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Combating The Spread Of Fire Ants

We know that fire ants have been in the state since 2000. They have typically been an invasive species only in Western Kentucky; however, earlier this year, Kentuckians discovered them in the eastern part of the state. These ants can pose a risk to human, animal and crop health. While the U.S. Department of Agriculture doesn't currently list Kentucky as an "invaded" state, you should still know how to prevent, spot, report and treat fire ants in case you do encounter them.



Imported fire ant mounds may be as large as 18 inches high and 30 inches wide, and feature no entry hole.

So far fire ants have been confirmed in southeastern counties like McCreary and Whitley

counties along the Tennessee border, but the survey is ongoing to determine the boundaries of the infested area. If you are in or around an area where fire ants have been reported, it is important to report suspected fire ant mounds. Fire ants can spread to new areas of the state through the movement of certain agricultural products. For example, fire ants can infest round bales stored in the field or on the ground, so be wary in purchasing these types of bales.



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Combating The Spread Of Fire Ants

Fire ants are known for their mound-like nests. These nests vary in size but can be as large as 18 to 24 inches tall, and the mound has a fluffy soil appearance. You'll typically find these mounds in open sunny areas on level ground or on a southern facing slope, and you won't usually find them in wooded areas.

If you suspect fire ants on your property, do not approach the mound as fire ants are very aggressive and may sting if you disturb the mound. To report a mound, contact your local extension agent or submit a report to ReportAPest@uky.edu including a photo or video and address or GPS coordinates of the mound.

If fire ants are identified on your property, you may use fire ant baits such as Advion, Amdro and Extinguish to eliminate the ants. Read and follow the directions on the product label. Do not use gasoline, diesel or other flammable products as a control tactic. Article by Joe Collins, Kentucky Deputy State Entomologist

Soil Testing

Soil testing is a soil-management tool we use to determine the fertility of soil as well as the optimum lime and fertilizer requirements for crops. Fall is the best time of year to test your soil. Most nutrients take some time to break down and become available to the plant. If you give them all winter to break down, by the time you are ready to plant in the spring, the plants can better take up the nutrients.

All Kentucky county extension offices offer help with soil testing. Just bring a soil sample to your county extension office and they will send it to UK's Division of Regulatory Services and within a few days you will have the results. Testing doesn't cost much and you may use the results for everything you grow from trees and flowers to fruits and vegetables.

When taking a soil sample, remember plants have shallow roots that lie within the top 6 to 12 inches of soil. Use a trowel to dig down about 6 to 8 inches and collect approximately two cups of soil per sample. Put the sample in a plastic bucket since a metal bucket may taint the results. When you bring the sample to your county extension office, they will put it into a soil test bag along with some information you provide and soon you will have your test results. It will save you some money and it is good for the environment.

As a rule, you should test sandy-textured soils every 2-3 years and clay soils every 3-4 years. However, if problems occur during the growing season, send in a soil sample for analysis.

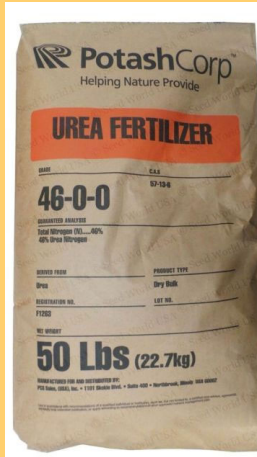
Contact The Washington County office of the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service for information on soil testing. Soil testing is free through our office as well!



October To-Do's

Lawns

October through November is the best time to fertilize your lawn for a low maintenance approach. Apply no more than 1.5 pounds of actual nitrogen per 1000 sq. ft. This would be about 4.5 pounds of ammonium nitrate or 3 pounds of urea. Don't apply phosphorus and potassium unless your soil test has determined you need it. There is no sense in wasting money on fertilizer that your soil and plants don't need.



Don't let leaves stay on your lawn very long it can smother it out. Its better to chop them up with the mower than to let them lay whole. Raking is the best option as well as a bagger on a lawn mower.

Flowers

Dig tender bulbs before or just after a very light frost. Plants such as cannas, elephant ear, gladiolus, caladium, dahlia, and calla lilies need to be dug to insure you have them next year. Often its not the freezing soil that kills them because usually the soil doesn't freeze deep enough to get them. Actually it's the cold wet soil that causes them to rot.

Gladiolus can actually be cured like an onion and stored in a cool dark place. Other



bulbs such as caladium and dahlia do better if packed in dry peat or vermiculite in a cardboard box. Store them in a cool dark dry place where the temperature remains above freezing.

Trees And Shrubs

October is still a good time to plant many trees and shrubs. Don't fertilize them when you plant them wait until colder weather in November or December.

Remember to keep newly planted trees and shrubs watered even after the leaves fall off.

Their root systems are still growing and they need water. A tree that has a trunk 2 inches in diameter needs 15 gallons of water per week while a tree with 1 inch diameter trunk needs 10 gallons.

If you got a soil test done and you don't want to apply sulfur or lime to lower or raise your pH then you should choose plants that are tolerant to your particular soils. Arborvitae, alders, ash, bald cypress, hawthorn, hornbeam, juniper, honey locust, swamp white oak, sycamore, willows, and redbud are all tolerant of high pH's or those above 7.

Dogwoods, most evergreens, some oaks, hollies, azaleas, and rhododendrons are tolerant or prefer pH's below 7 or even down to 4 or 5.

Vegetables

Harvest winter squash when the rind is hard. This means it is very difficult to penetrate it with your fingernail. Don't allow them to be exposed to frost, they won't keep as long. Store them in a cool place above freezing and out of direct sunlight.

Harvest pumpkin when they turn the color they are supposed to be meaning deep orange usually. Like winter



squash the rind should be hard. Make sure to leave a portion of the stem attached to the pumpkin. This will help it keep longer.

In early October, sow sets of Egyptian tree or multiplier onions.

Harvest carrots before a heavy freeze.

Apply a fresh layer of mulch or leaves over the garden if you didn't sow a cover crop. This will protect your soil during the winter and add nutrients for next years crop.

Pest Proof Your Home

Many pests seek refuge in homes and buildings in response to changes in weather, such as extended periods of rain or drought, or the onset of cool autumn temperatures. In response to these pest invasions, homeowners often apply liberal amounts of insecticides indoors. Although indoor insecticide application often provides quick results for the pests you see, this strategy is generally ineffective at providing a long-term solution because most of the pests being treated are coming in from outside the home. Therefore, to ensure a pest-free home, it is important that residents focus their attention towards denying pest entry before they make their way indoors, a process better known as “pest-proofing”.

Outlined below are six tips for pest-proofing one’s home or business. Steps 1 to 3 will also conserve energy and increase the comfort level during winter and summer. Equipment and materials can be purchased at most hardware or home improvement stores.

- 1. Install door sweeps or thresholds at the base of all exterior entry doors.** Lie on the floor and check for light visible under doors. Gaps of 1/16 inch or less will permit entry of insects and spiders; 1/4-inch-wide gaps (about the diameter of a pencil) are large enough for entry of mice; 1/2-inch gaps are adequate for rats. Pay particular attention to the bottom corners as this is often where rodents and insects enter. Garage doors should be fitted with a bottom seal constructed of rubber (vinyl seals poorly in cold weather). Gaps under sliding glass doors can be sealed by lining the bottom track with 1/2- to 3/4-inch-wide foam weather stripping. Apply sealant (see #3 below) along bottom outside edge and sides of door thresholds to exclude ants and other small insects.
- 2. Seal utility openings** where pipes and wires enter the foundation and siding, such as around outdoor faucets, receptacles, gas meters, clothes dryer vents, and telephone/cable TV wires. These are common entry points for ants, spiders, wasps, rodents, and other pests. Holes can be plugged with mortar, caulk, urethane expandable foam, copper mesh (like the material in pot scrubbers), or other suitable sealant.
- 3. Seal cracks around windows, doors, fascia boards, etc.** Use a good quality silicone or acrylic latex caulk/sealant. Although somewhat less flexible than pure silicone, latex-type caulks clean up easily with water and can be painted. Caulks that dry clear are often easier to use than pigmented caulks since they don’t show mistakes. Buy a good caulking gun; features to look for include a back-off trigger to halt the flow of caulk when desired, a built-in ‘slicer’ for cutting the tip off of new caulking tubes, and a nail for puncturing the seal within. Prior to sealing, cracks should be cleaned and any peeling caulk removed to aid adhesion. For a professional look, smooth the bead of caulk with a damp rag or a moistened finger after application. A key area to caulk on the inside of basements is along the top of the foundation wall where the wooden sill plate is attached to the concrete foundation. Ants, spiders, and other pests often enter through the resulting crack.
- 4. Repair gaps and tears in window and door screens.** Doing so will help reduce entry of flies, gnats, mosquitoes, and midges during summer, and cluster flies, lady beetles, and other overwintering pests in autumn. Certain insects are small enough to fit through standard mesh window screen. The only way to deny entry of these tiny insects is to keep windows closed during periods of adult fall emergence.
- 5. Install 1/4-inch wire mesh (hardware cloth) over attic, roof, and crawl space vents** in order to prevent entry of birds, bats, squirrels, rodents, and other wildlife. Be sure to wear gloves when cutting and installing hardware cloth as the wire edges are razor-sharp. Backing the wire mesh from the inside with screening will further help to prevent insects such as ladybugs, paper wasps and yellowjackets. If not already present, invest in a chimney cap to exclude birds, squirrels, raccoons, and other nuisance wildlife. Raccoons, in particular, are a serious problem throughout Kentucky. Many chimneys become home to a family of raccoons which, in turn, are often infested with fleas.

Pest Proof Your Home

Consider applying an exterior (barrier) insecticide treatment. While sealing is the more permanent way to exclude pests originating from outdoors, comprehensive pest-proofing is laborious and sometimes impractical. For clients needing an alternative, pest-proofing can be supplemented by an exterior treatment with an insecticide. Homeowners will get the most for their efforts by applying longer-lasting liquid formulations containing pyrethroids (e.g., cypermethrin, bifenthrin, cyfluthrin, Gamma-Cyhalothrin, etc.). Such products are sold at hardware and lawn and garden shops. For better coverage, it's often best to purchase these products as concentrates so that they can be diluted and applied with a pump up sprayer, hose end sprayer, etc. Treat at the base of all exterior doors, garage and crawl space entrances, around foundation vents and utility openings, and up underneath siding. It also may be useful to treat around the outside perimeter of the foundation. Be sure to follow all label instructions, and use this information only as general guidance. Clients who choose not to tackle these activities may want to hire a professional pest control firm, many of which offer pest-proofing services. By Zachary DeVries, Entomology Extension Specialist



Boxelder Bug



Brown Marmorated Stink Bug



Cluster Fly-Face Fly



Garden Millipede



House Centipede



Multicolored Asian Lady Beetle



Western Leaffooted Pine Seed Bug



Wolf Spider



Pillbug

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College of Agriculture,
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Recipe Of The Month



Sorghum Gingerbread Pear Muffins

1 cup whole-wheat flour	½ teaspoon	½ cup sorghum syrup
½ teaspoon baking powder	ground ginger	½ cup unsweetened
½ teaspoon baking soda	¼ teaspoon salt	applesauce
½ teaspoon ground	1 egg	1 pear , peeled, cored,
cinnamon	½ cup buttermilk	and diced

Preheat oven to 375 degrees F. **Grease** 12 muffin cups or line with paper liners. In a mixing bowl, **combine** the flour, baking powder, baking soda, cinnamon, ginger, and salt. In a separate bowl, **mix** together the egg, buttermilk, sorghum syrup and applesauce until smooth. **Add** the egg mixture to the flour mixture and **combine** until the batter is just moistened. Gently **fold** in the diced pears. **Fill** the muffin cups with the

mixture. They will be full. **Bake** in the preheated oven until a toothpick inserted in the center of a muffin comes out clean, about 20 minutes.

Yield: 12 muffins. Serving size, one muffin.

Nutritional Analysis: 90 calories, 1g fat, 0g saturated fat, 0g trans fat, 15mg cholesterol, 140mg sodium, 20g carbohydrate, 2g fiber, 13g total sugars, 10g added sugars, 2g protein