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Vegetable Gardening for Beginners



Sarah Browning
Extension Educator in
Lancaster County

Is this the year you want to plant a home vegetable garden? If so, there's still plenty of time to get started.

Home vegetable gardening is a popular hobby for a number of reasons. Some people garden for exercise and some for the enjoyment of harvesting flavorful produce that can be eaten fresh from the garden or preserved for use during winter. Others garden so they can grow a wider variety of vegetables than are available at their local grocery store. Finally, concerns about food safety are the motivation for others.

Regardless of motive, gardening can be as simple or as complex a project as you make it. However, careful planning can make gardening easier, more productive and more enjoyable. In planning your garden, it is important to consider a few basics.

How Big Should My Garden Be?

This is an important consideration because a small, weed-free garden will produce more than a larger, poorly maintained garden. Consider how many family members will help with the garden. Or will you be handling the hoe alone? Plants such as watermelon, pumpkin and winter squash take up large areas of garden space. In small gardens, the use of compact vegetable cultivars will conserve

Vegetables can be grown in gardens of many sizes; from large to small traditional in-ground plantings, to small container gardens.



Photos: Pixabay

space and enable gardeners to plant a greater variety of vegetables. So you might consider continuing to buy watermelons, squash and pumpkins.

Many vegetables can be grown in containers, creating a patio, deck, balcony or kitchen doorstep garden and providing growing room for those without enough space for a traditional vegetable garden. Vegetables and herbs can also be incorporated in ornamental plantings of shrubs, perennials and annuals to create an edible landscape.

What Should I Plant?

Tomatoes, both slicing and cherry types, are among the most popular home garden vegetables. Carrots, radishes, beans, peas and salad greens (lettuce, arugula, mesclun, sorrel) are some of the easiest vegetables to grow. Sweet corn is more difficult and has a relatively low-yield per plant, so is another vegetable to consider continuing to buy.

Vegetable cultivars with unusual color or shape, like 'Purple Haze' carrots or 'Easter Egg' radishes, make gardening — and possibly even eating vegetables — fun for children.

Consider buying those plants designated as an All-America Selection (AAS). Selection as an AAS Award winner recognizes a vegetable for significant achievements, proving it to be superior to all others on the market. Many winners become staples in the garden industry for many years, such as 'Imperator' carrot (1933), 'Straight-8' cucumber (1935) and 'Sweet Banana' pepper (1941).

For a list of some vegetable cultivars suitable for use throughout Nebraska, refer to Nebraska Extension NebGuide "Selected Vegetable Cultivars for Nebraska," (G1896) at <https://go.unl.edu/vegetables>.

see *VEGETABLE GARDENING* on page 3

EXTENSION POSTPONEMENTS, CANCELLATIONS & CHANGES

Due to COVID-19, Nebraska Extension statewide is canceling or postponing all teaching or gathering events until May 31 unless they can be delivered remotely. At this time, Extension is planning for summer events as normal, but will publish the status of events scheduled after May 31 as far in advance as possible.

The Lancaster County Extension office is closed to in-person traffic until further notice. 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>).

"Sewing for Hospitals" Community Service Project



Due to COVID-19, Bryan Health in Lincoln has reached out to Lancaster County 4-H and Extension needing sewn, 100% cotton, protective, adult-sized masks for non-medical personnel and patients.

Here are ways to help:

- Use your own 100% cotton fabric of any color or print. Fabric must be laundered with detergent, dried in the dryer and pressed before cutting. Each mask requires two 7" pieces of elastic. Extra elastic is available.
- Pick up kits containing fabric, elastic, "Sewer Info Sheet" and instructions to make at least 10 masks.
- Donate new, unused 100% cotton fabric (no fleece or flannel). We request at least 1/2 yard pieces.

Instructions, "Sewer Info Sheets" and more information: lancaster.unl.edu/sewingforhospitals

If you have questions or are unable to access the instructions online, email Kristin Geisert at kristin.geisert@unl.edu.

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

CONNECT WITH US

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444 Cherrycreek Road, Suite A
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NEBLINE

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Making a Meal With What's on Hand

Struggling to make meals with what you have on hand? Are you wanting to make a favorite recipe, but missing some of the ingredients? Are you tired of buying ingredients you only use once?

Here are some examples to spark your imagination:

Want to make sandwiches, but you've just eaten your last slice of bread? Use tortillas, bagels, pita bread, French bread, English muffin, rolls, focaccia, biscuits or lettuce wrap instead.

Feel like pasta, but you're missing the pasta sauce? Try these tasty alternatives:

- Olive or vegetable oil with garlic.
- Pesto or fresh tomatoes with garlic, olive oil, salt and pepper.
- Top your pasta with chili or soup. For some soups, you may wish to add less liquid, so they make a thicker sauce.

Craving tacos or burritos, but you are short on ingredients?

- No tortillas, use rice instead to make rice bowls.
- No ground beef or chicken, use a can of black beans in place of the meat. Drain and rinse the black beans. Sauté with 1 teaspoon of olive or vegetable

oil and 1/2 of a taco-seasoning packet for a plant-based meal.

I want to make a smoothie, but I'm out of yogurt! No problem, swap the yogurt out for applesauce, fruit juice, milk or frozen bananas. Then, add fruits (fresh, frozen or canned) you have on hand and blend it up.

Hungry for pizza, but missing some ingredients?

- Warm a tortilla shell in a skillet and top with your favorite pizza toppings.
- Use another type of crust such as canned or homemade biscuits, English muffins, Naan bread or French rolls.
- Make your own homemade pizza sauce by combining 15 oz canned diced tomatoes, 2 tablespoon minced garlic, 2 teaspoon olive oil, 1 teaspoon sugar, 1 teaspoon salt and 1/2 teaspoon black pepper. Add to a blender and pulse 2-3 times until tomatoes are finely diced.
- Use black or white beans to make a bean pizza sauce. The smoother you want the sauce, the more you need to smash the beans with a fork or food processor prior to adding your desired flavoring.

Save my salad, I'm out of dressing! Homemade salad

dressing is a breeze with this simple salad equation. Simply add 1 cup oil with 1/2 cup lemon juice or vinegar in a sealable container. Add 1 teaspoon garlic, 1 teaspoon salt and 2 teaspoon dried herbs of your choice. Shake until combined.

Your favorite meat marinade ran out? Use an oil and vinegar salad dressing, also known as a vinaigrette. It makes a great marinade.

Out of pasta for casseroles? Substitute another starchy food such as cooked rice, cooked or canned potatoes, carrots or sweet potatoes, cooked or canned beans, or lentils for pasta.

Out of fresh fruit? Add dried, canned or frozen fruit to your recipe. Dried fruits are very dense, so if you substitute them into a recipe, keep in mind the ratio of one cup of fresh fruit is equal to about 1/4 cup of dried.

This article was originally written by Alice Henneman, MS, RD. Updated and reviewed in 2020. Additional contributors include: Brenda Aufdenkamp, Donnia Behrends, Kayla Colgrove, Ann Fenton, Lisa Franzen-Castle, Brie Frickenstein, Jamie Goffena, Hannah Guenther, Carrie Schneider-Miller, Natalie Sehi, Nancy Urbanec and Cami Wells.

Source: Tastings publication, Food and Culinary professionals practice group of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

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

HOMEMADE PIZZA CRUST

(Yield: 8 servings)

- 1 1/4 cup whole wheat flour
- 1 1/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 2 3/4 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 Tablespoon vegetable oil
- 3/4 cup water
- 1/2 cup pizza sauce
- 2 cups vegetables (sliced tomatoes, shredded carrots, sliced bell pepper, sliced onion)
- 5 ounces Mozzarella cheese, shredded
- Fresh basil leaves, gently rubbed under cold running water (optional)

1. Wash hands with soap and water.
2. Preheat oven to 400°F.
3. Spray a large baking sheet or pizza pan with non-stick cooking spray. Set aside.
4. In a medium bowl, combine flour, baking powder and salt.
5. Add oil and water. Stir until it forms a ball. If dough is stiff add up to 1/4 cup more water.
6. Knead dough on a floured surface for 3-4 minutes.
7. Press/roll dough out on prepared pan.
8. Spoon pizza sauce on dough.
9. Arrange desired toppings over sauce. Sprinkle on cheese.
10. Bake for 15-25 minutes. If using basil leaves, sprinkle on pizza before serving.

Nutrition Information: Serving Size (1/8 of pizza): Calories 220 Total Fat 6g Saturated Fat 2g Sodium 582mg Total Carbohydrates 32g Fiber 3g Protein 10g

Source: Nebraska Extension Nutrition Education Program



Craig Chandler, UNL Communications

2020 Cash Rent Survey

Tyler Williams
Extension Educator,
Lancaster Co.

One of the most difficult tasks of renting agricultural land is determining a “fair” price for all parties involved, and the current economic challenges make that task even harder. The University of Nebraska–Lincoln Agricultural Economics Department conducts a yearly survey to help landowners know and understand the value and average rental rates of the land in their area. Overall, the average market value of ag land in Nebraska increased by 3% from 2019, and it is the first time since 2014 the state saw an increase in the overall market value of ag land.

About the Survey

On March 11, 2020, the 2020 Nebraska Farm Real Estate Report was released from Cornhusker Economics <http://agecon.unl.edu/cornhusker-economics> and this article contains “preliminary” data from the 2020 Nebraska Farm Real Estate Market Survey. This survey was sent to professional farm and ranch managers, certified general appraisers and agricultural bankers earlier this winter asking about prices and values for the upcoming 2020 growing season. This report is considered “preliminary” because it is publicized once enough surveys are returned in order to have statistical significance. This allows users to see most of the data as early as possible to assist with rental

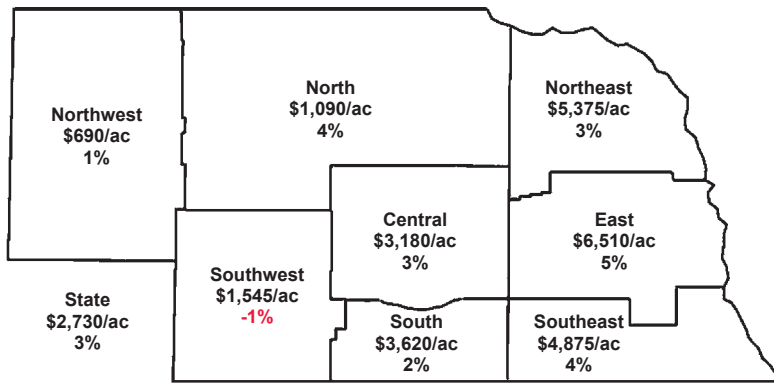


Table 1. Average reported value of Nebraska farmland for different land types by Agricultural Statistics District, Feb. 1, 2020^a

TYPE OF LAND	AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS DISTRICT		
	EAST	SOUTHEAST	STATE ^c
Dryland Cropland (No Irrigation Potential)	\$6,130/acre 6% change	\$4,425/acre 7% change	\$3,165/acre 4% change
Dryland Cropland (Irrigation Potential)	\$6,560/acre 7% change	\$5,335/acre 1% change	\$4,140/acre 3% change
Grazing Land (Tillable)	\$3,310/acre 8% change	\$2,930/acre 6% change	\$1,250/acre 5% change
Grazing Land (Nontillable)	\$2,375/acre 5% change	\$2,125/acre 8% change	\$830/acre 4% change
Hayland	\$2,965/acre -2% change	\$2,735/acre 3% change	\$1,645/acre 2% change
Gravity Irrigated Cropland	\$7,765/acre 2% change	\$6,230/acre 6% change	\$5,780/acre 2% change
Center Pivot Irrigated Cropland ^b	\$8,905/acre 5% change	\$7,700/acre 3% change	\$6,120/acre 3% change
All Land Average ^c	\$6,510/acre 5% change	\$4,875/acre 4% change	\$2,730/acre 3% change

^a Source: UNL Nebraska Farm Real Estate Market Surveys, 2019 and 2020.

^b Value of pivot not included in per acre value.

^c Weighted averages.

rate negotiations, with the understanding the numbers may be a little different in the final report to be released in June. This March report is simply a “sneak-peek” to the final report and should be used as such.

Report Findings

The report provides data based on the eight Agricultural Statistics Districts in Nebraska (see map above). Lancaster County is located in the East District; however, much of the ag land, especially the southern half of the county, will have similar-

ities to the Southeast District. There are two data sets provided: Average Value of Farmland and Reported Cash Rental Rates. The Farmland Values in **Table 1** is split into Dryland Cropland (with or without irrigation potential), Grazing Land (tillable or non-tillable), Hayland and Irrigated Cropland (with gravity or center pivot). The table also shows the percent change from 2019, and nearly all locations saw a slight increase in land values. Overall, the All Land Average in the East and Southeast Districts increased by 5% and 4%, respec-

Table 2. Reported cash rental rates for various types of Nebraska farmland and pasture: 2020 averages, percent change from 2019 and quality ranges by Agricultural Statistics District^a

TYPE OF LAND	Average	AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS DISTRICT	
		EAST	SOUTHEAST
Dryland Cropland	Average	\$205/acre 2% change	\$165/acre 6% change
	High Third Quality	\$235/acre	\$195/acre
	Low Third Quality	\$165/acre	\$130/acre
Gravity Irrigated Cropland	Average	\$250/acre 2% change	\$230/acre 5% change
	High Third Quality	\$285/acre	\$270/acre
	Low Third Quality	\$210/acre	\$195/acre
Center Pivot Irrigated Cropland ^b	Average	\$280/acre -2% change	\$260/acre 4% change
	High Third Quality	\$330/acre	\$300/acre
	Low Third Quality	\$240/acre	\$220/acre
Pasture	Average	\$51/acre 9% change	\$48/acre 4% change
	High Third Quality	\$67/acre	\$62/acre
	Low Third Quality	\$38/acre	\$36/acre
Cow-Calf Pair Rates ^c	Average	\$51.30/pair 6% change	\$51.40/pair 9% change
	High Third Quality	\$63.00/pair	\$58.80/pair
	Low Third Quality	\$44.10/pair	\$36.20/pair

^a Source: Reporters' estimated cash rental rates (both averages and ranges) from the UNL Nebraska Farm Real Estate Market Survey, 2019 and 2020.

^b Cash rents on center pivot land, assumes landowners own total irrigation system.

^c A cow-calf pair is typically considered to be 1.25 to 1.30 animal units (animal unit being 1,000 lb. animal) for a five-month grazing season. However, this can vary depending on weight of cow and age of calf.

tively; however, there was a slight decrease in hayland in the East District.

The most popular data from the survey is the Reported Cash Rental Rates found in **Table 2**. This table provides cash rent data on dryland cropland, gravity and center-pivot irrigated cropland, pasture and cow-calf pair rates. The overall cash rental rates have primarily increased as well, when compared to 2019. The East district did see a decrease on Center Pivot Irrigated Cropland.

When using this data, it is very important to remember

the report produces values for a region and doesn't take into account the local “supply vs. demand” that may alter these values for your land. The report also provides a range based on the quality of the ground, which can be highly subjective.

Communication with your tenant or landlord is critical for understanding the needs of both parties as this report does not include the multitude of factors unique to your farm. These numbers should simply serve as a starting point for the communication on rental rates.

Vegetable Gardening

continued from page 1

What's the Best Location?

Locate your garden in a level area with well-drained soil and a minimum of 6 hours direct sunlight each day, although 8–10 hours of direct sunlight are ideal. Avoid low spots or areas at the base of a slope or hill. Such areas are slow to warm up in spring and may collect water, staying too wet during rainy periods.

Make sure your garden has easy access to water and is close enough to your home for easy maintenance and harvesting. You may also grow plants in more than one location of your yard. A small garden near the kitchen door can provide herbs and greens for quick seasoning and salads.

If using containers, choose the largest possible for your location. Providing your plants a large soil area for root growth will make them more vigorous and productive. Plus, larger containers dry out slower during hot weather when your plants are fully grown.

Do I Only Plant Once in Spring?

No, garden spaces can be planted more than once using a technique called succession planting. For example, an early crop is planted and harvested, then the area is cleared and replanted for a second harvest. Sometimes there's even time for a third crop in one season.

For example, a spring crop of peas, lettuce, cauliflower or broccoli is planted and harvested in early summer. After harvest, the ground is cleared and additional fertilizer incorporated in the soil. Then a second crop of warm-season vegetables, such as summer squash, beans, Swiss chard or carrots, is planted.

As another example, two or three crops of lettuce can be harvested from the same garden space by doublecropping.

Also consider staggered plantings with quick maturing crops like radishes, green onions or lettuce, to avoid being swamped with too much for a few days and then not any for a



Purchase seeds or transplants from a reputable nursery or garden center.

period of time. By simply planting a little seed every 7–10 days, you can ensure a continuous harvest. As the earlier plantings are harvested, they can be removed and replanted.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Nebraska Extension has many publications, including online at <http://extensionpubs.unl.edu>; search for 'Vegetable'.

Pesticide Applicators: Deferment of License Recertification

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 situation, Nebraska Department of Agriculture (NDA) is easing renewal requirements on valid commercial, non-commercial and private pesticide applicator licenses due for renewal by April 15, 2020. This extends valid pesticide applicators' licenses if:

- License holders notify NDA of their intent to renew their license, and
- Pay the required license fee, by check or credit card, by May 15, 2020.

Upon receipt of payment, NDA will allow the applicator to postpone the required training for license renewal until April 15, 2021. Notify NDA of your intent to defer recertification by calling 402-471-2351. A new license will be issued that MUST be renewed by April 15, 2021.

Annual training for dicamba is still required for crop application of specific dicamba products. Online training is available at www.nda.nebraska.gov.

The full order can be found at www.nda.nebraska.gov/COVID-19.

When Thunder Roars or Lightning Flashes, Go Indoors!

Soni Cochran

Extension Associate, Lancaster County

Lightning is one of the leading causes of weather-related fatalities. In the U.S., floods are the only weather events causing more fatalities than lightning. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reports that each year hundreds of people are injured by lightning strikes.

Your odds of being struck by lightning in a given year are relatively low — only around 1 in 500,000. However, some factors can increase your odds.

Lightning most often strikes people who work outside or engage in outdoor recreational activities. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than one-third of lightning strike deaths occur on farms. Other common places where people are struck by lightning include industrial work sites and private homes.

Lightning can happen any time of year but July and August are months with the highest-recorded number of lightning strikes. Time of day is also a factor as two-thirds of all reported lightning casualties occurred between noon and 6 p.m.

It is important to pay attention to the weather forecast and be prepared in case conditions change. If you have a smart phone, sign up for weather alerts. Pay attention to early weather signs of potential lightning strikes like distant thunder. Be ready to stop all your outdoor activities if weather threatens and immediately seek safe shelter.

Lightning: What You Need to Know

- When thunderstorms are in the area, there is NO PLACE outside that is safe!
- If you hear thunder, lightning is close enough to strike you. **Remember: “When thunder roars, go indoors!”** If you are hard of hearing or know someone who is deaf, it is important to recognize a flash of lightning as your sign to go indoors!
- When you hear thunder or see a lightning flash, immediately move to a safe shelter like a substantial building or metal-topped vehicle.
- Shelter in place for at least 30 minutes AFTER you hear the last rumble of thunder.

Indoor lightning safety – 32% of lightning injuries occur indoors.

- Do not use your landline phone. Stay off computers and other electrical equipment — anything that puts you in direct contact with electricity.
- If you have time and it is safe to do so, unplug your electrical devices and appliances.
- Avoid plumbing. Don't bathe, shower or wash dishes by hand.
- Stay away from windows and doors, and stay off porches.
- Do not lie on concrete floors and do not lean against concrete walls.

Last resort outdoor risk reduction tips — if you are caught outside with no safe shelter:

- Immediately get off elevated areas such

New Focus on Disaster Education

Starting this month, the NEBLINE will have a section dedicated to disaster education, which could include mental wellness. This replaces the previous wildlife section. For information and resources on wildlife, visit <http://wildlife.unl.edu> and <http://lancaster.unl.edu/pest>.

- as hills, mountain ridges or peaks.
- Never lie flat on the ground.
- Never shelter under an isolated tree.
- If you are camping in an open area, find safe shelter immediately. Tents offer NO protection!
- If you are in a group, spread out to avoid the current from a lightning strike traveling between members.
- Immediately get out of and away from ponds, lakes and other bodies of water.
- Stay away from objects which conduct electricity (barbed wire fences, power lines, windmills, etc.).
- Protect your pets. A dog house isn't safe in a storm and pets should never be left outside on a chain.

Myths and Facts from the National Weather Service

Myth: No rain? No clouds overhead? You are safe from lightning.

Fact: Lightning often strikes more than three miles from the center of a thunderstorm, far outside the rain or thunderstorm cloud. According to the National Weather Service, these “bolts from the blue” can strike 10–15 miles from the thunderstorm.

Myth: When you are in a car, the rubber tires protect you from lightning because they insulate you from the ground.

Fact: Most cars are safe from lightning, but it isn't because of the rubber tires. You are protected because the car has a metal roof and metal sides. If

lightning strikes a vehicle, it goes through the metal frame into the ground. This is one reason why you shouldn't lean on the doors of your car during a thunderstorm. Convertibles, motorcycles, bicycles, cars with fiberglass shells and some outdoor recreational vehicles offer no protection from lightning.

Myth: If you touch someone who has been struck by lightning, you will be electrocuted.

Fact: It is safe to touch a lightning victim to give him/her first aid. The human body does not store electricity. Immediate medical attention, including calling 911, starting CPR and using an AED, may be critically important to keep the person alive until more advanced medical care arrives.

Myth: If you are in a house, you are 100% safe from lightning.

Fact: A house is a safe place to be during a thunderstorm as long as you avoid anything which conducts electricity.

Source: National Weather Service, *Lightning Myths and Facts*, www.weather.gov/safety/lightning-myths.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Nebraska Extension's Disaster Education website, <https://disaster.unl.edu>, has resources for:

- Families & individuals
- Homeowners
- Businesses & communities
- Agriculture

Sleep Impacts Mental and Physical Health

Susan Harris,

Extension Rural Health, Wellness and Safety Educator

How much sleep did you get last night? If you live in Nebraska, where current stress levels are high, there is about a 30% chance that it was less than seven hours and not enough for a body to recharge all its parts.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and World Health Organization have made it official: **Sleep Deprivation is a public health problem.** Fifty years ago, Americans slept an hour to an hour and a half more than they do today. Some might be proud of accomplishing more in a day and sleeping less, but they should consider how the body deprives itself of crucial processes when that happens. While proper nutrition and physical activity rank right up there for overall health, sleep performs magic that no other activity does:

- Sleep flushes diseased and damaged bits of toxins and waste from our brains. It also performs a process called consolidation, which cements information learned throughout the day into the brain and retains it.
- Sleep plays a role in metabolism and helps control hunger hormones.
- Sleeping triggers tissue growth that heals injuries and creates virus-fighting cells to boost immunity to illness.
- Creativity, energy levels and positive moods increase with sleep, while it also fights stress.



Turn off all devices while sleeping so there is no lighting up, dinging, vibrating or ringing.

- Muscles and organs rebuild critical cells during sleep.

One of the main symptoms of all sleep problems in adults is daytime sleepiness. Sometimes sleep deprivation will show itself in other ways, such as irritability, confusion, memory loss, concentration problems or depression. This can be deadly for producers using heavy equipment, handling chemicals or working with livestock. A study by colleagues at UNMC (Siu et al., 2015) involved farmers performing four balance tests using a pressure mat for several weeks. As sleep time decreased, they became less stable — **7.4 times worse** when they slept less than their average weekly hours the night before the test, and that was still with at least five hours of sleep! In another study, adolescent youth on farms were significantly more likely to get injured if they slept less than

9.25 hours per night (Stallones et al., 2006). Agriculture is dangerous enough for adults. Let's not allow children and teens to be in even more danger. They need much more sleep than the 8 hours recommended for adults.

A surprising fact for many parents is that young children who exhibit symptoms of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) may actually be suffering from only sleep deficiency, according to Dr. Victoria Molfese, Child, Youth and Family Studies at University of Nebraska–Lincoln. The symptom of “bouncing off the walls” and seeming to be full of extra energy, can be a sign that a child needs more sleep! In addition to basic daily life routines like food and beverage intake and physical activity, consideration for sleep hygiene — nightly routine — is imperative. Evening screen time and household light, noises and lights in the bedroom, and time in bed should be analyzed by a physician before any medication is prescribed for ADHD.

Sleep is the single most effective way to reset body functions for good health in humans of all ages, and lack of it has more impact on aging than anything else we can do to our bodies. Going without it means risking a whole slew of breakdowns, including high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease, mental instability and even obesity.

It is crucial for individuals to respect the need for adequate sleep and make it a priority in daily routines. A few ways to achieve better quality sleep include the following:

- Go to bed, and more importantly, get up at the same time every day. This is crucial for setting our biological clock! Use the alarm clock the right way: NO snooze button. Get up and get out on time.
- Sleep in a room temperature of 60–68°F.
- Turn off all devices while sleeping so there is no lighting up, dinging, vibrating or ringing. Phone alarms still work in silenced or airplane modes.
- Allow eyes to take in plenty of bright light first thing in the morning and avoid it in the evening. Lower lights in the house after the sun goes down and make sleep spaces absolutely dark.
- If there is a struggle with insomnia or waking not feeling refreshed each morning, consider an in-home sleep study, as prescribed by a physician.

Sleep aids are not recommended as a first solution, as they can create dependency and next-day “hangover” effects or sleepiness, according to Dr. David Cantal, Pulmonologist at Platte Valley Medical Group in Kearney, Nebraska. Melatonin supplements can be helpful in small doses and for short time frames to help normalize a sleep routine that has been disrupted by shift work or time zone changes.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Nebraska Extension handout, “Tips & Tricks for Better Sleep,” with a list of 30 sleep tips and tricks, is online at <http://go.unl.edu/sleepips>.

For program information about sleep deprivation and how to conquer it, contact Susan Harris at susan.harris@unl.edu.

2020 Perennial Plant of the Year

Aralia cordata 'Sun King' has a bold pop of glowing color and texture and could be the perfect anchor for a shade or part-shade landscape border. This plant has bright yellow shoots emerge in spring, then grows up to 6-feet tall and nearly as wide. The small, cream-colored umbels of flowers are attractive to bees and are followed by tiny, dark inedible drupes. Despite the Sun King's stature, it is well behaved and has little to no reseeding or suckering. Native to Japan, Korea and southeast China.

Hardiness: USDA Zones 3–9.

Light: Part-shade to full-shade. A few hours of sun brings out the yellow; tends to be more chartreuse in deeper shade.

Soil: Not picky, but can wilt during dry spells, so provide additional water as necessary.

Uses: Terrific in combina-



Aralia cordata 'Sun King'

tion with hosta, ferns and other shade perennials.

Maintenance: This is a low-maintenance deciduous perennial. Remove dead foliage after hard freeze. Supplemental

water helps keep foliage from getting brown edges during a dry spell.

Source: Perennial Plant Association

Composting How-To Videos

Compost has many benefits when used in the home landscape — it provides nutrients, increases the water-holding capacity of sandy soil and improves aeration of clay soil. Plus, making your own is a great way to recycle garden waste.

View two videos from Backyard Farmer at <https://lancaster.unl.edu/yard-garden/>

- Making Compost
- Composting Bin Construction

The normally scheduled May and June composting demonstrations sponsored by Nebraska Extension in Lancaster County and the City of Lincoln Recycling Office have been canceled. There will be three, free demonstrations in fall: Sept. 12, Oct. 3 and Oct. 24 (all starting at 10 a.m.).



Spending Time in Nature is Beneficial to Children and Adults

Katie Krause

Extension Educator,
Douglas–Sarpy Counties

The daily lives of people across Nebraska continue to be significantly affected by the evolving response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Schools, zoos, museums, recreational facilities, stores and so many other places are closed. Going to your local playground is not recommended, as the virus has been found to survive on plastic and stainless steel for 2–3 days (N van Doremalen, et al., 2020). However, this is a great time to find ways to play in natural settings. This could be in your own backyard, going for a walk in your neighborhood or getting out to a more natural setting.

Spending time in nature is beneficial to children and adults of all ages. Socially, children are able to negotiate and develop friendships in a different way outdoors, than indoors, as they have more of a sense of freedom outdoors (Warden, 2011). Cognitively, children are learning scientific concepts as they are naturally observing, investigating and forming hypotheses when playing outdoors in natural settings (Thomas and Harding, 2011). Physically, children are more active, which benefits their overall general health (Ward, 2010), and have fewer days of illness and fewer allergic reactions than



children who are inside most of the day (Hendricks, 2011). Research has even shown that children who spend more time outside, have a reduced risk of being nearsighted (Sherwin et al., 2012).

Knowing how important time outside is, and with all of the limitations there currently are around social gatherings and public places, here are some ideas for ways to get outside:

• **Find somewhere 'wild' and just let children play!** There are a lot of benefits for children to have free, uninterrupted play in nature. Find a place in the woods, in a grassland or even a small park in the city (just be sure you are only physically around the people who live in your home) and just let children play! Intervene only if absolutely necessary.

- **Make a nature bracelet** — Use clear packing tape, put it on your wrist backwards (sticky side out) and collect items from nature. Get back to the house, cut off the bracelet and put it on paper, or put another piece of tape on the bracelet to preserve the items you found!
- **Go on a scavenger hunt** — You can do this anywhere! Even in very urban areas, and if you had to, even from your windows. Decide what type of scavenger hunt you want to go on, such as a shape or color search. There are templates available online, or make your own. Some of the items you can pick up and collect in a basket or bag, take pictures or just help children write down what they see. You can revisit this multiple times and see if children can go back and find the items again.
- **Birds of Nebraska** — You can do this anywhere; from the window, in your yard or out in nature. Look for birds and try to identify them. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology is a wonderful resource for all things birds: www.birds.cornell.edu or you can use the Nebraska Bird Library's website www.nebraskabirdlibrary.org. Make a bird journal, having children draw the birds they have seen and keep a tally of how many times they see birds of the same species.
- **Create a nature playground in your own backyard** — Check

out the publication "Nature Play at Home" online at www.nwf.org/-/media/NEW-WEBSITE/Programs/ECHO/NWF-ECHO_NaturePlayAtHome for great ideas for some easy-to-construct, free or low-cost backyard play areas. Example: **Sand play** — Young children love to dig, dump and transfer (moving items such as sand or water from one container to another). While doing this, they are discovering many science and math concepts! You can use sand, soil, small rocks (not for children that still put stuff in their mouths), etc. Put in anything from a small dish bin to a big plastic pool and let children play. Provide an assortment of tools, such as washed-out plastic containers, like yogurt or cottage cheese cups, and old spoons or other cooking utensils. Even very young children can be taught that the materials need to stay in the bins. (Do this by clearly stating, 'Sand must stay in the bin', for very young children, stay with them and physically help them keep sand in the bin. Provide a reminder or two, and if they still are dumping items, you can remove the activity or remove them from the area for a while).

These are stressful times for everyone. The more time children spend outside, the more regulated and happier they will be, and the happier the adults who care for them will be, too!



GARDEN GUIDE

THINGS TO DO THIS MONTH

Mary Jane Frogge, Extension Associate,
Lancaster County

To grow annuals in containers on the patio, use a light-weight soil mixture. Keep the plants well watered, because the soil dries out fast. Apply a water-soluble fertilizer according to package directions every two weeks.

Lawns maintained at the correct height are less likely to have disease and weed infestation. Kentucky bluegrass and tall fescue should be mowed at approximately 3-inches in height. Mow frequently, removing no more than one-third of the blade at each cutting.

Watering roses with soaker hoses or drip irrigation will reduce the spread of black spot disease.

Plant ground covers under shade trees that do not allow enough sunlight to grow grass. Vinca minor or English ivy are ground cover plants that grow well in shade.

Plan a landscaping project on paper first. Do not over plant. Be sure you know the mature size of each plant and allow for growth.

In May, set out marigold, petunia, ageratum and begonia transplants. All are good border plants.

Cabbage loopers and imported cabbage worms are green caterpillars. They eat large holes in the leaves of plants in the cabbage family. For control, caterpillars can be picked off by hand or sprayed with *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt), a natural, non-toxic preparation available by various trade names.

Harvest rhubarb by cutting or by grasping the stalk and gently pulling up to one side.

Grass clippings can be used as a mulch in flower beds and vegetable gardens if allowed to dry well before use. Never use clippings from a lawn that has been treated with a herbicide.

Mulch around newly planted trees and shrubs. This practice reduces weeds, controls fluctuations in soil temperature, retains moisture, prevents damage from lawn mowers and looks attractive.

When you visit botanical gardens and arboretums, take your camera and notepad with you. Plan now for changes you will make in your landscape.

Grow your own dried flowers. Raise statice, globe amaranth, straw flowers and other everlastings to provide flowers for this year's arrangements.

In May, have successive plantings of beans and sweet corn to extend the harvest season in the vegetable garden.



HEART OF 4-H VOLUNTEER AWARD

Mary Burroughs

Lancaster County 4-H is proud to announce Mary Burroughs of Lincoln as winner of the May "Heart of 4-H Award" in recognition of outstanding volunteer service.

A 4-H volunteer for two years, Mary is already making a big impact:

- Leader of the Super Shamrocks club.
- Assistant at STEM Tech club meetings.
- A superintendent of the 4-H Clothing area at the Lancaster County Super Fair.
- Instructor and volunteer at Clover College.
- Coordinator of the Lancaster County Quilt of Valor projects in 2019 and 2020.
- Assistant at pillow sewing and basic crocheting workshops.
- Contributor to the 4-H/Extension "Sewing For Hospitals" community service project.

"I love helping and sharing my talents with others," she says. "The 4-H program shaped a lot of who I am today and I love giving back to the program. Every experience is great, but my favorite would have to be making a Quilt of Valor during the Clover College in 2019. The quilt ended up being awarded to a Lancaster County Extension intern who served in the Navy. It was an amazing experience to attend the award ceremony and hear her story.

Pictured behind Mary is her senior year 4-H project, a quilt made of all her 4-H ribbons.



Youth for the Quality Care of Animals Requirements Due June 15

4-H/FFA members enrolled in any of the following animal projects need to complete Youth for the Quality Care of Animals (YQCA) training: Beef, dairy cattle, goat, poultry, rabbit, sheep and swine.

Youth must be currently enrolled at <https://ne.4honline.com>. Only parents/guardians may enroll 4-H members. In Lancaster County, youth may choose one of two options to complete their YQCA requirements:

- Complete online training at <https://yqca.learnrow.io>. Cost is \$12. For directions and more information, visit <https://4h.unl.edu/yqca>.
- Attend a **face-to-face training held Thursday, June 4 or Thursday, June 11, 6–7:30 p.m.** at the Lancaster Extension Education Center, 444 Cherrycreek Rd., Lincoln. To sign up for face-to-face trainings, you must go to <https://learnrow.io> before the training. The training will cost \$3 payable by credit or debit card on the website. We cannot take payments in person, all families must register and pay online. You must sign in as proof of attendance — certificates will be available online.

Deadline to complete YQCA and submit certificates of completion is June 15. Send completed certificates to Calvin at calvin.devries@unl.edu or Nebraska Extension in Lancaster County, 444 Cherrycreek Rd., Suite A, Lincoln, NE 68528.

4-H/FFA Livestock ID Help Nights, June 2 & 9

New this year, Lancaster County 4-H will offer two Livestock Identification Help Nights when 4-H staff will be available to assist 4-H/FFA families completing their livestock identification/ownership requirements for the Lancaster County Super Fair and/or Nebraska State Fair. These nights will be Tuesday, June 2 and Tuesday June 9, 6–8 p.m. (ahead of the June 15 identification deadline) at the Lancaster Extension Education Center, 444 Cherrycreek Road. Assistance will be provided for beef, sheep, meat goats, bucket calves, swine, dairy cattle and dairy & pygmy goats identifications. Exhibitors who plan to show at State Fair are encouraged to bring a laptop or mobile device for entering their ID's on Show Stock Manager. Families can complete animal requirements on their own — attendance at a help night is not required. If you are unable to attend, but have questions about the identification process, contact Calvin at 402-441-7180 or calvin.devries@unl.edu.

4-H Leader Packets Will Be E-mailed/ Online

This year, instead of receiving spring leader packets in the mail, club leaders and independent members will be **emailed information, and handouts will be posted as PDFs** at <https://lancaster.unl.edu/4h/leaders> in late April.

4-H Spring Leader Virtual Training, April 29

New leaders, experienced leaders, parents and volunteers are invited to a 4-H Leaders Training on Wednesday, April 29, 9 a.m. or 6:30 p.m. **This year, the training will be done as ZOOM ONLINE MEETINGS.** Register for the training and your preferred time by emailing Kristin at kristin.geisert@unl.edu by Wednesday, April 22. Documents used in the trainings will be available at <http://lancaster.unl.edu/4h/leaders>. You will be emailed the link to the Zoom meeting. The link will be live 48 hours prior to the meeting if you wish to test your equipment. Meeting will focus on NEW 4-H curriculum, static exhibits, opportunities for 4-H members and more. Learn about fair entry, contests and important Super Fair information. It is a great opportunity to connect with other parents and leaders in a new virtual way! Email your questions to kristin.geisert@unl.edu.

Babysitting Training Postponed

The Babysitting Training for 5th–7th Graders scheduled for Tuesday, June 18 has been **POSTPONED**.

HORSE BITS

Horsemanship Level Tests in May Postponed to June

Due to COVID-19, all Nebraska 4-H Horse Advancement Level Testing scheduled before May 31 have been **POSTPONED**. This includes the Lancaster County 4-H previously scheduled dates of May 5 and May 19. The deadline for passing advancement levels has been extended to June 15.

Youth are encouraged to complete the written test — which are offered online — and the reports/feed chart/healthcare charts, as these pieces can be completed by youth at home. Contact Kate Pulec at kpulec3@unl.edu for more information.

The following 4-H Horsemanship Advancement Level Testings are planned at the Lancaster Event Center, 84th & Havelock, Lincoln. Sign-up one-week in advance by emailing kpulec3@unl.edu.

- Tuesday, June 2
- Thursday, June 4
- Friday, June 5
- Monday, June 8
- Tuesday, June 23

All other horsemanship level requirements and paperwork must be completed and handed in to Kate before the riding portion can be done. Independent youth and clubs are encouraged to have virtual meetings to complete the demonstration part of their advancement levels. For more information contact Kate at kpulec3@unl.edu. It is important to note 4-Hers need to be testing with their own 4-H projects. In addition, youth testing for level II must have their horses groomed/clipped for show readiness.

Virtual 4-H Club Meetings Through May 31

Because of COVID-19, Nebraska Extension has decided 4-H clubs statewide may NOT meet in-person until after May 31. Virtual meeting options could include:

- Email communications.
- Phone calls (iPhones can call up to 5 people at once, Androids can call up to 6).
- Group FaceTime video calls (up to 32 people — must have iPhone, iPad or iPod touch).
- Skype conference call (up to 25 people).
- Zoom webinars (free version has 40-minute limit).

4-H Life Challenge Contests

4-H Life Challenge judging contests help youth learn more about issues related to family and consumer science and entrepreneurship. Contests are open to all 4-Hers. **Due to COVID-19, the COUNTY CONTEST WILL BE HELD VIRTUALLY.** At this time, there is no change to the statewide contest format.

- **County Life Challenge: Junior (ages 8–11) and Senior (ages 12 & up)** will be held **VIRTUALLY** on Saturday, May 30. More details to follow. Preregister by May 27 by emailing Kristin at kristin.geisert@unl.edu (there is no entry form). The study packet will be posted on our website in May at <https://lancaster.unl.edu/4h/lifechallenge>.
- **Statewide Life Challenge (for ages 12 and up)** will be held Monday, June 22 and Tuesday, June 23 on UNL East Campus. To participate and be on a team, email kristin.geisert@unl.edu by May 27.

Special Garden Project

All youth (need not be enrolled in 4-H) have the opportunity to participate in a special garden project: Growing the flower Bachelor Buttons 'Classic Magic.' **Note change to previously published information:** This year seed packets will not be available for sale at the Lancaster Extension office. Families are encouraged to purchase seeds at mail order nurseries. Email mfrogge2@unl.edu for more information and to receive an online newsletter.

4-H/FFA Sheep & Meat Goat Weigh-in Changed to June 8

4-H/FFA market sheep or market meat goat exhibitors planning to participate in the performance class based on rate of gain at the Lancaster County Super Fair must have their lambs and goats weighed on **MONDAY, JUNE 8, 6–7 p.m.** at the Lancaster Event Center – Pavilion 1 (East Side). **NOTE, DATE HAS CHANGED** from May 12. All lambs and goats will utilize USDA Scrapie tags as their identification. No official 4-H/FFA tags will be utilized. Bring your scrapie tags and we can help tag as needed. Breeding ewes and does are welcome as well, if you need help putting in scrapie tags. The breeder must supply scrapie tags or 4-Hers must order their own tags. If you need to order tags, call 866-USDA-TAG (873-2824). Exhibitors planning on exhibiting market sheep or goats at the Nebraska State Fair must have DNA sampled. It is strongly encouraged to have DNA pulled at the time of weigh-in. For more information, call Calvin DeVries at 402-441-7180.

4-H Horse IDs Due June 15

Each horse which will be shown at the State Horse Show and Lancaster County Super Fair must be identified on form "4-H Horse Identification Certificate" and submitted to Nebraska Extension in Lancaster County office by June 15. **Note: This is a change from the previously published June 1.** Form is available at the office as a carbon copy form. If you use the online form at <http://go.unl.edu/uwg4>, make a copy for yourself.

District Horse Shows Canceled

Nebraska 4-H is canceling all District Horse Shows. All youth will be allowed to enter the Fonner Park State 4-H Expo without qualifying. Entries to the State 4-H Expo are due to the county Extension office by June 15.

Horse Stampede, July 12

The 4-H Stampede is now moved to July 12 (the Sunday prior to the start of the State Expo). The contests will be held at Fonner Park in the Bosselman Center starting in the morning. All youth will need to re-enter if they were previously entered for the March contest. Entries are due to the county Extension office by June 15.

Horse Judging and Pre-State Horse Show Postponed

The Lancaster County Super Fair 4-H Horse Judging Contest scheduled for Friday, May 29 has been **POSTPONED**.

The Lancaster County 4-H Horse VIPS Committee's Pre-State Horse Show (formerly the Pre-District Show) scheduled for Saturday, May 30 has been **POSTPONED**.

Clover College ONLINE Registration

Due to COVID-19, Clover College may have alternative plans or be canceled. Prior to the May 20 registration date, enrolled 4-H families will be emailed an update. Non-4-H families can check the status at <https://lancaster.unl.edu/cc>.

4-H Clover College is planned for June 16–19. See previous page for complete schedule. Registration will ONLY be available online! Walk-in or mail-in registrations will NOT be accepted at the Extension office.

Classes fill up quickly!

Registration opens Wednesday, May 20 at noon for currently enrolled 4-H members.

In May, enrolled 4-H families will be emailed an online link and access code to register, which will activate at noon on May 20.

Registration opens Wednesday, May 27 at noon for non-4-H youth.

Registration link will be posted at <http://lancaster.unl.edu/cc>

An email address and a debit or credit card will be required to complete a registration. There are no additional online or credit card processing fees, only the cost of the chosen workshop(s).

Tip: To speed the process during registration, determine your workshop choices and possible alternates ahead of time. Take note of the age requirements, as classes where age is not met will not appear in the online class choices.

Workshops which are 'full' will be indicated during the registration process. At that time, a no-cost 'wait list' option with no guarantees, will be enabled. Names on the wait list will be notified by email if a spot becomes available.

To use 4-H Activity Certificates for Clover College, get reimbursed by bringing the certificate(s) and Clover College online confirmation to the Extension office after it reopens.

There are no refunds unless workshops are canceled due to COVID-19 health directives.



EXTENSION CALENDAR

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

April

29 4-H Leader Trainings. **CHANGED TO VIRTUAL** 9 a.m. & 6:30 p.m.

May

1 Preference Given to 4-H Council Camp Scholarship Applications Submitted to Extension by this Date

2 Spring Fling Horse Dressage Schooling Show, Lancaster Extension Center - Pav. 3 **POSTPONED**

5 4-H Horsemanship Level Testing, Lancaster Extension Center 5:30 p.m. **POSTPONED**

5 4-H Council Meeting **WILL BE CANCELED OR VIRTUAL** 6 p.m.

8 Extension Board Meeting **CHANGED TO VIRTUAL** 8 a.m.

19 4-H Horsemanship Level Testing, Lancaster Extension Center 5:30 p.m. **POSTPONED**

25 Extension Office Closed for Memorial Day Holiday

29 4-H Horse Judging Contest, Lancaster Extension Center 5 p.m. **POSTPONED**

30 Pre-State Horse Show Presented by 4-H Horse VIPS, Lancaster Extension Center **POSTPONED**

30 4-H County Life Challenge Contest **CHANGED TO VIRTUAL** 8:30 a.m.

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:

- Embryology & EGG Cam
- Horse Judging At-Home Lessons

- Excerpts from Nebraska 4-H "STEAM Clothing: Maker's Guide"
- Listen to Your Heart

- Tower Building Activity
- Youth Gardening Activities
- Plant Science Contest Study Resources

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

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

Opportunities include:

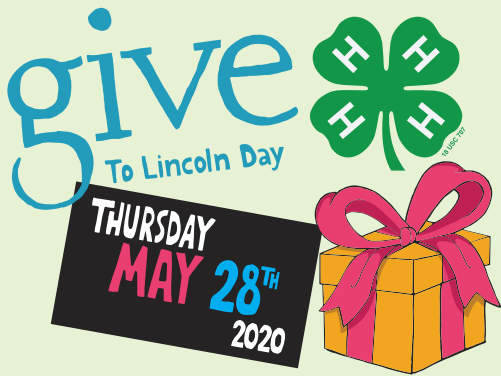
- "Living Room Learning" for 3rd–5th Grades, Tuesdays & Thursdays at 2 p.m.

- "Boredom Buster Challenge" for 6th–9th Grades, Mondays & Wednesdays at 2 p.m.
- "Virtual Field Trips" for 9th–12th Grades, Tuesdays at 11 a.m.

- Companion Rabbit Science Online Course
- "STEM at Home" Activities
- "Smart Cents at Home" Activities

Support Local 4-H Youth During "Give to Lincoln Day"

Lancaster County 4-H Council is one of the nonprofits the community can give donations to during "Give to Lincoln Day" hosted by Lincoln Community Foundation. Your donation on May 28 is increased by a proportional share of a \$500,000 challenge match fund!



For more information or to make a tax-deductible donation, go to <http://go.unl.edu/giveto4hcouncil>

Flushing Products Other Than Toilet Paper Can Cause Big Problems Down the Line

Becky Schuerman
Extension Domestic Water/
Wastewater Associate

There is no time like the present to have a "Flushing 101" review. Whether you live in a rural area and have your own personal onsite wastewater system or your house is hooked up to a municipal wastewater system, everyone needs to be conscious of what we flush down the toilet. Regardless of what type of wastewater system your home is hooked up to, minimizing solids in our wastewater will improve the overall system performance.

Your toilet is not a garbage disposal and while the end point of flushing is like a "black hole," it is not a case of out of sight, out of mind. The end result of flushing anything and everything down your toilet will put your septic system or municipal wastewater treatment system at a higher risk for damage.

Minimizing solids in the wastewater will improve system performance. Solids add to the sludge and scum layers in the septic tank or lagoon, making it



Becky Schuerman, Nebraska Extension

necessary to have a septic tank pumped/lagoons dredged more often. Solids also add to the organic load in the system. Too much organic matter can produce

Problems can include clogged pipes, clogged filter screens, or a clogged and/or saturated drain field.

an unbalanced system, resulting in inadequate treatment. Problems can include clogged pipes, clogged filter screens, or a clogged and/or saturated drain field.

A good rule-of-thumb is that biological material (human excrement) and toilet paper should be the only things flushed into the system as much as possible. If you use a thicker, plusher toilet paper brand, please use it conservatively because these types of toilet paper tend to not break down as quickly as the thinner varieties do.

Here's a list of things you should NEVER flush down the

toilet because they do not biodegrade/break down easily or quickly, and will cause costly problems within a wastewater system and potential environmental

contamination as well:

- Paper towels, napkins or facial tissue
- Wet wipes, even if they say flushable
- Feminine hygiene items, even if they say flushable
- Diapers, baby or adult
- Cotton balls/pads/swabs
- Dental floss
- Hair
- Kitchen grease and food
- Cigarette butts
- Medications

By following the rules of Flushing 101, you will save yourself or your municipal wastewater system costly maintenance, repairs and headaches.

Peer reviewed by: Dr. Bruce Dvorak, Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering and Biological Systems Engineering, and Katie Pekarek, Extension Educator for Water Quality