

Mary Dossett

Agent for Horticulture



Horticulture Newsletter

**JANUARY
2024**

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Master Gardener Spotlight

Marianne Halicks

Master Gardener



Class of 2009

Cooperative Extension Service

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

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Disabilities
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Keeping Your Houseplants Happy During Wintertime

Source: Rachel Rudolph, Horticulture Assistant Professor

Even though your houseplants do not have to deal with the cold like your garden does, you should still change how you care for them this season, ensuring they stay healthy and continue to grow well. Following these tips, your leafy friends will bring lushness and natural beauty into your home, even in winter.

Decrease watering

In general, less light means less water. Plants need less water in the winter because they don't get as much sunlight, compared to spring and summer. To test soil moisture, push your finger into the potting soil at least one inch deep. If the soil is dry, water thoroughly. It is better to water plants well less often than water just a little bit every day. In the winter, it is possible that you will only need to water once every two to three weeks.

Pay attention to the Sun

If possible, move your plants closer to the windows. If they're on the ground, put them on a plant stand. Every week or two, rotate the pots to ensure all sides of the plants get some sunlight.

It's okay if a few leaves fall off

Plants outside over the summer will probably lose some leaves when they come back inside. This is normal because they are getting used to the lower light levels inside. It's normal for plants that stay inside all year to lose a few leaves as winter approaches. This is just their way of getting ready for less light.

Avoid temperature extremes

Keep plants away from cold drafts, radiators and hot air vents. Sudden hot or cold drafts can kill plants, stress them out, or dry them out.

Put the fertilizer on hold

Winter is a time for most houseplants to rest. They don't need fertilizer because they usually aren't actively growing. In the fall, stop fertilizing and start back up again in the spring when plants get more sunlight and start growing again.

Scan for pests

If you are bringing plants inside for the winter, be sure to check the leaves, stems and soil surface for pests. Wipe leaves down with a wet cloth or remove pests by hand before bringing the plants inside. Small bugs that feed on sap, like aphids and scales, tend to show up more in the winter. Another common winter pest is the spider mite which likes warm, dry places to live. When watering, flip the leaves over and look at the undersides and along the stems. If you find bugs, use your fingers or damp cloth to remove them. Neem oil and insecticidal soap may be options for managing houseplant pests. With any product, be sure to read the entire label for application instructions and precautions.

Increase the humidity

In the winter, the air inside our heated homes is often drier. Most houseplants, especially those from tropical areas, do best when the humidity is between 40 and 50%. However, in the winter, most homes have humidity levels between 10 and 20%. Putting plants close together is an easy way to make the air around them more humid. Plants can also be put on trays with pebbles and water to make the air more humid. To keep the roots from rotting, pot bottoms should be above the water. As the water evaporates, it makes the air around your houseplants more humid. Keep plants away from vents with blowing air.



More information on caring for houseplants is available at the McCracken County Extension office.

Photo from Pixabay.com

Does Your Christmas Tree Have Bugs?

If your household celebrates Christmas, and if you prefer to use a natural tree to do so, you may end up bringing in more than just a beautiful evergreen. Firs, pines, and spruces can all harbor a multitude of arthropods nestled in their foliage or even living under the bark. In the field, Christmas tree growers combat a variety of insects that could damage the tree before harvest, but the ones you might deal with in the home are called “post-harvest” pests, and they are similar to fall invading insects when they pop up in the house.

Christmas Tree Invaders

Some of the critters hiding out in the tree may be adults using the tree as an overwintering site. In the tree outside, they would be protected from the colder air temperatures of winter and hopefully be safe from freezing. Once they come inside though, our interior heating will warm them up and allow them to start moving around. This group can include large and obvious specimens like spiders and stink bugs, as well as smaller, harder to detect types, like barklice and predatory mites. Many of these may stay with the tree, but if they do start to wander, they are unlikely to survive very long in our dry, winter homes.

The other invaders with Yuletide spirit are likely hiding in the tree as eggs or as pupae. These immobile life stages in insect development are common overwintering stages as they are protected and don't need inputs to survive. Insect development is temperature-dependent, though. When eggs or pupae are outside, the cold temperatures will delay them from hatching until spring when temperatures start to perk up. When they come into our consistently 68- to 70-degree homes, though, they start developing rapidly and will be able to hatch or emerge just in time for Christmas dinner. Hitchhikers in this group can include aphids, scale insects, and spiders. One interesting insect egg case that may come with your tree is made by a praying mantis. Mantids create an ootheca, an egg case that looks like spray foam insulation and protects their eggs. These can be on the trunk or twigs of a tree and hard to spot; some mantids seem to prefer fir trees for their egg laying site.



Figure 1: Mantid oothecas are strange looking objects. They resemble foam insulation and can contain thousands of eggs. (Photo: Jim Kalisch, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Entomology Department).



Figure 2: Insects that hatch from eggs accidentally brought inside will be small and do not present an issue. Immature mantids like this one can be numerous and startling but can be easily disposed of. Santa hat added for effect. (Photo: Jim Kalisch, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Entomology Department).

Bark beetles may be under the bark of the tree as pupae. The adults could emerge from these pupae more quickly thanks to the indoor heating, as well. The larvae of these small beetles (1/4 inch or less long as adults) live and feed in wood. Even though they utilize wood, these beetles will not be interested in infesting the lumber of your home. In fact, none of the aforementioned arthropods pose a hazard to homes, pets, people, or stocking stuffers. You can always easily vacuum them up and dispose of them.

What to Do (and Not Do)

There is an association between these post-harvest pests and warmer autumn temperatures. These pests aren't necessarily something that the Christmas tree grower/seller could have prevented. When you buy your tree, you might see it get shaken by a machine to try and dislodge any unwelcome guests. But usually the harvest, transport, and purchasing of the tree is enough to discourage arthropods from hanging out. Those hitchhikers that make it through this process result in a relatively rare phenomenon, but one that can still be startling if it happens to you!

Again though, these accidental houseguests shouldn't cause much concern. Vacuuming, spritzing individuals with soapy water, or sweeping them outside are all acceptable responses. Bug bombs, liquid sprays, or other insecticides should not be used on the tree. These residues could be hazardous to people and are not likely to provide good control in this situation.



Figure 3: Bark beetles may be around a quarter of an inch long and will emerge from the bark of decorative trees. They will not use wood found in your home for food or egg laying. (Photo: Jim Kalisch; University of Nebraska-Lincoln Entomology Department)

By Jonathan Larson; Entomology Extension Specialist

Stress and Decline in Woody Plants (ID-50)

Woody plant stress has many potential causes that can ultimately lead to decline and death of landscape trees and shrubs. This publication discusses the symptoms and common causes of stress and decline in woody plants. A brief section on ecology and physiology explains how each part of a woody plant's anatomy performs unique functions, all of which are necessary for healthy growth. Suggestions for preventing and managing plant stress are also included, along with a list of additional resources available through the UK College of Agriculture, Food and Environment.



Stress and Decline in Woody Plants (ID-50) is available online.

For publications on plant diseases, visit the UK Plant Pathology Extension Publications webpage.

By Cheryl Kaiser, Plant Pathology Extension Support, and Paul Vincelli, Plant Pathology Extension Specialist

*The office will be closed
for the holiday*

*Dec. 25th–Jan. 1st
Returning Tuesday, Jan. 2nd*

*Merry Christmas
and
Happy Holidays!*

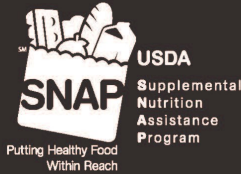




Roast Venison



This institution is an equal opportunity provider. This material was funded by USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program — SNAP.



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

Roast Venison

- 4 pounds venison roast
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons flour
- 2 tablespoons oil
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 onion, sliced
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- ¼ cup lemon juice
- 4 cups low-sodium canned tomatoes
- ¼ teaspoon browning sauce, if desired

Season roast with salt and roll in flour. Brown on all sides in hot oil in a heavy skillet. Place in a slow cooker and add remaining ingredients. Cook on low for 10 hours or on high for 6 hours.

Leftovers ideas: cold sandwiches, heated in barbecue sauce for hot sandwiches, or diced into soup or stew.

Yield: 12 servings

Adapted from Venison Recipe Collection, Compiled by Becky Nash, Extension Agent for Family and Consumer Sciences

Nutrition Facts

12 servings per container
Serving size 5 ounces (255g)

Amount per serving
Calories 250

	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 6g	8%
Saturated Fat 2g	10%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 130mg	43%
Sodium 300mg	13%
Total Carbohydrate 10g	4%
Dietary Fiber 2g	7%
Total Sugars 5g	
Includes 2g Added Sugars	4%
Protein 36g	
Vitamin D 0mcg	0%
Calcium 11mg	0%
Iron 5mg	30%
Potassium 498mg	10%

* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

SOLAR ECLIPSE WATCH PARTY

April 8th, 2024

LIMITED ECLIPSE
GLASSES
AVAILABLE

IF INCLEMENT
WEATHER, THE
EVENT IS
CANCELED

11AM - 3PM

ECLIPSE BEGINS 12:42PM
TOTALITY 2:00PM-2:02PM

SCAN FOR MORE
INFORMATION

**MCCRACKEN COUNTY
EXTENSION SERVICE**
2025 NEW HOLT RD
PADUCAH, KY 42001
(270) 554-9520



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Lexington, KY 40506



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McCracken County
Extension Service

Horticulture Walking Club

Meets : Every Wednesday (May – July)

Time : 11AM-12PM

Location : Greenway Trail
*Meet at Skate park entrance

Call our office at
(270) 554-9520 to
sign up!

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Under 18 years of age must be accompanied by an adult

2024 TOOLBOX GARDEN SERIES



Martin-Gatton
College of Agriculture,
Food and Environment

McCracken County Extension Service
2025 New Holt Road Paducah, KY 42001
(270) 554-9520

Jan 2: Flower Arranging *RSVP*

Feb 6: Electric Canning

Mar 5: Honey Bees

Apr 2: Homesteading

May 7: Perennial Cut Flowers

Jun 4: Garrett Farms (on-site) *RSVP*

Jul 2: Fairy Garden *RSVP*

Aug 6: Fall Asters

Sep 3: Hydrangea

Oct 1: Tulips

Nov 6: Wreath Making *RSVP*

**FIRST TUESDAY
OF EACH
MONTH
5 - 6 P.M.**

*November session will
be on a Wednesday*

**November
Date
Change**

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