



Alabama Cooperative Extension System
St. Clair County Office

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Dear Friends of Extension,

Our 5th annual 4-H Clover Classroom officially kicks off on July 12th when we host our archery workshop. We do have just a few more spaces available in our beginner kids cooking camp, sportfishing workshop, GPS scavenger hunt, and the Auburn University road trip. If your child is interested in participating in any of these workshops and is between the ages of 9-14, call our office as soon as possible to register. As always, cost is only \$5 per workshop with lunch and a t-shirt featuring our new 4-H Clover Classroom logo will be provided. I assure you that they will have fun and learn a lot!

In just a few days beautiful fireworks will fill the evening sky as we celebrate our country's independence. However you plan to celebrate, I would like to wish you and your family a safe and happy 4th of July!

Until next time,

Lee Ann Clark



The Alabama Marriage Handbook

Strong, healthy, long-lasting marriages *don't just happen* on their own. They happen when two people are *intentional* about their marriage. Research has established that certain key elements are associated with healthy relationships and healthy marriages, and they can be learned!



This colorful 44-page resource is an educational "handbook" for a healthy marriage. It is designed to share information learned from studying healthy marriages and contains helpful tips, additional publications, resources, and Web sites all provided in a reader-friendly format. It is useful in family and child programs and services as well as in premarital and marriage enrichment programs.

Topics covered include: Money; Work & Family; Home and House-Care Responsibilities; Children and In-Laws. Special topics addressed include: Remarriage; Substance Abuse and Other Addictions; Mental Health Problems; Infidelity; and Domestic Violence.

Published by the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, the free handbook is available at the St. Clair County Extension office. Downloadable copies are also available by visiting www.aces.edu/StClair. Just click on publications at the top and then search for publication HE -829, or the Alabama Marriage Handbook.

Alabama Blueberries

For health conscious people, blueberries are one of the most highly sought fruits in the United States. Research has shown blueberries to be high in antioxidants, providing numerous health benefits to the consumer. Blueberries are versatile fruits and can be eaten fresh, frozen, dried, or added to cereals, salads, yogurt, ice cream, and more. Blueberry production, mostly of the rabbiteye type, is increasing in Alabama. At present, there are about 400 acres of blueberries in Alabama. Many of these are young plantings and will not be in full production for a few years. About 50 percent of the blueberries are shipped while the remainder is grown for local pick-your-own operations and roadside outlets.

The blueberry is also used in the landscape and in home fruit plantings. The deciduous shrub is quite hardy throughout the state. There are many species of blueberries worldwide. The rabbiteye blueberry (*Vaccinium ashei*) is native to the Southeast and is the most popular species grown throughout Alabama. 'Tifblue,' 'Powderblue,' 'Brightwell,' 'Premier,' and 'Climax' are among the most popular varieties of rabbiteye presently being grown. Other blueberry types being grown to a lesser extent include northern highbush (*Vaccinium corymbosum*) in north Alabama and southern highbush (interspecific hybrid), best suited for south Alabama.

Blueberries are ready for harvest beginning in mid April to late September depending on location and type. In Alabama, rabbiteyes are harvested mostly from early June through August. After berries turn fully blue, they are ready to harvest in 3 to 5 days and harvesting a plant will continue for 3 to 4 weeks. Berries will not sweeten further after harvest, but will turn a darker blue.

Handling Blueberries

Blueberries are not as perishable as most other berries. While other berries keep their quality only a day or two after you buy them, blueberries will keep about a week if they are handled properly. Use care in working with blueberries—they do bruise easily. Put blueberries in a plastic container and refrigerate as soon as possible. Do not wash blueberries until you are ready to use them. The added moisture will hasten the growth of mold on the berries.

Freezing Blueberries

Only ripe, full-flavored berries should be used for freezing. Blueberries do not have to be washed before freezing. Washing before freezing results in a tougher-skinned product. However, the berries should be harvested when they are dry, and they should be washed after thawing.

If blueberries are washed before freezing, you should sort the berries then wash them quickly in cool water. After washing the berries, spread them on a metal tray in a single layer.

Allow the berries to dry (they stick together if they are frozen wet). Then freeze them until they are solid. Finally, pack the berries in freezer containers, and label the containers. Blueberries may be frozen in containers or covered with a cold 40 percent syrup (3 cups of sugar to 4 cups of water).



Nutritional Value of Blueberries

Blueberries can be classified as a convenience food because there is no pitting, peeling, or waste. A pint serves four people generously, and a half-cup serving of blueberries contains only 44 calories. Fresh blueberries are a source of vitamins A and C, soluble fiber, potassium, phytochemicals, and phosphorous. Shiny, plump blueberries are delightful to eat:

- Sprinkle fresh blueberries on cereal, ice cream, melons, or meringue shells.
- Use blueberry sauce on vanilla pudding or ice cream.
- Make blueberry crepes. Place sweetened blueberries sprinkled with lemon juice in the center on freshly cooked crepes and roll the crepes. Top with whipped cream and more berries or a blueberry sauce.
- Stir blueberries into pancake, waffle or cake batter.
- Nestle a few blueberries inside biscuits along with a little butter and sugar, bake, and serve hot for a surprise opening.

Deep Dish Blueberry Pie

Pastry for 2-crust pie

6 cups fresh blueberries

1 cup sugar

1/4 cup cornstarch

3 Tablespoons lemon juice

3 or 4 Tablespoons butter or margarine

Prepare and roll pastry. Line greased baking dish with bottom pastry. Combine washed blueberries with other ingredients and put in the pastry. Dot with butter. Top with remaining rolled pastry, seal edges together, and make small slits in top pastry to let steam escape during baking. Bake at 400°F for 15 minutes. Lower oven temperature to 350°F and continue baking for about 45 minutes until crust is browned. Serve hot or cold. Top with cream, whipped cream, or ice cream if desired. For one 9-inch pan pie, use 4 cups blueberries, 3/4 cup sugar, 4 Tablespoons flour or cornstarch, and 1 1/2 Tbsp. butter. Prepare as above. Bake about 10 minutes at 400°F, then 30 minutes at 350°F.

Source: HE-0579 Alabama Blueberries

The Gulf Oil Spill and It's Implications for Seafood Safety



Federal and state public health authorities are confident that, through careful monitoring, they can maintain the safety of seafood sold at retail outlets, though many food safety experts remain concerned about the possible long-term effects associated with the spill.

Food safety authorities have a number of cutting-edge technologies at their disposal to monitor for potentially harmful contaminants associated with the spill. These include a battery of laboratory tests to detect not just chemical contaminants in water and sediment but also seafood that has been exposed to these elements, according to Dr. Steve Otwell, a seafood specialist with the Florida Sea Grant College Program.

In addition, special sensory methods have been developed and successfully used by trained experts to detect certain aromas that may indicate exposure. Used in combination, these analytical tests and sensory methods have proven to be effective measures for securing seafood safety.

However, because the analytical methods typically take longer and cost more, the more sophisticated tests are used only sparingly, says Kristin Woods, an Alabama Cooperative Extension System regional agent and food safety expert who is also serving as the land-grant university representative for the Food Safety Task Force, a multi-agency effort organized to deal with the aftereffects of the spill.

Woods says that the speed of the tests is particularly important because seafood is one of the most perishable food commodities. For this reason, food safety authorities typically use a more straightforward, three-step sensory method to monitor for safety.

“You inspect the fish for visible signs of contamination,” Woods says. “Then after cooking, you check for aromas associated with the chemicals in the oil-volatile fatty acids. If the first and second steps turn up nothing, you taste it.”

In addition, a number of safety regulations are in place to protect consumers against tainted seafood. “Enforcing these regulations is the responsibility of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and, in some cases, the U.S. Department of

Agriculture,” says Dr. Jean Weese, an Alabama Cooperative Extension System food scientist. “But the responsibility also comes back to the people who are selling the fish—the retail outlets. I don’t think any retail chain is going to accept any fish that’s being fished out of waters that have been put off limits by federal or state regulatory authorities,” she says.

Even so, federal and state authorities will have their work cut out for them in the coming weeks and months, Woods says, adding that they are only now beginning to assess the long-term effects of this spill.

A wide variety of chemicals are typically associated with an oil spill, notably polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), which are highly water-soluble—a characteristic that increases the likelihood of aquatic species exposure. Given the possible size and duration of this spill, authorities are uncertain to what extent these substances threaten seafood safety.

“The good thing about PAHs is that they can be easily detected through taste and smell,” says Woods. “So, if they’re out there, we’re going to be able to detect them in the sensory tests.” Some consumers have wondered if marine species typically harvested for food will suffer permanent contamination as a result of exposure to the elements.

The good news is that marine species are as resilient as many nonmarine species. Once the effects of the spill cease, marine animals can eventually eliminate the contamination associated with exposure. However, the species’ resilience will depend on the amount and type of oil associated with the spill as well as the organisms’ metabolisms.

There is the added question of how dispersants being used to mitigate the effects of the spill could affect marine life and seafood safety.

“We hope the ocean is big enough to dilute these dispersants,” Woods says. “They’re apparently not at toxic levels, but we can’t be sure of this into the future.”

“In order for you to succeed, your desire for success should be greater than your fear of failure.” ~Bill Cosby

The Gardening Corner

By: Tony Glover, Regional Extension Agent
Commercial Horticulture
Home Grounds, Gardens & Home Pests



June Beetle

Question: My yard has been invaded by green bugs that are about twice the size of Japanese beetles. They buzz around my kids and pets and I am concerned about one of them being bitten or stung.

Answer: The pest is likely a June beetle or as I called them growing up, a June bug. Green June beetles are velvet green with orange or rust stripes along the outer margins of the wing covers. Beetles can range from ½ to 1 inch in length and as you described, they are twice as large as their more destructive relative, the Japanese beetle. Peak flights for this insect started in late June and will continue another couple weeks.

The adults out buzzing around in your yard are probably seeking a mate or there is a good food source that they are attracted to. The adults primarily feed on over ripe fruit but sometimes they feed on leaves of peach trees. Since they do have chewing mouthparts it is possible to be bitten by them but they don't have a stinger. Even though they seem aggressive while buzzing around, and I have been scared out of my wits when disturbing a group of them while picking peaches, I have never been bitten by them.

They will soon complete their lifecycle and lay eggs for a new generation. The eggs will develop into a grub that will develop and overwinter in the soil. These grubs are different from most grub species in the southeast in that they come out of the ground at night and move from one place to another. Even more unusual, they crawl on their backs when moving. When disturbed, the grubs curl up into a C-shape, much like my teenage girls do when I ask them to wash the dishes.

The adults can cause damage to the turf while nesting but it is normally not severe enough to treat with an insecticide. The grubs can actually be beneficial in the turf because small populations of them will aerate the soil while tunneling. However, large populations can cause excessive tunneling causing the grass roots to dry out and die in patches. If control of grubs appears warranted do so in August and September when the grubs are small, close to the surface and more susceptible to pesticides. Most recommended pesticides work best after irrigation or a soaking rain.

I am not sure how wide spread this problem is in recent years because we get so many more calls about the dreaded Japanese beetle which causes much more damage to ornamental plants. Normally I don't pay a lot of attention to what one or two folks say about pest numbers but if one of the people is your mother you better listen. In this case while visiting my mother in Cullman recently she asked me, "do you know, where have all the June bugs gone?" to which I responded, "No – but if you hum a few bars I may be able to pick it up." After I picked myself up and brushed off a little I asked her what she meant and she swears she has not seen any June bugs since the Japanese beetles arrived a few years back. I would be interested to know if anyone else has observed a decline in June beetles around your home in the last few years. Send me an email with your observations to satisfy my mother's curiosity. You may drop me a note or a question at gloveta@aces.edu. For more information and control options visit our web site at www.aces.edu and go to the publications area at the top of the page. We have two relevant publications you may want to read: "Biology and Control of the Green June Beetle" and "Controlling White Grubs on Lawns and Turf."

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.

Tactics for Tick Control

Ticks are not insects. They are arthropods that are more closely related to spiders. Adult ticks have eight legs while insects have six legs. Ticks are ectoparasites which means that they must have a host for each stage of their life cycle in order to survive and reproduce. The tick life cycle includes an egg, larval, nymphal, and adult stage. The larval stage of the tick has six legs, but when it molts to the nymphal stage there are eight legs. Ticks are most resistant to drying out than other insect pests. The American dog tick, *Dermacentor variabilis* (Say), is the most common tick in Alabama.

Ticks do not travel very far on their own and most likely hitch a ride on a host. Hosts will include dogs, mice, squirrels, other rodents, and lizards.

Minimizing your exposure to tick bites is important because some ticks can carry disease-causing organisms. Tick bites can also result in prolonged itching.

- Wear light colored clothing in wooded areas or places that ticks are known to infest. Ticks are easier to see on light colors so you can remove them before they attach.
- Tuck pants legs into socks, boots, or shoes to prevent ticks from crawling up under your clothing.
- Apply an insect repellent containing DEET to boot or

shoe tops, around the waist, and on exposed skin. In heavily infested areas, you may want to use permethrin on clothing.



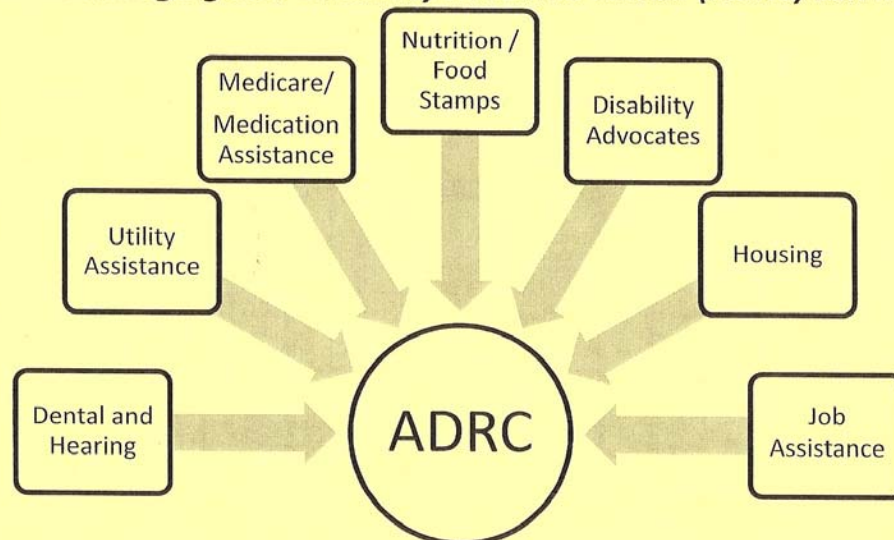
Permethrin is not for use on skin. Most insect repellents for mosquitoes usually work well against ticks.

- Examine yourself carefully for ticks after leaving the woods or tick infested area. Normally, ticks must attach for several hours before a disease agent is passed from tick to man. Therefore, remove ticks promptly.
- Remove attached ticks carefully. Using a pair of fine tweezers, firmly grasp the tick at the point closest to where it is attached and pull with a slow steady motion. You should hear a “pop” as the ticks mouthparts are pulled free. Disinfect the bite with rubbing alcohol or iodine. Avoid removing ticks with bare fingers. If the tick is crushed, you could introduce the disease agent with infected tick tissues through cuts or abrasions of the skin.
- Check your pets, especially dogs, for ticks as often as possible. Outside pets can pick up ticks and bring them into the home. Remove ticks from pets in the same way you remove ticks from yourself.

Source: ANR-1070 IPM Tactics for Tick Control

A service provided by the Middle Alabama Area Agency on Aging ***Needing to locate Resources?***

Your local Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) can help.



A representative is available every Tuesday

Must have an Appointment, please contact: 1-866-570-2998

Location: Moody City Hall, 670 Park Avenue, Moody, AL 35004

Benefits of Buying Local

The American tradition of the family farm is in danger of fading away as there are now less than a million people in the U.S. that claim their primary occupation to be farming. This represents a loss of almost 5 million farms since 1935. Family farms, exhibiting self-sufficiency, are the foundation of our rural communities. Communities benefit from the local farmers as they purchase their goods from local merchants and provide jobs which enhance the local economy. This produces a winning combination for all.

Usually sold within 24 hours of being harvested, fruits and vegetables produced locally are fresher and taste better than produce which has been shipped for a long period of time. Statistics show that produce purchased in supermarkets may have been shipped from distant states and countries traveling an average of 1,300 miles for as many as 7 to 14 days. When eaten at the height of ripeness, one reaps the benefits of the exceptional flavor and nutrients of the produce.

You can do your part to ensure that there will be farms in your community in the future and that generations to come will have abundant and nourishing food. It's easy as buying fresh and buying local. **LOOK FOR THE LABEL and TASTE THE DIFFERENCE.**

Shop at your local farmers market or farm stands where you will find the freshest food available. One is probably near you as there are more than 112 farmers markets and 175 farm stands in Alabama. Also, encouraging your local restaurants and grocery stores to purchase from local farmers will be of benefit to you and your community.

1. **Buying from the local farmer** not only financially benefits the farmer but the community as well. Today's farmer receives less than 10 cents of the retail food dollar. When farmers sell directly to the consumer, the middleman is cut out thus producing higher profit for the farmer. The farmer then circulates his profits throughout the community with local merchants creating a cycle that helps to build a strong local economy.
2. **Buying from the local farmer** allows him to profit which in turn reduces the likelihood that he will have to sell his land for development. Agricultural landscape can only survive as long as the farmer is profitable. Family farms that are well-managed value the resources of fertile soil and clean water. Cover crops are grown to prevent erosion, replace nutrients



and capture emissions. Many species of wildlife are in a perfect environment in the patchwork of our farmers' fields, hedgerows, and ponds.

3. **Buying from the local farmer** ensures healthier and better tasting food. Studies prove that fresh produce loses nutrients quickly. Produce purchased locally was probably picked within the past day or two and provides crispy, sweet and flavorful food. Eating healthy, locally grown food not only strengthens your family but your community as well. Food that is shipped long distances is bred for a longer shelf life, not for taste.
4. **Buying from the local farmer** helps protect genetic diversity. There is little genetic diversity in the produce grown to meet commercial standards. Only varieties that can survive shipping, transporting and have a long shelf life are chosen. Therefore, only a few hybrid varieties of fruits and vegetables meet those demands. On the other hand, local farmers that sell to local grocery stores and restaurants can produce a wide variety of produce, some of which are heirlooms passed down from generation to generation because they taste good.
5. **Buying from the local farmer** helps protect our environment. Local food doesn't have to travel far. This reduces carbon dioxide emissions and packing materials. Buying local food also helps to make farming more profitable and selling farmland for development less attractive.
6. **Buying from the local farmer** helps safeguard your health. Knowing where your food comes from and how it is grown enables you to choose safe food. Buy food from local farmers you trust.

Source: Alabama Farmers Market Authority, <http://www.fma.state.al.us/BuyLocal.aspx>

An illustration of a farmers market stall. The sign above the stall reads "ST. CLAIR COUNTY FARMERS MARKET". A woman in a blue shirt is behind the counter, and a woman in a red shirt is standing in front of the counter with a child. There are baskets of produce on the counter and on the ground.

Wednesdays,
2—5:30 p.m.

Farmers Market Nutrition
Voucher Program
Redemption Site

Located on Hwy 231N, just
past the Pell City Post
Office, in gravel parking lot
in front of Mary's Mini
Warehouses

Where to Store Foods in the Refrigerator

Location, location, location is the mantra in real estate! Location also is important when selecting a storage area for foods in your refrigerator.

What foods are best suited for the top and bottom shelves in the fridge?

Store raw foods that must be cooked prior to serving (such as raw meat, poultry, fish) on the refrigerator's *bottom* shelf to prevent their juices from coming into contact with other foods. Raw juices often contain harmful bacteria. Store them in their wrapping on a plate or a tray.

Store prepared or ready-to-eat foods on shelves above raw foods that must be cooked.

What foods can go in the side door? What should not go in the door?

The shelves or compartments on the side door tend to be the warmest part of the refrigerator. Side door shelves are intended for foods that can stand a slightly higher temperature without going bad. For example, store mustard, barbecue sauce, soft drinks, condiments, sauces, and jellies in the side door.

Eggs should be stored in their carton on a shelf, not on the refrigerator door.

What produce goes in the crisper? What produce should not go in the crisper?

Use your refrigerator crisper drawer for whole produce. Store fruits in a separate refrigerator crisper drawer from vegetables. Fruits give off ethylene gas, which can shorten the storage life of vegetables. Some vegetables give off odors that can be absorbed by fruits and affect their quality. Most whole produce keeps best in perforated or unsealed plastic

bags in the *crisper drawer* where the humidity is the highest.



Avoid washing produce before refrigerating it. The dampness can make it spoil sooner.

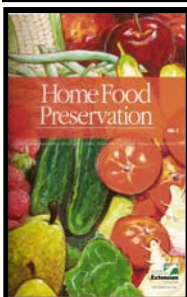
Some foods that taste best when stored at room temperature include bananas, melons, onions, potatoes, sweet potatoes, tomatoes and winter squashes. Store them in a clean, dry, well-ventilated place, away from areas where meat is prepared.

Some produce can be ripened on the counter, and then stored in the refrigerator. Examples include avocados, kiwi fruit, nectarines, peaches, pears, and plums. Avoid placing produce in a sealed plastic bag on your countertop. This slows ripening and may increase off-odors and decay from the accumulation.

A few additional guidelines:

- The temperature in a refrigerator should be 40°F or below. Keep an appliance thermometer in your refrigerator and check it frequently.
- A general rule of thumb for refrigerator storage for cooked leftovers is 3 to 4 days.
- Divide a large pot of food like soup or stew into small portions and put in shallow containers before being refrigerated. Divide a large cut of meat or whole poultry into smaller pieces and wrap separately or place in shallow containers before refrigerating.

Source: Alice Henneman, MS, RD, University of Nebraska/Lincoln, Lancaster County Extension Educator



Home Food Preservation is the only reference and recipe book of its kind published in Alabama. It is available at the St. Clair County Extension office for just \$9.00. The book includes information on canning, freezing, drying, jams, jellies, pickles, relishes, and other combination foods. It is based on the most recent USDA guidelines.

For the beginner, *Home Food Preservation* is a must, with its complete, step-by-step procedures. For the experienced, it provides quick-reference charts with processing times. Pick up your copy today!

Pressure Canner Dial Gauge Testing Available

If you preserve by pressure canning, plan to have your pressure canner lid tested yearly to determine if it is operating at the correct pressure and temperature. The St. Clair County Extension office offers **FREE** testing for these type canner lids. Just call our office to set-up an appointment at (205) 338-9416. During your visit, be sure to ask for up-to-date food preservation instructions. Free publications are available!





Friend of 4-H Award

Mrs. Lisa Kennedy



St. Clair County 4-H is proud to announce Mrs. Lisa Kennedy as this issue's winner of the *Friend of 4-H Award* in recognition of her outstanding volunteer service.

Mrs. Kennedy is in her 2nd year of volunteering for 4-H in St. Clair County. In 2008, she became a volunteer 4-H leader at Victory Christian School, where she led the 4th, 5th and 6th grade clubs.

When asked why she believes 4-H is so important she said, "I thought it was very important to educate children about farming and agriculture. We don't see too many farms anymore and a lot of our kids don't know where their food comes from. I personally find that frightening." Mrs. Kennedy went on to say that, "I try not to buy anything unless it's grown in the USA or locally. Our family founded Alabama Ag Center at Eden and I used it as a tool for the kids to learn about gardening." She decided to start a volunteer-led 4-H club so that her kids as well as the others could have the privilege of participating in the different activities offered through 4-H; they especially enjoyed taking part in the Farm-City Scarecrow contest held back in the fall.

Mrs. Kennedy is originally from Oxford, but lives in Pell City with her husband, David, and twins, Joshua and Ashley. Last year she grew 4 acres of vegetables and this year she plans to do the same and sell half at farmers markets and give the other half away to people in need.

Congratulations Mrs. Kennedy and thank you 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.

Pictured (l to r): Noah French, 1st place—Blocks Rocks Lego Design; Madison Green, 2nd place—Chef 4-H; April Deesce, 1st place—Chef 4-H; Ashley Kennedy, 1st place—Photography; Hannah Saxon, 1st place—Public Speaking; Lisa Kennedy, 4-H Volunteer Leader; and Joshua Kennedy, 1st place—Extreme Birdhouses.



Mrs. Kennedy's 4-H'ers Compete



Limited Space Available

A few spaces are still available in the following 4-H Clover Classroom Workshops: Sportfishing, Beginner Kids Cooking Camp, GPS and the Auburn University Road Trip. Children between the ages of 9-14 are eligible to participate. They do not have to be a member of 4-H. All workshops are only \$5 each and lunch is provided.

To register, please contact 4-H Agent Assistant, Tonya Tomlin at the St. Clair County Extension office at (205) 338-9416.



St. Clair 4-H'ers Compete on Regional Level

St. Clair County 4-H'ers competed recently at Regional 4-H Congress. The event was held on Thursday and Friday, June 24th —25th at the State 4-H Center in Columbiana. Pictured (back row l to r): Kameron Crenshaw—1st place, Freestyle Exhibit; Rebecca Parker—2nd place, Freestyle Exhibit; (middle row l to r) Alexandra Booker—2nd place, Alabama Quilters; Victoria Booker, The World I See Photography; and (front row) Jacob West—3rd place, Blocks Rock Lego Design. **CONGRATULATIONS** to all our winners and those who competed! You represented St. Clair County well and we are very proud of you!



Spotlight—Operation: Military Kids

Operation Military Kids (OMK) is the U. S. Army's collaborative effort with America's communities to support the children and youth impacted by deployment. This initiative was officially launched in April 2005. Since its inception, OMK has touched 88,000 military youth and provided information to 21,009 community members across the United States.

Operation: Military Kids, as part of the 4-H/Army Youth Development Project, is a vital part of the Army OneSource (AOS) delivery system. National, state and local partners of Operation: Military Kids provide access to 4-H and other youth programs and support services where military children live. OMK Partners can organize special events, provide transportation to military kids going to sporting events or other extracurricular activities, or participate in the Hero Pack initiative.

OMK Teams operating in 49 states and the District of Columbia include over 600 OMK partner members from both national and local organizations that work together to provide support to the military children in their state.

For more information about Operation: Military Kids in Alabama, please contact Ms. Charlene Hines at our state 4-H office in Auburn at (334) 844-2294 or email hinescm@aces.edu.

Cast Iron Cookware: Seasoning—The “Magic” Word

Seasoning seems to be the “magic” word with cast iron. Many people take it for granted that “once seasoned, always seasoned,” but this is nowhere near true.

Dishwashing liquids of this day and time are murder on cast iron. All present day detergents are fabulous for removing grease, which is exactly what cast iron does not need.

Cast iron should not be washed in soapy water, other than the very first time used, which removes the protective coating put on by the manufacturer for shipping purposes. Soap only strips your seasoning from the utensil, making it necessary to re-season after each use.

There is nothing boiling hot water and a stiff brush will not remove. When you use your utensils, remove the food immediately. While the utensil is still

hot, wash immediately in hot or boiling water. Do not drain dry. Wipe dry with a soft cloth or paper towel. You want the utensil to have a greasy appearance. To add a protective coating against sweating, due to weather changes, spray the just washed utensil lightly with a non-stick cooking spray, both inside and out, wipe dry and store, with the cover removed.

Always remember NEVER wash with soap, or liquid detergents. Boiling water and a stiff brush are the key items.

Your cast iron will turn black, only with frequent use. Seasoning is actually a build up of grease, which carbonizes on the utensil, turning it black, smooth and slick to the touch, with use.

A utensil **does not** turn black immediately. It takes many uses, turning a shade darker after each use,

until eventually the utensil is a deep shiny black.

To break-in your cast iron properly, it’s best to start out by using the items for frying the first few times. (Perhaps bacon, sausage, French fried potatoes, deep fried chicken or fish).

Cast iron cookware is durable, versatile, healthful. With just a little loving care, it will continue to serve your family for years to come.

Remember—a dull looking, grayish-colored utensil is its way of telling you, “I need to be seasoned again.” Be sure to look for a “how-to” guide to seasoning cast iron in the next issue of the *Extension Newsletter*.

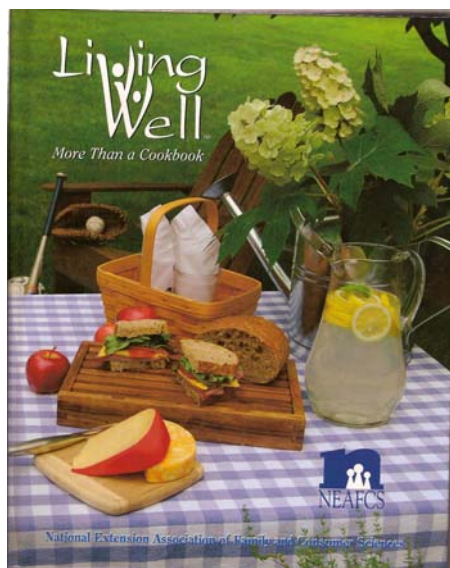
Source: Georgia P. Aycock, retired AL Cooperative Extension System Resource Management Specialist

Living Well—More Than a Cookbook

Members of the National Extension Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (NEAFCS) have developed and illustrated a book containing delicious, time-tested recipes from across the nation. Also, included is a “Recipes for Living” chapter containing research-based information on Healthy Lifestyles, Living Green, Home Safety, Financial Management, Care of Textiles, and Etiquette.

“Today, the critical emphasis on safe, affordable food and a healthy, nutritious diet is evident in every aspect of American life,” said Colien Hefferan, Administrator Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service. “NEAFCS members have had an extraordinary impact on advancing not only sound nutritional practices, but on sound practices in all aspects of healthful living.”

Living Well—More Than a Cookbook



features a designated recipe page for each affiliate with a sidebar describing the significance of the recipe to the state. You will discover a delicious world of adventure in food with over 275 recipes.

A nutritional analysis of each recipe includes calories, total fat, calories from fat, carbohydrates, sugar, sodium, and fiber. Other nice extra features in the book are food storage life in refrigerator and freezer, and conversion chart for the amount of fresh produce to purchase.

Living Well—More Than a Cookbook will sell for \$29.95 if ordered online. Consumers may buy the book from the St. Clair County Extension office for \$27, which includes tax. Proceeds from the book sales will be divided between NEAFCS and State Affiliates to support Extension Family and Consumer Sciences educators in their efforts to enhance the quality of life for individuals, families, and communities.

For more information, visit the NEAFCS website, at www.neafcs.org. To purchase a cookbook locally, visit the St. Clair County Extension office.

Protect Your Valuable Electronics from Power Surges

Microchips—you'll find them everywhere in the modern household. Even everyday appliances like air conditioners and refrigerators use them.

There's only one problem: microchips are notoriously susceptible to power surges. One good jolt and your new giant flat panel TV or whole-house sound system can be toast—very expensive toast. And, contrary to popular opinion, lightning is not the most common cause of power surges. According to the Leviton Institute, 80% of temporary power surges come from inside the home, when appliances like refrigerators, washing machines or even laser printers cycle on or off.

What You Don't See Can Hurt You

While less dramatic than a direct lightning strike that takes out everything in its path, everyday household dips and spikes in voltage do their damage over time, insidiously eroding performance of electronic components and especially sensitive gear like computers. Do the words "hard drive crash" strike fear into your heart?

Fortunately, surge protective devices (SPDs) offer outstanding protection from power surges, safeguarding your expensive appliances, electronics, and computers, and the irreplaceable information stored on them.

How They Work

SPDs are the wallflowers of the electrical world. Most of the time, they sit there, unnoticed. Until you need them, that is; then in the space of nanoseconds, they spring into action. A metal oxide varistor or gas discharge arrestor in the SPD diverts the potentially destructive surge of voltage to the ground wire, where it is safely channeled away.

SPDs come in a wide range of models to fit every budget.

While they all offer protection, a whole-house network combining layers of SPDs provides protection in depth, and should stop anything short of a direct lightning hit.

Power Strip SPDs

- Are priced from \$15 to \$100, depending on features.
- Offer a good localized defense against temporary power surges.
- Typically provide 6-8 outlets, enough for a home office or den.
- Should include protection for FAX, cable, or Ethernet lines, "back doors" that surges can enter through.
- Are available at any electronics or computer store.
- Should display the UL 1449 label, which means they meet tested and approved standards.

Surge Protective Receptacles

- Install in place of regular outlets.
- Keep your floor clear of wires.
- Offer sleek designer styling as well as ample protection.

Surge Panel and Meter Adaptors

- Meter Socket Surge Adaptors form a powerful first line of defense outside the house, and can be installed by your utility company.
- Panel-Mounted Surge Protectors, installed by a professional electrician near the breaker box, will tame most powerful surges before they can reach your invaluable electronics.

Source: Helpful Hints on Home Electricity, Vol. 15, Leviton Manufacturing Co, Inc.

Tutti-Fruitti Ice Cream

3 ripe bananas, mashed

1 cup orange juice

9 Tablespoons lemon juice

1 small can crushed pineapple, drained

Few drops red food coloring

Mix all ingredients well and freeze in ice cream freezer.

1/2 cup chopped maraschino cherries

3 cups sugar

2 (12-oz.) can low-fat evaporated milk

3 cups (1%) milk





Master Gardener Class Begins In September

A Master Gardener Class will be conducted on Tuesdays, beginning September 7th through November 30th, 2010 from 9 a.m.—2:30 p.m. in the St. Clair County Extension Office auditorium. Cost is \$115 which is used to cover cost of materials. Applications are available at the St. Clair County Extension office or can be downloaded at www.aces.edu/StClair. The deadline to apply is Tuesday, August 10th, and the class is limited to 20.

The following topics will be covered: soils and soil fertility; plant physiology; basic entomology; plant propagation and pathology; weed identification and control; home lawn care; herbs; care and maintenance of ornamentals; home fruit production; annuals and perennials; and home vegetable production.

For more information, please contact Charles Pinkston, Regional Extension Agent—Home Horticulture, Home Grounds and Home Pest Management at the St. Clair County Extension office by phone at (205) 338-9416 or email pinksch@aces.edu. To learn more about the Master Gardener Program visit www.aces.edu/mg.



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