Have a Homegrown Holiday!

It’s hard to believe that we are entering the last three months of 2011. The year has flown by as most seem to do. We had an extremely hot and dry summer that affected plants and animals alike—not to mention us humans. Fall is finally here, though, and with it hopefully comes some cooler weather. We start off in October with football and the State Fair. This is also the time a lot of people head to the coast to do some fishing or just relaxing on the cooled-off beach. Other people prefer to head to the mountains to enjoy the leaves changing and the fall festivals. Some of the rest remain at home to enjoy the Piedmont’s own fall festivals, changing leaves, football, and plenty of good food.

At Thanksgiving we have an opportunity to prepare some of the food we preserved from our summer garden. Green beans, lima beans, corn, pickles, and potatoes are all things we could use for the meal that we grew in our own gardens. Any fresh produce from a fall garden would also be a nice addition to the Thanksgiving table. Using the produce from one’s own garden is a way to look at the Thanksgiving meal with a sense of accomplishment. If you have children who helped with the garden and with meal preparation, they will have the opportunity to look back fondly on what a family Thanksgiving meal really means. They may not see it immediately, but at some time it might bring more meaning to this time of year.

Christmas is right around the corner after Thanksgiving. Although a part of the population only recalls buying things for other people, I know some still make things to give out as gifts, but it is probably only a small percentage. Why not give someone a special gift of something you grew and preserved this year? Homemade jams and jellies make useful, personal gifts. I know for a fact that homemade pickles make some folks very happy. I have a friend who loves my mother’s homemade sweet pickles. He says the only problem with them is that they do not last very long. Somehow hands other than his own make their way into the jar and the pickles disappear!

The holidays are a special time to spend with family and friends. Enjoy the time together and take a moment to remember those special holidays in the past. Think about that special homemade gift you gave or received and make this year’s a Homegrown Holiday.

Roger N. Cobb, Director

Calendar Updates

- Tues. 10/11/11 10:00 am Houseplants Workshop with Master Gardener, Dottie Olson
- Sat. 10/15/11 8:00am-1:00pm Paint and Pesticide Disposal Day
- Fri. 10/21/11 Deadline to apply for the 2012 Extension Master Gardener Class
- Thurs. 10/27/11 Deadline to order from the 4-H Fall Plant Sale
- Wed. 11/16/11 Nickels for Know-How Referendum

For more information:
Call 336.570.6740
Or visit http://alamance.ces.ncsu.edu/
Battling the Home-grown Holiday Bulge
~Jessica Oswald, MS, RD, LDN
Family & Consumer Science Agent

The holidays can be a particularly tricky time for anyone watching his/her waistline. From office parties to festivities with friends and family, the holidays are full of tempting treats everywhere you look. No matter what, it seems rather difficult to avoid having some appetizers or desserts at cocktail parties and it’s just about impossible to avoid lavish family feasts. Fortunately, there are some ways to eat sensibly while still enjoying the holiday events.

These tips can help you battle the homegrown holiday bulge…

1) Going to a party? Don’t go hungry! – If you’re hungry when you arrive at a holiday party, then you’re more likely to eat more. You’re also more likely to reach for those calorie dense foods. To avoid overindulging at a party, make sure that you eat a good breakfast and lunch before the party and maybe even have a little snack before you head out the door.

2) Be a picky eater. – Check out all of the food that’s available first. Then select the items that you really want. Don’t go for those things you eat all the time. Instead, select small amounts of the items that you’ve never tried or the things that you can only get around the holidays.

3) Work the room. – At any gathering don’t hover around the buffet table. If you hover, you’ll also graze and eat more than you realize. Get about 3 to 4 items that you want to try and then step away from the table. Go mingle with guests or talk to that relative you rarely see.

4) Watch the liquid calories. – Those tasty holiday beverages can be packed full of calories. Eggnog has about 343 calories per cup. While it’s perfectly okay to raise a glass of your favorite holiday beverage, research the calories first and be mindful of how much you are drinking.

5) Make substitutions. – Are you doing the cooking? Then you can make dishes a whole lot healthier with some simple substitutions. Instead of whole milk, use low-fat milk. Replace oil with applesauce if you’re baking cookies. Use sliced almonds instead of fried onion rings. In soups or anything that calls for broth, use the low-sodium, fat-free version.

Holiday Helplines

Butterball – For all your turkey needs!
(800) BUTTERBALL
(800-288-8372)

Land-O-Lakes – Consumer Affairs representatives are available to answer your baking questions.
(800) 782-9606

Libby – For any pumpkin pie related issues.
(800) 854-0374

Ocean Spray – Call them for any cranberry related questions and advice.
(800) 662-3263

USDA – This is your place for food safety concerns, anything from defrosting to cooking to storing leftovers.
(888) 674-6854
Grow Your Own
~Mark Danielely, Horticulture Agent

Fall is finally here and while it is not my favorite season of the year, I am glad to be through with summer. Though the arrival of fall does somewhat limit our outside gardening activities, it does give us an opportunity to do some gardening inside. You may have noticed that many of our garden stores now have spring flowering bulbs in stock. While they are great to plant in the garden, many of the spring flowering bulbs can be forced to bloom inside. With a little planning, you can grow your own flower decorations for Thanksgiving, Christmas and Valentine’s Day.

Several types of bulbs can be used for forcing. Tulips, daffodils, hyacinths, paper whites and amaryllis are some of the most popular. Amaryllis and paper whites are the easiest to force because they don’t need a chilling period before they bloom. Amaryllis and paper whites will bloom in 3 to 4 weeks after potting. Bulbs that are potted up at the end of October should be blooming nicely for your Thanksgiving parties. Thanksgiving is a good time to pot up bulbs for Christmas.

Tulips, daffodils and hyacinths need at least 13 weeks of moist chilling at 35 to 45 degrees in order to bloom indoors. The bulbs may be kept in the refrigerator, but avoid putting them in the crisper drawers with ripening fruits and vegetables. The ripening process releases ethylene gas that may injure the bulbs. The bulbs will develop roots in the refrigerator, so keep the soil evenly moist. Tulips, daffodils and hyacinths will bloom in about 3 to 4 weeks after being removed from cold storage. These will work well for Valentine’s Day.

When you are purchasing spring flower bulbs this fall for your garden, be sure to get some extra that you can use to force inside your home. If you pot some bulbs every two weeks, you can enjoy spring flowers in your home all winter.

Plant the bulbs in a well-drained and sterile potting mix with a pH from 6 to 7. Plastic or clay containers can be used as long as they have good drainage. Soak clay pots over night before planting to keep the pots from drawing the moisture from the potting soil. Fill the bottom of the pot with soil so the top of the bulb will be even with the top of the pot. For paperwhites, put the flat side of the bulb next to the pot so the first leaf to emerge will be to the outside. Finish filling the pot with soil to within ½ inch of the top.

Release Your Inner Gardener!

Applications are still being accepted for the Master Gardener Class of 2012. Learn from the best—Extension Specialists, Certified Arborists, Cooperative Extension Agents, and Master Gardener Volunteers. Then join the Alamance Emgees in spreading the word on best gardening practices.

Deadline for application: October 21, 2011.
15-week course begins Wednesday, January 18, 2012.
$100 fee covers book, materials and 42 hours of formal instruction

For more information about the Alamance County Cooperative Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program call 336.570.6740 or click here for an application: http://alamance.ces.ncsu.edu/files/library/1/Application%202011.pdf
Homegrown Hay
~Jennifer King, Livestock Agent

Whether you raise your own hay or purchase your supply from a local farmer, there are several factors that separate the good hay from the bad. The most important things to look at when selecting hay are texture, maturity, color, leafiness, weeds, mold, dust, severe weathering, and foreign materials. Overly mature hay has coarse and thick stems that contain more fiber and less nutritional value than young leafy hay with fine stems. Beware of wet hay or hay that has been re-dried. It will have a yellow or brown appearance rather than bright green. Sun exposure and the elements will sometimes cause the outer portion of the bale to be discolored and weathered looking; however the inside of the bale should still be green. Moldy hay is usually heavy, dusty, and stuck together. Although you can get a general idea of hay quality by its appearance, you cannot determine nutritional value without a forage test. Bring a forage sample to the Cooperative Extension office in a gallon sized Ziploc bag with your payment of $10.00. We will then take these samples to the NCDA lab in Raleigh for analysis.

Noah's Ark Wasn't Built When It Was Raining
~Jennifer King, Livestock Agent

In light of the recent tornado, wildfire, and hurricane in our great state, the topic of disaster preparedness seems to be a front-runner on everyone’s mind. Obviously, the safety of your family is of greatest concern, but it is also important to consider your livestock and develop an emergency plan. Here are some guidelines for formulating a disaster plan for your farm:

1. Keep extra hay, feed, water, medications, and medical supplies on hand.
2. Compile a folder with important records, registration papers, medical history, specific dietary restrictions, and photos of your livestock. This documentation will be important to find and claim your animals if they escape.
3. Make sure every animal has individual identification. Luggage tags can be braided into horse's manes, phone numbers can be written directly on the animal with a livestock crayon, or consider having your horse microchipped.
4. Secure or remove items that could become hazardous debris. Filling large items, such as empty feed troughs, will prevent them from blowing around and provide an additional supply of water.
5. Create a disaster box and keep it in your barn or trailer for emergencies. This box could contain tack, ropes, halters, feed, medicines, paperwork, buckets, feed nets, garden hose, flashlight, blankets, tarps, portable radio, and spare batteries.

If evacuation is mandatory or if you feel that evacuation is the safest option for your family, you need to have a plan for safe travel and temporary housing for your animals. Here are a few tips from the North Carolina Department of Agriculture for evacuation planning:

1. Evacuate animals as soon as possible. Be ready to leave once the evacuation is ordered. In a slowly evolving disaster, such as a hurricane, leave no later than 72 hours before anticipated landfall, especially if you will be hauling a high profile trailer.
2. Arrange for a place to shelter your animals. Potential facilities include fairgrounds, other farms, racetracks, humane societies, convention centers, and any other safe and appropriate facilities you can find.
3. Contact your local emergency management authority and become familiar with at least two possible evacuation routes well in advance.
4. Set up safe transportation and experienced handlers and drivers.
5. Take all your disaster supplies with you or make sure they will be available at your evacuation site.
6. If your animals are sheltered off your property, make sure they remain in the groupings they are used to.

If you choose to stay home through a disaster or if one suddenly hits, you need to decide whether to leave animals in the pasture or confine them in a shelter. This decision should be based on available facilities, the type of disaster approaching, and consideration of the animals’ ability to protect themselves. Before an emergency, evaluate your pasture and facilities for the best location. If you have trees that may be easily uprooted, overhead power lines, miscellaneous debris, barbed wire fencing, or extremely small acreage, your pasture might not be the safest place to leave your livestock.

After a disaster it is critical to remember that the behavioral state of your livestock has probably been altered. These animals may be agitated and confused and it is best to handle them in a cool, calm, and collected manner. Place livestock in a familiar setting with other animals they are familiar with to reduce the amount of stress. If you have evacuated the area and are returning home after a catastrophic event, remember that there can be hazards on the road such as downed power lines, flooded areas, debris and wreckage that may make travel difficult, especially hauling a trailer with livestock.

Disaster preparedness is the key to reducing chaos and stress when an emergency strikes. Create a plan for your family and your farm before the threat of a natural disaster is ever present. In the long run, it pays to be prepared.
Nickels for Know-How
~Roger Cobb, Field Crops Agent

Nickels for Know-How is a 60-year-old voluntary assessment on feed and fertilizer produced and purchased in North Carolina. The money is collected and deposited with The North Carolina Agricultural Foundation, Inc., which uses the funds to support research, teaching and extension projects at NC State University. On November 16, voters will have the opportunity to renew this program and assess themselves three nickels for each ton of feed and fertilizer they purchase.

Farmers started Nickels for Know-How in a referendum held November 3, 1951. The General Assembly authorized a vote on this self-help program after it had been requested by the North Carolina Farm Bureau and the NC Grange. The Board of Directors of the NC Agricultural Foundation, Inc. decides how the money is going to be spent. The foundation based at NC State includes farmer members or agribusiness leaders from each county who approve each proposal for support from the faculty at NC State.

The next referendum is Wednesday, November 16, 2011. If two-thirds of the voters vote "yes" in the referendum, the Nickels for Know-How program will continue for another six years. All users of feed and fertilizer in North Carolina and their family members are eligible to vote.

The polling places in Alamance County will be open from 8am until 5pm. Polling places will be located at the following places:

- Agricultural Building – Burlington
- Farm Services – Graham
- Mebane Shrubbery – Haw River
- Southern States – Mebane
- Teague’s Market – Snow Camp

Alamance County 4-H Fall Plant Sale

Alamance County 4-H would like to ask for your support as we raise funds for our scholarship fund and programming efforts. This year we are selling apple trees, pecan trees, peach trees, fig trees, muscadine vines, and blackberry plants. Not only will you be supporting a great organization, but you’ll be growing your own food!

- Apples: Aunt Rachel (heirloom), Gala, Virginia Beauty, Enterprise, Stayman Winesap, Blacktwig
- Pecans: Pawnee and Elliot
- Peaches: Elberta and Red Haven
- Figs: Celeste and Brown Turkey
- Muscadine Grapes: Carlos, Doreen, Magnolia, Nesbitt, and Noble
- Blackberries: Arapaho and Navaho

Order Deadline: October 27, 2011 (order & payment due)
Pick Up Dates: November 3-4, 2011, 8 am– 5 pm
Pick Up Location: Alamance County Cooperative Extension Office
209-C N. Graham-Hopedale Rd.
Burlington, NC 27217

Homegrown—The 5th H?
~Beth Davis, 4-H Agent

Hopefully you all are familiar with what 4-H is by now. In case you are wondering, the 4 H’s stand for HEAD, HEART, HANDS, and HEALTH. In 4-H, we encourage our young people to achieve their goals. They are challenged to use their heads for clear thinking, their hearts for loyalty, their hands for service, and their health for better living. If they do all these things, they will be an asset to their clubs, communities, our country and our world.

It’s funny, the responses I get when I ask people if they know what the 4 H’s stand for. A lot of people think one of the H’s stands for home. Even though that’s not an official H, it is an important one. It does help to have a supportive home life to make a young person successful in life.

Another H that is becoming more popular with our 4-H members is “homegrown.” Many 4-H members are raising livestock or planting crops with the help of 4-H Volunteers and Extension staff. This is exactly how 4-H began over 100 years ago. Now that more people are trying to save money by growing their own food, it’s important for them to see how valuable Cooperative Extension is.

This year, there were 17 youth involved in the Central Piedmont Junior Livestock Show & Sale from Alamance County. That number doubled from last year. Instead of sitting around looking at facebook or youtube, these young people were caring for their animals and learning about what it means to be responsible for something other than just themselves. This fall, we have a number of 4-H youth who will be showing market turkeys. The same concept applies. Not only do they learn about raising an animal, but they also learn about the market value of these animals, and can earn a pretty penny from selling them.

To help raise funds for the 4-H program, we have a plant sale every year. In the spring we sell blueberry plants, and this fall we will be selling fruit trees. By purchasing these fruit trees, you would not only be supporting the 4-H program, but you would also be growing your own produce. Just think how nice it will be to go out to your own back yard next summer and pick your own fruit instead of paying a ridiculous price for a small amount of imported produce. If you ever have questions about planting or any other horticulture concerns, you can call your local Cooperative Extension Agent and they can help you!

Homegrown may not be an official H, but it is becoming a way of life…again. Just know that if there’s a question about agriculture, families, or youth, you can always call on Cooperative Extension! We hope you have a happy and healthy holiday season!

Gifts from the Garden
~Jordan Apple, NC A&T Intern

The holidays are quickly approaching. This year try to get more creative and give gifts from your garden. Gardens are full of interesting things other than the beauty for the eye and nose. If your main interest is in herb gardening a simple gift idea is to make personalized seasoning blends. You can mix up a batch of your favorite dried herbs and present them to your friends with a recipe using the herbs. If you don’t feel comfortable mixing your own blend then bottle the individual herbs up.

If you have a friend who shares the same passion as you do for gardening, seed passing is a great idea. Save the seeds from your favorite plant, put them in a packet or jar and pass the seeds and care instructions for them to your friends. A more common gift idea is to can food from your garden. Canning can include vegetable or fruits. When canning you don’t just have to put one type of vegetable or fruit into the jars. You can make salsa, chow-chow, the base for a soup, jams, jellies, pickles and much more. This is a wonderful way to introduce the not-so-much-of-a gardener to your way of living.