



June-July
2021



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Home Gardening Newsletter

Upcoming Macon County Fair

When you think about a county fair you may find yourself cracking a smile recalling memories of fun experiences you had as a child. The importance of county fairs dates back to a time when rural folks loved to get together and celebrate. It's a time of festivity where youth and community members gather together to display their best harvest and crafts, along with enjoying long-lasting relationships and traditions. An air of anticipation, excitement, and high energy surround people of all ages during a county fair. Youth and adults alike are drawn together to rekindle friendships, to be together as families, and to show off their achievements.

Experiencing a county fair provides opportunities for all age groups to participate in areas such as: showing sheep, hogs, goats and cattle in the youth livestock shows, along with displaying artwork, flowers, quilts, vegetables from the garden and so much more! Communities are inspired by the efforts of volunteers who work together to create a cohesive atmosphere that defines a county fair. It takes a "village" to make a fair happen and so we need you!

What You Can Do to Help with the Macon County Fair?

Become an Exhibitor - Many people don't realize or think about the fact that they can bring their interest and talent to the fair as an exhibit. The more exhibits the better as folks love to come to the fair to see things. So, check out our Macon County Fair website to see what you can do to become an exhibitor or to set-up an education booth.

Get Involved & Volunteer - Time is precious but volunteering your time at the county fair is time well spent. Helping out will enable you to make new acquaintances, discover new opportunities, and unearth the county fair's importance.

Invite Others to Exhibit & Help Them

Do you have a friend who is a gifted crafter or has amazing artwork? Invite them to showcase their talents at the fair. Tell them about opportunities at the fair and help them learn how to be an exhibitor.

This year the Macon County Fair will be held from Wednesday September 22nd through Saturday September 25th.

For more information about the upcoming Macon Fair got to:
<https://themaconcofair.com/> and like us on Facebook too!



Common Gardening Questions

As we move into the summer, many of our warm season vegetables will explode with green leaves and the emergence of colorful fruits such as purple eggplants, red cherry tomatoes and yellow crookneck squash. Typically, at this point in time, questions arise as gardeners observe and wonder why their vegetables have poor fruit set, what are those pesky diseases and insects, and finally when is the right time to harvest? The following information comprises some common questions and answers that come across my desk every year.

How do I control worms in my cabbage and broccoli? Use a lightweight row cover to exclude moths and prevent them from laying eggs. Use a Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*) insecticide such as Javelin or Dipel to control worms and conserve beneficial insects. Begin application when worms are small.



Why are my carrots bitter and woody? Carrots are a cool-season vegetable so if daily temperatures exceed 80 degrees Fahrenheit, carrot color and taste will decline.

Why is my lettuce bitter? Lettuce is a cool-season vegetable. Bitterness occurs when lettuce is grown during high temperatures. Washing and storing the leaves in the refrigerator will remove the bitterness in 48 hours.

When do I harvest potatoes? New potatoes can be harvested as soon as they reach a suitable size. Potatoes for storage can be harvested when the vines turn yellow. Do not harvest potatoes when the soil is very wet. This will increase the chance of rotting. Avoid exposing potatoes to too much light as the green portion contains an alkaloid called solanine that can cause illness. All green portions should be thoroughly cut off before cooking.

When do I harvest sweet potatoes? - Harvest the roots when they are large enough for use before frost. Avoid bruising or scratching during handling. (Damaged sweet potatoes rot easily in storage.) Ideal storage conditions are a temperature of 55°F and a relative humidity of 85%. Crawl spaces or basements usually do the trick.



My snap beans look healthy but aren't forming bean pods. Why? Bean blossoms will abort from the plants in hot, dry weather. Also, too much nitrogen fertilizer or manure will prevent pods from setting. Beans do not need a lot of nitrogen. Bean pods will not set if the soil is waterlogged.

Why didn't the ears on my sweet corn fill out to the tip? Weak kernel formation can be caused by poor pollination. Hot, dry weather during silking inhibits good pollination. Rather than plant a single row of sweet corn in the garden, I recommend planting several short rows.

When do I harvest sweet corn? Harvest sweet corn when the silk is dried and the ears feel solid within the husk. The kernels will be milky and tender. Generally, sweet corn is harvested 21 to 28 days after silking. Five to six days are required for pollination when the silks emerge. Sweet corn should be harvested in early morning when the sugar content is the highest in the kernels.

Why aren't my peppers setting fruit? Pollination will decline if temperatures drop below 60 degrees Fahrenheit or above 90 degrees. Too much nitrogen will reduce fruit set.

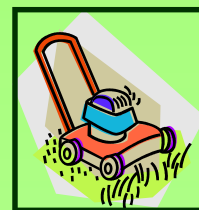
Why do eggplant fruits not ripen properly? Stunted plants from cool weather, flea beetle damage or poor, infertile soils will fail to develop a quality fruit.

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June Horticulture Tips

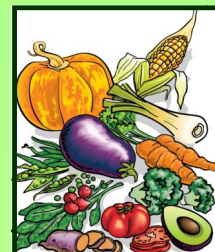
Lawns

- Do not fertilize cool season lawns between April through August
- If broadleaf weeds are present, pull them while they are small or spot treat with a broadleaf herbicide.
- Mow Fescue and bluegrass lawns at 3 inches.



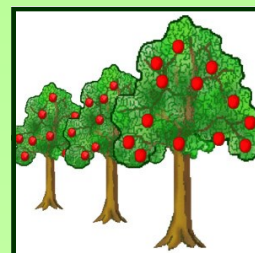
Vegetables

- Plant beans, lima beans, beets, carrots, Swiss chard, corn, cucumbers, okra, southern peas, pumpkins, and turnips.
- Side-dress vegetables 6 weeks after planting.
- Assure that vegetables get a least one inch of water per weeks. Do not wet foliage late in the day. Consider drip irrigation.
- While squash plants are still small, apply *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) to stems weekly to prevent squash vine borers. Scout for insects. Hand pick, or if necessary to save the crop, use the least environmentally harmful insecticides.
- Spray tomatoes weekly with fungicide to prevent early blight and late blight diseases.
- Start Brussels sprouts and collards for transplanting into the garden in mid-July.
- Dig new potatoes when tops begin to die down.
- Plant pumpkins for Halloween.



Fruits

- Protect blueberries and raspberries with bird netting.
- Renovate strawberry bed after the berry harvest is completed.
- Continue fungicide/insecticide sprays on fruit trees and grape vines.
- Remove suckers and water sprouts from fruit trees.



Trees Shrubs & Flowers

- Water newly planted trees and shrubs weekly if rain is inadequate.
- Prune out dieback on rhododendron, azalea, and mountain laurel.
- Water valued trees and shrubs if needed. Apply enough water to soak in at least 10 inches deep.
- Water newly planted trees and shrubs once a week if it does not rain.
- Remove foliage of spring flowering bulbs after foliage has dies back. Bulbs can be thinned out or moved at this time.
- Remove dead flowers in flower beds to encourage longer flowering.
- Cut off the faded flowers of perennials to encourage a second flowering.
- Install supports for tall-growing flowers before they start to flop.
- Pinch back chrysanthemums to develop bushy plants with more flowers.



Gardening Questions continued

Why are my tomato leaves dying from the bottom upwards? One cause may be from the fungus Early blight. This disease attacks the tomato leaves and fruit beginning in June. Early blight lesions are observed on the leaves and stems. For control, stake and mulch tomatoes, increase plant spacing to reduce humidity around the plant and remove some of the lower leaves. Copper sprays will help keep plants protected.

Why do tomatoes get a black spot on the bottom of the fruit?

The black spot on the bottom or blossom end of the tomato is called blossom end rot. Blossom end rot is a problem in dry, hot weather. Make sure that your pH is adequate (6 to 6.5), and the tomatoes are evenly watered.



If you have more questions about your garden, contact the Macon County Extension Center at 828 349 2049.

Christy Bredenkamp,
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