

Taylor County Horticulture Newsletter

October 2025

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Why Natives?

Written by Annette Jefferson, Taylor County Master Gardener

Native plants are plants that have evolved in an ecosystem for years. Why not enjoy those benefits in your landscaping? These benefits include conserving water, creating habitat for local fauna, and providing food for pollinators and birds. However, the most important benefit is the low maintenance of native plants. Especially when established, fertilizing and watering are not necessary, only occasional pruning of stray branches. These plants also survive our winter's cold snaps much better than non-natives.

For more than a decade, I've strived to utilize only native plants in my central Kentucky landscape. It's important to give natives 3-5 years, at least, to really start to shine after planting. Selecting young natives that are no more than knee high when planted survive best. With our wet springtimes, spring is my favorite time to plant. Autumn plantings, unless it is a rainy fall, will have to be watered regularly until there is a wet spell.

Focusing on native shrubs and trees, here are a few favorites that bring beautiful blooms and/or interesting features to a yard:

Common Witch-hazel Tree (Hamamelis virginiana):

Large shrub or small tree that typically prefers rich bottom land, however, I planted one in clay soil, and it is doing well. It is slow growing but has interesting fringe-like yellow flowers in fall, though flowers are fairly inconspicuous. Birds like the seeds and it is a host plant for the spring azure butterfly. Grows 20 feet in height, 10-15 in width. Witch hazel grows well in full shade to partial sun. An interesting native plant to have in shady spots.



Catalpa Tree, sometimes called Catawba (Catalpa speciosa):

Native to North America, this is a large, deciduous tree with large, heart-shaped leaves and showy tropical-looking flowers. When in bloom, beginning in late May through June, it's a show stopper. Catalpa worms love the leaves and every year we have the leaves eaten, though normally not too noticeable. However, one summer the tree had its leaves denuded, and then grew back 3 times. The tree bounced back with no problems. Do not plant where the leaf dew will drip onto cars or cause other landscaping issues. It has large seed pods, and needs an area to itself. Since we have honeybees, another interesting phenomenon is that the bees will gather leaf dew on the back of the leaves in late summer. The tree will be humming then. They grows to 60-80 feet in height, and 40+ width.



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October 2025

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1	2	3	4 Farmers' Market OPEN 8 AM - 2 PM
5	6	7	8 4-H 🍀 Entomology Group: Crickets 3:30 PM	9	10	11 Fall Festival at the Farmers' Market 9 AM - 12 PM MARKET OPEN 8 AM - 2 PM
12	13 Busy Bloomer Garden Club Topic: Lily of the Valley 1:00 PM	14	15	16 Green River Beekeepers 7:00 PM	17	18 Farmers' Market OPEN 8 AM - 2 PM
19	20	21 4-H 🍀 Horticulture Pumpkin Painting 3:30 PM ----- Fall Floral Design with Laityn 5:30 PM	22	23	24	25 Trick-or-Treat & Food Truck Festival at the Farmers' Market 8 AM- Sold Out MARKET OPEN 8 AM - 2 PM
26	27 Fall Floral Design with Laityn 5:30 PM	28 Flower Frogs 5:30 PM	29	30 Flower Frogs 10:30 AM	31	

All 4-H Events require registration on Eventbrite.

To RSVP for the classes, call the Extension office at 270-465-4511.

UPCOMING EVENTS



4-H Entomology Club

Crickets



**Wednesday,
October 8
3:30 p.m.**

*This is free and open to youth 9-18 (as of January 1, 2026). Spots are limited.
Registration is required on Eventbrite.*

Busy Bloomer Garden Club

This month the Busy Bloomer Garden Club will be learning all about the Lily of the Valley!



**Monday, October 13
1:00 p.m.**

We will be meeting at the Taylor County Extension Office.

Taylor County Farmers' Market

The Taylor County Farmers' Market is open Saturday's from 8:00 AM - 2:00 PM at 73 Animal Shelter Road (off Highway 210, past Wal-Mart).

Special Events:



**Fall Festival
Saturday, October 11
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.**



**Trick-or-Treat & Food Truck Festival
Saturday, October 25
8:00 a.m. - Sold Out**



Green River Beekeepers

The Green River Beekeepers meet on the 3rd Thursday of each month.

October Meeting:

Thursday, October 16th at 7:00 p.m.



Taylor County Extension Office
1143 South Columbia Avenue
Campbellsville, KY



4-H Horticulture Club

Pumpkin Painting

**Tuesday, October 21
3:30 p.m.**

*This is free and open to youth 9-18
(as of January 1, 2026).
Spots are limited.*

**Registration is required on
Eventbrite.**



Fall Floral Design

Join Laityn Gray & Kara Back-Campbell in creating fall floral designs!

**Tuesday, October 21
5:30 p.m.
-OR-
Monday, October 27
5:30 p.m.**

Spots are limited! Call the Taylor County Extension Office at (270) 465-4511 to reserve your spot today!



Flower Frogs

Join Kara Back-Campbell, County Agent for Horticulture, in creating these adorable Flower Frogs!

**Tuesday, October 28
5:30 p.m.
-OR-
Thursday, October 30
10:30 a.m.**

Spots are limited! Call the Taylor County Extension Office at (270) 465-4511 to reserve your spot today! 3



Kentucky & Kissing Bugs

Over the last week or so, kissing bugs have been in the news. In the southwestern and western United States, there are growing concerns about the prevalence of kissing bugs and the possibility that a parasite they vector may be more common in those states than previously believed. That parasite is responsible for Chagas disease, a health issue more common in Central and South America that can become a chronic long-term health issue.

As reporting expands, there have been publications and social media questions about kissing bugs and Kentucky, as well as how at-risk people and animals might be affected. There is one species of kissing bug that dwells here, the eastern bloodsucking conenose, but thus far, it has not posed a distinct human health hazard.

Eastern bloodsucking conenoses are out and about in Kentucky, looking to take blood meals. People can be bitten by conenoses, leaving people to wonder if they were exposed to/contracted Chagas disease. Luckily, the chances of Eastern bloodsucking conenoses vectoring Chagas disease are low due to a variety of circumstances that make the conenose different than their close relatives in the subfamily Triatominae.



Eastern Bloodsucking Conenose Basics

As part of the kissing bug group, these are blood feeding critters. Kissing bugs belong to the Hemiptera order, also known as true bugs. Hemiptera also includes things like aphids, stink bugs, bed bugs, cicadas, and many more. All true bugs have piercing sucking mouthparts and go through incomplete metamorphosis. Conenoses are specifically a part of the Triatominae and are closely related to assassin bugs and wheel bugs.

Conenoses start life as an egg and progress through eight nymphal instars, or stages, to reach adulthood. To go from one stage to the next, they must take a blood meal. The adults are about 3/4 inch long, dark in coloration, and have distinctive orange or red-orange squares on the border of their body.

Kissing bugs get their common name for their penchant of biting a human host near the mouth. This creepy kiss is done when humans are asleep to minimize chance of detection. Conenoses can also bite on the face. In addition to biting people, eastern bloodsucking conenoses will dine on frogs, rats, raccoons, cats, and dogs. Because of this, they can be found in tree cavities, near doghouses, and by animal enclosures.

Is there anything to be concerned about?

Kissing bugs as a group are responsible for vectoring the parasite that causes Chagas disease. This disease is more commonly associated with Central and South America than Eastern North America. In the acute phase of Chagas, which would occur soon after transmission, the CDC describes that the patient may experience fever and/or swelling around the bite site. In chronic cases, those who suffer from Chagas may have heart and digestive tract issues.

Typical vectoring of the Chagas pathogen comes from a kissing bug biting a person and then defecating on the person's face, often near the bite site. Upon waking, the person may wipe or itch at the bite, which can transfer the parasite into the wound.

The eastern bloodsucking conenose can and will bite humans. In the past, the pest has tested positive for the parasite responsible for Chagas. It is believed that they may acquire the parasite from rats or other wildlife they have fed on; however, they are not classically considered to be competent vectors for Chagas to humans. This is because, unlike their relatives, these conenoses do not tend to defecate while engaged in feeding or soon after feeding while still on the sleeping human. Without exposure to the infected feces, you should be relatively less likely to acquire Chagas. For this reason, if you find a conenose in your home, it is extremely unlikely you will end up with Chagas disease here in Kentucky. Of course, if you feel concerned or ill, please consult with a medical professional!

Mistaken Identities

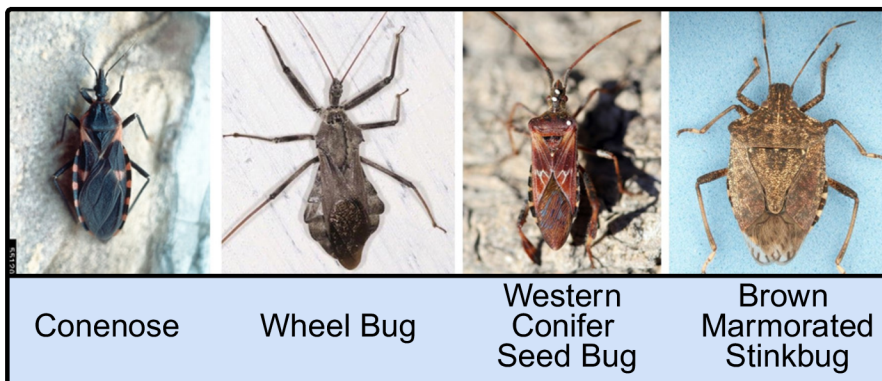
The eastern bloodsucking conenose can be confused with multiple, more common insects. Some of these include the bloodsucking conenose, a wheel bug, a western conifer seed bug, and a brown marmorated stinkbug. Wheel bugs have a large cog that projects from the top of their thorax that differentiates them from a conenose.

Western conifer seed bugs have flattened legs that resemble an oar or paddle. Brown marmorated stink bugs are much lighter in color than the conenose.

Management

Even if you are not at distinct risk of infection, few people enjoy the idea of an insect drinking their blood while they are asleep. Conenoses are best prevented by using pest proofing methods like applying caulk to seal cracks and gaps around windows, walls, roofs, and doors; by repairing screens and windows; and by closing holes and cracks leading to the attic/crawl spaces. Conenoses are also attracted to lights and will fly at houses with outdoor lighting. Turning off outdoor lights or changing to timers/motion detection can reduce light attraction. Finally, checking pet or animal domiciles for bugs is also practical. Those who live near wooded areas are more at risk and should be proactive. You may also need to perform pest control for things like rats, raccoons, etc. that are acting as hosts to the conenose. Insecticides are generally not necessary but pyrethroid products applied to cracks and crevices can be used for serious infestations.

Source: Jonathan L. Larson, Entomology Extension Specialist



What Are Flower Frogs?

A flower frog is a tool that is placed on or inside a vase to hold flowers in a desired position. Flower frogs may be made out of metal, glass, ceramic, and even clay. They originated in Japan in the 14th century and arrived in Europe in the 16th century. Vintage flower frogs you see today were most likely replaced by the invention of the floral foam in the 1950's. The flower frogs' popularity is gradually returning due to the desire for a more sustainable option instead of the single use floral foam. Join us on October 28th to learn how to make your own to fit a mason jar. Also, keep your eye out during yard sales and estate sales for these collectible antiques!



Cheesy Pumpkin Pasta Bake

Ingredients:

- Nonstick cooking spray
- 2 cups dry penne pasta (or any short pasta such as bowtie)
- 1 1/2 tablespoons unsalted butter, divided
- 1 small, sweet onion, diced
- 1 can (15 ounces) pumpkin puree (not pumpkin pie filling)
- 1 cup low-fat milk
- 1 cup sharp cheddar cheese, shredded
- 1/2 cup grated parmesan cheese, divided
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 3/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 3/4 teaspoon nutmeg (optional)

Directions:

1. Wash hands with warm water and soap, scrubbing for at least 20 seconds.
2. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.
3. Spray a 2-quart baking dish with nonstick cooking spray and set aside.
4. Cook pasta according to package instructions. Drain and set aside.
5. While pasta cooks, in a large skillet over medium heat, melt half of the butter. Add the onion and cook until tender, about 3 to 5 minutes.
6. Reduce heat to low and add the pumpkin puree, milk, cheddar cheese, 1/4 cup parmesan cheese, thyme, salt, pepper, and nutmeg (if using) to the skillet. Stir to combine until cheese is melted and the sauce is smooth.
7. Add the pasta to the sauce and gently combine. Pour into the prepared baking dish.
8. Melt the remaining butter in a small bowl and add panko breadcrumbs. Stir to combine and sprinkle evenly over the pasta.
9. Bake uncovered for 20 to 25 minutes or until heated through.
10. Sprinkle with the remaining 1/4 cup parmesan before serving. Refrigerate leftovers within two hours.

