



Ag News

Ray Wilson, Leslie County Agent for Agriculture and Natural Resources Education (606) 672-2154 Email: rwilson@uky.edu

Get Ready for Spring Planting

Source: Kenny Seebold, UK extension plant pathologist

While we get these days that reminds us of spring we begin to think about gardening time. Now is the time to manage and prevent disease in this year's garden. Summer crops may still be standing, even after being killed by heavy frosts and cold temperatures. At this time, you can take preemptive measures to help ensure a successful and bountiful garden this season.

Cleaning things up can help cut back on disease in the following harvest season. Many pathogens responsible for diseases commonly seen in home gardens can overwinter or survive between crops on equipment and plant residue. Here are tips to prevent the spread of disease and be ready for the next growing season:

Remove old plant debris and trash from the garden or greenhouse and burn or bury it. Thoroughly clean tools and equipment and sanitize with disinfectant. (This is also a good time to oil shovels and other blades to prevent rust.)

Turn dead plant matter under as soon as you are finished with the garden. Several plant pathogens can survive in these residues during the winter, and they can threaten this year's crops. Plowing them under now allows more time for plant matter to break down and the pathogens to die.

Rotation is another powerful tool that should be implemented to prevent disease. Rotation slows the buildup of pathogens in the

vegetable garden, preventing problems in the long run. For best results, avoid planting the same or closely related crop species in the same place more than once every three years. Even though spring is months away, start thinking about what you'll grow and where it will go in the garden. Making notes of variety, placement and yield from the past season while it is fresh in your mind is especially useful, since it is easy to forget the details over the long winter months.

As the new gardening catalogs start coming in it is time to start mulling over the varieties you are likely to plant. Resistant varieties can significantly reduce or eliminate damage from disease and can allow a gardener to lower (or possibly eliminate) use of fungicide for a particular crop. Do keep in mind that resistant varieties do not eliminate disease. Consult your seed supplier or catalog for more information.

A garden does take planning and careful consideration, but successful disease management begins with the few simple steps outlined above. If you start now, you'll have built a strong foundation for a successful disease management program in your home garden.

For more information contact Ray Wilson, Leslie County Agent for Agriculture and Natural Resources Education at (606) 672-2154.

