

KENTUCKY NURSERY BULLETIN

UK NURSERY CROPS TEAM

APRIL 2022

Cooler & Wetter than Average Overall

While the very first few days of May are expected to be relatively warm, the NOAA's Climate Prediction Center is forecasting an above average chance for cooler than average temperatures for the month. With this in mind, it is quite possible we haven't seen our last frost date just yet.

The outlooks for precipitation are also calling for an above average chance of wetter than average conditions for most of the eastern half of the US. Coupled with the potential for a late frost, this could make getting field planting a challenge this year.

See **UKAg Weather's Long Range Outlooks** for a variety of forecasts of temperature and precipitation probabilities.



College of Agriculture,
Food and Environment
Cooperative Extension Service

NURSERY CROPS EXTENSION & RESEARCH

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<https://NCER.ca.uky.edu/>

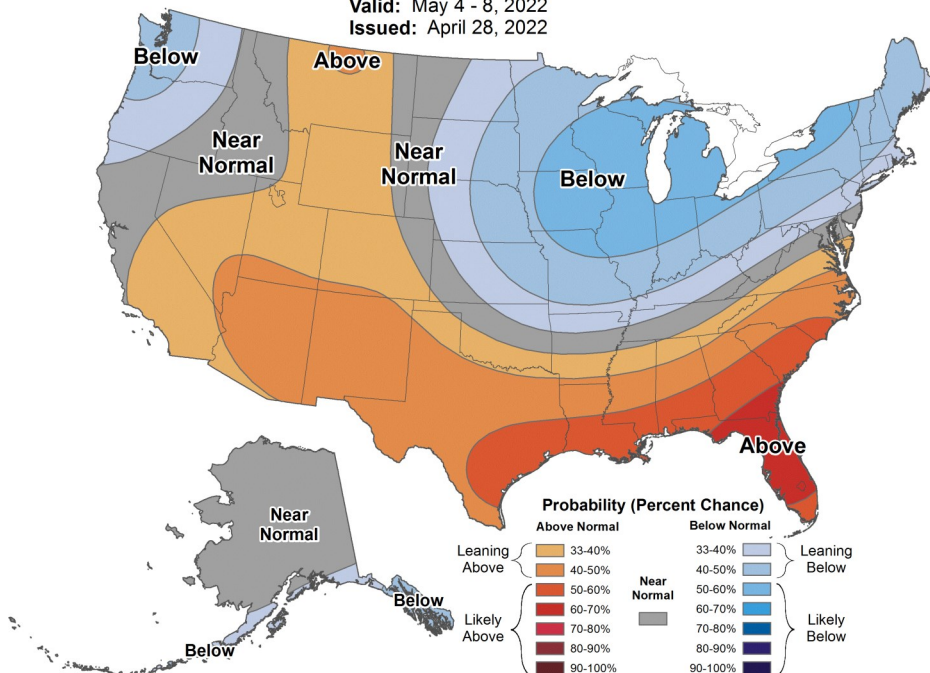
Joshua Knight, Senior Extension
Associate & Managing Editor



6-10 Day Temperature Outlook



Valid: May 4 - 8, 2022
Issued: April 28, 2022



Temperature Probability, May 4-8 2022

Image: NOAA Climate.gov, 28 APR 2022

- **Hammerhead Worms Slithering into Kentucky**
- **2022 KNLA Summer Summit Registration Open—Schedule Posted**

Hammerhead Worms Slithering into Kentucky

Jonathan Larson, Extension Professor, Entomology

Recently we have received several inquiries about hammerhead worms and their prevalence in Kentucky. These predaceous flatworms look like something out of a bad 1950's sci-fi movie, sometimes described as snake-like with a hammer for a head. They have also been in the news a lot lately after some social media posts went viral and people began to notice them. So, what are they and should anything be done about them?

Identification

These particular land planarians are distinct looking. Typically they are light brown or honey in color. Species may also have varying numbers of dark stripes that run down their back. For example, *Bipalium kewense* (also known just as hammerhead flatworm) has five dark lines, while *Bipalium pennsylvanicum* or the three-lined flatworm has... three lines. The species vary in size but they can be over 10 inches long. Their most distinguishing characteristic is the sickle or half-moon shaped head that gives the group their name. They are also slimy looking, flat in profile, and legless.



Figure 1: Hammerhead worms are slimy, legless, predatory worms most noted for their hammer or half moon shaped heads. They feed on earthworms, snails, and slugs.

Photo © Jean-Lou Justine, Leigh Winsor, Delphine Gey, Pierre Gros, and Jessica Thévenot

What is the issue?

Some flatworms are native to the US and Kentucky but others, like the two mentioned above, are introduced and potentially invasive. Broadly, this group is predaceous, and they can feed on snails, slugs, and earthworms. Their potential to harm earthworm populations could hurt the beneficial services that earthworms provide by decomposing various materials in nature.

In addition, there are some medical and veterinary concerns. Some species produce tetrodotoxins, which are potent and most famously associated with pufferfish. That doesn't mean that contact with these odd critters will automatically kill you, but caution should be exercised with them. **Handling them should be avoided but if it does occur, wash your hands afterwards.** They can also be a host for rat lungworm, similar to snails and slugs. This parasite can be passed to humans when eating undercooked or raw snails, slugs, freshwater shrimp, crabs, and frogs. Because of the toxin and possible parasites, if you were considering it, definitely do not eat hammerhead worms!

Continued on next page...

Are they in Kentucky?

The short answer is yes, these have been found in the state. In 2020 there were two confirmed samples, one from Letcher County and one from Calloway County. In 2021 there was at least one inquiry from Pulaski County and in 2022 a sample was confirmed from Fayette County. These counties are spread fairly far apart which could indicate they could be found in other Kentucky counties. They are most likely to be found in warm, damp environments. They might be spotted under rocks and logs or in leaf litter. Sightings of hammerhead worms may increase on rainy days, particularly if the rainy day occurs after a dry period.

Management

It is hard to recommend a broad management tactic that would rid an area of these worms. However, if you do spot one in your garden or near your home, there are some simple things you can do using products likely already in your home.

First, don't try to physically destroy or cut up the worms. Segmenting them can result in reproduction. Part of their body does naturally "fall off" and turn into a new individual, so don't help them with that process. You can however use salt on them, like you would a snail or slug. It will destroy them, but you need to be cautious about not getting salt in the soil around your plants. Spritzing the hammerhead worm with vinegar or citrus oil can also kill it. If you need to isolate the treatment, you can pick up the hammerhead worm with tweezers or gloved hands and put in a sealable bag, then apply the salt or vinegar.

If you think you have found a hammerhead worm, please reach out to your county Extension agent for identification confirmation and sample recording.



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Figure 2: We have received multiple reports of hammerhead worms in Kentucky. People should exercise caution around them and avoid handling with bare hands if at all possible. They may be found in damp areas and appear more frequently after a rain.

Photo by Whitney Cranshaw, Colorado State University, Bug-wood.org

2022

Kentucky Green
INDUSTRY CONFERENCE


Summer
Summit

JUNE 22nd. and JUNE 23rd.

Featuring a Bus Tour and Evening at
Yew Dell Botanical Gardens!

*The Summer Summit is open to anyone interested in attending,
pre-registration is REQUIRED in order to attend.*

Wednesday, June 22nd

7:30am - 8:30am - Registration Check in at the
Holiday Inn Express/Hurstbourne

9:00am - Bus departs the hotel

Stop 1:

9:30am - 10:30am - Churchill Downs

Stop 2

10:50am - 11:50am - Waterfront Botanical Gardens

Stop 3

12:20pm - 1:20pm - Kentucky Kingdom

4:00pm - Tour of Yew Dell Botanical Gardens

5:30pm - 6:30pm - Cocktail Hour/Cash Bar

6:30pm - 9:00pm - Keynote Speaker

Thursday, June 23rd

Schedule attached.



For more information, please visit www.knla.org or email info@knla.org

2022**Kentucky Green**
INDUSTRY CONFERENCE**THURSDAY - JUNE 23rd.**

Registration begins at 7:30 a.m. (EST)	PEST MANAGEMENT	Plants/Design
8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.	Pesticide Regulation Update Roy Brad Smith	Plants: Native, Exotic, Aggressive, and Invasive. Andrea Wilson Mueller CPLD Jacob Stidham
9:35 a.m. - 10:35 a.m.	Rusts, rots, spots, and more: Getting to Know the Harmful Microbes Tara Watkins	Greening campuses: Nature Rx for education and health Christopher Sass, PhD Ned Crankshaw, FASLA
10:40 a.m. - 11:40 a.m.	Bees, Pesticides, and Politics: Challenges and Opportunities for Sustainable Urban Landscapes Daniel Potter, Ph.D.	West Kentucky Native Plants and Where do They Live Winston Dunwell, Ph.D.
11:10 a.m. - 11:45 p.m.	Vendor Introduction	Vendor Introduction
11:45 p.m. - 12:45 p.m.	LUNCH & BUSINESS MEETING	LUNCH & BUSINESS MEETING
1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.	Sustainable Landscaping Paul Vincelli, Ph.D	Green Walls for Human Health J. Eric Spangler
2:05 p.m. - 3:05 p.m.	Pesticides, Risks, and Safety Ric Bessin, Ph.D.	Perennial and Annual designs for the public – find out some best practices and plants used in designing for public spaces. Kyra Back
3:10 p.m. - 4:10 p.m.	The Sinister Six: Turf Pests to Watch for in 2022 Jonathan Larson, Ph.D.	Science and Art at the Baker Arboretum Martin Stone, Ph.D.

Pesticide, Arboriculture, and Landscape Architecture CEU credits available.

The University of Kentucky's **Nursery Crop Extension Research Team** is based out of two locations across the bluegrass to better serve our producers.

The **University of Kentucky Research and Education Center (UKREC)** in **Princeton** serves western Kentucky producers while our facilities and personnel on main campus in **Lexington** serve central and eastern Kentucky producers.

Check out our [YouTube Channel!](#)

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