

## Plant Now to Preserve Later

It's not too soon to begin planning your summer garden, especially if you want to grow some extra produce to preserve and enjoy throughout the next year. People grow gardens for different reasons. Some just want enough produce to enjoy fresh while others want extras to preserve. But, how much extras should you plant to preserve without having such an abundant crop you become a pest to your friends and neighbors when you try to share the bounty.

Resources are available to give you an idea of how much to grow based on the amount you want to enjoy fresh and have extra to preserve. For example, a bushel of green beans (about 30 pounds) will give you enough for 15 to 20 quarts. You'll want to plant 5 to 10 feet of beans to also have some to eat fresh.

A bushel of green peas (30 pounds) will only provide 6 to 8 quarts canned or frozen and you'll need between 20 and 30 feet. The difference is peas generally only have one major picking and you'll likely have multiple batches of green beans. When planting tomatoes, figure about 3 to 4 pounds per quart for preserving. You'll need 10-12 plants to have enough to can or freeze for a family of four.

Of course, it all depends on the growing days for your area, weather, moisture, heat units, diseases and those pests who try to make your plants their temporary home. For details on the cost of preserving and storing food, go to <http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/foodnut/08704.pdf>

Several Food Preservation Workshops will be offered in Northeast counties this spring and summer. Contact the county office for details on each workshop.

### **Saturday, June 8, Morgan County Extension, Fort Morgan**

*Basic 101 Class: 9 am to 12 noon*

*Pressure Canning: 12:30 – 3:30 pm*

### **Saturday, June 22, AM, Washington County Extension, Akron**

**Saturday, July 13, Yuma County, Details TBA**

## Spring 2013

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## **Extension Online**

<http://www.goldenplains.colostate.edu>  
[www.extension.colostate.edu/logan](http://www.extension.colostate.edu/logan)  
[www.extension.colostate.edu/morgan](http://www.extension.colostate.edu/morgan)

Where trade names are used, no discrimination is intended and no endorsement by Colorado State University Extension is implied.

## Bike Safety

Medical research shows a bicycle helmet can prevent up to 85% of cyclists' head injuries. More than 700 bicycle riders are killed in the U.S. every year, and 75% of them die of head injuries.

Here are reminders about helmet safety.

- Wear a helmet when riding. A person can expect to have a crash in 4,500 miles of riding.
- Even low-speed falls on a bicycle trail can scramble brains.
- Make sure the helmet fits to get maximum protection. A good fit means level on the head, touching all around, comfortably snug, but not tight. The helmet should not move more than about an inch in any direction, and must not pull off no matter how hard you try.
- Less expensive helmets are just as good as more expensive ones.
- Standards are no longer a big issue in the US market, but check inside for a CPSC sticker. (Consumer Product Safety Commission)
- Children under one should not be riding on a bicycle. Toddlers should be able to hold their head up with a helmet on.
- Pick white or bright colors for visibility to be sure that motorists and other cyclists can see the rider.
- Avoid a helmet with snag points sticking out, a squared-off shell, inadequate vents, excessive vents and extreme "aero" shape, dark colors, thin straps, complicated adjustments or a rigid visor that could snag in a fall. If the helmet "snags" on the pavement then a neck injury could result.
- Never let a child play on the playground with a helmet on. They could get caught on something and choke the child.

Source: Bicycle Helmet Safety Institute



## Gardening with Kids

Creating a garden with grandchildren can be a fun, educational, and healthy experience for everyone. Follow these 10 tips from the American Community Garden Association to make the most of the experience.

- 1) Make the garden kid based. Let kids help decide what will be included, construction and planting, and the maintenance. Grown-ups need to facilitate and show how, but not do everything.
- 2) If possible, let the kids help choose so they understand the importance of light, soil, drainage and other environmental factors. Make sure the plant choices are adapted to local conditions so you are most successful.
- 3) Design the garden for what children want to be doing and learn, and don't worry about aesthetics. A child's sense of what is pretty may not be yours, but that's ok.
- 4) All kids are washable, so let them get dirty. Set up a hand-washing and shoe-scraping station before they go back inside.
- 5) Children aren't automatically afraid of things which crawl and creep. Those add curiosity, amazement, and learning.
- 6) Avoid using chemicals in the garden.
- 7) Children are likely to try things they never have eaten before because they have helped plant, care for and harvest it.
- 8) Prepare the kids for their gardening experience by asking questions about what they have learned. They can take pictures and keep a scrapbook during the summer.
- 9) Have enough equipment and tasks to keep kids entertained, but be open for the "teachable moments" which come along.
- 10) Gardening is a powerful experience for children. Being responsible for tending a garden fosters their sense of "nurturing" and helps them learn to care for other living things.



## New Banking Tools

Banks have introduced several new products and services in recent years aimed at enhancing consumer convenience. You may be aware of some of these tools; but there are some very new ones you may not yet know about. Here is a brief listing of ten banking tools from the most recent Consumer Reports Money Adviser newsletter.

1. Online and mobile banking to access your checking and other accounts from your home computer or a smart-phone app or other mobile Web device. They are considered highly secure and offer 24/7 access.
2. Electronic bill paying lets you pay your bills without writing and mailing checks. Using your bill statements, set up the account payments and “send on” dates for the variable accounts like credit cards; or automatic monthly payment for recurring level payments like mortgage or insurance premiums. Many companies give a discount to customers who use electronic billing and electronic payments.
3. Expedited payments with fees ranging from \$5 to \$25 to speed up your electronic payments, which usually take about 5 days for processing. U.S. consumers spend almost \$1 billion a year on these extra fees. You may choose this tool to avoid late fees and a raise in interest rates. It’s best to train yourself to pay bills early.
4. Account-activity alerts provide e-mail or text messages from your bank to monitor account activity in an effort to prevent bounced checks and overdraft fees, or fraudulent activity on the account. You must have e-mail or text options activated on your cell phone service plan.
5. Overdraft coverage under the new banking rules, requires consumers to opt in to this service. It allows the account to run a negative balance because you have agreed in advance to pay the overdraft fees charged by your bank. This could be a very costly tool.



## Banking Tools (continued)



6. Budgeting tools where banks are providing free online budgeting tools to help consumers track their spending and meet savings goals. With frequent use of your debit card, this tool can help pinpoint your budget busters. Other financial education or retirement planning tools may be available.
7. Photo-check deposit allows consumers to use the camera on their smart phone or web device to photograph the front and back of checks and make the deposit electronically. For deposits involving cash, you must still go to a bank or ATM.
8. Person-to-person payments tool provides electronic payments to private individuals. You need their name and email address to arrange the payment from your bank account. The recipient gets an email with instructions on how to put in their account routing number to receive the payment. There may be fees associated with this tool.
9. Discounts from affiliated retailers in the form of ads or discount coupons may show up on your online bank statement as a result of this new type of promotion called transaction-driven-marketing. It analyzes your spending patterns and serves up deals tailored to your lifestyle. You can opt out if you have concerns about the privacy of your spending choices.
10. Investment advice and services as banks are anxious to provide investment and retirement planning services to boost their revenues. Search for an investment advisor that works on a fee basis instead of a commission basis to get more objective information.

Source: Consumer Reports Money Adviser, March 2013

## Grow Your Own



With food prices rising, it's a great time to grow your own. There has been a boom in gardening. Cultivating even a 20 x 30 foot plot can save about \$600 a year according to the National Gardening Association. No yard? No problem. Most veggies and some fruits can be grown in containers. Follow these easy steps for tasty, fresh produce, and big savings, all summer long.

### Step one: Start with healthy soil

If your soil is slightly crumbly and holds together when gently squeezed and released, it's good for gardening. That indicates the soil will retain moisture but still provide drainage. To get the dirt in top growing shape, composting is key. Buy organic compost or make your own by tossing leaves (green & dried ones) and fruit and vegetable scraps into a compost pile and waiting. It can take weeks or even months to become the rich "black gold" soil you want.

### Step two: Get the best seeds

Seeds and seedlings are sold everywhere, and seeds are seeds, right? Not really. Some stores sell seeds and plants which may not be ideal for your zone. Seedlings may be force-fed fertilizer to make them tall in the store but weak in the long run. Seeds aren't always fresh, either. Shop at a nursery where you can get guidance, or go to a reputable online gardening site which caters to the climate where you live.

### Step three: Use the right tools

Buy a basic hand-tool set – trowel, transplanter (a sharp, skinny shovel for weeding), and cultivator. But to save your back, speed up weeding, and water better, experts recommend additional tools including a long handled cultivator, a soaker hose, a mini tiller, a watering wand and a watering can. Hit garage sales where you'll often find a variety of garden tools, hoses, and other equipment pretty cheap. Downsizers are eager to get rid of their lawn and garden stuff.

Source: adapted from ShopSmart, Consumers Report, 2010

## Colors Which Sell Houses

Emerald green might be this year's hot color, according to Pantone, which creates color standards for paint companies and other industries. But if you're trying to take advantage of rising real-estate values to sell your home this spring, you're better off sticking with neutral colors, according to color experts and home stagers. But, neutral doesn't have to mean boring or painting everything white.

### Tips for a Quick Sale .....

**Go with the flow.** You're selling space. To make your home feel larger, it's important you use neutral colors which allow the eye to move from one space to another without interruption. Dark colors are out because they take a lot of light away. People want to have a lot of light and rooms that look like they provide big space. Take time to repaint any room which is painted in dark colors.

**Warm it up.** Choose paint colors with a slightly warm cast, such as off-white, creamy white or light beige. Pass on bright whites and whites with blue or gray undertones. They are too cool and can make the room feel sterile.

**Inject color.** Use accessories like pillows, throws, bedspreads, and art to add color. They add personality but won't keep people from buying a home because they think they have to repaint it immediately.

Source: Consumer Reports, March 2013



## Does canned food go bad?

If you've cleaned out the pantry this spring and found yourself tossing away outdated cans of food, you may wonder why they even have expiration dates.



Canned foods display two kinds of dates. Calendar, or open, dates give an easily read date based on the regular calendar year. Coded dates are ones which only the manufacturer can decipher.

Open dates will have wording like “best if used by (or before)” dates. They indicate the time by which the maker advises eating the food for best flavor or quality. They're not safety related.

Does that mean you can open a can of peaches which is years past its prime? If the can isn't bulging (could indicate dangerous bacterial growth) or damaged, the contents might be safe to eat. And, don't expect old items to taste super-fresh.

In general, high-acid canned foods such as tomatoes and pineapple will retain peak quality on the shelf for 12 to 18 months if stored in a clean, cool, dry place. Low-acid canned foods such as meat, poultry, fish, and most vegetables will retain best quality for two to five years.

Even though the dates on cans are more about quality than safety, most manufacturers will recommend you not consume the product. Since it may not be as high quality as when eaten closer to the packing date, you may not buy it again and therefore the manufacturer has lost a customer.

Food Storage for Safety and Quality (9.301) at <http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/foodnut> will provide more information on storing foods in the refrigerator or freezer.

Source: Consumer Reports, March 2013

## Food Allergy Labeling

Since January 2006, food manufacturers must clearly identify the source of all ingredients in foods which might contain one or more of the eight most common food allergens.

Prior to this legislation, ingredients were listed by their common name, but their sources were not identified. Now, the name of the food source of a major food allergen must appear in parentheses following the name of the ingredient. An example would be the ingredient flour would have to be listed as “flour(wheat)” in the ingredient list, or immediately after the list of ingredients, a statement that says “contains wheat”.

There are over 30 different types of advisory labeling which can be used on food products which makes it difficult to interpret labels. Even though the food allergens should be identified in foods, individuals who have allergies must still be very aware of food eaten and, in some cases, be aware of foods in which they have external contact.



## Healthy Weeknight Meals

Coming home after a long day at work can certainly lead to grabbing take-home or choosing convenience foods which might not be healthy.

Those who have time to prepare healthy meals on weeknights report they plan dinners ahead of time and make sure they have all ingredients on hand. They also do some of the pre-prep on the weekend or other times during the week when they are not so busy. This includes pre-cutting produce and putting them in plastic bags or sealed containers.

They also report cooking in quantity when they have extra time and freezing meals which can be easily heated.

## Picnic and Barbecue Season Safety

Picnic and barbecue season is a great opportunity for outdoor fun with family and friends. But it can also be an ideal opportunity for food borne bacteria to thrive.

Protect yourself, your family, and friends from food borne illness during warm-weather months by practicing safe food handling when transporting, preparing and serving food for your special outing.

- ✓ **Keep cold food cold.** Place cold food in a cooler with ice or frozen gel packs. Cold food should be stored at **40°F or below** to prevent bacterial growth. Food may be packed while still frozen so it stays colder longer.
- ✓ **Organize cooler contents.** Consider packing beverages in one cooler and perishable foods in another. Then as the beverage cooler is being opened and reopened, the perishable foods won't be exposed to warm outdoor air temperatures.
- ✓ **Keep coolers closed.** Limit the number of times the cooler is opened as much as you can to keep the contents cold longer.
- ✓ **Don't cross-contaminate.** Keep raw meat, poultry, and seafood securely wrapped. This keeps their juices from contaminating prepared/cooked foods or foods which will be eaten raw, such as fruits and vegetables.
- ✓ **Clean your produce.** Wash fresh fruits and vegetables before packing them in the cooler. Packaged fruits and vegetables labeled "ready-to-eat," "washed," or "triple washed" don't need to be washed again.



## Safe Grilling Guidelines

It's important to follow safe grilling guidelines to make sure your grilled food reaches the table safely.



- Marinate foods *only* in the refrigerator. Don't reuse marinade. If you plan to use some of the marinade as a sauce on the cooked food, reserve a portion separately before adding the raw meat.
- If you partially cook food to reduce grilling time, do so *immediately before* the food goes on the hot grill.
- Always use your food thermometer to be sure food is cooked thoroughly. (**Check the table below of USDA recommended temperatures.**) The color of the food or juices is not an accurate indication of doneness.
- Keep food hot until served by moving it to the side of the grill rack, just away from the coals or flame. It will stay hot but not get overcooked.
- Using the same platter or utensils which previously held raw meat, poultry, or seafood allows bacteria from the raw food's juices to spread to the cooked food. Use a clean platter and utensils to serve cooked food.

Food Temperatures	
Food	Temperature
Ground Beef, Pork, Veal, Lamb Steaks, Chops, Roasts	160° F 145° F rest 3 min.
Chicken/Turkey Breasts Chicken/Turkey Whole Pieces Ground Chicken/Turkey	165° F 165° F 165° F
Fish and Shellfish, Any Type	145° F
Ham, Fresh or Smoked (uncooked)	145° F rest 3 mi

## Washing Fresh Produce

Warmer weather and summer bring more options for fresh produce whether in the grocery store, farmers market or your own garden. Fresh produce has many health benefits but has the potential to cause health issues if it is not properly washed.

Washing fruits and vegetables not only helps remove dirt, bacteria, and garden pests, but it also helps remove residual pesticides. There isn't one specific washing method that completely removes or kills all bacteria that may be present on produce. However, studies have shown that thoroughly rinsing fresh produce under running water is very effective.

Advertisements promoting fruit and vegetable washes claim they are the best way to keep fresh fruits and vegetables safe. But are these washes effective? The FDA (Food and Drug Administration) does not recommend using commercial produce washes. The safety of their residues and their effectiveness has not been tested or standardized.

Do not use detergent or bleach solutions to wash fruits and vegetables. Fresh produce is often porous, so the chemicals could be absorbed and change the safety and taste of the food.

The best method to wash produce is to briskly rub fruits and vegetables with your hands under running water to remove microorganisms and dirt. Scrub produce which has a hard rind or firm skin with a vegetable brush. Water should be no more than 10 degrees colder than produce to prevent microorganisms from entering into the stem or blossom end of the produce.



## Guidelines for Washing Produce

Here are guidelines for several specific types of produce.



**Leafy green vegetables.** Separate and individually rinse the leaves of lettuce and other greens. Discard outer leaves if torn and bruised. Leaves can be immersed in a bowl of cold water for a few minutes to help loosen sand and dirt and make them easier to clean. Adding vinegar to the water (1/2 cup distilled white vinegar per 1 cup water) followed by a clean water rinse has been shown to reduce bacterial contamination but may affect texture and taste. After washing, blot dry with paper towels or use a salad spinner to remove excess moisture.

**Melons.** The rough, netted surfaces of some types of melon provide an excellent environment for the microorganism which can cause food borne illness. These can be transferred to the interior surfaces during cutting. Use a vegetable brush and wash melons thoroughly under running water before peeling or slicing.



**Hot peppers.** When washing hot peppers, wear gloves and keep hands away from eyes and face.

**Grapes, cherries and berries.** Store unwashed until ready to use, but separate and discard spoiled or moldy fruit before storing. Wash gently under cool running water right before use.

**Mushrooms.** Clean with a soft brush or wipe with a wet paper towel to remove dirt.

**Herbs.** Rinse by dipping and swishing in a bowl of cool water and dry with paper towels.

## It's Almost Fair Time

Many of you participate in one or more of the county fairs in Northeast Colorado, but have you exhibited at the Colorado State Fair in August? Anyone is eligible to exhibit at the State Fair. You do NOT have to exhibit an article at the local fair before State Fair. In fact, most items need to arrive in Pueblo while county fairs are still going on.

Each of the counties in Northeast Colorado will be collecting exhibit items between July 8 and July 19 which will be taken to Pueblo by Morgan County for the Creative Arts building. Specific packing is required by State Fair and details are available at your county Extension office.

The complete list of State Fair classes will be available [www.colostatefair.com](http://www.colostatefair.com) May 24. For class details select Events, then Competitive Events, then General Entry. All Creative Arts exhibits, except baked foods, are eligible for this State Fair Outreach project. Stop by your local Extension Office to get complete details or check their county Extension website.

## Patio Planters

Have a lonely corner on the patio that needs some color? Add a plant in a pretty new pot. Designers recommend dark plants in light planters and vice versa. Look for a style that works with your patio furniture.

Consider the scale of both planter and the plants. Tall plants look best in tall planters; small ones in shorter pots. You might want to fake it. Composites that mimic stone are less breakable and easier to haul around. When selecting planters, add some punch and use patterns.



## Smarter Snacking

☺ Check your hunger level. Are you actually hungry? Or are you tired, bored, lonely? Or did you just see a food commercial on TV?



☺ Are you thirsty rather than hungry?

☺ Rather than eat a super-sized snack, start with a small size or share a big snack with a friend.

☺ Do you know what is in the snack? Read the food label to find out how many calories you are eating.

☺ Don't eat while driving, reading, or watching television. If you aren't focused on what you're eating, it's easy to overeat.

☺ Have a snack which is a combination of protein and carbohydrate. Protein provides more nutrients and also staying power.

☺ A small handful of nuts can satisfy your craving for something salty and also provide some nutrition.

☺ Keep sliced vegetables ready to grab when you want something crunchy.

☺ Eat some fruit when you crave sweets.

☺ Try low-fat or skim milk for a beverage rather than a soft drink or sugary fruit based drinks.



## Mark Your Calendars

For details on any event listed, contact the Extension Office in the county where the event will occur. Contact information for each office is listed on the first page of this newsletter.

### April --

21-27 Money Smart Week. Various programs offered throughout Northeast Colorado

- 23 **Cooking Matters** nutrition and cooking 6-week workshop begins, 10 am – 1 pm, Morgan County Extension Center meeting room, Fort Morgan

### May - -

- 1 **Navigating Decisions with Older Adults**, Rocky Mountain Conference on Aging, The Ranch at Loveland, Colorado. Information at [www.larimer.org/ext](http://www.larimer.org/ext)
- 6 ServSafe Food Safety Training **taught only in Spanish**, 9 am – 3 pm, Country Steak-Out, Fort Morgan
- 10 **Fast Fat Facts**, Morgan County Diabetes Success, 12 Noon, Colorado Plains Medical Center, Fort Morgan
- 21/22 Rocky Mountain Food Safety Conference, Johnson & Wales University, Denver. Information at <http://www.rmfoodsafety.org>
- 27 Memorial Day Holiday, Extension Offices Closed

### June - -

- 5 **Sparkle, Glitz and Glitter**, 4-H Artistic Clothing Workshop available to all Northeast Colorado 4-H members, 1:30 to 4 pm, 4-H Building, Morgan County Fairgrounds, Brush
- 6 **ServSafe Food Handlers' Training**, 9 am – 3 pm, 4-H Building, Morgan County Fairgrounds, Brush
- 8 Food Preservation Workshops: Basic 101 morning; Pressure Canning afternoon; Morgan County Extension Center, Fort Morgan
- 13/14 Lillian Fountain Smith Nutrition Conference, Fort Collins, [www.fshn.caahs.colostate.edu/lfs/](http://www.fshn.caahs.colostate.edu/lfs/)
- 22 Food Preservation Workshop, Akron, Basic 101 morning, Washington County Extension, Akron



### CSU Extension - NE Colorado FCS on Facebook

Hey, Facebook fans –  us on Facebook.

<https://www.facebook.com/CSUExtensionNortheastFCS>

The social media tool of Facebook is a place to share some tips and links, and see your interests and concerns. Please visit this joint page for the five Family and Consumer Science agents in Northeast Colorado. Some agents also have a county page ([Phillips County Extension](#)) or an individual page ([Gisele Jefferson](#)).

Let us know what's on your mind. We would love to hear from you!