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# SOLUTIONS

*Newsletter of the Alamance County Cooperative Extension Service*

## Jump Start Your New Year

*Mark S. Danieleley, Interim Director*

Jump start 2015 with Alamance County Cooperative Extension's wide selection of educational programs. Whether your interest is home gardening, youth activities or traditional livestock and field crop agriculture, there's something for you.

Chris and I have just completed the class schedule for our 2015 Think Green Thursdays series. The classes begin in January and are held about every two weeks through October. Topics range from planting asparagus to xeriscaping. Our monthly Alamance Gardener newsletter will have more information on the class schedule throughout the year. If you are not receiving the Alamance Gardener, let Chris or me know and we'll add you to the list.

If you have children or grandchildren ages 5-19, check out our 4-H program. Erin and Laurie are already working on the 2015 4-H schedule and it will be great! While we encourage club membership, you don't have to belong to a club to enjoy 4-H activities. Contact Erin or Laurie to learn more about a 4-H

club or the many summer programs that will be offered.

There are many opportunities this winter for folks interested in learning more about livestock. Sheep, swine and beef producers all have regional educational meetings in Guilford County. Lauren has details about these conferences in her livestock newsletter. Lauren is also working with the youth livestock program. The group did very well at the State Fair in November and have another competition in January.

January will be an important month for our field crop producers. The area field crops meeting will be in Asheboro on January 23 and the regional tobacco meeting will be in Yanceyville on January 29. Contact Dwayne for more information on both of these meetings. Dwayne will also be working on scheduling some pesticide recertification classes this winter.

If you're not sure who to call, call Beverly! 336-570-6740. As always, she will point you in the right direction.

*Mark S. Danieleley*



## Calendar Updates

Thurs. Jan 8	Farmland Preservation Board Estate Planning Workshop
Sat., Jan 17	NC Sheep Producers Association Meeting, Guilford Extension
Fri., Jan 23	Area Crops Meeting, Asheboro, NC (see page 5)
Tues-Thurs Jan 27-29	NC Forage and Grassland Council Winter Conference Series, Jan 27-Kenansville, Jan 28-Statesville, Jan 29-Canton
Thurs., Jan 29	Regional tobacco meeting, Yanceyville
Thurs., Jan 29 10:00	THINK GREEN THURSDAY - Spring Lawn Care
Wed-Thurs, Feb 11-12	Pastured Swine Conference, Greensboro
Thurs-Sat., Feb 12-14	NC Cattlemen's Association Conference, Hickory
Thurs., Feb 12 10:00	THINK GREEN THURSDAY - Grapevine pruning with Andy Zeman
Wed., Feb 18 1:00	Fruit Tree Pruning demonstration
Fri., Feb 20	4-H Clover Spotlight (Talent show and Visual Arts Display)
Tues., Feb 24	Piedmont Regional Beef Conference, Guilford County Extension
Thurs., Feb 26 10:00	THINK GREEN THURSDAY - Small Fruit (blueberries & brambles)
Thurs., Mar 12 10:00	THINK GREEN THURSDAY - Composting
Thurs., Mar 26 10:00	THINK GREEN THURSDAY - Pruning Woody Ornamentals
Fri., Mar 27	4-H Celebration Night (Awards and officer installation)

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

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## Jump Start Your Garden With Seeds

by: Mark Danielely, Horticulture Agent



Winter is here and there is little for a gardener to do except look at the seed catalog and dream about spring. Starting vegetable plants from seed is not very difficult and can save you some money over buying transplants. A tomato seed may cost less than 10 cents where a transplant may be 40 cents. The main advantage however in using seed is the variety availability. The typical garden store may have 15-20 tomato varieties available, but Johnny's Selected Seeds catalog lists more than 80. If you are really looking for unusual or rare tomatoes try the Totally Tomatoes website. I tried counting the varieties, but gave up after 250.

There is one rule to always remember when buying seed. Cheap seed is never a bargain. The seed may be old and



have poor germination or it may be mislabeled and turn out to be something other than what you wanted. It would be a great disappointment if you were expecting Big Boy tomatoes and got cherry tomatoes instead. Buy only enough seed for this year's crop. While it is possible to save extra seed, it is usually better to buy fresh seed each year. There are a number of fancy products you can buy to ger-

minate seeds. They usually are plastic trays with some sort of clear plastic top and may cost as much as \$25. If you like to be thrifty, you can use half gallon milk or orange juice containers. Cut the containers in half and make sure



to put holes in the bottom for drainage. Another area that doesn't pay to be cheap is with the potting soil. Buy a good quality potting soil that has a fine texture without big chunks of bark or peat. Don't try to use soil from your garden because it is not sterile and may not drain well.

Make sure the soil is moist before sowing the seeds. It is best to try to sow the seeds in rows instead of broadcasting them all over the soil surface. Sowing seeds in rows reduces the chance of disease and improves light availability and air movement. Try to sow the seeds thinly to make transplanting easier. Be careful to not sow the seeds too early. That can lead to tall and weak plants that won't transplant well. Tomato plants can be ready to go to the garden in 6 weeks while peppers may take more than 8 weeks.

The seeds should be misted regularly to keep the soil moist or you can cover the container with a piece of clear plastic. If you use the clear plastic, don't put the container in a sunny window because the germinating seeds may get too hot. After the first true leaves appear, usually in 2-3 weeks, it is time to transplant the seedlings into individual containers. Plastic cell packs work well for this and will reduce root damage when planting the seedlings into the garden.



For more information on starting seeds you can read the following article.

Starting Plants from Seeds

<http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/hil/hil8703r.html>



## 4-H, A Jump Start for Success

Erin Bain, 4-H Agent

Almost everyone has seen the 4-H Clover whether they know what it means or not. It's a green clover with a white H in each of the leaves. It has also been said that when people see the 4-H Clover, they tend to smile. Even if they have no idea what 4-H is, they still associate it with something positive. That's what we try to do in 4-H, create positive experiences and fond memories. Many times that's why parents and grandparents want their kids to become involved in 4-H. They have memories of going to 4-H camp, showing livestock, or doing activities in their clubs. If you're wondering what the 4 H's stand for, they are Head, Heart, Hands and Health. The green in the 4-H Clover represents nature's most abundant color and is symbolic of springtime, life, youth and growth. The white symbolizes purity and high ideals.

In 4-H, we have lots of competitions, and we like to give lots of Blue Ribbons. But one of the greatest figures in 4-H here in North Carolina, L.R. Harrill wisely said, "It's a great

thing to produce a Grand Champion 4-H steer, but unless you do something to produce a grand champion boy or girl, you have failed in your greatest responsibility." And this is what I would like to think that our Alamance County 4-H Program will focus on in this New Year. Everyone loves to win, but sometimes you have to receive a red or white ribbon before you can achieve the blue. And sometimes, you don't ever get that blue ribbon at all. But the learning experiences that 4-H can provide for the youth here in Alamance County can ultimately be worth more than a physical ribbon ever will.

When I grew up in 4-H I had some great successes over the years that gave me confidence and made me feel like I could do anything. But they were also mixed in with some disappointments that were very hard to swallow. I like to think that I learned equally from those experiences and I still tell people practically on a daily basis that 4-H truly did make me the person

that I am today. If you have a youth in your life who you think would benefit from being involved in 4-H, please contact Erin Bain, 4-H Agent at 336-570-6740 or [efbain@ncsu.edu](mailto:efbain@ncsu.edu).



Cooperative Extension's  
Youth Development Program

## Cards and Cookies Report

Erin Bain, 4-H Agent

Cards and Cookies is an Annual event for Alamance County 4-H where we come together around the Holidays for fun and fellowship and work together to give to others. Our 4-H youth and parents decorated over 300 cookies and made beautiful Holiday cards to give to local charities and community organizations including Allied Churches.



We hope that the love we put into our creations is felt by all those who receive them.



## Jump Start with Quality Forage

By: Lauren Langley, Livestock Extension Agent

We are now heading into the winter months and going off of last year's winter and recent signs, one may suggest this is going to be a bad winter. Whether you are raising beef cattle or goats, nutrition should be at the forefront of your concerns all the time, but especially in the winter. Why is that? Well, you see livestock burn more energy when it is cold, therefore their nutritional requirements increase in the winter. Major concern is placed on livestock that are lactating, in late gestation, growing (young in age), or older in age.

Here are a few tips to jump start 2015 with quality forage:

### Hay

**You don't know what you don't know-** Livestock need plenty of forage in their diet each day. Usually, this means around 1.5-3% of their body weight, depending on the species and production stage. You will need to know what quality of hay you are feeding to determine if nutritional needs are being met. Lower quality hay may not meet protein and energy requirements for late gestating or lactating livestock. A complete analysis can be performed on forage and feed (not commercial) for \$10 through NCDA&CS. The analysis will tell you the nutritional value of the forage so you can then make the decision to supplement or not. *Note- I have a hay probe that is available for you to borrow to pull a sample from your hay. Please call ahead of time to reserve it.*



If you are looking to purchase hay, we recently updated the Alamance County Hay and Straw Directory for 2015 which can be viewed here:

<http://alamance.ces.ncsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/2015-Hay-and-Straw-Directory.pdf> and if you would like to be added to the hay directory, you will need to complete an online form found here: <http://go.ncsu.edu/haystrawdirectory>

### Pasture

**You have to give in order to receive-** Fresh forage (pasture) is the cheapest feed for grazing livestock. However, if your pasture has undesirable species (such as weeds or other weedy grasses) and bare spots you will not see much feed from it. Make sure to assess your pasture each year and determine if it is time to overseed, renovate, or add inputs such as fertilizer, lime, or herbicide. The easiest way to tell if your pasture needs fertilizer or lime is to soil test every 2-3 years. Keep in mind, the peak season fee of \$4/sample is in effect from now until the end of March.



You may need to consider renovating your pasture if it is too far gone with weeds, thin forage, or invasive forage that is undesirable (this could be bermudagrass that has overtaken orchardgrass, etc.). Overseeding is a great tool if you notice that your pasture is becoming thin and weeds are starting to move in. By thickening your forage stand, the weeds will become choked out. To make good use out of any pasture however, you will need to understand best grazing management practices, such as rotational grazing.

Make plans NOW for 2015 to be a better year with quality forages playing a major role in your nutritional plan. If you have questions, please do not hesitate to call me. Remember, I am available for farm visits if you need me to take a look at your pasture (or livestock)! **Happy New Year!**



## Avoid Jump Starts, Inspect Your Equipment

by: Dwayne Dabbs, Field Crops Agent

Farmers have made it through another growing season, so now it is time to sit back and relax, right? If only! This is a busy time for farmers too, between going to meetings about new products coming out for next year, going to trainings and recertification meetings. There is never a dull moment, or so it seems. Then, when they aren't in meetings, farmers are working on equipment that was pushed to the side during the year, mainly because they



didn't have time to get to it.

I know that everyone has their own system of how they check over their equipment, but the

key is making sure that you get it done. Since there is a little bit of down time, go through each piece of equipment that you will be using in the coming year and make sure everything is working the way that it needs to be. Nothing makes things worse than when you head out to the field and the piece of equipment breaks. Like the old

saying goes, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

## Jump Start Your Season Here.

by: Dwayne Dabbs, Field Crops Agent

Coming up on the calendar we will have several meetings that may be of interest to you. On **January 23, 2015** we will be having our Multi-County Field Crops Meeting. This is a collaboration of five counties coming together with specialists from NC State to talk about new research and other issues concerning Corn, Small Grains, and Soybeans. This year we will have Dr. Heiniger speaking on small grains and corn. Dr. Dunphy will be giving an update on what's happening with soybean production. Lastly, we will have Dr. Havlin coming to give a talk on soil fertility and ways that farmers can improve soil health. The meeting will be held at the **AVS Banquet Center in Asheboro, NC**. We will plan on starting **registration** around **8:30 that morn-**



**ing**, and the meeting will be wrapping up somewhere around **2:00 that afternoon**. If you are interested in attending, please call the **Randolph County Extension Office at 336-318-6000, before January 19, 2015**, so that we can have a head-count on how many people to expect for this meeting.

I have had several people ask me about when I'll be doing more pesticide recertification meetings. The answer is, I'm not really sure yet. I am waiting on people in Raleigh to send out the new material for the pesticide classes and until that comes about, I really cannot set up classes. I hope to

have classes toward the end of January and beginning of February, but at this point I am playing the waiting game. I will send out more information as soon as it becomes available.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

## Jump Start Your Healthy Resolutions with Brussels Sprouts!

The much-maligned Brussels sprout deserves a second chance on your menu this winter. Loaded with vitamins K and C and a good source of many other vitamins, minerals and fiber, this quirky bad boy of the vegetable world is just what the doctor ordered for a healthy new year. Despite their odd way of growing, Brussels sprouts are a cultivar of the same species as cabbage, in the same family as collard greens, broccoli, kale and kohlrabi. Brussels sprout is a cultivar in the Gemmifera group of cabbages (*Brassica oleracea*), grown for its edible buds.

Try these recipes and give Brussels sprouts a second chance!

### Brussels Sprout Salad

#### For the Dressing:

- 3/4 cup olive oil
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 2 tablespoons white vinegar
- 1 1/2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice
- 1/4 teaspoon grated lemon zest
- 1 teaspoon whole-grain mustard
- 1 small clove garlic, smashed
- Salt and freshly ground pepper

#### For the Salad:

- 1/2 pound Brussels sprouts, leaves only (3 1/2 cups leaves)
- 2 tablespoons dried cranberries
- 2 tablespoons roasted, salted almonds, coarsely chopped
- 1/2 ounce Parmesan cheese, shaved or shredded

**Make the dressing:** In a large bowl, whisk the honey, vinegar, lemon juice, lemon zest, mustard, garlic, 1/2 teaspoon salt and a pinch of pepper. Slowly whisk the oil into the vinegar mixture until combined. Refrigerate at least 1 hour; store in an airtight container up to 1 week.

**Make the salad:** Toss the Brussels sprout leaves, dried cranberries, almonds and 1/4 cup dressing in a large bowl. Pile the salad onto a plate. Top with the Parmesan and season with pepper.

### Roasted Brussels Sprouts

- 1 lb Brussels sprouts, halved if large
- 3 slices thick-cut bacon, chopped
- 1 Tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
- salt & pepper

Heat oven to 400 degrees F. Line a half sheet pan with heavy-duty foil. Toss Brussels sprouts with oil and spread in a single layer in the pan. Top with chopped bacon and bake for 20 minutes, stirring halfway through, until bacon is crisp and sprouts are caramelized. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

