

Agriculture and Natural Resources



A Message from Your ANR Agent:

Folks,

It's Christmas and there's a lot of agriculture that goes with the holiday. Think about it and appreciate it. Everything from the meat to all the sides and desserts—all come from agriculture. Even the decorations are plant based. Whether you have a real tree or an artificial tree—thoughts are with Mother Nature. Everybody has a favorite dish, decoration, smell, or taste that they associate with Christmas. Use this time to appreciate and think about all the successes you had with the yard or garden during 2022. I love this time of year and tell everyone, "I do my best farming this time of year"! You've been getting seed catalogs and all kinds of advertisements for garden supplies. I love to drool over all the new tools and look for new varieties to try in the upcoming year, to reflect and dream of what would like to do in the New Year. It's a time to enjoy your successes for this year. To enjoy family and friends. Enjoy the time and we'll get serious about planning for next year, after we celebrate Christmas and the New Year.

Have some Christmas fun!

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!!!

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Christmas Tree Care

By: Deborah B. Hill, Forestry

Selecting a Tree

Cut Trees

For a cut tree, the ideal choice for a really fresh tree is to cut one yourself from a Christmas tree farm. When that is not an option, two ways to check for tree freshness on a tree lot are:

1) bend a green needle between thumb and forefinger – if it snaps rather than bends, the tree may be too dry;

2) thump the tree stem firmly on the ground once or twice – if brown needles fall out, that is OK, but if green needles fall out, the tree may be too dry.

Note also how trees are stored and displayed on the lot –

- Are they in full sun?
- Are they exposed to wind?
- Are the trees standing upright and separated from each other?
- Are the stems not in water?



These are all factors that may increase the chances of the tree needles drying out and falling off . Also, ask the vendor where the trees came from and when they were cut. Frequently, the further the distance traveled, the earlier the trees were cut – some are cut in October. Pay attention to weather patterns, too. A long, mild fall will delay the time the trees go into winter dormancy and basically shut down all their systems. If the trees are cut before they go into dormancy, they probably will be more susceptible to drying out quickly and dropping their needles.

Balled and Burlapped

For a balled and burlapped tree, many of the same points are useful. Check both the size of the root-ball and whether or not it is damp to the touch. Often balled and burlapped trees are displayed in old tires – the root-ball for any tree over 3 feet tall should completely fill the tire. Again, ask where the trees came from and how long ago they were dug – local sources are probably better for freshness and for compatible soil types. If the root-ball is dry, the tree is probably suffering from drought conditions. For

both types of trees, but especially for the living trees, make sure the foliage is wrapped when you transport it, so that air movement across the needles does not cause further drying. If a cut tree is bound with twine or netting, that will be protection enough.

Species Choices

The most commonly grown Christmas tree species in Kentucky are white pine and Scots pine, followed by Douglas-fir, Colorado blue spruce, and Norway spruce. Scots pine has medium length needles and short, stubby branches and will hold all kinds of ornaments well. White pine has very soft, fragrant foliage and flexible branches, and will not support heavy ornaments well. Douglas-fir and the spruces are more like Scots pine but have very short needles relative to the pines. Fraser fir is the Cadillac of Christmas trees, with a wonderful, pungent odor, but Kentucky does not have the appropriate conditions for its growth. Firs and spruces may be more expensive than pines because they take longer to grow to the same heights. For balled and burlapped trees, the best choices are probably white pine and the spruces for replanting in Kentucky and for greatest beauty in the home landscape.



Home Care

Preparation

For cut trees from a lot, remove another 1 or 2 inches of the stem to allow the pitch or sap to flow. Place the tree in a bucket of warm water (the heat will help get the sap flowing as well as opening up the water-conducting channels in the wood) and store it somewhere out of direct sunlight and wind (e.g., garage, basement, enclosed porch) until ready to put in the house. For balled and burlapped trees, once you get the tree, dig a hole in your yard where the tree will be planted. The hole should be at least two times the width of the root-ball but the same depth. Cover the soil you have removed so it doesn't freeze up on you while the tree is in the house. Place the tree's root-ball in a tub or bucket big enough to hold it and store it out of wind and sun for at least two days before going into the house. Mist down the needles, and water the root-ball just enough to get it damp, not wet. Installation Place any real tree in a spot where it is away from a heat source – stoves, registers, fireplaces, radiators, etc. There is a tiny (less than one

1,000th of one percent) chance that a Christmas tree (real or artificial) may be flammable, but keeping it away from flame or heat sources reduces that possibility. Limit the hours that electric lights are lit on the tree – each bulb is a tiny hot spot on the needles. Keep a cut tree watered (use only tree stands that will hold up to a gallon of water) and a living tree damp. When the cut tree is installed, fill the reservoir of the tree stand with the following solution: 1 cup of corn syrup plus 3 tablespoons of liquid bleach in one gallon of water. Continue to add solution to the reservoir as needed for as long as the tree remains in the house. If this seems like an odd combination of ingredients, here is the explanation (from one of Kentucky’s long-time Christmas tree growers): The bleach tends to thin out or remove the sticky pitch from the tree’s water-conducting channels and to allow the water to get into the tree. The corn syrup gives the tree a simple carbohydrate source for food, in addition to the fluid of the water. This combination should help the needles stay on your holiday tree.

Removal

After the Christmas season is over, dispose of a cut tree in a responsible manner. More options are becoming available to the Christmas tree consumer. One option is to put the tree out in the backyard with peanut-buttered pine cones or cups and strings of popcorn and cranberries for wildlife food and habitat. In some parts of the state, Christmas trees are recycled as fish habitats in lakes. In many towns and cities, civic organizations or departments of the municipal government set up chipping stations where trees can be brought to be chipped into mulch (often you can take some of the mulch home for your trees or garden, too). If possible, avoid putting the tree in the trash to go to a landfill. When a living tree has been enjoyed in the house for a week, return it to a sheltered, but unheated, location as you did before it went into the house. With all the decorations removed, mist the needles down again and make sure the root-ball is still damp. After two or three days, plant the tree, remembering to remove all plastic twine, wire, and burlap from the root-ball. Slightly loosen the soil of the root-ball and use the protected, reserved soil from the hole to fill in around the tree. If temperatures



allow, water the tree thoroughly after planting and put mulch (wood chips, sawdust) 2 or 3 inches deep around the tree (but not touching the bark of the tree). If there are warm spells during the winter, water the tree again, but otherwise it should just begin growing new needles in the spring. A real tree can make the whole Christmas tradition memorable, delighting sight, smell, and

touch. With appropriate care, it will only enhance your holiday experience.

Bring Your Garden Inside

By: Richard Durham, extension professor, UK Department of Horticulture

If the thought of facing a long winter without straight-from-the-garden freshness makes you sad, weep no more. It's easy as tomato pie to grow your own produce indoors.

There are a number of indoor gardening systems on the market today. They range in price and require anything from 2 square feet in space all the way to a multi-tiered 5-foot wide rack of shelving and grow lights. But if you don't have the money or space to invest in one of these systems, don't worry. There's plenty you can do without them.

The biggest challenge people usually face when growing plants indoors is light. Some plants, like tomatoes, which can be grown in a pot indoors, require close to 10 hours of light a day. You might not be able to get that much light relying on windows alone. However, if you have a table or deep windowsill, you can position a grow light over your plants. Grow lights are bright, wide-spectrum lights that approximate sunlight. They come in all price ranges and styles, from desktop to hanging versions. You can also use a full-spectrum fluorescent light if you have a fixture nearby. There are also LED plant lights that are a bit more expensive but use less electricity than fluorescent lights. Incandescent bulbs do not emit the right spectrum of light for plant growth.

Containers should have proper drainage. Greens and some herbs only need a few inches of depth, while tomatoes will require a 12-inch deep pot. Use potting soil, which has better drainage, rather than garden soil.

Here are some easy plants to consider growing indoors this winter.

- Scallions and garlic greens. For scallions, also known as green onions, you can cut off the tip with the roots and place it in a glass with about an inch of water. When the roots are 2 or 3 inches long, plant them in potting soil in a shallow container. You can either harvest the green tops and let the plant



continue to grow or use the entire green onion. For garlic greens, plant a garlic clove in a few inches of potting soil mix. You won't be able to grow bulbs, but the

green portion tastes garlicky and serves as a good substitute, either raw or sauteed.

- Carrots. Small carrots are easy to grow in potting soil. Sprinkle the seeds on top of the soil in a pot or long window box, lightly cover with damp peat moss and water well. And don't throw away those carrot tops. They're edible and nutritious and can be used in soups and sauces and even smoothies.
- Salad greens. Spread the seeds across the top of a 2-inch to 4-inch deep container filled with potting soil. Lightly press them into the soil and mist to keep the seeds moist. Wait until the leaves are at least 4 inches long and then harvest the leaves starting from the outside of the plant. These plants will keep producing all season long, if you harvest them leaf by leaf.
- Herbs. Basil, chives and parsley are extremely easy to grow indoors. Parsley demands more humidity, so misting the plants will help them flourish. Use an organic fertilizer to help your herbs reach their full potential.



Winter Horse Care Tips

By: Aimee D. Heald

It's wet, it's cold, and it's windy. If horse owners consider a few management details, their horses can tolerate this kind of weather. Bob Coleman, University of Kentucky College of Agriculture equine specialist, said horse owners need to keep an eye on three things during the winter months to keep their stock in good shape: shelter, feed and water.

"In this climate, with the wind chills and more rain and freezing rain, horses are going to get wet and they better have something they can get underneath," Coleman said. "They don't need to be in the barn, but we should think about some shelter; maybe a run-in shed so they get out of the wind."

Three-walled shelters that guard against prevailing winds are best. And, in such a wet climate, a roof couldn't hurt either.

"When we have conditions where it rains and turns cold, horses are really wet and their hair coat is not doing anything for them and then the wind starts blowing. Then they're stuck with no way to get out of the wind and it dramatically chills them," he emphasized. "In addition to shelter, having a bedded area is also worth considering. Straw or wood chips are fine the idea is to have something that drains well and is dry for horses that are kept outside "

Horses are very resilient and tolerant to the cold. They can withstand temperature down to 13 degrees Fahrenheit. Anything below that is cause for horse owner to think about their feeding program. Horses will need more energy to keep themselves warm. Coleman said the best advice is to listen to the local forecast and take necessary action.

"We are very fortunate to have good communications available to us," he said. "If they tell you it's going down to 10 degrees, you need to think about adding more feed. You're probably looking at adding a half-pound of hay for every degree below 13 F. If you're feeding roll-bale hay, just make sure it's adequate and good quality."

If you know your hay isn't very good, it's a good idea to add grain to the ration, especially if the horses body condition is below a five or a six. But, Coleman warns about feeding grain full-force to horses who aren't used to eating it. He said it's better to slowly add it to the ration so they can adapt to it. It's preferable to add more good quality hay since it does generate more heat for the animal.

"The other thing to think about is how horses are getting their water," Coleman reminded. "Make sure the water source hasn't frozen up. Check ponds often, the edges freeze fast which also makes them more dangerous. Make sure a stock tank has a heater to keep water thawed."

Coleman said producers should call him or their county Extension agents if they have questions about how to care for horses in the winter or if they just want an opinion on the quality of their hay.

The most important thing is awareness. When the weather gets cold and wet, management rules change. But horse owners can alleviate problems if they closely watch the weather and their animals and quickly respond to adverse conditions.





Tex Mex Spaghetti Squash Casserole

1 small (about 2 pounds) spaghetti squash	2 teaspoons dried cumin	1 (4 to 5 ounce) can chopped mild green chilies
1 pound lean ground beef	¼ teaspoon ground cayenne pepper	1½ cups low fat cheddar cheese
½ cup chopped onion	½ teaspoon salt	1 tablespoon chopped fresh cilantro
½ cup chopped red bell pepper	1 cup chopped fresh tomatoes	
1 teaspoon minced garlic		

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. **Prepare** the squash by carefully **cutting** it in half lengthwise with a sharp knife and **scooping** out the seeds. **Place** on a lightly greased baking sheet, cut-side down and **bake** for 30-35 minutes, or until a sharp knife can be easily inserted into the rind. **Remove** the squash from the oven and **cool**. Use a fork to **scrape** out the stringy flesh from the shell and **place** in a colander. **Press** out as much liquid as possible. **Place** squash in a medium bowl and keep warm. In a skillet, **cook** the ground beef over medium heat until browned. **Add** the onion, red bell pepper and garlic. Continue to **cook** until the vegetables are tender. **Add** the cumin, cayenne pepper and salt. **Drain** well and set aside. In a small bowl

combine the chopped tomatoes and green chilies. **Spray** a 9-by-13-inch baking pan with non-stick coating. **Layer** half of the spaghetti squash in the bottom of the pan. **Spread** half the meat mixture on top of the squash. **Layer** half of the tomatoes and chilies on top of the meat and **top** with half of the cheese. **Repeat** the layers. **Bake** at 350 degrees F until the casserole is hot all the way through and the cheese is bubbly, 15-20 minutes. **Sprinkle** with the cilantro and serve.

Yield: 9 servings.

Nutritional Analysis: 140 calories, 4 g fat, 1.5 g saturated fat, 30 mg cholesterol, 400 mg sodium, 11 g carbohydrate, 3 g fiber, 5 g sugars, 17 g protein.



Zippy Corn Chowder

1 medium onion, chopped	and chopped	3 cups fresh or frozen whole kernel corn
1 green pepper, chopped	2 teaspoons Dijon mustard	4 green onions, chopped
1 tablespoon butter	1 teaspoon basil	2 cups skim milk, divided
1 (14.5 ounce) can low-sodium chicken broth	½ teaspoon paprika	2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
2 large red potatoes, cubed	½ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes	1 teaspoon salt (optional)
1 jalapeno pepper, seeded		

In a large saucepan, **sauté** onion and green pepper in butter until tender. **Add** broth and cubed potatoes. Bring to a **boil**. **Reduce** heat; **cover** and **simmer** for 15 minutes or until potatoes are almost tender. **Stir in** jalapeno, mustard, basil, paprika and red pepper flakes. **Add** corn, green onions and 1½ cups of milk. Bring to a **boil**. In a separate bowl, **combine** all-purpose flour and remaining ½ cup

milk, **stirring** until smooth. Gradually **add** mixture to soup. Bring to a **boil**. **Cook** and **stir** for 2 minutes or until thickened and bubbly.

Yield: 8, 1 cup servings

Nutritional Analysis: 190 calories, 2.5 g fat, 1 g saturated fat, 5 mg cholesterol, 350 mg sodium, 34 g carbohydrate, 4 g fiber, 10 g sugar, 7 g protein



Buying Kentucky Proud is easy. Look for the label at your grocery store, farmers' market, or roadside stand.



Upcoming Dates for Dec.

When	What	Time	Where
Dec. 17	Broken Trail	all day prep & “Christmas for Kids” project	
Jan. 2-4	Fruit & Vegetable Conf.	all day	Bowling Green
Jan. 21	Beekeeping School	9am-1pm	Zoom
Jan. 26-28	Oak Conference	all day	KSU

+ **Still to be scheduled** –

Mushroom Workshop, Farmers Market Meeting, Master Gardener Class, Landscaping Class

Pikeville Farmers Market

Follow us on Facebook @PikevilleFarmersMarket to stay up to date with our events for the 2023 season. The 2023 Farmers Market will officially open in June! If you are interested in selling your homegrown crops, canned goods, or handmade crafts message us on Facebook or call the Pike County Extension Office at (606) 432-2534 and be sure to attend our Spring Training events (to be scheduled). We would love for you to join and sell with us next year!

Thank you for a great 2022 Season!



Photograph: Pikeville Farmers Market vendors participated in the 2022 Pikeville Christmas Parade





**PIKE COUNTY
EXTENSION
SERVICE**

148 Trivette Dr.
Pikeville, KY 41501

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