

Adam Watson, Agriculture Extension Agent watson@utk.edu

Upcoming Classes *Please Preregister!*

March 14th Growing Vegetable Transplants 6:00pm-7:00pm

Join Agriculture Agent Adam Watson to learn how to successfully grow your own warm season vegetable transplants. In-person location: Jonesborough Farm Bureau Basement Meeting room, 1103 Boones Creek Rd Jonesborough.

Register for In-Person: <https://tiny.utk.edu/inpersontransplant> or call 753-1680

Zoom Registration: <https://tiny.utk.edu/transplantzoom>

March 22nd Spring Cleaning: Maintenance and Sharpening of Garden Tools

6:00pm-7:00pm UT/TSU Washington County Extension Office 206 West Main St.

Jonesborough. Led by two of our current Master Gardener interns, Marie Taylor and Charles Honeycutt, learn the ins and outs of getting your garden hand tools prepped for the garden season. **In-person only! Limited to 12 people! Preregister by calling our office 423-753-1680**

Late Winter/Early Spring Lawn Care Priorities

Follow-up on Crabgrass Control from last issue:

Last month I mentioned waiting for crabgrass control until we see forsythias in full bloom. If you've noticed in the landscape forsythia are blooming earlier than expected this year. So, this season I'd delay crabgrass preemergent herbicide until the middle of March with a second application 6-8 weeks later. If we were to see crabgrass germinating February into mid-March it's nearly certain to be killed when we have our next frost event; crabgrass is not frost tolerant. The mid-march herbicide application (which prevent germination of crabgrass) will ensure good control through the end of April and the second application will last until mid-June. See [Crabgrass Species Control in Turfgrass](#) for more info.

Use If Using Wood Ashes in the Garden

I recently had the chance to review a soil test for a home vegetable garden that had an amazingly high pH of 7.9. An ideal garden soil pH is around 6.5; pH is important to gardeners because it's all nutrient availability. It wasn't first apparent exactly why the pH was so high as we'd never see such a pH occurring naturally in our native soils.

After talking with the gardener and ruling out a gross over application of lime I was left scratching my head. It wasn't until the gardener mentioned applying wood ashes that it clicked. While wood ashes have some nutrient content, particularly calcium and potassium (potash), they are also extremely alkaline in nature due to carbonate content. Inadvertently, the gardener had driven the soil pH dramatically alkaline and too high for our vegetables to grow well.

Is there an amount of ashes that would be ok to add to a garden? In general, we'd be safe in **adding 15-20 lbs. of ashes per 1,000 square foot of garden per YEAR**; higher application risks negatively impacting soil pH.

The Trusty Trowel-March 2023

Beware of Invasive Pears Adam Watson

It looks like we might see our invasive pears blooming early this year. Most years, about the middle of March you'll begin to notice large numbers trees blooming white all across the area. A good portion of what you are seeing is an invasive tree known as callery pears. The average person probably isn't knowingly familiar with callery pears by that name, but you might be familiar with at least one callery pear variety, the Bradford pear.

The Bradford pear, originally from China and Vietnam, was introduced and promoted beginning in the 1960's for several reasons. Bradford pears are reliable spring bloomers, they have few disease or insect problems and they are adaptable to a range of soil conditions including the urban environment.

However, some problems became evident too. When blooming they can offer a scent that isn't the most pleasant. Their physical structure proves to be very brittle with frequent limb breakage in ice and wind storms sometimes requiring removal of the tree. And generally speaking, they are not a long lived tree, rarely lasting more than 25 years. A more significant issue, their invasive potential, has only come to light in more recent times.

Bradford pears were always said to be sterile; this wasn't entirely accurate. Bradford pears in fact self-incompatible; they can't pollinate their own or other Bradford pears flowers, but they can be pollinated by other callery pear varieties. Enter the other callery pear varieties that were introduced intending to address some of the negatives found with Bradford pears. These newer varieties of callery pears suddenly offered the Bradford pears the opportunity to produce fruit and viable seeds. Birds or other animals eat these fruits and then spread the seeds across the landscape.

When you have non-native plants self-sowing in the environment you always have to ask if there is an ecological impact? In the case of callery pears many believe the answer is yes. One of the significant negatives associated with their spread is that their physical presence displaces native species that could be growing in our environment. So, why worry if we have a callery pear growing along the roadside or a native species? One thing to consider is the function that the species serve in the larger ecosystem.

A callery pears isn't host to many insect species. Many birds and other species rely heavily on insects for their diets. When callery pears are present in the environment they represent a space that is no longer functioning to provide resources to the other members of the ecosystem. As the presence of the callery pears increase and displace native species that do offer ecological support to other species, the environment becomes less suitable for native birds for instance. Counterintuitive, when we are literally increasing the number of trees across the landscape, but not all trees are created equal in regards to ecosystem function.

If you have callery pears in the landscape, I'd suggest replacing them with one of a number of spring blooming trees. Redbuds, Crabapples, Serviceberry, Flowering Cherries, Magnolias and others can be good alternatives to callery pears. If you have wild growing callery pears, I'd encourage removal; cutting them down and stump herbicide treatments to prevent resprouting is the general recommendation and [here is a publication outlining that](#). Do be cautious if you intend to bush hog or mow down the trees; some of the seedling trees can have large thorns that can puncture tires.



Tennessee Home Garden Variety Trials



2023 Home Garden Variety Trial

You are invited to participate in a research study. You will be asked to complete cultivar evaluation forms that should take about 10

minutes of your time. Information will be used to assist home gardeners in TN select the best vegetables for their home gardens. The information in the study records will be kept confidential. No reference will be made in reports which could link participants to the study. If you have questions at any time about the study please contact Dr. Natalie Bumgarner at nbumgar@utk.edu.

[UT HGVT catalog 2023](#); [Online order link for 2023 trial](#)

2ND ANNUAL TENNESSEE INVASIVE SPECIES YOUTH POSTER CONTEST

Prizes!

Calling all Students,
4th-8th Grade!

Presented by:



Entries Due July 1, 2023

Learn the details and sign up here: <https://backyardstem.tennessee.edu/invasives>



2023 Tennessee 4-H Beekeeping Essay Contest

Information on this contest is found at
<https://4h.tennessee.edu/beekeeping-and-entomology>

**All essays are to be submitted to
beessay@utk.edu by March 15, 2023**

2023 Topic: *The Importance of Beeswax*

Although honey bees are much-beloved for honey, bees also produce beeswax that can be used in many ways. For this essay, a 4-H student should discuss why beeswax is so important to the hive (it's a pantry, it's a nursery, it's the dance floor), but also discuss their favorite way to use beeswax outside the hive. Photos of candles, soaps, or lip balms that are made to show the 4-H'er's skill in using beeswax are welcomed as are recipes or brief instructions. More information about the [4-H Beekeeping Essay Competition](#).



2023 Rules

1. Contest is open to **active** 4-H club members only. 4-H'ers who have previously placed first, second, or third **at the national level** are not eligible; other state winners are eligible to re-enter. Failure to meet any one rule will disqualify entry.
2. Write on the designated subject only.
3. All factual statements and interview references must be cited in a "sources" or "bibliography" list.
4. On a separate page, please include a brief biographical statement of the writer including mailing address, email address and phone number.
5. Essay must encompass the designated topic in 750 to 1,000 words. Word count does not include sources, works cited or the writer's biographical statement.
6. Essay must be typewritten or computer-generated on single-sided pages and formatted following standard manuscript format using double-spaced type and 12pt font in legible font face.
7. Essays will be judged on (a) scope of research, 40%; (b) accuracy, 30%; (c) creativity, 10%; (d) conciseness, 10%; and (e) logical development of the topic, 10%.
8. Essayists **should not** submit essays directly to The Foundation for the Preservation of Honey Bees, Inc. office.
9. All entries become the property of the Foundation and may be published or used as it sees fit. No essay will be returned.

National Awards (sponsored by the Foundation for the Preservation of Honey Bees):

First place: \$750.00

Second place: \$500.00

Third place: \$250.00

Let the Seed Starting Begin!



Warm Season Vegetables like Tomato, Pepper and Eggplant should be started as seedlings Mid-March.
These warm season crops can be planted in the garden May 1-15.

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For questions about your home and garden please feel free to contact me, Adam Watson, Agriculture Extension Agent watson@utk.edu or by cell 423-430-6711. Emailing or texting pictures is a great way to get questions to me.

Washington County Extension-206 West Main Street Jonesborough, TN 37659-1230
Office Phone: (423) 753-1680

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