

# HORTICULTURE HAPPENINGS NEWSLETTER

(HM)

## Kristin's Comments



Happy Gardening!

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Welcome to the Spring 2026 Edition of the Horticulture Happenings Newsletter, your go-to source for all things horticulture! Here's a quick overview of what you'll find in this edition:

- Before the gardening season gets busy, it's a good idea to clean and disinfect your hand tools and planting supplies. By doing this, you can eliminate plant pathogens from healthy plants. Our comprehensive factsheet with this information is available on pages 2 and 3 of the newsletter.
- Prepare for upcoming garden activities with our February and March gardening calendars! February's recommendations are on page 4, and March's are on page 5.
- Mark your calendars for our future 2026 gardening programs! We offer a wide range of programs designed to help you become a better gardener. For the full list of these workshops, please see page 6 of the newsletter.
- Kick-start the 2026 gardening season with our Garden to Groceries program! Join us on Zoom during the lunch hour and get expert advice from experienced Extension Agents in the area. For more information about these programs, please refer to page 7.
- Lastly, don't miss out on our "Plate it Up! Kentucky Proud" Asparagus Ham Quiche recipe! The full recipe is featured on the back of the newsletter, ready for you to try. Enjoy!



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# Cleaning & Disinfecting Hand Tools

SOURCE: PLANT PATHOLOGY FACT SHEET PPFS-GEN-17

Dirty tools, containers, and surfaces come as no surprise to small commercial growers and residential growers. Rinsing with water to remove obvious soil or plant residues is a common practice. However, this type of basic cleaning can fail to remove microscopic plant pathogens that can remain on surfaces. Tools, containers, shoes, and surfaces should also be disinfected to remove fungal, bacterial, and viral plant pathogens to prevent transmission to healthy plants. Some readily available products can either clean items or disinfect, while others can both clean and disinfect. The following details the cleaning and disinfecting methods suggested for growers with small acreages and residential gardeners.

## Products for Cleaning

Cleaning products, such as soaps and detergents, help remove loose organic matter. This partial list includes some of the common products suitable for cleaning. When cleaning tools and supplies, it is helpful to use brushes, scrubbing pads, and paper towels to aid in the removal of dirt and plant debris.

- Dish detergent
- Liquid soap, hand soap
- Household cleaner
- Bathroom cleaner
- Brush or broom
- Towels

## Products for Disinfection

Disinfectants/sanitizers are products that have anti-microbial activity and can kill disease-causing microorganisms. Microscopic organisms can be transmitted on tools and surfaces, even after rinsing or washing. Disinfectant products may also be labeled as antimicrobials or sanitizers. This partial list is a sample of commonly available products that can be used to disinfect hand tools and surfaces.

Products that can be used to both clean and disinfect are noted with an asterisk (\*).

- Rubbing alcohol or alcohol prep pads (available as 70% solution, do not dilute)
- Bleach (Mix 9 parts water with 1 part bleach to produce a 10% solution)
- Trisodium phosphate, TSP (Mix 9 parts water with 1 part TSP powder to produce a 10% solution)
- Hand sanitizer
- Household cleaner, such as Lysol™ Concentrate Disinfectant\*
- Antimicrobial bathroom cleaner, such as Scrubbing Bubbles™\*



**When cleaning tools and supplies, it is helpful to use brushes, scrubbing pads, and paper towels.**





## Cleaning & Disinfecting Hand Tools

SOURCE: PLANT PATHOLOGY FACT SHEET PPFS-GEN-17

### Procedure for Cleaning & Disinfecting

#### Step 1: Cleaning

Clean and scrub to remove organic matter, which can inhibit the disinfection process. Begin with a water rinse and then follow up with a soapy wash. Rinse surfaces after washing to remove residues.

#### Step 2: Disinfecting

Methods for disinfection include soaking (Figure 5a), dipping (Figure 5b), and spraying (Figure 5c). Exposure time is the length of time the product needs to remain in contact with the surface to kill or inactivate pathogens. Most products, including household cleaners (Lysol™), rubbing alcohol (70%) and TSP (10%) require a 3- to 5-minute soak to effectively sanitize (inactivate pathogens). Note that bleach is the most effective disinfectant and can kill surface microorganisms within 30 seconds. Both bleach and TSP are corrosive to metal tools and can be harmful if inhaled; thus, they are not recommended as a first choice for disinfection. Never mix bleach with other cleaning products, as a toxic gas can be produced. Hand tools with wooden parts are often more difficult to disinfect than those made of plastic, metal, or fiberglass.



#### Step 3: Rinse & Dry

A thorough rinse can remove residues, as well as products such as bleach, that may corrode tools and metal surfaces. Allow tools to dry completely before storing. Some tools may benefit from oiling before storage.

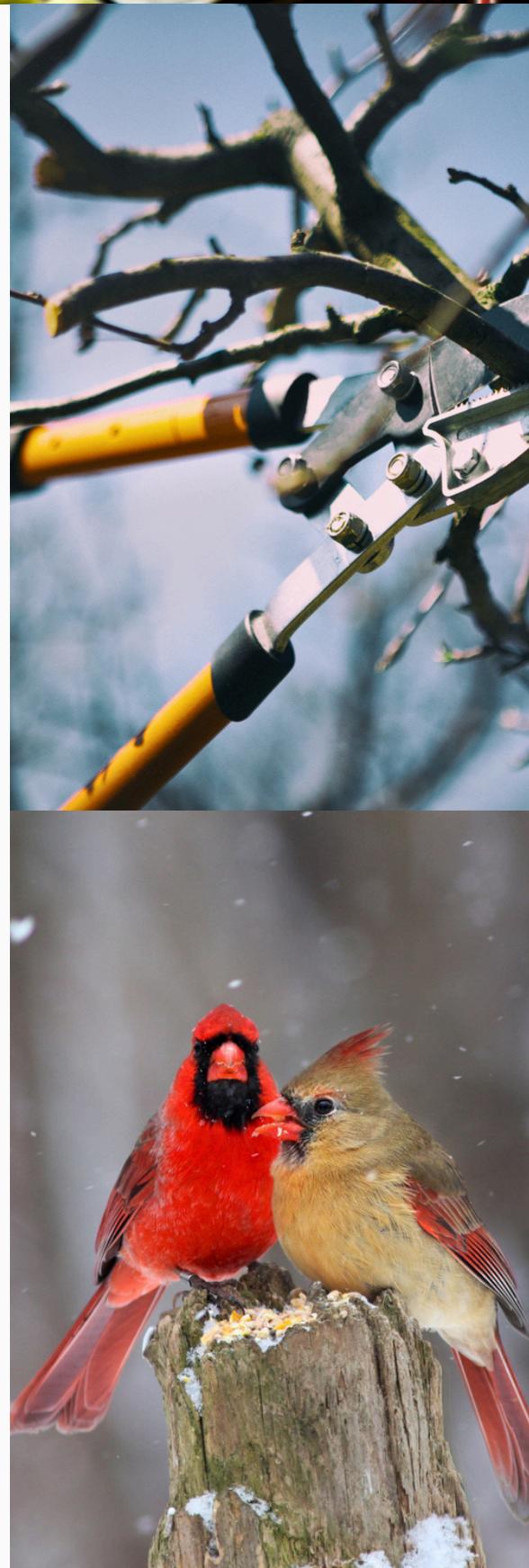
To view the complete fact sheet from start to finish, use the QR code provided below.





## February Garden Calendar

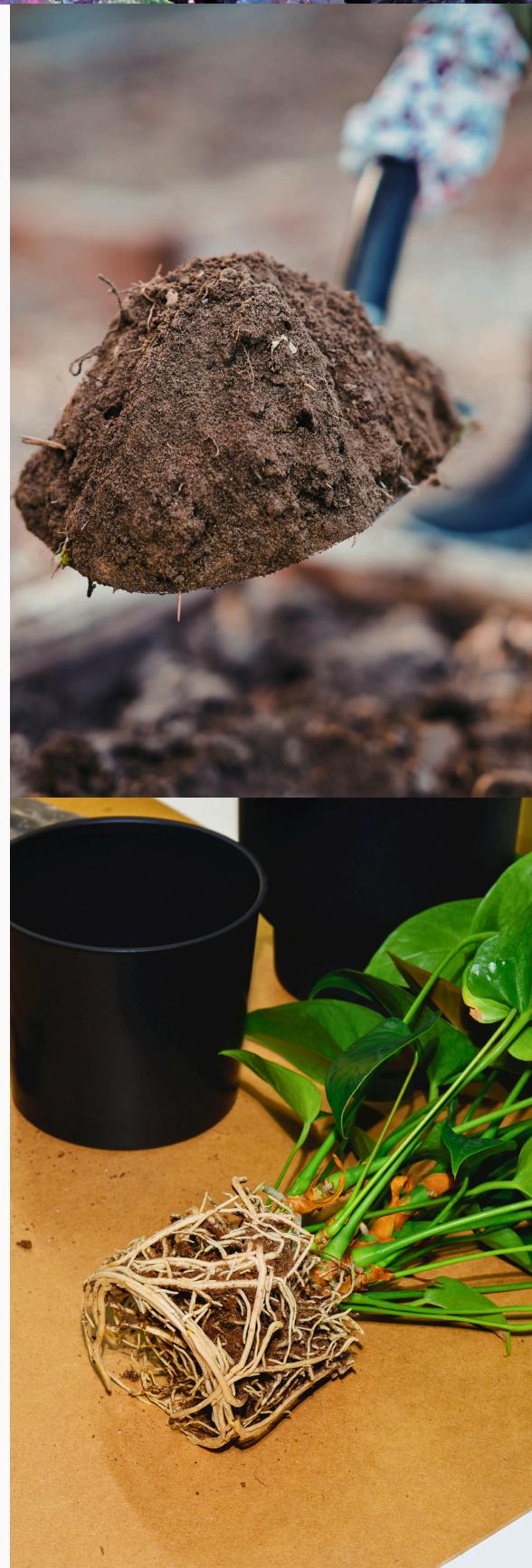
- Brighten up the winter home by forcing branches of flowering trees and shrubs indoors. Forcing branches can be done as soon as the buds begin to swell in late winter. Forsythia and pussywillow can be forced as early as late February. Wait until March to force more difficult ornamentals such as crabapples, magnolias, and redbuds.
- Perform maintenance tasks on backyard fruits this month. Prune home fruits to maximize sunlight potential and help fight off disease pressure. Apply dormant oil for apple and pear trees. February is also a good time to fertilize fruit trees. Apply fertilizer at rates based on plant growth rate and condition. Make sure to obtain a fruit tree spray guide to have on hand for the season ahead.
- Sow seeds of cool-season vegetables indoors. Begin trays of broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, kohlrabi, lettuce, and Chinese cabbage on February 15<sup>th</sup> for western Kentucky and February 25<sup>th</sup> for central Kentucky.
- Use an artificial grow light system to provide enough light for germinating seedlings. Two cool-white fluorescent lights, or a combination of 1 cool-white bulb and 1 warm fluorescent light, work well for most vegetables. Plants require 16 to 18 hours of light daily for germination.
- A germination mat can also raise root-zone temperature, helping seedlings germinate faster. Make sure to remove the germination mat after germination has occurred.
- February 14<sup>th</sup> is the day to celebrate Valentine's Day. Support local flower farmers in the area by purchasing bouquet subscription services or buying gift certificates to use later in the season.
- Houseplants are another good option to buy for your special someone. Succulents are a good choice for houseplants, since they thrive on neglect and like it on the dry side.
- Participate in the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), which is held in February. In this activity, bird enthusiasts count the birds they find in their backyard, neighborhood, or other locations. The sightings are then recorded at the website found at [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org).
- Check feeders daily and replenish when low on seed or empty. The feeders help provide birds with an adequate food supply during stressful winter days when the ice has covered their native food sources.
- Sharpen and clean gardening tools before the gardening season starts. Take time to organize the garden shed that is filled with containers, soil, and other gardening equipment.





## March Garden Calendar

- Apply pre-emergent herbicide for crabgrass control between the first part of March and April 15th for central Kentucky. A good indicator plant for knowing when to apply this product is forsythia, which blooms bright yellow in the spring.
- Perform a soil test and apply lime and fertilizer recommendations based on soil test recommendations.
- Clean and sharpen garden tools.
- Gradually harden off vegetable seedlings grown 2 weeks indoors before planting outdoors. Each day, increase the plant's time outside by a few hours, and eventually work up to 24 hours a day for a couple of days to help toughen them up.
- Prepare the garden soil for planting.
- Move cabbage and kohlrabi transplants to the garden for western Kentucky on March 15th and central Kentucky on March 25th.
- On March 15th, in western Kentucky, and March 25th, in central Kentucky, start seeds of beets, carrots, collards, kale, mustard, peas, spinach, early potato seed pieces, radishes, turnips, green onions, and endive outdoors.
- Trays of tomatoes, eggplant, and peppers should be begun indoors on March 15th for western Kentucky and March 25th for central Kentucky.
- Plant cool-season herbs like dill and parsley.
- Plant asparagus and rhubarb crowns in the home vegetable garden. Fertilize established plants with 1 lb. 5-10-10 per 100 sq. ft. Dig and divide any 4-year-old rhubarb plants.
- Plant cool-season flowers such as pansies, ornamental cabbage, and kale to add spring color to the garden and landscape. These flowers work great in containers, too!
- Get the lawn mower ready for the season by sharpening mower blades and performing other needed mower maintenance.
- Prune fruit trees in the orchard or backyard to increase sunlight and airflow. Remove clippings from the area and discard them properly.
- Incorporate organic matter, such as compost, into garden soil to improve soil structure.
- Prune back roses in the garden or landscape.
- Repot houseplants if you notice decreased plant growth and the roots running out of the container's drainage holes.
- Monitor young fruit and landscape trees for vole damage.
- Remove dried plant material from perennial flowers and cut back grasses to stimulate new growth.





## Growing Your Own Sweet Corn

A Live Zoom Presentation  
February 12th, Noon (Central)

## Bushes, Berries and Birds

Guest Speaker:  
Dr. Martin Stone

Tuesday, February 24  
6:00 PM

Warren County  
Extension Office



## Sowing Native Seeds Workshop

February 17, 2026

6:00 PM

Warren County  
Extension Office

Fee for supplies: \$5.00

Call to register  
at (270) 842-1681.



**JACKSON'S  
FRUIT TREE  
PRUNING  
WORKSHOP**

**SATURDAY, MARCH 7TH  
9:00 AM**

**JACKSON'S ORCHARD  
1280 SLIM ISLAND RD, BG  
CALL TO REGISTER.  
PLEASE DRESS ACCORDINGLY  
FOR THE OUTDOORS.**

# Garden to Groceries

## Practical Gardening Education

Learn how to grow vegetables, fruits, and herbs, troubleshoot common problems, harvest at peak nutrition, and transform produce into tasty, healthy meals.

### What Participants will Get:



Seasonal  
Modules



Interactive  
Webinars



Take Home  
Resources



**Gardening is cost effective, supports local agriculture, and reduces waste!**

### Program Dates Via Zoom:

All Sessions Held at 12:00 Noon CST

- February 12<sup>th</sup> – Sweet Corn
- March 12<sup>th</sup> – Potatoes
- April 9<sup>th</sup> – Tomatoes
- May 14<sup>th</sup> – Cucumbers
- June 11<sup>th</sup> – Pumpkins
- July 16<sup>th</sup> – Zucchini/Squash
- August 13<sup>th</sup> – Strawberries
- September 10<sup>th</sup> – Lettuce
- October 8<sup>th</sup> – Garlic
- November 12<sup>th</sup> – Herbs





## Asparagus Ham Quiche

SOURCE: PLATE IT UP! KENTUCKY PROUD

### Ingredients:

- 1 pound fresh asparagus, trimmed and cut into 1/2 inch pieces
- 1 cup finely chopped ham
- 1 small finely chopped onion
- 2 (8 inch) unbaked pie shells
- 1 egg white, slightly beaten
- 2 cups shredded reduced fat cheddar cheese
- 4 large eggs
- 1 container (5.3 ounces) plain Greek yogurt
- 1/3 cup 1% milk
- 1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper

### Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 400 F.
2. Place asparagus in a steamer over 1 inch of boiling water and cover. Cook until tender but still firm, about 4-6 minutes. Drain and cool.
3. Place ham and onion in a nonstick skillet and cook over medium heat until lightly browned.
4. Brush pie shells with beaten egg white.
5. Spoon the ham, onion, and asparagus into the pie shells, dividing evenly between the 2.
6. Sprinkle 1 cup shredded cheese over the mixture in each shell.
7. In a separate bowl, beat together eggs, yogurt, milk, nutmeg, salt, and pepper. Pour the egg mixture over the cheese, dividing evenly between the 2 shells.
8. Bake uncovered in a preheated oven until firm, 25-30 minutes. Allow to cool approximately 20 minutes before cutting.

Nutritional Analysis: 200 calories; 11g fat; 4.5g saturated fat; 65mg cholesterol; 370mg sodium; 14g carbohydrate; 1g fiber; 3g sugars; 10g protein.

