

Extension Connections Newsletter

Rock Island County
321 W 2nd Ave, Milan, IL 61264
309-756-9978

Henry-Stark County
358 Front St., Galva, IL 61434
309-932-3447

Mercer County
910 13th St, Viola IL 61486
309-513-3100

Website: extension.illinois.edu/hmrs | Email: uie-hmrs@illinois.edu

See the World Clearly: Everyday Habits for Healthy Eyes

By Kristin Bogdonas, Illinois Extension food and nutrition educator

Did you know your eyes can distinguish millions of colors? Or that the muscles controlling your eyes are among the busiest in your body, making thousands of movements every day? From reading a favorite book to recognizing a familiar face, our eyes work tirelessly to help us experience the world around us.

As we age, however, our vision naturally changes. Conditions such as cataracts, glaucoma, and age-related macular degeneration become more common, making it even more important to take steps to protect our eye health. The good news is that many of the same habits that support heart and brain health can also help preserve your vision.

One of the most important ways to care for your eyes is through a balanced, colorful diet. Certain nutrients play a key role in keeping your eyes functioning at their best:

- Vitamin A supports the retina and helps with night vision. Good sources include sweet potatoes, carrots, spinach, and cantaloupe.
- Vitamin C acts as an antioxidant that helps protect eye tissues from damage. Find it in citrus fruits, strawberries, bell peppers, broccoli, and tomatoes.
- Vitamin D and omega-3 fatty acids may help support the retina and reduce dry eye symptoms. Fatty fish such as salmon, tuna, and sardines provide both nutrients, while nuts and seeds are additional sources of omega-3s.
- Zinc helps transport vitamin A to the retina. Lean beef, poultry, beans, lentils, nuts, seeds, and whole grains are all good sources.



- Lutein and zeaxanthin are plant compounds that help protect the eyes from harmful light. They are abundant in dark leafy greens like kale, spinach, and collard greens, as well as eggs, peas, corn, and broccoli.

Nutrition is only part of the picture. Staying physically active, managing chronic conditions such as diabetes and high blood pressure, protecting your eyes from the sun, and scheduling regular eye exams can all help maintain healthy vision over time.

This month, try adding more colorful fruits and vegetables to your plate, including a serving of leafy greens, enjoying fish rich in omega-3s, and spending a little time outdoors while wearing sunglasses that block UV rays.

Food & Nutrition Programs



Scam Alert, Tues., Aug 11, 10:30 a.m. Illinois Extension, Milan

Financial wellness: Phone, text, email, and online scams: recognize the warning signs, what to do to combat scams, and a checklist of what to do if you are the victim of a scam. Join Amy Hood and Jennifer Kline from Blackhawk Bank & Trust to learn what you can do to protect yourself from scammers. This program will take place at the Illinois Extension office and is part of the HCE Lessons for Living workshops.

Register online at go.illinois.edu/ScamAlert



Building a Balanced Charcuterie Board | Mon. Aug 10, 5 - 6 pm Coal Valley Public Library

Charcuterie boards are fun to eat and make the perfect appetizer for entertaining. Treat your family and friends to a healthy charcuterie board this season by making simple modifications. Illinois Extension food and nutrition educator Kristin Bogdonas will show you what a charcuterie board is, what elements go into making a traditional board (or box), and how to adapt your board for different seasons and holidays.

Sign up with Kaylee Floyd at the Coal Valley library, 309-799-3047.



Turn Summer Tomatoes into Year-Round Favorites

Tomatoes bring a fresh, tangy taste to a wide variety of home food preservation products and can be safely canned, frozen, or dehydrated to keep that fresh flavor to enjoy later in the year. Popular preserved tomato products include salsa, sauces, and tomato juice, as well as tomatoes preserved whole or halved for later cooking.

Learn all about Tomatoes at extension.illinois.edu/food-preservation/tomatoes

Illinois Extension seeks input from residents on statewide food waste survey

University of Illinois Extension is seeking input from Illinois families on their food use at home to better understand food waste and develop practical, community-focused solutions.

Each year, Illinois households send over 400,000 tons of food waste to landfills. This represents millions of dollars in lost food value and generates methane, a potent greenhouse gas. At the same time, one in eight Illinois residents faces hunger — underscoring the urgent need to reduce waste at home.

Help be part of the solution. If you are involved in household food shopping, meal planning, cooking, or kitchen cleanup, we want to hear from you. Share what works well for your household and what is challenging.

Take the survey at **go.illinois.edu/FoodWasteSurvey**



Take the Food Waste Survey

go.illinois.edu/FoodWasteSurvey



Open to Illinois adults who shop, cook, or help with meals.

Illinois Extension

Horticulture Programs

Botanical Workshop: Drought Tolerant Landscape Thurs. Aug 27, 10 AM -noon, Milan

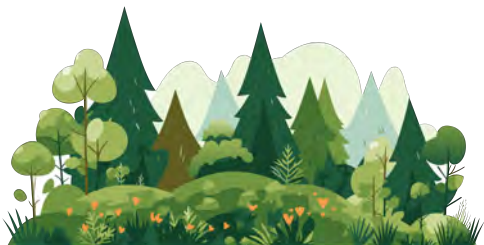
Join horticulture educator Emily Swihart to learn practical strategies for creating an attractive, water-efficient home landscape. This session covers what makes plants drought tolerant, recommended species to consider, and simple water-smart practices you can use right away. Participants will then create their own air plant terrarium to take home.

Cost: \$15, all supplies included.

Sign up at: go.illinois.edu/DroughtTolerant



Forestry Stewardship Webinar Series



Join forestry experts for a series of free webinars.

Sign up for any or all of them! Virtual sessions are one hour long, open to the public, and free to attend. All webinars in this series have been approved for ISA Certified Arborist Continuing Education credits.

Register at go.illinois.edu/Forestry2026

Aug. 5, 2 PM: Managing for Oak Regeneration: What does Current Research Tell us? Presenter: Chris Evans, University of Illinois will review what recent research says about the strategies and practices used in managing for oak seedlings.

Aug. 12, 2 PM: Selling Timber: What the Landowner Needs to Know, Hank Stelzer, University of Missouri Extension will walk you through the process of selling timber from start to finish and the need to hire a professional forester.

Aug. 19, 2 PM: Fire Ecology for Managing Grasslands and Woodlands, Jon Henn, University of Illinois will discuss of the basics of fire ecology in native systems and how it can be implemented on private land for management goals.

Aug. 26, 2 PM: Drone-based Herbicide Application Efficacy for Priority Invasive Plants, Kevin Rohling, University of Illinois will provide an overview of the recommendations for successful drone treatments, and next steps to improve this emerging technology in natural resource management.



August 13, 1 PM | Ecology at Your Home: Everyday Environment Webinar

Remember back in grade school biology learning about things like the carbon cycle? How about evolution? Or even things like a predator-prey relationship? These are all important aspects of ecology that, when paired with a few design considerations, can teach everyone how to make any landscape an oasis for nature and the envy of neighbors. Refresh your biological knowledge and learn how to increase the ecological value of home spaces.

Presenter: Abigail Garofalo, state Master Naturalist specialist

Register at go.illinois.edu/HomeEcology

Farm in the Park

Tues, Aug 4 • 11 AM- 1 PM

Veteran's Park, Galva, IL



Come Celebrate Agriculture with us!

Bring your family for a fun, FREE day exploring agriculture, horticulture, and healthy living with Illinois Extension. Enjoy interactive games, kids' crafts, information booths, hand-outs, prizes, and more—all in downtown Galva at Veteran's Park.

Here's what's planned:

- **Free Petting Zoo**
- **Kids Crafts & Activity Stations**
- **Wellness, Gardening, 4-H, and Ag Resources**
- **Interactive Games & Prizes**
- **Lunch special:** \$5 hot dog, chips, cookie, drink.

Fall Harvest Prairie Tour

Photo by Jessica Grissom

Experience the Prairie at Sunset

Tuesday, September 15 at 5:30 p.m.

Step into the beauty of an Illinois prairie with University of Illinois Extension and the Mercer County Master Gardeners. Enjoy an open hay rack ride across Prairie Hills Farm as owner Bill Joseph highlights native plants, land history, and the importance of prairie conservation.

Address: Prairie Hills Farm,
1121 160th St., Aledo, IL



Cost: \$10 person.

Sign up at go.illinois.edu/PrairieTourAledo
Space is limited, and each attendee must register.