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Washington County Cooperative Extension Service

The Hoe Truth Newsletter

Helping You Grow



HORTICULTURE

Take Care of Our Feathered Friends

February 2024

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Winter is a hard time for birds to find natural foods like wild cherries and dogwood and holly berries. We can help by putting out feeders filled with seed, along with suet, pine cones smeared with peanut butter and even fruit halves. It will help supplement their diet and provide enough food to get them through the winter.

Most birds will eat just about anything you put out, but there are some birds who have preferred foods. If you select the foods of birds that you want to see, then you will be less likely to get nuisance birds like starlings, grackles and crows. You are better off not to buy seed mixes as they contain peanut hearts, which are attractive to starlings. You will have better success if you buy black oil-type sunflower seed and white millet separately, in bulk. These are often cheaper than seed mixes too. Black oil sunflower seed will attract most seed-eating birds. Millet will attract sparrows, cowbirds and dark-eyed juncos.



Platform feeders will accommodate most birds. They can also lead to a lot of seed loss and waste, as the birds will knock the seed around and fall to the ground. If you want to attract specific birds, choose a feeder for that type bird. Gold and house



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

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 LEXINGTON, KY 40546



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To Do's For February

Trees And Shrubs

February is a good time to prune trees and shrubs. Of course depending on bloom time.

One note of caution on pruning, if the tree or shrub is an ornamental and blooms in the spring don't prune it until after it blooms. Fruit trees should be pruned now through the beginning of March.

If you aren't sure what your soil needs it is always a good idea to have a soil test done. It is FREE and it will save you time and money in the long run.

Vegetables

If you are growing your own vegetable transplants in window seals or under lights remember as a general rule it takes about six weeks for a good sized transplant to grow.

This means you can start broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, kohlrabi, Chinese cabbage, and other cool season garden plants in mid February. These will be planted in the garden in late March.

Lawn

If your lawn needs lime it can be applied now or anytime. You don't need lime on a lawn unless the pH is below 6.0.

Apply phosphorus and potassium anytime of the year as your soil test indicates.

Mid February and March are the times to sow new lawns or over seed old ones. September is the best time but now is the second best.

Pre-emergent control herbicides can be applied in late February and March. This will help control annual weeds. A second application may be needed in late May or June for good crabgrass control. Don't apply pre-emergent herbicides if you sowed or plan to sow grass seed this spring.

February Plant Of The Month



Succulent

Hardy in USDA Zones 7B - 10B

- ↑ Height: 6-8 in
- ↔ Space: 30-32 in
- ☀ More than 6 Hours of Daily Sun
- 💧 Light to Medium Moisture
- 🕒 Grown for its Attractive Foliage
- 🐇 Deer and Rabbit Resistant

- Low, spreading rosette
- Long green, wavy leaves with spots
- Cherry red spots on cream margin
- Best in dry, very well drained soil
- Water and fertilize lightly in summer
- Slow grower
- Pair with Dianthus, Hen & Chicks, Sedum

Cherry Chocolate Chip Perennial Deciduous Agave

MAD ABOUT MANGAVE® Cherry Chocolate Chip *Manfreda undulata* PP29918

EPA Issues Advisory On Pesticides by Beekeepers To Control Varroa Mite

Last week, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued an advisory to clarify what pesticide products and active ingredients are registered to control Varroa mites (*Varroa destructor*) in beehives and how it views the use of unregistered products to treat beehives. Additionally, EPA stressed that it remains committed to collaborating with and supporting the beekeeping community. It is providing an update on those efforts, which includes registering new tools for managing beehive pests and working with federal and local partners to advance valuable research.

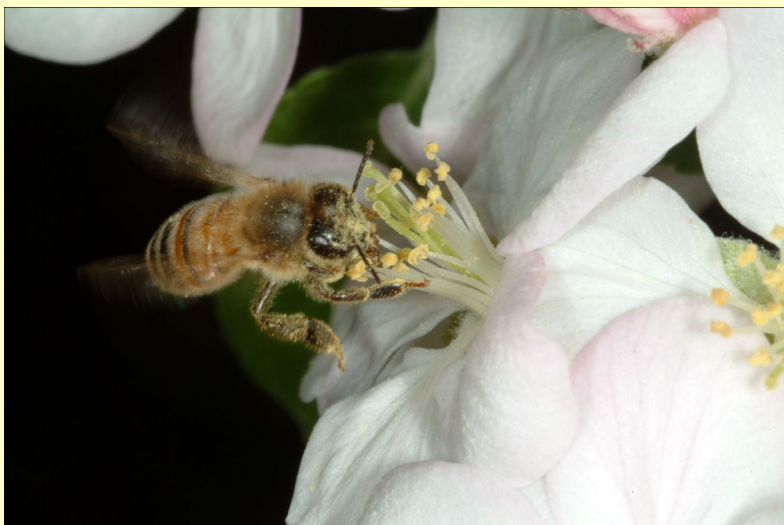


Figure 1. A honey bee visiting an apple bloom. Services provided by honey bees are critical to our ag economy (Photo: Ric Bessin, UK)

The EPA stated that it recently learned that beekeepers may be using products containing pesticide active ingredients (e.g., oxalic acid, formic acid, amitraz, and thymol) that are not registered to control Varroa mites in bee colonies. In the advisory, EPA continues to affirm that (1) the use of registered pesticides must comply with labeling requirements under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA), (2) that pesticide residues in or on food derived from beehives (e.g., honey, comb, wax, propolis, royal jelly, pollen) must comply with any federal tolerances under FFDCA, (3) that use of unregistered pesticides to control varroa mites cannot extend beyond personal use, and (4) that there may be more restrictive state requirements that must also be followed. EPA remains committed to supporting states with primary enforcement authority to ensure compliance with

FIFRA requirements. **It is a violation of FIFRA to use registered pesticides in a manner that is not in accordance with label instructions.**

Currently, EPA has registered 16 pesticide products covering about 10 active ingredients that can be used on beehives to control Varroa mites. Recently, EPA has registered two new Varroa mite control products (*i.e.*, Varroxxan and Ex-Ox tablets) containing oxalic acid as the active ingredient. Each product allows for easier application of oxalic acid, and in the case of Varroxxan, a slower release and longer acting application of oxalic acid in the honey bee colony. EPA stated it will continue to prioritize the registration of pesticides that target Varroa mites and continue to provide helpful information about these products.

EPA considers any application of an unregistered pesticide for other than personal use (e.g., application of an unregistered pesticide to another person's property) to be distribution of an unregistered pesticide and a violation of FIFRA. Personal use would not likely include activities that involve any operation in commerce, such as selling or distribution of bees/colonies, pollination services, queens, honey, comb, wax, propolis, royal jelly, or pollen. An individual raising bees as a hobby and personally consuming whatever honey is harvested might be considered "own personal use." But as described above, an individual beekeeper cannot sell or distribute (which includes transportation) any unregistered pesticide and cannot sell or distribute any adulterated honey or other edible beehive products.

For more information on the EPA advisory, visit their [website](#) for a copy of the advisory and additional information on the currently registered pesticide products for controlling Varroa mites in beehives.

Source: Ric Bessin, Entomology Extension Specialist

Take Care of Our Feathered Friends

finches prefer a tube feeder with a small opening for nyjer thistle or hulled sunflower seeds.

Don't forget that birds need water too. Keep a bird bath or water source close to feeders, and be sure the water is fresh and not frozen, as it tends to freeze in winter. Place the feeders in an open area where there are deciduous and evergreen trees, with shrubs nearby, so birds can escape for shelter.



House cats can be a problem around bird feeders as they will lay in wait to ambush the birds for a meal. If you have a cat, consider putting a collar with a bell on it, so birds can escape before being attacked.

Keep your feeders clean by periodically using hot, soapy water and a capful of bleach to remove old, dried seed. Platform feeders might hold water and should have small holes drilled into the bottom to allow water to drain.

Prevent Winter Damage From Voles and Moles



A common misconception is that moles and voles, those burrowing pests that destroy our lawns and gardens, take a break in the winter to hibernate. Nothing is further from the truth. In winter, moles and voles simply dig deeper to escape the cold, while continuing to eat with a ravenous appetite. We tend not to go out as much in the winter, therefore we do not see their signature tunnels, hills and holes, which are occasionally covered by snow. You can avoid surprises in your lawn this spring by preventing winter damage with a few precautionary measures.



You can purchase traps, repellents and baits to help control mole problems. If you used mole repellents during the summer, continue to use them into winter. Stopping the use of repellents can leave your lawn and garden vulnerable to mole activity. If you see signs of damage in the winter, you should begin repellent applications immediately.

The effectiveness of repellents for voles, which are sometimes called meadow mice, are not proven. When dealing with only a few voles, trapping might be the best option. Use ordinary mousetraps baited with peanut butter or apple. The traps must be placed in the runs and then covered with boards to be effective.

If you are unsure about mole and vole signs or control measures, you can seek professional help from a trusted pest control company. A pest control professional will notice signs of mole and vole activity and can apply the any necessary treatments throughout the year if a problem is found.

Next fall, take proactive measures to prevent moles and voles as winter approaches. Avoid overwatering your garden or lawn with sprinklers and irrigation, which makes the soil moist and loose. Wet soil makes it easier for the moles and voles to move around, while providing moles with an abundance of their main food source, earthworms and grubs. Another preventive measure is not to mulch too early in the fall. Mulch is a great way to protect plants from plummeting temperatures and helps retain moisture, but it also provides attractive homes for voles. Wait to mulch until a couple of weeks after the first frost. It might convince a vole to take cover for the winter someplace else. Physical barriers in your beds and around trees can protect them from mole and vole damage as well.



Black Rot of Grapes

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IMPORTANCE

Black rot is the most serious and prevalent grape disease in Kentucky. While it can affect all developing above-ground plant tissues, fruit infections are the most destructive. Both residential and commercial vineyards suffer significant yield losses without an adequate disease management program.

SYMPTOMS & SIGNS

The black rot fungus infects immature leaves, shoots, tendrils, and fruit (FIGURE 1).

Leaves

Black rot symptoms first appear as small, round, reddish-brown spots that enlarge to 1/8 to 1/4 inch in diameter; spots may coalesce into larger blotches (FIGURE 1). Enlarging spots develop dark margins with light brown-to-tan centers (FIGURE 2). Numerous fungal fruiting structures (pycnidia) develop within spot centers and are visible to the naked eye as tiny black specks (FIGURE 3). Newly developing leaves can become infected anytime during the growing season; however, as leaves mature, they become resistant to infection.

Shoots, petioles, tendrils

Black rot symptoms appear on developing shoots, petioles, and tendrils as irregular or elliptical-shaped, somewhat sunken, tan-to-brown lesions. Lesions become peppered with tiny black fungal fruiting structures (pycnidia) (FIGURE 4).

Fruit

Soft, light brown spots (FIGURE 5) rapidly enlarge on fruit until entire berries are affected (FIGURE 6). Diseased berries then shrivel into black, wrinkled mummies (FIGURE 7) that either drop to the ground or remain attached to clusters. As with other infected tissues, black rot mummies become covered with pycnidia. Grape berries are susceptible to infection until 3 to 4 weeks after bloom, although symptoms may develop later.



FIGURE 1. BLACK ROT AFFECTS SHOOTS, TENDRILS, LEAVES, AND FRUIT; HOWEVER, IT IS DAMAGE TO FRUIT THAT RESULTS IN DEVASTATING YIELD LOSSES.

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Recipe Of The Month

Kale and Cauliflower Salad



Plate it up!



1 15-ounce can chickpeas,
drained and patted dry
1 tablespoon olive oil
4 cups finely chopped kale
4 cups (1 large head) finely
chopped cauliflower
2 tablespoons diced red onion
½ cup roasted sunflower seeds
½ cup dried cranberries

Pre-heat oven to 400 degrees F.
Toss chickpeas with olive oil and
spread on baking sheet. **Roast** 20
minutes, **stirring** once and then let
cool. **Combine** kale, cauliflower,
onion, sunflower seeds, cranberries,
and cooled chickpeas in a large
bowl. In a small bowl **whisk** together
dressing ingredients until combined.

Dressing:

1 clove garlic, minced
4 tablespoons olive oil
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
2 teaspoons sugar
½ teaspoon ground black pepper

Pour dressing over salad ingredients
and **toss** to combine.

Yield: 10, 1-cup servings

Nutritional Analysis: 200 calories,
11g total fat, 1.5g saturated fat, 0mg
cholesterol, 200mg sodium, 22g total
carbohydrate, 5g fiber, 9g total sugars,
1g added sugars, 6g protein