

Extension Notes

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AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

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Soil Compaction is Hard on a Garden

Gardening season is in full force. It's a good time to think about the soil in your garden plots and beds. Soil compaction creates an unfriendly growing environment for plants and is a serious problem for many home gardeners. But don't worry, it is relatively easy to prevent.

Compaction transforms soil into a difficult environment for plant growth by making it harder for roots, water to penetrate the soil. Major causes of compaction are working the soil when it is too wet, foot traffic and excessive rototiller use.

To reduce this problem, avoid working in the garden or walking in it when the soil is too wet. Squeeze a handful of soil and if it forms a muddy ball, rather than crumbling when you open your hand, that's a sign the soil is too wet to work.

Walk between plants and rows in the garden area to reduce compaction in primary plant growth areas.

Excessive rototiller use destroys soil structure and promotes compaction. When compaction takes place in a dense soil structure, it also makes root growth more difficult.

A little hand hoeing, rather than a rototiller, may be all you need to do to eliminate a few weeds. It usually causes less soil damage than repeated rototilling and is less harmful to the earthworms that help aerate the soil.

You also can use mulch to control weeds instead of tilling. Layering mulch 2 to 3 inches deep relieves the pressure of walking on the soil, reducing the degree of compaction.

Contact the Carter County Cooperative Extension Service for more gardening information. Educational programs of the Cooperative Extension Service serve all people regardless of economic or social status and will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, creed, religion, political belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expressions, pregnancy, marital status, genetic information, age, veteran status, or physical or mental disability.

Upcoming Events:

- **Hike & Learn** – Friday, June 7th @ 1:00 PM – Morehead State University Eagle Lake
- **Farmer's Markets Open** – Saturday, June 15th @ 8:00 AM at the Olive Hill Market (Save-a-Lot Parking Lot) and @ 9:00 AM at the Grayson Market (Shed behind the Extension Office)
- **Ag Development Board Meeting** – Monday, June 24th @ 6:00 PM – Extension Office