



USU Extension Service, Iron co.
585 North Main #4
Cedar City, UT 84721

Change Service Requested

Other Contact Information
Phone: 435-586-8132
Fax: 435-586-3314
Check us out on the web:
<http://extension.usu.edu/iron>

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What's Growin' On?: Christmas Tree Tips & Tricks

-Ashley Tullis, USU-Iron County Staff Assistant & USU Extension Master Gardener

 O Christmas, Tree O Christmas Tree! 

If you plan to add a fresh cut tree to your holiday decor this year, USU Wildland Resources Dept. suggests these tips for proper Christmas tree selection and care-

- Before shopping, measure the area in your home where the tree will be placed. Measure both width and ceiling height. Remember that several inches will be cut from the butt end, but the stand will add several inches to the tree's overall height.
- To ensure that the tree will remain evergreen through the holidays, check for freshness and moistness. Once needles become dry, they usually stay dry — even when the tree is placed in a stand with water. The best way to ensure that your tree is fresh is to buy from a local grower or from a retailer you know and trust.
- Gently pull on several needles to check for freshness. Also, lift the tree and strike the butt end on the ground. If many needles fall from the twigs, the tree is probably not fresh. Fir and pine trees hold needles better than spruce trees.
- Check the color. Some trees are sprayed with blue-green dye. Though the dye can be harmless, it can be hiding a dry tree.
- Once a fresh tree is brought home, re-cut a thin section from the butt end and place the tree in a pail of water until you are ready to decorate it. Keep the tree outside and away from sun and wind so it does not become dry.
- Once inside, the tree should be placed in a sturdy stand that holds at least one gallon of water. A fresh tree can lose this much or more water a day. Place the tree away from heaters, furnace vents, televisions and other heat sources.
- Lights on the tree should be UL-approved and protected by an inline fuse. Small pinpoint lights work well because they stay cool. Don't be sentimental about old Christmas tree lights. Old lights with cracked insulation or loose sockets should be discarded. Turn lights off when the tree is unattended. Flammable decorations should not be used on a Christmas tree with electric lights. Candles should never be used to light a Christmas tree or wreath.
- A fresh tree that is watered daily can stay moist and safe for several weeks. If a tree is displayed in a public building, it should be kept no longer than 15 days and should be treated with a fire retardant solution.

Keep the good stuff growing!



Source: <https://extension.usu.edu/archive/selection-and-care-tips-for-christmas-trees>

KATHY'S CORNER

Extension
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[EXTENSION.USU.EDU](https://extension.usu.edu)

USU EXTENSION - IRON COUNTY - 585 N MAIN SUITE 4 - CEDAR CITY UTAH 84721


JUST A QUICK NOTE

Some of our most favorite holidays are so close; can you smell the pumpkin pie? Is your mouth watering for seasonal sweets or perhaps green bean casserole?

This edition of Kathy's Corner will focus on staying safe during the holidays- with your finances, health and wellness, food preparation, travel, and more.



Have the most joyous and safest holiday season ever!


Kathleen (Kathy) Riggs, Professor
USU Extension, Iron County
Family and Consumer Sciences/4-H Youth

✓ CHECK IT OUT

What is your Money Personality?

Learn more about your personal Habits and Attitudes ("Habitudes") and how they influence your financial decisions.



Simply click below to watch this recorded YouTube webinar brought to you by Utah Women & Leadership Project at Utah State University with guest presenter, Amanda Christensen, USU Extension Associate Professor and co-director of the Empowering Financial Wellness project.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j4rF1mu92wE> or simply log into YouTube and search for What is Your Money Personality?

OTHER GREAT READS INSIDE:

PG 2: WHY SHOULDN'T I REUSE CANNING JAR LIDS?
PG 2: DO'S AND DON'TS FOR BLACK FRIDAY/CYBER MONDAY
PG 3: SELF-CARE DURING THE HOLIDAYS
PG 3: HAVE A FOOD SAFETY QUESTION? ASK USDA!
PG 4: WHAT'S GROWIN' ON?: CHRISTMAS TREE TIPS & TRICKS

LOOK WHAT'S COMING

It's true! Thanksgiving is right around the corner with Christmas and New Year's Eve close behind. Don't be caught without knowing where you can go for quick answers to your food safety questions whether it's a weekend or on the day of the actual holiday. Check out the Partnership for Food Safety Education which is endorsed by USDA, CDC and FDA. See: <https://www.fightbac.org> or <https://www.facebook.com/FightBAC/>



USU Extension Office Holiday Calendar:

The Iron County Extension Office will be closed:

- November 25-26 for Thanksgiving
- December 24 for Christmas
- Limited hours and staff availability December 27-31
- January 1 New Year

FYI- Other December Holidays:

Hanukkah, November 29- December 6:
• Festival of Lights; celebrates the victory of the Maccabees and rededication of the Ancient temple in Jerusalem.

Kwanzaa, December 26- January 1
• (/ˈkwɑːn.zə/) is an annual celebration of African-American culture culminating in a communal feast called Karamu, usually held on the 6th day.

WHY SHOULDN'T I REUSE CANNING JAR LIDS?

According to the National Center for Home Food Preservation (NCHFP), canning lids should not be used a second time since the sealing compound becomes indented by the first use, preventing another airtight seal. Screw bands may be reused unless they are badly rusted or the top edge is pried up which would prevent a proper seal.



If in your experience, you believe you have achieved good seals reusing canning lids, please consider what the potential consequences may be based on what NCHFP states.

- High acid foods such as jams, jellies, fruit and pickles may develop mold or darken the food item more quickly. While not life-threatening if tasted, consider the economic loss of not being able to eat the food.

- Low acid foods such as vegetables, vegetable mixtures, and meats should not be pressure canned using lids that have been used previously. If processing times and temperature (under pressure) are not followed correctly, botulism toxins may grow in sealed jars and moist conditions and can be deadly. Since these toxins cannot be seen, smelled, or tasted, do you really want to jeopardize the health of you or your family?

If a jar of low-acid food comes unsealed while in storage, DO NOT taste it or feed it to your family or pets.

These foods are also susceptible to mold and bacteria growth. The risks are real-

ncfhp@uga.edu

<https://extension.psu.edu/when-a-jar-becomes-unsealed>

DO'S AND DON'TS FOR BLACK FRIDAY/CYBER MONDAY

How can you know if you will be savvy and safe while scanning the internet or navigating foot traffic in your favorite small business or big box store this holiday season?

Begin doing some research on best tips and practices by simply typing "Do's and Don'ts for "Black Friday" into your favorite search engine. You might be surprised by the "Official" lists that pop up. For example, the site *Influenster* takes a lighter yet informed approach suggesting:

- DO get excited / DON'T get crazy.
- DO get your game face on / DON'T get too competitive.
- DO carpool / DON'T text and drive.
- DO shop for your little ones / DON'T bring them.
- DO buy gifts for others / DON'T forget to treat yourself too.
- DO splurge a little / DON'T be reckless.

<https://www.influenster.com/article/the-official-list-of-dos-donts-for-black-friday>

On the other hand, *Fairwinds* takes the most practical approach:

- Do pay using secure methods.
- Don't spend more on your credit card than you can pay off in full immediately.
- Do make a plan ahead of time.
- Do calculate time spent versus the savings you gained.

<https://www.fairwinds.org/blog/family-finances/the-dos-and-don%20%99ts-of-black-friday-and-cyber-monday-shopping.html>



SELF-CARE DURING THE HOLIDAYS

Trying to balance the various roles and responsibilities we have makes the idea of taking time for ourselves seem nearly impossible. Time seems to be a common struggle when it comes to self-care especially with the holidays sneaking up on us.

USU Extension Assistant Professor, Christina Pay, shares five tips for taking care of yourself even amid the holiday rush.

1. Schedule time for self-care.

This may be as simple as setting a timer in the kitchen or on your phone. Be strategic in choosing when you are most likely to be active.

2. Keep it small and simple.

Even 10-15 minutes to walk around the block or deliver items or food to a neighbor would work. Stretching is also great to relax tense muscles.



3. Make time to be healthy.

Getting enough sleep, eating healthy and being active are all foundations of good self-care. Being focused on eating healthy meals will help reduce cravings for yummy treats.

4. Ask for help.

If you have family joining you for the holidays, ask them to pitch in. It will lessen your load and can help them feel useful.

5. Make time to laugh.

Laughter provides stimulation to your heart, lungs and muscles. It reduces tension and helps you to relax. This will help you better enjoy the season, festivities, and those around you.

<https://extension.usu.edu/healthwellness/physical/making-time-for-self-care>

HAVE A FOOD SAFETY QUESTION? ASK USDA!

Large gatherings and family meals over the holidays seem to produce large amounts of food that must be prepared and leftovers that need to be stored. It's a great idea to plan ahead of time, just what some of the key food safety guidelines are so your family avoids foodborne illnesses. USDA and the Food Safety Inspection Service team up for answers to common questions.

For example-

- * How long can you store fish?
- * How long can meat and poultry remain in the refrigerator once thawed?
- * How long can you keep spiral cut hams in the refrigerator?
- * How long does chicken broth stay good in the refrigerator?

For answers to these and several other food-related questions this holiday season, check out:

<https://ask.usda.gov/s/>

On the lighter side, here's something for the kids in your life!

