



Harlan County Ag News

MARCH 2023

Cooperative Extension Service

Harlan County
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UPCOMING PROGRAMS

March 7 - Harlan County Beekeepers - 6p - Depot

March 10 - Plant Order Forms Due

March 28 - Backyard Gardening - 6p - Depot

April 3 - Backyard Gardening - 11a - Depot

April 4 - Harlan Co Beekeepers - 6p - Depot

Reminder: If Harlan County Schools are cancelled due to weather, any Extension workshops scheduled for that day will also be cancelled.

Backyard Gardening Program

The Backyard Gardening Program will be held on March 28 at 6:00pm and April 3 at 11am. Both programs will be held at the Harlan County Extension Depot. Programs will feature planting and care, as well as informational publications. Attendees will receive a Gardening in Kentucky publication and a Kentucky Gardening Calendar. To register for either program, contact us here at the office.



Backyard Poultry Program

We are planning a Backyard Poultry Program this spring. The topic will center on raising chickens in the backyard and include egg laying and meat chickens, housing and feed needs. If you are interested in attending this program, once scheduled, contact us here at the office and we will notify you once it is on our calendar.



SUCCESSFULLY STARTING VEGETABLE, FLOWER SEED INDOORS

Starting seed indoors enables gardeners to select the exact varieties they want for vegetable or flower beds, whether an heirloom tomato or new zinnia variety. There are other benefits from having a variety of home-grown vegetables and flowers. One of the most satisfying is to say, "I grew these plants myself, from seed."

Vegetable seeds that are easy to start indoors include tomatoes, peppers, squash, cabbage, eggplant and cucumber. Marigold and zinnia flower seed also are simple to start inside.

Garden centers and mail-order catalogs offer many varieties from the newest and improved ones to favorite standbys. To avoid buying too many seed, calculate how many plants of each variety are needed for the garden.

For greater success starting seed indoors, don't plant them too early and give them adequate, but not excessive, water and sufficient light.

Seed planted too early result in overgrown plants that are yellow, crooked and spindly before it is even time to transplant them outdoors. Thus, it is critical to properly time the planting of new seed so young seedlings will be large enough to transplant in the garden when the danger of a late frost is over.

To determine when to start the seed, check the outdoor sowing time on the seed packet or last late frost date for your location. Plant seeds three to four weeks prior to the recommended seed packet date, or time for the last late frost. An exception is squash and cucumbers, which require only seven to 10 days for seedlings to grow large enough for transplanting in the garden.

When it's time to plant seed, gently press potting soil into each small container; add two seed per container at the depth recommended on the package, and put the containers in leak-proof trays.

Unless you are using a peat product, be sure containers have at least one drainage hole.

Then, slowly water each small container to saturate the potting mix, using slightly warm tap water. Never allow containers to sit in standing water. Throw away excess water that seeps into the trays.

Put the leak-proof trays in a warm location such as the top of a refrigerator or freezer to help seed germinate, usually in seven to 10 days. A sprout emerging from the potting mix indicates germination.

Plants need a bright area to grow indoors, but unfiltered sunlight will dry out the containers too quickly.

After seed germinate, move the trays to a south window or sunroom with filtered light. An alternative is to put incandescent or fluorescent bulbs six to eight inches from the containers to provide light necessary for germination. Leave the lights on all the time, and occasionally rotate plants that begin to grow towards the light source. Fluorescent lights are preferable because they do not get as hot as incandescent lights.

A hot bed or cold frame may be a good investment for gardeners planning to produce lots of seedlings to transplant each year.

It is critical for newly-germinated seedlings to have water available for the next two to three weeks, so frequently check the moisture content with your finger to keep from damaging tender roots. Carefully and consistently water when the soil feels dry a little below the surface for the first two weeks. You can slowly apply a water-soluble fertilizer the third week. Be sure to follow instructions for the amount of fertilizer to use.

To avoid common problems starting seed indoors, use a high-quality starter mix, don't plant seed too early; select a warm area to germinate seed; provide a high-light environment for seedlings to grow; and keep developing seedlings moderately moist.



Getting Ready for Spring

By Derrick Snyder - National Weather Service Paducah, KY

March is when the traditional springtime thunderstorm season begins to ramp up in the Commonwealth. As we all know, some of these storms can be real doozies, and it's important we're prepared to weather them. Here's a few tips to help keep you and your loved ones safe:

1. **Stay informed:** Make sure you've got a weather radio or follow a trusted news station to stay on top of what's brewing. Your local National Weather Service offices offer free storm spotter training classes during this time of year, and these courses are excellent ways to learn about how severe thunderstorms form and how to stay safe around them. Call your local office to find out more information about a spotter training near you.

2. **Have a plan:** Make sure you and your family have a designated place to take shelter and a plan for how to stay in touch with one another during a storm. Write it down and keep it handy, just in case. Don't forget to practice your plan too!

3. **Stock up:** Keep a well-stocked pantry with enough non-perishable food and water to last a few days, in case of power outages or other emergencies. Other items to keep on hand in case of an emergency include extra clothes, medications, cash, and a first aid kit. See the list below for additional supplies.

Secure your property: Make sure any loose items around your property are secured to prevent them from becoming dangerous projectiles during high winds. Consider moving livestock to a safe place and securing any loose roof shingles to prevent damage to your home, farm buildings, or workshops. Don't forget, there's plenty of resources out there to help you get prepared for severe weather. The National Weather Service, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and your local emergency management office can all provide you with valuable information on what to do before, during, and after a thunderstorm. Learn more about making an emergency plan at www.ready.gov/plan.

Top 10 Routine Tractor Maintenance Tasks

Tim Stombaugh, extension agricultural engineer
Tractor maintenance tends to fall by the wayside when you get busy. Don't put these tasks off until spring and summer. Performing a simple front-to-back routine every week can help you remember key maintenance points. Be ready for the growing season before it starts with these 10 routine maintenance tasks.

1. Inspect the front axles and steering. Is it time to grease the bearings and steering components? Make sure nothing is loose.
2. Check the coolant system. Make sure the coolant levels are adequate. Ensure the radiator is not plugged up with debris.
3. Look at those belts. Check to see they have the right tension and that they are not cracked. This will prompt you to have a spare on hand.
4. The air filter is next. Make sure it is not clogged and robbing power from your engine by not allowing air to get through.
5. Check engine oil. You should check this daily, but if you haven't, a good time to do it is during your weekly inspection. Also, check the fluid itself to ensure it doesn't have any contaminants or water in it.
6. Pay attention to the battery. If your battery is not a maintenance-free battery, check the liquid levels. Examine the cables for corrosion and make sure they aren't rubbing against the frame components.
7. Check clutch and brake linkages. With everyday use, you may not notice linkage getting out of adjustment. Specifically check for free play and other linkage adjustments.
8. Look at the hydraulic reservoir. Make sure the fluid is at the correct level and change the fluid when needed. The system provides fluids for remote cylinders, and it the critical lubricating force in your tractor's transmission.
9. Test those tires Make sure they are properly inflated.
10. Check the back of the tractor. Is it clean? Make sure the hydraulic hose connections are clean to keep dirt out of the system.

Farmer's Market Skillet Bake

1/2 small onion, finely chopped
 2 cloves garlic, minced
 4-5 small red potatoes
 1 tablespoon olive oil
 2 cups shredded mozzarella cheese, divided
 1 medium summer squash, sliced
 1 medium zucchini, sliced
 4 medium sized tomatoes, sliced
 1 teaspoon salt
 1 teaspoon pepper
 5 fresh basil leaves, finely chopped, divided

Preheat oven to 375 degrees F.

Prepare onion, garlic and sliced potatoes (about 1/4 inch thick).

Heat olive oil over medium heat in a 10 or 12-inch oven safe skillet.

Add onion, garlic, and potatoes to pan and **stir** to coat with oil.

Cook over medium heat, **stirring** occasionally until golden brown and tender.

Add 1 cup mozzarella cheese.

In a bowl, **toss** together the squash, zucchini and tomatoes with salt, pepper, and half of the finely chopped basil.

Layer squash and tomato slices over the potato and cheese layer. **Top** with remaining mozzarella cheese.

Bake 35 minutes or until vegetables are tender and cheese is melted. **Remove** skillet from oven and **top** with remaining basil.



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Jeremy N. Williams
 County Extension Agent
 For Agriculture/Natural Resources

2023 Plant Order Form

Cooperative Extension Service

Purchaser Information:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Postal Code: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Harlan County
519 S. Main Street
Harlan, KY 40831
(606) 573-4464

Quantity	Item	Unit Price	Total
_____ bundles	Strawberries (Allstar) (June bearing—larger berry)	\$5.00 (bundle of 25)	
_____ bundles	Strawberries (Earliglow) (June bearing—smaller, sweeter berry)	\$5.00 (bundle of 25)	
	Blackberries (Natchez)	\$4 each	
	Blueberries (Duke) (two varieties needed for pollination)	\$8 each	
	Blueberries (Chandler) (two varieties needed for pollination)	\$8 each	
	Raspberries (Prelude) - bare root	\$4 each	
	Bristol Black Raspberries	\$4 each	
	Asparagus (Millennium)	\$1 each	
_____ bundles	Onion plants (Candy)	\$5 (bundle of 60)	
		Total Due	

Pre-payment is required by Friday, March 10, for all plant orders.

Make checks payable to: WTA Ag Fund

Payment Information:

Amount Paid: _____

Date: _____

Received by: _____

Check No.: _____ or Cash _____

Plants are expected to ship from the nursery during the first week of April. We will send you a postcard to let you know when the plants will be available for pickup.



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College of Agriculture,
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STANDARD
US POSTAGE PAID
HARLAN, KY
PERMIT 831