

Weed It and Reap

FRANKLIN COUNTY COOPERATIVE EXTENSION JANUARY 2024 NEWSLETTER



Keeping Your Houseplants Happy During Wintertime

By: Rachel Rudolph, Horticulture Assistant Professor

Even though your houseplants do not have to deal with the cold like your garden does, you should still change how you care for them this season, ensuring they stay healthy and continue to grow well. Following these tips, your leafy friends will bring lushness and natural beauty into your home, even in winter.

Decrease watering

In general, less light means less water. Plants need less water in the winter because they don't get as much sunlight, compared to spring and summer. To test soil moisture, push your finger into the potting soil at least one inch deep. If the soil is dry, water thoroughly. It is better to water plants well less often than water just a little bit every day. In the winter, it is possible that you will only need to water once every two to three weeks.

Pay attention to the Sun

If possible, move your plants closer to the windows. If they're on the ground, put them on a plant stand. Every week or two,

(Continued on pg. 2)

IN THIS ISSUE

KEEPING YOUR HOUSEPLANTS HAPPY DURING WINTERTIME . .	1-2
GARDEN TOOL MAINTENANCE & REPAIR WORKSHOP	3
AMERICAN BITTERSWEET.	4-5
THANK YOU FOR NATIVE BERRIES	5
BACKYARD COMPOSTING	5
HOUSEPLANT PROPAGATION	6
PLANNING FOR YOUR FUTURE GARDEN	7
WELCOME JOSH ALKORN— FACILITIES MANAGER	7
CUSHAW PIE	8
WINTER MARKET	8

(Continued from pg. 1, Keeping Your Houseplants Happy During Wintertime)

rotate the pots to ensure all sides of the plants get some sunlight.

It's okay if a few leaves fall off

Plants outside over the summer will probably lose some leaves when they come back inside. This is normal because they are getting used to the lower light levels inside. It's normal for plants that stay inside all year to lose a few leaves as winter approaches. This is just their way of getting ready for less light.

Avoid temperature extremes

Keep plants away from cold drafts, radiators and hot air vents. Sudden hot or cold drafts can kill plants, stress them out, or dry them out.

Put the fertilizer on hold

Winter is a time for most houseplants to rest. They don't need fertilizer because they usually aren't actively growing. In the fall, stop fertilizing and start back up again in the spring when plants get more sunlight and start growing again.

Scan for pests

If you are bringing plants inside for the winter, be sure to check the leaves, stems and soil surface for pests. Wipe leaves down with a wet cloth or remove pests by hand before bringing the plants inside. Small bugs that feed on sap, like aphids and scales, tend to show up more in the winter. Another common winter pest is the spider mite which likes warm, dry places to live. When watering, flip the leaves over and look at the undersides and along the stems. If you find bugs, use your fingers or damp cloth to remove them. Neem oil and insecticidal soap may be options for managing houseplant pests. With any

product, be sure to read the entire label for application instructions and precautions.

Increase the humidity

In the winter, the air inside our heated homes is often drier. Most houseplants, especially those from tropical areas, do best when the humidity is between 40 and 50%. However, in the winter, most homes have humidity levels between 10 and 20%. Putting plants close together is an easy way to make the air around them more humid. Plants can also be put on trays with pebbles and water to make the air more humid. To keep the roots from rotting, pot bottoms should be above the water. As the water evaporates, it makes the air around your houseplants more humid. Keep plants away from vents with blowing air.



Garden Tool Maintenance & Repair Workshop



FEBRUARY 3, 2024

10:00AM

Free and open to the public

Franklin County
Cooperative Extension
101 Lakeview Court
Frankfort, KY 40601

Scan the QR code or enter the link to register.



<http://tinyurl.com/5d4e4rb6>

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Lexington, KY 40506



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American Bittersweet

By: Joyce Fry, Capital Area Master Gardener

American bittersweet (*Celastrus scandens*) is a vine native to Kentucky. It is found in woody habitats where it uses trees for support. If growing in a sunny location, it can produce an abundance of fleshy berry-like orange fruits.



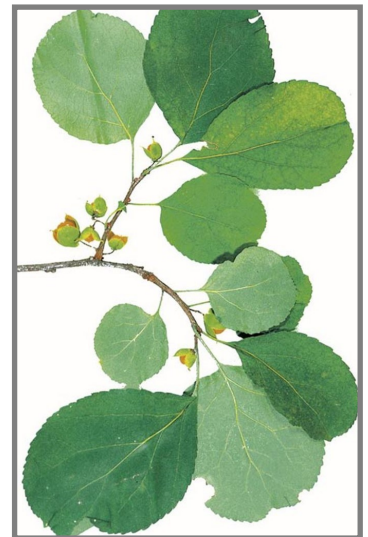
Bittersweet fruit.

When ripe, the orange capsules split open to disclose nutritious red berries, readily consumed by birds and other wildlife that can access them. It is worth noting that its fruits are toxic to humans. The berries make excellent autumn holiday decorations, such as table centerpieces or wreaths. Beware, however, of its imposter, the Asian or oriental bittersweet, *Celastrus orbiculata*. Its species name, *orbiculata*, refers to its roundish leaves. This species was imported from eastern Asia in 1879 and has been a persistent pest ever since, making it an invasive species. It is so widespread and invasive as to have made the Kentucky Invasive Plant Council's "Severe Threat" list, the most notorious categorization of invasive plant species in Kentucky [[KYEPPClist press release \(see-
eppc.org\)](#)]. Because the oriental bittersweet spreads rapidly and invades natural areas readily, our native bittersweet is in jeopardy of being outcompeted and replaced by its more

aggressive doppelganger. Making the plight of our native bittersweet even more dire, *C. orbiculata* has been known to hybridize with *C. scandens*, diluting its gene pool.



American bittersweet leaves and fruit.



Oriental bittersweet leaves and fruit.

Although the two vines are of the same genus, there are several physical characteristics that differentiate them. As noted above, the fruits of American bittersweet are nutritious wildlife food. Conversely, as is true with the fruits of most invasive species, the fruit of oriental bittersweet are like junk food. Another difference in the berries is that the orange and red fruits of *C. scandens* are more durable than the yellow and red berries of *C. orbiculata*. The latter tend to shatter upon drying, which makes them much less desirable for use in decorative arrangements. Look for differences in the locations of the flowers and subsequent fruits of these two species. Those of *C. scandens* are located at the ends of the branches, while those of *C. orbiculata* grow along the leaf axils. Look at the leaves and note that they differ in shape. As previously mentioned, *C. orbiculata* has roundish to ovate leaves with shallow rounded teeth. Its counterpart has long elliptical leaves with serrated edges and short pointed tips. Another striking difference is in the growth of each

species. Our native vine grows to a length of about 20-30 feet, while the invasive vine attains lengths up to 60 feet and 4 inches in diameter. The vines of *C. orbiculata* can get so heavy that they may break limbs or topple their supportive trees. Moreover, they often strangle trees by twining around them in a process known as girdling. Because of its smaller size, our native *C. scandens* does not have the tendency to do that.

A hallmark of an invasive species is its ability to outcompete native species. It can do this, in part, due to the lack of natural enemies that would have regulated its spread and growth in its former ecosystem. Without such hindrances, it will inhabit locations with the most ideal growing conditions before the native species can get established. Another hallmark is that invasives fare well even under less-than-ideal growing conditions. They are typically among the first pioneer species to colonize a disturbed site. Those advantages improve the survival and colonization success of invasive species over that of native ones.

If you are interested in planting our native bittersweet, keep in mind that it is dioecious (as is the invasive bittersweet), meaning that there are both male and female plants and both are necessary to produce fruit. Talk to your local nursery or Extension Agent for guidance on obtaining and growing this lovely, wildlife-friendly vine species. Your local Extension Agency can also help you if you are interested in eradicating oriental bittersweet from an area, and you find additional information at the Kentucky Invasive Plant Council's website [[KY-IPC - Kentucky Invasive Plant Council \(se-eppc.org\)](http://KY-IPC - Kentucky Invasive Plant Council (se-eppc.org))].



INTERESTED IN

BACKYARD COMPOSTING

JOIN FRANKLIN COUNTY SOLID WASTE FOR A CLASS COVERING THE BASICS. PARTICIPATION* IN THE PROGRAM GETS YOU A FREE COMPOST BIN OR TUMBLER!

When: February 28th 6:00-7:00
Where: Paul Sawyer Library Community Room

SPACE IS LIMITED!
 email: ally.hall@franklincounty.ky.gov
*PARTICIPATION INCLUDES QUARTERLY DATA SHARING WITH THE SWM DEPARTMENT

Pre-registration required!



For more information and events, check out our webpage.

<https://franklin.ca.uky.edu/facebook.com/FranklinCountyKyCooperativeExtension>



HOUSEPLANT PROPAGATION WORKSHOP

February 21, 2024

6:00PM

Free and open to the public

Franklin County
 Cooperative Extension
 101 Lakeview Court
 Frankfort, KY 40601

Scan the QR code or enter the link to register.



<http://tinyurl.com/yjdde97k>

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 University of Kentucky.

Planning for Your Future Garden

Source: Kathryn Pettigrew, Horticulture Research Analyst, and Rachel Rudolph, Horticulture Assistant Professor

Winter is an excellent time for planning next year's garden. Take advantage of the shorter days and cooler weather to create a vision for the upcoming growing season.

The first step is to look back on the previous growing season. Revisit any photos taken to refresh your memory of the plants that brought enjoyment, utility or challenges. What grew well and what did not perform as expected? If you took any notes or recorded activities in your calendar, review those items. If something was done a little late or too early, think about how you could change your approach.

Evaluate the produce your household consumed last year. Consider if you need to grow additional quantities or increase the amount grown. Also ask yourself if there are other varieties that you would like to try.

For your garden, list the plants you intend to grow and consider where they will be planted. Even a rough-draft map can help you better understand what is possible. These records can serve as a shopping list and a reference for later. Digital tools such as spreadsheets are excellent for this purpose as they can be easily located in subsequent seasons and revised. However, the pen-and-paper method can serve the same purpose and be great for mapping out the location of plantings. There are also apps available to digitally plan your garden bed.

Once you have a general idea of the plants you want for your home garden, you can more confidently turn your attention to sourcing seeds. Seed companies can be located online, but if you

prefer a physical catalog, call and request one. Reputable seed sources will identify the variety sold as well as a description, germination rate and lot number.

If you're unsure whether a seed company is reputable, don't hesitate to contact your county extension agent. Seeds for popular varieties can sell out quickly, so purchasing things ahead of springtime is a good idea. Extra or unused seeds can be stored in sealed bags or a plastic bin in a cool place and saved for later.



≡Welcome≡

JOSH ALCORN FACILITIES MANAGER

Josh is joining us as the Franklin County Facilities Manager. He will be working to make updates to the building, help set up meeting rooms, and ensure our spaces are clean and organized!



Josh has 2 sons, Trent (16) and Maddex (13). He also has a beautiful dog named Clay (3). He has almost completed his B.S. in Agriculture. He and his family love being outdoors as much as possible! He is very excited to be working with the Franklin County Extension Office!



Cushaw Pie

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

1. To prepare squash: Wash and remove rind from the squash. Cut flesh into 1 inch squares.

Steam squash cubes until tender. Drain and mash.

2. 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.

3. Pour mixture into pie shell.

4. Bake 15 minutes at 400° F.

5. Reduce oven temperature to 350° F and bake pie for an additional 45 minutes or until filling sets.

Yield: 8 slices

Nutritional Analysis: 250 calories, 13 g fat, 5 g saturated fat, 2.5 g trans fat, 70 mg cholesterol, 140 mg sodium, 33g carbohydrate, 1 g fiber, 3 g protein.

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





Winter Market

FRANKLIN COUNTY FARMERS MARKET 404 WILKINSON BLVD

Jan. 6th 10-11:30am	Mar. 2nd 10-11:30am
Jan. 20th 10-11:30am	Mar. 16th 10-11:30am
Feb. 3rd 10-11:30am	Mar. 30th 10-11:30am
Feb. 17th 10-11:30am	Apr. 13th 10-11:30am


Adam Leonberger

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