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Gardener's Almanac November & December Gardening Checklist

- If natural precipitation is sparse and ground is not frozen, water evergreen trees and shrubs to ensure they are well hydrated heading into winter.
- Blow out irrigation systems.
- Winterize lawn mowers and rototillers by draining the gas or adding a fuel stabilizer. Be sure to follow manufacturer recommendations.
- Clean and sharpen dirty garden tools and treat them with old oil or other rust-inhibiting products.
- Disconnect hoses from water spouts to avoid freezing damage.
- If you haven't mowed your grass for the final time, cut it to a height of 1-to-1½ inches to minimize disease problems.
- Apply a quick-release nitrogen fertilizer after the last mowing for early greening next spring.
- Put the yard and garden to bed, including: cleaning up the garden, adding compost, and wrapping columnar evergreens to prevent snow breakage.
- Use deicing compounds sparingly to avoid salt damage to landscape plants.
- Try your hand at forcing amaryllis to bloom indoors for the holidays.
- Shop for your gardener, great holiday gifts include: books, pruners, gift certificate, gloves, a living wreath, pottery, or yard ornaments.



Keep the good stuff growing!



KATHY'S CORNER


Extension
UtahStateUniversity



November / December 2023 EDITION

EXTENSION.USU.EDU

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

JUST A QUICK NOTE 

Dear friends-

This edition of Kathy's Corner newsletter marks the end of an era lasting 30 years in Iron County. How I've enjoyed searching out topics I thought would be timely, informational, science-based, and sometimes humorous for the benefit of residents of Iron County and beyond.

After an amazing career spanning more than 41 years, I've decided to see what else is out there for me during my "silver" years.

It has been a very rewarding experience to serve among such great people. May God bless you and may you continue to find answers to your questions as you reach out to your local USU Extension Office in the future.

Warmly,

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



✓ CHECK IT OUT

The 2024 USU Extension calendars have arrived at our office. Feel free to stop by and pick up your FREE copy during regular office hours. We have a limited supply!



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LOOK WHAT'S COMING

Upcoming Fall/Winter 2023 Classes:



The free Empowering Financial Wellness Webinar Series continues in December! Check <https://extension.usu.edu/finance/empowering-financial-wellness/classes-and-webinars> for more information.

Virtual Diabetes Cook Along

FREE Virtual Class Series



We are holding a special virtual Diabetes Cook Along to discuss issues and struggles with **controlling diabetes symptoms during the holiday season**. We will be demonstrating some lower carbohydrate versions of holiday recipes. The class will be held on **December 5th at 11:00 am**.

The registration link for the virtual class is: <https://4h.zsuite.org/external-event-registration/23992>.

FINANCE TAKE 5 TASK



Take \$5 to make someone's day.

There are many simple things you can do with \$5 to make someone's day: take flowers, make a treat, leave a note, put a little gas in the teenager's car, or even pay for the drink order behind you at the drive-through. The act of giving benefits your physical, emotional, and social well-being, and best of all... it's contagious!

FINDING A HEALTHY BALANCE WITH TECHNOLOGY AND YOUR CHILDREN

Are you looking for an inexpensive, educational, fun, interactive, low-cost, tech toy for one or more children this Christmas? Consider that media or gaming devices may start taking the place of physical activity, hands-on exploration, and face-to-face interaction. The University of Illinois- UC Extension suggests parents and other adults find a healthy balance.

- **Talk and interact while using technology.** Conversations help your child understand what they see and how technology works.
- **Infants and toddlers need hands-on practice with real objects.** They benefit most from their interactions with people through play and conversations. Use technology to complement other activities rather than relying solely on technology to entertain or teach your child.
- **Young children are attracted to blinking lights and screens.** Childproof as needed, especially heavy electronic items such as big screen TVs, which are tip-over hazards.
- **Your child is watching your technology use, which can interfere with daily routines.** Put down your device and give your child your full attention. Use electronic media away from meal and sleep spaces.

With supervision, appropriate time limits and good role modeling, families can find that healthy balance children need with technology use.

Source: <https://extension.illinois.edu/blogs/family-files/2017-12-21-find-healthy-balance-technology-and-your-children>

ESSENTIAL "ALWAYS" OF HOLIDAY FOOD SAFETY

The joy of gathering for holidays meals and other celebrations should be just that- a celebration- one that's free of concerns for food safety. Here are ten rules of food safety to fend off any chance of bacteria ruining an otherwise perfect get-together.

1. **Always wash your hands.** It's a simple rule, yet easily forgotten in the midst of festivities.
2. **Always clean and sanitize.** Clean and sanitize any surfaces that have touched raw poultry, meat, or fish and their juices.
3. **Always thaw the frozen meat/poultry safely.** Follow one of three USDA recommendations for thawing: in the refrigerator, in cold water, or the microwave- not on the counter. Remember the danger zone for bacterial growth, 40- 140° F.
6. **Always separate foods to avoid cross-contamination.** Use separate cutting boards for meat and vegetables/fruits; after use wash used cutting boards, knives, and countertops with hot soapy water.
7. **Always cook thoroughly.** Make sure your holiday turkey is cooked to a safe final internal temperature of 165° F by using a reliable food thermometer. (325° F is the recommended oven temperature.)
8. **Always follow the 2-hour rule.** All perishable foods must be refrigerated within two hours of coming out of the oven or refrigerator. If food is allowed to cool / warm to within the danger zone, bacteria can multiply quickly.
9. **Always keep warm food warm and cold food cold.** If transporting food to another location, use insulated containers, like crock pots, to keep foods warm. Add cold temperature foods to a cooler with ice.
10. **Always store leftovers properly.** It is important to use smaller, shallow dishes to store hot foods to ensure the middle of the dish cools quickly.

<https://news.extension.uconn.edu/2022/11/23/8-essential-always-of-holiday-food-safety/>



10 HAPPY HACKS: for a Flourishing Life

"Things will work out", "This, too, shall pass", "It's not as bad as you think." These are popular expressions we may hear when others are attempting to cheer us up. However, there are some tips (or "hacks") we can apply in our own lives to keep our thoughts more positive throughout the good and not-so-good occurrences of life. Consider implementing one or more of the following and practice them throughout the holiday season.



- **Pay Attention.** Mindful people are healthier and happier.
- **Cherish Your Friends.** Make time for people in your life.
- **Use Your Strengths.** Know your strengths and design your life to use them (see: VIAcharacter.org)
- **Give Thanks.** Savor the good in the past and present.
- **Get Moving.** Regular Exercise boosts happiness and lowers stress.
- **Drop Grudges.** Forgiveness unburdens and opens your heart.
- **Smile More.** Smiling lets sunshine in our soul and spreads it to others.
- **Practice Kindness.** It feels good to do good. Turn outward and serve others.
- **Make a Record.** Write down and hold on to the good in your life.
- **Find Flow.** Make time for activities that use your strengths.

Source: www.relationships.usu.edu

GIFTING FOOD FOR CHRISTMAS?

USDA plans for a slowing of inflation related to pricing many food products in 2024. An increase of around 2.1% increase is still possible for domestic (USA) meat and poultry. Depending on what part of the world meats and other foods are imported, increases could be closer to 5.1%.

Hmmm. Maybe this year's Christmas gifts to family and friends could/should include a gift of food to add to the pantry or food storage. A few ideas to start the brainstorming process:

- A case of soup (or several cans)
- Dehydrated fruit
- Freeze-dried meats or vegetables
- 25 lbs. bag of sugar, flour, or another staple



Source:

https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/outlooks/37753/51678_oce151c.pdf?v=9946.2

STAY SAFE AND WARM INDOORS

If you plan to use a wood stove, fireplace, or space heater to keep warm this winter, be extremely careful. The Centers for Disease Control share safety tips for safely keeping your home warm. Beyond following the manufacturer's instructions remember:

- Use fireplaces, wood stoves, or other combustion heaters only if they are properly vented to the outside and do not leak gas or exhaust into indoor air space.
- Do not burn paper in a fireplace.
- Make sure you have proper ventilation if you must use a kerosene heater.
- Use only the type of fuel your heater is designed to use— don't substitute.
- Keep heat sources, like space heaters, at least 3 feet away from drapes, furniture, or bedding. Never cover your space heater.
- Never place a space heater on top of furniture or near water.
- Never leave children unattended near a space heater.
- Make sure that the cord of an electric space heater is not a tripping hazard, but do not run the cord under carpets or rugs.
- Avoid using extension cords to plug in your space heater.

<https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/duringstorm/indoorsafety.html>