



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Proposes Listing Monarch Butterfly as Threatened

On December 10, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) issued a [press release](#) proposing to list the monarch butterfly as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. The proposed decision was then listed in the Federal Register on December 12 to start the 90-day public comment period. While this does not address new regulations yet, the Fish and Wildlife Service hopes that this proposed rule will help build on and enhance monarch conservation efforts while balancing activities in support of economic growth.

The monarch butterfly completes an incredible annual 3 to 5-generation migration that covers thousands of miles from its overwintering sites in Central Mexico to the northern Midwest, Northeast, and Canada. However, over the past 30 years, populations have declined by more than 80% to 95%, increasing the risk of this species' extinction later this century. During the winter, high in the mountains of central Mexico, monarch butterflies roost by the millions on trees in less than 20 secluded areas.

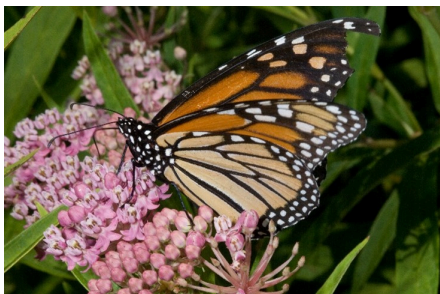


Figure 1. The monarch butterfly is an iconic species that is highly regarded by the public (Photo: Ric Bessin, UK).

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The USFWS is proposing to increase monarch habitats by planting native milkweed and nectar plants all across the nation – in yards, schools, parks, rights-of-way, businesses, places of worship, and other area lands. While the adults will take nectar from a variety of plants, the caterpillars need milkweed for development. Other proposed provisions will help protect populations and provide an opportunity for populations to recover.

The USFWS is seeking public input on its proposal to list the species as threatened with species-specific protections and flexibilities to encourage conservation under section 4(d) of the Endangered Species Act (ESA). **Public comments will be accepted on the proposal until March 12, 2025.** The Service will then evaluate the comments and any additional information on the species and determine whether to list the monarch butterfly.



Mary Dossett
Agent for Horticulture
Advisor for McCracken County
Extension Master Gardeners



Savannah Gilbert
Horticulture Assistant

Prep for poinsettias- what to know before you grow

Source: Rick Durham, UK extension consumer horticulture specialist

With their bright red, pink or white leaves, poinsettias herald the approach of the holiday season. They are beautiful as stand-alone plants or as components of bigger holiday displays. In the United States, we grow poinsettias as indoor potted plants, most in heated greenhouses, but you might be surprised to know that in its native climate, this subtropical species can grow to more than 10 feet tall.

The person responsible for bringing poinsettias to the United States was Joel Roberts Poinsett, a botanist, physician and the first U.S. ambassador to Mexico. Dec. 12 is officially Poinsettia Day and marks the 1851 death of Poinsett.

Growers cultivate more than 100 varieties of poinsettias, but the red leaf variety is the most popular. Contrary to popular belief, poinsettias are not poisonous. The plant was cleared of this charge by the National Poison Center and the American Medical Association. Also, an Ohio State University study found a 50-pound child would have to eat more than 500 leaves to have any harmful effect. Even though the leaves have an awful taste, it's still a good idea to keep pets away from the plants as consumption can cause digestive upset.

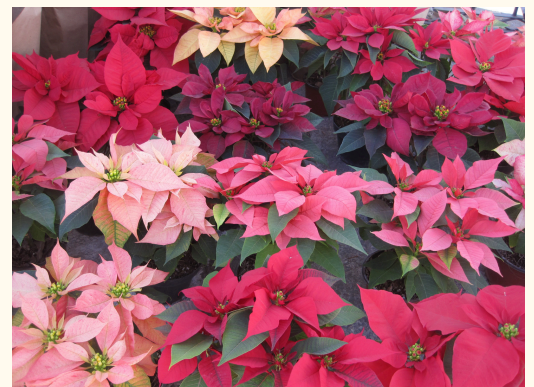
More than 34 million poinsettias are sold each year, accounting for about a quarter of the sales of all flowering potted plants. For those who are thinking about taking up mass production, while that may seem like a big money-maker for growers, it is actually a high-risk venture with significant start-up costs, such as building a heated greenhouse, and requires demanding labor and management. The profit margin for most poinsettia growers is low due to the highly competitive marketing environment of wholesale and retail markets like local garden centers, florists and grocers, roadside stands, farmer's markets, fundraisers and direct sales from the farm.

Those interested in producing the plant should also consider the short six-week sale window beginning in early November. Still, growers see a value in producing a crop of poinsettias, because it allows for spreading capital investments over the whole year versus having the greenhouse sit idle during later summer and fall.

In the end, growers who cultivate multiple varieties can distinguish themselves a bit from the competition and have a market advantage.

For more information on poinsettias or other horticulture topics, contact the McCracken Cooperative Extension Service.

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From Tree Thief to Holiday Tradition: The Story of Mistletoe

Once autumn leaves have fallen, mistletoe becomes highly visible on large trees throughout Kentucky. *Phoradendron*, the scientific name for Kentucky's most common type of this parasitic plant, means tree thief. These small leafy plants are commonly found on twigs and branches of many hardwood species in the southern U.S. Mistletoe extracts (steals) water, mineral elements, and food from tree hosts; hence the name.

Mistletoe use in holiday decor has roots in pagan traditions. The appearance of a live parasitic plant while the host tree appears dead led some to believe that mistletoe mysteriously held the life of the tree during winter. Druids harvested mistletoe in a special rite, never allowing the plant to touch the ground, and then hung it in their homes for good luck.

Our modern-day mistletoe holiday tradition likely originates from a mythological Norse goddess of love and beauty. Frigga, whose son was restored from possible death by mistletoe, was thought to bestow a kiss on anyone walking beneath one. Today, when two people meet under the mistletoe, tradition suggests they must exchange a kiss for good luck.

Phoradendron has simple, fleshy green leaves arranged oppositely on stems (Figure 1). Stems are short and more branched than host trees, so mistletoe often appears as a spherical bunch of dense vegetation (Figure 2). These bunches may be a foot or two in diameter and are located high in the tree where sun exposure is greatest. Mistletoe berries range from white to straw-colored to light red. Birds eat the fruits, reportedly toxic to human and animals, then deposit the seeds onto branches where they germinate and penetrate the next host tree.



Figure 1: The *Phoradendron* mistletoe has simple, fleshy green leaves. (Photo: Paul A. Mistretta, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org)



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Figure 2: Mistletoe often appear as a spherical bunch of dense vegetation. (Photo: John Hartman, UK)

Mistletoe commonly appears in open-grown trees where birds tend to roost, thereby less frequently in forest trees. Generally, mistletoe causes minimal damage, although it can be harmful to stressed trees. Mistletoe can be removed from landscape trees by pruning.

Don't get burnt, because not all firewood is created equal

<https://exclusives.ca.uky.edu/2024/anr/dont-get-burnt-because-not-all-firewood-created-equal>

DON'T GET BURNT, BECAUSE NOT ALL FIREWOOD IS CREATED EQUAL

Source: Laurie Taylor Thomas, University of Kentucky extension forester at Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment

Fires in the fireplace or outside in the fire pit are intrinsically connected to our visions of nestling in for a long, comfy winter. Outside, let the winter bring its ice and snow if it wants. Inside, we could have a fire to snuggle up to. But not all firewood is created equal.

There are some important things to know before lighting, igniting just any old wood.

- Different species of trees provide different amounts of heat. Wood is made up of air and wood fiber, or cellulose. Since the cellulose burns, but not the air, look for the heaviest or densest firewood per unit volume. The best woods would be oak, hickory and black locust. Yellow-poplar, silver and red maple are not as dense and will provide much less heat. On the other hand, they are great woods for starting a fire.
- Freshly cut wood contains a lot of water. Seasoned wood refers to wood that has been given the time for some or all of that water to evaporate. It usually takes between six and 12 months for wood to cure. If you burn it too soon, when it's still green, most of the heat generated will go into evaporating that water, rather than heating your room.
- Burning unseasoned wood can also be dangerous. Generated smoldering fire can cause a creosote buildup in your chimney. Burning pine logs, with their heavy resin, can result in the same problem. Over time, that buildup can lead to a chimney fire.
- If you're seasoning your own wood, cut it first to a length that fits your fireplace, remove the bark, and split the logs for faster drying. Stack it off the ground in an open area with good airflow. Pallets make a good base for this. Air dry it for a minimum of six months.
- If you are buying your wood from a vendor, ask what tree species the wood comes from and how long it has been seasoned. Wood that has been properly seasoned has a gray, weathered appearance and large cracks in the ends of the logs. Even if you've bought seasoned wood, storing it correctly—stacked off the ground and covered with a tarp to protect it from rain—will prevent the wood from reabsorbing water.
- Be aware, too, of unwanted visitors that can hitch a ride on your firewood. Buy firewood near the location where you plan to burn it. Moving infected firewood long distances (especially ash) can spread invasive species, such as the emerald ash borer, a destructive species that originated in Asia. You likely won't see the adult borers, which are three-eighths to one-half-inch long and very narrow. But larva and eggs could be out of sight inside the logs.

However you plan to enjoy utilizing firewood this season, stay safe and enjoy their embers.

Contact your local McCracken Extension office for more resources, tips and information.



Lichens in Landscape Plantings (PPFS-GEN-20)

Lichens are fascinating and complex living organisms that are composed of multiple organisms growing together for the mutual benefit of one another. Lichens can grow in colonies on pretty much any substrate anywhere on Earth. Frequently found on rocks, fences, tombstones, and soil, lichens cause the most concern when present on living trees and shrubs. While often found on woody plants in poor or declining health, they are not causing the decline; lichens are neither pathogenic nor parasitic.

This publication discusses the biological components in lichens, where they grow, concerns related to lichens, types of growth habits, and what should (and should not) be done when found on landscape plants.

Lichens in Landscape Plantings (PPFS-GEN-20) is available online.

For additional publications on diseases and other issues affecting landscape plants, visit the UK [Plant Pathology Extension Publications](#) webpage.

By Cheryl Kaiser, Plant Pathology Extension Support, and Paul Vincelli, Plant Pathology Extension Specialist

University of Kentucky
College of Agriculture, Food & Environment
Extension Plant Pathology

College of Agriculture, Food and Environment
Cooperative Extension Service

Plant Pathology Fact Sheet

PPFS-GEN-20

Lichens in Landscape Plantings

Paul Vincelli
Plant Pathology
Extension Specialist

Cheryl Kaiser
Plant Pathology
Extension Support

Ellen Crocker
Forest Health
Extension Specialist

WHAT IS A LICHEN?
A lichen is a complex living organism that is composed of multiple organisms growing together for the mutual benefit of one another (a mutualistic symbiotic relationship). One component, an alga, provides food through photosynthesis; a second component, a fungus, provides physical structure and protection. Recent research has identified the presence of a third component, a yeast (Basidiomycete, a different group of fungi), in many lichens. The yeast is believed to produce substances that help prevent infections and repel predators.

WHERE DO THEY GROW?
Lichens grow in colonies everywhere and anywhere, including the tropics and polar regions. Because they prefer clean, fresh air, lichens are less likely to be found where the atmosphere is polluted. They also grow on pretty much any substrate, such as rocks, fences, tombstones, and soil, as well as trunks and branches of both live or dead woody plants (FIGURES 1 & 2).

WHAT IS THE CONCERN?
Lichens growing on living trees and shrubs can raise concerns that the lichens are causing a disease; however, lichens are neither pathogenic nor parasitic.

While these organisms often do appear on woody plants in poor or declining health, they are not causing the decline. Some lichen growth on tree trunks is not unusual (particularly in higher light conditions or high humidity environments); however, abundant growth of lichens is often an indicator that the tree is in decline from other causes:

- Lichens have a photosynthetic component and require sunlight. The canopy of a healthy tree tends to limit sunlight penetration. However, trees under stress often have a thinning canopy or dieback, allowing more sunlight to get through and providing favorable conditions for lichen growth.




FIGURE 1. THE CANDELARIA FLAME LICHEN (*CANDELARIA CONCOLOR*; CANDELARIACEAE FAMILY) HAS A FOLIOLOSE GROWTH HABIT. HERE SHOWN ON MAPLE, IT IS ALSO OFTEN FOUND ON ASH, WILLOW, AND ELM TREES, AS WELL AS ON WOODEN FENCES AND POLES.
FIGURE 2. THIS FOLIOLOSE LICHEN IS A MEMBER OF THE PHYSICIACEAE FAMILY, A DIVERSE GROUP OF LICHENS THAT CAN ALSO HAVE FRUTICLOSE OR CRUSTOSE GROWTH HABIT.

Agriculture & Natural Resources • Family & Consumer Sciences • 4-H/Youth Development • Community & Economic Development

Kentucky Fruit and Vegetable Conference

January 6-7, 2025

The 2025 Kentucky Fruit and Vegetable Conference will be Monday and Tuesday January 6-7, 2025 with pre-conference events on Sunday, Jan. 5 at the Marriott Lexington Griffin Gate Golf Resort & Spa in Lexington, KY.

This premier, state-wide event annually brings together approximately 600 growers, researchers, and technical support providers. The conference is devoted to fruit, vegetable, and cut flower production, handling, harvesting, marketing, storage, and related topics. The conference kicks-off with pre-conference events including fruit and vegetable grower roundtable discussions with university specialists where the group debriefs on the production year, challenges are discussed and questions are answered.

The main conference program has more than 20 different educational tracks with more than 70 speakers. The trade show offers more than 60 vendors featuring horticulture products and services.

Register here: tinyurl.com/2025fruitandveg

Kentucky State Horticultural Society 169th Annual Meeting

Kentucky Vegetable Growers Association 54nd Annual Meeting

Organic Association of Kentucky and Kentucky Horticulture Council

In cooperation with
University of Kentucky Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment


Kentucky State University College of Agriculture, Communities and the Environment and Kentucky Department of Agriculture









Country Ham and Broccoli Grits

<p>1 tablespoon olive oil</p> <p>1 pound fresh broccoli florets</p> <p>1/2 cup minced onion</p> <p>3/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes</p>	<p>2 cloves minced garlic</p> <p>4 cups 1% milk</p> <p>1 cup uncooked quick grits</p> <p>1 cup 2%, shredded cheddar cheese</p>	<p>6 ounces country ham, cut into 1/2 inch pieces</p> <p>1 large egg, beaten</p> <p>Salt and pepper to taste</p>
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1. Preheat oven to 375°F. Coat 13x9x2 inch baking dish with cooking spray. **Heat** olive oil in a frying pan. **Sauté** broccoli, onion, garlic and red pepper flakes until vegetables are tender. About 5 minutes. **Set aside.**

2. Heat milk to a boil in a large saucepan. Slowly, **whisk** in grits. **Reduce heat** and stir continuously until thickened. **Reserve** 2 tablespoons of the cheese.

3. Remove from heat, stir in


ham, broccoli mixture, cheese, egg, salt and pepper. **Mix** until well blended. **Pour** into prepared baking dish.

4. Sprinkle with reserved cheese. **Bake**, uncovered for 30 minutes, or until top is set and lightly puffed.

Yield: 16, 1/2 cup servings.

Nutritional Analysis: 120 calories, 3.5 g fat, 1 g saturated fat, 25 mg cholesterol, 370 mg sodium, 13 g carbohydrate, 1 g fiber, 4 g sugar, 9 g protein.

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



**The McCracken
County Cooperative
Extension will be
closed from
December 25-
January 1 for the
Holiday**



2025 HORTICULTURE PROGRAMS

WINTER SOWING

5pm-6pm



Join us for a hands-on gardening workshop at the Extension Office taught by Tammie Winkler. Please RSVP by calling (270) 554-9520.

JANUARY 7TH, 2025

2025 New Holt Rd.
Paducah, Ky 42001

**MARY DOSSETT,
HORTICULTURE AGENT**

**Cooperative
Extension Service**

Agriculture and Natural Resources
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MARTIN-GATTON COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND ENVIRONMENT

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Lexington, KY 40506



Disabilities
accommodated
with prior notification.

2025 Horticulture Programs

5:00 - 6:00 P.M.

McCracken County Extension Service
2025 New Holt Rd Paducah, KY 42001

Please RSVP for each program
by calling (270) 554-9520

JAN 7 Winter Sowing

FEB 4 “Evergreens” Propagation (on-site)

MAR 4 Native Plants

APR 1 Fairy Gardens

MAY 6 Container Gardening

JUN 3 Floral Arranging

JUL 1 Love Shack Farm (on-site)

AUG 5 Drying & Pressing Cut Flowers

SEP 2 Lawn Management

OCT 7 Pumpkin Planters

NOV 5 Holiday Wreaths

