



The Garden Spade

April 2020

“Reliable, Responsive and Relevant Information for the Missouri Gardener”

Grow Vegetables in Containers this Spring

Donna Aufdenberg, MU Extension Field Specialist in Horticulture

It has been a very wet spring. Very few of us gardeners have been able to put out much of the cool season vegetables. Just when we get a few dry days the rains start again. Do not despair, consider a different method of planting. Try growing vegetables in containers.



Many of our vegetable do just fine in containers. We must keep in mind that just like in a garden, in order for garden plants to be productive, we must have a well drained growing medium, adequate water and fertilizer, and plenty of sunlight.



It is important to select containers that are large enough to hold the plants and their root systems. Based on the size of the vegetable, it will determine the size of the container. Plastic pots, buckets, washtubs, wooden planters, or hanging baskets are just a few suggestions. In Missouri, cattle mineral tubs seem to be the favorite for gardening. Almost any kind of container can be used if it provides good drainage through holes in

the bottom or in the sides. If holes need to be made, drill four or more holes evenly spaced around the bottom of the container. If more drainage is needed, then rocks or broken pieces of clay pots can be placed at the bottom of the container.

The size of containers depends on the vegetables you intend to grow. Six to ten inch diameter pots are fine for herbs and some of the smaller vegetable varieties but for most crops, such as tomatoes and peppers, a 3 to 5 gallon container is best. (I would recommend no smaller than a 5-gallon bucket for tomatoes unless you are growing a patio or cherry tomato.) The depth of the container is

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University of Missouri

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AND VETERAN EMPLOYER

Grow Vegetables in Containers this Spring

Donna Aufdenberg, MU Extension Field Specialist in Horticulture

Continued from page 1 important. Soil 6 to 8 inches deep is the minimum for most vegetables. Root crops such as carrots and radishes do better in deeper soils.

Vegetables in containers require a growing medium that is well drained but holds enough water to support the plants. It is important to pick a light-weight soil-less growing mix. Avoid using garden soils that will have weed seeds and disease pathogens. Avoid cheap “potting soils” that are likely to hold too much water, compact and heavy.

Most vegetables that grow in the ground of a regular vegetable garden will also grow in containers. The chart to the right gives vegetables best suited for container growing.

Sunlight is important for growing quality vegetables. Most require full sun, which is 6 to 8 hours of direct light. Vegetables such as lettuce, various greens, and herbs can tolerate as little as 4 hours of sun. Pots can be moved to where the best sun exposure is.

Since the roots of the plants are limited and the soil-less mixes do not contain much of the necessary nutrients, it is essential that fertilizer be applied to the container soils. A soluble fertilizer (15-30-15 or 20-20-20) applied once a week is recommended. This can be applied while watering as long as the plants are not wilted from the lack of moisture.

Plants grown in containers require frequent watering because they dry out quickly from sun and wind. Some plants may require daily watering. Water thoroughly so that the water can reach the bottom of the container and allow the excess to drain through the drainage holes. If the soil dries out completely, it may cause wilting or dropping of fruits and flowers. On the other hand, do not overwater. Water the soil and avoid getting the leaves wet. Wet leaves encourage disease.

If you would trellis or stake the plant in the garden, then trellis or stake it in the container. It is very important to train tomatoes, squash and vining cucumbers to allow better air circulation and prevent disease problems from starting.

CROP	MINIMUM SIZE CONTAINER	NUMBER OF PLANTS
Cabbage	1 Gallon	1 Plant
Carrots	2 Gallon	Thin to 2 to 3 inches apart
Cucumber	2 Gallon	2 plants
Eggplant	3 Gallon`	2 plants
Green Beans	1 Gallon	2 to 3 plants
Herbs (Various)	1 to 2 Gallon	1 to 3 plants (depends on herb variety)
Lettuce	1 Gallon	4 to 6 plants
Onions	2 gallon	4 plants
Pepper	3 Gallon	2 Plants
Radishes	2 Gallon	Thin to 1 to 2 inches apart
Squash (Bush)	2 gallon	1 plant
Tomato (Cherry)	3 Gallon	1 plant
Tomato (Standard)	5 Gallon	1 plant

April Gardening Calendar

Donna Aufdenberg, MU Extension Field Specialist in Horticulture

Outdoor Flowering Plants and Ornamentals

- When buying bedding plants, choose compact, bushy plants that have not begun to flower.
- If you buy plants that have blooms, pinch them off before planting so the plant will use energy for root establishment instead of flowering.
- Winter mulches should be removed from roses. Remove dead wood by pruning.
- Examine shrubs for winter injury. Prune all dead and weakened wood.
- Consider planting flowers that can be dried for winter arrangements. Some of the best are strawflower, statice, Chinese lantern, celosia and globe amaranth.
- When chrysanthemums show signs of life, dig up and divide large plants. Discard woody portions and replant divisions 12 to 15 inches apart.
- Many popular plants can be divided now including: phlox, fall asters, Shasta daisies, baby's breath and lirioppe.

Vegetables Gardening

- Plants started indoors should be hardened off outdoors before being transplanted into the garden.
- Use frost blankets to protect tender vegetables from late frosts.
- Thin out crowded seedling from earlier plantings of cool season crops such as leaf lettuces, beets, carrots, radishes, spinach and mustard.
- Flower stalks need to be removed from rhubarb plants, if they develop.
- Now is the time to divide mint, chives, tarragon and creeping thyme.

Fruits and Nuts

- For specific times to spray fruit crops, consult University Extension Guide Sheet #G6010, Home Fruit Spray Schedule.
- Plant bare-root or potted fruits as soon as the soil can be worked.
- Remove tree wraps from fruit trees now.
- Protect bees and other pollinating insects. Do not spray insecticides on fruit trees that are blooming.
- Remove straw covering from strawberries.

Lawns

- Start mowing cool season at recommended heights.
- Aerate turf if thatch is heavy or if soil is compacted.
- Apply crabgrass preventer by the first week of April. Do not apply to areas that will be reseeded.
- The first grass clippings of the season are rich in nutrients and contain fewer weed seeds than those collected later. Put them in the compost pile or mow frequently and mulch them on the ground.

Tips for Buying Healthy Plants

Purchase plants with compact, bushy growth. Avoid plants that are leggy and limp.

Buy plants that are not quite blooming yet. If there are a few buds that are not open, pinch them off before planting.

Take home only plants in properly moist pots. Avoid wilted or overly wet plants.

Only buy plants with healthy colored foliage. Lower yellowing leaves are a sign of problems.

Avoid plants with disease spots or a lot of browning on leaves.

Check the roots. They should be white or creamy white in color and not brown or black.

Inspect the plants for pests. Aphids are very common in early spring on bedding plants.

What Is This??

Katie Kammler, MU Extension Field Specialist in Horticulture

“What is this???” Common things that come to local extension offices every year. Can you guess what they are?



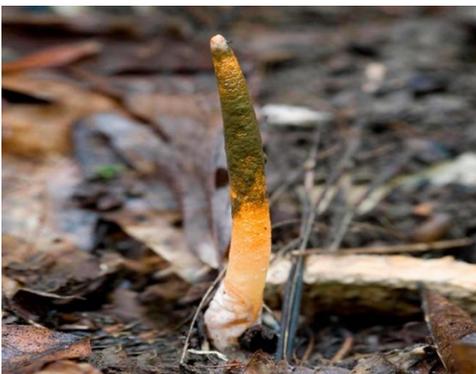
Fungus Gnat Larval Stream - According to University of Illinois Extension, “Fungus gnat larvae are more likely to be numerous in areas with an overabundance of water from rainfall or irrigation.” To find out more about it, go to <http://hyg.ipm.illinois.edu/article.php?id=300>

Photo courtesy of University of Illinois Extension



Indian Pipe - According to Missouri Department of Conservation “Indian pipe is a perennial wildflower that lacks chlorophyll and is therefore white (sometimes pinkish). It is sometimes misidentified as a mushroom. It usually grows in small clusters.” To find out more about it, go to <https://nature.mdc.mo.gov/discover-nature/field-guide/indian-pipe>

Photo courtesy of Missouri Department of Conservation



Stinkhorn Mushroom - According to Missouri Department of Conservation, “Grows in leafy debris, mulch piles, rotting wood; also in woods and fields. Commonly grows in landscaping mulch. The elegant stinkhorn can emerge from its "egg" and grow to full size (and stinkiness) in just a few hours. It's often smelled before it's seen!” To find out more about it, go to <https://nature.mdc.mo.gov/discover-nature/field-guide/elegant-stinkhorn>

Photo courtesy of Missouri Department of Conservation



Dog Vomit Slimemold - According to Washington State University Extension, “Slime molds can be quite fascinating if not a little bit revolting. They are a “fungus-like organism” that thrives in a wet damp environment. There is over 900 species of slime molds but one of the more frequently seen ones is amusingly called “dog vomit slime mold.” To find out more about it, go to <https://extension.wsu.edu/stevens/2016/07/dog-vomit-slime-mold-fuligo-septica/>

Photo by Katie Kammler

Big Garden Mistakes

Katie Kammler, MU Extension Field Specialist in Horticulture

Some garden mistakes are easy to fix but others are not. I am going to share some common big garden mistakes that we are not able to repair if we do them. These are just a few but there are many more.

Topping Trees: This is a pet peeve of mine! Topping is horrible for tree health. It leaves huge wounds that typically do not heal, allowing entry for decay, insects, and disease. Branches that come out of these topped trees are weak and often break in storms. If a tree has grown too large for the space or it is too near a building, it is better to completely prune off limbs near the building or completely take out the tree and start over with better placement or a tree species that does not get as big at maturity.

Adding Sand to Improve Clay Soils: It does not work that way. If sand is added to clay, it results in a concrete-like mixture, making growing conditions worse than clay. To actually change soil texture, it would take adding over 50% of the total soil volume to significantly change the texture of clay soils. This isn't feasible in a home garden situation nor is mixing in that volume. The key to improving clay soils is adding organic matter and that can take time. Examples of organic matter include manures, composts, leaves, grass clippings, straw, cover crops, etc. Always remember to consider the source to make sure there are not any contaminants from herbicides, especially in manures and composts.

Contaminated Composts and Manures: In the last five years or so, we have seen this problem occur numerous times. Composts and manures can be contaminated with commonly used pasture herbicides. Adding contaminated compost can cause plants to become stunted, grow oddly or even die for years after application. It is always a good idea to do a quick test to determine if there might be herbicide contamination before spreading it on the garden since it can take years for the contamination to go away. Put some of the compost or manure in a pot and plant bean seeds. The beans will show distorted growth if there is herbicide carryover present.

Removing top soil during construction: We see this happen in new housing developments or new home construction. Many times, the top soil "disappears" and never returned leading to a struggle to grow desirable plants and lawns. Sometimes these soils are referred to as fabricated soils because construction activities lead to soils that are highly mixed and altered. These soils can have various fertilities and unhealthy pH ranges, be heavily compacted, full of trash and debris, and have strange transition zones that can vary from foot to foot in the construction zone. These are things not easily fixed. Air spades and vertical mulching can help relieve compaction, organic matter can be added, and pH can be adjusted but these soils will never be like they were before construction.

A little is good, more is better! We see this happen in fertilizing, pesticides, lime and more. Too much fertilizer can lead to burning plants. It can also lead to runoff and pollution of our water sources. Pesticides, which include insecticides, herbicides, and fungicides, have specific labels rates and application directions. The LABEL is the LAW! Applying too much can lead to burn, pollution, and human and animal risks. Applying too much lime can increase the pH where nutrients become unavailable to plants. pH can be lowered with sulfur but this takes time and put plants on a roller coaster ride. Wood ashes can also have a liming effect and increase phosphorus and potassium levels.

Please consider carefully how what you do can impact your future gardening! If you have questions, please contact your local Extension specialist and we are happy to help walk you through decision-making processes so you can have a successful garden.

Growing Blue Ribbon Vegetables

Kelly McGowan, MU Extension Field Specialist in Horticulture

County fair time will be here before we know it. If you like to grow vegetables, try your hand at entering some of your produce in the vegetable contest. Some incentives include blue ribbons, bragging rights, cash prizes, and it can be a lot of fun!

I have judged some of these events and would like to share some do's and don'ts of things I have encountered.

- 1) Try to enter in as many categories as possible; many categories will have only 1 or 2 entries and sometimes none at all. This will greatly increase your chances of winning something.
- 2) Read rules and regulations very carefully; I have seen many great entries not win because of something as small as filling out the entry tag incorrectly. The people who coordinate these contests are very particular about this. Some other small things could be incorrect number of something (an example would be cherry tomatoes), incorrect container, etc.
- 3) Make sure you enter in the correct category. It sounds simple, but many people get confused about which category their vegetable should be in and are disqualified. If you have any questions, be sure to call or email ahead of time.
- 4) Harvested at proper maturity for consumption (bigger is not better in this case); firm, tender, crisp, and fresh
- 5) Attractive; good color, shape, clean, trimmed, and free of blemishes (even the side facing down)
- 6) If more than one is being displayed, make sure they are uniform in size, color, shape
- 7) Good enough quality to stay fresh at room temperature for a week
- 8) Attractive in appearance; clean, free of spider webs and insects, disease, and injury
- 9) Try growing something unusual that people have never seen before; plan ahead by looking through seed catalogs that come in the winter
- 10) Canned goods - clean, fresh, right amount of head space, attractive, easy to see contents



For smaller vegetables, multiple specimens are usually requested for an entry. Check your local fair rules for requirements.



Larger entries such as watermelons only require one specimen per entry.



“Finding five to six alike of any vegetable for the county fair can be a challenge. Try to match shape, color and size as best as possible.”



Heirloom Corn

Gatlin Bunton, MU Extension Field Specialist in Agronomy

With colorful names like Hickory King, Bloody Butcher, and Trucker's Favorite, heirloom open pollinated corns can make a great addition to the home garden. Heirloom corns are useful in many ways from decorations in the fall and roasting ears in the late summer to fresh hominy over the holidays. There are numerous varieties and kinds to choose from, including dent, flint, flour, pop and sweet corns to fit the needs of the home gardener.

Heirloom corns are as easy to grow as any modern sweetcorn. Planting dates, nutrient requirements and harvest are all similar to the modern varieties, but can prove to be less sweet if eaten as roasting ears and often times grow much taller. As with any corn, pollination is important to produce full ears. When laying out the area to grow corn it is important to plant in blocks of shorter rows rather than one long row to allow the wind to pollinate the plants successfully. Fertilizer should be applied at planting with about half of the soil test recommended amount of nitrogen being applied at this time. When plants are approximately 30 inches tall the remainder of the required nitrogen should be applied in a side dress application. Side dressed fertilizer can be incorporated with cultivation. Cultivation will provide needed weed control and may be necessary multiple times throughout the season until the plants close canopy and block light from the row. Insect pests of heirloom corn are similar to those of modern sweet corn. Corn earworms are common and cause kernel loss. Japanese beetles feed on newly emerged silks, which can result in poor pollination.

Most of the heirloom dent, flint, and flour corns can be harvested like sweet corn and provide an old fashioned corn flavor not found in modern sweet corn. Harvest for dried ears will be several weeks after a traditional sweetcorn harvest, when the husks have turned brown and ears begin to turn down and hang upside down. When all ears are harvested, it is time to shell the kernels off the cob. This task can be accomplished by hand or through small hand held shellers that remove the kernels as you push the ear through. For larger quantities, it may be worthwhile to invest in a hand crank corn sheller or borrow one from a collector. These tools make easy work of large quantities of heirloom corn. Dried shelled corn has many uses in traditional dishes, such as hominy, corn grits, and corn flour.

Seed saving and at home breeding of open pollinated corns can be a rewarding past time. To save seed from your open pollinated corn, allow it to dry on the ear and harvest like you would dry corn for eating. Select the best ears and ears from plants that performed well in your garden environment. Try to avoid ears from outside rows that may have had less competition than those grown in the middle of the corn patch. These ears may appear big and come from large, healthy plants, but they are likely benefiting from the added light found in the outer rows. To maintain the purity of your corn it is

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Bloody Butcher Dent Corn



Warners Dent



Open pollinated corn

Heirloom Corn

Gatlin Bunton, MU Extension Field Specialist in Agronomy

Continued from page 7 necessary to isolate it from other corn. This can be accomplished by distancing your corn from other nearby corn by 600 feet or careful planting timing to avoid flowering of nearby corns.

If you find two or more varieties that perform well for you, crossing these varieties can provide many years of enjoyment as you select the best new plants from your cross. Corn is one of the easiest plants to breed for the homeowner because it bears separate male (tassel) and female (silk / ear) flowers on each plant. By simply planting multiple varieties together a cross can occur. With purposeful crosses made by pollinating one variety with another, a new hybrid can be created. With a little time and some diligent selection on your new hybrid, you can create your own open pollinated corn.

Field of open pollinated corn (right).



Mature open pollinated corn (left).

Plants of Merit: Coppertina Ninebark

Physocarpus opulifolius 'Mindia' COPPERTINA

Type: Deciduous shrub

Zone: 3 to 7

Height: 6 to 8 feet

Spread: 6 to 8 feet

Flower: Small pinkish-white, five-petal flowers in dense clusters from May to June.

Comments: Sun to part shade, tolerant of drought and poor soils. Pruned after bloom. Coppertina is patented with copper foliage that turns red and does not sucker like native ninebarks.

Information & photos sources: Missouri Botanical Garden



Plants of Merit are plants selected for their outstanding quality and dependable performance for the lower Midwest. They grow consistently well in Missouri, central and southern Illinois, and the Kansas City Metro area. It is a program of Missouri Botanical Garden. Plant review submitted by Katie Kammler

Saskatoon Blueberries

Rennie Phillips, Master Gardener from Scott City, MO

Probably 25 years ago, we moved into the country close to Scott City, MO. We started planting fruit trees and bushes, which included blueberries. When I was shopping for blueberries, I was checking out Gurneys and came across some Saskatoon Blueberries. One offer included two bushes, so I ordered two bushes.

During the last 25 years, we have bought and planted over 50 regular blueberry plants with almost all of them dying. We tested the soil, treated the soil accordingly, watered the plants and frankly gave up on blueberries. But, those two Saskatoon Blueberries just kept growing and pumping out small blue berries that taste amazingly like blueberries. They do not require special treatment like a regular blueberry.

Saskatoon blueberry plants are native to the northern states on into Canada. They are a serviceberry that forms small deciduous bushes or small trees up to 18 feet or so. One site said that the Saskatoons could get up to 30 feet tall. I do not think ours will ever get that tall. Our plants are about 7 or 8 feet tall. It seems like the older the bushes get the larger the berries and the more the bushes produce.

We pick and enjoy a good amount right by the bushes but we also pick and freeze some as well. The berries start out off red and slowly turn blue. The deeper the blue the sweeter the berry. Marge tosses some in her pancakes and you ca not tell the difference in taste and appearance from real blueberries.



Saskatoon Serviceberry (a.k.a. Saskatoon Blueberry, Western Shadbush or Juneberry)

(*Amelanchier alnifolia*)

- Hardiness zone : 2 to 8
- Full sun to full shade; Plants in full sun will have better fruit production.
- Prefers loam soils but tolerates clay and sandy soils.
- Suckers to form colonies.
- Needs well-drained soil; avoid wet, poorly drained soils.
- Best Soil pH range: 5.5 to 7.0, however, will tolerate above 7.0.
- Fruit: Pendulous cluster of small, round fruit ripens to dark purple in June. Ripe fruit can be eaten fresh or used in jams, jellies and pies.
- Excellent for wildlife.

For more information:

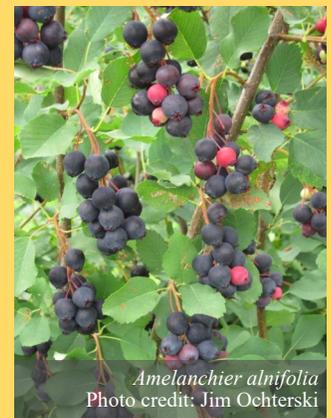
NC State Extension, <https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/amelanchier-alnifolia/>

North Dakota State University, <https://www.ag.ndsu.edu/trees/handbook/th-3-33.pdf>

Cornesll Small Farms Program, <https://smallfarms.cornell.edu/2011/10/juneberries-they-go-where-blueberries-cant/>



Amelanchier alnifolia flower
Photo credit: Matt Lavin



Amelanchier alnifolia
Photo credit: Jim Ochterski

Tick Bite Prevention

Sarah Havens, MU Extension Field Specialist in Natural Resources

Tick season is fast approaching and is here in some places. Preventing tick bites can prevent the spread of tick-borne illness.

Before You Go Outdoors

- **Know where to expect ticks.** Ticks live in grassy, brushy, or wooded areas, or even on animals. Spending time outside walking your dog, camping, gardening, or hunting could bring you in close contact with ticks. Many people get ticks in their own yard or neighborhood.
- **Wear light color clothing.** Choosing clothing with lighter colors deters ticks and also allows you to see ticks on you easier.
- **Treat clothing and gear.** You can treat clothing and gear with products containing 0.5% permethrin. Permethrin can be used to treat boots, clothing and camping gear and remain protective through several washings. Alternatively, you can buy permethrin-treated clothing and gear.
- **Use insect repellent.** Repellants containing DEET, picaridin, IR3535, Oil of Lemon Eucalyptus (OLE), para-menthane-diol (PMD), or 2-undecanone are good choices. Always follow product instructions. Do not use products containing OLE or PMD on children under 3 years old.
- **Avoid contact with ticks**
 - ⇒ Avoid wooded and brushy areas with high grass and leaf litter.
 - ⇒ Walk in the center of trails.
 - ⇒ Avoid trails or areas heavily used by deer or livestock.

After You Come Indoors

- **Check your clothing for ticks.** Ticks may be carried into the house on clothing. Any ticks that are found should be removed. Tumble dry clothes in a dryer on high heat for 10 minutes to kill ticks on dry clothing after you come indoors. If the clothes are damp, additional time may be needed. If the clothes require washing first, hot water is recommended. Cold and medium temperature water will not kill ticks.
- **Examine gear and pets.** Ticks can ride into the home on clothing and pets, then attach to a person later, so carefully examine pets, coats, and daypacks.
- **Shower soon after being outdoors.** Showering within two hours of coming indoors has been shown to reduce your risk of getting Lyme disease and may be effective in reducing the risk of other tickborne diseases. Showering may help wash off unattached ticks and it is a good opportunity to do a tick check.
- **Check your body for ticks after being outdoors.** Conduct a full body check upon return from potentially tick-infested areas, including your own backyard. Use a hand-held or full-length mirror to view all parts of your body. Check these parts of your body and your child's body for ticks:
 - ⇒ Under the arms
 - ⇒ In and around the ears
 - ⇒ Inside belly button
 - ⇒ Back of the knees
 - ⇒ In and around the hair

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Tick Bite Prevention

Sarah Havens, MU Extension Field Specialist in Natural Resources

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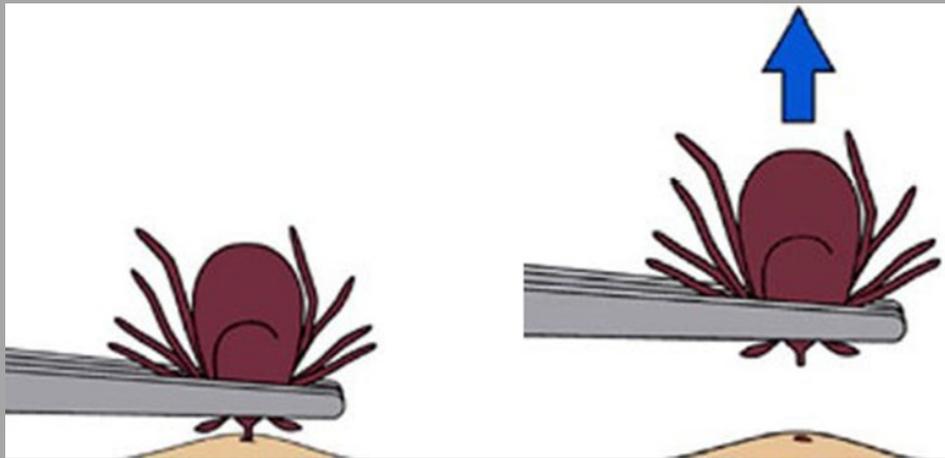
- ⇒ Between the legs
- ⇒ Around the waist

If You Have a Tick Bite

If you find a tick attached to your skin, there's no need to panic—the key is to remove the tick as soon as possible. There are several tick removal devices on the market, but a plain set of fine-tipped tweezers work very well.

How to remove a tick

1. With a fine-tipped tweezers grasp the tick as close to the skin's surface as possible.
2. Pull the tick upward with steady, even pressure. Don't twist or jerk the tick. Twisting or jerking the tick can cause the mouth parts to break off and remain in the skin. If the mouth parts do break off, remove the mouth parts with tweezers. If you are unable to remove the mouth easily with clean tweezers, leave it alone and let the skin heal.
3. After removing the tick, thoroughly clean the bite area and your hands with rubbing alcohol or soap and water.
4. Never crush a tick with your fingers. Dispose of a live tick by putting it in alcohol, placing it in a sealed bag/container, wrapping it tightly in tape, or flushing it down the toilet. You might also save the tick in the freezer. This will allow it to be tested if you believe you have a tickborne illness from the bite.



Picture from Centers for Disease Control

Follow-up on the tick bite

If you develop a rash or fever within several weeks of removing a tick, see your doctor. Be sure to tell the doctor about your recent tick bite, when the bite occurred, and where you most likely acquired the tick.

Upcoming Events

As we monitor the national, state and university response to contain the spread of COVID-19 and keep public health top priority, all face to face MU Extension programming has been suspended through May 15, 2020. This also includes all Extension Master Gardener Program project meetings, programs, and events.

University of Missouri Extension Offices have also been temporarily closed, however Extension Specialists are teleworking from home. You may contact any of them by phone or email. You may also visit your local MU Extension County Facebook page to find out what is occurring locally in regards to posts, web trainings and opportunities, and Extension newsletters.

May 2020

11 Cooking with Herbs at the Girardeau County Extension Office at 6:00 p.m. Learn how to use herbs and how to use them. Hosted by the Girardeau County Master Gardeners. Registration Fee: \$5 Call 573-243-3581 to register.

16-17 Ste. Genevieve Garden in Ste. Genevieve; Tours of public gardens, Plant Sales, Farmers Market; \$7 per person; \$6 per person for groups of 10 or more; Children 12 and under free; For more information, call 573-883-7097



The Garden Spade

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Each month there is a title picture on the front cover of the newsletter. This month: Daffodils