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Top 5 Ag Topics From 5 Years



Image by RetroTRAKTOR from Pixabay

EXTENSION POSTPONEMENTS, CANCELLATIONS & CHANGES

Due to Covid-19, postponements, cancellations or altering of teaching and gathering events connected with Nebraska Extension in Lancaster County continues. Please refer to our website (<https://lancaster.unl.edu>) or connect with Extension staff for the status of events.

The Lancaster County Extension office lobby is now open. We want to do our best to assist you in any way we can, while also protecting the public and our staff. Extension staff are available via phone (leave a message at 402-441-7180 and someone will return your call) or email (lancaster@unl.edu). Many of Extension's educational resources are online (<https://lancaster.unl.edu>).

Tyler Williams

Extension Educator,
Lancaster County

The model of Extension has shifted over time, but the mission of "helping Nebraskan's enhance their lives through "research-based education" has remained the same. I hope I have been able to achieve this mission in my time in Lancaster County, but I am sad to say I have left Extension for a career in private industry.

In the five years I have been in Lancaster County, there are a few agricultural topics that most-commonly landed on my desk, my phone or my email. What better way to help address these issues than to tackle them right up front? Although, Extension receives a wide range of requests or issues, I have compiled a top five list of the most popular issues.

1. Pasture Management

The most common issue I receive has to do with pasture management. There are many reasons for this, but the biggest reason is, it can be pretty challenging. The area soil types, range in management strategies, variable weather patterns and just plain logistical challenges, can make managing pasture or rangeland difficult. This makes each situation unique, but I will cover some overarching themes I come across.

The most common challenge is weed control. The best way to prevent a weed from growing is to have grass "out compete" the weeds. The most common challenge for that is caused by

overgrazing. This can be due to overstocking, leaving animals on too long, poor quality grass, horses grazing or lack of cross fencing. The best advice I can give is to make smaller paddocks (or small pastures) and rotate when grazed down to 4 inch height (this can vary). This takes fence, time and money, but it will increase your grazing days and decrease weed pasture. There also may be cost-share funds for cross-fencing through the Natural Resource Conservation Service.

Cedar trees and locust trees, among other trees, continue to invade pastures and decrease the grazing value of the land. The best strategy for this is prescribed burning. This poses many challenges and risks, but is nature's way of restoring

for very small trees or used on recently-cut trees.

When restoring these pastures or planting new grass, it can be difficult to know what to plant. This depends on what grows well in your area and what you plan to do with it. Grasses can either be cool-season or warm-season and this determines when it grows the best. In our climate, cool-season grasses grow well from April to mid-June and September through mid-October. Warm seasons will grow well from mid-June through August, but weather conditions dictate the success in any given year. It is best to have both warm-season and cool-season grasses to graze, but these should, ideally, be in different paddocks. Mixing cool-season with warm-season is

not recommended, since the cool-season will often dominate.

Resources and Services:

- Getting to Know Your Pastures: Techniques to Enhance Monitoring <http://extension-publications.unl.edu/assets/pdf/g2212.pdf>



Photo: Tyler Williams

Grazing management is key for weed control.

grasslands. The local fire department, prescribed burn groups and Pheasants Forever may be resources for burning pastures. Cutting and removing trees is likely the best option for larger trees. There are some herbicide options found in the 2020 Guide for Weed, Disease, and Insect Management, but these are often

- Recommended establishment and seed selection can be found here: <http://extension-publications.unl.edu/assets/html/g1705/build/g1705.html>
- Certified Perennial Grass Varieties Recommended for Nebraska <http://extensionpublications.unl.edu/assets/pdf/ec120.pdf>

- Prescribed Burn Associations <https://nebraskapf.com/prescribed-burn-associations-pba/>

2. Farmland Rental and Lease Information

Two unique issues regarding farmland ownership found in Lancaster County are the challenge of urbanization and development on agricultural land, and the number of absentee landowners residing in the county. As the population of Lancaster County (estimated at over 300,000) continues to increase development of housing, acreages, schools, etc., the value of each parcel of land can vary significantly. Landowners want to know what it is worth, what they can do with the land and how much to charge someone else to use the land.

My first response to all of this is there is not a single source or number to give the value of the land. The value is often determined by who owns it or wants to own it and can be heavily dependent on local nuances. In order to get an official estimate or appraisal, contact a Nebraska licensed appraiser https://appraiser.ne.gov/appraiser_listing.html.

Cash rent or lease arrangements are common questions and the 2020 estimated values for this information was presented in the May 2020 Nebline. This information can be valuable to find the "ball park" rental rates in the area; however, these are estimates provided by land managers in the area and should serve as a guide. The number you eventually determine should be dictated by land quality, local demand, discussions with partners and most importantly, discussions with the tenant. Communication with the tenant is number 1, 2 and 3 when it comes to importance for deciding rental agreements and rates.

- A good resource to access farm management and lease information is <https://lancaster.unl.edu/ag/farm-mgt>
- Southeast Nebraska Ag Economist Extension Educator, Austin Duerfeldt, aduerfeldt2@unl.edu

3. Crop Nutrient Management

When all things go exactly as planned, nutrient management in crop production can be fairly straight-forward. In

see TOP 5 AG TOPICS on page 3

EXTENSION RESOURCES

disaster.unl.edu/coronavirus-covid-19-resources

Find resources related to COVID-19:

- Children & Families • Food Access & Food Safety
- Mental Wellness • Ag Producers • Businesses

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NEBLINE

FOOD & HEALTH

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7 Tips for Successfully Baking as a Family

Lisa Franzen-Castle,
Extension Nutrition Specialist

Looking for a family activity that provides opportunities to share traditions, recipes and fun?

Try baking together using these helpful tips from the Home Baking Association:

Do Some Prep Work

Prep by reading and trying the recipe first. Add 20 to 30 minutes to explain, show and guide beginners and 15 minutes for intermediates or experienced bakers. Divide this prep work into two sessions, if needed, or pre-measure or prepare some steps beforehand.

Keep it Clean

Remember to wash hands and countertops before starting and cleaning up after you're done. Provide separate towels for hands and dishes, and frequently wash pot holders. Aprons or large t-shirts are great for keeping clothes clean during the baking process.

Take it One Step at a Time

Read the recipe, gather ingredients and make sure nothing was left out. When short on time, or working with beginning or young bakers, prepare some steps ahead or do some steps one day and complete the mixing or baking the next.

Use the Tight Tools

Pour liquids—water, oil,

milk, honey and corn syrup—in a clear liquid measuring cup placed on the countertop. Read the amount at eye level. Use standard dry measuring cups and spoons for dry ingredients—flours, sugar, cocoa, brown sugar and cornmeal. Also use measuring spoons for small amounts of any ingredient.

Do a Safe Kitchen Checklist

Turn handles of pans



Photo by Cacaye on Flickr

toward the center of the stove so sleeves or people passing by won't catch on them and spill. Keep cupboard doors and drawers closed unless in use. Use only dry hot pads or oven mitts because heat goes through damp mitts. When stirring or checking for doneness, tilt the lid away from you so steam is released away from your face.

Oven Ins and Outs

Before preheating, make

sure the oven racks are in the right place for the pans and recipe. Preheat the oven as the recipe directs. Place pans in the oven so they do not touch each other or the oven sides. Do not place pans on racks directly below or above another pan. Keep clean, dry oven mitts or pads close by.

Baking Can be a Learning Experience

Children and adults learn a lot together in the kitchen. The results of cooking or baking together contributes to stronger relationships at home and in groups. Children also learn time management, teamwork, following directions and problem solving—all important life skills.

FAMILY FOOD & FUN AT HOME WEBSITE

FOOD.UNL.EDU/FAMILYFOOD

Spending more time at home? Looking for easy meals, ways to involve your children in preparing meals and snacks or how to stay active? Check out Family Food & Fun at Home for the following ideas: basic cooking tips, tips for cooking with kids, recipes for cooking with kids, easy family meal recipes and staying active at home.



RECIPE OF THE MONTH

Kayla Colgrove, MS, RDN, ACSM-CPT, Extension Educator, Lancaster Co.

For your next family baking activity, try this banana bread recipe from Nebraska Extension's Nutrition Education Program (NEP).

BANANA BREAD

(Yield: 12 servings)

3 bananas, ripe
1 cup sugar
1 egg
1 teaspoon vanilla
2 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon salt

1. Wash hands with soap and water.
2. Preheat oven to 325°F. Spray a 9 x 5-inch loaf pan with non-stick cooking spray. Set aside.
3. In a medium mixing bowl, mash the bananas. Crack eggs separately into a small bowl then pour into bowl with bananas. Wash hands with warm water and soap.
4. Beat in the sugar and vanilla until mixed well.
5. In a large mixing bowl, combine flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt.
6. Add the liquid ingredients to the flour mixture stirring just until the dry ingredients are moistened. Pour batter into prepared pan.
7. Bake for 50 to 60 minutes or until a knife inserted near the center comes out clean.

Nutrition Information per Serving: (1/12 of recipe) Calories 180, Total Fat 0.5g, Saturated Fat 0g, Cholesterol 20mg, Sodium 350mg, Carbohydrate 40g, Dietary Fiber 2g, Sugars 22g, Protein 3g, Vitamin A 0%, Vitamin C 4%, Calcium 2%, Iron 6%

Source: Nebraska Extension Nutrition Education Program





Photos: Tyler Williams

Nutrient deficiencies can cause severe yield loss.

TOP 5 AG TOPICS

continued from page 1

corn production, in particular, nutrient needs are estimated based on expected yields and nutrient availability. However, the expected conditions and reality often never align, so some modifications and adjustments are usually needed.

In addition to pre-season soil tests (discussed more in 5), there are some in-season soil and tissue tests available to analyze the current nutrient status. These can be useful when determining if more nutrients are needed, which is often due to inclement or adverse weather conditions because the environment can dictate the availability, location and form of the nutrients in the soil. Nutrients such as Nitrogen and Sulfur can change in their availability and form rather quickly due to extreme tempera-

ture or precipitation, so testing may be necessary.

You can take soil samples or take leaf tissue from the plant to submit to the testing labs. With in-season samples,

you need to do this in a timely manner and plan to respond quickly before any deficiencies cause damage or reduce yield. There are other sensor-based technologies available, but not discussed here. After receiving the testing results, recommendations are often on the soil test or you can reach out to the Extension office to help resolve issues raised on the sampling results.

For more resources, go to Soil Management to Optimize Crop Production in Nebraska: <https://cropwatch.unl.edu/soils>

4. Pest Identification

Understanding the development, lifecycle and biology of all the potential pests in Nebraska is impossible. You likely recognize many of the common weed or insect pests around the farm or home, but you will come across something you are not familiar with. Luckily, Nebraska

Extension has experts and experience in plant physiology, plant pathology and entomology among other areas and can help with the proper identification and management for these pests.

The first, and most useful, piece of pest identification is to get good pictures. Take multiple pictures of the pest using a zoom to get very close, as well as pictures from further away to get a sense of the environment. You also want to capture the damage and any patterns of that damage. Once you have these



Photos: Tyler Williams

Poison hemlock is a common weed in Lancaster County.

pictures, you can email them to lancaster@unl.edu, with a description of the problem and any history that may help with identification. Not all pests can be identified virtually, so a sample may be needed. For more information on providing information digitally, go to

<http://go.unl.edu/plantclinic>.

There are also digital tools that can help. The University of Nebraska–Lincoln has the Digital Diagnostics Network mobile app and online tool, which allows you to submit pictures and description to a range of specialists to help identify the pest.

For help in identifying your pest, go to <http://digitaldiagnos-tics.unl.edu/> on your computer or use the app on your mobile device (Android or Apple, search app store).

5. Soil Sampling

Soil sampling is one of the most important pieces of information you can have about your land, and to be honest, Lancaster County is home to some very diverse and challenging soils. Whether it is a 100-acre field of row crops or the garden in your backyard, understanding what is in your soil is the most critical piece to growing plants. The most common questions regarding soil sampling are how to take the sample, where to send it and what it means.

To take a soil sample, use a soil probe and remove a core of soil. (FYI — you can check-out a probe at the Extension office between 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.) The sample can be taken in the fall or early spring and should be taken to at least a depth of 8-inches. Some crops will have roots much deeper, so samples can be taken down to 36-inches, especially in

row crop situations. Take four to eight cores from areas that are representative of the field and do this in a few locations in the field. If in a small plot, one area may be sufficient. Mix the cores in a plastic bucket and fill a soil sampling bag.

There are few places to take the soil samples (or even forage samples) in the area. Ag Source Labs (Lincoln), Midwest Labs (Omaha) and Ward Labs (Kearney), are a few options for soil tests. You will be able to select which tests to have done on your soil and this depends on your crop and how often you conduct soil tests. The labs can assist you with this selection. The results from the tests are typically available in less than a week.

The tests results often provide a “range” for adequate values based on the crop(s) you are trying to grow. It is difficult to give a blanket recommendation for these tests, so please reach out to the Extension office if you are having challenges or need help interpreting the results.

- Soil and plant testing lab nearby:
AgSource Labs <https://laboratories.agsource.com/lincoln/>
Midwest Labs <https://midwest-labs.com/>
Ward Labs <https://www.wardlab.com/>
- Guidelines for Soil Sampling NebGuide <http://extensionpublications.unl.edu/assets/pdf/g1740.pdf>

Timing Your Fruit Harvesting Apples, Pears & Plums

Sarah Browning
Extension Educator,
Lancaster County

To obtain quality fruit from your garden, it’s important to harvest the fruits at the right stage of maturity. Knowing when to harvest tree fruits is a challenge in judging several factors: flesh firmness, flesh color, skin color, flavor and number of days from full bloom. The ideal harvest time for apple and pear cultivars varies widely, so do some research on the cultivars in your home orchard or use the tips below to gauge the best harvest time.

Apples

If picked prematurely, apples are likely to be sour, tough, small and poorly colored; if picked overripe, they may develop internal breakdown and store poorly.

To harvest apples correctly, you must be familiar with the term “ground color.” Ground color is the color of the fruit’s skin, aside from any reddish blush that occurs on the side of fruits in the sun. In red-fruited apples, look at the side of the apple that faces the interior of the tree.

When the ground color of red apple cultivars changes from

leaf green to a lighter pale green, the apples are ready to harvest. In yellow apple cultivars, the ground color becomes golden. Mature apples with a yellowish-green background color are suitable for storage.

Apples will improve in storage if they are picked when hard but mature- i.e., showing the mature skin color but still too hard for good eating texture. Most apple cultivars have brown seeds when ready for harvest. However, seeds may become brown several weeks before proper picking maturity. When harvesting, do not remove the stems from apples that will be stored.

Fresh eating apples can be allowed to fully ripen on the tree.

Pears

Pears do not have good eating quality if left on the tree until they are mature. They develop stone or grit cells, or a mealy texture that makes the fruit less desirable. Tree ripened fruits may also have soft, brown centers and a reduced shelf life. For good flavor and texture, pears should be picked hard and ripened after harvest.

Harvest pears while they are still quite firm (hard) but the ground color has lightened to a pale green or greenish-yellow color. Additional indications

pears are ready to harvest are when the fruit stem easily separates from the branch with an upward twist of the fruit and when the lenticels (spots on fruit surface), which are white or green on immature fruits, become brown.

After harvest, any pears intended for storage should be handled as described below. Those intended for canning, preserving or fresh eating should be held at 60–65°F for 1-3 weeks, depending on the pear

cultivar, until they reach a good eating texture. High temperatures (75°F and higher) after picking will cause the fruit to break down without ripening. After ripening, pears can be canned or preserved.

Storage of Apples & Pears

Sort the immature fruits for defects, discarding any with bruises, insect or disease damage, cracks, splits or mechanical



Pickney

Immature plums change color as they ripen.

injury, then place them into cold storage at 29–31°F and 90% humidity.

Perforated plastic bags can be used to store small groups of fruit; they help maintain high humidity around the fruits but prevent the accumulation of excess moisture in the bag. Unperforated plastic bags can also be used, just don’t seal them shut. Instead, just fold the top of the bag over allowing some air movement and water evaporation from the bag. Regularly inspect stored fruits for mold or rotting fruit; discard any you find.

When stored at this temperature, apples may last for up to 6 months and pears for 2-4 months. Late-maturing apple varieties are best suited to storage.

Plums

Fruit color, softness and flavor are the best indicators for timing your plum harvest. Plums are ready to harvest when the flesh starts to soften and yields to gentle thumb pressure. Fruit skin color changes from green to purple, red or yellow. But the best way to tell when it’s time to harvest is to taste a few fruits!

Plums keep for 3–5 weeks if stored in the refrigerator at 32–40°F in perforated plastic bags.

Paper Wasps and Yellow Jackets

Jody Green

*Extension Educator,
Douglas/Sarpy County*

Wasps are beneficial insect predators and biocontrol agents of many insect and arthropod pests, but during the summer months, some species have the potential to be an urban pest.

Identification of Social Wasps

Social wasps such as paper wasps and yellow jackets, live in large colonies, compared to solitary wasps, which live and forage alone. Bees can be distinguished from wasps by their fuzzy appearance and their diet consists of nectar, pollen and water. Wasps appear hard and shiny with less hair, wings are folded into a narrow strip over the abdomen while at rest and legs dangle as they fly.

Pest Status of Wasps

Wasps become nuisances when nests are constructed in locations where humans frequent. Only females are capable of stinging and most stings occur when they are stepped on, touched or in defense mode. Some people are hypersensitive to wasp venom, and stings can lead to life-threatening anaphylactic shock. It is



Paper wasps appear smooth and shiny with various patterns of yellow and brown or black



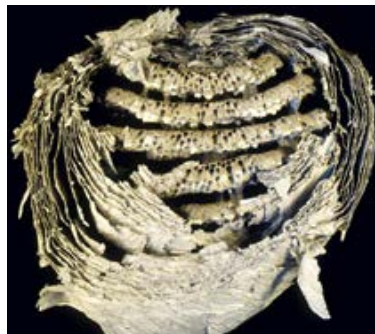
Yellow jackets are bright yellow and black with black antennae



The European paper wasp resembles the yellow jacket, but has yellow antennae



Paper wasp nest



Yellow jacket nest

advised to seek medical treatment if severe reaction occurs.

Nesting Type and Location

The queen overwinters in protective sites, and emerges when the weather warms up. She begins to search for a suitable location to begin construction of her nest. She builds cells using papery pulp made from chewed up wood fibers mixed

with saliva, and lays a single egg in each cell. She forages for food during the day, feeding larvae pre-chewed insects. Adult wasps feed on sugary substances such as nectar, plant sap and rotting fruits.

The nest of a paper wasp is a single-layer of downward-facing, exposed cells, resembling an umbrella. These nests are constructed under any horizontal surface, including overhangs of

buildings, beams, furniture and limbs. The European paper wasp can also nest in small cavities, such as hollow posts of outdoor furniture, appliances and light fixtures. A yellow jacket nest consists of a series of round combs stacked in tiers, covered in an envelope and are located underground in abandoned rodent burrows, as aerial nests or in wall voids.

Avoid Attracting Wasps

Many wasps are scavengers and will forage on a wide variety of foods we consume. The best way to prevent wasps is to keep food covered, dispose of trash in a covered container and remove rotting fruit from trees.

Finding and Treating the Nest

The best time to find the

nest is during the day, but the best time to treat is after dark when temperatures are cooler and all foragers retreat to the nest. Wear protective clothing that covers the body, face and hands completely, and if using a flashlight, cover beam with red cellophane. If you find a nest in your wall void, do not seal the entry hole!

Pest management companies can eliminate wasp nests if located in difficult areas and locations. They have specialized equipment and insecticidal dust to complete the job during the day. There are many products labeled for wasps and intended for homeowner use. Synthetic pyrethroids such as cyfluthrin, prallethrin and deltamethrin offer quick knockdown in ready-to-use formulations that can be sprayed as far away as 15–20 feet. It is best to treat now while colonies are below peak population numbers and aggressive behavior is not yet evident. Come late summer, adult wasps will be plentiful and respond aggressively when competing for sources of sugar (i.e. your watermelon, popsicle, fruit juices and pop).

If you can avoid the nest and it's not bothering anyone, leave the nest alone. The colony will die after the first hard freeze.

Severe Weather Preparedness and COVID-19

Soni Cochran

*Extension Associate,
Lancaster County*

The current situation with COVID-19 and social distancing rules do not eliminate the potential for a severe weather outbreak, including the possibility of tornadoes. However, it does require a little extra preparation for such an event as we are in the midst of severe storm season. Planning can reduce the danger should a tornado warning be issued.

The first step is to have an emergency plan for your household. The plan will include identifying the safest location for shelter in your home, preparing an emergency kit and checking your method of receiving alerts and warnings.

Best Places to Shelter

If you live in a mobile home, there is no safe place to take shelter in that structure. Check with your park management on shelter capabilities and make plans accordingly. Verify these are open and available to you and the other residents despite the recent COVID-19 protocols.

If you live in an apartment complex, you may have bigger challenges. Check to see if your building or complex has a safe place to shelter during severe weather. If so, verify the shelter is open and available to you and the other residents despite recent COVID-19 protocols. If no shelter is available, check for space on the lowest level, without windows, and put as many walls between you and the outside as possible.

In a house without a basement,

put yourself on the lowest level with as many walls between you and the outside as possible. Centrally-located halls and bathrooms are the safest location to seek shelter (see graphic below). If you have a basement, that is, by far, the best location to go. Sheltering under the stairwell may protect you from falling debris.

Emergency Kit Supplies

An emergency kit should consist of water (one gallon of water per person per day for at least three days, for drinking and sanitation), at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food, flashlight, first aid kit, extra batteries, whistle to signal for help, dust mask to help filter contaminated air, plastic sheeting and duct tape to shelter-in-place, moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties for personal sanitation, wrench or pliers to turn off utilities, manual can opener for food and cell phone with chargers and a backup battery.

Best Options for Severe Weather Updates

Smart phones and the internet are a common method of getting weather updates. You should also consider a backup method in case these systems are down. An NOAA weather radio is an important tool to receive these warnings. When purchasing a weather radio, make certain it has a signal in the location you will use for shelter and is programmed for your area.

Now's the Time to Plan and Practice Your Plan

Many people are spending more time than normal at their residences. While

this will provide additional challenges for individuals in apartment complexes, etc. – it does provide a fantastic opportunity for everyone to plan and rehearse. Disaster plans shouldn't be limited to severe weather! Prepare and practice for fires, earthquakes and other disasters in this time of isolation.

During a disaster, what is good for you is also good for your pets, so get them ready today. Make sure your pets and any larger animals are included in your emergency preparedness plans. For more information, visit <https://www.ready.gov/pets>.

Remember:

- In the case of a warning, your first priority is to protect yourself from a potential tornado!
- Have multiple modes of receiving an alert or warning – with at least one form of alert not reliant upon cellular communications. Set correctly for

your area, an NOAA weather radio can provide important information without relying on cellular access.

- Identify the safest shelter location — either in your home or in a communal shelter.
- If using a communal shelter — i.e. mobile home park or apartment complex — confirm the shelter is open and what distancing practices are in place keeping in mind COVID-19 protocols.

This article was adapted from K-State Research and Extension, https://webapp.agron.ksu.edu/agr_social/article_new/severe-weather-preparedness-during-covid-19-381-8

FOR MORE SEVERE WEATHER SAFETY TIPS VISIT:

https://www.weather.gov/mob/Severe_Tornado
<https://disaster.unl.edu>



Ideal tornado sheltering locations within a house. Graphic from NOAA (<https://www.weather.gov/safety/tornado>)

Time to Look for Bagworms

Mary Jane Frogge
Extension Associate,
Lancaster County

Bagworms have become a serious pest in Lancaster County. Bagworm larvae hatched in late May and have been feeding on plant material for over a month. They are about half of their mature size.

Take a walk through your landscape or windbreak and check all your landscape plants, especially spruce and junipers. If you find an outbreak of bagworms, chemical control may be needed. *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) is available at nurseries and garden centers as Dipel or Thuricide. Other insecticides currently labeled for bagworm control include acephate, carbaryl, cyfluthrin, malathion and permethrin. Be sure to read and follow all label directions.



Bagworm feeding on spruce tree in mid-July.

If you have a large infestation in your evergreen trees or shrubs, do not delay in controlling the bagworms. Feeding by mature caterpillars slows in August before pupation into adults, so chemical control

in late summer and fall is not effective. By that time, your valuable landscape plants or windbreak are already severely damaged by the maturing bagworms.

Backyard Farmer Show

Backyard Farmer (BYF) is Nebraska's place to go for all of your gardening information for over 65 seasons. BYF airs on Thursday's, at 7 p.m. CT, from April to September on NET1.

BYF repeats Saturdays at 10 a.m. on NET, Sundays at 3 p.m. and Mondays at 5 p.m. on CREATE.

Backyard Farmer is dedicated to helping you find solutions to your lawn and garden questions. Every year from spring to fall, our panel of experts deals with topics from insect pests, disease, turf and fruits and vegetables, as well as landscape design and general horticulture topics.

BACKYARD FARMER



GARDEN GUIDE

THINGS TO DO THIS MONTH

Mary Jane Frogge, Extension Associate,
Lancaster County

In July, a garden needs one inch of rain or water each week. Early morning is the best time to water. Evening watering is less desirable because plant leaves that remain wet through the night are more susceptible to fungus diseases. Mulch plants to reduce water losses and improve yields.

Check the soil moisture of container-grown vegetables and flowers daily. As the temperature rises, some plants may need water twice a day.

Many plants are easily propagated by layering in July. Euonymus, verbenas, English ivy and climbing roses are a few plants that will root if the stems are fastened down and covered with soil.

For fall harvest of lettuce, radish, carrots, beets, turnips, kale and spinach, sow seeds in late July to early August.

Continue to make successive plantings of crops like beans and sweet corn to provide a continuous harvest until fall. A small garden will produce a large quantity of vegetables if replanting is done throughout the summer.

A brown or grayish cast over a lawn can be caused by dull or improperly adjusted mower blades that shred grass rather than cut it.

Store pesticides in a safe place in their original containers, away from children and pets. Use pesticides carefully in your garden. Read the labels and follow the directions. The warnings and precautions are for your protection.

Certain pesticides have a waiting period of several days between the time of the last spray and harvest. Read and follow directions on all labels before applying to your vegetable crops. Wash all produce thoroughly before use.

For maximum landscape interest in a small, vertical space, try annual vines. They can disguise ugly walls and fences. When trellised, they can create shade and privacy while hiding undesirable views. Try morning glory, nasturtium vine and scarlet runner bean.

Cutting flowers is best done with sharp pruners which will help avoid injury to the growing plant. A slanting cut will expose a larger absorbing surface to water and will prevent the base of the stem from resting on the bottom of the vase. It is best to carry a bucket of water to the garden for collecting flowers.

5 Tips for Working Remotely from Home and Caring for Children During COVID-19

Lynn DeVries

Extension Educator, West Central
Research & Extension Center

If we could press rewind and go back in time to mid-March, I wonder what we would have been doing. The sudden and abrupt transition to working from home and having to juggle roles of employee, parent and teacher all at once was certainly something most of us were not prepared for. Most of us had little time to plan how we would design our work space, daily schedules and balance work and family under one roof. If this sounds like your "new normal," you are not alone. I have found some helpful tips and words of encouragement I would like to pass along from a recent article by Holly Hatton-Bowers and Carrie L. Hanson-Bradley, Assistant Professors at the University of Nebraska.

TIP 1: Acknowledge Emotions

Emotions are normal and healthy and give us clues to what we may need to feel better.

Dr. Dan Siegel says it can be helpful to "name it to tame it." We often feel emotions in our bodies first, such as tightness in our chest or a stiff neck. Siegel advises us to stop for a minute, pay attention to what we feel in our bodies and then name our emotion. The authors recommended saying, "My body feels..." and the emotion I am experiencing is..."

Keep in mind that emotions are not forever, "name it, tame it" and move on. Judging ourselves for having emotions only makes us feel worse.

TIP 2: Manage Expectations

It is difficult to juggle all of your roles at the same time, so do not expect to be able to fulfill all the roles you play at the same level you did before COVID-19. It can be helpful to understand each individual manages change differently; and this is particularly true as families adjust to the newness of working from home, parenting and teaching at the same time. Some will embrace it as a new opportunity for creativity while others can feel overwhelmed.

What about Parenting Expectations?

Daily routines will be different for each individual family. Whether it be educational activities, or family time together, what young children need more than ever right now is time to connect, cuddle, have a routine with some flexibility and to feel safe.

Can you find ways to make every day activities fun for your child? Perhaps the family meal time could turn into a picnic on the floor. Maybe you could make a game of sorting socks when doing the laundry. Try and be intentional about when you need to work and when to play or be with your children. It's like putting deposits in the bank, when children

receive moments of our undivided attention, then they are more likely to feel okay when parents need to move away to focus on work.

TIP 3: Create a Schedule

Sit down and create a schedule that works for your family. Keeping in mind it is good to allow for flexibility. Schedule in work time and time for household chores. Time for children to play and do chores and school work too. If there are two parents in the home, the adults could alternate work hours so as to keep children safe as well as giving them the parent connection time they need most.



Image: Sara Gavin

TIP 4: Practice Self-Care

It is healthy to take time away to focus on what you need as an adult. Yet, when we are under stress, self-care is one of the first things that gets pushed aside. Here are a few strategies for self-care:

- Listening to music
- Taking time to virtually connect with friends and family
- Spend time in nature
- Exercise
- Practice deep breathing or meditation
- Eating healthy
- Reading or drawing
- Getting adequate sleep and waking up at the same time each day
- Practice positive thinking and/or practice gratitude

TIP 5: Be Gentle with Yourself

We are collectively experiencing a worldwide crisis, and crises trigger our brains into fight, flight or freeze mode. That means our brains are focused on surviving, not thriving. So it is normal to feel like you aren't functioning at your peak level. Have you felt forgetful lately, not as motivated or find yourself not knowing what day it is? It may be your brain's way of protecting you in this time of stress.

Soon, you will be able to look back on this time and process what has happened, but in-depth processing happens only after you feel emotionally and physically safe. So in this time of crisis, be gentle with yourself (and with others). Self-compassion creates space where mistakes are viewed as valuable learning opportunities, tiny victories call for huge celebrations and we can acknowledge our suffering without criticizing ourselves for being human.



HEART OF 4-H VOLUNTEER AWARD

Grace Kim

Lancaster County 4-H is proud to announce Grace Kim of Lincoln as winner of the June “Heart of 4-H Award” in recognition of outstanding volunteer service.

A 4-H volunteer for over six years, Grace has helped in a variety of roles:

- Co-leader of the Boots N’ Hooves 4-H horse club.
- A superintendent at the Lancaster County Super Fair 4-H Horse Shows.
- Member of the Horse Volunteers in Program Service (VIPS) committee and helping at the Pre-District Horse Show.
- Assisted youth and families in her club and Prairie Star 4-H club in preparing for the Lancaster County Super Fair, State 4-H Horse Exposition and open horse shows.
- Organized Horsemanship Levels Testing Prep Clinics.
- Coached a Lancaster County Junior quiz bowl team which earned grand champion at the 4-H Horse Stampede.

“I like being a 4-H volunteer because I can share my passion of showing horses with the younger generation,” she says. “Seeing youth grow into young adults that are successful in their careers after 4-H is what makes it worth it. My favorite experience is ‘sending off’ my senior girls on senior night at the county fair. A very emotional night as everyone expresses their love and support for the aging-out youth and seeing the accomplished 4-H careers the youth have had.”

Lancaster County 4-H thanks Grace for donating her time and talents. People like her are indeed the heart of 4-H!



4-H/FFA Livestock Booster Club Scholarships Due July 6

Applications for Lancaster County 4-H/FFA Livestock Booster Club \$500 college scholarships are due July 6. Open to all Lancaster County 4-H/FFA seniors, but preference to those who have exhibited production livestock in 4-H or FFA. The application is at the Extension office and online at <http://go.unl.edu/5bg>. For more information, contact Calvin DeVries at 402-441-7180. Two winners will be announced at the Youth Livestock Premium Auction.

Video Companion Animal (and Cat and Pet Rabbit) Showmanship Entries Due Aug. 10

The Nebraska 4-H Video Companion Animal Showmanship Contest provides youth an opportunity to showcase their knowledge and skills they have developed in their 4-H companion animal project. From cats, pet rabbits and rodents to birds, reptiles and amphibians, 4-H youth are invited to record a 3–5 minute presentation demonstrating their knowledge about the care their companion animal requires. This statewide contest is open to youth ages 10–18 who are enrolled in a companion animal project. Video submissions will be accepted through Monday, Aug. 10. Information, rules and regulations are at <https://4h.unl.edu/companion-animal/showmanship-contest>. If you have questions, contact Lisa Karr at lisa.karr@unl.edu.

Seven Lancaster 4-H Clubs Receive Governor’s Ag Excellence Awards

Congratulations to the seven Lancaster County 4-H Clubs who received 2020 Governor’s Agricultural Excellence Awards: **Cornerstone Equestrian, Five Star 4-H’ers, Lancaster County 4-H Teen Council, Rabbits R Us, Sheridan Shamrocks, Tails N’ Trails** and **Unified Showing**. The awards are sponsored by the Nebraska 4-H Foundation and Nebraska Investment Finance Authority (NIFA). Each year, 25 Nebraska 4-H clubs are awarded \$500 to be used as described in their award application.

4-H’ers Qualify for State Speech & PSA Contest

The Lancaster County 4-H Speech and Public Service Announcement (PSA) contest was held virtually this year due to COVID-19. More than 52 Lancaster County 4-H youth competed in this year’s communication events. The following top winners will have the opportunity to represent Lancaster County at the state Speech & PSA virtual contest (learn more about the state contest at <https://4h.unl.edu/public-speaking>). Several speech videos and PSA recordings will be posted soon at <https://lancaster.unl.edu/4h/speech>.

SPEECH CONTEST:

- **Intermediate (11–12 years):** Sarah Lange, Micah Pracheil, Khloe Cuttlers, Emmy Sheldon, Melanie Wiggins
- **Senior (13–18 years):** Kylie Hansen, Autumn Lindsley, Gabriel Livingston, Samuel Livingston

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT (PSA) CONTEST:

- **Intermediate (11–12 years):** Cash Hance, Clara Johnson, Melanie Wiggins
- **Senior (13–18 years):** Ella Hendricksen, Riley Peterson, Eliese Schwinck

4-H Companion Animal Challenge Results

The statewide 4-H Companion Animal Challenge was held virtually the week of April 13. Youth had the opportunity to display their companion animal knowledge through four contests: art, demonstration, essay and photography. Congratulations to all Lancaster County 4-H members who participated! Below are the Lancaster County purple ribbon winners and champions. Complete results are at <https://4h.unl.edu/companion-animal/challenge>.

DEMONSTRATIONS

- **Team:** Taylor Root & Caraline Higgins (champion)

ESSAY

- **Intermediate division:** Andrew Donlan (champion)
- **Senior division:** Nathaniel Gabel (champion)

ART CONTEST

- **Junior division:** Joseph Donlan (champion)
- **Intermediate division:** Andrew Donlan, John Donlan



HEART OF 4-H VOLUNTEER AWARD



Greater Lincoln Obedience Club

Lancaster County 4-H is proud to announce the Greater Lincoln Obedience Club (GLOC) as winner of the July “Heart of 4-H Award” in recognition of outstanding volunteer service. Even though they are not a 4-H club, they do so much to help 4-H’ers and their families.

4-H volunteers for over 15 years, Greater Lincoln Obedience Club is already making a big impact:

- They have helped mentor 4-H’ers and their parents in dog sports.
- They are available to answer questions the 4-H’ers may have regarding their dogs and obedience.
- They supply various equipment for the 4-H’ers to use to train their dogs for the fair. Including providing the agility equipment used at the Lancaster County Super Fair 4-H Dog Agility Show.

Teresa Barney, leader of GLOC, says, “We enjoy watching the kids compete in dog sports with their pet; it strengthens the bond between dog and handler. Being able to watch these kids year after year grow and become more confident in their ability to work and train dogs is rewarding.”

Lancaster County 4-H thanks the members of GLOC for donating their time and talents. People like them are indeed the heart of 4-H!



HORSE BITS

Virtual State 4-H Horse Show — Entries Due Online July 6

Due to concerns regarding the spread of COVID-19, Nebraska 4-H has decided to cancel the in-person State 4-H Horse Expo. Instead, a modified Fun Horse Show & Stampede will be hosted allowing youth to compete virtually. Participants will record and submit videos and pictures of their entries using the rules and specifications found at <https://4h.unl.edu/state-horse-expo>. Details on the Horse Bowl contest is pending.

Horse Incentive Forms Due July 24

Any Lancaster County 4-H’er may participate in the horse incentive program and earn points by participating in horse-related activities between January 1 and July 17. The more points you earn, the more valuable the reward! The points you tracked from participating in horse-related activities must be totaled on the Horse Incentive Summary Sheet. Official sheets and Reward Request Form are due to the Extension office no later than July 24. More information can be found at <https://lancaster.unl.edu/4h/horse>.

4-H Equine Virtual Forum

Nebraska 4-H Horse has created a new Equine Virtual Forum called Evaluate My Ride. This forum uses Flipgrid to allow all equine riders the opportunity to join! Evaluate My Ride will provide members with tips, suggestions and ride evaluations from equine industry clinicians. New patterns or topics will be shared and cover a variety of disciplines related to equine riding. Participants may review materials at their own pace, try out any of the listed topics and work on the feedback they are given. Evaluate My Ride is open to all ages. Members will have the opportunity to submit videos of ranging difficulty and experience. New members may join at any time and catch up on the past weekly materials at their own pace. For more information or to sign up, visit <https://4h.unl.edu/evaluate-my-ride>.



LANCASTER COUNTY Super Fair

All public aspects of the Lancaster County Super Fair have been postponed to 2021 due to COVID-19. This year's Super Fair will focus solely on 4-H & FFA youth participation. See press release at SuperFair.org.



4-H/FFA at Super Fair Planning To Be a Blend of Virtual and In-Person

Lancaster County 4-H, the Lancaster County Agricultural Society and Lancaster Event Center staff recently agreed to a plan for 4-H/FFA participation at the Lancaster County Super Fair to be a blend of virtual and in-person entries. A survey of 4-H parents, youth and volunteers helped guide the decision (305 people completed the survey). Fair in-person events are pending approval from the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department.

Current plans for the 4-H & FFA events scheduled for July 30–Aug. 2 are as follows:

VIRTUAL:

- Static exhibit entry and judging.
- Contests (including Table Setting, Fashion Show, etc.).
- Clover Kids Show & Tell.
- Cat and Household Pets shows.
- Dog show will likely be changed to a Skill-a-Thon.

IN-PERSON:

- Livestock, rabbits, poultry and horse shows will be show & go (animals are brought in, shown and leave immediately following the show). Animal show may change date and location from what is printed in the Fair Book.

CANCELED:

- Static exhibit interview judging.
- Animal herdsman ship and stall decorations.
- 4-H Council's Food Stand and Chicken Dinner.
- Lancaster County Ag Society's Exhibitor Breakfast

UP-TO-DATE PLANS WILL BE POSTED AT: <http://lancaster.unl.edu/fair>

Directed Health Measures in effect during the fair must be adhered to. There will be entry and spectator capacity limits for each event. Further details to come.

The following deadlines remain the same:

- Animal entries need to be submitted online at <http://lancaster.fairmanager.com> by July 1, 11:59 p.m.
- Horsemanship level requirements are due July 1.

The following deadlines have been extended to July 1:

- Identification certificates/affidavits for 4-H/FFA beef, bucket calves, dairy cattle, swine, sheep, goats, rabbits, llamas/alpacas and horses.
- Youth for the Quality Care of Animals requirements (online only this year).

If you have any questions, please email 4-H staff at lancaster@unl.edu.

All details/plans are subject to last minute changes.

SUPER FAIR 4-H/FFA ANIMAL ENTRIES MUST BE SUBMITTED ONLINE BY JULY 1

All 4-H/FFA animal entries for the Lancaster County Super Fair must be entered online at <http://lancaster.fairmanager.com>. This includes livestock/poultry exhibitor T-shirt sizes. No paper forms will be accepted! Youth must have been enrolled AND animal project(s) selected online at <https://ne.4honline.com> by June 15.

Deadline is Wednesday, July 1, 11:59 p.m. No late entries will be accepted!

More details and step-by-step instruction guides with pictures is at <http://lancaster.unl.edu/4h/fair>. If you have questions about the process, call Heather Odoski at 402-441-7180.

Tips:

- For rabbits, notice there are 4 rabbit divisions. If you can't find the class you are looking for, try the other rabbit divisions. If you plan to enter 12 rabbits, you will need to submit 12 entries.
- For horses, notice there are 4 horse divisions. If you can't find the class you are looking for, try the other horse divisions. If you plan to enter 12 horse classes, you will need to submit 12 entries.

Volunteers Needed To Make In-Person 4-H/FFA Events Possible at Super Fair — Please Sign Up by July 1

To make this year's in-person 4-H & FFA events possible at the Lancaster County Super Fair, new types of volunteers are being sought to implement the new health guidelines and supplement the limited fairgrounds staff. There is limited funding due to fairgrounds events being canceled since mid-March. Sign up is encouraged by July 1 to confirm sufficient volunteer help is available to go forward safely. Sign up at <https://superfair.org/get-involved/be-a-volunteer>.

Plant Science Contests Changed to Online

The Lancaster County 4-H Plant Science contests previously planned for July 8 will be changed from in-person to online. The contests will be open to all youth, as well as adults. Youth do not need to be enrolled 4-H members to participate. Advance registration is not needed. Ribbons and premiums will be provided to enrolled Lancaster County 4-H youth.

Participants choose which portions of the contest to participate in:

- Horticulture contest
- Tree identification
- Weed & grass identification

The Nebraska 4-H Online Horticulture Judging contest will be available through Monday, June 22, 8 a.m. at <https://4h.unl.edu/online-horticulture-judging-contest>.

The Lancaster County 4-H Tree ID and Weed & Grass ID online contests will start July 8. Time and links will be announced soon. Look for details and study material at <https://lancaster.unl.edu/hort/youth/fair>.

Virtual Presentations Contest Video Entries Due July 11

This year's 4-H Presentations Contest will be held virtually. Register by Monday, July 6 by calling the office at 402-441-7180 and providing youth name(s), age(s) by Jan. 1 of current year, presentation title and class number. You may also email Kristin at kristin.geisert@unl.edu to register. Specify if it is a team presentation. Open to all 4-Hers ages 8–18. Need not be enrolled in a specific project. See Fair Book page 16 for complete contest information. A how-to handout and virtual entry details will be available at <http://lancaster.unl.edu/4h/fair> and the Extension office. All participants are strongly encouraged to read the handout. Video entries need to be submitted by Saturday, July 11, 8:30 a.m.

Virtual Clover Kids Show & Tell Video Entries Due Aug. 2

All 4-H Clover Kids, youth ages 5–7 by Jan. 1, 2020, are invited to upload a video of their favorite project or small animal for the virtual Clover Kids Show & Tell. Submit videos by Sunday, Aug. 2, 1 p.m. Details will be available at <http://lancaster.unl.edu/4h/fair>.

4-H & FFA Entry Wristbands Instead of Hangtags

This year, 4-H/FFA exhibitors will not need entry pass hangtags to enter the fairgrounds. Instead, each youth exhibitor may only invite limited immediate family members due to health capacity limits for each building. Colored wristbands will be used to indicate who is allowed in specific buildings on each day. Further details to come as finalized with health department.

Virtual Static Exhibit Entries Due July 28

Videos and/or photographs of static exhibits need to be uploaded by Tuesday, July 28, 8 p.m. Details about what is required for each virtual entry by department and class and how to include the supporting information will be available at <http://lancaster.unl.edu/4h/fair>.

Be sure to include required additional information, recipe cards, data tags, etc. in your virtual entry. See 4-H/FFA Fair Book for detailed entry requirements for each class.

- Home Environment Supporting Information Tag for each home environment exhibit. Note: "Quilt Designs Other Than Fabric" exhibits also use this tag.
- Food Preservation Card for each food preservation item.
- Photography Data Tag for each photography exhibit.

4-H Clover Kids (ages 5–7) need to include their name and brief description of item (up to 5 items).

Virtual Fashion Show Video Entries Due July 20

This year's Fashion Show judging will be held virtually. Register by Monday, July 13. Submit sewn garment paper entry forms with fabric swatches by mail (clearly marked "Fashion Show" on the outside envelope) OR drop off at the Extension office (placed inside a clear, plastic resealable bag marked "Fashion Show"). Please email Shopping in Style (with a photograph), Attention Shoppers and Clover Kids entries to kristin.geisert@unl.edu. A handout, entry forms and details for submitting your fashion video(s) all will be available at the Extension office or online at <http://lancaster.unl.edu/4h/fair>. Video entries of youth as well as Clover Kids walking in their garments need to be submitted by Monday, July 20, 11:59 p.m. The submitted videos will be used to create a 4-H Cyber Runway Show available for public online viewing which will include the announcements of ribbons, awards, state fair qualifiers and champions — taking the place of an 'in-person' show. Public video link will be posted at <http://lancaster.unl.edu/4h/fair>.

Virtual Table Setting Contest Video Entries Due July 20

The Table Setting Contest will be held virtually this year for ages 8–18. Register by Monday, July 13 by calling 402-441-7180 (there is no entry form). Provide 4-Hers name, age and category (picnic, casual, formal or birthday). A "how-to" handout will be available at the Extension office or online at <http://lancaster.unl.edu/4h/fair>. Participants select a theme and display one place setting, including table covering, dishes, glassware, silverware, centerpiece and menu. No food needs to be displayed. Submit a 5-minute judge presentation by Monday, July 20, 11:59 p.m. A public online viewing of entries, along with ribbon placings and top award announcements will be available online — link will be posted at <http://lancaster.unl.edu/4h/fair>.

EXTENSION NEWS

New Urban Entomologist, Kait Chapman



In June, Kait Chapman joined Nebraska Extension as an urban entomology extension educator for Lancaster, York, Seward, Cass, and Otoe Counties. Her primary focus will be programs related to plant- and food-insect issues and other insects that affect humans like head lice and bed bugs. Kait’s research background has primarily been in plant-insect interactions, including host-plant resistance to aphids, earning a bachelor’s degree in Insect Science and finishing her doctorate’s degree in Entomology from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. During her time as a graduate student, Kait devoted time to teaching and developing science literacy and informal outreach programs that communicate complex

scientific topics to diverse audiences. In 2018, Kait acted as the Director of Outreach for a strategic communications and marketing consultancy in the environmental, sustainability, science, and social equity sectors. Kait is especially passionate about community engagement, and as a native Nebraskan from Papillion, she’s eager to assist her fellow residents as well as businesses, institutions, and industry and health professionals solve their pest problems. You can contact Kait at 402-441-7180 and kcchapman13@unl.edu or follow her on Twitter @KaitChapmanUNL. Lancaster County currently offers diagnostic service of insects and pests.

Upcoming Early Childhood Trainings

The Learning Child Team is currently offering a variety of free or low cost VIRTUAL trainings for childcare providers. Some topics coming up in July are: Deeper Dive into Documentation & Mindfulness and Self-Care. Visit this website to learn more about the trainings and to sign up! <https://extension.unl.edu/statewide/douglas-sarpy/early-childhood-education-professional-development-programs/>



EXTENSION CALENDAR

All events will be held at the Lancaster Extension Education Center, 444 Cherrycreek Road, Lincoln, unless otherwise noted.

July

- 1 Deadline for Identification Requirements of 4-H & FFA Sheep/Goats/Swine/Beef/Bucket Calves/Dairy Cattle/Llamas & Alpacas/Rabbits and Horses
- 1 Deadline for 4-H/FFA Livestock Animal Exhibitors to Complete Requirements for Youth for Quality Care of Animals
- 1 Deadline for All 4-H/FFA Super Fair Animal Online Entries
- 1 Requested Date to Sign Up To Volunteer at Super Fair to Make In-Person 4-H & FFA Events Possible
- 3 Extension Office Closed for 4th of July Holiday
- 6 Deadline to Sign Up for State 4-H Fun Horse Virtual Show & Stampede
- 6 4-H/FFA Livestock Booster Club Scholarship Deadline
- 8 4-H Plant Science Tree ID and Weed & Grass ID Online Contests Start
- 10 Extension Board Meeting 8 a.m.
- 11 4-H Virtual Presentations Contest Video Entries Due 8:30 a.m.
- 17 4-H Horse Incentive Program Last Day to Log Hours/Points
- 20 4-H Virtual Fashion Show Judging Videos Due 11:59 p.m.
- 20 4-H Virtual Tablesetting Video Entries Due 11:59 p.m.
- 24 4-H Horse Incentive Program Forms Due to Extension
- 28 4-H & FFA Virtual Static Exhibit Entries for Super Fair Due 8 p.m.

July 30–Aug. 2 Lancaster County Super Fair *Lancaster Event Center*

4-H Resources You May Use at Home

lancaster.unl.edu/4Hathome

Lancaster County 4-H is compiling a list of 4-H resources and activities 4-H families, volunteers and youth may use at home. You do not need to be enrolled in 4-H to use these resources.

Resources include:

- NEW — It’s Magic! Clover Kids At Home Activities
- Listen to Your Heart

- Horse Judging At-Home Lessons
- Excerpts from Nebraska 4-H “STEAM Clothing: Maker’s Guide”

- Tower Building Activity
- Youth Gardening Activities

4h.unl.edu/virtual-home-learning

Nebraska 4-H is excited to share live experiences, self-paced opportunities and activity guides for youth & their families.

Opportunities include:

- NEW — Family Fun Day for all ages, Tuesdays at 6 p.m.
- NEW — Clover Kid Fun Pack, self-paced lessons for ages 5–7.

- Living Room Learning for 3rd–5th Grades, Thursdays at 10:30 a.m.
- Boredom Buster Challenge for 6th–9th Grades, Mondays at 2 p.m.

- Virtual Field Trips for 9th–12th Grades, Tuesdays at 10 a.m.
- STEM at Home Activities

Protect Your Private Well from Stormwater Runoff

Becky Schuerman

Extension Domestic Water/
Wastewater Associate

Warmer weather is here and our precipitation has changed from snow to rain, though snow melt also creates stormwater runoff. The next time it rains, go outside and notice how the rainwater moves from roof areas and gutters, driveways, walkways and other concrete or asphalt surfaces. Make sure this water is not flowing toward your private drinking water well.

Stormwater

As stormwater flows over the land, it can pick up debris, bacteria, chemicals, soil and other pollutants and carry those toward your well. Sources of contaminants on an acreage might include paint, wood-sealants, solvents, used motor oil and automotive fluids,

cleaning products, deicers/salt and other chemical products leaked or poured onto the ground. Fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides applied to lawns and gardens can wash off with stormwater or runoff from irrigation, particularly if the ground is already saturated. Pet and animal waste are additional sources of contamination. Research shows drinking water wells that have been impacted by standing water/flooding are more likely to be contaminated with bacteria. Other pollutants also may have entered the well with runoff. These potential contaminants may not only affect your well, but the aquifer that your well taps into, thus potentially contaminating other wells in your area.

Reduce the Risk

To reduce the risk of contamination from runoff, your well casing must extend above



Photo by Jan Hyngstrom

the ground by at least one foot. The ground must slope away from your well casing so that water cannot pool up around the

well head. If stormwater flows toward your well, you will need to re-grade and/or landscape the area so stormwater flows away

from the well, while maintaining your well casing extends above the ground by at least one foot.

Runoff is Unavoidable

Stormwater and water runoff is unavoidable. If you are aware of where runoff exists around your property, you can adopt best landscaping and site management practices that will greatly minimize the negative effects runoff. Your well and the groundwater so many Nebraskans rely on as their drinking water source will thank you!

FOR MORE INFORMATION

See the NebGuide <http://extensionpublications.unl.edu/assets/pdf/g2052.pdf> for easy to complete assessments for “Landscaping and Site Management to Reduce Runoff” and “Pollutants in Runoff.”