

AG NOTES
By John Teague
UT/TSU Extension
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FALL COLORS

Dr. Wayne Clatterbuck, Professor, Dept. of Forestry, Wildlife & Fisheries of the University of Tennessee Extension, shared these facts on fall colors. Here are some interesting things that affect fall foliage.

Leaves are turning colors. Autumn coloration in Tennessee should be brilliant. Weather conditions have encouraged vigorous tree growth, plenty of moisture, and warm and not excessively hot fall days. Trees are not stressed. The combination of not too much and not too little moisture, no extended droughts, and diurnal warm days and cool nights should promote vibrant color change with longer durations this year.

Tennessee is fortunate to have a wide variety of tree species and different topographies from Bristol to Memphis. Each tree species has different patterns of leaf color and shedding of leaves. The varied topographies provide different environmental conditions that influence leaf color change. The leaf color will occur at different times and scales across the landscape depending on species mixtures and environmental conditions.

The color change will peak first at the higher elevations in the mountains of east Tennessee and the Cumberland Plateau during the second and third week of October. The best colors in the Ridge and Valley (Knoxville area) and middle Tennessee is usually the last week of October (Halloween) and perhaps extending into November. The colors in west Tennessee reach their zenith during the first two weeks of November.

Factors that influence leaf color are shorter day lengths, moisture, temperature, and sunlight. For more information why leaves turn color, refer to UT Extension publication on *Changing Colors of Leaves* (SP 529), found at <https://extension.tennessee.edu/publications/Documents/SP529.pdf>

Here are a few summary statements about leaf color change. Cool nights and warm days tend to retain leaf color longer and colors are more vibrant. Sunny days promote vivid leaf color. Overcast days will cause color to be duller. Freezing overnight temperatures and early frost will cause leaves to turn brown without leaf color. Strong winds and heavy rain can blow leaves off the trees prematurely limiting the duration of leaf color. Adequate moisture will yield a longer period of leaf color. Leaf color change begins first at the higher elevations where it is cooler, then progresses to the valleys allowing some leaf color on the Tennessee landscape from October through mid-November. Extended summer droughts and lack of moisture during the fall promote short-lived leaf color that is less brilliant. The longer-growing season attributed to climate variability consistently has delayed the fall color change in Tennessee 7 to 10 days compared to 20 years ago.

Enjoy the show! Since weather conditions vary from year to year, no two fall seasons will look exactly the same. Leaf color in 2021 is projected to be one of the finest.

WHAT IS THIS?

I had an image of a larvae sent to me for identification and the question should they destroy it and its eggs if it's a destructive critter. I thought I recognized it, but then it was different. This threw me off so I sent it to the lab for ID. I have attached photos of three stages. Turns out that I had not seen this one before.

The photo of this variety of hornworm looked like our tomato or tobacco hornworm, but this one was brownish and the horn is missing on the tail. Note the black dot on the tail. Apparently, they have tails in the early stages, and then it disappears in the late stages.

The photo of the hornworm with the rice-shaped eggs attached to it is not its eggs, but it has been attacked by a parasitoid wasp and these wasp eggs are slowly killing the hornworm, so it's being taken care of by nature. The Pandora Sphinx adult photo shows its color pattern, and I immediately think of green camouflage.

The photos of the adult and the hornworm larvae with the wasp egg cocoons are from a publication from Michigan State University by Duke Elsner, and the link is https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/hornworm_caterpillars_the_big_cats_of_the_vineyard

These hornworms can cause significant damage in vineyards, and the recommendation from the author is to keep vigilance out for hornworms to avoid extensive damage to foliage. Controls are available.





THE KIDS

We watched Hank and Ford play baseball. Good games. They are getting pretty good at fielding and batting, and when on base they love to steal bases. Hank stole home twice. Ford will swing at most anything and he's going to get a good hit most of the time. Ford played first base and he likes it there and does a good job. Hank covered second and shortstop. He even pitched the last inning and it was okay. At times he had too much speed and not enough accuracy. It's a learning league and I like that. More emphasis on how to play a position than on winning. No stars. The coaches are great teachers, some of them played at the college level.

Piper is learning more about horseback riding. She loves it and does her part at the barn work. She loves to ride any horse at the farm, but she really likes to ride her mother's horse. She is learning how to balance, be safe, control, etc. No doubt that she'll be a rider, she giggles and talks the whole time and you can tell she is thrilled.

We love 'em. Can you tell?