Welcome back to Farm & Garden. A lot has happened since our last issue. We have a new addition to the Barren County Cooperative Extension team. Ms. Andrea Stith joined the team on June 30th as our new horticulture agent. If you haven’t met Andrea, please stop by and get to know her. The 2017 growing season has been another challenging one. Excessive early rains, followed by a dry period have left farmers and gardeners scrambling. Inside this issue you’ll find information on managing Johnsongrass, and making a plan for fall forage seeding. Also included are recommendations of managing your home lawn and bringing new life to late season gardens. Remember the Barren County Extension service is here to serve Barren County. If you have an idea for a program please share it with one of the agents. As the new UK Extension says, “it starts with us.”

Andrea L. Stith
Agent for Horticulture

Chris A. Schalk
Agent for Agriculture & Natural Resources
A celebration of local food and fantastic community!

Fall is the number one time to fertilize cool season grass species so the plants can develop a strong reserve of carbohydrates in their roots. This will aid in spring green-up. Fertilizer application rates should be based on soil tests and plant requirements. Now is the perfect time to bring lawn soil tests to the Barren County extension office.
Don’t Overlook Johnsongrass in Your Pastures
Livestock producers in the southern United States should not overlook johnsongrass in their pastures. For one thing, under certain conditions it can kill your cattle. Another reason not to overlook johnsongrass is that it is excellent forage – if you can get over the fact that it can kill your cattle!

Positive Aspects of Johnsongrass
As far as nutritive value is concerned, johnsongrass is tough to beat. One study conducted at the Noble Research Institute in Oklahoma showed that the quality, expressed as percent crude protein (% CP), and digestibility, expressed as percent total digestible nutrients (% TDN), of johnsongrass is as good as any of the forages tested (Figure 1). In this study, bermudagrass was neck and neck with johnsongrass in terms of % CP and % TDN. The bermudagrass was a managed stand and was fertilized with 50 to 100 pounds per acre of actual nitrogen. The johnsongrass was unfertilized and unmanaged. In another Noble Research Institute study, the palatability of several warm-season grasses was evaluated by yearling steers. In the study, three yearling steers had access to plots containing pure stands of 14 different warm-season perennial grasses (both native and introduced). Johnsongrass came out near the top in this study. Alamo switchgrass was the only other grass in the study that had more bites taken of it than johnsongrass in year one (9,262 versus 6,062, respectively). A testament to the preference for johnsongrass by livestock can be seen while driving down the road; pastures that are continually grazed generally won’t have any johnsongrass, but you will see it all along the roadside – out of reach of the fenced-in cattle.

Negative Aspects of Johnsongrass
Johnsongrass is on the noxious weed list in several U.S. states (including Kentucky) and has even made the list of the 10 most noxious weeds in the world. Johnsongrass can accumulate nitrates during the summer if exposed to several dry, cloudy days in a row. It can also produce prussic acid (hydrogen cyanide) after stressful conditions such as drought, freezing weather or exposure to a herbicide that kills grasses. If your johnsongrass is subjected to any of these conditions, keep cattle away for about a week to allow the prussic acid to dissipate. ~ Chan Glidewell, Noble Research Institute

---

Data collected by Frank Motal, Noble Foundation
Numerous infectious diseases can occur on lawns in Kentucky. Unless diagnosed and managed, these diseases can sometimes cause extensive damage. A sound lawn management program provides benefits in two ways: it reduces the severity of lawn diseases; and improves the lawn’s recovery should a disease outbreak occur. You can control diseases of turfgrasses most effectively by using as many of the following lawn management practices as feasible.

The first step in improving your lawn is to accurately diagnose the problem. Although diseases are sometimes responsible for poor turf quality, they are not the only cause. You may need to consider some other possible causes of thinning or dead grass: improper fertilization, chemical injury, mower problems, dog or insect injury, localized dry spots, poor soil drainage, excessive thatch, and competition from other plants. Bring samples of diseased turf into the Extension Office for assistance.

Underfertilization makes certain diseases worse, whereas overfertilization worsens others. For greatest lawn health, make sure your program provides moderate fertility. Lawns of Kentucky bluegrass, tall fescue, or perennial ryegrass should receive no more than three to four pounds of total nitrogen per 1,000 square feet each year; even less nitrogen is acceptable for lawns on a low-maintenance or moderate-maintenance program. Most or all of the fertilization should be applied during the fall months, which helps to promote recovery of the grass in the event a summer disease outbreak has already occurred. Avoid heavy applications of fertilizers during spring and summer, as lush spring or summer growth can be more prone to certain diseases. Also, have the soil tested to determine whether lime, potash, or phosphate should be applied to meet your lawn’s fertility needs.

Mowing too closely during the hot months of summer can stress the lawn, increasing susceptibility to diseases and environmental extremes. Mow lawns at a 2- to 2 1/2-inch height. Mowing too high can also favor some diseases, particularly in the late autumn. Continue mowing through late autumn to prevent leaf tissue from accumulating. A thick covering of leaves on the lawn during the autumn and winter can lead to outbreaks of disease during wet weather even though the grass is dormant.

Keep the mower blades sharp. A dull mower shreds the grass blades. This not only causes the lawn to be temporarily unsightly, but it may also provide wounds for infectious fungi to invade.

Avoid frequent, light waterings of your lawn. This encourages the grass to develop a shallow root system and frequently provide the moisture that fungi need to infect the leaves. When watering, saturate the soil to a depth of three to four inches to promote deep rooting. If a disease outbreak is evident, water early in the day so that the leaves dry by nightfall. If the lawn is watered late in the day, the leaves may remain wet until morning, thus providing long periods of leaf wetness favorable for infectious fungi.

Control weeds, insects, and other lawn pests which can cause stress. A stressful turfgrass environment often favors diseases. Follow all label directions when using lawn chemicals, as improper application can sometimes lead to turfgrass injury.

Fungicides can be an important part of a disease-control program in an intensively managed turf, such as putting greens on a golf course. However, if you follow a sound program of lawn management through the practices described above, rarely should you need fungicides for a home lawn. Before using any fungicide, be sure the disease is properly diagnosed. If a disease breaks out in your lawn, keep in mind that a return to weather favorable for turf growth and vigor will help alleviate the problem.
While summer officially started late June, now is the best time to begin planning for fall seeding. Failure to do so often results in missing seeding windows or inability to secure the needed supplies such as seed, herbicides and equipment. Below are a few quick reminders to improving seeding success.

- Spray herbicides now. Most herbicides require six weeks or more before seeding perennial grasses, so if you are planning to seed in September, herbicides should be applied soon. Be sure to read and follow all label instructions.

- Research and purchase seed now. New and productive varieties may not be available in high quantities, so purchase seed now to prepare for seeding late August – mid-September

- Perform routine maintenance and any repairs needed on seeding equipment. Seed placement is crucial to seeding success.

- Ensure soil fertility. If you haven’t soil tested in the last 3 years for pastures or last year for hay fields, do so now and apply any needed lime, P or K as recommended. For all cool-season pastures, fall nitrogen is recommended to boost root reserves and increase winter survival.

- For more information on fall establishment, contact the Barren County Extension office

**Quick TIPS!**

Weeds and grass that grow too close to your tree can steal water and nutrients, and lead to damage from lawnmowers. Make sure your tree is properly mulched using the 3-3-3 rule: leave 3 inches of free space around the trunk for air exchange, spread the mulch in a donut shape 3 feet from the trunk to keep down weeds and grass growth, and pile the mulch 3 inches high to keep the roots from drying out too quickly.
Summer’s heat and weather can take a toll on your flower garden. But with a little extra care, it is possible to bring it back to life for a few more weeks of vibrant color and texture.

It’s always important to make sure annuals and perennials get plenty of water this time of year, especially in later summer. Annuals, in particular, will start to decline without an adequate supply of water to keep the ground moist.

The general rule of thumb for watering your plants is 1 inch of water per week. Plants growing in pots may need water as often as every day throughout the summer, depending on the type of plant and the size of the container. Once the top few inches of container soil is dry, add enough water so that a little drains through the hole in the bottom of the pot. If rain doesn’t supply enough water, you should apply the necessary water in one application rather than in several small applications. Remember, the best time to water your plants is in the morning or early evening, preferably before 7 p.m.

During periods of drought, many annuals may appear to die. However, if you cut them back, water them regularly and apply fertilizer, they will often recover.

Another thing you can do to help your summer flower garden rebound is to remove spent, or old, flowers. This process is called deadheading. Deadheading helps encourage new growth that will produce new flowers.

Late summer is also the time to pull out the flowers that have seen their better days and plant new ones that are more suitable for fall.

Annual flowers that give a good show in the fall include pansies, ornamental cabbage and kale and snapdragons. Perennials, such as anemones, asters and showy sedums, also give a good show in the fall but you’ll need to transplant them the previous spring to give them a chance to provide their best show.

As you renovate your summer garden, be careful when applying fertilizer around perennial plants. If you apply fertilizer later than August, it may stimulate new growth at a time when the plants would normally begin to prepare for dormancy. And that can mean more winter injury.

Of course, all of this may be moot if you haven’t carefully tended your summer garden throughout the growing season. If you’ve kept your garden well-watered and periodically added fertilizer, your chances are greater for a late summer and fall show of color. For more information, contact the Barren County Extension office.
Pesticide Container Rinse & Return

Tuesday, September 19, 2017
10 AM to 12 PM
Barren County Road Department Barn

Be sure caps are removed, container is triple rinsed, and label removed.
Kentucky Tomatoes

SEASON: July through October

NUTRITION FACTS: Tomatoes are rich in nutrients that promote good health, including fiber and vitamins C and A. A medium tomato contains about 25 calories, 20 mg sodium, and is a good source of potassium.

SELECTION: Choose firm, well-shaped tomatoes that are fragrant and rich in color. Tomatoes should be free from blemishes, heavy for their size, and give slightly to pressure. Three to four medium tomatoes weigh about 1 pound. One pound of tomatoes yields about 2 ½ cups of chopped tomatoes.

STORAGE: Store ripe tomatoes at room temperature and use them within three days. Keep out of direct sunlight. Place green tomatoes in a paper bag to ripen.

Source: www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov

Bacon and Tomato Dip

1 cup fat free sour cream
1 cup low fat mayonnaise
2 large tomatoes, diced, reserve excess juice
4 slices bacon, cooked crisp and crumbled
1 teaspoon garlic powder

1. Combine all ingredients.
2. Add reserved tomato juice until dip reaches desired consistency.
3. Serve with fresh vegetables or reduced fat crackers.

Yield: 16, 2 tablespoon servings.
Nutrition Analysis: 50 calories; 3 g fat; 1 g saturated fat; 5 mg cholesterol; 160 mg sodium; 6 g carbohydrate; 0 g fiber; 3 g sugar; 1 g protein.

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