

# Lyon County Cooperative Extension Service ANR/Hort Newsletter October-December 2025

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## **Cow Herd Expansion is not the Only Way to Capitalize on a Strong Calf Market**

Dr. Kenny Burdine, UKY Extension Specialist

Much has been written recently about the strength of the current cattle market. With beef cow inventory at a

60+ year low and demand being very strong, cow-calf operations are clearly in the driver's seat. Calf values are more than double what they were three years ago, which speaks to considerable opportunity for cow-calf operators to invest in their cowherds. Expansion is often the first opportunity that comes to mind in a strong calf market, and there is likely merit in expansion if doing so is consistent with the goals of the operation. However, some producers may not be interested in growing the size of their cowherds due to land and/or management constraints or other reasons. This article will briefly walk through other opportunities that are worth consideration.

### **Genetics**

Some producers may choose to use the current increase in cow-calf revenues to improve the genetics of their herds. Investment in genetics often has long-run implications, resulting in more valuable calves to sell over multiple years. Sires certainly come to mind, but the current calf market, combined with the strong cull cow prices, may provide an opportunity to cull a bit harder and also purchase some higher-quality females.

### **Facilities**

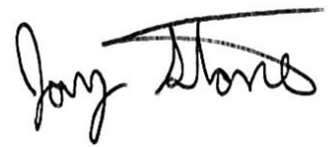
Working facilities are crucial resources for cow-calf operations for numerous reasons. Value-added opportunities such as health protocols, post-weaning programs, castration, implants, etc., are made much easier with quality working facilities. The same is true for the receiving, sorting, and loading of cattle. If facilities have historically been a constraint, the current market may be providing an opportunity to make improvements and position the operation to sell higher value calves in the future.

### **Grazing Systems**

Winter feeding days are typically the most expensive days for cow-calf operations as stored feed (hay) is being fed. Improved grazing systems (interior fencing, additional water sources, portable mineral feeders, etc.) allow for more efficient use of existing forage during the grazing season. This has the potential to increase the number of grazing days and the number of hay feeding days. In most cases, this results in lower costs per cow per year and puts an operation in a better position when calf prices fall.

### **Debt Service & Financial Management**

Strong markets also provide an opportunity to make financial moves that set an operation up for the long run. Increased revenues may allow an operation to pay down some debt and thereby lower its cost structure going forward. Similarly, it may provide an opportunity to build some working capital and lower dependence on operating



loans. In both cases, future interest expenses are reduced, which has implications for profitability. To be clear, the purpose of this article was not to discourage expansion. There are likely operations that need to be done just that. But I also live in an area where land constraints are real, and I know that expansion is not always feasible. Plus, I have seen situations where operations expanded during strong markets and wished they had not done so a few years later. The main point is that the current calf market provides a significant opportunity for a cow-calf operation to position itself for the long run, and that will look different for each one of them.

## 2025 Farmland Values

Dr. Steve Isaacs, UKY Extension Specialist

USDA releases the results of its annual survey of farmland values each August. The 2025 report indicates that national farm real estate values increased by 4.3% to an average of \$4,350/ac. Kentucky farm real estate values increased 3.4% to an average of \$5,480/ac. When categorized as Cropland and Pasture, Kentucky's prices increased by 3.7% for cropland and 3.4% for pasture to \$6,450/ac and \$3,900/ac, respectively. The average farm real estate value is the widely reported US Farmland Value. The USDA average is a broad indicator of changes in land values. The average is not derived from sale prices. The survey includes data from approximately 9,000 tracts of land of about one square mile each across the continental United States. The survey takes place in early June and reports the separate values of cropland, pastureland, and the value of all land and buildings to arrive at an average "farm real estate value." The 2025 per-acre value of \$4,350 is up from \$4,170 in 2024. State-level values are also reported. The complete 2025 Land Values Summary is available from the National Agricultural Statistics Service of the USDA. Land value trends are widely reported in the farm literature, usually in the format of Figure 1 without an inflation adjustment. This graphic captures data between 1970, when farm real estate was valued at \$196/acre, and 2025, with its \$4,350/ac in nominal dollars (actual observed values). Figure 1 includes inflation-adjusted values as well, with values indexed to 2024. The 1970 Inflation-adjusted value (also called real value) was \$1,532/ac in 2024 dollars. In real terms, land values rose dramatically through the 1970s and peaked at \$2,927/ac in 1981, prior to the ag financial crisis of the 80s. Real values plummeted to \$1,543/ac in 1993, a 47% decline, returning to their 1970 values. Real values did not exceed the 1981 highs until 2007. Another way to approach changes in land values is in its year-to-year change.

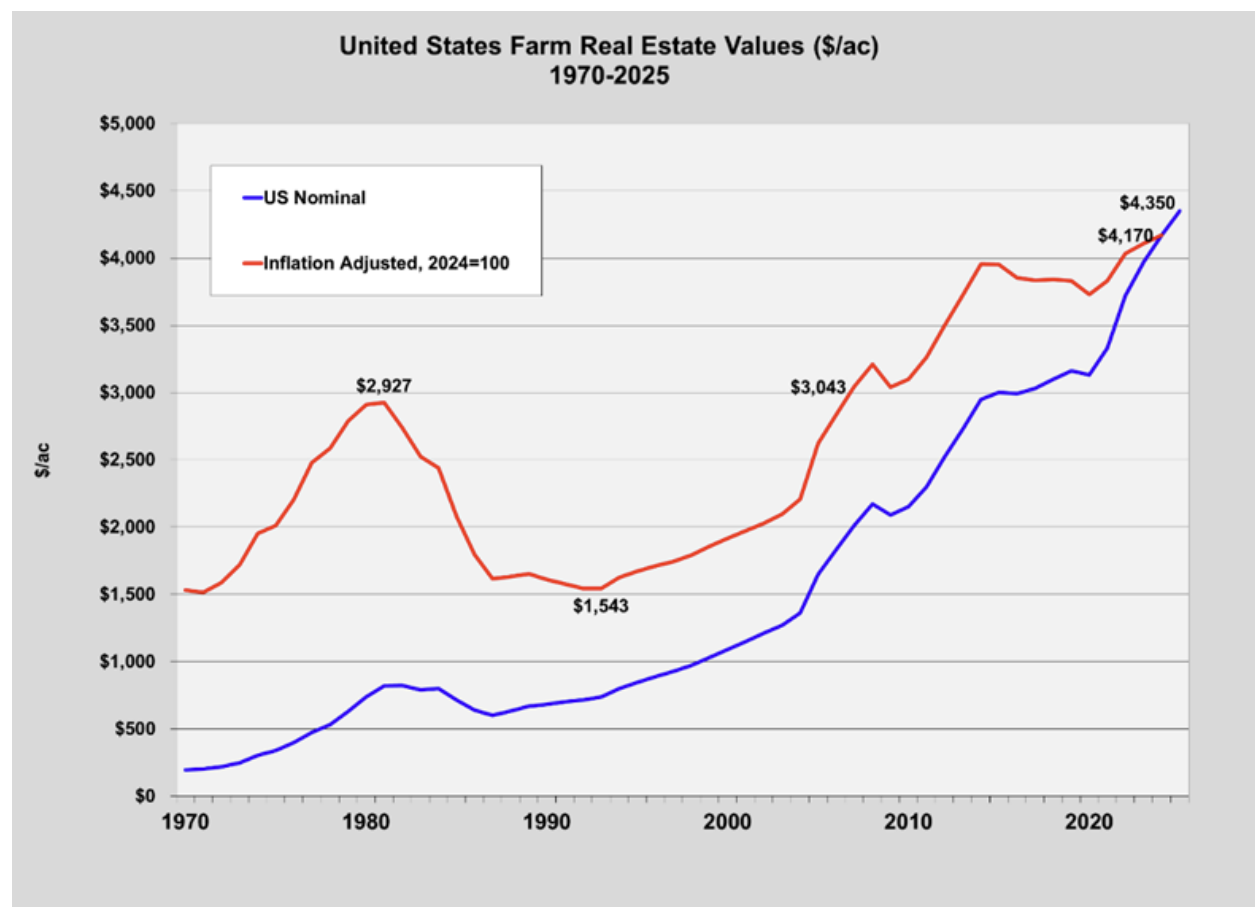
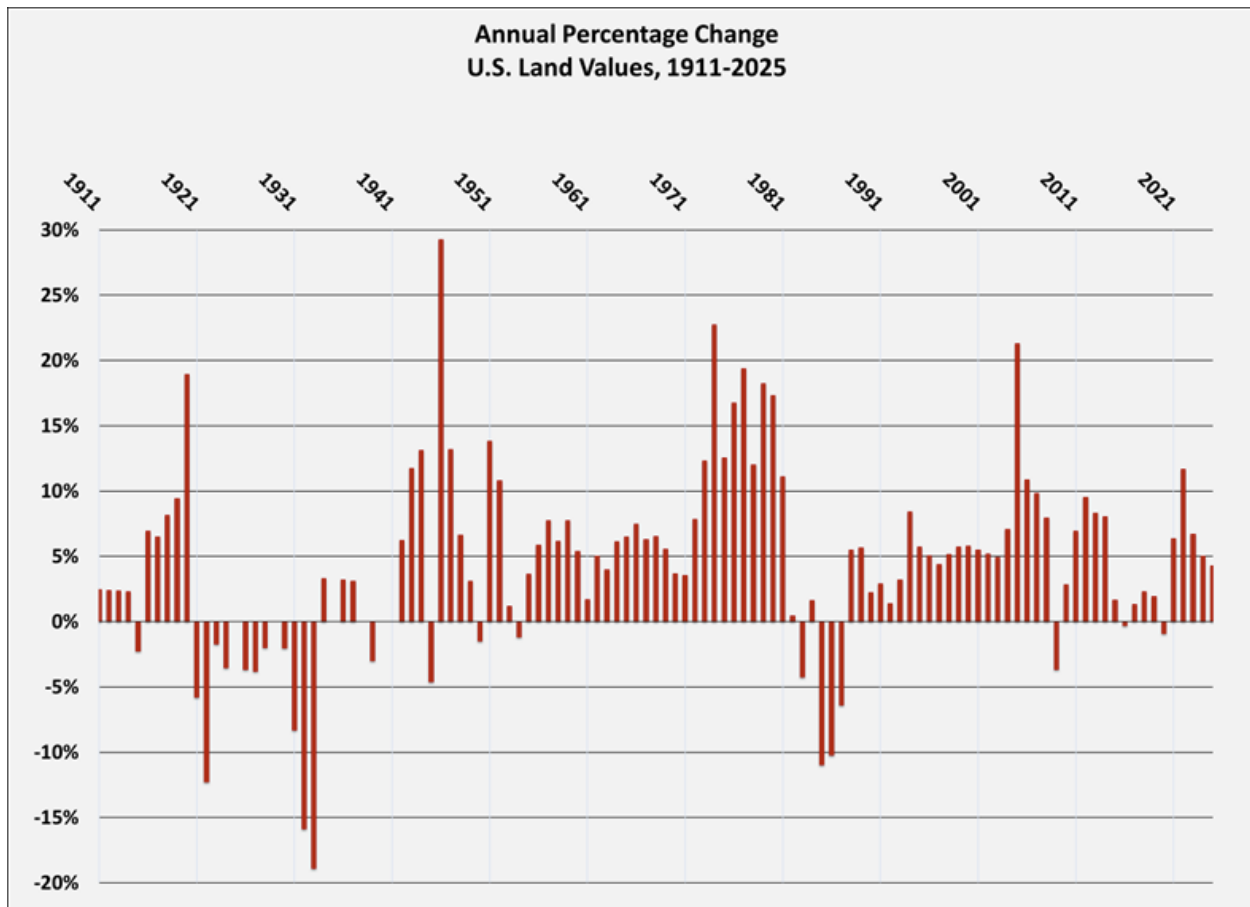
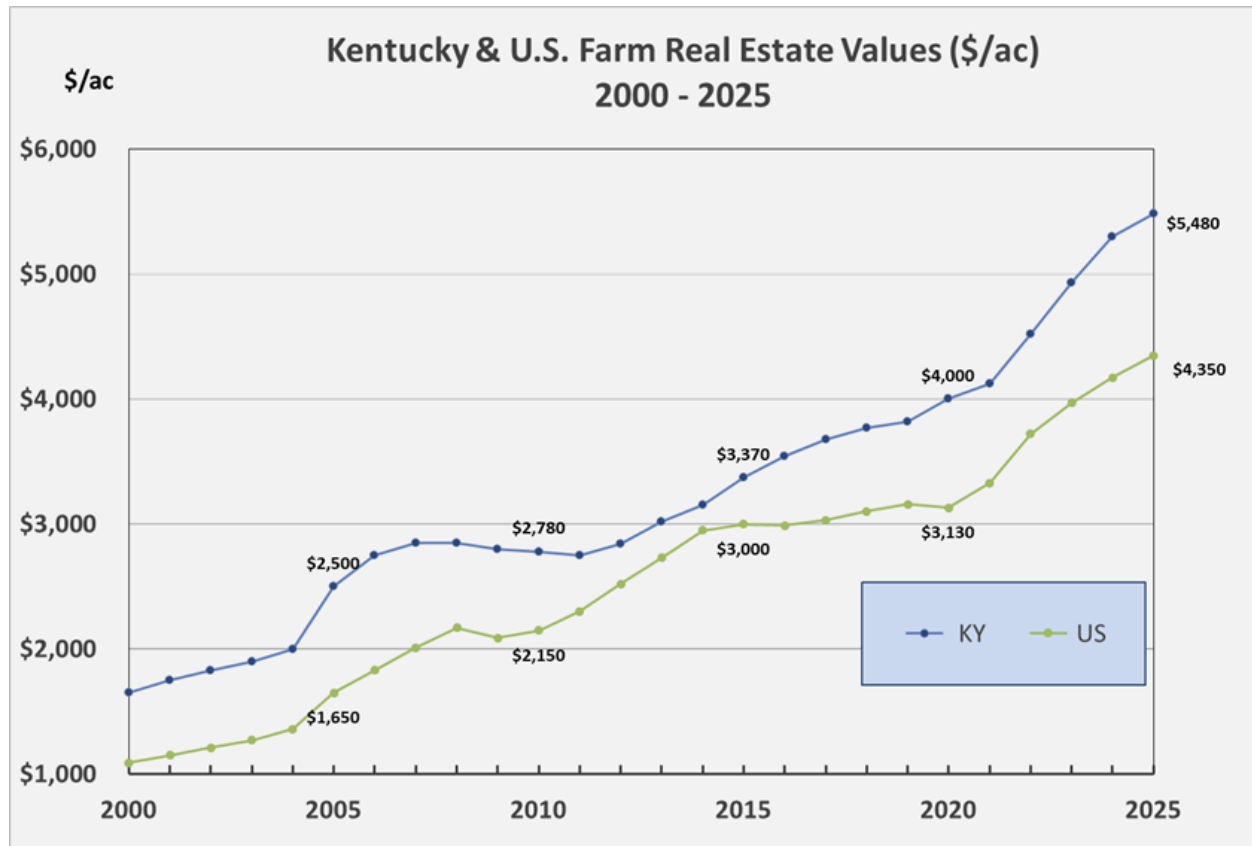


Figure 2 is a longer view of land value. Data has been available for the past 115 years. The changes from the previous year are indicated by a percentage difference from the previous year. Events like the Great Depression of the 1930s, the 70s boom, and the 80s farm financial crisis are readily apparent. While land values have increased in the long run, they do not increase every year. In fact, in 23 of the past 115 years, land values have been lower than the previous year. If the annual change is adjusted for the annual inflation rate, land values have decreased about 40% of the time. Let's turn to Kentucky land values. They tend to move similarly to national values, with Kentucky's average farm real estate values that exceed the U.S. average.



The last 25 years are illustrated in Figure 3. On a nominal basis, Kentucky's land value has increased by \$3,880/ac since 2000. It is notable that there was a six-year period from 2007 to 2013 during which Kentucky land values were flat to declining. Several factors may account for that, including ag commodity prices and a slowing of the general economy. That period also coincides with the end of the tobacco quota program. The value of the quotas (which were attached to the land) had been capitalized into the price of land. It is likely that the loss of that asset had a dampening effect on land values in that period.



## CAIP Educational Meeting

### Thursday, November 6<sup>th</sup>, 8 PM

### Lyon County Extension Office

The sign-up period for this year's County Ag Investment Program (CAIP) ended on October 15<sup>th</sup>. Those who have completed applications will need to complete the educational meeting component to be eligible to receive funding under the program guidelines. To accomplish this, a meeting will be held for all program applicants at the Lyon County Extension office on November 6<sup>th</sup> to go over all the eligible investment areas of CAIP, as well as the requirements for each part of the program. A meal will be served, so please call us at (270)388-2341 to reserve your spot.

## 2026 Lyon County Master Gardener Class



The 2025 Master Gardener Class, held this fall, has been a big success, and we are exploring an opportunity to hold an additional class in the Spring of 2026! If you are interested in becoming a Master Gardener Volunteer in Lyon County, contact us at the Lyon County Extension Office and get on our sign-up list! Cost for the upcoming class will be \$60, which covers the cost of the Master Gardener manual (yours to keep!) with all class materials and weekly refreshments furnished by us!

The Lyon County Master Gardeners are a very active group, annually sponsoring activities such as the Native Plant Sale, the Lyon County Demonstration Garden, the Christmas Wreath Making Event, volunteering at LBL's Naturefest, and many other activities. New for this year, they started a Seed Library for gardeners to obtain or exchange seeds! Advantages of becoming a Master Gardener include:

- Expanding your knowledge on Gardening, Landscaping, and Turf Management
- Learning more about Native plants and Natural areas in Kentucky
- Expanding access to local foods
- Safe and responsible use of Pesticides
- How to protect and preserve our water and natural resources
- Gaining opportunities to volunteer and serve your local community

If these sound like activities that you would like to take part in, come see us at the Extension Office! We have a packet ready for you to complete to start the process of becoming a Lyon County Master Gardener. Class size will be limited, so come and see us soon!

### ***Forest management plans: A roadmap to a healthier woodland***

*Source: Jacob Muller, assistant professor and extension forestry specialist* If you own woodland, you already know it's more than just trees — it's a living, breathing ecosystem full of potential. Whether your goals include timber production, wildlife habitat, recreation, or conservation, a Forest Management Plan is your most effective tool for bringing your vision to life.

Think of a Forest Management Plan as a roadmap. It outlines your long-term goals for your land and lays out the steps to achieve them. It helps you understand what resources you have, what your land is capable of producing and how to manage it sustainably. From hunting and hiking to timber harvesting and habitat restoration, your plan can be tailored to fit your unique objectives.

Creating a plan isn't a one-time event — it's a process. Here are 10 key steps to developing and implementing a woodland management plan:

1. **Identify goals and objectives.** What do you want from your woodland?
2. **Conduct an inventory.** Assess tree species, soil, water, and forest health.
3. **Revisit objectives.** Adjust based on what your land can realistically support.
4. **Record area details.** Map and document conditions by stand.
5. **Designate management areas.** Divide your land into zones based on use.
6. **Select practices and schedule activities.** Choose actions like thinning or planting.

7. **Implement practices.** Put your plan into action.
8. **Keep records and evaluate.** Track progress and forest response.
9. **Refine as needed.** Update your plan based on results and changing goals.
10. **Enjoy Your Woodland!** Spend time in it to better understand how it responds.

If developing a plan seems daunting, the good news is that you don't have to do it alone. In fact, a professional forester or natural resource manager is the best resource available to you to help you articulate your goals, assess your land's potential, and design a realistic, achievable plan. They'll also help you navigate challenges like invasive species, disease and access issues.

Costs may vary significantly depending on the size of your woodland and the complexity of your goals. Hiring a consulting forester to develop a plan may be beneficial, as it affords you, the landowner, some flexibility and ensures that someone visits your property in a timely manner. However, many state agencies, such as the Kentucky Division of Forestry, offer this service to landowners at no cost to them. One potential downside is that you may have to wait for a forester to become available to assist you in managing your woodlands.

Regardless of whom you work with, when it comes to implementing your plan, many state and federal programs offer financial assistance — and some even require a written plan to qualify. In Kentucky, for example, the Forest Stewardship Program offers technical and financial support to landowners who commit to sustainable management.

A Forest Management Plan isn't just a document — it's a commitment to your land's future. Whether you're managing 10 acres or 1,000, taking the time to plan today will pay off for decades to come.

Contact the Lyon County Extension office for more information.

Additional resources can be found at <https://forestry.mgcafe.uky.edu/Management-Plans>

## Calendar of Events

### November

**November 4<sup>th</sup>-Lyon County Master Gardener's Assn-6 PM @ the Lyon County Extension Office**

**November 6<sup>th</sup>- CAIP Educational Meeting-6 PM@ the Lyon County Extension Office **\*RSVP Required\*****

**November 18<sup>th</sup>-West Kentucky Beekeeper's Assn-6 PM @ the Lyon County Extension Office**

**November 15<sup>th</sup>-KSBA Beekeepers Conference-Owensboro, Kentucky**

### December

**December 2nd-Lyon County Master Gardeners Holiday Dinner- 6 PM @ Echo Charlie's **-Members Only****

**December 4<sup>th</sup>-Christmas Wreath Making Event Sponsored by the Lyon County Master Gardeners-**

**10 AM at Lyon County Convention Center @ Lee Jones Park-See enclosed Flyer**

**Caldwell-Lyon Fall Cattlemen's Meeting-December 4<sup>th</sup> @ 6 PM-Lyon Convention center, RSVP**

**By calling to Lyon County Extension Service at (270)388-2341**

**December 16<sup>th</sup>-West Kentucky Beekeeper's Assn- 6 PM @ Lyon County Extension Office**

**December 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup>- Drone Pilot Workshop- Hopkins County Extension Office- **\*REGISTRATION REQUIRED\*****

**Registration @ Eventbrite.com or email [lori.rogers@uky.edu](mailto:lori.rogers@uky.edu) for more information**

**Cooperative Extension Service**  
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Family and Consumer Sciences  
4-H Youth Development  
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LEXINGTON, KY 40546



Disabilities  
accommodated  
with prior notification.

# Pre-Registration Survey

## Lyon County Cooperative Extension Master Gardener's Class



Thank you for your interest in becoming a Lyon County Master Gardener Volunteer. Extension Master Gardener's pride themselves in being the only trained and certified volunteer organization that focuses on assisting the home gardener. Upon completion of all class and volunteer requirements you will be certified to participate as an Extension Master Gardener Volunteer. Please return this completed form to 231 Main Street, Eddyville, KY 42038 or via email to [jstone@uky.edu](mailto:jstone@uky.edu). If you have additional questions about the Extension Master Gardener program, please contact the extension office at 270-388-2341.

Why do you want to participate in the master Gardener's program?

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What area of gardening interests you the most and why?

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What skill/knowledge set would you like to learn from this program?

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Rate your current gardening knowledge. (*Mark where you fit on the scale below.*)

**Brown Thumb**-----**Green Thumb**

### Demographics

Full Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Full Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_  
Cell Phone# \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_  
Race (Circle): White Black American Indian Asian Other  
Ethnicity (Circle): Hispanic Non-Hispanic Gender (Circle): Male Female





Kentucky Extension  
Master Gardener

Join us for some  
holiday season fun!

COOPERATIVE  
EXTENSION  
SERVICE

**UK**  
UNIVERSITY OF  
KENTUCKY  
College of Agriculture,  
Food and Environment



# 2025 DESIGN YOUR OWN CHRISTMAS WREATH THURSDAY, DECEMBER 4

LEE S. JONES PARK  
LYON COUNTY CONVENTION CENTER  
HWY 93 S. EDDYVILLE, KY  
10 A.M.—12 P.M. CLASS SIZE LIMITED

**COST \$25.00 PER WREATH ~ \$25.00 PER SWAG**  
**EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION BY NOVEMBER 18TH ~ \$20**  
**PREREGISTRATION REQUIRED, PAYMENT DUE AT REGISTRATION**  
PHONE 388-2341 OR VISIT LYON COUNTY COOPERATIVE EXTENSION  
231 MAIN ST., EDDYVILLE, KY 42038

**ALL SUPPLIES PROVIDED INCLUDING GREENERY AND BOWS.**  
**LIGHT REFRESHMENTS PROVIDED AND DOOR PRIZES.**  
**ENJOY GOOD COMPANY AND CHRISTMAS MUSIC!**  
**ORGANIZED BY THE LYON COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**  
**[HTTP://LCMGA.YOLASITE.COM/](http://LCMGA.YOLASITE.COM/)**

- **OPTIONAL: BRING YOUR OWN GARDEN GLOVES, PRUNERS.**
  - **ANY PERSONALIZED ITEMS/DECORATIONS.**
- **BRING A CANNED FOOD DONATION FOR THE FOOD BANK**
- **BRING BACK LAST YEAR'S WREATH FRAME FOR A \$4 REFUND**

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Disabilities accommodated  
with prior notification.