

Alabama Cooperative Extension System
St. Clair County Office

Extension Newsletter

*Raising Kids, Eating Right,
Spending Smart, Living Well*

September/October 2007

Volume 2, Issue 11

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Dear Friends of Extension,

As I prepare this newsletter and begin thinking about September and October, my thoughts turn to those cooler autumn days ahead of us. Won't it be a refreshing change after all the triple digit temperatures we have experienced this summer? This certainly has been one of the hottest, driest summers on record!

If you haven't signed up to receive the *Extension Newsletter* yet, please feel free to contact me by phone at (205) 338-9416 or email at clarkla@auburn.edu. I will be happy to add your name to our mailing list. We do respect your privacy and won't share your information. As always, if you have suggestions or comments about the newsletter, I welcome them. Happy Fall!

Until next time,

Want a Free Annual Credit Report?

The Fair Credit Reporting Act, signed into law by President Bush in December 2003, requires each of the nationwide consumer reporting companies—Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion—to provide you with a free copy of your credit report, at your request, once every 12 months. You can order all three reports at one time or stagger your requests by ordering a different one every 4 months, which I recommend.

If you want to order your free annual credit report online, there is only one authorized website: **annualcreditreport.com**. Many other websites claim to offer "free credit reports," "free credit scores," or "free credit monitoring." But, be careful. These sites are not part of the official annual free credit report program. Some use terms like "free report" in their names; others have website names that purposely misspell **annual-creditreport.com** in the hope that you will mistype the name of the official site.

To order your free annual credit report online, carefully type in the name: **annualcreditreport.com**. Once you have provided your name, address, Social Security number, and date of birth you will be directed to individual websites operated by the three nationwide companies. You may get offers to buy additional products or services while on their sites, such as credit scores or credit monitoring products, but you are not required to make a purchase to receive your free annual credit reports.

You can also order your free report by calling toll-free, 1-877-322-8228, or by mailing a completed Annual Credit Report Request Form to: Annual Credit Report Request Service, P.O. Box 105281, Atlanta, GA 30348-5281. Do not contact the reporting agencies directly. They only provide free annual credit reports through the website, phone number, and address above.

Source: Federal Trade Commission, May 2006



Help Yourself to a Healthy Home

Part 3—Hazardous Household Products

Do you have these products in your home? Bleach, rat poison, mothballs, charcoal lighter fluid, oven cleaner, batteries, mercury thermometers, gas, oil, wood polish, toilet and drain cleaners, shoe polish, bug spray? Household products like these are dangerous for children!

Household products are called hazardous if they can harm people when not used in the right way. Not every product is hazardous and some are more dangerous than others.

You can use most products safely if you follow the directions on the label. Doing things that are not on the label is risky for your health and your family's health. People run into trouble by using too much of a product or by mixing two products together, for example.

In 2000, nearly 20,000 children were exposed to or poisoned by household chlorine bleach.

Children can be poisoned if products are stored or thrown away unsafely. Children's bodies are small, so even a little bit of some chemicals can cause big problems.

Eating or drinking a hazardous product is dangerous, of course. Also, just touching or breathing some products—even a very small amount of them—can be harmful. They burn your skin or eyes just by touching them. Some hazardous products can make you sick if they get into your body through your skin or when you breathe in their dust or fumes.

Sometimes you know right away if you or your child has come into contact with a hazardous product. You may feel sick to your stomach or dizzy. Your skin may itch or burn. Your eyes may water or hurt.

Other problems don't show up until later, like cancer or harm to your lungs. Also, coming into contact with chemicals can affect a child's growing body. You can protect your children and yourself from illness and injury. Use hazardous products safely. Store them carefully. Dispose of them properly.

When In Doubt, Check It Out!

- Call your local Poison Control Center, (800) 222-1222
- Call your local Cooperative Extension office
- Call your local or state health department
- Contact the Consumer Products Safety Commission, (800) 638-2772—www.cpsc.gov
- Contact Healthy Indoor Air for America's Homes, (406) 994-3451—www.healthyindoorair.org
- The *Home*A*Syst* handbook, (608) 262-0024—www.uwex.edu/homeasyst
- EPA's Consumer Labeling Initiative—www.epa.gov/opptintr/labeling/index.htm



Questions to Ask

Use Safely

Do you use hazardous household products safely?

- Read the label. That is one of the most important steps in using products.
- Look for words like **caution, warning, flammable, harmful, danger, poison**. These tell you that a product may be hazardous. If you see these words on a label, take extra care.
- Look for special instructions on the label such as: “Work in well-ventilated area.” This means work outside or with the windows open. The fumes can make you sick if you do not have enough fresh air.
- “Wear protective clothing.” This means wear goggles or safety glasses, gloves, long sleeves, or other coverings. The right clothing can prevent burns or keep chemicals from going into your body through your skin.
- Never mix products unless the label says it is safe to do it. For example, never mix products containing chlorine bleach with products containing ammonia. You will make a deadly gas by mixing these together.
- Keep children and pets away while you use hazardous products.
- Always put the cap back on and put away the product right after you finish using it.

Store Safely

Do you store hazardous household products safely?

- Keep them away from children. A locked, secure place is best.
- Store them in the package, can, or bottle they came in. Never put them in another container (especially one for food or drink)! This helps prevent poisoning and keeps the label instructions with the product.
- Keep containers and packages dry. Close them tightly.
- Set containers inside a plastic bucket in case of leaks.
- Store products at least 150 feet away from your well, cistern, or water pump. This will protect your water supply and your health.
- Keep products away from heat, sparks, and fire.
- Store batteries and flammable chemicals like gasoline in the shade, away from direct sunlight.

In Case of Emergency

You can reach your local **Poison Control Center** by calling **1-800-222-1222** from anywhere in the country.

Put this number next to all of your telephones and where you store your hazardous products.

Safe Disposal

How do you get rid of leftover products?

- Share the extra with someone who will use it up.
- Take leftovers to a community hazardous waste collection point. Ask your local or state health department where this is.
- Some products—like pesticides—are very hazardous. You will even need to be careful how you dispose of the container. The label will tell you what to do.
- Never dump or burn hazardous products on your property. Dumping or burning them near a water supply is very dangerous.
- Never burn hazardous wastes in a barrel or stove. Burning may let off toxic gases and make hazardous ash and smoke. And, it’s against the law in many states.
- Recycle used motor oil or antifreeze. Many communities have places for you to do this.
- Mercury is a threat to health. Products that have mercury in them are fluorescent bulbs, thermometers, thermostats, and blood pressure meters. Call your local trash department or health department to find out where to recycle products with mercury.

Action Steps

Here are some ways to protect your family’s health.

- Buy only what you need to do the job.
- Use products known to be safe when possible.
- Read and follow directions on product labels—always!
- Post the Poison Control Center telephone number next to the phone.
- Never mix two products together unless you are certain it is safe to do so.
- Never mix bleach and ammonia.
- Keep all hazardous products, including bleach, in a cabinet out of reach of children.
- Buy products in childproof containers.
- Keep hazardous products in their original containers.
- Give leftover products to someone else to use.
- Find out about your community’s hazardous waste collection points.
- Recycle products that you can—oil, antifreeze, products with mercury.

Source: HE-838: Help Yourself to a Healthy Home

The Gardening Corner

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



Question: Are ornamental grasses difficult to grow and what are some good ones to try in our area?

Answer: Ornamental grasses are becoming a very popular addition to many landscapes. They can be used as accents, borders, or in mass to fill in areas. These plants are generally low maintenance and offer more than just attractive foliage and flowers. Enjoy the movement and sound that grasses bring to your landscape. Even in the winter when the foliage is dead and brown they offer character and movement.

Spring or fall are good times to establish ornamental grasses. Raised beds provide the ideal site because well drained soils are preferred by most of the ornamental grass species. Placement should be in full sun, although light shade is tolerated by some species such as Upland Sea Oats, Blue Sheep Fescue, Blue Lyme Grass, Miscanthus and Pennisetum. Planting when soil temperatures are warm will result in a greater success rate. Space plants to give each an area as wide as the expected height.

The main cultural requirements involve cutting back to near ground level when unsightly or at winter's end, lightly fertilizing in spring and late summer, and dividing every 3-4 years. Annual varieties will benefit from monthly grooming to promote maximum flowering. You can prune anytime in the winter but why not enjoy them as long as possible and time your pruning just prior to new growth emerging. Be careful to not prune too close to the ground. Leave about 3-4 inches of dormant grass exposed. They can be pruned easily with electric shears or even a small chainsaw.

Here is a list of a few you might consider:

Feather Reed Grass, *Calamagrostis arundinacea*, forms distinctly upright 3 foot clumps which bloom with upright flower spikes in early summer. The mature straw color lasts into winter.

Upland Sea Oats or Northern Sea Oats, *Chasmanthium latifolium*, grows to 3 feet with very attractive panicles resembling true sea oats of the beach dunes. They tolerate both wet feet and dry soils, making them very versatile. In mulched beds, then tend to self sow.

Dwarf Pampas Grass, *Cortaderia selloana* 'Pumila' or 'Compacta,' grows to 6 feet with many silver, female plumes, and added cold tolerance which extends its range throughout Alabama. Being seed sterile, plants are uniform and dependable in performance.

Blue Lyme Grass, *Elymus glaucus*, grows to 3 feet with medium textured blue foliage. Plumes are somewhat inconspicuous as they emerge green in early summer and quickly dry to straw color. Rhizomes can be slightly invasive in sandy or amended soils.

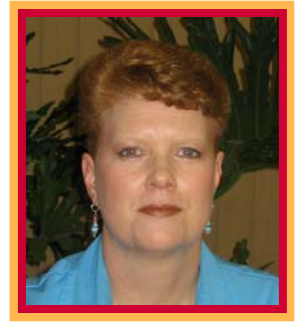
Ravenna Grass (Hardy Pampas), *Erianthus ravennae*, is a vigorous clump grass similar in size to standard Pampas, but lacks the quality of plume but is very cold hardy. I have had regular Pampas for ten years without severe winter kill but it has been mild for all that time.

Maiden Grass, *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Gracillimus,' is perhaps the most popular of the Japanese Silver Grass group. The upright, arching 5 to 6 foot plants display dark green, fine textured foliage and rosy plumes in late summer. Flowers mature to silver and persist through winter. 'Morning Light' is slightly smaller in stature with narrow banded white variegation along leaf edges.

Continued on page 5 →



Agent Spotlight



Angela Treadaway Regional Extension Agent Food Safety, Preservation and Preparation

Angela Treadaway has worked for the Alabama Cooperative Extension System for 21 years. She currently serves as Regional Extension Agent in the area of Food Safety, Preservation and Preparation. Prior to this position, she served as the Family and Consumer Sciences Agent in Shelby County. She is a native of Fyffe, a town in the Sand Mountain area of Alabama. She earned her B.S. degree in Home Economics and Business and a Masters of Arts in Teaching, both from the University of Montevallo. Angela lives in Columbiana with her husband, Dewayne, who works for MetLife Insurance in Birmingham. They have one son, Zachary, who is sixteen. While not working, she enjoys reading, walking, and spending time with family and friends from church.



Angela taught participants how to can homemade salsa and grape jelly at this year's 4-H Clover Classroom Advanced Cooking Camp at Moody High School.

Angela is housed at the Shelby County Extension Office but also serves St. Clair, Blount, Cullman, Jefferson, and Walker counties. She is an active member of the National Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (NEAFCS). Angela has worked in St. Clair County conducting food preservation workshops for adults and youth, Serv Safe® Certification programs for anyone who is Health Department inspected and offers Caring for the Caregiver programs, food safety classes for churches and volunteers who work to serve meals, tailgating food safety classes and holiday food safety workshops, to mention just a few.

If you would like more information about food safety, preservation or preparation please feel free to contact Angela at (205) 338-9416 or email at treadas@auburn.edu. She will be happy to assist you.

~Gardening Corner Continued~

Porcupine Grass, *Micanthus sinensis* 'Strictus,' is an erect form of Zebra Grass. Dramatic garden accent is provided by golden horizontal bands on upward oriented leaves of the 5 to 6 foot plant. Erect, deep straw colored flowers are prominent from September through winter.

Dwarf Fountain Grass, *Pennisetum alopecuroides*, forms dense 2 to 3 foot clumps and is often confused with annual fountain grass. Plumes appear in midsummer and fade from rose-brown to deep straw color. Small cultivars usually require a little extra water and fertilizer for good plant performance.

There are many varieties of each of these and many other species to choose from. For more information visit the following web site from the University of Georgia: <http://pubs.caes.uga.edu/caespubs/horticulture/orngrass.html>.

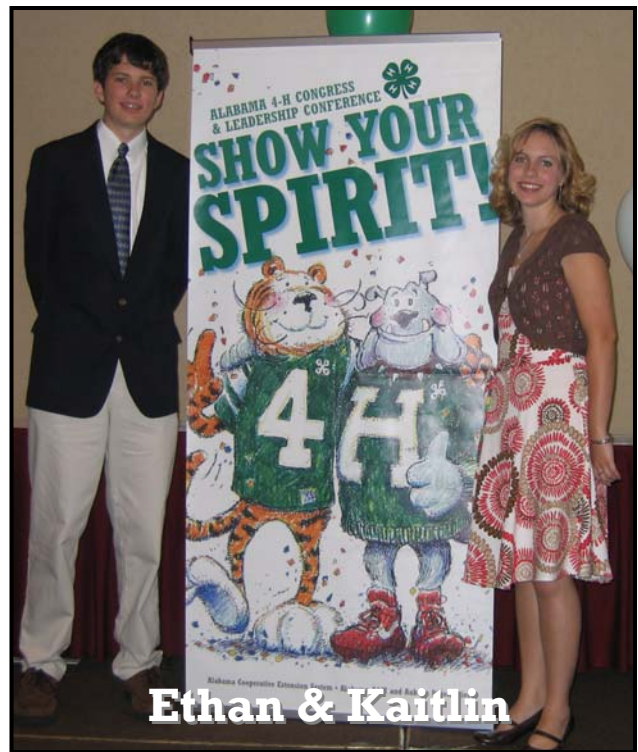


Got Questions? We've Got Answers!
www.aces.edu/StClair

4-H Happenings



Ashley, Kelsey,
Joanna & Emily



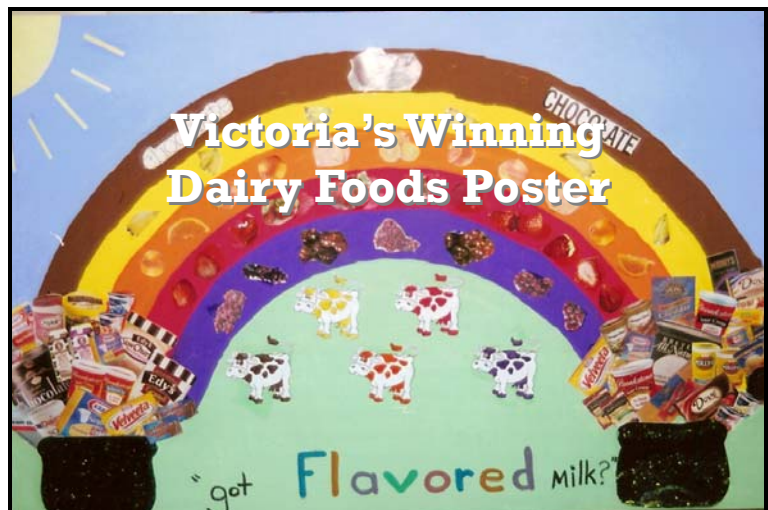
Ethan & Kaitlin

St. Clair County 4-H'ers Win at State Level

We at the St. Clair County Extension office would like to congratulate these outstanding 4-H'ers who recently won the following awards at state-level competitions: **Ashley O'Rear**: 4th place-Western Riding; 9th place-Western Trail, Senior; 10th place-Senior Geldings; and 7th place-Western Reining. **Kelsey Davis**: 5th place-Western Riding; 4th place Western Trail; 4th place Hunt Seat; 10th place-Western Showmanship, Senior; 4th place Western Reining and 9th place Western Horsemanship. **Joanna Rowlen**: 3rd place-Stock Type Pony Geldings. **Emily Stover**: supported fellow 4-H Equine Club members; **Ethan Parker**: 1st place-Speak Up Alabama, Persuasive Public Speaking; **Kaitlin Crenshaw**: 1st place-Freestyle Demonstration. **Victoria Booker**: 2nd place Dairy Food Poster Contest.



Victoria &
Mrs. Tonya





4-H Clover Classroom is Hands-On Fun, Learning

Held each July, the 4-H Clover Classroom is a series of hands-on fun workshops for youth ages 9-14 presented by the St. Clair County Extension office. This year's Clover Classroom featured 6 different workshops with over 75 participants! A special thank you to all the instructors, volunteers and donors who helped make this year's event such a success! More photos are available online at www.aces.edu/StClair. Click on the St. Clair County 4-H link.



Phillip Johnson, Ashville Middle School Principal and 4-H Volunteer, assists Kameron at the GPS & Orienteering Scavenger Hunt



Chase caught 12!



Emily decorates her cake



Addison, Summer and Meagan learn about yeast breads while making their own pizza crust



Nyaa finds her coordinates



Rebecca, Melanie and Miranda enjoy the meal they prepared



Cody and Nyaa can their homemade salsa



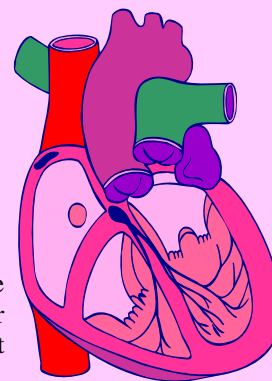
Austin King catches a BIG one!



Mrs. Tonya & Ethan, "mission control," prepare rockets for launch

A Focus on Cholesterol...

September is National Cholesterol Education Month



Why is cholesterol important?

- High cholesterol levels are a major risk factor for developing heart disease, the number one killer of both men and women in the U.S.
- Too much cholesterol causes build-up in the arteries called plaques. Over time this results in your arteries hardening, losing their elasticity and narrowing. When blood flow is impeded, enough blood and subsequently oxygen cannot reach your heart. When the flow is completely obstructed, a heart attack occurs.
- Everyone greater than 20 years of age should have their cholesterol checked every 5 years.

What can a fasting lipid test tell you? What do your cholesterol numbers mean?

- Total cholesterol
- LDL “bad” cholesterol—the main source of plaques and blockages
- HDL “good” cholesterol—prevents accumulation of cholesterol in arteries
- Triglycerides—another form of fat found in the blood

What do your cholesterol numbers mean?

Total Cholesterol Level:

- <200 mg/dL—desirable
- 200-239 mg/dL—Borderline high
- 240 mg/dL and above—High

LDL Cholesterol Level:

- <100 mg/dL—Optimal
- 100-129 mg/dL—Near optimal/above optimal
- 130-159 mg/dL—Borderline high
- 160-189 mg/dL—High
- 190 mg/dL and above—Very high

HDL Cholesterol:

- <40 mg/dL—low

Triglyceride Level:

- 150-199 mg/dL—Borderline high
- >200 mg/dL—High

What is your risk for developing heart disease?

- The more risk factors and the higher your LDL, the greater the chance of developing heart disease.

What affects cholesterol levels?

- Non-modifiable factors—increase in age, male gender, and heredity (family history, race, etc.)
- Modifiable risk factors—tobacco use, high blood pressure, physical inactivity, obesity, diabetes, and certain medications (e.g. beta blockers, progestins, loop diuretics, thiazide diuretics, glucocorticoids, protease inhibitors, mirtazapine, anabolic steroids, azole antifungals, interferons, bile acid resins, and isotretinoin)
- Other contributing factors—stress and alcohol

What are my goals of therapy?

- Treatment is directed by the amount of risk each person has
- If 2 or more risk factors are present, a risk score is calculated using scoring tables
- The combination of medical history, number of risk factors, and risk score determine your treatment regimen and goals.
- The primary goal of treatment is to lower LDL. After LDL goal is reached, other cholesterol components may be targeted.

Treating high cholesterol:

- Therapeutic Lifestyle Changes (TLC) are recommended for everyone
 - 1) TLC diet
 - 2) Weight loss
 - 3) Exercise—physical activity for 30 minutes everyday or on most days can raise HDL and lower LDL
 - 4) LDL
- Drug Therapy Options
 - 1) Statins—lowers LDL
 - 2) Bile acid sequestrants—lowers LDL
 - 3) Nicotinic acid—lowers LDL, increases HDL
 - 4) Fibric acids—lowers LDL, increases HDL
 - 5) Cholesterol absorption inhibitors—lowers LDL

Source: AU InforMed; Volume 4, Number 25 (Issue 122); August 30, 2006



10 Bright Ideas for Weight Loss

Are you finding yourself wanting to lose weight? Make small, gradual, realistic changes that will build upon one another, creating a healthier future. Start today by reviewing these strategies to help you control your weight:

1. You should think “choose well” not “diet.”

Instead of trying to starve yourself, choose foods that allow you to fill up on fewer calories. These are foods that are:

- minimally processed
- high in fiber
- low in fat and sugar

Examples include fruits; vegetables; cooked whole grains such as barley, oatmeal, whole-wheat products and brown rice; and legumes. For protein, always pick leaner choices such as white breast meat of poultry (without skin); pork loin; lean beef; legumes; and seafood. Prepare these items with little added fat.

2. Try to make exercise fun.

- Take up several aerobic activities that are enjoyable, such as an aerobics class, walking, bike riding, swimming, running, hiking, softball, etc.
- Work out aerobically at least an hour a day, five or six days a week.

3. Only eat when you are hungry.

Avoid eating to relax, cure boredom or overcome depression. Instead, take a walk or call a friend.

4. Take care when eating out.

When you eat out, choose soup and salad or smaller dishes that are low in fat. Ask for sauces and dressings on the side. If portions are large, take half home!

5. Be a smart shopper.

- Fill grocery carts 2/3 full of whole foods instead of processed convenience foods. These include fat-free dairy, fruits, whole grains, vegetables, seafood, chicken and lean cuts of meat.
- Buy plenty of fruits and vegetables. Aim for 5+ servings of fruits and vegetables each day.

6. Snack for better health.

- Snack only when hungry.
- Instead of packaged snacks, think “out of the bag” and enjoy fresh fruits, vegetables with low-fat dips or fat-free, light yogurt. Baked potatoes, sweet potatoes and oatmeal also make great snacks.

7. Be a little adventurous.

- Be adventurous and expand your

range of healthful food choices.

- Buy a low-fat cookbook to help you modify traditional high-fat favorites, and to introduce quick healthful dishes.

8. Use less fat when cooking.

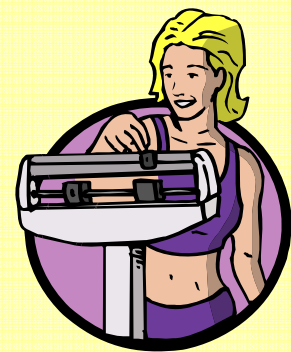
- Prepare foods using lower-fat cooking methods such as baking, broiling, grilling, roasting or steaming instead of frying.
- Eliminate “extra” fats. Trim visible fats from meats. Rinse cooked ground meat. Remove skin from poultry.

9. Limit sugar and refined starch.

- Limit the amount of foods you eat that contain added sugars.
- Limit refined starch foods that are made with white flour and low in fiber. Fill up instead with high-fiber choices such as corn, potatoes, yams, limas, peas, dried beans and whole grains.

10. Don't skip breakfast.

- Starting the day with a high-fiber, low-fat breakfast will help you consume fewer calories the rest of the day. Never skip breakfast!



Source: Food & Health Communications, Inc.

*Integrity is what we do, what we say,
and what we say we do.” —Don Galer*



Think Fire Prevention During October

Losing a home to fire can be a devastating experience. To protect your home, your family and yourself from fire it is important to understand its basic characteristics.

Fire spreads quickly, making it almost impossible for you to gather your valuables, pets or even make a phone call. In two minutes, a fire can become life threatening. In five minutes, a residence can be engulfed in flames.

The poisonous gas emitted during a fire can make you disoriented and drowsy. Inhaling the heat and smoke from fire can harm your lungs. For these reasons, people who are asleep when their homes catch on fire may fall into a deeper sleep rather than being awakened by fire.

You can take various steps around your home to prevent fires or to help ensure everyone's safety if a fire does occur. Installing smoke alarms on every level of your home can decrease by half your chances of dying in a fire. Place smoke alarms outside bedrooms on the ceiling or high on the wall, also at the top of open stairways, or at the bottom of enclosed stairs and near, but not in, the kitchen. To ensure that smoke alarms are working properly, test and clean them once a month and replace the batteries at least once a year. All smoke alarms should be replaced every 10 years.

Having an escape plan that everyone in your family is familiar with can help maintain a sense of relief during what could be a chaotic time. Practice escape plans on a regular basis to ensure that each family member knows what to do in

case of a fire. If your home has more than one level, you may want to consider installing escape ladders. This gives people a way to avoid being trapped by a staircase or doorway that could be engulfed in flames.

Regularly clean your home's storage areas—garage, pantry and closets so trash, old furniture and flammable liquids do not accumulate.

The most important thing to do to safeguard your home from fire is to talk. Include every person in your family in discussions about what to do in case of a fire. Make certain that all family members know their responsibilities and are familiar with at least two evacuation routes. The best plan is to be prepared.

Keep It Clean: Electric Blankets & Pillows

Autumn means cooler weather (hopefully) and a time to pull those electric blankets out of storage. When was the last time they were cleaned? To launder electric blankets, use a gentle cycle and a short agitation time—about two to three minutes. Do not dry in a dryer unless the care label recommends it. Hang the blanket over two lines or lay it flat to dry. Never dry clean an electric blanket, the chemicals may ruin the wiring.



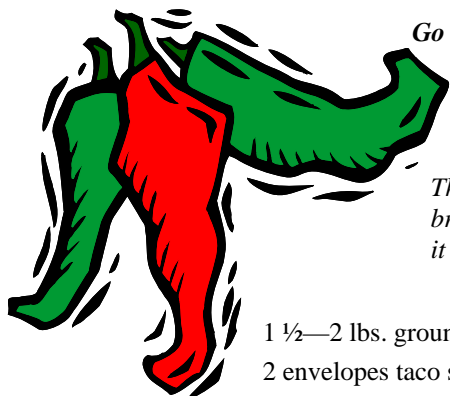
Here's how to know if large items such as comforters, sleeping bags, etc., can be laundered in your home washer.

- Place the item in the empty washer tub.
- If the item fits loosely in the washer and the top row of the tub holes is visible, it's safe to wash it.
- If the top row of holes is not visible, the item is too large and should be laundered in a commercial washer at a Laundromat.

Laundering pillows helps keep dust mites under control—wash and dry them at least once a month unless you use allergen-impermeable covers. Launder only pillows that are labeled “washable” by the manufacturer and follow the care instructions. Wash two pillows at a time to keep the load balanced. Set the washer for a gentle cycle and warm water. Add detergent to the washtub and partially fill the washer. Submerge the pillows in the water to expel air. Allow the washer to complete filling, then wash for one to two minutes. Dry pillows in the dryer. Periodically take them out and fluff to prevent clumping as they dry.

Source: The Soap & Detergent Association

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.



Go south of the border with these recipes that are sure to spice up family meal time. Enjoy!

Santa Fe Soup

This recipe is provided by Regional Extension Agent Kent Stanford and his wife Amy. Kent brought this soup to one of our staff Christmas parties a few years back and everyone loved it and wanted the recipe!! It is very easy to prepare and makes a delicious one pot meal.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1 ½—2 lbs. ground chuck | 1 large onion, chopped |
| 2 envelopes taco seasoning mix | 2 envelopes ranch salad dressing mix |
| 1 (14 oz.) can stewed tomatoes | 1 (10 oz.) can Ro-Tel tomatoes |
| 1 (16 oz.) can pinto beans | 1 (16 oz.) can kidney beans |
| 1 (16 oz.) can black beans | 2 (15 oz.) cans whole-kernel corn |

Brown beef with onion. Drain. Combine all ingredients in large stock pot. Simmer until heated through. Serve with corn chips, cheese and sour cream. Optional: Add 2 cups water and simmer for 2 hours.

Recipe Corner

Easy Homemade Salsa

This recipe is provided by 4-H Agent Assistant Tonya Tomlin. She has brought it to some of our lunch meetings and it is always a big hit with everyone! And, best of all, it is very easy to make.

- | | |
|--|---------------------------|
| 1 (16 oz.) can Ro-Tel tomatoes | 2 Tbsp. sugar |
| 1 (16 oz.) can Hunt's diced tomatoes with roasted garlic | 2 Tbsp. white vinegar |
| 1 (8 oz.) can Hunt's tomato sauce with roasted garlic | 1/2 onion, finely chopped |
| 2 Tbsp. garlic salt | fresh cilantro |

Combine tomatoes, tomato sauce, salt, sugar and vinegar in blender or food processor and pulse for 5 to 8 minutes. Pour into bowl. Add onion and cilantro to taste. Serve with favorite tortilla chips or over chicken with rice.

Southwest Chicken Casserole

A friend shared this recipe with me several years ago and it has become a family favorite. As temperatures cool down, casseroles become a good choice for the big question—"what's for dinner?". And, if your lifestyle is as busy as mine, it can be made ahead and then just topped with the tomatoes right before baking. It's delicious!

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 cup uncooked Saffron (yellow) rice | 1 can cream of chicken soup |
| 2 cups chicken stock | 1 cup sour cream |
| 1 lb. cooked chicken, chopped—reserve stock | 16 oz. cheddar cheese, grated |
| Salt and pepper | 1-(10 oz.) can chopped, stewed tomatoes or Ro-Tel tomatoes |
| 1 tsp. chili powder | |

Combine rice and chicken stock in medium saucepan and cook slowly until done. Line bottom of greased 9 X 13-inch baking dish with one-half cooked rice. Layer ingredients in the following order: chicken, salt, pepper, chili powder, soup, sour cream and cheese—starting over with rice and ending with cheese on top. Just before baking, top with chopped tomatoes. Sprinkle a little extra chili powder on top and bake at 350° F. for 45 minutes. Serves 6.



Note: The use of brand names is not meant to imply endorsement of these products by the St. Clair County Extension office.



Attention: First-Time Home Buyers

Are you thinking of buying a home for the first time? If so, plan to attend a seminar for first-time homebuyers. Topics to be covered include:

- Terms used in home buying
- The process of getting a home loan
- How much home you can afford
- Qualifying for assistance

FREE!

FREE!

What: First-Time Homebuyers Seminar
When: Thursday, October 11, 2007
Time: 6:00—8:00 p.m.
Where: Jefferson State Community College, Pell City Center
500 College Drive, Pell City, AL 35125

Representatives from Housing and Urban Development will be there to answer questions. Sponsored by the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, St. Clair County Office and HUD.

You must pre-register to attend. Registration forms are available at the St. Clair County Extension office (205-338-9416) or online at www.aces.edu/StClair. For more information, please contact Ruth Brock, Regional Extension Agent.



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