



# Illinois Extension

## Connections Newsletter

The College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences

### Henry/Stark Counties

358 Front St. Galva, IL  
(309) 932-3447  
Tues, Wed, Thur. 8 am - 4 pm

### Mercer County

910 13th St. Viola, IL  
309-513-3100  
Tues, Wed, Thur. 8 am - 4 pm

### Rock Island County

321 W 2nd Ave. Milan, IL  
(309) 756-9978  
Mon-Fri. 8am - 4 pm

WE WILL BE CLOSED ON MEMORIAL DAY, MONDAY, MAY 27

Visit our website: [extension.illinois.edu/hmrs](http://extension.illinois.edu/hmrs)

## BALANCING ACT: NAVIGATING MENTAL HEALTH IN A HYPERCONNECTED WORLD

Cheri Burcham, Illinois Extension family life educator

We live in a rapidly changing world that can be complex to navigate. About half of Americans can remember a time when we were not constantly connected and it was easier to tune out the noise of the world, while the younger half of the population can't imagine life without the internet.

Modern life can have a significant impact on mental health — for better or for worse. The disturbing imagery in the media we are exposed to today can be deeply unsettling. At the same time, our current technology also allows us to mobilize and provide collective support more efficiently in times of natural disasters or injustice.

And ironically, while our devices make us more connected than ever, loneliness is an increasingly serious public health concern. We are now able to have conversations with friends and family on the other side of the world in real time. However, constant connection also means that we will know if we weren't invited to a friend's party down the street. Recent survey data show that more than half of U.S. adults (58%) are lonely. Finding a sense of calm and focusing on well-being when you are having mental health concerns can be daunting in our fast-paced society. It can be especially challenging to know where to start.

May is Mental Health Month and family life educators with Illinois Extension are raising awareness of the important role mental health plays in our lives. They are encouraging members of the community to take action toward protecting their mental health and overall well-being. Illinois Extension family life educators will focus their efforts on helping members of the community to learn more resources for practicing self-care. Each week during May, there will be a helpful post on the [University of Illinois Extension: Around the Table Facebook page](#). Each post will give a new mindfulness technique to try for self-care and well-being. Mental Health America has also created a [toolkit](#) that provides free, practical resources for addressing mental health.

### Get Help Here:

If you think you may be experiencing symptoms of a mental health condition and are unsure of where to start, take a free, private mental health test to determine next steps at <https://screening.mhanational.org/screening-tools/>. If you feel you are experiencing a mental health crisis, call or text 988 or chat at 988lifeline.org. You can also reach the Crisis Text Line by texting HELLO to 741741.

It's important to remember that working on your mental health takes time. Change won't happen overnight. Instead, by focusing on small changes, you can move through the stressors of modern life and develop long-term strategies to support yourself — and others — on an ongoing basis.



## May is Better Sleep Month

As May ushers in a focus on improving our sleep habits, insights from the National Sleep Foundation shed light on the crucial role bedtime routines can play in enhancing sleep quality.



Research from the National Sleep Foundation found that “being motivated and having a bedtime routine was associated with more sleep and higher sleep quality even among those with more severe pain”.

For a comprehensive guide on optimizing your sleep environment, understanding sleep disorders, exploring sleep positions, or simply enjoying engaging quizzes, visit [www.bettersleep.org](http://www.bettersleep.org).

## Tips for Restful Sleep:

- Your bed should not double as a desk, dining room table, or couch
- Avoid consuming alcohol and caffeine right before bed
- Eat a balanced diet and nothing too heavy before lying down
- Stick to light activities such as yoga and stretching
- Feeling anxious? Try taking a bath and writing down what’s on your mind
- Make sleep a priority. It’s an appointment you should never miss!



## GET YOUR PRESSURE CANNER TESTED FOR FREE BY ILLINOIS EXTENSION

Spring is a great time to take inventory of your canning equipment to prepare for the summer canning season. If you have a dial gauge pressure canner, make it a habit to get it tested by [Illinois Extension](http://Illinois Extension) every year.

Various foods can be canned at home with a boiling water bath and pressure canner. Water bath canning is used for high-acid foods, including fruits and acidified tomato products. However, if low-acid foods, like meats and vegetables, are in your canning plans, you must use a pressure canner.

Over time, the needle on a dial gauge pressure canner can become inaccurate. If the dial gauge is not measuring the correct pressure, foods inside the pressure canner may be underprocessed, which increases the risk of serious illness from botulism.

Drop off your lids(s) at one of our offices in Galva, Viola or Milan (addresses and hours are listed on the front of this newsletter.) Once they are checked, you will be contacted for pickup. Testing is free and available year-round. For fastest service, take them to the Milan office where our nutrition and wellness educator Kristin Bogdonas has her office. For more information, contact her at [kmbogdo@illinois.edu](mailto:kmbogdo@illinois.edu) or call her at 217-244-5274.

## FOOD PRESERVATION RESOURCES

Enjoy garden-fresh foods all year long by preserving at home. Visit Illinois Extension’s food preservation website at: [go.illinois.edu/food-preservation](http://go.illinois.edu/food-preservation)

And check out these links for more on:

### WHY CAN PRODUCE?



Check out all the benefits of canning your own produce at [go.illinois.edu/WhyCan](http://go.illinois.edu/WhyCan)

### WHAT DO I NEED?



See the equipment and supplies you’ll need for canning at: [go.illinois.edu/CanningEquipment](http://go.illinois.edu/CanningEquipment)

### FREEZING EQUIPMENT



What you’ll need for freezing: [go.illinois.edu/FreezingProduce](http://go.illinois.edu/FreezingProduce)





## EVERYDAY ENVIRONMENT WEBINAR: FUNGUS AMONG US | THURS MAY 9, 1 PM

Fungi are more than a pathogen eating your trees or the mushroom in your meals. Not a plant or an animal, fungi are dynamic organisms that help decompose and recycle the nutrients in organic materials and form beneficial relationships with plants. About 400 million years ago, fungi were the catalyst that prompted life to move from the sea to land. Today, fungi contribute to resilient ecosystems in the face of climate change. Discover the vital role the unassuming fungus has in connecting and balancing Illinois ecosystems.

Register at: [go.illinois.edu/fungi](https://go.illinois.edu/fungi)  
or call our office at (309) 756-9978.



## FOUR SEASONS GARDENING: NATURAL LAWN CARE | TUES MAY 14, 1:30 PM

With billions of gallons of water used on lawns every year, more residents are researching natural approaches to lawn care. Learn what goes into taking care of a lawn and what to swap to achieve more natural, environmentally friendly lawn habits. Explore resources, what a lawn requires, and how to seasonally adjust natural care techniques with Gemini Bhalsod, Extension horticulture educator.

Register at [go.illinois.edu/ExploreLawns](https://go.illinois.edu/ExploreLawns)  
or call our office at (309) 756-9978.



## STRATEGIES FOR DEBT REPAYMENT WED MAY 8, 11 AM

Discover ways to overcome debt stress. If you have debt or are planning on taking on debt, do you have a plan on how to pay the money back? Explore different strategies for prioritizing debt repayment.

Register at: [go.illinois.edu/MoneyBasics2024](https://go.illinois.edu/MoneyBasics2024)  
or call our office at (309) 756-9978.

## ESTATE PLANNING 101: THE BASICS TUES MAY 14, 10 AM

Have you ever felt overwhelmed when you heard "estate planning"? In this session, we hope you become less fearful of estate planning, learn some basic concepts and terms related to estate planning, and gather resources to aid you in getting your affairs in order.

Register at [go.illinois.edu/2024HCELessons](https://go.illinois.edu/2024HCELessons)  
or call our office at (309) 756-9978.



## DON'T GO IT ALONE: IMPROVING YOUR SOCIAL CONNECTIONS | THURS MAY 9, 2 PM

Research indicates that social isolation and loneliness significantly affect the quality of life, particularly for older adults. Studies reveal over a fifth of U.S. adults identify as lonely or isolated. Discover the difference between social isolation and loneliness and identify risk factors for both. Learn about the various consequences of isolation and loneliness and strategies for staying connected with others. Presenters: Emily Harmon and Cheri Burcham, Extension educators.

Register at: [go.illinois.edu/TLCWebinars2024](https://go.illinois.edu/TLCWebinars2024)  
or call our office at (309) 756-9978.

## It's almost May; is it time to stop mowing?

Did you notice lawns growing longer last May? No Mow May, originating in the UK in 2019, aims to aid pollinators by letting 'weeds' bloom. While beneficial in theory, it has drawbacks.

In places like Illinois, No Mow May's timing doesn't align well with peak bloom periods for dandelions and clover. Moreover, leaving cool-season grasses unmown for a month can stress them, affecting survival.

Rather than a month of neglect followed by usual maintenance, a more sustainable option is reducing mowing frequency. Studies show less frequent mowing can benefit bee populations. Lawns provide crucial functions like erosion control and recreation, but non-functional areas could be converted into pollinator habitats. Planting diverse flowers and delaying Spring cleanup can further aid pollinators.



Read the full story at [extension.illinois.edu/blogs/good-growing](https://extension.illinois.edu/blogs/good-growing)

## Billions of Cicadas Set to Emerge Across Illinois: What You Need to Know

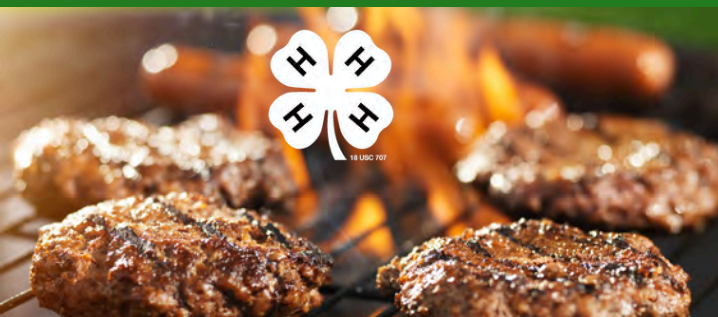
In 2024, Illinois is experiencing a remarkable event as historic numbers of periodical cicadas prepare to emerge. Emily Swihart, Illinois Extension horticulture educator, highlights the simultaneous emergence of two broods, XIII and XIX, a phenomenon not witnessed since 1803, making it a rare and exciting occurrence for enthusiasts of insects and natural phenomena.



Despite their loud calls, cicadas pose no threat to humans or pets. However, their emergence, driven by soil temperatures reaching 64°F, will likely create a cacophony in affected areas. Reports indicate that cicadas have already begun digging holes in central Illinois, signaling the imminent emergence.

For comprehensive information and updates on cicada emergence throughout Illinois in May and June, including downloadable resources, visit [extension.illinois.edu/insects/cicadas](https://extension.illinois.edu/insects/cicadas).

## A delicious way to support 4-H!



### Cookout to benefit Henry County 4-H

Fri, May 17, 11 am to 1 pm

Fareway, 540 Pritchard Dr. Geneseo, IL

Make plans to grab a grilled lunch to go at Fareway in Geneseo, and support Henry County 4-H! Menu items includes: Pork Chop Sandwich, Hamburger, Brat Patty, Pork Patty, Brat Link, Hot Dog, Chips, Pop, and Water.

## FREE family fun with University of Illinois Extension & 4-H!

Wednesday, May 29, 11 am - 1 pm

at Wyoming Public Library, Wyoming, IL

*Come for lunch, hot dog meals for sale.*

- Hands-on Ag Activity Stations
- Games & Prizes
- SNAP-Ed Recipes & Samples
- 4-H Activities
- Free Extension Resources
- Fun for the whole family!

