August 2025

Woodford Horticulture Update

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Agent Note

Happy August, Woodford Countians!

Our current weather patterns with excessive heat and humidity are forecast to continue for a while, which means we may see more disease and insect issues in gardens. Some tips to handling a couple of common tomato diseases are included in this month's newsletter, along with pointers to using water wisely. Stay cool, and please reach out if you have any questions!

Gloria Scott

Native Plant Spotlight

Hibiscus moscheutos, known commonly as swamp mallow or hardy hibiscus, is an herbaceous perennial that is native to wetlands and creek edges in the southeastern United States. It grows well in average garden soils in full sun, with medium to wet soil preferred. Plants grow 3 to 7 ft. tall and 2 to 4 ft. wide, with a somewhat rounded, shrubby form. Flowers are showy, white to pink, and large, with some up to 8 inches in diameter. At the peak of bloom, established plants can produce 20 or more flowers per day. The blooms attract butterflies and other pollinators.

Flower close up by Andrew Cannizzaro CC BY 2.0, NC State Extension

Water wisely this summer

Rick Durham, UK Horticulture Extension Professor

Kentucky summers can feel like living inside a greenhouse — high heat, thick air and the occasional thunderstorm that somehow misses your yard entirely. When the thermometer sticks in the 90s with little rain, plants need help. The trick is watering smart, not nonstop.

Watering your yard in the early morning lets water sink in while the sun's still low, so less of it evaporates into thin air. Lawns built on tall fescue or Kentucky bluegrass want roughly an inch to an inch and a half of moisture each week. Pay attention to color and timing: when blades turn a tired gray-green, your footprints linger a bit too long or it hasn't rained in a week or so, it's time to run the sprinklers.Remember that watering thoroughly as opposed to frequently will promote deep root systems that help grass withstand dry periods.

Trees and shrubs run on a different clock. New saplings crave approximately 10 gallons of water weekly for each inch of trunk thickness. It may even help to build a small berm or raised area that surrounds newly planted trees to concentrate applied water around the root zone where it is needed most. Established woody plants settle for an inch of rain every week or so, and many native species can usually go two weeks without suffering harm. Stick a finger in the dirt — if those top two inches feel damp, hold off on watering. Roots that are too wet cause problems as well.

Veggies can be picky. Tomatoes, peppers, beans — once they decide to bloom and the fruit or pods bulk up — will wilt at the first hint of drought. Aim for an inch of water a week, but break it into two sessions if your soil drains fast. Drip lines or soaker hoses help keep leaves dry and disease at bay; if you're hand-watering, hit the soil, not the foliage, and do it early in the day. Also remove weeds and grass nearby that will compete with your food crops for moisture.

Soil texture matters. Bluegrass clay retains moisture like a sponge, so fewer, longer waterings are most effective. Sandy pockets in central or western parts of the state drain like a sieve, demanding shorter, more frequent pours. Either way, spread a three-inch mulch blanket — shredded bark, straw, even last fall's leaves. Mulch cuts surface evaporation, evens out soil temperature and prolongs soil moisture which saves you from constant hose duty. Keep mulch two to three inches from the base of plants to allow air movement and drying — prolonged moisture in these areas may promote disease.

It could also be very helpful to keep a rain gauge staked in the yard. When a summer storm dumps an inch, skip the next watering cycle and let nature foot the bill. And before cranking irrigation up during a dry stretch, glance at city notices. Some counties post watering advisories once reservoir levels start to look shallow.

Contact the Woodford County Extension office for more information on watering your plants.

Bacterial Spot & Bacterial Speck on Tomato

By Kim Leonberger, UK Plant Pathology Extension Associate, and Nicole Gauthier, UK Plant Pathology Extension Specialist

Bacterial spot and speck are common diseases of backyard and commercial tomatoes in Kentucky. Both diseases look similar, and differentiating between these diseases can be challenging. Leaves, stems, and fruit may become infected, resulting in reduced fruit quality or yield losses. Preventative practices are critical for disease management to avoid damage and losses.

Bacterial Spot & Speck Facts

- **Bacterial spot** begins as small, circular, brown spots on leaves (Figure 1), often with a wet or greasy appearance. Over time, spots merge resulting in large, blighted areas. In severe cases, defoliation may occur. Small lesions form on green fruit and appear as raised blisters or scabs (Figure 2).

- **Bacterial speck** may affect leaves, stems, and fruit. Leaf lesions are small, circular, and brown and often surrounded by a yellow border (Figure 3). Lesions spread and come together, resulting in large dead areas. Defoliation may occur in severe cases. Small, sunken specks may develop on green fruit.

- Conditions for infection are different for each disease. **Bacterial spot** disease favors warm, humid, or rainy conditions, while **bacterial speck** is more likely to occur during periods of cool, wet weather.

- **Both bacterial spot and speck** can be introduced via infected seeds or transplants. Pathogens can overwinter in infected crop debris from the previous season.

- **Both bacterial spot and speck** pathogens are spread by water such as irrigation or rain.

- **Bacterial spot** is caused by the bacterial pathogen *Xanthomonas campestris pv. vesicatoria*, and **bacterial speck** is caused by the bacterial pathogen *Pseudomonas syringae pv. tomato*.

Figure 1: Bacterial spot begins as small, circular, brown spots on leaves. (Photo: Kenny Seebold, University of Kentucky)

Figure 2: Bacterial spot fruit lesions appear as raised blisters or scabs. (Photo: Mary Ann Hansen, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Bugwood.org)

Figure 3: Bacterial speck leaf lesions are small, circular, and brown and often surrounded by a yellow border. (Photo: Gerald Holmes, Strawberry Center, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, Bugwood.org)

Management

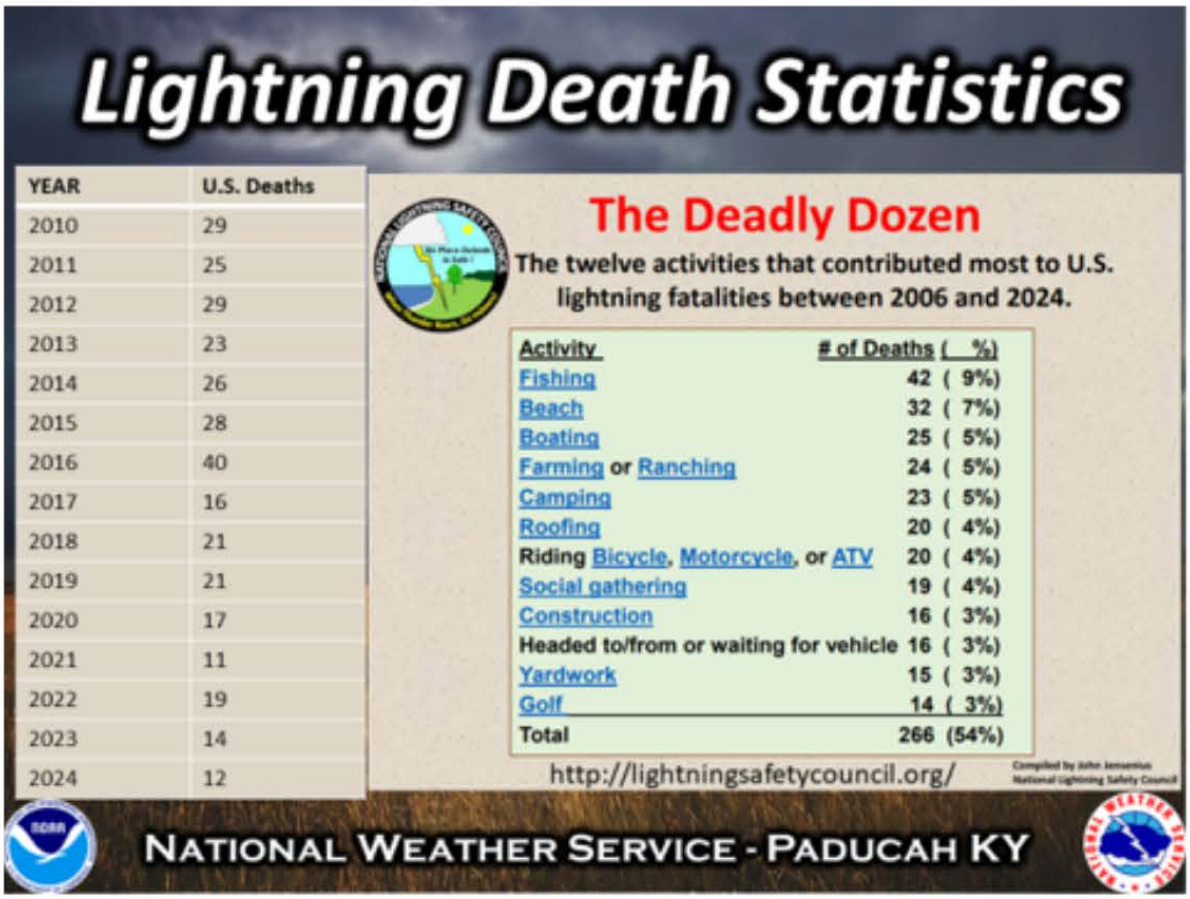
- Plant pathogen-free seed and transplants.
- Disinfect tools and implements.
- Manage weeds in and near plantings.
- Avoid overhead irrigation and working with plants when leaves are wet.
- Increase plant spacing to encourage air circulation and drying.
- Promptly remove and destroy diseased plant material.
- Rotate with non-host crops.
- Destroy crop residues after harvest.
- Deep plow to bury residual inoculum.

Commercial growers can find information on bactericides in the Vegetable Production Guide for Commercial Growers (ID-36) and the Southeastern U.S. Vegetable Crop Handbook. Organic growers should consult the Organic Commercial Spray Schedules for Field Production series of publications available on the Plant Pathology Extension Publications website for fungicide recommendations. Homeowners should consult the Small Acreage & Backyard IPM Guides series for fungicide information or contact your county Extension agent for additional information and recommendations regarding fungicides.

Lightning Safety

By Derrick Snyder - National Weather Service Paducah, KY

While the risk for severe thunderstorms that produce tornadoes, large hail, and damaging winds is greatest during the spring across most of the country, the dangers of lightning can occur during all times of the year. Every year, hundreds of people are seriously injured from lightning strikes. The good news is that lightning deaths have trended downward in recent years thanks to greater preparedness and education. However, numerous people are still killed every year. Looking at the statistics for lightning fatalities, the majority of lightning deaths occurred while people were doing outdoor activities.



The deadliest activity when it comes to lightning strikes is fishing, followed by beach going, boating, camping, farming/ranching, riding bikes/motorcycles/ATVs, roofing, gathering outside, working construction, walking to a vehicle, yardwork, and playing soccer or golf. If you are caught outside during a thunderstorm, remember that there is no safe place outside from lightning. If a thunderstorm is occurring or nearby, seek shelter inside a sturdy enclosed structure. A hard-topped vehicle can also provide good shelter.

Keep these things in mind when it comes to lightning safety:

1. Your chances of being struck by lightning depend on how you react when storms are in the area.
2. Remember: "When Thunder Roars, Go Indoors!" If you can hear thunder, you are close enough to be struck by lightning!
3. The threat of lightning increases as a storm approaches, peaks when it is overhead, and gradually diminishes as it moves away.
4. Many people wait too long to get to a safe place and then go back outside too soon before the threat is over. Wait about 30 minutes after you hear the last rumble of thunder to return outside.

Garden Calendar Quick Tips: August

- Common tomato blights show up in late summer! Inspect plants regularly and remove any infected leaves as they appear. This will help control the spread of disease. Be careful not to wet foliage when watering, as splashing water often spreads disease organisms.
- Monitor plants in the Cucurbit family (squash, pumpkin, cucumber) for squash bugs and squash vine borers. Treat as necessary.
- Do not spray pesticides in the heat. Spray in early morning or wait until early evening when temperatures are cooler. Always read labels thoroughly for any additional precautions.
- Plant cool season crops like broccoli, cabbage, brussel sprouts, and cauliflower now for best results. In Kentucky, these crops often perform better in fall than in spring.
- Many short season vegetables can be planted now for a fall crop, including beans, squash, cucumber, radishes, carrots, and lettuce. Remember that shortening days will cause plants to mature more slowly. Allow at least two weeks longer than the predicted days to harvest.
- Finish trimming shrubs and hedges this month to allow time for the re-growth to mature before winter.
- Divide crowded perennials now through mid-September. This will also help prevent diseases.

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https://www.facebook.com/woodfordCEShorticulture

Woodford County Extension Master Gardener Page:
https://www.facebook.com/WoodfordCountyMasterGardeners

Buzzing for Bee Club

Local opportunity to get hands-on learning about our fuzzy buzzy best friends!

3rd Wednesday each month

4:30 PM Hive Inspection (weather permitting)

5:30 PM Club Meeting

RSVP:

Attending EITHER or BOTH

Hive Inspection | General Meeting

For further info, contact Joe Lacefield

Phone: (859) 333-9691

RSVP: tfaragher@windstream.net

Calendar of Upcoming Events

Aug 6	Best Crops for the Fall Vegetable Garden - Woodford County Public Library, 3 p.m.
Aug 14	Tomato Fest
Aug 14-24	Kentucky State Fair

Plate It Up Recipe Card

Tomato Zucchini Herb Bake

2 tablespoons olive oil
1 small sweet onion, diced
1 ½ pounds zucchini, cubed
1 clove garlic, minced
2 tomatoes, seeded and chopped
½ teaspoon dried basil
½ teaspoon paprika
½ teaspoon dried oregano
½ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon ground black pepper
1 cup cooked long grain brown rice
2 cups shredded mozzarella cheese, divided

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. **Lightly grease** a shallow 1 ½-quart casserole dish. **Heat** oil in a large skillet or pot over medium heat. **Sauté** onion for 3 minutes until slightly softened. **Add** the zucchini and garlic and **cook** for 5 to 7 minutes, or until slightly tender. **Add** tomatoes and allow to **heat through**, about 2 minutes. **Add** basil, paprika, oregano, salt, pepper, and rice and **stir** to combine. **Turn off** heat, and **fold in** 1 cup of cheese. **Transfer** to the prepared casserole dish, and **top** with the remaining cheese. **Bake** uncovered for 20 minutes, or until cheese is melted and bubbly.

Yield: 6, 1 ½ cup servings

Nutritional Analysis: 220 calories, 12g fat, 5g saturated fat, 0g trans fat, 20mg cholesterol, 450mg sodium, 17g carbohydrate, 3g fiber, 4g total sugars, 0g added sugars, 12g protein

Kentucky Zucchini

SEASON:
June through October

NUTRITION FACTS: Squash is low in calories, containing only 20 calories per cup raw. It contains vitamins A and C and is naturally free of fat, cholesterol, and sodium.

SELECTION: Popular summer squashes include yellow crookneck, yellow straightneck, zucchini, cocozelle, and patty pan. Summer squash should be picked or purchased when young and tender; both skin and seeds are eaten because the peel holds many of the nutrients. It should be harvested at 6 to 8 inches in length. Patty pan squash are ready when they are 3 to 4 inches or less in diameter.

STORAGE: Place unwashed squash in perforated plastic bag and store in the crisper drawer of the refrigerator. Wash just before preparation. Use within two or three days.

PREPARATION: Summer squash is a mild-flavored vegetable and combines well with herbs and seasonings. Try it with basil, allspice, rosemary, and marjoram. Cook as a side dish or use in stews, casseroles, and main dishes. It can be grilled, steamed, boiled, sautéed, fried, eaten raw in salads, or used in stir-fry recipes.

ZUCCHINI
Kentucky Proud Project
County Extension Agents for Family and Consumer Sciences
University of Kentucky Dietetics and Human Nutrition students
May 2020

Source: FruitsAndVeggies.org

Buying Kentucky Proud is easy. Look for the label at your grocery store, farmers market, or roadside stand. https://plateitup.ca.uky.edu

Plate it up!

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

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MARTIN-GATTON COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND ENVIRONMENT

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