

Kentucky Nursery LISTSERV Bulletin

University of Kentucky Nursery Crops Team

Mid-December 2017

Winter starting off cold and wet

Over the next 5 days, southern parts of the state may see as 2-3 inches. A cold front is moving in on Christmas Eve that will drive temperatures down into the teens overnight for much of the state. Highs will stay in the 30s until the end of 2017.

For more information see [UKAg Weather Center's Long Range Outlooks](#)

Next month, Kentucky Nursery and Landscape Association will be having it's annual **Spring Training & Showplace** in Louisville on January 24-25th and the Nursery Team will be there!

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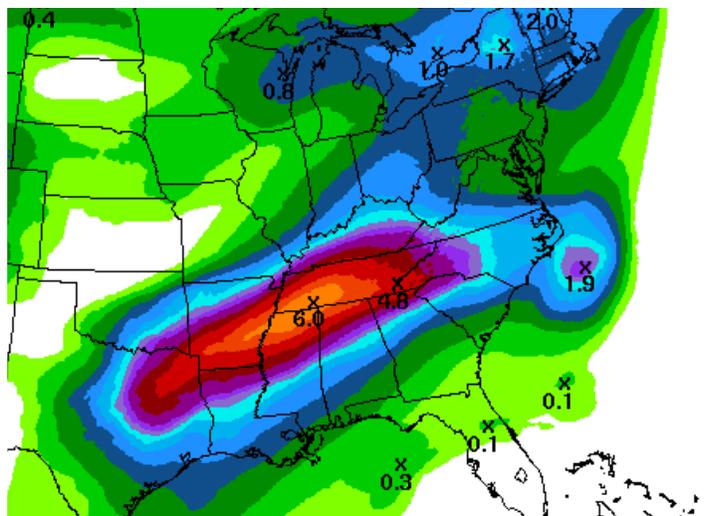
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Joshua Knight, Managing Editor



5 Day Rainfall Forecast, Dec19-Dec24, 2017
Source: NOAA / National Weather Service

- **Tree Thief to Holiday Tradition: The Story of Mistletoe**
- **“Wet Feet” of Ornamentals**

Tree Thief to Holiday Tradition: The Story of Mistletoe

Nicole Ward Gauthier, Extension Professor, Plant Pathology

Once autumn leaves have fallen, mistletoe becomes highly visible on large trees throughout Kentucky. *Phoradendron*, the scientific name for Kentucky's most common variety of this parasitic plant, means tree thief. These small leafy plants are commonly found on twigs and branches of many hardwood species in the southern United States. Mistletoe extracts (steals) water, mineral elements and food from tree hosts; hence the name.

Mistletoe use in holiday traditions has roots in pagan times. The appearance of a live parasitic plant while the host tree appears dead led some to believe mistletoe mysteriously held the life of the tree during winter. Druids harvested mistletoe in a special rite, never allowing the plant to touch the ground, and then hung it in their homes for good luck.

Our modern-day mistletoe holiday tradition likely originates with a mythological Norse goddess of love and beauty. Frigga, whose son was restored from possible death by mistletoe, was thought to bestow a kiss on anyone walking beneath one. Today, when two people meet under the mistletoe, tradition suggests they must exchange a kiss for good luck.

Phoradendron has simple, fleshy green leaves arranged oppositely on the stem (Figure 1). Stems are short and more branched than host trees, so mistletoe often appears as a spherical bunch of dense vegetation (Figure 2). These bunches may be a foot or two in diameter and are located high in the tree where sun exposure is greatest. Mistletoe berries range from white to straw-colored to light red. Birds eat the fruits, reportedly toxic to human and animals, then deposit the seeds onto branches where they germinate and penetrate the next host tree.



Figure 1. The *Phoradendron* variety of mistletoe has simple, fleshy green leaves.

Image: Paul A. Mistretta, USDA Forest



Figure 2. Mistletoe often appear as a spherical bunch of dense vegetation.

Photo: Joseph O'Brien, USDA Forest Service, bugwood.org

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Mistletoe commonly appears in open-grown trees where birds tend to roost, thereby less frequently in forest trees. Generally, they cause minimal damage, although they can be harmful to stressed trees. Mistletoe can be removed from landscape trees by pruning.

Additional Information

- Plant Pathology Publications

<http://www2.ca.uky.edu/agcollege/plantpathology/extension/pubs.html>

“Wet Feet” of Ornamentals

Kimberly Leonberger, Extension Associate, Plant Pathology
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“Wet feet” is the common term for a condition that affects plant species intolerant of wet growing conditions. This problem occurs when soils become saturated in water, which ultimately causes roots to suffocate. Once root damage occurs, plants decline and may eventually die. While “wet feet” is an abiotic disorder, declining root health and wet soil conditions can provide the ideal environment for infection by many root and collar rot pathogens.

Excess soil moisture may result from high clay content, poor drainage, lack of topsoil, drainage from other locations collects at site, low areas in the landscape (Figure 1), or overwatering.

Obvious indicators of “wet feet” are the presences of wet, soggy soils or puddles on the soil surface after heavy rains. Algae or moss may also be present on soil surfaces at wet sites. Plant symptoms such as wilting, yellowing, and/or browning (Figure 2); twig or branch dieback; and browning and death of deeper roots, while surface roots remain healthy can result from “wet feet.” Knowledge of a growing site, drainage, and irrigation practices in helpful in diagnosing “wet feet”.

For more information on “wet feet” and related disease problems, including symptoms, causes, prevention, and treatment, review the publication “Wet Feet” of Ornamentals ([PPFS-OR-W-04](#))

Additional Information

- Plant Pathology Publications ([Website](#))



Figure 1. Low-lying areas may hold surface water after excessive irrigation or heavy rain.

Photo: Julie Beale, University of Kentucky



Figure 2. Root damage from wet conditions can cause drought symptoms due to reduced uptake of water and nutrients resulting in symptoms such as wilting, yellowing, and/or browning.

Photo: Nicole Ward Gauthier, University of Kentucky

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.

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