HORT FROM THE HILLTOP

HARRISON COUNTY HORTICULTURE NEWSLETTER

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Hello Horticulturalists!

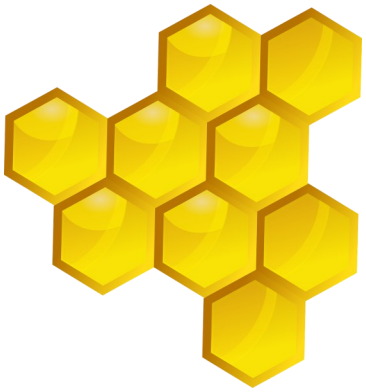
I hope your summer is going well and you have been able to enjoy some of the sunny weather and slightly cooler temperatures we have been having!

I wanted to share a programming update. With the uncertainty of COVID and with restrictions changing quite often, I have decided to once again offer Fall Classes Virtually. The series of classes are still being planned, but will be posted in the September Horticulture newsletter.

With that being said, I hope if you joined us virtually last fall, you will choose to again, and if you haven't tried virtual classes, I will be happy to help with technology issues or any questions you might have.

I hope you each enjoy what's left of summer and I hope we can all get back to normal soon!

Attention Beekeepers!



We have a group of individuals that are in the process of creating a beekeeping club here in Harrison County!

The club is open to anyone and any experience level. The mission statement the founding members have created is "to secure the future of beekeeping". The group wants to provide educational opportunities, share knowledge and resources and bring awareness to honey bees and the art of beekeeping and honey production.

So, if you are a current beekeeper, interested in beekeeping, a newbie who just wants to learn more about bees, a protector of pollinators, youth, or adult, all are welcome to the first meeting!

The meeting will take place at the Harrison County Extension Office on Tuesday, September 14th at 6:30 p.m.

We hope this group will offer a valuable resource to Harrison County and the surrounding area. We hope to see you there! For more information, follow the Licking Valley Honey Bee Society on Facebook.

Cicada Killers, Not Murder Hornets, Are in Our Yards

If you listen closely, you might hear the annual cicadas singing their songs in the trees. You might also hear some of them making their "alarm" signal, a whirring/grinding noise they use when under attack. What is there for these large hemipterans to fear though? That would be the cicada killer wasp—a specialized parasitoid, built to hunt cicadas, sting, and paralyze them, and then drag their body to a hole in the ground where the wasp will lay her eggs on the cicada. After eggs hatch, the immature wasps will slowly devour the cicada alive. It's a bug eat bug world out there!

Adult cicada killers are large and in charge. Females can reach up to 2 inches long. The adults have dark orange heads/thoraxes with black and yellow abdomens. (Photo: Dawn Dailey O'Brien, Cornell University, Bugwood.com)

Cicada Killer Basics

The adult cicada killer females can reach up to 2 inches in length, while males are 1.5 inches long. They both have orange-colored heads and thoraxes with black abdomens that have yellow designs on them. The females have spurs on their back legs, which will help them with digging tunnels used as a nest for their larvae. Females also have a stinger at the tip of their abdomen, while males have a pseudostinger (it isn't hooked to a venom sac).

Females are fast-flying and on the hunt for cicadas or digging most of the time. Males will hover near areas of female activity and watch. They may also attempt to deter people from approaching by hovering near their face. As mentioned before though, they don't have a stinger, so they are all bark and not bite.

Cicada killer burrows can be quite long underground. An individual female may excavate about 100 cubic inches of soil to make a home for her young. When they sting a cicada, they either fly it back to the nest, drag it, or do a series of aimed "jumps" where they carry it to a tree or bush and jump/glide to get it home. In the burrow, a chamber with a female egg may get two to three cicada to eat while male eggs get one cicada. The height of cicada killer season is late July and early August.

Confusion Over Identity

Because of their size, we have received many inquiries about whether cicada killers are the Asian giant hornets (also known as the "murder hornet" in popular media). There are many differences between the species, including: cicada killers are solitary versus the social nature of Asian giant hornets, and the propensity to sting is higher for the Asian giant hornet.

A comparison of Asian giant hornets (left) and cicada killers (right). Note differences in the size of the head, coloration, and patterns on the abdomen. (Photos: Asian giant hornet by Washington State Dept. of Ag; Cicada killer by University of Florida)

The two species also look different upon closer inspection. The Asian giant hornet's head is much larger and broader than the cicada killer; they also have a yellow-orange coloration for their head, and their abdomen is banded black and yellow-orange. The cicada killer is darker overall and has distinct patterns rather than bands on their abdomen.

Cicada Killers, continued...

Cicada Killer Considerations

While cicada killer wasps can be annoying and a little scary, they mean humans and pets no harm. (Photo: Jody Green, University of Nebraska)

Cicada killer wasps are not considered a priority stinging hazard. There have been incidents, but they are few and far between. This can be chalked up to the fact that there are not social and therefore have no nest to defend. This means that control is usually unnecessary.

However, cicada killer populations can build in a local area over time. They like areas with loose, dry, light textured soils in the open sun. We routinely receive reports of them digging between parts of retaining walls and also appearing on open playgrounds. They can be scary for people and annoying as they fly around. Management can include:

- Sometimes, simply setting up a sprinkler and regularly running it in the area can make it wet enough that the wasps are discouraged away.
- Other times, a more physical approach of removal can involve using a tennis racket to kill them. It sounds like a joke but it is a very effective method of control!
- For an insecticide-based approach , applying a dust insecticide into the entrance of the burrow will work to kill populations coming in and out of the hole.

Article by: Jonathan L. Larson, Entomology Extension Specialist, University of Kentucky

Dividing Flower Bulbs

A question I often get asked is when to divide flower bulbs. Any time we are dividing plants we need to do our research, because certain times of the year are best for dividing certain plants. For bulbs, like tulips and daffodils, August is actually a good time to divide them. In August, the new roots have generally not started to grow yet on bulbs, and if they have started, they are small and just starting to appear.

If you're unsure of whether or not you need to divide your flower bulbs, here are a couple of things to consider. If you have noticed a decreased number in blooms, smaller flower size, poor growth, or the flower bed is looking a little full, it is probably a good idea to divide them.

To divide them, lift them out of the ground very carefully with a shovel or a pitch fork. Be sure to get rid of any bulbs that are off color, dark, shriveled, or look diseased.

Once your bulbs are lifted from the soil go on and plant them in their new home. If you aren't sure where to plant them or if you are giving them away, you can keep them in a cool, dark, and dry location and plant them as soon as possible in the fall. Flower bulbs can be planted between 4—8 inches apart depending on the bulb size, and the rule of thumb for plant depth is 2—3 times the bulb height.

Cover Crops for Home Gardens

Cover Crops are an intentionally seeded crop over an area that would otherwise be idle for a period of time (winter). They are planted at the end of your growing season in an effort to improve the soils physical structure and fertility and to assist with erosion control. You can choose a legume (adds nitrogen to the soil) or a grass-type cover crop, or a combination of the two. **Some common cover crops include:**

- **Buckwheat**—a grain, seeded May through August at a rate of 2—3 lbs. per 1000 sq. ft.
  - Grows quickly, quick soil cover, not winter hardy, weedy if allowed to go to seed, fine roots help loosen top soil, weed suppression
- **Wheat**—a grass, seeded September to November at a rate of 3 lbs. per 1000 sq. ft.
  - Can be seeded later than many other cover crops, improved soil structure, winter hardy, prevents erosion, produces massive root system which can make it difficult to turn over in the spring
- **Crimson Clover**—a legume, seeded August to September at a rate of 1 lb. per 1000 sq. ft.
  - Fixes nitrogen, attracts pollinators, usually winter hardy, not tolerant of drought, easy to turn over
- **Oats**—a grass, seed spring oats in September or early March and seed winter oats in September to October at a rate of 2 lbs. per 1000 sq. ft.
  - Not winter hardy, but residue protects soil from erosion, great companion to legume cover crops, weed suppression, a lot of biomass
- **Cereal Rye**—a grass, seeded in September to November at a rate of 3—4 lbs. per 1000 sq. ft.
  - Can be seeded later than wheat, excellent cover, good for erosion control, a lot of biomass, improves soil structure, very hardy, if not killed early enough in the spring it can lead to too much top growth which may make it difficult to turn over in spring

Easy Peach Cobbler

½ cup whole wheat flour
½ cup all purpose flour
1½ teaspoons baking powder
1 pinch salt
1½ cups sugar (divided)
1 cup skim milk
½ cup unsalted butter
4 cups fresh peeled peaches
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1 teaspoon ground nutmeg or cinnamon

1. Preheat the oven to 375° F. **Combine** the flour, baking powder, salt and ¾ cup sugar in a large mixing bowl. **Add** the milk and mix only until the dry ingredients are wet.

2. Melt the butter and **pour** into a 13 x 9 inch baking dish or pan. **Add** the flour mixture on top of the butter. Do not stir.

3. In a saucepan, **heat** the peaches, ¾ cup sugar and lemon juice until the sugar is dissolved and the peaches are coated. **Pour** evenly over the flour mixture. Do not stir. **Sprinkle** with nutmeg or cinnamon.

4. Bake for 40 minutes or until crust is golden brown. **Remove** from oven and serve warm.

Yield: 12 servings.

Nutritional Analysis: : *190 calories, 8g fat, 5g saturated.fat, 80 mg sodium, 20mg cholesterol, 32g carbohydrate, 1g fiber, 24g sugar, 2g protein.*

Plate it up! Kentucky Proud

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