margined blister beetle, stink bugs, leaf-footed bugs, western flower thrips, two-spotted spider mite, Colorado potato beetle, tobacco hornworm, pepper maggot, beet armyworm, yellow-striped armyworm, tomato fruitworm, European corn borer.
3. Tomato, pepper, eggplant and potato diseases and management.
4. Herbicide injury.
5. A list of resources for further study.

To view the publication, visit <http://www2.ca.uky.edu/agc/pubs/id/id172/id172.pdf>.

For more information on gardening, contact the McCracken County Cooperative Extension Service.

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## If You Need to Cut Down a Tree – Do It In Winter

Trees are valuable components of our ecosystems, not to mention the cooling and other benefits they can provide around our homes. But sometimes you may need to cut one down. From a wildlife perspective, the best time to cut down a tree is in the winter. All else being equal, I prefer removing trees in the early to mid-winter, rather than later in the winter.

### What Are Some of the Reasons to Cut Down a Tree?

There are many reasons why you might choose to remove a tree from your property. Some common reasons include:

- It is a hazard tree which poses a safety risk to people or personal property. If it is a safety risk, it doesn't matter what time of the year it is. The tree should be removed to make the area safe.
- The tree isn't a safety risk – yet, but you can tell that it is going to be and you'd rather take care of the problem before it becomes critical. Whether you can wait until winter will depend on the circumstances.
- You want to manage your property for a prairie / grassland habitat, a savanna habitat, or an open woodlands habitat. Prior to European settlement, much of the eastern U.S. was a complex matrix of habitats ranging from open prairie / grasslands to closed canopy forest. Today, grasslands and shrublands are some of our most rapidly disappearing habitats as they are developed or allowed to grow up into forests.
- You want to do a timber harvest.

### Why Is Winter the Best Time to Remove Trees?

During the spring and summer, trees may be used as maternity or nesting sites. We all know that many birds nest in trees. Many of our bats also form maternity colonies in tree cavities or under loose bark. Baby birds and baby bats can't fly. Cutting down a tree in the spring or summer risks killing any baby birds or baby bats in the tree.

In the winter, we don't have any nesting birds or bat maternity colonies to worry about. Few, if any, of our bats hibernate in trees so you aren't likely to disturb any bats by cutting down a tree during the winter. Birds may roost among the tree's branches or in small cavities, but those are transient roosts. Winter birds can, and often do, move from one place to the next. So, if a winter roost disappears, the birds will just move to another. However, many of our owls and some of our hawks will begin nesting in late winter or very early spring, which is why I prefer to remove trees in early to mid-winter, if possible.

### Summary

There are many reasons why you might need to cut down a tree. Those reasons will vary from person to person and may include safety, economic, and habitat management considerations, just to name a few. Cutting trees in winter, especially the early to mid-winter, will typically have the fewest negative impacts on your local wildlife.



Photo by Nikhil Joseph on [Pexels.com](https://www.pexels.com)

Source:

Shannon Trimboli,

Helping you discover and appreciate the nature around you. <https://shannontrimboli.com/>



MONARCH WAYSTATION

# MASTER GARDENER

TOOLBOX SERIES

MARCH 7<sup>TH</sup>, 2023

5PM CST



Master Gardener, Marianne Halicks, will be updating the public on the pollinator waystation project at the Extension Office. Next Joanna Kirby, past President of The Garden Club of Kentucky, Inc., will present on Monarch butterflies.



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Contact the McCracken County Cooperative Extension Service at (270) 554-9520 to learn more

If inclement weather closes McCracken County Schools, programs are canceled

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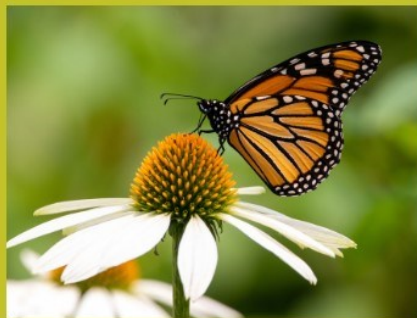
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# 4-H Club - Monarch Butterfly



Love Butterflies? We do too!

so much that we are starting a BRAND NEW 4-H Club. Our first club meeting will kick off at @5:00 p.m. with an awesome Master Gardner teaching us how to build a monarch waystation. Not only will we learn about monarchs, we will be building a waystation onsite during club meetings.



March 7, 2023

\*Youth ages 12-18

\*must be accompanied by an adult

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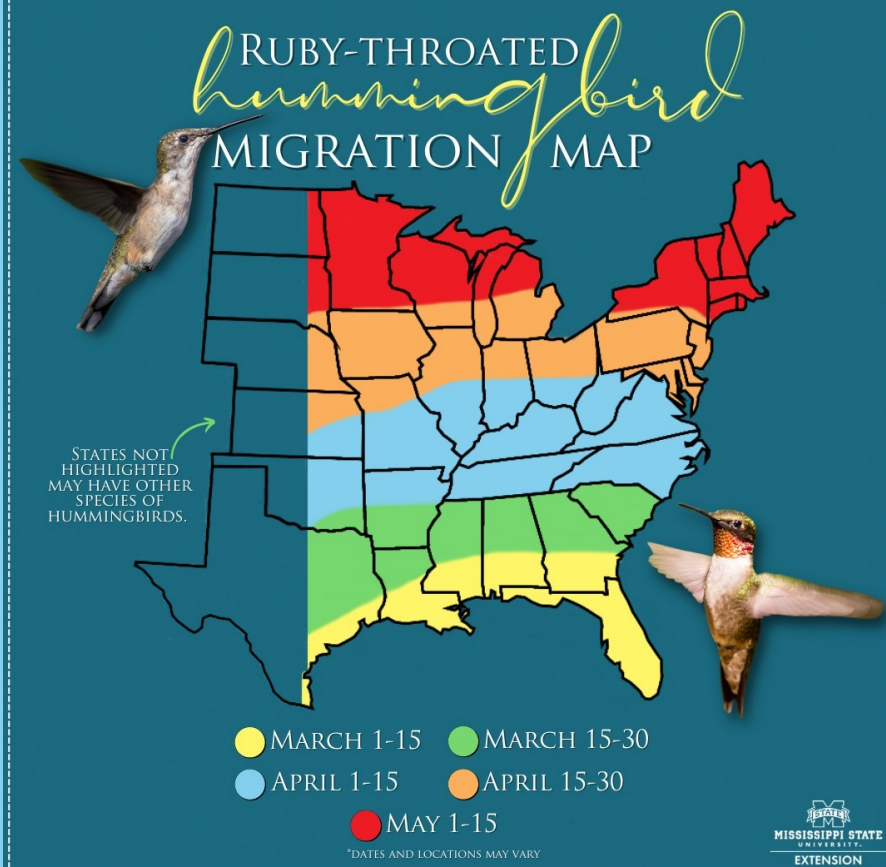
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Quick  
Tip



**Plan to prune fruit trees this month. A day with temperatures above 40 degrees will allow you to spray them with dormant oil, which will take care of many overwintering insect pests.**