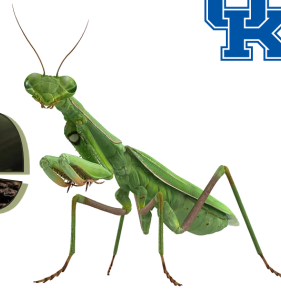


Boone County Horticulture

January-February 2024 Newsletter

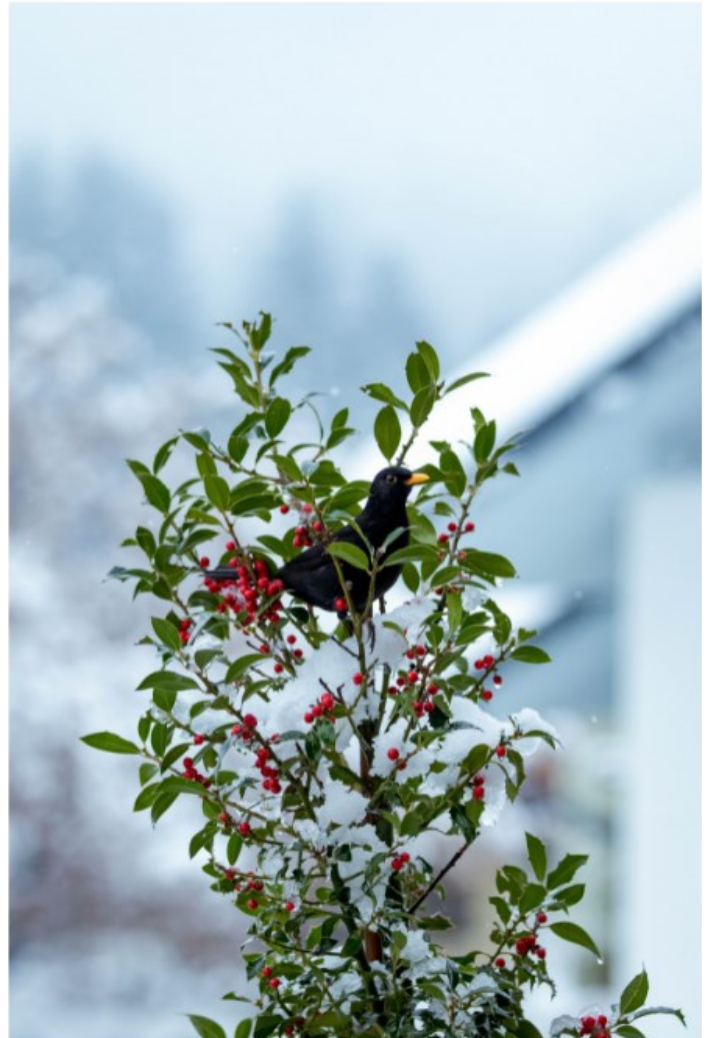


Plants for Winter Wildlife

*By Robert Brockman
Boone County Extension Agent
for Horticulture*

During the winter months, it is easy to be disappointed in the lack of green plants and life outside. For many of us, it is either a time to focus on growing plants indoors, or time to set up your birdfeeder and watch what wildlife comes. There is, however, a way to still enjoy plants outdoors while attracting birds and other wildlife to your gardens. Today, we will look at a few things to keep in mind when planting to attract winter wildlife.

Wildlife cover plants. Cover plants are those plants that wildlife can use for protection from predators and from the elements. Cover plants are incredibly important if you are hoping to attract birds (and other animals) to your bird feeders. A birdfeeder placed in the middle of an empty yard will not get nearly as many visits as one placed in a location where birds can safely fly to a cover plant for protection. Good cover plants are those that hold onto foliage during the winter. Evergreens, by nature, hold onto a lot of green foliage which can protect wildlife from strong winter winds



(Continued)

Quick TIP

After cutting off the old flower stalk of your holiday amaryllis, keep the leaves growing. Fertilize monthly, keep moist, and put in a sunny south or west window.

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Disabilities accommodated with prior notification.

and from the prying eyes of hawks (and humans). Ornamental grasses can also be very good cover plants during the winter, just make sure to leave the foliage in place until spring!

Seed bearing plants. Seed bearing plants are important for winter wildlife because of the nutrition they can provide. These plants can be trees and shrubs which hold onto fruit during the winter. They can also include many native ornamental grasses whose seed heads stick up above the foliage. Even summer flowering annuals and perennials such as purple coneflower and black eyed Susan have seedheads which can be left for the benefit of birds and other wildlife. It's important to remember that different types of fruits and seeds will attract different



species of birds. While goldfinches are attracted to the seedheads of coneflowers and black eyed Susan, they won't touch holly berries. Hollies will attract squirrels, robins, chickadees, cardinals, and others. The northern bayberry, mentioned later in this newsletter, attracts cedar waxwings, thrashers, robins, and many others.

Combination plants. Just as the name says, combination plants provide both winter cover for wildlife, and food for them to eat. A few native species to look at include big bluestem, switchgrass, red cedar, northern bayberry and American hollies. An important thing to note from this list is that red cedar, northern bayberry, and American holly are all diecious plants. Diecious means that some plants have male flowers while others have female flowers and fruit. If you don't have a combination of the two flowers/plants, you won't get fruit!

One last thing to keep in mind is where to plant your wildlife friendly plants. A good location is one that will allow wildlife to safely move from cover to cover, and from cover to your birdfeeder. Planting a wildlife attracting plant next to a busy road can lead to danger for both humans and wildlife.



Quick TIP

Soil testing is free through your local county Extension office. Call your county office for information on collecting your soil sample.

Looking Forward for Planting in 2024

By Joe Smith
Boone County Extension
Horticulture Technician

After a series of events we saw in our gardens in 2023, I think we may need to reevaluate what we are going to plant in our landscapes this season. The major event we saw from this past year was the big freeze around Christmas 2022

We saw a record number of calls, emails, etc., regarding winter damaged shrubs. These included mostly broadleaved evergreens such as holly, boxwood, cherry laurels, nandina, etc. The boxwood situation was particularly bad because of the number of these shrubs used in local landscapes. The 'Boxwood Blues' as I began to call it started with the initial winter damage that then progressed to an even worse issue with *Volutella* blight effecting many of these stressed and winter damaged shrubs.

Looking forward with all the insect and disease problems including boxwood blight, Box tree moth, leafminer, mites, etc. developing on boxwood, they would not be on my list of shrubs for planting in 2024.

Another shrub we had numerous inquiries about was the cherry laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*). Here at the office we had several of these planted, some of which did survive the 'Polar Vortex' of 2014, but the last surviving member was eliminated last winter. Cherry laurels are beautiful plants but should not be sold in zone 6 (or colder) in my opinion. There were lots of dead laurels around the Boone County neighborhoods this past spring. I wouldn't bother thinking of replanting these either. My advice is to find something else that fits the space, suits your taste, and is hardy in our area. Or move to zone 7. I'm a little jealous about the wider variety of plants that grows there versus zone 6. Why not try some of the many new viburnum cultivars for these situations where the laurels failed?

In a nutshell, chose your plants wisely and do some research before planting. Better yet drive around the local neighborhoods and see what is thriving and what is not. The Boone County Arboretum is a great place to see a lot of these plants growing and you can see them first hand before planting them in your landscape.



Viburnum x burkwoodii 'Conoy' Common Name: Conoy Viburnum
Photo by Oregon State University Extension

Avoid using deicing salts near trees, shrubs or flower beds.
Builders sand or 10-10-10 fertilizer is a good alternative.

Quick
TIP

Starting Seeds Indoors

*By Robert Brockman
Boone County Extension Agent
for Horticulture*

While we may be a while away from spring time, now is the time to plan and prepare. Many of us will be starting at least some of our plants from seeds planted indoors. Some seedlings grow rapidly while others take their time and must be started incredibly early. A few plants you will want to plant in February, if you plan to start from seed, include herbs such as thyme, oregano, parsley, and chives; vegetables such as broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, and cauliflower; and flowers such as petunias, cornflowers, hollyhock, and black eyed Susan.

Soil: start seeds indoors in a mix of sterile soil or soilless media. Soilless media includes potting mixes with peat or coconut coir as the base. These medias will often also have other minerals such as vermiculite or perlite that help create a porous environment for seedling roots. Steer away from using garden soil as even high quality garden soil will have fungi that kill seedlings, something we call “dampening off”.

Fertilizer: most potting mixes do not include fertilizer, so this will need to be supplemented to plants as they grow.

Light: for true success with growing seedlings indoors, a good source of light is needed. Natural light can be great for seedlings, but is in limited supply during the winter months. Seedlings will need 12 to 18 hours of sunlight a day. Natural light can be supplemented by artificial fluorescent or LED lamps. The height of the lamps will slowly need to be raised as the plants grow. Keep the lamps 5-10 inches above the foliage.

Air flow: as plant seedlings grow, additional air flow will likely be needed. Without additional airflow, most seedlings raised indoors will grow tall rapidly but will have weak stems that cannot stand up to normal everyday winds when placed outdoors. The airflow will also help the plant’s leaves adapt to drying winds, likely making leaves smaller and thicker. Air flow can be created using a small fan moved around the plants, starting far away so that the seedlings aren’t blown over. Air flow can also help with gnats.

Pots and labels: make sure to label everything! Pots can be as small or large as you would like. Seedlings started in small pots will likely need to be transplanted soon, but will need less space. Whatever pot you use, make sure it is clean and sterile.

Seed: start with healthy seed from your own garden or from a reputable nursery/catalog. Read the label for information on when to plant, how many seeds per pot, and how deep the seed should be planted.

Hardening off and transplanting: stay tuned for more information on hardening seedlings off and transplanting, coming soon in March/April of 2024!



Northern Bayberry??

By Joe Smith
Boone County Extension
Horticulture Technician

The holidays may be over but you can still enjoy a classic holiday scent the rest of the year. Yes, the Northern bayberry (*Myrica pensylvanica*) has very aromatic foliage and is a great winter food source for the winter bird population.

This tough shrub tolerates drought, salt spray and poor soils, and best of all, it's native, making it a great consideration for Northern Kentucky landscapes.

This native grows to about 8-10 feet and has glossy semi-evergreen leaves that are dotted with resin and release that typical bayberry aroma when touched. This shrub is a dioecious shrub meaning it requires a male and female plant to set the attractive gray berries. From insignificant flowers, small, wax coated berries will develop. This fruit is desired by turkey, tree swallows, woodpeckers and other birds.

Bayberry grows fairly slowly to form dense spreading colonies that provide great cover for overwintering birds and other wildlife. So why not try this beautiful and fragrant native shrub to chase away those winter blues!



What the Heck is Marcescence?

By Joe Smith
Boone County Extension
Horticulture Technician

Some deciduous trees exhibit a trait known as marcescence. This is when leaves dry and wither, yet remain on the tree until late winter or early spring. The best known marcescent species are American beech and various species of oaks, like the pin oak. It's been hypothesized that this leaf retention helps to limit browsing by deer and other herbivores of the developing buds. The new buds being hidden by shriveled foliage, are less likely to be seen and eaten. Since this trait is usually seen in young trees or on the lower branches of mature trees (these branches are particularly prone to browsing by wildlife) this theory may be valid.

So next time when your wondering why that tree or shrub is holding on to those old shriveled leaves, there may actually be a reason behind this winter leaf retention!



Kale and Potato Soup

4 teaspoons olive oil	6 red potatoes, diced	¼ teaspoon black pepper
1 chopped yellow onion	½ cup chopped carrot	
3 cloves garlic, minced	4 cups shredded kale	
1 box (48 ounce) low-sodium chicken broth	½ pound cooked chicken breast, shredded	

- In a large saucepan, **heat** the olive oil over medium heat for 1 minute. **Add** chopped onion and garlic and **cook** uncovered for 5 minutes.
- Add** chicken broth, potatoes and carrot; cover and bring to a boil.
- Reduce heat** and simmer for 20 minutes.
- Mix** in the kale, chicken and black pepper. **Cover and simmer** for 15

minutes or until kale is tender.
Yield: 6, 1½ cup servings.
Nutritional Analysis:
 270 calories, 5 g fat, 1 g saturated fat, 25 mg cholesterol, 210 mg sodium, 43 g carbohydrate, 5 g fiber, 15 g protein.

Buying Kentucky Proud is easy. Look for the label at your grocery store, farmers' market, or roadside stand.



Kentucky Kale

SEASON: May through June and September through November.

NUTRITION FACTS: Kale is a good source of vitamins A and C. A half-cup serving contains 20 percent of calcium needed daily. It is low in calories, sodium and contains no fat.

SELECTION: Choose dark colored, small to medium sized leaves. Leaves should be fresh, young and tender. Avoid greens with coarse stems or yellowed, dried, limp leaves.

STORAGE: Store kale and other greens in the coldest part of the refrigerator for no more than 2 or 3 days.

PREPARATION: Wash leaves in lukewarm water. Remove roots, rough ribs and center stalks if they are large or fibrous.

To cook: Add washed greens to a medium-sized

Source: www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov

saucepan with ¼ inch of water. Bring water to a boil. Cover and cook until tender. Crisp and tender leaves may require 5 to 10 minutes.

To freeze: Wash young, tender green leaves thoroughly and cut off woody stems. Blanch greens for 2 to 3 minutes, cool, drain, and package. Leave ½-inch headspace, seal, label and freeze. Greens can be stored for up to 1 year.

KENTUCKY KALE

Kentucky Proud Project

County Extension Agents for Family and Consumer Sciences
 University of Kentucky, Dietetics and Human Nutrition students

March 2013

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COOPERATIVE
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BIG CHANGES FOR THE 2024 BOONE COUNTY FAIR!!

Fair
 TIP

The date for the Boone County 4-H and Utopia Fair has changed in 2024. In past years, we have had our fair the first full week of August. The 2024 Boone County Fair will be held June 24—29. Registration of exhibits will be Sunday, June 23. This change will mean that warm season vegetables such as tomatoes and peppers will have less time to mature. The fruit and vegetable categories have changed according to what will be mature in early summer. We will be removing some warm season categories such as pumpkins, winter squash, and some tomatoes and peppers. We will be adding a few cool season categories such as cabbages, collards, carrots, and strawberries. Look for information regarding new horticulture fair classes in upcoming editions of our newsletter. See you at the FAIR IN JUNE!

For More Information...

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!*

Planting for Birds & Pollinators

► January 23, 6:00-7:30pm
Boone County Extension Office
Join us as we discuss what birds and pollinators need and the plants that fill these roles!

Low Light Lovers

► January 25, 6:00-7:30pm
Boone County Extension Office
Local horticulturist, Tim Porter, will discuss how to maximize your low light houseplant success.

Going Green—Organic Pesticides & Fertilizers

► February 27, 2:00-3:00pm
Boone County Enrichment Center
This class will provide eco-friendly options and organic alternatives for the home gardener.

The Edible Landscape

► March 11, 1:00-3:00pm
Boone County Enrichment Center
Learn how to incorporate edible plants into your home landscape.

Let's Get Started Growing a Home Vegetable Garden

► March 12, 2:00-4:00pm
Boone County Enrichment Center
Learn how to prepare your vegetable garden. Discover how to control pests, weeds, and diseases with minimum pesticide use.

Growing Tropicals in Kentucky

► March 19, 11:00 am-12:30pm
Boone County Extension Office
Local horticulturist Kim Smith will discuss which tropical plants do well in our landscape and the special care they need.

Growing Brambles

► March 20, 6:00-7:30pm
Boone County Enrichment Center
This class will discuss how to grow brambles in the tri-state area.

Growing your Dyes

► March 27th, 10:00-11:30am
Boone County Enrichment Center
Come and learn about starting a dye garden, including what plants produce different colors and how to grow those plants.

Low Maintenance Lawn Care

► April 9, 4:00-6:00pm
Boone County Enrichment Center
Learn about the latest methods to have green, healthy, and dense turf with minimal care.

Container Gardening

► April 15, 10:00-11:30am
Boone County Enrichment Center
We'll discuss the pros and cons of growing in containers and things to consider for maximum success.

Building a Trellis

► April 16, 1:00-3:00 pm
Boone County Enrichment Center
Join us as we discuss how to construct various types of trellises and the plants that grow on them.



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/

Growing for the Boone County Fair

► April 17, 6:00-7:30pm
Boone County Enrichment Center
Learn how to grow and submit fruits and vegetables for the fair. Special emphasis placed on new categories for the 2024 fair.

Earth Day Seed/Tree Seedling Giveaway

► April 22, 10:00 am-12:00pm,
Florence BCPL
OR 6:00-7:30 pm, Walton BCPL

Companion & Succession Planting

► April 24, 6:00-7:30pm
Boone County Enrichment Center
We'll discuss how to maximize your garden space through companion and succession planting.

Earth Day Seed/Tree Seedling Giveaway

► April 22, 10:00 am-12:00pm,
Florence BCPL
OR 6:00-7:30 pm, Walton BCPL

Companion & Succession Planting

► April 24, 6:00-7:30pm
Boone County Enrichment Center
We'll discuss how to maximize your garden space through companion and succession planting.



Gardening with Kids

► May 7, 4:00-5:30pm
Boone County Enrichment Center
Garden with your children! Class is targeted for kids ages 6-9.

Residential Rain Gardens

► May 13, 6:00-7:30pm
Florence BCPL
(7425 U.S. Hwy 42, Florence)
Explore what it takes to design and construct a residential rain garden. Please register at the BCPL website.

Re-Landscaping

► May 14, 1:00-3:00pm
Boone County Enrichment Center
Join us to discuss how to give your home landscape that much needed face lift!

Urban Trees

► May 21, 6:00-7:30pm
Boone County Enrichment Center
Come and learn what species of trees do well in urban and suburban areas of the tri-state.

Preventing Stress on your Landscape Trees

► June 10, 6:00-7:30pm
Virtually via Zoom
Join us for what you can do to keep your landscape trees healthy and happy!

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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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