

HORTICULTURE NEWSLETTER



March - April

2021

Attracting Hummingbirds

By Dennis Morgeson

Washington County

Extension Agent for Horticulture

We will start with some hummingbird facts. The hummingbird is the smallest species of bird in the world! They are cable of hovering, flying backwards, and are the only avian species that can fly upside down and backwards. Most people think there are several different types of hummingbirds in Kentucky but actually there is only one, the Rubythroat, that lives east of the Mississippi river. The male rubythroat is the one with the large red spot on its neck and breast. The male rubythroat weighs only 3.03 grams or as much as 2.5 paperclips!

Hummingbirds routinely cruise at 27 miles per hour but can reach up to 60 miles an hour while mating (now that's dangerous). The hummingbirds wings beat 53 times per second, they have little or no song, a female rubythroat can eat 2000 insects per day, they have to eat 100% of their body weight in nectar per day just to survive, they cannot smell, they find food by sight, feed every 5 minutes to one hour based on food sources, and often migrates over 500 miles in a single day!

Rubythroats generally arrive in Kentucky by mid-April. Hummingbird's favorite foods include nectar from all kinds of flowers and insects. Their favorite



native flowers include native iris, pinks, columbine, and phlox. Mating usually takes place in May with young arriving in June; females build the nests and rear the young.

By late July migration southwards begins starting from the north downward usually they don't leave Kentucky until late September. Hummingbirds over winter in Mexico and the Caribbean Islands. Male hummingbirds generally only live 2.5 years while females live 3.5 years. Over 50% of all young will not survive until adulthood.

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Quick
TIP

Hummingbirds don't like to stay out in the open when they're not feeding. They're all about conserving energy when they can. That's why it's best to place a feeder 10 to 15 feet from a tree, shrub or other appropriate hiding place. Doing so gives them a place to rest and stay out of the sun.



Attracting Hummingbirds

Continued

By Dennis Morgeson

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Attracting hummingbirds is relatively easy as long as you feed them and have flowers near by. Feeders should be set out by mid-April to attract the first comers. You may need more than one feeder because each male will defend a feeder. Place feeders out of sight from each other to attract more hummingbirds. Hummingbird feeders don't have to be elaborate however red is their favorite color.

When feeding hummingbirds store purchased nectar mixes are fine however not needed, you can make your own. A basic recipe consists of 4 parts water, one part sugar (don't mix it any stronger), boil the water and sugar for 2 minutes to kill any harmful bacteria. Cool the solution in the refrigerator and fill your feeders. Don't add any dyes or coloring to your feed it's not needed and some of them can actually harm the birds.

With all of the sugar water out in the elements your feeders will need to be cleaned regularly, weekly or bi-weekly. Wash it with a mild soap, rinse with bleach, and rinse thoroughly with water. Insects can become a problem but don't ever spray insecticides near your feeders. If you follow the recommended mixing rates bees may not like it, if they do, mix a double strength amount in another feeder and the bees are likely to go to that feeder and leave the one for the birds alone. For ants just rub petroleum jelly on the wire hanger and the ants can't get to the feeder.

Hummingbirds need fresh water so feel baths up daily. They really like fresh nectar so plant many types of flowers; they also need trees and shrubs to nest and rest in. An open sunny area for flying is also preferred.



If you want to plant flowers for attracting hummingbirds several plant families are the best such as: the mint family which includes salvia, bee balm, and hyssop, the honey suckle family wild or tame with the native trumpet honeysuckle as a favorite, the columbines wild or tame, the bignonia family which includes trumpet creeper and cross vine, the penstemons, the lobelias which includes the native cardinal flower as well as cultivated species, the mallow family which includes hollyhock, hardy hibiscus, and rose of Sharon, the morning glory family, and woody species such as buckeye, clethra, Carolina Silverbell, native and cultivated azaleas and rhododendrons, and weigela. Other particular plants that hummingbirds prefer are nicotiana (flowering tobacco), zinnia, Mexican sunflower, snapdragon, obedient plant, foxglove, cleome, and canna.

If you don't have some of the hummingbirds favorite plants then now is a good time to plan the gardens. You will get a multitude of benefits such as beauty, butterflies, and most of all the summer long excitement of hummingbirds in your garden!

Quick TIP

You must change your feeder's nectar, even if it looks like it hasn't lost a drop, on a regular basis. During hot weather, change it every two days. In milder weather, once a week is fine. You will want to put your feeder in a place that gets a mix of sun and shade throughout the day. If the sun is too intense, the nectar can heat up and spoil or ferment in just a few hours.

Succession Planting

By Beth Wilson

Pulaski County
Extension Agent for Horticulture

Do you get plumb ill when your tomatoes (or insert any vegetable name) become diseased and it seems like you just started harvesting? Or the lettuce you planted is done and you still want salad? Many gardeners make the mistake of relying on one planting of a vegetable to be sufficient for the entire growing season. There's a 'thing' called succession planting that may help out.

Succession planting is a gardening practice that involves planting tomatoes (or any vegetable) at intervals throughout the growing season. It's also described as planting a new crop after an old crop is done. Planting this way, successively, ensures that, as older plants mature and end their production cycle, new ones start to produce.

This article will focus on planting vegetables at intervals during the season. Using this technique requires planning and maybe adjusting varieties based on days to maturity or heat/cold tolerance.

Lettuce and radishes are popular vegetables to successively plant. Sow seeds every week into prepared soil, the reward is a good supply of fixings for salads during the spring months. For summer harvests, heat-tolerant varieties are recommended.

For vegetables like tomatoes or peppers, 2 to 4 plantings during the season is a good suggestion. However, this means you must have transplants ready to go in the ground on those dates. Planning is a must for this type of gardening.

For tomatoes and peppers, the first safe planting date for Central KY is May 5-May 15. The last safe planting date for central KY is June 15 to July 1. Many gardeners push these dates on both the early and late ends.

An example would be planting tomatoes on April 30 (cold protection needed), May 30, and June 30. A fourth planting could be attempted on July 30 (or earlier) using a tomato variety with 50-55 days to maturity. This last planting would potentially need cold protection as well (see Table 1).



Beans, sweet corn, squash, cucumbers, and carrots are other vegetables that are easily planted in succession. See the Table 2 for recommended intervals.

This method works well for those gardeners wishing to enjoy fresh garden produce for as long as the season allows. For gardeners wanting to preserve, more garden space should be devoted to larger plantings with roughly the same harvest date.

Using succession planting, a gardener can harvest more and better quality produce from a garden site during a given growing season. Gardeners know their garden site and can adjust planting and seeding times in the table below. Here's to a great 2021 vegetable gardening season!

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An easy way to keep your harvest coming in is to choose more than one variety of a crop and make them early-, mid-, and late-season varieties. The seed packet will be labeled as such, or sometimes you will just have to read the "days to maturity" number. Choosing a short day, middle day and long day maturity variety of vegetables can stagger the harvest throughout the growing season.

**Quick
TIP**

Succession Planting *Continued*

By *Beth Wilson*

*Pulaski County
Extension Agent for Horticulture*



Table 1: Tomato or pepper planting and seed starting dates for succession planting

<i>Plant outside</i>	<i>Start seedlings</i>	<i>Notes</i>
April 30	March 15	May need cold protection Any maturity date
May 30	April 15	Any maturity date
June 30	May 15	Any maturity date
July 30	June 15	May need cold protection 50-55 days maturity

Table 2: Seeding/transplanting intervals for vegetables and herbs

<i>Crops</i>	<i>Interval between sowings/plantings</i>
Leaf or baby lettuce Radish, Spinach Cilantro	7 days
Sweet Corn, Bush beans Head lettuce	10 days
Beets, Turnips, Parsley Basil, Dill	14 days
Cucumbers, Melons Carrots	21 days
Summer squash	30 days

*Recommended intervals from Johnny's Seed
(<https://www.johnnyseeds.com/growers-library/vegetables/succession-planting-interval-chart-vegetables.html>)*

Make sure you have enough seed to get you through the season and into fall if you plan to over-winter vegetables in hoop houses. Seeds can become hard to find mid-summer. Some seed lasts several years; others need to be fresh for good germination.

**Quick
TIP**

Spring Lawn Tips

By *Andy Rideout*

*Henderson County
Extension Agent for Horticulture*

Fescue lawns in Kentucky can struggle by the end of the summer with drought, disease, and even insect problems. Often our fescue lawns are thin and needing some nitrogen by the time fall arrives. September and October are the best times to overseed and fertilize your lawn, but some maintenance practices can be done in the spring.

Seeding in the spring is not the best, but sometimes we need to overseed for various reasons. New spring seedlings typically do not have enough time to develop a strong root system before the hot summer arrives. If you do need to seed in the spring, do it as early as the weather allows. Make sure you get good seed to soil contact by using a slit seeder or aerify the lawn before broadcast seeding. Aerifying opens up small holes that allows the seed to contact the soil. Aerification also helps open up the soil allowing air in the profile. Realize that some of your newly seeded fescue most likely will not survive the summer, depending on the year.

Weed control is probably the most important task you can do for you lawn. There are two major categories of weeds; broadleaf weeds (dandelions, clover, henbit) and grassy weeds (crabgrass, goosegrass). The majority of broadleaf weeds are controlled post-emergently- after they germinate. Grassy weeds are best controlled pre-emergently- before they germinate. This spring is the best time to apply a pre-emergent for those grassy weeds. Most lawn and garden supply stores will carry a decent product available to the home owner. Often, pre-emergent is combined with fertilizer and easy to apply using a broadcast spreader. The success of your pre-emergent depends on accurate application so make sure not to miss areas.

Best practices tell us to fertilize in the fall but, for higher maintained lawns, a little nitrogen in the early



spring can provide some benefits. If you choose to apply some nitrogen, apply it early to mid March and be careful not to apply too much. Fescue lawns are lush and typically growing fast in the spring and will need very little encouragement.

Spring lawn care can be challenging with the spring rains and cooler temperatures. When applying products, ensure you read directions and application rates before application. Make sure to wear proper protective equipment when applying herbicides such as gloves, long sleeve shirt, and long pants. Weed control depends on proper application and your health and the environment will thank you.

Applying herbicides and fertilizer are not for everyone. There are many qualified lawn care professionals that will help. Ask your friends and neighbors for recommendations and give us a call your local Extension office; we are happy to help!

For best results when overseeding, fertilizing or applying herbicide the use of a criss-crossing diagonal pattern at half the drop rate will help to ensure good coverage.

Quick
TIP

Termite Season

By Amanda Sears

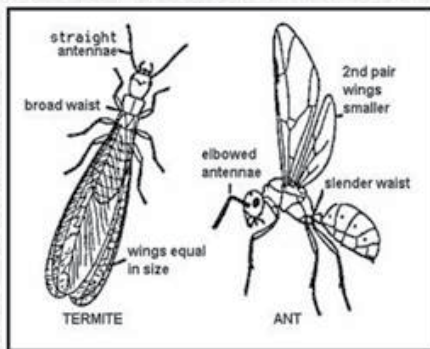
Madison County

Extension Agent for Horticulture

Springtime brings warmer temperatures and more abundant rainfall, and it's typically when many winged termites emerge inside homes and other structures. Termites swarm from their colony to disperse, fall to the ground, find mates and start new colonies in the soil.

Through May, you might see swarms of winged termites, called swarmers, inside your home, signaling an infestation that can cause extensive and costly damage. Since swarmers are attracted to light, you often see them or their shed wings around windows, doors and light fixtures.

Winged ants may also swarm this time of year. By examining the insect you can determine whether it's a termite or an ant. Termites have straight antennae; ants have elbowed antennae. Also, termites have uniform waists; ants have constricted waists between body regions. Termites have two pairs of wings of equal size. Ants also have two pairs of wings, but the forewings are longer than the hindwings.



Since termites are attracted to moisture, it is important to reduce consistent wetness in soil around the foundation as well as humidity in crawl spaces.



Use properly functioning gutters, downspouts and splash blocks to divert water away from the foundation. Also, repair leaking faucets, water pipes and air-conditioning units. Be sure the soil grade next to the foundation directs surface water away from the structure, and adjust lawn irrigation systems and sprinklers to minimize water puddles near the foundation.

Providing adequate ventilation reduces the humidity in crawl spaces. Prune shrubbery and other vegetation growing over vents to improve cross-ventilation. To reduce moisture, install four- to six-milliliter polyethylene over about 75 percent of the soil surface.

Many termite infestations result from direct structural wood-soil contact that gives termites access to food, moisture, shelter and a hidden entry into the home. To avoid this situation, be sure there are at least six inches between ground level and wooden elements such as siding, porch steps, latticework, door and window frames and posts.

Termites are especially attracted to moisture retained below cellulose-containing materials like mulch and wood chips. Use mulch sparingly, especially if other conditions are conducive to termite problems. Two to three inches is usually plenty of mulch. Do not let it come into contact with wood siding and door or window frames.

For termites, it's an easy trip from external wood to siding and internal wood. You don't want to give them any "springboards" into your house. Keep all wood piles at least 20 feet away from your house, whenever possible for DIY termite control. And that includes firewood, mulch piles, and tree stumps.

Quick
TIP

Hellebores

By Jamie Dockery

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Extension Agent for Horticulture

Hellebores are wonderful garden plants, yet they remain fairly uncommon in perennial gardens. When you consider their evergreen nature, ease of culture and beautiful late winter blooms it is hard to imagine why they have taken so long to catch on. The tide is turning for these shade loving plants. In fact the Perennial Plant Association chose Hellebore as the perennial plant of the year in 2005.

Over the last decade or so Hellebore breeders have created and introduced many new cultivars in a range of colors and combinations, many with contrasting spots of color in the flower centers. Improvements in plant form have also produced upward facing blooms, better foliage, and several double flowered types. The bloom color ranges from green to white to rose to burgundy, with some varieties approaching black. There are even some yellow varieties making their way into catalogs and shops.

The most popular hellebores are the oriental hybrids, which are known as Lenten roses because they traditionally bloom around the beginning of lent. Hellebores are easily grown, thrive in partial shade, and can even handle dry shade situations. The plants prefer soils high in organic matter but will tolerate less than ideal conditions. They resent wet feet. Most grow about two feet tall and have glossy evergreen foliage. The real selling point is their miraculous late winter bloom, which typically begins in February here in Kentucky. You may want to trim some of the winter battered foliage to showcase the emerging flowers.

Much like peonies, hellebores can take a few years to reach their full potential. But a gardener's patience is well rewarded and a mature clump of hellebores in full bloom is a spectacle you won't soon forget.



Although these beauties were once hard to find in nurseries, you can now find them offered for sale and with a little investigating, you can find many unique colors and varieties. If you aren't familiar with hellebores, try a few in your garden. If you are fortunate enough to have grown them for years look into the newer varieties available today, I think you will be pleasantly surprised at the offerings.

Hellebores plants may be slow to settle in, once they do, they rarely need division and may resent it. Apply a light application of balanced or slow-release fertilizer or side-dress with compost and organic amendments when new growth appears.

Quick
TIP



Upcoming Horticulture Events

Upcoming
Events

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Horticulture Webinar Wednesdays

12:30pm EST/11:30am CST

Registration link:

<https://tinyurl.com/UKYHortWebWed21>

Visit kentuckyhortnews.com



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

The Hort Webinar Wednesdays are going to continue in 2021. They are starting on the first Wednesday in Feb and are scheduled through the end of May. The time has changed to 12:30 ET/11:30 CT. All the sessions will be recorded and found on the KentuckyHortNews.com site and on YouTube!

Each week, participants will be invited to explore subjects that include small fruit production, beekeeping, vegetable gardening, lawn care and more!

Register at <https://tinyurl.com/UKYHortWebWed21>

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