



*Dennis Meyer*

# The Hoe Truth Newsletter

## Helping You Grow



HORTICULTURE

December 2023

Volume 19

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<https://washington.ca.uk.edu/horticulture>

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Extension Service



PLEASE JOIN US FOR A

# WREATH MAKING WORKSHOP

13TH DECEMBER

9:00 AM TO 4:00 PM  
WASHINGTON COUNTY EXTENSION OFFICE  
245 CORPORATE DRIVE, SPRINGFIELD KY  
CALL 859-336-7741 TO REGISTER  
COME MAKE YOUR OWN WREATH  
WITH LIVE GREENERY!  
PARTICIPANTS CAN STOP BY  
ANYTIME DURING THE DAY.  
COST \$20.00 BOW INCLUDED

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Food and Environment

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**Cooperative Extension Service**  
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LEXINGTON, KY 40546



Disabilities accommodated with prior notification.

# We want to hear from you.

- Thousands are helping us improve services and programs in our community.

*Can you help too?*

- KY Resident?
- 18-Years Old?

10-minute survey at:  
[go.uky.edu/serveKY](http://go.uky.edu/serveKY)



 Cooperative Extension Service

## December To Do's

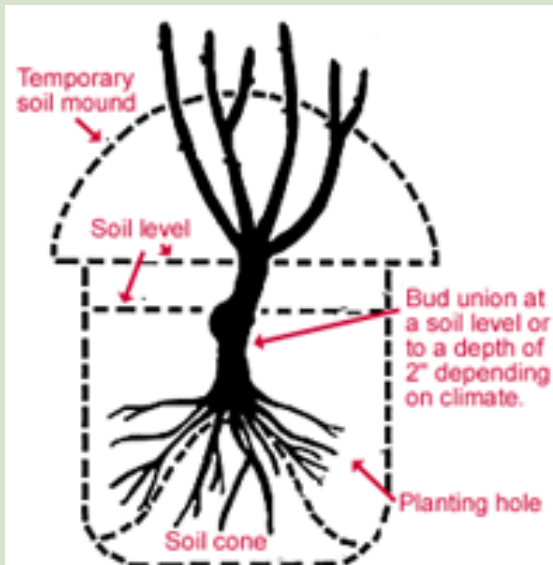
Cover your rose bud unions as soon as the temperatures reach the upper teens and low twenties with 8 inches of mulch or soil. You can go ahead and do this anytime now.

will last the longest.

protects the soil and provides nutrients for spring plantings.

Keep fresh Christmas trees away from direct heat, they will dry out much faster.

Now is still a good time to make a compost pile!



Cut your lawn one last time if you haven't lately. It will keep it looking nice this winter and reduce disease problems this winter and spring.

December is a good time to apply fertilizer to lawns and landscapes. Spray liquid lime sulfur or a fungicide containing chlorothalonil on peach trees to stop peach tree leaf curl next year.

After Christmas mulch your Christmas tree by running it through a chipper shredder. It will decompose and make great compost.

Cut your Christmas Tree yourself it

If you find some time between the holidays and shopping December is a really good time to apply a layer of compost or manure to the garden. It

**The Extension Office  
Will Be Closed  
December 25th  
Through January 1st  
For The Holidays**

# New Fruit and Vegetable Disease Videos Released

Dr. Nicole Gauthier, Plant Pathology Extension Specialist, has released three new videos related to fruit and vegetable diseases. Each title, along with a summary of Dr. Gauthier's presentation, video run time, and Web link, are listed below.

## Strawberry Leaf Diseases

The identification and management of common foliar diseases of strawberry (leaf spot, leaf scorch, and leaf blight) are discussed. (4:42)

<https://youtu.be/Sd2SczhsrKc>

## Choanephora Fruit Rot of Cucurbits

The identification and management of this watery soft rot is discussed in a summer squash planting (2:07)

<https://youtu.be/aQ4LIN8hJlg>

## Cane Blight of Brambles

Common cane blight diseases of brambles (anthracnose, cane blight, and spur blight) are discussed collectively. The video emphasizes disease management by following a rigid pruning schedule and sanitation. (4:01)

<https://youtu.be/oozMSrtyUbl>



Screen shot of the Strawberry Leaf Diseases video presented by Dr. Nicole Gauthier.

Imported fire ants (IFA) have been a recurring problem in several Western Kentucky counties for almost 25 years. The pattern has been that suspect IFA mounds (Figure 1) are reported, confirmed by a specialist, treated, and then eliminated. This has kept IFA from becoming established in the western portion of the state. Most of these reported mounds have been in counties near the Land Between the Lakes Region.

In the winter of 2022, an IFA mound was reported, confirmed, and eliminated in McCreary County. Soon after that, dozens of new mounds from various southern parts of the county were reported and confirmed, followed by numerous reports in southern Whitley County. IFA mounds have also been found in several locations in Knox County and single locations in Bell and Laurel Counties. The mounds identified in Knox, Bell, and Laurel counties have been treated, but infestations in portions of McCreary and Whitley Counties are too extensive to eliminate.

While IFA may have some value as a predator of insect and tick pests, they are a serious public health threat. For many people, an IFA sting is painful and causes a raised pustule, but for some, it can cause a serious anaphylactic reaction that can require prompt medical attention. UK Entomology's webpage has a factsheet on IFA ([ENTFACT-469](#)) that describes its identification, significance, biology, and management.

While it may not be possible to eliminate IFA once it becomes established in an area, it is important to slow the spread of this invasive insect into new areas of Kentucky. Persons who find a suspect mound should contact their county Extension agent or take a picture and e-mail it to [ReportAPest@uky.edu](mailto:ReportAPest@uky.edu).

# Imported Fire Ant Update

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*Figure 1. IFA typically makes raised, dome-shaped mounds to help capture sunlight and heat the colony. When the colony is disturbed, workers “boil out” to defend their nest (Photo: Ric Bessin, UK).*

## December Plant of The Month Poinsettia Prestige Early Red

Like full sun

Dislike being jostled

Resent getting hit with drafts

Prefer moderate, stable temperatures (70 F)

As far as how often to water poinsettia, you'll have to go by feel; they prefer soil that's moist but not waterlogged



# Keeping Your Houseplants Happy During Wintertime

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.



# Washington County Cooperative Extension Service

245 Corporate Drive  
Springfield KY, 40069  
Office 859-336-7741  
Fax 859-336-7445  
Email [dennis.morgeson@uky.edu](mailto:dennis.morgeson@uky.edu)

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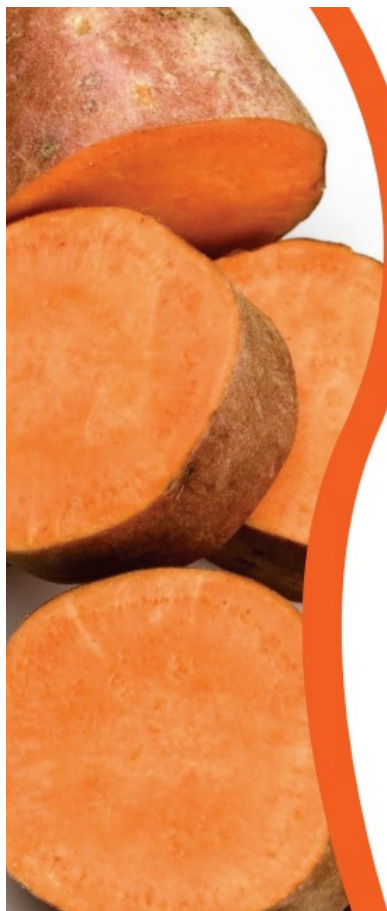


## We Are On The Web!!!

[washington.ca.uky.edu](http://washington.ca.uky.edu)

Facebook at:

<https://www.facebook.com/WashingtonCountyKentucky4H/>



## Nutty Sweet Potato Biscuits

<b>1 cup</b> all-purpose flour	<b>¼ teaspoon</b> ground cinnamon	potatoes
<b>⅓ cup</b> whole wheat flour	<b>¼ teaspoon</b> ground nutmeg	<b>6 tablespoons</b> sugar
<b>1½ teaspoons</b> baking powder	<b>⅓ cup</b> chopped walnuts	<b>¼ cup</b> butter, melted
<b>½ teaspoon</b> salt	<b>1 cup</b> mashed sweet	<b>½ teaspoon</b> vanilla
		<b>1 tablespoon</b> milk

1. In a large mixing bowl, **combine** flours, baking powder, salt, cinnamon, nutmeg and walnuts. **Set** aside.
2. **Combine** sweet potatoes, sugar, butter, vanilla and milk; **add** to flour mixture and mix well.

3. **Turn out** onto a floured surface; gently **knead** 3 or 4 times. **Roll** dough into ½ inch thickness. **Cut** with a 2 inch biscuit cutter and **place** on a lightly greased baking sheet.
4. **Bake** at 450°F for 12 minutes or until

golden brown.

**Yield:** 18 biscuits

**Nutritional Analysis:** 4 g fat, 2 g saturated fat, 5 mg cholesterol, 210 mg sodium, 14 g carbohydrate, 1 g fiber, 4 g sugar, 2 g protein.



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