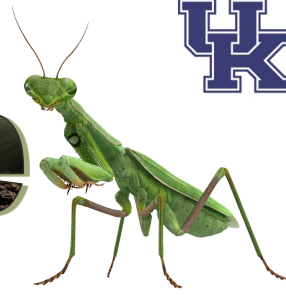


Boone County Horticulture

May-June 2023 Newsletter



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

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Grow Your Own Salsa Garden

By Joe Smith
Boone County Extension
Horticulture Technician

Salsas come in many varieties, flavors and colors but no matter the ingredients, they add flavor and color to even the most mundane dishes.

They can be the traditional vegetable or even fruit-based, hot or cold, spicy or mild. No matter what type you prefer it's likely you can grow many of the ingredients in your own garden.

All you really require is a vacant space in your yard or a few containers and a full sun location. You can grow most of these plants in containers or in-ground, depending on your garden space and needs.

The ingredients for the most traditional type of salsa include chili peppers, tomatoes, oregano, onions, and cilantro.



(Continued)

Quick TIP

In early to mid-May, make your first plantings of green beans, lima beans, cucumbers, pumpkins, peppers, tomato transplants, and watermelons.

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Starting with transplants found at your local garden center is definitely the easiest way to start, but growing your own transplants earlier in the season is also a great option for those looking for some of those special varieties etc.

The Tomatoes:

Paste tomatoes like Roma, Amish paste, and San Marzano are very meaty and less juicy. These may not make the best fresh salad or tomato sandwich, but they make an excellent thick salsa. Slicing tomatoes are more juicy and better for sandwiches and eating out of hand.

The Peppers:

Hot pepper varieties traditionally used in salsa include jalapeño, cayenne, Hungarian wax and long green chile (fairly mild) as well as habanero (quite hot) . The level of heat is totally up to you, but always make a small test batch to taste first, then adjust accordingly.



The Onions:

Onions are a longer season crop and require usually more time and space to cultivate. Gardeners can choose to plant nursery grown seedling plants or sets early in the season, or purchase onions at the grocery store to supplement their recipes.

Garlic:

Garlic is planted in the fall, and harvested the following summer. Separate cloves are planted then, and will develop into a full head of garlic, which can later be harvested. Like onions, garlic cloves can be purchased to supplement recipes.

Herbs:

Herbs for salsa include cilantro, basil, parsley and oregano. Oregano is a perennial and can be harvested year after year. Cilantro, basil and parsley are super easy annual herbs to grow. These can be started indoors each year at the same time as tomatoes, and set out after the last spring frost.



Clay soil can be improved by adding organic material, such as top dressing with compost or well-rotted manure. This will improve (increase) drainage, and provide more appropriate water holding capacity. Organic material will also add essential nutrients to your soil.

**Quick
TIP**

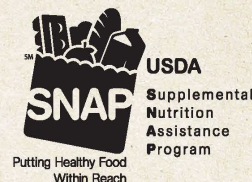


RECIPE



University of Kentucky
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FARMERS' MARKET SALSA



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

- 5 medium tomatoes
- 1 jalapeño
- 1 garlic clove, peeled and minced
- ½ medium red onion, peeled and cut into ¼-inch pieces
- 1 (15 ounce) can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 3 tablespoons fresh lime juice
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 1 tablespoon fresh cilantro, chopped

1. Wash the vegetables. Cut the tomatoes into ½-inch pieces and put into a medium-sized bowl. Remove ribs and seeds from jalapeño and mince.

- 2.** Add the garlic and onion to the tomato mixture.
- 3.** Add black beans to tomato mixture.
- 4.** Stir in the lime juice, salt and pepper.
- 5.** Add cilantro and stir until combined.
- 6.** Serve with fresh vegetables and tortilla chips for dipping.

Makes 8 servings

Serving size: ½ cup

Cost per recipe: \$3.46

Cost per serving: 43¢

Nutritional facts per serving:

15 calories; 0g total fat; 0g saturated fat; 0g trans fat; 0mg cholesterol; 55mg sodium; 3g carbohydrate; 1g fiber; 1g sugar; 1g protein; 0% Daily Value of vitamin D; 0% Daily Value of calcium; 0% Daily Value of iron; 2% Daily Value of potassium.

Source: Adapted from USDA Mixing Bowl, <https://whatscooking.fns.usda.gov/recipes/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap/fresh-salsa>

Eastern Red Cedar: A Native Evergreen for Northern Kentucky

By Joe Smith
Boone County Extension
Horticulture Technician

While most locals consider the red cedar a roadside weed tree, this is basically the only native conifer to our region of north central Kentucky. What is not to like? This evergreen is easily grown in average to dry well-drained soils in full sun. While it prefers drier locations, it is intolerant of constantly wet soils and shady conditions. But wow, can it handle all matter of heat and dry conditions. In fact, it has the best drought resistance of any conifer native to the eastern U.S.

Juniperus virginiana, commonly called Eastern red cedar, is native to every county in Kentucky, where it typically occurs on limestone bluffs and glades, old pastures and fence rows. It is a broadly conical, sometimes columnar evergreen conifer with horizontal branching that typically grows to 30-65' tall. Gray to reddish-brown bark exfoliates in thin 'shaggy' strips on mature trees. Trunks are often fluted at the base. Heartwood is light reddish brown and very aromatic, and is commonly used for cedar chests, etc.



The needled foliage is a dark blue green, and may turn brownish green in winter. Cultivars of this species often retain better foliage color in winter and many forms are available in tree, as well as shrub, form. The red cedar is a dioecious species (separate male and female trees). Female trees produce round, gray to blackish-green berry-like cones (1/4" diameter) that ripen in fall the first year. Berry-like cones are attractive to many song birds like cedar waxwings etc. To produce seed, a female tree must be close to a male tree.

Some of the best cultivars of Eastern Red Cedar				
Name	Foliage	Berries	Form	Height/Spread
'Brodie'	Rich green	No	Slender cone	15-25', 5-10'
'Burkii'	Silver blue	No	Slender cone, smaller	10-15', 4-7'
'Canaertii'	Deep green	Yes	Narrow cone	20-40', 6-15'
'Grey Owl'	Silver grey	yes	Spreading shrub form	6-8', 3-4'
Emerald Sentinel™ (<i>'Corcorcor'</i>)	Emerald green	Yes	Dense, upright	12-25', 4-10'
'Hillspire'	Rich Green	No	Slender pyramid	15-30', 3-10'
'Idyllwild'	Bright green	No	Upright, twisted	10-20', 5-10'
'Glauca'	Silver blue	Yes	Upright pyramid	20-25', 6-8'
'Taylor'	Blue green	No	Very slender, upright	18-25', 2-3'

With all the problems we are currently having with our evergreens in Northern Kentucky like spruce needlecast disease, white pine decline and numerous other pests and diseases why not give this native evergreen a place in our local landscape plantings?

Buttonbush

By Joseph Morgan
Boone County Extension
Horticulture Technician

Cephalanthus occidentalis is an excellent native plant for rain gardens and other consistently moist areas in the garden. Providing interest almost year-round and a tolerance to many adverse conditions make this a valuable option to any gardener in our area. Buttonbush can tolerate full sun to partial sun and will tolerate regularly wet soils, in fact, this shrub will grow in standing water. If grown in deeper shade, you may notice fewer blooms and if grown in soil that regularly dries out, this shrub may struggle. Although it has a niche role to fill, buttonbush can bring great interest to an otherwise tough spot. The shrub is mostly inconspicuous until June, when an abundance of unique spherical blooms covers the plant. These blooms attract many pollinators including hummingbirds. In late summer these blooms will turn into red fruit that pops even in the shade. This fruit can be a food source for over 20 species of birds. As we enter autumn, the foliage of *Cephalanthus occidentalis* picks up vibrant red and orange fall colors.



<https://extension.okstate.edu/programs/oklahoma-proven/plant-profiles/cephalanthus-occidentalis-buttonbush.html>

There are several different cultivars to consider if you are looking to purchase a buttonbush, some of the most popular include 'Crimson comet', 'Sputnik', and 'Sugar shack'. The largest difference among these is mature size. 'Sugar shack', a Proven Winner's introduction is expected to be 5' in height and width, 'Sputnik' is expected to mature around 8' in height and width, 'Crimson comet' is the largest of the three, topping out at 10 feet in either direction. With the size flexibility that comes with these cultivars, many gardeners are sure to find a suitable place in the landscaping for these excellent shrubs.

To attract hummingbirds, plant bee balm, lobelia, cleome, columbine, delphinium, four-o'clocks, impatiens, petunias and trumpet vine.

Quick
TIP

Native and Nonnative Bees

*By Robert Brockman
Boone County Extension Agent
for Horticulture*

Over the last few years, you have likely heard a lot about bees. You have probably heard how important they are to the plants in our gardens and therefore to us. You have likely also heard that their populations are decreasing because of pesticides, parasites, diseases, and a lack of diversity. But how much do you really know about bees? Do you know that there are over twenty thousand species of bees in the world? Or that most species of bees live solitary lives and don't have a colony? While you may know both facts about bees, hopefully you will learn something new!

Bees are a tremendously diverse set of organisms. While they are closely related to other insects such as wasps and ants, there are a few things that make them unique. All species of bees are vegetarian and do not hunt other insects. They, like many other insects, rely on plant nectar for the carbohydrates it contains. What makes them unique, however, is that they feed pollen to their young as a protein source. With very few exceptions, bees have special hairs on their body that are branched in such a way that it holds pollen. The adult bee can temporarily store pollen on its body and bring it back to its nest to feed to its larvae or provision its nest.

As mentioned above, not all species of bees form colonies. Most species of bees build one or more nests where they lay their eggs in sealed compartments. These bees will leave packets of pollen next to their unhatched eggs before they close their nest entrance and leave to build a new nest. Solitary bees may build nests next to other bees, but they do not provide resources to each other. This is in stark contrast to social bee species such as honeybees or the many bumblebee species. Within a social bee colony, there is one female which lays eggs, and there are many female offspring of the queen which do the work of finding food, caring for young, building the colony, and defending it from attack. These colonies can hold tens of thousands of bees if it is a European honeybee colony, or several hundred individuals if it is a mature bumblebee colony. Honeybee colonies are considered perennial and will live for several years, while bumblebee colonies are annual, starting out as a single queen in the spring, and dying with the first hard freezes of winter.

Bees vary greatly in the time of day and year that they are active, and what they pollinate. Honeybees and bumblebees are active throughout the season, but their populations tend to build up as the growing season goes on. Many of our native solitary bee species are only active for a short period of time. Species such as the blue orchard bee are only active as adults for a month or so in early spring. After that period, the adults die but the eggs will hatch and develop unassisted before emerging as adults the following spring. Blue orchard bees, and others like them, are incredibly important because they do not need to build up a population to effectively pollinate spring flowers. Many native bees, particularly bumblebees, are also able to pollinate during cool and wet weather when honeybees aren't as effective. Many of our native bee species are seeing population declines of a similar, or greater magnitude as the European honeybee.



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Ansel Oommen, Bugwood.org

(Continued)

So, what can you do to help both native bees and European honeybees? Reducing the amount of insecticide that we use in our landscape is an incredibly important first step. If you have to spray an insecticide to save your plants, try to spray something like *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) which is selective to a different set of insects (caterpillars) and cannot kill bees. You can also spray when bees aren't active, or cut the flowers off plants that absolutely must be sprayed. Planting a diverse landscape will also help your local bees. A few things to keep in mind when planting your garden is to try to have something flowering all season long, plants clumps of the same species which are easier for bees to find and forage from, plant native species which will help both bees and other wildlife, and plant flowering trees which have large numbers of flowers. A few native flowering trees that are beneficial to bees include pussy willow, red maple, American elm, eastern redbud, serviceberry, sassafras, aromatic sumac, and hawthorns. Let bees be your excuse to add just a few more flowering plants to your yard!



Find us here...

Extension Campus Location Key:

Virtual via Zoom, Must register to receive Zoom link 🏠
 Extension Service office, 6028 Camp Ernst Rd., Burlington
 Enrichment Center, 1824 Patrick Dr., Burlington
 Farmers Market, 1961 Burlington Pk., Burlington
 Environmental and Nature Center, 9101 Camp Ernst Rd., Union
 Boone County Arboretum, 9190 Camp Ernst Rd., Union; Register at: www.bcarboretum.org/

For more information or to register for any of our classes, visit our website at boone.ca.uky.edu. Click "Online Class Registration" or call us at 859-586-6101.

Upcoming Horticulture Events *Please Register!*

Straw Bale Gardening

► May 10, 1:00-3:00 pm
Enrichment Center, Upper Level
We will demonstrate how to successfully prepare or "season" a straw bale and also discuss how to plant it for season long vegetable production.

Tree & Shrub Options for Small Properties

► May 16, 10:00am-12:00noon
OR 6:00-8:00pm
Enrichment Center, Upper Level
Join us for great tree and shrub options that will work for small sites.

Invasive Pest Insects

► May 23, 1:00 pm
Enrichment Center, Upper Level
Come and learn about current invasive insects that impact our landscaping and forests.

Beyond Red Maples—Under Utilized Landscape Trees

► May 24, 1:00-3:00 pm
Enrichment Center, Upper Level
Avoid monoculture in your landscape. We will discuss some great underutilized tree selections for the Northern Kentucky area.

Cover Crops & Green Manure

► June 9, 1:00-2:00 pm
Environmental & Nature Center
Join us as we discuss the role of cover crops in adding organic matter and building the soil structure. We will discuss cover-crop selection, sowing techniques and soil incorporation.

Learn the Trails

Environmental & Nature Center
Learn the three main trails at the Nature Center through these guided hikes so you can feel comfortable hiking on your own during Hike the Trails!

- May 3, 10:00 am
Blue Trail (0.5 miles)
- May 24, 10:00 am
Yellow Trail (0.7 miles)
- June 21, 10:00 am
Red Trail (2 miles)

Hike the Trails

10:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m.
Environmental & Nature Center
► *Every Wednesday from May-October*
Enjoy exploring the Nature Center on your own. You must sign-in and out at the large Shelter House. Rain may cancel.



Boone County Farmers Market

Seven days a week, 9:00 a.m.—5:00 p.m. May through October
1961 Burlington Pike, Burlington, KY 41005

► Opening Day May 13th

Fresh, high-quality fruits and vegetables from local Northern Kentucky farmers!

► Join us **May 20, 9am to 1pm** for the **Family Friendly Community Activities Fair!**

FREE EVENT!! Giveaways—Community Information—Bounce House & Slide—Ask A Master Gardener!



For more information or if you have questions, contact us—we are here to help!

859-586-6101 • boone.ca.uky.edu

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Joe Smith

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Joseph Morgan

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