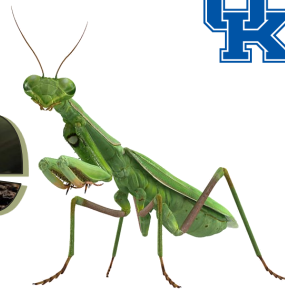


# Boone County Horticulture

Sept-Oct 2024 Newsletter



**Cooperative Extension Service**  
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## Composting Puts Fall Leaves to Good Use

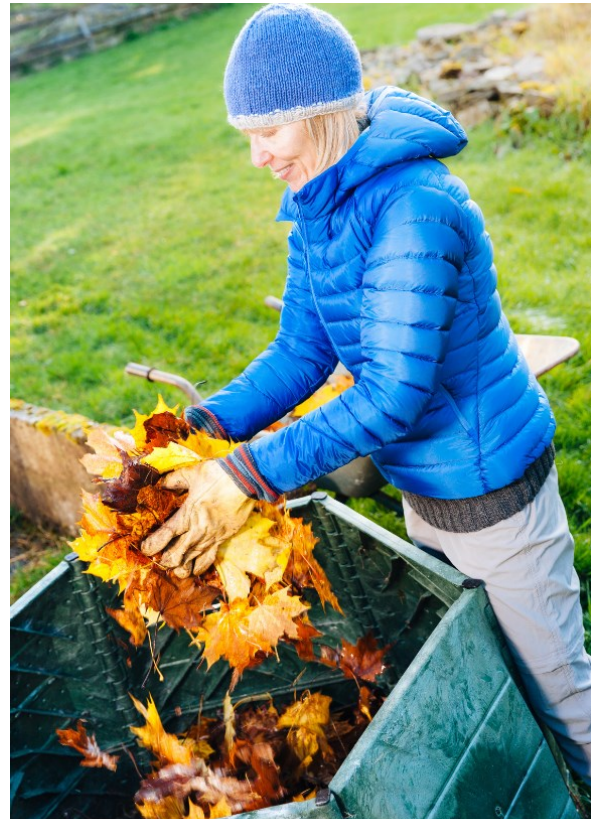
*By Rick Durham*  
University of Kentucky  
Extension Professor

As the fall season progresses, many folks obtain large amounts of leaves and other yard wastes that need to be removed from their property. Composting is a practice that is beneficial to the environment and at the same time allows property owners to get rid of these different yard wastes in an effective manner.

When you compost leaves, other yard debris and kitchen waste, a microbial process converts these items into a more usable organic amendment. You can use finished compost to improve soil structure in gardens and landscape beds. Compost also helps the soil hold nutrients and reduces erosion and water runoff.

You also can use finished compost as a mulch to help reduce weed problems, moderate soil temperatures and conserve soil moisture.

Composting yard and kitchen wastes also reduces the volume of material going into landfills. Yard and kitchen wastes comprise more than 20 percent of the waste generated each year. By composting these wastes, you help reduce disposal costs and extend the usefulness of landfills. This increases the return on your tax dollars.



*(Continued)*

## Quick TIP

At the end of the season, vegetable plants that are heavily infested with insects or diseases should be removed from the garden and destroyed...not put on the compost pile.

### Cooperative Extension Service

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Disabilities accommodated with prior notification.

Weeds free of seed heads and residues like vines and pruned limbs make a good addition to a compost pile. It is not necessary to remove grass clippings if you follow proper lawn management practices. If you decide to compost grass clippings, mix them with other materials like leaves or brush.

You also can compost many kitchen scraps such as fruit and vegetable peelings and cores, coffee grounds, tea bags and crushed eggshells. However, avoid cooked foods, meat, bones, fat or dairy products because they attract animals.

Put your compost pile on a well-drained site that will benefit from nutrients running off the pile. If you are just starting to compost, prepare the pile in layers of materials. This will ensure the proper mixing of materials to aid decomposition. It is best to alternate layers of green leafy material with brush or other woody material. If your compost material contains no soil, sprinkle a little soil or a compost starter in each layer to inoculate the pile with microorganisms.

Ideally, the pile should be 1 cubic yard (3 by 3 by 3 feet).

If you are only going to compost tree leaves, layering might not be necessary; simply add leaves as you collect them. When leaves are dry, add moisture.

Since dead leaves do not have adequate nitrogen for rapid decomposition, mix them with grass clippings or add high-nitrogen fertilizer to speed up breakdown. For example, add 5 ounces (one-half cup) of fertilizer containing 10 percent nitrogen analysis for each 20 gallons of compressed leaves.

To ensure good aeration and drainage, occasionally put down a 3-inch layer of coarse plant material like small twigs or chopped corn stalks, or use a wooden pallet.



*(Continued)*



# Quick TIP

Fall is an excellent time to plant. The fall season usually provides three months of suitable weather for planting while spring renders only two months.

The composting process can be completed in one to two months if materials are shredded, turned to provide good aeration, kept moist and supplied with nitrogen and other materials that cater to compost-promoting microorganisms. Otherwise, it may require 12 months.

Periodically turn the compost pile once a month or when the center of the pile is noticeably hot. This will help microbes more efficiently break down wastes. The more often you aerate, the more quickly you will have useable compost. Compost is useable when it fails to heat up after turning.



Adequate moisture is essential for microbial activity. Water the pile so it is damp but does not remain soggy. Your compost pile should have the moisture content of a well-squeezed sponge, so you can squeeze a few drops of water from a handful of material. It is especially important to supply water during dry periods and when you add leaves and other dry materials to the compost pile.

If the pile emits an ammonia smell, it is too wet or packed too tightly for oxygen circulation. Turn the heap and add some coarse material such as small twigs to increase air space.

Compost needs a balanced diet of carbon and nitrogen to break down effectively. Microbes that break down waste need a certain amount of nitrogen for metabolism and growth. Although tree leaves are relatively high in nitrogen, adding nitrogen fertilizer or high-nitrogen components will accent decomposition. Grass clippings generally are high in nitrogen and will enhance decomposition when mixed properly with leaves. Other organic sources of nitrogen are poultry litter, manure and blood meal.

Compost is one of nature's best mulches and soil amendments, and you can use it instead of commercial fertilizers. Best of all, compost is cheap. You can make it without spending a cent. Using compost improves soil structure, texture, and aeration and increases the soil's water-holding capacity. Composting improves both your property as well as environment.

Now's a great time to add sulfur (to lower soil pH) or lime (to raise the pH), as needed (based on soil test results), since it takes up to six months for it to work.

**Quick  
TIP**

## It's Time to Renovate Your Lawn!

*By Joe Smith  
Boone County Extension  
Horticulture Technician*

We often receive questions from clients about when is the best time to seed your lawn or totally start over with a complete lawn renovation. The best time to renovate a cool season lawn is mid-August through late September. The second best time would be mid-February through March since establishment in the late spring and early summer often fails due to hot and dry conditions plus excessive weed competition.

Successful renovation involves selecting the right grass, eliminating competition from weeds, proper preparation and seeding, and most importantly, timing.



Although Kentucky is known as the bluegrass state, a lush bluegrass lawn can be challenging to maintain especially during the heat and drought conditions we have experienced this year. Tall fescue is the grass of choice for Northern Kentucky. Select a blend of about three recommended varieties of turf type tall fescue for the best results.

Although 'Kentucky 31' fescue is perfectly acceptable in many situations it has a lighter green color and wider blade texture and is mostly utilized in roadside plantings and parks. The newer turf type tall fescue cultivars are the best choice for a dark green, low maintenance and environmentally friendly lawn.

The next thing to consider is proper soil preparation or creating a good seedbed. Lawns can easily be renovated by using a slit seeder or dethatching machine that will loosen the dead turf, weeds, and thatch and leave shallow slits in the soils surface. The grass seed that falls into these slits will have good soil contact and thus germinate better. Soil testing is also a good thing to consider for future fertilization and for adjusting the soil pH for optimum growth. Remember soil testing is free for Boone County residents.

*(Continued)*



## Quick TIP

Garlic should be planted in September or early October, it will survive the winter, regrow next spring, and be ready for harvest by next July. We have a program on growing garlic on October 2nd.

Generally, fertilizer and lime recommendations can be incorporated while preparing the seed bed but can also be applied after the seed has germinated and your seedlings are up and growing.

Hand seeding can be done with a rotary spreader that can evenly distribute seed several feet in all directions. Hand held type rotary spreaders do a good job but are best for smaller areas. Cover the seed by lightly raking to achieve good seed to soil contact.

The area then can be mulched with a layer of good weed free wheat straw covering approximately 50% of the soil's surface. That is roughly about 1 bale per 1000 feet of area. Water frequently as needed until the new seed has germinated. One or two light irrigations per day may be needed until the young seedlings are up and growing.

Mowing a new lawn once it has geminated and is vigorously growing is also very important. Do not let that new grass grow too tall (5-6 inches) but instead wait till the new grass has reached a third of its intended height then mow. A good sharp mower blade is required to provide a good clean cut and to avoid lifting those new seedlings out of the ground.



As far as weed control, basically a good rule of thumb is to not apply these products until the new grass seedlings have been mowed at least three times. Depending on what post emergent herbicide is used always remember to follow the label instructions dealing with application rates, etc.

In conclusion, I hope this has helped clear up some of the confusion in regards to lawn seeding and renovation. By following the general guidelines of proper timing and seed selection you will have a beautiful lawn with fewer issues in the future.

**The Boone County Garden Club is happy to accept flower vases, canning jars, and spaghetti sauce jars to use to make floral arrangements for hospice patients. If you have items to donate, please contact Marea West at 859-689-1584 or [mareawest@fuse.net](mailto:mareawest@fuse.net). Thank you!**



## The Spotted Lanternfly - Not Just a Pretty Bug!

By Robert Brockman  
Boone County Extension Agent  
for Horticulture

The spotted lanternfly (*Lycorma delicatula*) was found, for the first time, in Boone county in early August, 2024. This is an invasive insect whose native range is Southeast Asia. It has been in the United States for ten years, originally being found in Pennsylvania in 2014.

This is an invasive insect very unlike the emerald ash borer (*Agrilus planipennis*), which came through and killed almost all untreated ash trees (*Fraxinus spp.*) in the region. The emerald ash borer was a specialist which only fed on ash trees, and to a very small extent, related species such as the American fringetree (*Chionanthus virginicus*). Spotted lanternflies are generalist insects that prefer to feed on a few species, but will commonly feed on many. In this manner, they are similar to Japanese beetles. The plant most associated with spotted lanternfly is Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*) which is also native to Southeast Asia and is often used as a host plant. In addition to feeding on Tree of Heaven, spotted lanternfly are known to feed on over a hundred species. A few of their preferred species include grapevine (cultivated and wild), hops (cultivated and wild), fruit trees, and hardwoods such as maples.



Ansel Oommen, Bugwood.org

Spotted lanternflies are sometimes mistaken as butterflies due to their bright colors. However, spotted lanternflies are more closely related to cicadas, plant hoppers, and aphids than butterflies. Unlike butterflies, spotted lanternflies go through incomplete metamorphosis. Because of this, young spotted lanternflies have a similar shape and overall look to their parents. Young spotted lanternflies, which are also called nymphs, lack wings and have different coloration than their parents. Spotted lanternflies feed in a similar way to cicadas and other true “bugs”. Rather than chewing up leaves or boring into plants, lanternflies will suck the plants sap and poop out a condensed sugary sap that we call honeydew. Honeydew first appears as glossy liquid on leaves, sidewalks, and even cars. However, shortly after appearing, honeydew is often colonized by black fungus which is called sooty mold. Honeydew can also attract many insects such as bees, ants, and wasps.

We do not expect spotted lanternflies to kill many plants such as the emerald ash borer did. Instead, we expect the spotted lanternfly to kill trees and other plants that are already stressed by diseases, poor location, or a host of other issues. This could mean that we will see many trees in areas such as parking lots wiped out by the spotted lanternfly. We also expect large numbers of spotted lanternflies, as well as the honeydew they produce, to be very unpleasant to be around. More information about management information will be coming in the upcoming months.

For More Information...

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

# Upcoming Horticulture Events *Please Register!*

## *Please Note:*

► For most Horticulture classes, registration opens one month prior to the class.

### **Seed Saving 101**

► September 5, 6:00-7:30pm  
*Boone County Enrichment Center*  
Are you interested in saving and storing your own seeds for future years? Come and learn the essentials!

### **All About Hydrangeas**

► September 11, 6:00-7:00pm  
*Boone County Enrichment Center*  
Do you love hydrangeas but have questions about growing them? Come and learn about different species and how/when to prune and care for them.

### **Plant Rescue 101**

► September 18, 1:00-2:30pm  
*Boone County Enrichment Center*  
How to (possibly) bring annuals inside to survive the winter

### **Horticulture Council meeting**

► September 19, 1:00-3:00pm  
*Boone County Enrichment Center*  
Have suggestions for horticulture classes or programs for 2025? Join us for a brainstorming session to help us better serve our community.

### **Native Nuts**

► September 19, 6:00-7:30pm  
*Boone County Arboretum*  
We will be going on a walk at the Boone County Arboretum to look at and talk about some of our native nut and fruit trees such as chestnuts, pecans, hickories, pawpaws, and persimmons.

### **Growing Garlic**

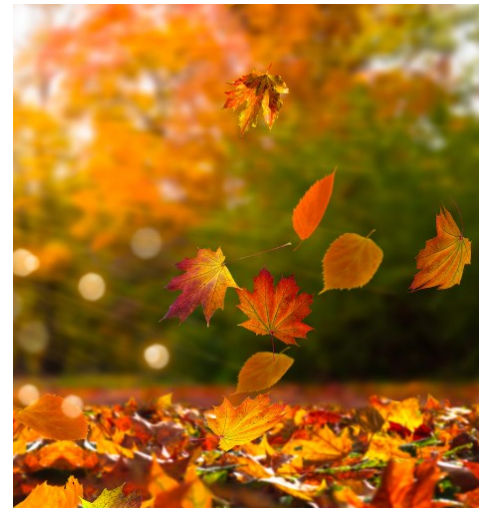
► October 2, 6:00pm  
*Boone County Enrichment Center*  
Are you interested in learning how to grow your own garlic? Learn how from Master Gardener and experienced garlic grower, Robert Simon.

### **Fall Tree Planting**

► October 9, 12-1:30pm  
*Boone County Enrichment Center*  
Learn about proper planting techniques for trees and shrubs. After the classroom portion of the program, we will go outside to plant a tree.

### **Get a Jump Start on Your Spring Garden with Bulbs**

► October 17, 10-11:30pm  
*Boone County Enrichment Center*  
How to plant bulbs in the fall to enjoy beautiful flowers in the spring.



## 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/](http://www.bcarboretum.org/)

### Foolproof Landscape Plants for Northern Kentucky

► November 4, 2:00-4:00pm  
Boone County Enrichment Center  
Learn about trees and shrubs adapted to difficult site conditions in Northern Kentucky such as clay soils, urban landscapes, drought, etc.

### It's Time to Put Your Garden Tools to Bed

► November 21, 10-11:30am  
Boone County Enrichment Center  
Learn the proper techniques to clean and sharpen your garden tools.

### Holiday Houseplants

► December 5, 6-7:30pm  
Boone County Enrichment Center  
Do you love houseplants during the winter but don't know how to care for them? Come and learn what your holiday houseplants need. A few of the species that will be covered include holiday cacti, poinsettia, cyclamen, and kalanchoe.

### Growing and Propagating Houseplants

► January 16, 1-2:30pm  
Boone County Enrichment Center  
Learn which houseplants are easy to grow and propagate.



## Cushaw Pie

2 cups cooked and mashed cushaw squash  
¼ cup butter  
¼ cup sugar  
½ cup brown sugar  
2 eggs  
1 teaspoon lemon extract  
1 teaspoon vanilla extract  
½ teaspoon nutmeg  
¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon  
1 9-inch graham cracker pie shell

To prepare squash: Wash and remove rind from the squash. Cut flesh into 1 inch squares. Steam squash cubes until tender. Drain and mash. Preheat oven to 400° F. In a large bowl, mix together the cushaw, butter, and sugars. Add eggs, lemon extract, vanilla extract, nutmeg and cinnamon. Mix until smooth. Pour mixture into pie shell. Bake 15 minutes at 400° F. Reduce oven temperature to 350° F and bake pie for an additional 45 minutes or until filling sets.

*Per serving: 250 calories, 13 g fat, 5 g saturated fat, 2.5 g trans fat, 70 mg cholesterol, 140 mg sodium, 33 g carbohydrate, 1 g fiber, 3 g protein*

*Source: <https://fcs-hes.ca.uky.edu/recipe/cushaw-pie>*



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

859-586-6101 • [boone.ca.uky.edu](http://boone.ca.uky.edu)

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