



Alabama Cooperative Extension System  
St. Clair County Office

# Extension Newsletter

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## Inside This Issue

**Heir Property in Alabama**

**Food & Water Safety When the Power Goes Out**

**Red and White: Clean Them Right**

**2-1-1 Connects Alabama**

**The Gardening Corner: Worthy Weeds**

**Kudzu Eating Insects**

**Wishing You a Healthy H-A-P-P-Y N-E-W Y-E-A-R**

**Recipe: Chewy Chocolate Brownies**

**Farm-City Banquet**

**Friend of 4-H Award: Ms. Leann Vann**

**Cleaning Resolutions for the New Year**

**Agent Spotlight: Nkenge Hyter**

**Money Talks! Have You Heard?**

**Generations Online Program**



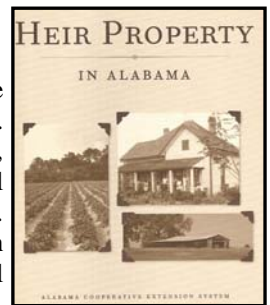
Dear Friends of Extension,

HAPPY NEW YEAR!! I hope you and your family had a nice holiday season and this year has gotten off to a good start!

This year I am excited to let you know about a new partnership that we have formed with the Middle Alabama Area Agency on Aging (M4A) to offer a program through our office called *Generations On Line*. This is a national community service initiative which is intended to reduce the digital divide among older adults. For more information about the program see page 12 and to sign-up to participate please call the St. Clair County Extension office at (205) 338-9416.

Until next time,

## Heir Property in Alabama



After the Civil War, many African Americans were deeded land by others or purchased land for themselves. Because of laws against teaching slaves to read and write, and later Jim Crow laws restricting access to legal assistance, many landowners did not leave written wills. A tradition of verbal bequeaths remains common today in the African-American community. However, verbal bequeaths are not generally recognized by Alabama law, resulting in what is called heir property—land held in common by the descendants (or heirs) of someone who has died without a will, or whose estate was not offered for probate.

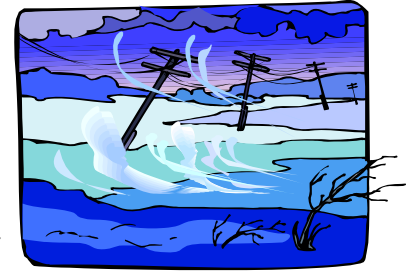
While many co-owners enjoy the flexibility heir property offers and the sense of community it fosters, the title to such property is usually considered clouded. There are a number of disadvantages to keeping land under a clouded title instead of a clear title. Problems associated with holding land as heir property, such as forced tax and partition sales, often lead to non-family members buying the land. Holding land as heir property is one of the leading causes of land loss among African Americans.

There are many misconceptions surrounding heir property and confusion often occurs about who owns what. It is important to be aware of risks involved in heir property, to know your rights as a landowner, and to take the proper steps to protect your land. Heirs have a right to enjoy the benefits of land-ownership but they also have the responsibility to ensure that the land is cared for.

For more information, call the St. Clair County Extension office at (205) 338-9416 and request publication HE-852, Heir Property in Alabama. *Source: HE-852*

# Food and Water Safety

## When the Power Goes Out



In the past few years Alabama has felt the impact of floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, and even ice storms. In these times of confusion it is not always easy to know exactly what to do. After the trauma and shock have worn off, there remains the overwhelming job of cleaning up. One of the biggest areas of concern is the safety of food and water.

### Keeping Refrigerated and Frozen Food Safe

One main factor in keeping food safe is keeping it at the proper temperature. The only way you can know if your food is at the correct temperature is to use a thermometer. There are several types that you need to have in your kitchen. One is a refrigerator/freezer thermometer. One of these thermometers should be placed in your refrigerator to assure you that the food is kept at below 40° F. Another one of these kind of thermometers should go in your freezer to insure that your food is kept at below 0° F.

### Keeping Refrigerated Food Cold When the Power Goes Out

In a refrigerator without power food will remain chilled for up to 4 to 6 hours. This temperature will keep the longest if you do not open the door of the refrigerator while the power is out. If you think that the power will be out longer than this, add bags of regular ice in your refrigerator to keep the temperatures cool longer. Place the ice on the upper shelves and pans to catch the melting ice on the lower shelves. The more ice you use, the longer the temperature will stay cool. Open the door only to add ice. Place the thermometer in the area farthest from the ice. Check the refrigerator temperature when adding ice. As soon as the power returns check to be certain that food has been kept below 40° F.

### Keeping Frozen Food Frozen

When the power goes off, food will remain frozen in your freezer for several hours—maybe as long as several days. If your freezer is full and not opened during the power outage, the food will remain frozen for up to 2 days—even if it is in the heat of the summer. If the freezer is only half full, food may store frozen only 1 day. This time will also depend on the seals in your freezer. If there is leaking around the seals allowing cold air to escape, your food will thaw much faster. Replace loose gaskets now to help preserve your food when the power does go out in the future. Other factors that affect how long your food will remain frozen when the power goes out are:

1. The size of the freezer (the bigger the freezer the longer the food will stay frozen). Example: Large blocks of ice take longer to thaw than small ones.
2. The type of food in the freezer. Example: Food with more water (fruits, vegetables, and meats) will stay frozen longer than food with little water (bread and nuts).
3. The insulation in the freezer. Example: If your freezer has only one thin layer of insulation, food will thaw more rapidly.
4. The cavity depth of the freezer. Example: The deeper chest-type freezers allow the food to remain frozen longer than upright freezers.

### How to Cook When the Power Goes Off

After a disaster has knocked out electricity or gas lines, cooking meals can be hazardous if a few basic rules are not followed.

#### Tips

- Charcoal or gas grills are the most obvious alternative sources of heat for cooking. Never use them indoors. If you do, you risk both asphyxiation from carbon monoxide and the chance of starting a fire that could destroy your home.
- Likewise, camp stoves that use gasoline or solid fuel should always be used outdoors.
- Use small electrical appliances to prepare meals if you have access to an electrical generator with sufficient capacity.
- You can use wood for cooking in many situations. You can cook in a fireplace if the chimney is sound. Don't start a fire in a fireplace that has a broken chimney. Be sure the damper is open.
- If you have to build a fire outside, build it away from buildings, never in a carport. Sparks can easily get into the ceiling and start a house fire.
- Never leave an open fire, canned heat, or candle unattended. Keep children away at all times.

For more information on food safety when the power goes out, please call the St. Clair County Extension office at (205) 338-9416 and request publication *HE-670* or visit our website to download a copy at [www.aces.edu/StClair](http://www.aces.edu/StClair).

Source: *HE-670 Food & Water Safety When the Power Goes Out*

# Red and White: Clean Them Right

February is the month to show off those red and white clothes. On National Wear Red Day, celebrated on Friday, February 4<sup>th</sup>, the color red, and particularly a red dress, serves as a banner to increase awareness about the ability all women have to improve their heart health and live stronger, longer lives. White Shirt Day, celebrated annually on February 11<sup>th</sup>, honors the men and women who participated in a sit-down strike at General Motors in 1937. On a day that recognizes workplace empowerment, the white shirts represent equal respect and treatment for blue-collar workers. And then there's the red that we wear on Valentine's Day and the red, white and blue that's a natural wardrobe choice on President's Day.

All of which means that February's laundry loads can create a few cleaning challenges! But Nancy Bock, Vice President of Education at The Soap and Detergent Association, has some guidelines that will wash away your concerns.

## General Laundering Tips

- Sort by color: whites and/or lights in one load; darks in another.
- Read the garment care labels. It may be necessary to further sort the loads by water temperature (hot, warm or cold), bleach requirements (chlorine bleach, nonchlorine bleach or no bleach) and washing machine cycle (regular, permanent press or delicate/knits).
- Most red items should be laundered in a cold water wash, either by themselves or with other bright colors.
- For combo-colored garments, such as a red shirt with a white collar or a print on a red background, add a dye-trapping cloth to the wash. It is designed to absorb and trap loose dyes during laundering, locking them away so they can't redeposit on their clothes.
- Pre-treat stains before putting items in the washing machine.
- Before putting items in the dryer, check to make sure any stains are completely removed. Otherwise, the heat of the dryer may set them permanently.

## Red Alert

Laundering red garments, particularly new ones, can present some additional challenges. That's because, in order to produce a bright, rich color, red fabrics are often over-dyed. When laundered, the color may fade or the red dye may transfer to other items. If the dye bleeds:

- Pre-treat the area and re-launder the garment in the warmest water that's safe for the fabric.
- Don't dry the garment until the bleeding is removed, as drying in a hot dryer may set the dye that has bled.
- Once the bleeding is removed, dry promptly. Dye

transfer can also occur when damp items stay in contact with each other for a period of time.

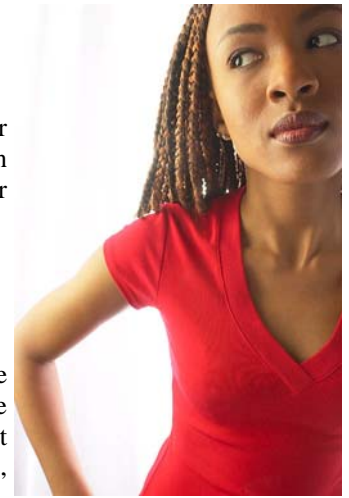
## Do the Whites Right


Read the fabric care label. The fact that the item is white doesn't necessarily mean that it's safe to use bleach, especially chlorine bleach.

Factors such as the fabric's fiber content (including silk, wool, mohair and spandex), finishes (such as the flame-retardant finish on children's nightclothes) and certain trims will affect the item's suitability for bleach.

If bleach is a no-no and there are stains, pre-treat them with a pre-wash stain remover. Be sure to check the cleaning product label first to make sure it is safe for the fabric, or presoak the item using detergent or a presoak laundry product that's safe for the fabric. Mix the soaking agent with water, and then add the item. Minimum soaking time is 30 minutes; longer, as much as overnight, may be necessary.

*Source: The Soap and Detergent Association Cleaning Matters Newsletter, January/February 2010*





**2-1-1  
Connects  
Alabama**

Are you facing difficult times and don't know where to turn? Are you looking for help with everyday needs? Are you wanting to volunteer? Dialing 2-1-1 is a free, easy to remember number to dial for information about health and human service organizations in your community. By dialing 2-1-1, information is much easier to find. At 2-1-1 Connects Alabama, you will speak to a real person every time. Call Specialists will assess your needs, help to problem solve and refer you to community-based organizations, government programs, support groups, and other local resources that can help. 2-1-1 Connects Alabama is:

- A local call from anywhere in Alabama.
- Confidential telephone assistance.
- Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Access for persons who have special needs.
- Accurate information about community resources.

# The Gardening Corner

By: Sallie Lee, Urban Regional Extension Agent,  
Home Grounds, Gardens & Home Pests



**Question:** I had lots of “unwanted plants” or weeds in my garden and lawn this year. Getting rid of them is an issue since I’m trying to use fewer herbicides. Some of them are actually attractive but I don’t want them taking over my lawn. What are my options?

**Answer:** Weeds have been referred to as “plants out of place,” or plants whose value we’ve yet to discover. Then there is the opinion that one man’s weed is another man’s treasure. And even a rose growing in a juniper bed could be classified as a weed.

What you define as a weed may not be the same as your neighbor’s definition, which means there may be fewer plants we want to eliminate if we knew their good sides.

For starters, weeds have lots of uses and can tell us about the soil in which they’re growing. Some are so nutritious our ancestors consumed them as food crops. Others are attractive, adding color, texture, and forage for pollinators during the flower stage of growth.

Dandelions (*Taraxacum officinale*) are prime examples of plants that have food value for humans and wildlife. One of the first nectar plants available in spring for honey bees and butterflies, their leaves were eaten as salad greens, collected to make tea or wine, and were in general considered a “spring tonic” plant. It is only fairly recently that we regard dandelions as prime targets for herbicides, while in reality, mowing them down before they set seed (remember those white puffballs our children love to scatter) will help keep numbers in check.

Lambsquarters (*Chenopodium album*) is one of the most nutrient-rich plants in our gardens and yards. One cup of raw lambsquarters leaves contains vitamin C, phosphorus, calcium, thiamin, riboflavin, niacin and iron.

**Note:** Before you consider munching on weeds, be sure they have been positively identified, as some healthy plants closely resemble others that can make us sick or even poison us.

Many homeowners try to eliminate clovers, another multi-use plant. Since clovers (white, red, crimson, etc.) are legumes that fix nitrogen in the soil, they are considered by some gardeners as beneficial, since soils in this area are generally nitrogen deficient. In fact, it might make sense to grow more clover and less turf grass. Clovers are very valuable for our bee pollinators, whose numbers are declining due in part to our efforts in eliminating some of their favorite forage plants, such as the clovers and dandelions.

Weeds can tell us about conditions in their environment, as they survive in conditions that would cause most cultivated plants to curl up and die. Humus deficient, saline, swampy, rocky, alkaline, and highly acidic soils are usually sites where weeds are the only plants growing, testaments to the tenacity of plant genetics, whether we appreciate their presence or not.

Soil that is moderately acid supports sorrel, dock, and horse tails. If soil is hardpan, we may see mustard, nettle, morning glory, or quack grass. Cultivated beds are cozy environments for lambsquarters, plantain,

Continued on page 9 →

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work in agriculture and home economics, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, and other related acts, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The Alabama Cooperative Extension System (Alabama A&M University and Auburn University) offers educational programs, materials, and equal opportunity employment to all people without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, veteran status, or disability.

# State's Residents Should Be on Watch for Kudzu Eating Insect



An insect best known for eating kudzu has made its way into Alabama. Dr. Charles Ray, an entomologist who works with the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, says kudzu bug specimens have been collected in Cleburne and Cherokee counties in northeast Alabama.

Ray says the bean plataspid, *Megacopta cribraria*, has moved out of Georgia where it was first located last fall.

“Based on the information Georgia scientists collected in 2010, I expect the bean plataspid is already present in neighboring Dekalb county,” says Ray.

While the discovery of an insect that eats kudzu sounds good, it has scientists concerned. Dr. Ayanava Majumdar, an Extension entomologist, says while an insect that eats kudzu sounds like a great thing, scientists are concerned about what else the insect might find good to eat.

“It was just reported for the first time in the United States in October 2009 where it was found feeding on kudzu in north Georgia,” he says. “Our concern is that we don’t know what impact it will have on other crops.” He explains that kudzu is a legume, making it a relative of sorts to some agronomic crops including soybeans, peanuts, alfalfa and clover. Scientists are worried that the insect might be a threat to these crops. Ray agrees with Majumdar that there is reason to be concerned.

“It seems to have already reached economically damaging levels on soybeans in Georgia,” he says. Ray and his colleague, Dr. Xing Ping Hu will be tracking the insects’ movements in Alabama.

“If anyone finds this insect, I want to know about it and the location,” he says. “If it’s on a plant, it would be very helpful to know what type of plant as well.” Ray can be reached at (334) 844-3836 or (334) 844-4336 or at [raychah@auburn.edu](mailto:raychah@auburn.edu).

A new insect pest threat to these crops could have a serious impact on the state’s agriculture. Both soybeans and peanuts

are major crops in the state. In Alabama this year, more than 10 million bushels of soybeans were harvested from about 360,000 acres. Around 190,000 acres of peanuts were planted in 2010 in the state, yielding almost 495 million pounds.

Hu, an Extension entomologist whose work focuses on household pests, notes that the insects can also be a headache for homeowners. Like the Asian lady beetles that many Alabamians are familiar with, the bean plataspid is often attracted to homes in response to declining temperatures, where they seek secluded sites to spend the winter months. She says it may be attracted to the southern and southeastern sides of light-colored homes.

“They may appear by the thousands,” says Hu. “The news we have from Georgia colleagues is that it is currently flying in large numbers to homes and is becoming a nuisance pest.”

In addition, she says homeowners might notice the bug’s odor if crushed. “Homeowners in Georgia have reported the insects have an unpleasant or bitter smell. It sounds as if they live up to one of their other common names, the globular stink bug.”

Homeowners who are confronting infestation should call the St. Clair County Extension office to speak with a Regional Extension Agent or contact Dr. Hu at (334) 844-5002 or email [huxingp@aces.edu](mailto:huxingp@aces.edu).

Adult insects are about 5 mm long and have a humped body. They have beak-like mouthparts and hardened fore wings that cover a pair of soft hind wings used for flying.



***“The only thing that’s worse than being blind is having sight but no vision.”***

***~Helen Keller***

# Wishing You a Healthy H-A-P-P-Y N-E-W Y-E-A-R

## H—ealth

*“The first wealth is health.”* (Source: Ralph Waldo Emerson)

Make health a priority this year. Read on for more ideas—health should be more than the absence of disease.

## A—ttitude

*“Health and cheerfulness naturally beget each other.”* (Source: Joseph Addison)

A positive attitude may not cure a disease. However, thinking positive can help you deal with misfortune, make the most of your current situation and enjoy life more.

## P—hysical activity

*“A man’s health can be judged by which he takes two at a time—pills or stairs.”* (Source: Joan Welsh)

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services *2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans* recommends for adults: “Most health benefits occur with at least 150 minutes (2 hours and 30 minutes) a week of moderate intensity physical activity, such as brisk walking. Additional benefits occur with more physical activity. Both aerobic (endurance) and muscle-strengthening (resistance) physical activity are beneficial.” For more information and for guidelines for children, check: <http://www.health.gov/paguidelines/guidelines/default.aspx>

## P—eople

*“Love cures people—both the ones who give it and the ones who receive it...”* (Source: Dr. Karl Menninger)

Numerous studies indicate social networks, whether formal (such as church or social club) or informal (such as meeting with friends), make people less vulnerable to ill health and premature death. Be wary, however, of social support that drains you through people being too demanding or encouraging you to engage in harmful behaviors.

## Y—our body

*“Take care of your body. It’s the only place you have to live.”* (Source: Jim Rohn)

Schedule physical checkups as needed: eyes, teeth, mammogram, colonoscopy, general physical, etc.

## N—o!

*“Half of the troubles of this life can be traced to saying yes too quickly and not saying no soon enough.”* (Source: Josh Billings)

Rather than adding “take a time management class” to your “to do” list, consider starting a “don’t do” list. You



may discover doing LESS can bring MORE enjoyment to your life. Especially if doing less allows you to spend time doing more to contribute to your health and happiness and that of your family and friends!

## E—at healthy

*“Rich, fatty foods are like destiny: they too, shape our ends.”* Source: Author Unknown

The website, MyPyramid.gov, recommends: “To move to a healthier weight, you need to make smart choices from every food group. Smart choices are the foods with the lowest amounts of solid fats or added sugars: for example, fat-free (skim) milk instead of whole milk and unsweetened rather than sweetened applesauce. Also, consider how the food was prepared. For example, choose skinless baked chicken instead of fried chicken and choose fresh fruit instead of a fruit pastry.” For more information on planning healthy menus, visit [www.mypyramid.gov](http://www.mypyramid.gov).

## W—aist Size

*“Your stomach shouldn’t be a waist basket.”* (Source: Author Unknown)

Your waistline may be telling you that you have a higher risk of developing obesity-related conditions, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), if you are:

- A man whose waist circumference is more than 40 inches
- A non-pregnant woman whose waist circumference is more than 35 inches

Excessive abdominal fat places you at higher risk for developing obesity-related conditions, such as Type 2 diabetes, high blood cholesterol, high triglycerides, high blood pressure and coronary artery disease. Consult with your health care provider to develop a plan for losing weight.

Here’s how to measure your waist, according to the CDC: To measure your waist size (circumference), place tape measure around your bare abdomen just above your hip bone. Be sure the tape is snug, but does not compress your skin, and is parallel to the floor. Relax, exhale, and measure your waist.

## Y—our hands

*“Keeping hands clean is one of the most important ways to prevent the spread of infection and illness.”* (Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or CDC).

According to the CDC, here’s the correct way to

wash your hands:

When washing hands with soap and water:

- Wet your hands with clean running water and apply soap. Use warm water, if it is available.
- Rub hands together to make a lather and scrub all surfaces.
- Continue rubbing hands for 15-20 seconds. Need a timer? Imagine singing “Happy Birthday” twice through to a friend.
- Rinse hands well under running water.
- Dry your hands using a paper towel or air dryer. If possible, use your paper towel to turn off the faucet.

## **E**—nough sleep

*“A good laugh and a long sleep are the best cures in the doctor’s book.”* (Source: Irish Proverb)

According to the 2008 “Sleep in America” poll by the National Sleep Foundation (NSF), “Working too much and sleeping too little takes a serious toll on people’s professional and personal lives.” Some of the findings of the poll included:

- 29 percent of those polled fell asleep or became very sleepy at work in the past month;
- 36 percent have nodded off or fallen asleep while driving;
- 14 percent missed family events, work functions and leisure activities the past month due to sleepiness.

Cutting back on other activities rather than cutting back on sleep may be more effective in enhancing the quality of your life.

## **A**—void portion distortion

*“Never eat more than you can lift.”* (Source: Miss Piggy, muppet character)

Rather than worry so much about “what” you eat, consider “how much” you eat. Downsize your portion sizes. Serve food on smaller plates. Eat from plates and bowls rather than packages and bags, so you see how much you’re eating.

## **R**—eading materials

*“Be careful about reading health books. You may die of a misprint.”* (Source: Mark Twain)

Consider the source before starting a new drastic diet or exercise plan. Beware of plans that:

- Promise quick, dramatic results.
- Charge large fees for consultations, equipment, supplements, etc.
- Rely solely on testimonials and statements from “professionals” with unusual-sounding degrees.

Source: Alice Henneman, MS, RD, University of Nebraska—Lincoln



## *Chewy Chocolate Brownies*

- Vegetable cooking spray
- 1/4 cup plus 3 Tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup cocoa
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 2 egg whites
- 1 whole egg
- 1/2 cup plus 2 Tablespoons sugar
- 6 Tablespoons unsweetened applesauce
- 2 tablespoons oil
- 1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla
- 2 Tablespoons chopped walnuts or pecans

Preheat oven to 350°F. Spray an 8-inch square baking pan with vegetable cooking spray. In a medium bowl, combine flour, cocoa, and salt. Mix well. In a separate large bowl, whisk together egg whites, egg, sugar, applesauce, oil, and vanilla. Stir in the flour mixture until just blended; do not over mix. Pour batter into the prepared pan and sprinkle walnut or pecans on top. Bake for 25 minutes, until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Cool the brownies on a wire rack for at least 15 minutes. Cut into 12 rectangles.

Exchanges per serving:	Per serving:
1 starch, 1/2 fat	Calories: 111, Fat: 4 g
Carbohydrate choices: 1	Carbohydrate: 17 g
Preparation time: 10 minutes	Protein: 3 g
Baking time: 25 minutes	Saturated fat: <1 g
Yield: 12 brownies	Sodium: 65 mg
Serving size: 1 brownie	Fiber: 1 g

Source: <http://www.diabetesselfmanagement.com>



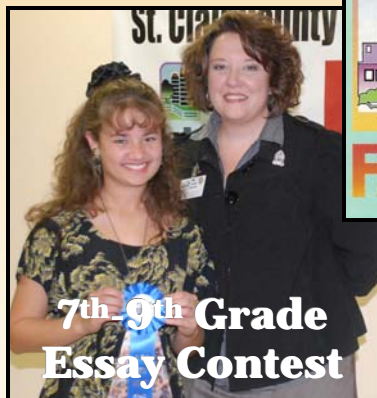
# 2010 Farm-City Banquet



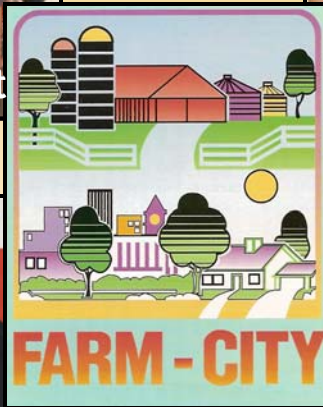
**K-3<sup>rd</sup> Poster Contest**



**4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> Poster Contest**



**7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Essay Contest**



**10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Essay Contest**



**Scarecrow Contest Winners**



The St. Clair County Farmers Federation Annual Farm-City Banquet was held on Monday, November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2010. Extension Specialist, Kent Stanford, was this year's guest speaker. He spoke about and presented the newly produced Virtual Poultry Farm Tour which was filmed right here in St. Clair County.

4-H'ers from across the county participated in the Farm-City poster and essay contest. Poster contest winners in the K-3<sup>rd</sup> grade division (pictured on page 8 from l to r): 4-H Agent Assistant, Tonya Tomlin; Laura Swindall with Malachi Swindall—3<sup>rd</sup> place; Shivone Johnson with Sera Beth Potter—1<sup>st</sup> place; Peggy Rickles with Kensley Harrell—2<sup>nd</sup> place. Poster contest winners in the 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grade division (pictured on page 8 from l to r): 4-H Agent Assistant, Tonya Tomlin; Ross Stanford—2<sup>nd</sup> place; Cheryl Boissel, with Bailey Jackson—3<sup>rd</sup> place; and Myra Walker, with Alana Hyatt—1<sup>st</sup> place. 4-H Agent Assistant, Tonya Tomlin, presented ribbons to Farm-City essay contest winners (on page 8). In the 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> grade division, Victoria Booker won 1<sup>st</sup> place and in the 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade division, Rebecca Parker was the 1<sup>st</sup> place winner.

The Farm-City Scarecrow contest winners were announced and awards were presented. Winners present to accept awards (pictured on page 8 from l to r): Homeschool 4-H club members, Mrs. Peggy Rickles, Beth Evans-Smith, Mrs. Shivon Johnson, Mrs. Jan Parker, and Mrs. Kim Johnson. Farm-City Scarecrow contest winners this year are: Business division: 1<sup>st</sup> place—Piggly Wiggly of Ashville; 2<sup>nd</sup> place—Robinson Law Firm/Ashville; and 3<sup>rd</sup> place—Sew Nice Embroidery of Ashville; K-1<sup>st</sup> grade division: 1<sup>st</sup> place—Beth Evans-Smith's Ashville Elementary kindergarten class; 2<sup>nd</sup> place—Shavon Johnson's 1<sup>st</sup> grade Ashville Elementary class; and 3<sup>rd</sup> place—Ashlee Newberry's 1<sup>st</sup> grade Ashville Elementary class; 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> grade division: 1<sup>st</sup> place—Kim Johnson's 3<sup>rd</sup> grade Ashville Elementary class; and 2<sup>nd</sup> place—Peggy Rickles' Odenville Elementary art class; 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grade division: 1st place—Pell City 4-H Homeschool group.

The Fitzgerald Yarborough family (picture above) of Ashville was selected as the 2010 Outstanding Farm Family in St. Clair County. Mrs. Margaret Evans, St. Clair County Farmers Federation Women's Committee Chairman, presented the plaque. Roland St. John was presented the Commitment to Agriculture and Community Award by Mrs. Jan Parker, St. Clair County Farmers Federation Women's Committee Farm-City Co-Chairman (pictured above).

**CONGRATULATIONS** to all the award winners!

## ***Gardening Corner Continued***

chickweed, dandelion, prostrate knotweed, speedwell, mallow, and prickly lettuce. Legume or pea family weeds prefer lighter or sandy soils, although they will grow in other environments since they, like most weeds, are adaptable.

Knowing which weeds are in your landscape, learning their growth habits, when they flower and set seed, is one of the most difficult aspects of dealing with weeds. So, if you are determined to resist sharing lawn space with those uninvited species, learn to identify what you've got growing. Find a good weed identification book (make sure it focuses on weeds of the Southeast U.S.), or contact your county Extension office, so you'll be prepared to treat at the most opportune time, even if that treatment is carried out via a lawn mower!

Remember that many weed seeds remain viable in the ground for decades. That explains a little secret about weed control – don't let them go to seed. Dig them up, chop them down, or even eat them first!

# Friend of 4-H Award

Ms. Leann Vann



*Regional Extension Agent, Nancy Graves, presents award to Ms. Vann*

St. Clair County 4-H is proud to announce Ms. Leann Vann as this issue's winner of the *Friend of 4-H Award* in recognition of her outstanding volunteer service. Leann started volunteering with 4-H in St. Clair County in November 2009 when she formed the *Steele Rockin' Raiders* 4-H club with her 5<sup>th</sup> grade students. She said she learned many life lessons by being in 4-H herself and believes that many kids are not exposed to things like responsibility or character training except through programs like 4-H. Leann is originally from Springville, Alabama where she completed grades K-12 at Springville schools. She participated in 4-H from fourth through eleventh grade and her main projects were baked goods exhibits and livestock showing, which included both pigs and steers.

She currently lives in Odenville. She attended Gadsden State Community College and earned a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from the University of Montevallo. She is a lifelong, active member of Low Gap United Methodist Church. She admits that she is living out her childhood dream of being a teacher. She is currently

working at Steele Junior High where she teaches fifth grade.

Her hobbies today are much the same as when she was in 4-H. Leann loves to cook and bake and enjoys spending time with her pets, although they are much smaller than the animals she worked with while in 4-H. She also enjoys reading most anything she can get her hands on.

Congratulations, Leann for the countless hours you have dedicated to St. Clair County 4-H! If you would like to be a 4-H volunteer or nominate someone for this award, please contact the St. Clair County Extension office at (205) 338-9416.



*Ms. Vann leads club in 4-H pledge*

## Cleaning Resolutions for the New Year

*Lighten your cleaning load with some easy-to-implement changes*

If left to pile up, cleaning tasks can be overwhelming. So here are 9 ways to make cleaning easier in the New Year.



1. **Manage the mail.** Even in our email age, most people still get plenty of snail mail. Open it over a wastebasket or recycle bin so that anything unwanted quickly disappears.
2. **Roll back the bed.** Replace fussy bedspreads with a duvet and duvet cover. The duvet itself makes bed-making easier. For cleaning, just pop off the cover and launder. It's faster and easier than washing a bulky comforter.
3. **"Sweep" the house nightly.** Just before bedtime, do a walk-through. Put newspapers in the recycle bin, toss out the junk mail, put dishes in the dishwasher, hang up coats, sweaters, towels, etc. and put away anything that wandered out during the day.
4. **Remove shower scum as you go.** A daily shower cleaner will keep shower and tub surfaces free of soap scum, mildew stains and hard-water deposits.
5. **Double up.** A full set of cleaning supplies on each floor of the home keeps them in easy reach for spot cleaning.
6. **Baskets for all.** Be sure there's a wastebasket in every room. Empty them as part of your nightly sweep.
7. **Tote 'em.** Keep cleaning supplies in a plastic carry caddy so they're easy to tote from room to room.
8. **Invest in some baskets.** Baskets in varying sizes are great repositories for toys, magazines, keys, remote controls, unopened mail and other everyday items that tend to take over countertops and tabletops.
9. **Vacuum on the run.** A small, hand-held cordless vacuum makes quick pickup a snap. Consider multiples—one in the basement, one in the garage, one on each floor in the house.

*Source: The Soap & Detergent Association*



# Agent Spotlight



## Nkenge Hyter

### Urban Regional Extension Agent

### Family & Child Development and Human Nutrition, Diet & Health



*Nkenge distributes nutrition information to seniors at local senior picnic*

Nkenge Hyter joined the Alabama Cooperative Extension System eight months ago. She currently serves as Urban Regional Extension Agent in the areas of Family & Child Development and Human Nutrition, Diet & Health. Prior to coming to Extension, Nkenge worked as a director of a child development center. She is a native of Huntsville, Alabama, and a graduate of Huntsville High School. Nkenge earned her B.S. degree in Human and Child Development from Alabama A&M University and M. S. degree in Elementary Education from Nova Southeastern University. She has one son named Jeffery. While not working she enjoys singing, dancing, and traveling.

Nkenge is housed in Jefferson County, but also serves St. Clair, Blount, Shelby and Walker counties. For more information about parenting and nutrition program, please contact her at (205) 338-9416 or email at [nch0004@auburn.edu](mailto:nch0004@auburn.edu). She will be happy to assist you.



## Money Talks! Have You Heard?

### As Much As \$5,666—or more—Could Be Waiting for You!

#### You could qualify!

*Did you work in 2010? You may be eligible for the Earned Income Credit—even if you don't owe income tax.*

#### If you worked in 2010:

- Did you have one child living with you? Did you earn less than \$35,535\*? You can get an EIC up to **\$3,050**.
- Did you have 2 children living with you? Did you earn less than \$40,363\*? You can get an EIC up to **\$5,036**.
- Did you have 3 or more children living with you? Did you earn less than \$43,352\*? You can get an

EIC up to **\$5,666**.

- If you had no children living with you, did you earn less than \$13,460\* in 2010? Were you between the ages 25 to 64? You can get an EIC up to **\$457**.

*\*Income limits for married workers are \$5,010 higher.*

#### You could get a CTC refund too!

Many families that earned more than \$3,000 may qualify for the Child Tax Credit (CTC) refund—up to \$1,000 for each qualifying child under age 17.

**File a Federal tax Return to get the**

#### EIC and CTC: Get Free Help!!!

- VITA—Volunteer Income Tax Assistance—helps people fill out returns for free.
- For a site near you, call 1-800-906-9887.

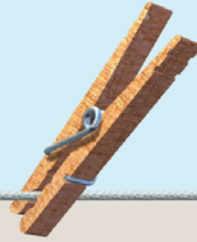
#### Make sure you get the Making Work Pay Credit

Many workers got the Making Work Pay credit in 2010 in their paychecks. But if you were self-employed, or didn't earn enough to have income tax withheld, you can claim this credit on your tax return.

*Source: The Center on Budget & Policy Priorities, Washington, D.C.*



# Generations on Line



INTERNET MADE SIMPLE FOR SENIORS

Whatever happened to...

- ...Bette Davis?
- ...rotary phones?
- ...Amos & Andy?
- ...your college roommate?
- ...drive-in theaters?

The Middle Alabama Area Agency on Aging (M4A), through its Senior Community Service Employment Program, provides an opportunity for seniors 55 or older to learn to use the computer free of charge. Generations On-line is self-paced and taught in a welcoming environment by a peer coach.

Never thought you'd have a chance to find out? Well, join us and find out...you never know what you'll find! Call the St. Clair County Extension office at (205) 338-9416 to learn more about how you can participate in the program.



Alabama A&M and Auburn Universities

**Alabama Cooperative Extension System  
St. Clair County Office**

1815 Cogswell Avenue  
Suite #103/B04  
Pell City, Alabama 35125

Phone: 205-338-9416  
Fax: 205-338-9417  
[www.aces.edu/StClair](http://www.aces.edu/StClair)