

FREE! Home Gardening Classes

Backyard Fruit: Pruning Grapes

March 11, 2025 6:00 PM

Join UT Extension Washington County Agriculture Agent Adam Watson and learn how to prune your grapes improve yields, and enhance fruit quality.

In-person Location: Jonesborough Farm Bureau Basement Meeting room 1103 Boones Creek Rd, Jonesborough.

Zoom registration: <https://tiny.utk.edu/grapepruning>

In-person Registration: <https://tiny.utk.edu/inpersongrapepruning>



Backyard Fruit: Less Common Fruits-Pawpaws, Elderberries, & Figs

April 1, 2025 6:00 PM

Join UT Extension Washington County Agriculture Agent Adam Watson and learn about growing a few less common fruits-pawpaws, figs, & elderberries-in our backyards.

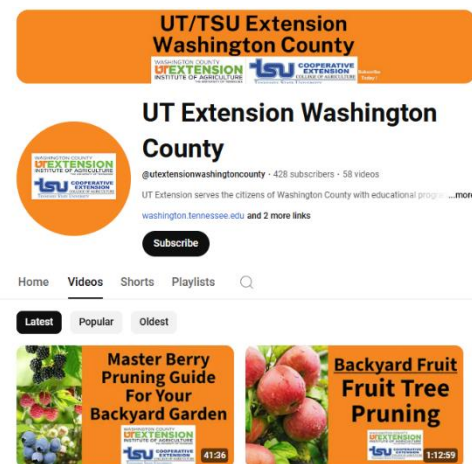
Zoom Webinar Only register at <https://tiny.utk.edu/lesscommonfruit>

If you have missed any of our gardening classes or are looking to refresh your skills on seasonal topics, visit our [YouTube channel](#). High priorities right now would include:

- [Master Berry Pruning Guide For Your Backyard Garden](#)
- [Backyard Fruit: Fruit Tree Pruning](#)
- [Backyard Fruit: Fruit Tree Pest Control](#)
- [Planning A 3 Season Vegetable Garden](#)
- [3 Season Vegetable Garden: Growing Vegetable Transplants](#)
- [Tomatoes and Peppers In the Home Garden](#)

If you're a fruit grower, you may be interested in these four newer publications from UT.

- [Growing Elderberries](#)
- [Growing Figs](#)
- [Growing Pawpaws](#)
- [Growing Persimmons](#)



The Trusty Trowel-March 2025

Using Wood Ashes in the Garden, A Cautionary Tale

A couple of years ago, I 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 about nutrient availability. This extreme alkaline pH explained why no vegetables were growing well. But, it wasn't initially 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 his vegetables to grow.

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 would risk pushing soil pH too high. Consequently, it's never advisable to use wood ashes to raise soil pH or as the sole source of potassium for the garden.

Don't Cut Back Those Daffodils and Other Spring Bulbs!

This month will bring us the spring bulbs in all their glory. Don't forget that many of these flowers are great as cut flowers in arrangements so take advantage of this and bring some indoors.



After the blooms are gone and the foliage is left some gardeners are tempted to cut these plants back to the ground, but it's best if this isn't done. Remember that the spring bloom is only possible if the plant can store sugars produced from photosynthesis. Photosynthesis requires green leaves, or foliage, to take place. If we remove the foliage of spring bloomers we reduce the size, and may even prevent, next year's blooms.

As the plants foliage begins to yellow and dieback, it is then acceptable to cut these plants back to the ground. In our area, the foliage starts to yellow usually in late May or June. Once the foliage dies back, it is also the proper time to divide clumps of daffodils that may be crowding each other.

Lawn Care Priorities

Crabgrass Control:

A pre-emergent herbicide that prevents crabgrass seed from germinating is the best control strategy for this grassy weed. The window for application is mid-March through early April; the application should occur while forsythia is in bloom. Read and follow all label directions, generally a second application 6-8 weeks later will increase the period of control as well as possibly controlling later germinating weeds such as goose grass. See [Crabgrass Species Control in Turfgrass](#) for more info

Spring Fertilizer application: Those looking for lower maintenance lawns can skip the spring fertilization all together, or apply the March recommendation only. Avoid fertilizer applications later than specified as above or at higher rates. Excess nitrogen fertility can lead to conditions that favor the development of disease. Check out the UT-Extension publication [Selecting, Establishing and Maintaining the Fescues](#) for more details.

- March 15th: Apply ½ lb. of actual Nitrogen per 1,000 square feet.
- April 15th: Apply ½ lb. of

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Many lawns are mowed too short:

It's not quite time to mow your lawn, but it is certainly going to be here sooner rather than later. It's not a bad idea to spend some time making sure mower blades are sharpened and the mower will start in preparation for when the time comes. For fescue lawns the lowest height to begin mowing would be 2 to 2 ½ inches. As the season warms it's beneficial to raise the mowing height 2 ½ to 3 ½ inches. For more details on mowing height including other grass types see [Turfgrass Maintenance: Mowing](#)

Timely Tips

- March is when the garden season begins in earnest for many gardeners. Many garden favorites such as Brassica crops (broccoli, cabbage, brussel sprouts), lettuce, chard, onions, and potatoes can be planted or sown out in the garden this month. Check out the [2025 Tennessee Home Fruit and Vegetable Calendar](#)
- March is also the time to start seedlings for later warm season crops. BUT, don't start too early as overgrown transplants aren't ideal to transplant. Tomatoes for instance should be started no earlier than 5-7 weeks before you wish to plant them out which in our area shouldn't be before the first week of May. Check out [Garden Planning, Plant Preparation And Planting](#) for more details.

House Calls Made! If you have lawn and garden questions I'm available to make a visit free of charge to Washington County residents. I can be reached at my office (423) 753-1680 or by em.ail watson@utk.edu.

For questions about your home and garden please feel free to contact me, Adam Watson, Agriculture Extension Agent watson@utk.edu.

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

References made to commercial products or brand names is with the understanding that no discrimination is intended and no endorsement is implied. Be sure to read and follow all pesticide label instructions.

Programs in agriculture and natural resources, 4-H youth development, family and consumer sciences, and resource development. University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture and county governments cooperating. UT Extension provides equal opportunities in programs and employment.

Household Hazardous Waste Collection Event

April 12, 2025

Sponsored and paid for by
Tennessee Department of
Environment and
Conservation

9:00 AM – 1:00 PM
Daniel Boone High School
1440 Suncrest Drive, Gray

Household Hazardous Waste - is defined as corrosive, flammable, toxic, or reactive materials used in your home, car or truck, or garden and lawn that is unwanted/unusable.



Now's your chance... It's FREE!

You can dispose of all those leftover household chemicals, lawn and garden products and automotive materials that you've never known what to do with.

Things to Bring:

Household Cleaners

Drain Openers
Oven Cleaners
Wood Cleaners & Polishes
Metal Cleaners & Polishes
Toilet Bowl Cleaners
Disinfectants

Home Maintenance

Chemicals

Paint Thinner
Wood Preservatives
Paint Strippers & Removers
Adhesives

Miscellaneous

Fingernail Polish Remover
Pool Chemicals
Photo Processing Chemicals
Medicines & Drugs
Reactive Materials
Aerosols (Spray Cans)
Compressed Gas
Mercury Thermostats
Mercury Thermometers
Fluorescent Light Bulbs
Needles/Sharps (in container)
Lead

Lawn & Garden

Chemicals

Herbicides
Pesticides
Fungicides
Fertilizers

Automotive Products

Fuel Additives
Grease & Rust Solvents
Air Conditioning Refrigerants
Starter Fluids
Body Putty
Coolants
Carburetor/ Fuel Injector Cleaners

NO Medical or Infectious Waste (besides needles and sharps in puncture-proof containers), Explosives, Ammunition, Radioactive waste including smoke detectors, or any empty containers. Waste from NON-household sources such as Businesses, Schools, Farms, Churches, Etc. will be accepted BY APPOINTMENT ONLY. Call 615-643-3170 to request a price quote and schedule an appointment.

Batteries, oil, paint, antifreeze and electronics are accepted daily at all Washington County Convenience Centers and will not be accepted this day. Go to www.washingtoncountyttn.org click on departments, then on solid waste

****If you have questions or need additional information, please call 423-753-1652.**