

HARVEST
GIVING
THANKS
scarecrows
Cinnamon
PUMPKINS
leaves
AUTUMN
HOT APPLE CIDER
Bountiful
family & friends

Alabama Cooperative Extension System Clay County Newsletter



Nov.—Dec. 2011
Volume 1, Issue 4

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Be sure to “like” us on Facebook to keep up with upcoming events and to find more great information!

**Clay County
Extension**

Friends of Extension



My drive to and from Clay County each day gets even more beautiful as the leaves change to breath-taking colors. As beautiful as it is, it is also a reminder that the Holidays are just around the corner! It’s hard to believe that we are already seeing snowmen, Santa and reindeer in our local shopping establishments. But, really I don’t mind, I am a “Holiday Junkie”! I like Christmas music year round and try to remember what I am thankful for each day. Remember as the Holidays quickly approach, don’t get so caught up that you forget to enjoy them for what they are. This is a time to reflect on the year and be thankful for all that you have been blessed with, a time for family and the celebration of our Savior! Happy Thanksgiving and Merry Christmas!

Amya Pomlin

Top Forage Professionals Featured at 2011 Alabama Forage Conference

Farmers from Alabama and the Southeast have the opportunity to hear from leaders in forage production at the 2011 Alabama Forage Conference, being held in north Alabama.



Kent Stanford, a specialist with the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, says the conference provides producers with an excellent opportunity to learn the latest information and research on forages and grazing management from.

“It’s a great one day conference at an excellent cost,” says Stanford. “For example, Dr. John Jennings with Arkansas Extension will talk about ways to extend the grazing season.”

The Dec. 1 conference will be held at Lake Guntersville State Park in Guntersville. Registration begins at 7:30 a.m.

As part of the conference, participants will be able to select from three concurrent sessions in the afternoon including one on clovers, another on weed control, and a final one targeting nutrient management. Topics include finishing beef on grass, update on endophyte infected tall fescue, weed control in pastures and hay fields, and using by-products and specialty fertilizers. It will also feature vendor exhibits related to forage and beef cattle production.

Registration before November 18 is \$25 per person and includes lunch and the fee is \$30 per person after that date. Checks should be made payable to the Alabama Forage and Grassland Coalition. Interested producers can register for the conference by sending their name, address, and registration fee to: Alabama Forage and Grassland Coalition, c/o Kay Holloway, 201 Funchess Hall, Auburn University, Alabama 36849.

For more information about the conference or if you are interested in having an exhibit, contact Eddie Jolley at (334) 887-4564 or at eddie.jolley@al.usda.gov; Kent Stanford at (256) 557-1206 or stanfmk@auburn.edu.

Consumer Poinsettia Care



J. David Williams, Extension Horticulturist, Professor, and
Becky Owens, former Graduate Student, both in Horticulture, Auburn University

Tradition

One of the most delightful decorations at Christmas is the poinsettia. Even though poinsettias were almost unknown just 70 years ago, today they are the most popular flowering potted plant in the United States. The usual color choice is the deep, vibrant red. However, there is a wide array of other colors, including pink, white, marbled, and speckled.

Selection

Make sure you are buying a high-quality plant before you leave the store. This will help you have a beautiful plant throughout the Christmas season and further, if you want to try reflowering later. The plant you choose should have flowers that are just beginning to open, or better still, the plant should have fully colored bracts with the flower buds still very tightly closed. You can expect the appearance of the plant to decline somewhat after the flowers have fully opened and have fallen off.

The plant should appear full with uniformly dark green leaves from under the colored bracts to almost the base of the plant. The leaves themselves should be completely free of disease and insects. The plant should be strong enough to stand on its own. No ties or stakes should be needed. Before you leave the store, ask for a protective sleeve to protect the plant from wind, rain, or cold temperature as you transport it. Don't buy a plant that has been stored in a sleeve or that looks wilted when the soil appears wet. This is a condition called epinasty from which the plant will not recover. A blast of cold air of less than 50 degrees F will give a severe shock to your plant and may result in leaf drop.

Care

Your poinsettia can add beauty to your home throughout the holiday season if you place it in an optimal location for its needs. Even if such a location is not the most prominent place to display it, you can put the plant on display when you have company, but be sure to place it back into its holding area later.

Poinsettia thrives in bright, but not direct, sunlight. Put the plant near a sunny window but not in direct sunlight. Direct sunlight could discolor the bracts. On the other hand, low light can cause the plant to lose some of its leaves. Consider displaying it in a shady location like the dining room table, but maintaining it near a window.

Post-Holiday Care

If you want to maintain your poinsettia beyond the Christmas season, you will need to give it some attention on a regular basis. And, there are some critical times at which you will need to tend your plant.

In early April, cut the plant back to about 6 or 8 inches in height and place it outside in the shade. Keep the plant watered. Fertilize the poinsettia regularly when new growth begins. Pinch growing tips every 4 to 6 weeks during the summer to make the plant bushy. But do not prune any more after September 1. You can re-pot your poinsettia to a larger sized container in May. Use a potting mix similar in composition to the one in which the plant is currently growing. Bring the plant indoors before the threat of cool weather.

We're on the Web!

Check Us Out At

www.aces.edu/Clay

Want to get our newsletter electronically?

Send an email to tomlita@aces.edu
with **Newsletter** in the subject line!

We will add you to our email list!



HOLIDAY SPENDING TIPS

By: Isaac Chappell, Regional Extension Agent 256-452-0557



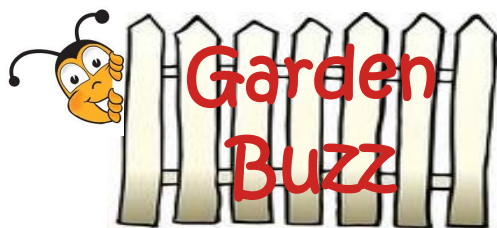
It's time to start thinking about gifts for family members, friends, co-workers, neighbors, hairdresser, etc...or maybe you've already gotten started with your shopping. Remember that gifts won't be your only expense this holiday season, and it's very common for people to splurge much, much more than they expect. Keep these tips in mind to avoid a financial hangover and keep your spending in check.

1. Reflect on last year. Take a look at your bills from last year and think about whether your financial situation has improved or worsened since then. Be brutally honest with yourself. Are you really ready for a repeat of last year? If not, start thinking hard about how much you want to spend.
2. Count the costs. Remember that gifts aren't the only holiday expense. Factor in the costs of travel, food, tree & decorations, wrapping paper & cards and postage when calculating your budget.
3. Check your list twice. Get organized as early as you can, by making a list of those you plan to buy for, along with a list of possible gifts. Having this list with you while shopping can help avoid impulse purchases.
4. Limit your use of plastic. Unless you are good - very good- at paying off your balances each and every month, view the cards in your wallet with a healthy measure of fear and trepidation. If you must use credit this year, and you know you won't be able to pay everything off right away, try this approach: Don't pay for every single purchase with credit; make sure you can pay your purchases off completely within 2 to 3 months, and limit your spending to the card in your wallet with the lowest interest rate.
5. Don't procrastinate. Avoid waiting until the last minute to shop so you'll have time to compare prices and take advantage of sales.
6. Time the sales. When you see an ad for an enticing sale, consider this: You may be able to avoid crowds and get first dibs on everything by shopping after 6pm on the day before the sale officially kicks off.
7. Steer clear of unwarranted warranties. In almost every case, you can feel comfortable about saving money by not paying for extended warranties on gift items. Unless you're buying a not-fully-proven technology, rest assured that the cost of the extended warranty usually equals the cost of a typical repair.
8. Hunt for discounts on the internet. When making online purchases, have you ever spotted those little areas where you can enter a "promotional code", "discount code", or "coupon"? That's a sign to open a web browser in another window and do a quick Google search for the retailer's name along with the same catch phrase used on that retailer's Web site. You could find a coupon in seconds and save on the purchase you're about to make.
9. Make your own gifts. Give some homemade gifts, such as cakes, cookies or gift certificates for your services. Such services could include babysitting, running errands, cooking a nice dinner, doing handyman work, repairing or detailing a car, just to name a few examples.
10. Keep it simple. Substitute expensive get-togethers and elaborate holiday dinner parties with inexpensive entertainment at home, such as a neighborhood potluck dinner or an evening of caroling.

Finally, keep in mind that the Holidays are not all about spending, but giving. Some of life's richest gifts can be given without any real cost to you. Spend time with your loved ones and friends, and have a blessed Christmas! Source: www.msnbc.com.

**2012 Money
Management Calendars
Will be arriving soon!
Pick one up at
Clay County Extension office**



**Chip East**Regional Extension Agent
Commercial Horticulture
eastwil@aces.edu

Using the Alabama Cooperative Extension's Web Site

The Alabama Cooperative Extension System is an information source for a wide range of topics. These topics include livestock, agronomy, horticulture, forestry and wildlife, food nutrition, food preservation, money management, family and child development, and many others. These programs are provided for adults and are also available to youth as part of the 4-H program. Information from the Extension System is provided through a variety of ways including our web site, newsletters, newspaper, e-mail, radio, Facebook, and others.

We have an office in every county of the state that you can call, e-mail, or visit. However, with the use of our website you have access to information anytime. If you have internet access and are not visiting the Alabama Cooperative Extension System web site, you are missing out on a lot of great information. Extension recently changed the look of our website to make it more user friendly. The point of this article is to explain how to use our web site to find needed information.

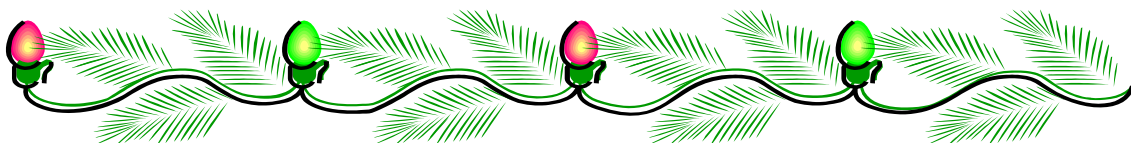
How do you get to the Alabama Cooperative Extension System or ACES web site? Well it's easy. Just go to <http://www.aces.edu/> and you will find the Alabama Cooperative Extension System home page. Like any site the more you use it, the easier it will be to navigate. I work with the commercial horticulture producers so I refer many people to the horticulture information on the site. Let's say we would like to look up information on blueberry production.

From the home page simply click on the Publications & Services tab at the top of the page, then click on ACES Publications. This will take you to a page that lists several program areas: Agriculture, Family & Consumer Sciences, Forestry and Natural Resources, 4-H Youth Development, Community & Economic Development, Urban Affairs & New Nontraditional Programs, and General Extension. Since we are interested in blueberry production, we will point to Agriculture with the cursor. This will bring up a box with many agriculture topics listed. Since we are looking for blueberry information, find horticulture on the list and click it. This will reveal a bar with ACES Publications and other things listed. This page shows our horticulture publications. Since we are looking for blueberry production just scroll down until you see ANR 904 Commercial Blueberry Production Guide for Alabama. Click on it and you will find the information you need. This publication was written for commercial growers and is several pages long. You could also scroll on down and find ANR-1078 Home Gardening – Rabbiteye Blueberries. It is a much shorter version for homeowners. As you are scrolling through the publications, you will probably find lots of interesting material you will like to read.

Here is another easy way to find information. From our home page there is a place at the top for you to search our site. Simply type in a subject you are interested in, and it will bring you to several links from our site concerning that topic. If you type in "blueberry" it will list publications such as the ones mentioned earlier, news articles, recipes, and other materials we have published concerning blueberries.

There is another feature on our Extension site you should know about as well. It is our Extension Calendar. Extension conducts many educational events throughout the state. You can use our web site to find out information about these events by going to our Extension Calendar on our web site. From our home page click on the Calendar tab at the top of the page, and it will take you directly to the calendar which lists events from the entire state. You can even search months ahead for events. You can also check events in your county by looking at your county's web site. From our web site (www.aces.edu) click on the Office tab at the top of the page. Then click on County Offices and select the county you live in to get to your county home page. From your county's home page you can see the Upcoming Events on the left of the page. You may want to click on surrounding county home pages as well to find out what is going on there. Most all of our events are open to anyone no matter where they live.

There is a lot of great information on the Alabama Cooperative Extension web site and it is there for your benefit. The more frequently you use the web site, the easier it will become to navigate. Use patience and contact us if you have trouble.



Selecting The Perfect Christmas Tree

By: Tony Glover, Regional Extension Agent

Commercial Horticulture

Home Grounds, Gardens & Home Pests

Question: I love to use real Christmas trees but the needles are always a mess. What type tree has the least problem with needle shedding?

Answer: The quick answer is “the fresher the tree, the better it will hold its needles.” The only way to know you have a freshly cut tree is to cut it yourself, or in my case, I just point to the tree and tell one of my sons to cut it for me. If you buy a tree from a local “choose and cut farm,” it probably doesn’t matter what species you purchase. The key to keeping the needles attached is to get the fresh cut tree stump into water as quickly as possible. Choosing a pre-cut tree from a sales lot can be a little riskier than cutting the tree yourself, but if you follow these tips your chance of getting a good tree will improve greatly. Purchase a tree as soon as trees are available even if you don’t plan to decorate it for several days. The sooner you can get the tree in water the longer it will last. Most of the trees on sales lots were cut at the same time, so the longer they stay on the lot without water, the less likely they will even take water up when they are placed in home tree stands with water reservoirs. Look at the tree trunk near the base and if you see splitting, the tree most likely has dried so severely it will not absorb water. Look for a tree with a healthy, green appearance and few dead or browning needles. Run your hand along a branch to see if needles seem fresh and flexible. Needles should definitely not pull free easily. If possible, bump the base of the tree on the ground. You should expect some of the old dead needles to fall off, but if green needles also fall off, the tree is not very fresh.

Once you have chosen that perfect tree and have arrived back home safely, you should make a fresh cut a couple inches above the original cut. This removes any clogged wood that would prevent water uptake. If you are not ready to place the tree indoors, you may store in a shady area outdoors or in an unheated room or basement. Regardless of where you locate the tree, make sure to check the water reservoir frequently and keep it filled a couple inches or more above the tree’s base. I have not seen any research that proves any concoction added to the water works significantly better than plain tap water. Another tip to consider involves tree location in the home. Keeping the tree away from heat sources such as air ducts, wood stoves, and fireplaces will prolong the freshness and reduce the risk of fire. Make certain all lights and extension cords are in good working order and turn lights off when the tree is not attended. Because our homes are much drier in the winter when the heating system is operating, a small room humidifier can be good for you, your house plants and Christmas tree. Some trees are just naturally better at retaining their needles. Douglas fir, Eastern White Pine, Fraser fir, Leyland Cypress, Scotch pine and Virginia pine are considered to have excellent needle retention. Freshness, however, is the key to needle retention. If you would like some additional tips and a list of the pros and cons of the most popular species, visit this website: <http://cufan.clemson.edu/hgic/pdf/hgic1750.pdf>



Home Garden Questions?

Call the Master Gardener Helpline

Toll free 1-877-252-GROW (4769)

(choose option 2 for Clay Co.)

Open: Mon.—Thurs.

9:00 a.m.—3:30 p.m.



Alabama Cooperative Extension System Clay County Office

93 County Road 31

Ashland, AL 36251

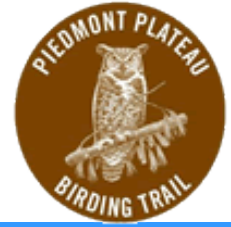
Phone: (256) 354-5976

Fax: (256) 354-7787

Email: tomlita@aces.edu

Piedmont Plateau Birding Trail

Launch date set for November 17th 2011



Please Join Us
for the official launch of
the Piedmont Plateau Birding Trail
Thursday, November 17, 2011
1:00 p.m. CST

Horseshoe Bend National Military Park

Invited speakers include representatives from the Alabama Tourism Department, Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs, Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Alabama Cooperative Extension System, Senators, State Representatives, local dignitaries and officials from Autauga, Chambers, Chilton, Clay, Coosa, Elmore, Lee, Randolph and Tallapoosa counties!

Trail displays, including our mascot on site.

Launching with 34 birding sites located along 3.5 million acres of Alabama's great outdoors, the Piedmont Plateau Birding Trail is a tourism initiative of the east-central region of Alabama.

Come Experience Bama's Best Birds!

Extension Office Holiday Closings

November 23-25

December 19-January 2



Leadership Clay County

What is Leadership Clay County?

Leadership Clay County is a community leadership development program. Its mission is to enhance the leadership skills of local residents for community and economic development. Through education, awareness, and networking, Leadership Clay County will help lay a foundation for the development and growth of leadership potential.



What does the program include?

Sessions will be conducted on the third Thursday of each month, typically from 8 a.m. until 2:30 p.m. from January thru May. Sessions will include presentations on leadership, tourism, hospitality, public speaking, County Service Agencies, and financial planning, among others.

Who can participate in Leadership Clay County?

To represent a cross section of the community, Leadership Clay County brings together a diverse group in terms of race, sex, and occupation. Participants need not share a common lifestyle or career – only a vision for “Leading with Diversity”. Participants must be at least 18 years of age.

How are participants chosen?

Applications are available at the Chamber of Commerce Office and The Extension Office, and will be accepted through January 4th by mail or drop off. Applications should be returned to The Clay County Chamber of Commerce 86838 Highway 9, Lineville, AL 36266 or The Clay County Extension Office 93 County Rd. 31, Ashland, AL 36521. The cost of the program is \$100 per participant and is due by January 12. The program’s steering committee members will review all applications and select participants representative of Clay County’s geographic areas and professional categories.



What are you asked to do?

Program participants will attend the January through May sessions and must not miss more than one session in order to graduate from the leadership program. Participants must also participate in a group project, which includes written and verbal presentations.

For more information concerning the program, contact :

Tonya Tomlin at the Clay County Extension Office 256-354-5976, or
Mary Patchunka-Smith at The Clay County Chamber of Commerce 256-396-2828



4-H Corner



Kim Good

Regional Extension Agent
4-H and Youth Development
goodkim@aces.edu



AUBURN

F O O T B A L L™

4-H DAY @ AU



AU vs. Samford

Saturday, November 19, 2011

Kickoff: NOON (Be in the stadium by 11:30 a.m.)

Jordan-Hare Stadium, Auburn University

4-HERS* & VOLUNTEER LEADERS* RECEIVE A FREE TICKET.

***MUST BE REGISTERED IN 4-H PLUS DATABASE.**

- **Cost:** \$10 per person by check or credit card. **Everyone must register.** Fee pays for a long-sleeve green 4-H T-Shirt (first come, best fit) and a Chick-Fil-A meal.

• **NO REFUNDS.**

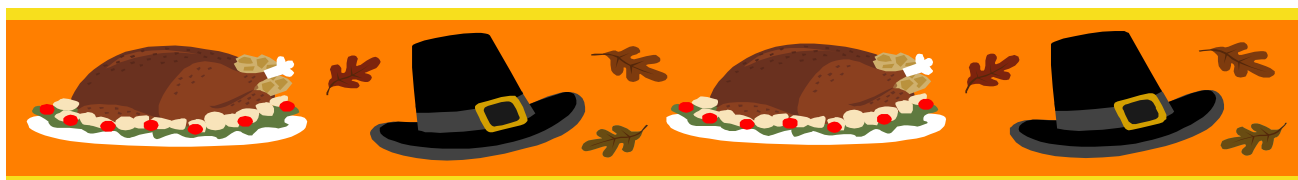
Registration Closes: Monday, November 14, 2011

QUESTIONS: Contact Janet McCoy, 334/844-7690; mccoysl@aces.edu

Sponsored by Auburn University Athletics, AU College of Agriculture and Alabama 4-H.

To register visit:

http://www.aces.edu/fourh/documents/4-HfootballDay11--Oct.10edition_000.pdf





Holiday Goodies!



White Chocolate Bread Pudding



1 lb. French bread
 1 quart + 1 cup heavy whipping cream
 3 eggs
 2 cups sugar
 2 Tbsp. vanilla
 2 (12 oz.) pkgs white chocolate chips

Tear bread and pour 1 quart cream over bread. Let stand for 15 minutes. Stir occasionally. Beat eggs. Add sugar, vanilla, and 1 package chips. Stir together and add to bread mixture. Pour into greased 9 x 13-inch baking pan and bake at 350°F for 45 minutes to 1 hour. Melt other chips and 1 cup cream in microwave and pour over pudding.

This is one of our very favorite Holiday Recipes. Hope you enjoy!

Each issue we will be featuring the upcoming events from the Clay County Chamber of Commerce. Be sure to check out their website www.claycochamber.com

Lineville Alabama Heritage Day

Join us in Lineville November 5 from 6 a.m. – 4 p.m. as we celebrate with an old-fashioned street festival. Begin the day at the Exchange Club Pancake Breakfast at 6 a.m. Other activities include an antique tractor show and parade, a juried vintage quilt show, and an 1890s costume contest. Enjoy historical displays and live music featuring local talent. Great food, craft vendors, and activities are planned for the whole family. Call 256-396-9121 for more information.





Be sure to mark your calendars for these up-coming events!

Piedmont Plateau Birding Trail November 17th 2011

Please mark your calendars to attend this great event for the Piedmont Plateau Birding Trail on November 17, 2011 at 1:00 pm at Horseshoe Bend National Military Park.



Mark your calendars! Alabama 4-H Day at Auburn University-November 19th!
4-H members get free football tickets!!
See Page 8

The Alabama Forage Conference will be held December 1, 2011 at Lake Guntersville State Park. This conference is held every other year and is a fantastic learning opportunity for livestock and forage producers. For more information contact:

Kent Stanford Extension Specialist - Nutrient Management

at 256-528-7133 ext. 10 or stanfmk@auburn.edu



Need to test your home for RADON?
Purchase your RADON Test Kit in our office!
93 Co. Rd. 31, Ashland or call 256-354-5976
Need More RADON Information call toll free
1-855-ALRADON

