

Weed It and Reap

FRANKLIN COUNTY COOPERATIVE EXTENSION DECEMBER 2024 NEWSLETTER



Proper Handling of Fresh Christmas Trees for Longer Enjoyment

By Annette Meyer Heisdorffer, Ph.D. Extension Agent for Horticulture Education-Daviess County

The fragrance of fresh evergreens in the house brings back wonderful memories of holidays celebrated with family and friends. Properly preparing the fresh-cut or balled burlapped tree for display indoors provides enjoyment and keeps it safe. Balled and burlapped and fresh-cut Christmas trees are available locally.

A live balled and burlapped tree serves two purposes: as a Christmas tree and for planting in the yard after the holiday. Inspect the tree for disease or insect pests. Then consider that the soil and root ball are heavy so select a size that you or someone else can handle safely to protect yourself and the tree. Another important point is to protect the tree by covering it or placing it inside a covered vehicle when bringing it home.

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After purchasing the tree, keep it outside in a protected, cool location. Gradually move the balled and burlapped tree indoors. First, take it into a garage or unheated room for a day or two before bringing it into the house. Before entering the house, place the tree inside a large, plastic tub to keep floors or rugs clean and dry. Remember that seven to ten days is the limit for keeping balled and burlapped trees indoors.

Place the tree out of direct sunlight and away from heat sources such as stoves, radiators, heat vents, and fireplaces. Heat may injure the tree. Use miniature lights for decorating since big lights are heavier and much hotter.

Remember to water the tree enough to keep the root ball from becoming dry and causing the tree to wilt and die. However, too much water, combined with indoor warm temperatures, may encourage new growth. The new growth could be damaged by cold temperatures when it is moved back outside.

After seven to ten days indoors, move the tree back to the garage or unheated room to allow it to adjust to colder temperatures for several days. If the tree is moved outside right away, it will be sensitive to cold temperatures and may be injured.

Then plant the tree. Dig a planting hole two and a half times wider than the soil ball and as deep as the depth of the soil ball. Place the tree in the planting hole, add some soil and water. Continue to fill in the hole and water again. More information on planting a balled and burlapped tree is available at <http://www2.ca.uky.edu/agcomm/pubs/ho/ho91/ho91.pdf>. Mulch the roots with 2 to 2.5 inches of hardwood bark or pine needles.

Continue to check soil moisture during the winter; water when needed.



When choosing a fresh-cut tree to buy, conduct a pull test. Gently, grab a branch and pull your hand across the needles firmly. The needles should stay attached to the branch. Gently bounce the tree on the ground. If the tree produces a shower of green needles, the tree is too dry. Expect a few older, yellow needles from the inside of the tree to fall. Also, the tree should be green or the typical color for that species.

When transporting the fresh-cut Christmas tree home, protect it by covering with burlap or a large piece of unwanted fabric, tie the tree with twine and place it in a sleeve of plastic netting, or put it inside a covered part of the vehicle. Wind dries out the needles, reducing the time it can remain safely inside your home.



When home, cut 1 to 2 inches off the bottom of the tree trunk. Place it in a bucket of water to allow water uptake. Keep the tree in a cool garage or shed out of the sun and wind until time to decorate it.

Before bringing the tree inside, cut off another 1 to 2 inches from the bottom of the trunk to improve water uptake. Make the cut straight across the trunk for best results. Place the trunk in a sturdy, water-holding stand with widespread legs, big enough to fit the trunk.

Place the tree in the house where room exits and major pathways are not blocked. Keep it away from heat sources and direct sunlight to prevent drying out.

Fill the reservoir of the tree stand with clear water, according to recent scientific studies. The recommendation at one time included bleach and sugar or corn syrup, but this is no longer recommended since they do not benefit the tree. The most important point is to keep water available to the tree. A one-gallon capacity tree stand makes it easier to

keep the tree watered. A tree can take up 1 quart of water per inch of diameter of the trunk. So, a four-inch diameter trunk can take up a gallon or more of water a day, especially during the first week inside. Check the tree stand reservoir daily and check to make sure the trunk is in the water.



Remove the tree when it becomes dry, brittle, or when needles begin to fall. A tree may last two to three weeks inside the home. A dry tree is a fire hazard. It is better to be safe than sorry.

Happy Holidays

The Franklin County
Cooperative Extension Office
will be closed from
December 25 - January 1
for the holidays.

With Care Some Holiday Plants can Brighten Your Home Throughout the Year

Source: Rick Durham, extension professor, Department of Horticulture

The colorful plants you enjoy during the holidays can linger beyond the season. If you care for them, they may become a welcome addition to your houseplant collection.

Traditional Christmas plants, such as poinsettia, holiday cactus, Christmas pepper, kalanchoe, Jerusalem cherry or cyclamen, require a bright, sunny location in the home. Regular thorough watering whenever the soil is dry is also very important. A sunny location and regular watering are enough for these plants throughout December, but they will need more specialized care if you plan for them flower again next year.



In January, decide whether to keep or discard your holiday plants. That decision is easy for Christmas pepper, Jerusalem cherry and chrysanthemum because they will not flower again in the home environment.

Holiday cactus, kalanchoe, or cyclamen can remain colorful through February with proper care. You may even keep them as

houseplants after February if you provide the correct conditions. Holiday cacti are relatively easy to grow while kalanchoes and cyclamen are more difficult. While poinsettias may continue growing, they are difficult to bring into flower for the next holiday season and are best discarded.

The major difference you'll see in your holiday plant after a year will be its size. If you are successful, you may have plants with 40 to 50 flowers from the same plant that had only six to eight flowers the previous year. Holiday cacti with many flowers will be two to five times as large next year. Kalanchoe will also increase in size while cyclamen tend to stay compact.

For this season's poinsettias, choose plants with small, tightly clustered yellow buds in the center of the colorful leaf-like bracts commonly referred to as the flowers. Look for crisp, undamaged foliage. Water the plant when it feels dry and discard excess water in the saucer under the plant. Place the plant in a bright, naturally lit location with some direct sunlight. Keep the plant out of drafty areas and away from heat-producing appliances. After a few weeks, apply houseplant fertilizer according to the label directions. The colorful bracts may stay nice into January and February.



Christmas Tree Recycling

With the winter Holidays fast approaching, many people are opting for a natural tree this year. After the presents are unwrapped, and the lights are coming down, please consider donating your tree to KDFWR for fish habitat construction. KDFWR has drop-off points across the state where you can bring your old tree and put it to good use. KDFWR will take your tree and combine it with others to create fish attractors for lakes all over the state. Trees will be used to replenish existing fish habitat sites as well as create new habitat

sites. These brush reefs provide nesting and rearing habitat for gamefish as well as creating homes for invertebrates and smaller fishes that provide food for larger fish. Just clean your tree of all the artificial decorations, lights, tinsel, ornaments, etc., and drop it off at one of our locations below during daylight hours only (between 8:00 am and 5:00 pm). Christmas tree drop-off sites will be open from Dec. 26 through January 15th. The locations are in parks for the most part, so it will be a good opportunity to get out of the house and enjoy a local park while you help fish populations across the state. Check below for the list of county drop-off sites.

| County | Location | Address/Directions | Contact | Phone Number |
|----------------|--|--|----------------|--------------|
| Anderson | Ace Hardware | 1106 Bypass South, Lawrenceburg, KY 40342 | Chris Dillon | 502-839-8880 |
| Barren | Barren River Lake Port Oliver Boat Ramp | From Hwy 252 in eastern Allen County, follow signs to Port Oliver Boat Ramp | Eric Cummins | 270-746-7127 |
| Boone | Camp Ernst Lake-Boat Ramp Area | Camp Ernst Park, 7615 Camp Ernst Rd, Burlington, KY 41005 | Jeff Crosby | 502-892-4464 |
| Breckinridge | North Fork Boat Ramp Parking Lot | KY 259 S of Hardinsburg | Adam Taylor | 270-257-2061 |
| Calloway | Western District Fisheries Office | 30 Scenic Acres Drive, Murray, KY 42071 | Adam Martin | 270-753-3886 |
| Campbell | Pendery Park | 4113 Williams Lane, Melbourne, KY 41059 | Megan Clere | 859-547-1866 |
| Carter | Grayson Lake USACE Emergency Spillway Area | West side of Launch Ramp Road near the USACE office | Tom Timmerman | 606-783-8650 |
| Fayette | Jacobson Park | East Lexington off of Hwy 25, Paddle Craft Parking Lot | Jeff Crosby | 502-892-4464 |
| Floyd | Eastern District Fisheries Office | 2744 Lake Rd, Prestonsburg, KY 41653 | Jason Russell | 606-889-1705 |
| Franklin | KDFWR Headquarters | #1 Sportsman's Lane, Frankfort, KY 40601 | Jeff Crosby | 502-892-4464 |
| Franklin | Forks of Elkhorn Hatchery | 3785 Georgetown Road, Frankfort, KY 40601 | Jeff Crosby | 502-892-4464 |
| Garrard | Garrard Co. Conservation District Office | 166 Precision Court, Lancaster, KY 40444 | Jeff Crosby | 502-892-4464 |
| Grayson | Moutardier Boat Ramp | KY 259 S of Leitchfield (11.7 mi) to 2067/Moutardier Rd to ramp | Darren Smith | 270-286-6608 |
| Harlan | Martin's Fork Lake Boat Ramp | Off Hwy 987 at Smith, KY, upper parking lot | Jason Russell | 606-889-1705 |
| Jefferson | McNeely Lake Boat Ramp | From I-265 Exit 155 on Beulah Church Road, right on Old Bates Road, left on Cooper Chapel Road | Jeff Crosby | 502-892-4464 |
| Knott | Carr Creek Lake Marina Parking Lot | 217 Big Smith Br., Sassafras, KY 41759, upper parking lot | Jason Russell | 606-889-1705 |
| Laurel | Bald Rock Picnic Area | 8990 W Laurel Rd, London, KY 40741 | Travis Bucket | 606-516-1909 |
| Laurel | London Region Recycling Center | 911 TLC Lane, London, KY 40741 | Jim Price | 606-864-5521 |
| Lawrence | Lawrence County Community Center | 205 Bulldog Ln, Louisa, KY 41230. Parking lot near dumpster (please do not block dumpster access). | Jason Russell | 606-889-1705 |
| Madison | Lake Reba Recreational Complex | Soccer complex B parking lot across from Lake Reba boat ramp parking lot | Tom Timmerman | 606-783-8650 |
| McLean | Northwest District Fisheries Office | 1398 Hwy 81N, Calhoun, KY 42327 | Jeremy Shiflet | 270-273-3117 |
| Perry | Perry County Conservation District | 310 Morton Blvd., Hazard, KY | Patti Fugate | 606-435-1725 |
| Pike | Fishtrap Lake | Pompey Br, in back corner of parking near RV campground | Jason Russell | 606-889-1705 |
| Pulaski | KDFWR Somerset Regional Office | 135 Realty Lane, Somerset, KY 42501 | Marcy Anderson | 606-677-4096 |
| Rowan | Minor Clark Fish Hatchery | 120 Fish Hatchery Rd, Morehead, KY 40351 | Tom Timmerman | 606-783-8650 |
| Scott | Lusby Lake/Scott County Park | Off of Hwy 25 north of Georgetown, Scott County Park Road, east of Road Department Garage | Jeff Crosby | 502-892-4464 |
| Shelby | Guist Creek Lake Marina | 11990 Boat Dock Road, Shelbyville, KY 40065 | Jeff Crosby | 502-892-4464 |
| Taylor | Crazy Horse Archery and Tackle | 2422 New Columbia road, Campbellsville, KY 42718 | Shaun Canaday | 270-789-3776 |
| Warren | Southwest District Fisheries Office | Approximately one mile down Bennett Lane, just past Schneider Lane intersection, Bowling Green | Eric Cummins | 270-746-7127 |
| Warren | Cabela's Outpost | 3395 Nell O'Bryan Court, Bowling Green, KY 42103 | Jacob Carroll | 270-936-8324 |
| Whitley/Laurel | Corbin City Garage | Between Engineer Street and Wallins Towing on 25W | Gary Kelly | 606-523-6530 |

Winter Cover Crop can Improve Garden Soil

Source: Rick Durham, extension professor, Department of Horticulture

No matter how small your garden is, it can play an important role in absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and temporarily locking it in the soil. There are a number of ways you can improve on this natural cycle, but at this time of year, the best way is through a cover crop.

Soil left bare over the winter months is susceptible to weed growth, erosion that can wash away valuable nutrients and a loss of carbon into the atmosphere. Soil nitrogen left over from this year's crop is subject to leaching due to fall and winter precipitation. Planting a fast-growing cover crop can help prevent these problems. The term crop in this context may be misleading. These plants are not meant to be harvested. Instead, they add important nutrients, promote beneficial bacterial growth and stabilize the soil.

Easy and effective cover crops that can be planted at this time of year include annual rye grass, hairy vetch, red clover and winter rye.

Annual rye and winter rye are particularly effective as late-season cover crops. They germinate quickly and are an effective barrier against weeds. Grasses, however, do not capture nitrogen in their root system, so consider pairing rye with a legume, such as red clover or hairy vetch.

Hairy vetch and red clover work well as a cover plant, whether paired with rye or by themselves. Being legumes, they are

excellent at fixing nitrogen in the soil. They are also prolific enough to reduce weeds and prevent erosion. In the spring, their blossoms will attract bees to your garden. If you worry about hairy vetch or clover reseeding in your lawn – though they're pretty plants and would add biodiversity and important nutrients – just cut them back before they bloom.

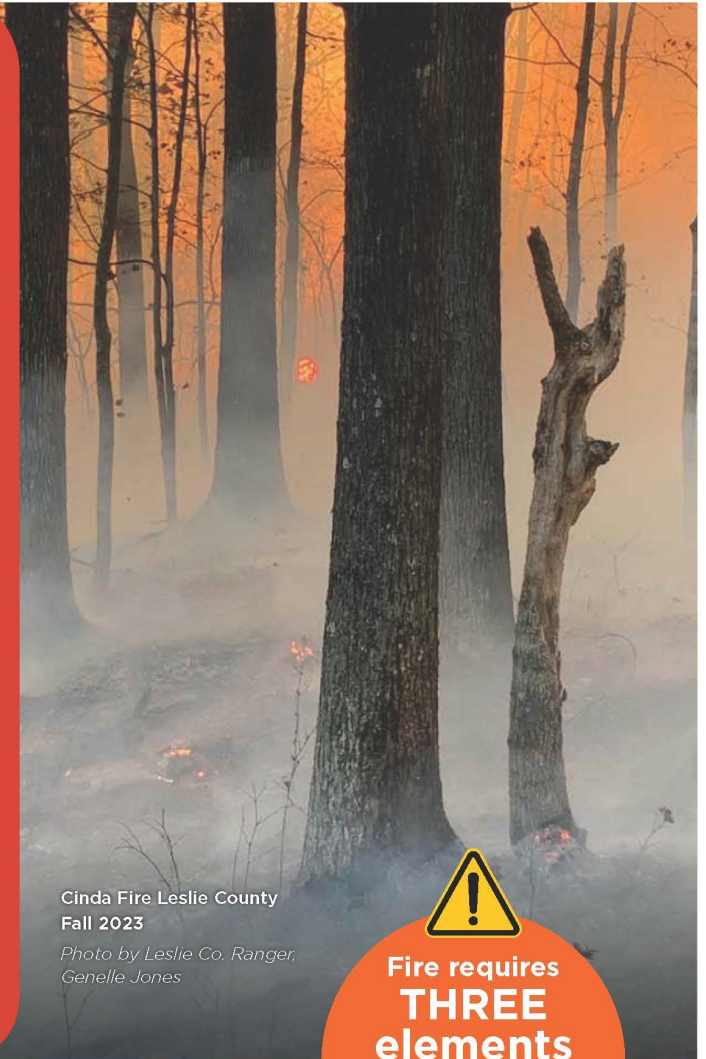
Come spring, you have two options. You can turn over your cover crop into the soil, allowing your vegetables or flowers to benefit from the nutrients it will slowly release. Or you can cut it back and let it die naturally, planting directly into the crop and using it as a mulch to continue to suppress weed growth and supply nutrients to your garden. Depending on which cover you plant, this may be easier said than done, because some, particularly grasses, are difficult to directly sow or plant into.

Grasses have a densely packed root system, which make them difficult to till or turn over. If your garden is particularly small or you're gardening in raised beds, rye might not be your best option. However, vetch and clover both have root clumps which are easily dug up and turned over or planted between. Be sure to terminate the cover crop before allowing the plants to go to seed.



NOT ALL THINGS IN THE FOREST SHOULD BE *WILD!*

Nature needs to be wild to thrive. However, fire is one thing that should not be running wild across the landscape. Wildfires are uncontrolled, unplanned fires burning in woodlands or grasses. Humans cause the majority of wildfires through activities such as camping, burning yard waste, or simply being careless. Although sometimes fire can be beneficial to environments, problems arise when humans build homes and develop land near forests and natural areas.



Cinda Fire Leslie County Fall 2023

Photo by Leslie Co. Ranger, Genelle Jones


Fire requires THREE elements to burn and grow heat, oxygen, and fuel.

Fire requires three elements to burn and grow: heat, oxygen, and fuel. Heat can come from many things such as campfires, sparks from equipment, or even the sun. Structural firefighters remove heat from flames by dousing them with water. Like



Town Mountain Fire – Fall 2023 Photo by KDF Personnel

humans, fire also needs oxygen to survive. Have you ever put the top back on a candle, and it stopped burning? That is because you have blocked off its oxygen. Lastly, fire needs fuel to burn. Wildfires mostly burn leaves, trees, and grasses. However, it will not distinguish between wood from a tree and wood from a house. Wildland firefighters use control lines that surround the fire to stop it spreading. They create a large ring around the fire, free of vegetation and flammable items, so the fire does not have any fuel to burn. If not controlled, wildfires can destroy homes, property, and lives.

(Continued on next page)

PROTECTING THE FOREST *TOGETHER*

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The weather plays a big role in the spread of wildfires. Fires tend to occur on dry days when the humidity is low. There is little moisture in the air for vegetation to absorb, so leaves and other dead vegetation burn more readily. Wind also increases wildfire danger. The wind feeds the fire more oxygen and helps it spread. If planning to make a campfire or other outdoor fire, always check the weather first. If it is supposed to be dry or windy, plan those activities another day.

People who enjoy outdoor recreation or live near natural areas have a responsibility to prevent and prepare for wildfires. Remember, fire can be a dangerous tool. Do not be careless or play with fire. Be responsible and help protect your community. You can also protect your home by creating defensible space and removing flammable materials from your property. This decreases the likelihood that a fire or its embers reach your home.

Protect your home and the homes of the wildlife around you by being responsible with fire, preventing wildfires, and being prepared in case a fire does become wild.



KENTUCKY FOREST FIRE SEASONS:

- *October 1st - December 15th*
- *February 15th -April 30th*

(Continued on next page)

Kentucky Division of Conservation, Protecting the Forest Together, 2024



Yocum Creek Fire
Fall 2023
Photo by KDF Personnel



Crew Leader James Madden
on Ash Lick Fire
Fall 2023
Photo by KDF Personnel

Kentucky Division of Conservation, Protecting the Forest Together, 2024

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Preventing Wildfires:

- ✓ Check the weather before doing any outdoor burning
- ✓ Do not burn within 150 feet of woodlands
- ✓ Have at least 10 feet of clearance around the fire from any vegetation.
- ✓ Do not leave your outdoor fire unattended
- ✓ Ensure there is plenty of water available
- ✓ Make sure the fire is out cold and no heat is felt from the embers.

Creating Defensible Space Around Your Home:

- ✓ Make sure your address is marked and fully visible from the road for emergency personnel
- ✓ Remove anything within 30 feet of your home that could burn easily, such as firewood, leaves, and other dead vegetation
- ✓ Clean roof and gutters
- ✓ Remove flammable materials on and from under decks and porches
- ✓ Keep plant bed watered and prune dead vegetation
- ✓ Mow grass regularly

FIRE SEASON

**October 1 – December 15
and
February 15 –April 30**



DO NOT BURN

No burning between **6 a.m.** and **6 p.m.**



Higher daytime temperatures dry out the fuels that feed wildfires.



Wind speed picks up during the day and can spread the flames faster.



Humidity drops during the day, drying out the fuels that feed wildfires.



Why?



OKAY TO BURN

Okay to burn between **6 p.m.** and **6 a.m.**



Temperatures drop at night and fuels won't dry out as fast.



Wind speed drops and is less likely to reignite embers or spread sparks.



Humidity levels rise at night and fuels absorb the moisture.



Why?

PROTECTING THE FOREST TOGETHER

FORESTRY FUN FACTS & WEBSITES!



DID YOU KNOW that the latex used to make rubber gloves is harvested from a rubber tree by making slits in its bark?

PLAY FOREST BINGO!



Before you go exploring make or print a bingo card with things you want to see along the way and check them off as you go!



kidsandtheoutdoors.com/forest-bingo-free-printable/

During growing season, oak trees can drink up to **100 GALLONS** of water per day!





Homebased Microprocessing Workshop

Homebased Microprocessors are farmers who grow and harvest produce to use in their value-added products. Homebased microprocessors are required to grow a predominant ingredient in the products they make. The first step to becoming certified as a homebased microprocessor is to attend a Homebased Microprocessor (HBM) workshop presented by the University of Kentucky.

January 16, 2025
9:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.

Franklin County Extension Office
101 Lakeview Court
Frankfort, KY

\$50
Fee

To register & for additional dates/locations:
ukfcs.net/HBM

(502) 695-9035
franklin.ext@uky.edu



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Lexington, KY 40506



 Disabilities accommodated with prior notification.

OAK Annual Conference

REGISTER NOW for OAK's 14th Annual Organic Farming Conference, *Grounded in Organics: From Soil to Market*, January 23-25, 2025, at Kentucky State University's Harold R. Benson Research and Demonstration Farm in Frankfort, Kentucky.

OAK's annual conference, now in its 14th year, includes a growing audience of hundreds of Kentuckians and neighbors active in the region's food systems: farmers, researchers, nonprofit professionals, federal and state agency partners, technical service providers and conscious consumers working collectively to build a resilient local food system for all. Collaboration among these diverse voices, grounded in the connection to Kentucky farms, soil and communities, provides a rich foundation for learning and growth. **We invite you to be a part of it!**

In 2025, OAK's conference program features three days of inspiration from local and regional speakers, a useful trade show and abundant networking opportunities to empower and support farmers and food system innovators. The conference theme for #OAK2025 is *Grounded in Organics: From Soil to Market*. **The primary focus of the OAK conference agenda is on-farm production systems, techniques and practices**, with the interwoven threads of **community, conservation and collective action** inseparable from the sustainable agriculture movement.

OAK is committed to making the conference open and accessible to all, and a big part of that is keeping the registration fees comparable to similar Kentucky and regional conferences. For several years, OAK received generous support that kept fees comparatively low. This year, however, OAK did not receive anticipated USDA conference grant funding and must raise the registration fees to pay conference costs. A portion of the registration fee supports farmers through locally sourced lunches with direct farm impact during the winter season. As always, OAK is grateful for support from sponsors that make the conference and scholarships possible, and options for discounted registration are available. **Register before December 13 to get early-bird pricing, or apply for a conference scholarship.** If paying the registration fee is a hardship for you, please reach out to conference@oak-ky.org.

**The 2025 Recipe & Cook Wild calendars are now available!
Visit the Franklin County Extension Office to pick up your free copy.**

University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service | Nutrition Education Program

COOK WILD KENTUCKY CALENDAR 2025

2025 NUTRITION EDUCATION PROGRAM UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

FOOD + NUTRITION

Recipe Calendar



Roasted Root Vegetables

6 medium beets
2 large sweet potatoes
3 parsnips
2 tablespoons olive oil

1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon black pepper
Dressing (recipe follows)

Dressing

1/3 cup white wine vinegar
1/4 cup olive oil
2 tablespoons horseradish
1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
2 teaspoons honey
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon pepper
Stir together and set aside.

Preheat oven to 400° F.

Peel beets, sweet potatoes and parsnips. Cut into 1/2 inch thick cubes.

Toss vegetables with olive oil and place in a single layer on a greased baking sheet.

Sprinkle with salt and pepper.

Bake at 400°F for 20 to 25 minutes, or until tender. Cool. Arrange vegetables on a serving dish and drizzle with dressing.

Yield: 6 servings

Nutritional Analysis: 210 calories, 10 g fat, 1.5 g sat fat, 3 g protein, 30 g carbohydrate, 0 mg cholesterol, 750 mg sodium, 7 g fiber.

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



COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

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Adam Leonberger

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Disabilities
accommodated
with prior notification.