

## Upcoming FREE Class \*Registration Required\*

### Identifying Common Northeast Tennessee Trees

July 16<sup>h</sup>, Thursday 6:00 PM

Do you ever use identification apps, but you're not sure whether the answer is correct? Join Washington County Agriculture Agent, Adam Watson, for a hands-on, beginner-friendly introduction to tree identification in northeast Tennessee. We will explore simple ways to identify common trees using key features that will enable you to confirm plant identities.

**In-person Only!** @ the Jonesborough Farm Bureau Basement Meeting room 1103 Boones Creek Rd, Jonesborough

Register here: <https://tiny.utk.edu/TreeIDClass>

**Save the Date, August 6<sup>th</sup>**, Nature Walk with Johnson City Parks and Recreation Naturalist Connie Deegan. Details soon. **Interest list here:**

<https://tiny.utk.edu/NatureWalk>



A winged aphid on the underside of a tomato leaf.  
Photo by A. Watson.

### Scout Now for Vegetable Insect Pests

Insect control is easiest when pest numbers are low and the insects are still young. Even though the tomato plant shown left has only been in the ground for a few weeks, I was able to find a few winged aphids. At the moment there are no visual symptoms the aphids were present. They were well hidden on the undersides of leaves and along the stems. Right now, their numbers are low, but given time, they can multiply quickly and become a serious problem. There are several control options available.

Naturally occurring beneficial insects, such as lacewing larvae and lady beetles, are effective predators of aphids. However, it takes time for these natural enemies to find the pests and build their populations to levels that provide control. During this lag period, some plant damage may still occur.

Organic products, such as insecticidal soap, can be effective, but they often must come into direct contact with the insects to work. This means you need to spray on the undersides of leaves where insects often hide. This is easier to achieve on smaller plants but requires careful attention. Another limitation is that insecticidal soap has no residual activity. An application today will not control aphids that arrive tomorrow, so repeated applications are often necessary.

## The Trusty Trowel-June 2026

It is important to note that insecticidal soap is not a homemade pesticide. These are commercially formulated and labeled pesticide products. Recipes found online that use dish soap or other household ingredients can damage plants. Gardeners are strongly encouraged to use only labeled products.

Conventional insecticides, such as bifenthrin or malathion, are also options. As with any pesticide, always follow the label directions for rates and application frequency.

For more information on managing insect pests in the garden, see our publication [You Can Control Garden Insects](#). As always, I'm happy to assist with any pest questions you may have. Please feel free to reach out to me at your convenience.



### **What's Growing on My Tree?**

I have received several questions lately from homeowners who have noticed something growing on their trees. It is often described as leafy, fern-like, scaly, or even hairy. In most cases, what they are seeing are lichens, and they do not harm the tree. In fact, their presence can be a sign of good air quality. Lichens come in many shapes and colors and are unique because they function as multiple organisms living together as one.

Lichens are considered composite organisms. They are made up of a fungus and a photosynthetic partner, either a green alga or cyanobacterium. In some lichens, a third partner—a basidiomycete yeast—may also be present. This yeast was only recently discovered and is still being studied. Each partner plays a role: the fungus provides structure and protection, the yeast may help with chemical defenses, and the alga or cyanobacterium produces sugars through photosynthesis to feed the lichen.

Lichens are also commonly found growing on rocks and other surfaces. They can survive in a wide range of environments, from the Arctic to hot, dry deserts.

Check out our [YouTube channel @ https://tiny.utk.edu/washingtonvideos](https://tiny.utk.edu/washingtonvideos) for videos of previous gardening webinars.

For questions about your home and garden please feel free to contact me, Adam Watson, Agriculture Extension Agent [watson@utk.edu](mailto:watson@utk.edu) or Office (423) 753-1680.

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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.