

# INSIDE | OUT

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SECTION E

## License plates get a natural makeover

State rolls out 3 new conservation images



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CONTRIBUTING COLUMNIST

Dragonflies, ruby-throated hummingbirds and Cumberland Falls are part of a win-win situation for ordinary citizens and for the environment. For an extra \$10, you can get nature license plates for your car, with the additional money going to the Kentucky Heritage Land Conservation Fund. The fund, established by the legislature in 1994, uses the money to buy and preserve natural areas.

Three new plates debut this month. The designs are replaced every five years.

A 12-member board awards grants to agencies such as local governments, specified state agencies like the Division of Forestry, and state colleges and universities. The goal is to help the agencies acquire and preserve habitats for rare and endangered species and areas important to migratory birds. Preserving natural areas for public use and education are also part of the fund's mission.

Joe Dietz, who has worked with the program since it began, has seen great success in the preservation of environmentally sensitive land. As of Sept. 30, the conservation fund had helped purchase 29,270 acres through more than 100 projects. Recent awards have included nearly \$500,000 to the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government to add 361 acres near Raven Run Nature Sanctuary. Other recently approved projects aid in the protection of the gray bat and Indian bat in Warren County, and preserving a healthy population of Short's goldenrod in Fleming County.

The new plate designs were chosen from 11 illustrations submitted to the fund and displayed at the Kentucky State Fair in 2006. The public voted on their favorite designs.

Dawn Morrow of Frankfort created the hummingbird plate. Charlie Baglan, of the Kentucky Department for Fish and Wildlife Resources, designed the Cumberland Falls plate. Shannon Martin, of the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet, came up with the dragonfly design, shown below

You can show your support of this program by requesting a nature plate when you renew your auto registration. If you already have nature plates, you should receive a reminder about the new plates. Because the old designs are being retired this year, you'll be able to keep your old plate as a collectible. (You'll still need a new tag and sticker for your car.)

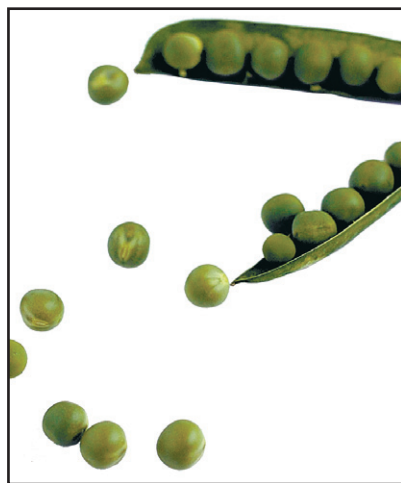
Susan Durisek Smith is a master gardener. Reach her at [durisek@aol.com](mailto:durisek@aol.com).



### To learn more

Revenue from Kentucky's wildlife plates has helped fund preservation projects in 52 counties. For a list, go to [www.dnr.ky.gov/heritageland](http://www.dnr.ky.gov/heritageland).

The money also helps fund nature preserves. For information about Kentucky's nature preserves, go to [www.naturepreserves.ky.gov](http://www.naturepreserves.ky.gov).



# YEAR OF GARDENING

One of the joys of gardening is sharing tips and techniques to encourage beautiful blooms and healthy plants. This year we asked garden club experts from all around Central Kentucky to help us with this month-by-month 2008 gardening calendar.

## JANUARY

Take advantage of a warm day for cleanup. Rake under bird feeders to avoid spring weeds and prevent a seed-hull buildup, which might inhibit nearby perennials' growth. Gather wind-blown pine cones and evergreen needles to mulch acid-loving woody plants like hollies and azaleas. Check the soil around perennials for frost-heaving, lightly tamping down disturbed plants. Make a list of last season's successes and failures during the severe drought, and start looking for xeriscapic, drought-tolerant plants native to Kentucky.

## FEBRUARY

Prune shade and fruit trees. County Cooperative Extension Service offices have great directions for proper techniques. Repot, clean up, divide and trim indoor plants. They'll repay you with growth and blooms. Young children around? Watch their eyes light up when you make a winter fairy garden with dwarf conifers, ground-hugging herbs and tiny fairy figures. Study all the garden catalogs you've received in the mail; order early, while the selection is best.

## MARCH

Cut back ornamental and native grasses to about 3 inches before new growth appears. Start herb seeds like basil, parsley, chives and Greek oregano indoors for transplanting after the last frost date in May. Sow cool-weather vegetable seeds like lettuce, peas, radishes and spinach directly into the garden. Plant cool-weather vegetable transplants like cabbage and chard, as well as onion sets as they become available.

## APRIL

Earth Day can be celebrated year-round. April showers can be diverted to a rain garden, which can intercept and slow runoff. Use native plants, which will attract wildlife. Start a compost pile or worm bin. Compost yard and garden waste and kitchen vegetable scraps, then use the compost in your garden. Leave grass clippings on your lawn. They are moisture-retentive mulch and a natural fertilizer.

## MAY

Plan a garden tour to gather ideas for the coming season. The peony gardens at Ashland, the Henry Clay Estate in Lexington are in bloom this month. Replace roses that didn't make it through the winter. Get a head start on weeds by raking the garden, using weed suppressants and mulching. Prune spring-blooming shrubs like azalea and rhododendrons after they've finished blooming but before they begin to set buds for the next year.

## JUNE

Usually the first week of June is time to plant seedlings and sow warm-season vegetables. As you're weeding, mark your irises when they bloom by tying a ribbon of the same flower color around the foliage. This will help identify them when you divide and transplant them later. Border your vegetable garden with summer annuals such as zinnias and marigolds. Removing spent flowers prolongs bloom time. To prevent leaf-burn, introduce your indoor plants to the outdoors and direct sunlight gradually, exposing them a little at a time. Use a controlled-release fertilizer to feed your flowers and vegetables.

## JULY

Take advantage of cooler mornings to do the weeding, watering, picking and deadheading. An exception: Never pick beans when they're covered with morning dew; that's a sure way to spread disease from plant to plant as you pick. Explore old fields. If you find one with lots of pink milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*) in bloom, be prepared to get intoxicated from the flowery fragrance. Water, water, water.

## AUGUST

Shop perennial sales for healthy, large plants that can be divided and established in the garden before the ground freezes. Don't deadhead coneflowers or *Rudbeckia* species. Instead, allow goldfinches to feed on the seed heads. Plan and order your fall planted bulbs. Plant cool-weather fall cole crops of cabbage, broccoli and cauliflower.

## SEPTEMBER

If you don't have a rain barrel, contact Bluegrass Pride about buying one. Rain water is free! Start composting lawn trimmings, leaves, garden waste and kitchen vegetable leftovers for free fertilizer. Save seed for next year. Label the containers with seed type and color. It's fun to share them with friends. Check your garden's health. Check the underside of leaves for insects to catch them while they're young. Weed by hand, hoeing or mechanical cultivator, but be careful not to injure plant roots.

## OCTOBER

Bring tender rosemary in from the garden by repotting into a clay pot, covering the base with moss; water only when moss is dry. Time for lawn care. Continue to mow and rake to prevent leaves from matting and smothering the grass. Clean up, repair and store garden furniture, equipment and tools. Look for foliage, berries and pods to dry for adding to wreaths and arrangements.

## NOVEMBER

Now's your last chance to plant spring bulbs, to allow good root connections to develop before the ground freezes. A bonus: Many garden centers have bulbs on sale this month. Do some iris care: Cut back leaves to about 6 inches. Dig up and separate rhizomes. Discard the "grannies" or decaying parts, and replant, making sure the rhizomes are just barely in the ground, slightly visible above the soil. Now is the time to clean up the vegetable garden. Remember to remove all foliage and fallen fruit to help prevent disease and insect infestations from carrying over to next year. Plan to rotate crops around your garden on a three-year cycle. Empty ornamental pots and move them to shelter; wet soil expands when it freezes and might break your pots.

## DECEMBER

Forcing branches into bloom can brighten your indoor decor. Look for trees and shrubs like magnolia, flowering pink and white cherry, redbud, dogwood and forsythia. Cut branches for forcing after eight weeks of temperatures below 40 degrees. Branches should be at least 6 inches long and cut on a slant. Split the cut end about 2 inches for better water absorption. Place the branches in hot water, add floral preservative and set in bright sunlight. In about two weeks, you should see some blooms.

Thanks to: **January:** Boone County Garden Club, Union. Marcia Schoeni, (859) 586-5860. **February:** Garden Club of Frankfort. Sue Kirkman, [suek551@msn.com](mailto:suek551@msn.com). **March:** Refined Garden Club, Lancaster. Connie Leggett and Larna Bentley, (859) 806-3911. **April:** Fayette County Master Gardeners. To order the 2008 Green Gardening Calendar, see <http://ces.ca.uky.edu/fayette/horticulture/calendar.pdf>. **May:** Daylilies & Lords Garden Club, Lexington. Mona Keeling, (859) 887-9793. **June:** Four Seasons Garden Club, Irvine. Susan G. Hawkins, [SGH4567@aol.com](mailto:SGH4567@aol.com). **July:** Harrison County Garden Club, Cynthiana. Yvonne Kramer and Susan E. Dumaine. **August:** Down to Earth Garden Club, Lexington. Carol Von Lancken, [CarolVon@uky.edu](mailto:CarolVon@uky.edu). **September:** Late Bloomers Garden Club, Paris. Phyllis Robinson, (859) 987-4637, [Robinson7878@bellsouth.net](mailto:Robinson7878@bellsouth.net). **October:** Fleming County Garden Club, Flemingsburg. Connie Crain, [Crain99@windstream.net](mailto:Crain99@windstream.net). **November:** Garden Club of Danville. Terry and Linda Taylor, [TerryRTaylor@bellsouth.net](mailto:TerryRTaylor@bellsouth.net). **December:** Somerset Garden Club. Jeanette Harrell and Cecelia Carroll, (606) 678-2889.

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