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# SOLUTIONS

Newsletter of the Alamance County Cooperative Extension Service

## What's New?



When you ask what's new at Alamance County Cooperative Extension, my first response is our new Family Consumer Science agent, Eleanor Frederick. This position had been vacant for four years, but thanks to County Manager Bryan Hagood and our County Commissioners it is now filled. Eleanor's educational program will focus on food safety, nutrition and food preservation. You can learn more about Eleanor in her article on page 4.

Chris and I have recently finished scheduling the Think Green Thursday classes for 2018 and, while we will repeat some of the favorites, we will have a few new classes. Vemicomposting and terrariums are two of the new classes we are offering that will give you a chance to get your hands dirty.

Taylor is working on a new Summer Sizzle schedule that will be fun and educational. Eleanor will collaborate with Taylor to present a class on healthy living including nutrition and physical activity.

Lauren and Dwayne will also have new Ag programs in 2018. While we always will have new classes and programs, one thing will never change and that is our commitment to helping our clients.

*Mark S. Danley*

## Calendar Updates

- Sat., Jan. 6: North Central District Winterfest, Forsyth County Extension
- Sat., Jan 20: Regional Sheep and Goat Producer Training, Greensboro
- Thurs., Feb. 1: Project Record Books and Portfolios due
- Thurs., Feb. 8: 10:00 **THINK GREEN THURSDAY** - Grapevine Pruning
- Fri., Feb. 16: Alamance County 4-H Celebration Gala
- Thurs., Feb. 22 10:00 **THINK GREEN THURSDAY** - Native Bees & Honey Bee Update
- Thurs., Mar. 1: 10:00 **THINK GREEN THURSDAY** - Fruit Tree Pruning @ Buster Sykes Farm
- Thurs., Mar. 1: Piedmont Regional Beef Conference, Greensboro
- Thurs., Mar. 22: 10:00 **THINK GREEN THURSDAY** - Birds of Spring—Watch Your Windows!
- Mar. 24 & 25: North Central District Teen Retreat

For more information and to register  
Call 336.570.6740 or visit <http://alamance.ces.ncsu.edu>

## What's New In Horticulture At Extension?

by: Mark Danieley, Horticulture Agent



If you are wondering what is new in the horticulture program, let me tell you about the Buster Sykes Agricultural Demonstration Farm and Forest. The Buster Sykes Farm is a 170-acre farm in Mebane that Mr. Sykes donated to Rett Davis as Alamance County Extension Director in 2004. Mr. Sykes wanted the farm to be used for forestry education, agricultural demonstrations as well as 4-H and Master Gardener activities.

As we discussed the possible activities on the farm, we decided a demonstration orchard would be a good idea. The orchard would have tree fruit like apples and peaches and small fruit like blueberries and blackberries. There are many people who are interested in growing their own fruit and this orchard would give us a place to teach the skills necessary to be a good fruit grower.

In the fall of 2015, we started clearing land to plant the demonstration orchard. In 2016, we built an eight-foot tall deer fence, prepared the soil for planting and installed an irrigation system. The planting was completed in March of 2017 and most of the plants have grown well.

The primary goal of the orchard is to teach people how to prune their tree and small fruit plants. Plants that are not pruned properly will have less fruit and more disease than plants that are properly pruned. We have had fruit tree pruning classes at our office, but it is hard to do a good class with only a few trees. Many people do not prune their trees in the first few years so the trees we've pruned annually are no longer the best teaching tools. At the Sykes Farm, we have enough trees to prune some on an annual basis and leave some to be pruned when they are several years old. Demonstrating how to prune a tree that has not been touched in five or six years will be a better real-world example.

Fruit thinning is another skill that we can teach in the orchard. Many of you have seen peach trees broken down by a heavy fruit load or a tree that has been propped up to keep the limbs from breaking. The ideal situation is to thin the fruit so that the tree will not break. It is better to have fewer big fruit than many small fruit. Thinning the fruit on apple trees is also beneficial. Not only does it reduce limb breakage, it can even out the yield from year to year. An apple tree with a heavy fruit load one year will produce fewer flowers the following year, which reduces the amount of fruit produced.

There are many other learning opportunities in the orchard including monitoring plant growth, pest susceptibility, fruit quality and variety yield trials. We will also collect bloom data to see what trees bloom early and usually lose their fruit to frost. Many of the fruit tree catalogs will state the tree is hardy in our area, but does not always specify a bloom date. It is great for the tree to live, but it is disappointing to see it bloom in March every year and never get any fruit.

Our first class on the farm will be held on March 1, 2018, and will be a fruit tree pruning demonstration. I am looking forward to the many learning opportunities we will have together on the Buster Sykes Farm.



## It's a Brand-New Year for 4-H!

Taylor Jones, 4-H Agent

As we come around the bend on a new year at Alamance County Cooperative Extension and 4-H, we have lots of things to look forward to. I particularly enjoy this time of year because it is a fresh beginning on a brand new year and I love to think of all the new and exciting things the year will have to offer. I love the quote that states, "Tomorrow is the first blank page of a 365-page book. Write a good one". This is how I plan to Make the Best Better in 2018 and I hope all my 4-Hers and you do too! Check out what's new this winter in Alamance County 4-H below:

### Winterfest

With a new year comes a new Winterfest event! The North Central District 2018 Winterfest will take place on Saturday, January 6<sup>th</sup>, at the Forsyth County Cooperative Extension Office. There, we will attend several leadership and citizenship workshops taught by 4-Hers from all across the district. We will all also be involved in a community service project that will help hurricane victims. We will be making "Blessing Buckets" which will include all sorts of items such as small snacks, towels, and personal hygiene items. All the items will be placed in buckets to be distributed to victims in our communities. We are really excited about Winterfest 2.0 2018 and hope to see you there!

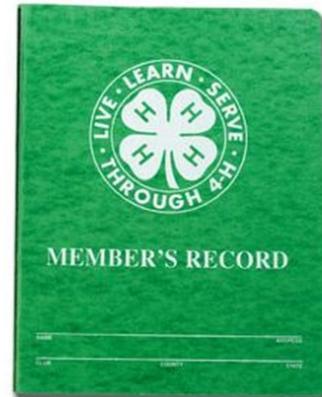


### Celebration Gala

This is a night you DO NOT want to miss! We roll out the red carpet (literally) for all of our 4-Hers and volunteers. As the New Year begins, we take the time to recognize our 4-H youth for all their achievements the year prior as well as celebrate our 4-H volunteer leaders! This year, Alamance County 4-H will have our annual Celebration Gala on Friday, February 16<sup>th</sup>, beginning at 6:00pm. The location of our event will be the First Baptist Church in downtown Burlington at 400 S. Broad St. Please look out for a formal invitation regarding this event, and please make plans to join us for a night of 4-H celebrations on February 16<sup>th</sup>!

### Project Record Books and Portfolios

A new year brings the time for your Project Record Books and Portfolios to be turned in. This year Project Record Books are due on February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018, by 4:30 pm. Please have all of them turned in by this time so we can have them judged and ready to move on for District and State judging in March.



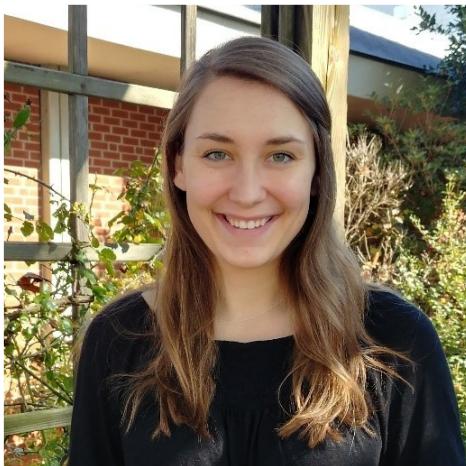
### Upcoming Dates for Alamance County 4-H to Remember

- ❖ North Central District Winterfest – January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2018 – Forsyth County Cooperative Extension
- ❖ Alamance County 4-H Celebration Gala – February 16<sup>th</sup> – First Baptist Church, Burlington NC
- ❖ Project Record Books and Portfolios due February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018, at 4:30 pm
- ❖ North Central District Teen Retreat – March 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>, 2018

## FCS Is News At Extension

by: Eleanor Frederick, FCS Agent

Happy New Year! I am the new Family and Consumer Sciences agent here in Alamance County. For those who are unfamiliar with that side of Extension, FCS encompasses all things food – primarily nutrition, food safety, and food preservation.



### About Eleanor

I grew up outside of Asheville, NC, where I enjoyed roaming around the woods and reading non-stop. As a high school student, I wasn't sure where I wanted to go to school or what I wanted to do. I did know that I loved science and food, so to combine those two passions I got a degree in Food Science from NC State University. Prior to joining Alamance County Cooperative Extension, I worked with Extension food safety specialists in Raleigh. In my free time I still love to read and be outside. I also love to cook and share food with others. I look forward to getting to know you all!

### Food and Nutrition Programs

In the spirit of the New Year, are there any new, food-related skills that you are interested in learning? You can submit ideas through this one-minute survey ([click here](#)) or by contacting me directly: eleanor\_frederick@ncsu.edu or 336.570.6740



### Roasted Root Vegetables\*

Stock up on great flavor and nutrient-rich vegetables with this winter staple!

- 1/3 cup olive oil
- 2 T. maple syrup
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 4 large beets, peeled and quartered
- 2 Yukon gold potatoes, cut into 1 inch cubes
- 2 carrots, peeled and cut diagonally
- 2 parsnips, diced

- 1 large sweet potato, cut into 1 inch cubes
- 1 rutabaga, cut into 1 inch pieces
- 2 large onions, quartered
- 2 T. clarified butter, melted
- 1/3 cup green onions, chopped
- Salt and pepper to taste

Preheat oven to 350 F. In a small mixing bowl, combine oil, maple syrup, and garlic. Place all vegetables on a heavy, large rimmed baking sheet. Pour oil mixture over vegetables and toss to coat. Spread vegetables out into a single layer and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Roast until tender and golden, about 1 ½ hours, stirring occasionally. Transfer vegetables to platter and drizzle with butter. Sprinkle with chopped green onions and serve.

\*Recipe from The Garden Plate: Recipes by Alamance County Master Gardeners available at Alamance County Cooperative Extension.

## Newfound Interest In Raising Livestock

By: Lauren Langley, Livestock Extension Agent



Each year, I notice a common trend. I receive phone calls and walk-ins from clients that want to raise livestock for the very first time. The story details from there can vary, but they all want to learn more about a specific species, market, or enterprise. Most are interested in small livestock such as sheep or goats, but there are some that want to try their hand at raising cattle. All of the information can be overwhelming at first, but that is what I am here for. My main career goal is to help people raise livestock, whether they have no knowledge or 50 years of knowledge. So, what does it take to get started?

**Market:** First things first: What is your market? Are you selling weaned calves or goat meat? Those are two very different markets to consider, for example. If you have ever met with me about raising livestock, this is likely the first question I will ask after wanting to know about your experience level. Without a market, you have a product that nobody wants or needs. Look into your market first; you will thank me later.

**Goals:** Without a goal, you cannot reach a desired outcome. Why do you want to raise livestock? What is the purpose, goal, or outcome? Create a business plan; this will help you think everything through.

**Knowledge:** Knowledge is power. Spend time attending educational workshops; find a mentor in your area that you can visit with; and read information from reliable sources. You can never learn it all. Take it slowly, and strive to learn all the time.

**Money:** I wish money grew on trees but it doesn't. It takes real world money to be able to start raising livestock. You have to think about fencing, pastures, waterers, shelter, handling facilities, and the cost of the livestock itself. If you have limited money to get started with, are there alternative funding options?

**Livestock:** Sourcing the right kind of livestock can be overwhelming. Who do you buy from? What breed do you go with? Do you want breeding or growing stock? Make sure to do your research so you can make informed decisions. Ask around to see where others have bought their livestock from. Attend producer sales, not weekly livestock markets. Meet with livestock breeders and ask a lot of questions!

Looking back on this year, I have followed up with several people that I have helped get started in raising livestock. It is exciting to see their hard work and vision take shape and get off the ground. If you have been on the fence about raising livestock, contact me today. I will be more than happy to talk with you about your ideas!

### Upcoming Livestock Events

- ⇒ January 20, 2018: Regional Sheep and Goat Producer Training - Greensboro, NC
- ⇒ March 1, 2018: Piedmont Regional Beef Conference - Greensboro, NC

## What's New In Field Crops?

By: Dwayne Dabbs, Field Crops Agent

Well, in the field crops world there really isn't much new stuff going on to most extents. Sure, there may be a new variety of this crop or that crop that may have a new trait or might be a little more tolerant to drought. However, for the most part the agronomics of growing the traditional crops in Alamance really has not changed much.

With that said, though, there is newer technology that is picking up speed as more and more farmers are trying it. I am talking about drones. Once upon a time, they were only available to the Armed Forces personnel for reconnaissance missions, and it was only in the past couple years that the public could afford to buy them. So I am sure that you know one of your friends that has a drone; you may yourself. But have you ever thought about what they can do for a farmer?

I have talked in the past about how farmers are using Geographic Informational Systems (GIS) to fine-tune their farming operation, by reducing overlap at planting or applying chemicals, and using data to find where weak spots are in the field and making adjustments. Most of the time with GIS, you get the data at harvest, pull your soil samples across the farm, and apply the amendments and fertilizers before the next crop is planted. While this can be effective, the problem that shows up in the field by harvest time may not always be from a soil issue. Therefore, this is where the drones come into play. Having something other than an airplane that can fly above the crop, especially if it is very tall, allows the farmer to see what is going on.

For a crop like corn, once it gets past a certain stage you cannot see over it anymore. Let us say that a disease starts showing up in the middle of the field; well, by harvest time, the yield will go down. By this point, the farmer has to try to figure out why this part of the field yielded half of what the rest of the field did. This is where a drone comes in handy, because the farmer can fly over the field and see that something looks different in that particular area. Then he or she can walk to that spot and do more thorough investigating on what is really happening. The programs that are available to farmers with the use of drones is another bonus; by simply flying over a field and using the camera and a program/app, the farmer can take pictures of the crop and determine nitrogen needs by the color differentiation of the crop itself, which can increase yields at harvest time. The possibilities with drones are endless, and every day there are new ideas of what drones and technology can do to improve yields and, in turn, the bottom line.



Drone photos of a tobacco trial that was hosted in Alamance County this year.

## Pond Weeds

The weather has finally cooled off, and your ponds will start clearing up as the water temperature goes down. I have had plenty of samples that have come to the office and have seen a literal smorgasbord of different weeds. At this point, if you know you have a problem in your pond, start jotting down notes, such as when it usually shows up, what chemicals you have used in the past and how good or bad they did on the weeds. This will help when determining what course of action you may need to take next spring. Seeing a physical sample will help me to identify what type of weed it is, and figure out what to do to get rid of it. I ask that you bring me a sample, the more complete, the better for me to identify it. Something like water-meal does not take much, but something like coon-tail or parrot-feather will take more of the plant itself. If you have any questions about how much of a sample you need to take or pond questions in general, please let me know.