

Allergy season has arrived despite cool temperatures

The unseasonably cool weather Kentuckians have been experiencing lately doesn't mean we have escaped allergy season.

"Allergy season actually begins in late February when junipers, pines, cedars and oaks release pollen into the air," says allergist Dr. Iraklis Livas. "Fortunately for allergy sufferers, snow and colder temperatures help keep the pollen count low."

Dr. Livas is a board-certified specialist with more than 17 years of clinical experience in allergies, asthma and immunology. He conducts specialty clinics throughout central and eastern Kentucky including Mt. Vernon.

Typical symptoms for people suffering from allergic rhinitis, commonly known as hay fever or seasonal allergies include; coughing, sneezing, itchy eyes, runny nose and scratchy throat. In severe cases it can also result in rashes, hives, difficulty breathing, and asthma attacks.

According to the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, an estimated 50 million Americans suffer from all types of allergies (1 in 5 Americans) including; indoor/outdoor, food & drug, latex, insect, and skin and eye allergies.

Dr. Livas says that allergy prevalence overall has been increasing since the early 1980s across all age, sex and racial groups and there are varying opinions about why this is so. "Perhaps we are too clean now. With fewer infections, immune systems can turn on themselves. Other theories are that global warming is responsible for more pollen, also, toxins from pollution can contribute to problems," states Livas.

"Spring-time in Kentucky can be particularly hard for some. Barometric and temperature changes can worsen symptoms," says Livas. "So when you have 70 degrees one day and 40 degrees the next, you'll feel worse."

Dr. Livas shares some Do's and Don'ts that you may want to follow during the pollen and mold seasons to lessen your exposure to the pollens or molds that trigger your allergy symptoms:

- DO keep windows closed at night to prevent pollens or molds from drifting into your home. Instead, use air conditioning; which cleans, cools, and dries the air.

- DO minimize early morning activities when pollen usually peaks in the morning and early afternoon.

- DO take a shower after outdoor activities.

- DO keep your car windows closed while traveling.

- DO try to stay indoors

when pollen counts or humidity is reported to be high, and on windy days when dust and pollen are blown around.

- DON'T take more medication than recommended in an attempt to lessen your symptoms.

- DON'T mow lawns or be around freshly cut grass; mowing stirs up pollens and molds.

- DON'T hang sheets or clothing out to dry. Pollens and molds may collect in them.

- DON'T grow too many, or overwater, indoor plants if you are allergic to mold. Wet soil encourages mold growth.

To help control your indoor allergy symptoms:

- DO dust regularly and use a vacuum with a HEPA filter to help eliminate stirring dust up into the air.

- DO encase mattresses, box springs and pillows in airtight zippered plastic or special allergen-proof fabric covers — available at many national stores.

- DO wash bedding weekly using hot water and dry in a hot dryer.

- DO remove the pets from inside the home and avoid contact. If avoidance is not possible, try to minimize contact. Bathing a pet weekly can help reduce the amount of allergens that are shed in the home.

- DON'T let pets sleep in the bedroom.

- DON'T leave food sitting out (including pet food dishes) that may attract cockroaches. Cockroaches produce a protein in their droppings that is a primary trigger of asthma symptoms.

- DO avoid airborne irritants such as; tobacco smoke, aerosols, paint, perfumes, cleaning products, and any other strong odors or fumes.

However, there are effective approaches to treating allergies, both prescription and non-prescription, including the use of antihistamines, decongestants, nasal sprays (either steroid or antihistamine) and immunotherapy (allergy shots).

If you or someone in your family is suffering from allergies or asthma, Dr. Livas and his staff can look at your health history and conduct a thorough evaluation as well as perform allergy testing, if needed, to determine which allergens provoke your symptoms. Once your evaluation and in-office skin test are complete, Dr. Livas will discuss the results and present you with your customized treatment plan.

For additional information or to schedule an appointment, contact Allergy, Asthma and Immunology at (800) 640-0246 or visit their website at www.drilivas.com.



Students at RCHS showed their support for former Lady Rocket Sara Hammond on Tuesday. Hammond and her Louisville Cardinals played for a National Championship title against Connecticut on Tuesday night. The Cardinals lost to the Huskies.

Yards to Paradise

By Max Phelps
Soil Key to Gardening Success

Soil is key to success in growing things. Sure, water and some nutrients will be needed as well, but the soil is what most influences success in plantings for both food and landscaping. Good soil is a pretty generic term, and someone who has made a living off the land will probably take one look and tell you if you have good soil or not. Usually they will be right.

It's not so simple as letting a farmer look at a handful of your soil though. There needs to be some analysis of the nutrient content, the organic content, and the size of the soil particles. A friable soil with good tilth is one thing to a corn grower and quite another to the local greenhouse or nurseryman. What you plan to plant or grow has significant bearing on what constitutes "good soil".

Too often a discussion on soil takes place after the fact. Someone has a dead flower, tree or a sick shrub and wants help figuring out what went wrong. Of course, diseases or insects or drought or too much water can be the culprits when things go wrong. But quite often it's the soil that is the problem.

Since soil is a major factor in growing successfully, let's talk about it in a little more depth. (Speaking of depth, depending on the crop or plant, what's below the first two or three inches on down to two or three feet depth can be a lot more important than what's visible at a glance.) For growing grass, two or three inches of topsoil with a subsoil that perks or drains well may be all that's needed. To grow corn or potatoes in the garden, it may take 8 to 12 inches of good deep loamy soil to get really good re-

sults. And some additional fertilizer, either from a farm store or some manure from a stable or something. Growing trees, be it forestry or orchard or vineyard, a deep well drained soil will be needed. Subsoiling techniques with a bulldozer or a husky tool behind a big tractor may be required to break up the soil on down to where the roots can penetrate for satisfactory growth and production.

To grow mustard, lettuce or radishes, a couple inches of loose soil at the surface may be all that's necessary. It really matters which crop or plants you are growing.

More things to consider:

1) The pH is a factor of acidity or alkalinity. 7.0 is the reading for neutral soil, that is to say a soil neither sweet nor sour. 2) Drainage; does your soil dry out too rapidly to support plant life without daily irrigation (think strawberries grown in sand in Florida or California), or does your soil hold water and stay sticky wet for days after a rain? Both conditions will greatly impact gardening success. 3) Organic matter. Organic matter in soil is usually a very good thing. (But tilling in some recently produced sawdust or mulch may be a very bad thing if you don't know how to adjust your nitrogen fertilizer to compensate for what will be tied up in the decay process. Ditto for dredged soil from a river or creek or soil from bottomland that is more than a foot or so from the surface—there may be close to zero available nitrogen, and you won't have success without adding nitrogen fertilizers, even though the soil may look plenty rich.)

The pH factor is neither good nor bad, it's simply a measurement. And if you're trying to grow a field of clo-

ver or alfalfa, you want a sweet or high pH soil. If you want to grow azaleas or blueberries, you'll almost certainly kill them by planting them in the field that grew alfalfa so well! So, be sure to test your soil for pH, if you've not done so before. There are ways to change pH, but it is better to plan well ahead for the crop or shrubs you intend to plant, not try to "fix" a bunch of sickly or dead plants. Lime (crushed and burnt limestone, gypsum, bone meal, are sources) will raise the pH to a higher number over time. Sulfur, aluminum sulfate, pine or hardwood mulch and peat moss are some ways to lower pH. Even importing some soil that already has the correct pH for your project may make sense if you are wanting to plant things that don't like your existing soil.

Drainage is not just for septic fields; drainage is critical to growing many trees and flowers successfully. Too dry will kill many plants, but plants native to deserts may grow just fine in such a location. Too wet all the time is often harder on trees and plants than drought. Willows and sycamores and cypress may be happy as can be with wet conditions. So, soil drainage or the lack thereof is part of what is key to gardening and landscaping success.

Another part of this topic is soil nutrients. Everyone knows (well maybe not everyone) that 10-10-10 garden fertilizers contain N-P-K, which is nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium or potash. These nutrients are demanded by most plants. But some plants absolutely require additional minor nutrients, what we call "trace elements". Iron, magnesium, manganese are examples of minor nutrients that plants also need. Adding 10-10-10 garden fertilizer to play

sand may indeed be sufficient to grow a few flowers or vegetables, but you will have nutrient-deficient plants. This is where additional supplements such as composted leaves and grass and manure can come in so handy. Peat, egg shells, coffee grounds, cocoa and rice husks, shredded straw or peanut hulls—so many organic wastes can be added to soil to improve both it's nutrients and water holding or drainage capacities.

Heavy clay soils, rocky soils, or worse yet—those yards where the developer sold all the topsoil and you're trying to grow grass and shrubbery around your house in soil that is not fit for growing—knowing your problems before you begin to plant is critical.

Growing success can be had in most any soil. You just have to choose the crops or landscape plants that will like what you have. Or, you will have to add to or amend your soil, or change it out for some that is better suited to what you want to plant. With the right knowledge and necessary adjustments in either your plant choices or in changes to your soil you can garden successfully almost anywhere.

I think it probably is good to conclude by adding that raised beds are one solution you may wish to consider if you have less than desirable soil for growing the things you want to grow. (Personally, I believe raised bed gardening is successful more because of adding good planting mixes than the simple act of doing a 'raised bed'.)

A good gardener will grow things that will amaze you in some very marginal soils. And if a person has ideal soil already, then raised beds are not needed. At least I don't find them to be helpful where the soil is already good.

The author is a landscaper. Contact Max via website www.rockcastles.net



PROGRAM OPTIONS

There are two programs in Rockcastle County that offer free early childhood education services to qualifying four year old children. (Three year old children may be eligible with an identified disability.) The programs are: The Rockcastle County Public Preschool and Kentucky River Foothills Head Start.

WHAT TO BRING FOR REGISTRATION

Please bring your child's state birth certificate, social security card, immunization certificate, proof of income and proof of medical coverage (i.e. medical card or insurance card) to register. Call your school with any questions and to make an appointment to register your child.

HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

The following health requirements must be met in order to enroll in the early childhood program and kindergarten.

- Physical exam
- Blood pressure and lead screening
- Dental exam
- Vision exam
- Immunizations

Early Childhood & Kindergarten REGISTRATION & SCREENING

ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for **Rockcastle County Public Preschool**, your child must be 4 years old by October 1st and meet one of the following requirements:

- Be eligible for Free Lunch
- Have a disability
- Three year olds may be eligible with an identified disability
- Non-qualifying four year olds may attend the Early Childhood program as space allows

To be eligible for **Head Start**, your child must be 4 years old by October 1st and meet one of the following requirements:

- Meet Federal Income Guidelines
- Have a disability
- Be eligible for Public Assistance (SSI, K-TAP, Child Care Subsidy)
- Meet guidelines for being considered a homeless family
- Reside in a foster home

What is a disability?
A delay in one or more of the following areas is considered a disability:

- Speech and language
- Large and fine motor
- Cognitive skills
- Social and emotional
- Self-help skills

REGISTRATION DATES

Students will only be enrolled by verifying residence within a school's attendance zone.

Brodhead Elementary School

Early Childhood & Kindergarten
9:00 AM - 2:00 PM
Tuesday, May 14th – Friday, May 17th

Please make an appointment by calling your school at (606) 758-9756.

Mt. Vernon Elementary School

Early Childhood & Kindergarten
9:00 AM - 2:00 PM
Tuesday, May 14th – Friday, May 17th

Registration will be located at
Rockcastle Adult Education Center
955 West Main Street Mt. Vernon, KY
Across from the Rockcastle Middle School

Please make an appointment by calling your school at (606) 256-2953.

Roundstone Elementary School

Early Childhood & Kindergarten
9:00 AM - 2:00 PM
Tuesday, May 14th – Friday, May 17th

Please make an appointment by calling your school at (606) 256-2235.