



Illinois Extension

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

NOVEMBER 2022

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

extension.illinois.edu/hmrs

Mercer County

910 13th St. Viola, IL

309-513-3100

Tues, Wed, Thur. 8 am - 4 pm

extension.illinois.edu/hmrs

Rock Island County

321 W 2nd Ave. Milan, IL

(309) 756-9978

Mon-Fri 8am - 4 pm

extension.illinois.edu/hmrs



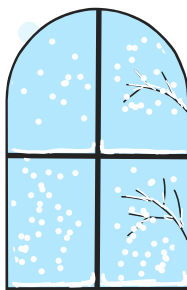
Notice: Starting Nov 1, the Galva office hours will change to being open Tue, Wed, and Thurs.

All of our offices will be closed on the following dates: Tues Nov 8 for Election Day

Tues & Wed Nov 15 & 16 for the Extension Conference | Thurs & Fri Nov 25 & 26 for Thanksgiving Break

WINTERIZE YOUR HOME: WINTER WEATHER CHECKLIST

Taking steps to get your house ready for colder weather can save you money and help you and your family stay safe and warm. Follow this checklist for tips on winter home prep to keep the cold out and the heat in:



Get your furnace checked

According to the Department of Energy, heating your space is the largest expense in the average U.S. home. Getting your furnace checked by a technician now could save you from an emergency when it's really cold outside. When a technician comes to check your furnace, they should make sure the pilot light and thermostat are working, check for leaks or cracks as well as the efficiency of your furnace.

Unplug appliances when traveling If you plan to travel for a week or more, try to unplug appliances to reduce your utility bill. Things like the coffee pot, toaster, and TV don't need to stay plugged in if you're not there. Another option is to purchase a SMART power strip. That way you can keep on the things you want, but turn the rest of the electronics off just with the flick of a switch.



Prepare for snow Research and purchase all of the essentials for your home now: things like shovels, snowblowers, and rock salt. If you're not sure which types of snow removal equipment you need, check out Consumer Report's buying guides for snowblowers and snow shovels to compare features and styles.

Add weather stripping Weatherstripping includes things like window insulator kits and foam for your doors and windows. This is one way to keep cold air from coming into your home. Some of these may be two-person projects so make sure you have enough hands on deck to help out, if necessary.

Inspect your chimney If you're planning on using your chimney this winter, make sure to get it inspected. According to the CDC, you can ask your local fire department to recommend an inspector or find one in the yellow pages under "chimney cleaning".

Get a thermometer Knowing the temperature of your home may be difficult if you don't have central heat and air. This is one handy tool to purchase to find out how warm/cool your room is this winter. This could also help you identify drafts or rooms that are losing heat quickly.

Check or update your thermostat If you have a manual or programmable thermostat, check with your energy delivery company; many offer rebates or discounts for replacing older thermostats with newer, smart thermostats. You might even be eligible for a free smart thermostat.

Test smoke detectors It's always good to check your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors twice a year. Why not check them before winter starts? According to the National Fire Protection Association, lighters, candles, or matches were the heat source in an average of 25,900 home structure fires per year (over a five-year period). Check your detectors, replace the batteries if needed, and keep you and your family safe.

Stay warm safely Consider purchasing a space heater or electric blanket. Some of us can never be warm enough, and having these items can help. Just make sure they have an auto-shutoff switch, and remember to follow best practices for space heater safety.

Although this isn't a comprehensive list, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has a wonderful Extreme Cold Guide you can check out if you want more information. Just remember, by preparing in advance for any season you can save yourself the hassle, headache, and financial burden cold winter months can bring to you and your wallet.



Getting Quality Sleep can be Ruff



Improve your sleep by following these tips!

Adequate, quality sleep is essential for our health and wellbeing. Sleep helps the body to heal and restore itself. It is vital for brain and heart health, mood and physical function, and a healthy immune system.

You can dramatically increase the quality of your sleep by having good sleep hygiene.

Sleep hygiene simply refers to your sleep habits. Being mindful of your sleep environment and your behaviors throughout the day, especially those before bedtime, can significantly impact your sleep quality.

Tips to Improve Quality of Sleep

- Create a relaxing bedtime routine.
- Have a consistent bedtime. Go to bed early enough to get at least 7 hours of sleep. Limit naps to no more than 20 minutes, or avoid altogether.
- Go to bed at about the same time each night. Awake the same time each morning, including on the weekends.
- Avoid large meals, caffeine, and alcohol before bedtime. Caffeine will persist for several hours after consumption and can interfere with your sleep.
- Create an optimal sleep environment: Keep your bedroom dark, quiet, relaxing, and at a comfortable temperature, between 60-67 degrees fahrenheit.
- Turn off electronic devices at least 30-60 minutes before bedtime. Electronic devices emit blue light, reducing melatonin levels, making it more difficult to fall asleep.
- Get the recommended amount of exercise. Being physically active during the day can help you fall asleep more easily at night and help you have a quality sleep.

Remember, making just a few adjustments to your sleep habits can help you get a goodnight's sleep, improve your health and quality of life.

SOURCE: Diane Reinhold, MPH, MS, RDN University of Illinois Extension, , Nutrition and Wellness Educator



This winter, take your love of gardening to the next level by becoming a Master Gardener. Join our Hybrid Training in February 2023!

After completing your training, you can volunteer as a Master Gardener to serve Henry, Mercer, Rock Island & Stark counties.

Choose from a variety of volunteer opportunities that interest you such as presenting programs to clubs, civic groups, or schools; answering calls or emails for our horticulture helpline; establishing demonstration gardens that serve as educational tools; educating citizens on how to set up a community garden, designing an educational display garden or manning the information booth at the QCCA Lawn and Garden Show. **You'll also enjoy fellowship with other Master Gardeners, monthly meetings, continuing education classes and conferences, holiday parties, and more!**

The hybrid course meets online with one subject per week AND on Tuesday mornings, Feb 7 to April 18.

- Have weekly live Zoom session with your teachers on Tuesdays from 9 - 10:30 am, with ability to ask questions and engage in discussions.
- Meet with others in the training to do case study questions and activities (Tuesdays 10:30 am - Noon) including four in-person sessions.

The cost for the hybrid training is \$225. (One scholarship is available to cover tuition - see details at registration link). Register by Jan 24.

Learn more and register @go.illinois.edu/hybridMGTraining

For more information, or if you need a reasonable accommodation to participate, contact Illinois Extension horticulture program coordinator Tracy Jo Mulliken at (309) 756-9978 or email her at tmully@illinois.edu

Perfect Gift for Gardeners!

Do you know someone who wants to be a Master Gardener? Someone who has everything and LOVES to garden? Give the gift of educational training to become a Master Gardener! They can take our Winter Hybrid Master Gardener Training, February 7 - April 18, 2023.

Get details at go.illinois.edu/MGGiftCertificate



Hosting Thanksgiving? Tips on cooking a traditional meal

If it's your turn to host the family holiday dinner, you hopefully have your game plan ready. There's a lot to consider, including whether or not you have the space: dining table space, burner/oven space and refrigerator space. Not to mention, what foods you are going to prepare and what foods you want others to prepare. No one wants to be working hard over a hot stove while everyone else is mingling and having fun. To beat the holiday anxiety, you need a thoughtful line of attack.

Think about quick and easy ways to prepare traditional recipes. Mashed potatoes, for instance, don't have to be peeled. Leave the skins on for less prep time and more nutrients. Rather than boiling over a hot stove, use the microwave to soften the potatoes; transfer to a slow cooker to keep warm. This frees up stove top space for something else.

Also, consider carving the turkey before roasting.

While you still have to take the time to break it down, you aren't doing it while the guests are watching and the dressing is getting cold. Watch a few videos online on how to break down a turkey and go for it! The roasting time will be less, and by separating the light and dark meat, you'll get a more evenly cooked bird.

Visit [Illinois Extension's Turkey for the Holidays website](http://IllinoisExtension.org/TurkeyfortheHolidays) for lots of great recipes and tips including how to prepare and cook a turkey, food safety, and more.
web.extension.illinois.edu/turkey/



Here are more practical tips to help you navigate the holiday meal prep:

- Make a to do list!
- Share recipes with extended family members ahead of time so you all can enjoy your favorite dishes.
- Enlist the help of the whole family! Record the sports game—watch it later, after dinner!
- Relax the timetable: sleep in, have a leisurely breakfast and enjoy a late afternoon holiday meal
- Bake a turkey breast rather than a whole turkey (bone in gives better flavor broth)
 - Thaw the turkey in the fridge (24 hours for every 5 pounds)
 - Think about oven space—you can cook the turkey the day before, slice and refrigerate and heat in the microwave
 - You can purchase an oven ready or even a pre-cooked turkey
- Do as much pre-prep as possible
 - Cook ahead and reheat when possible. Make soups, cranberry sauce, even mashed potatoes 2-3 days ahead and refrigerate. Bake pies or buy your favorite. Assemble casseroles and refrigerate uncooked; bake on the holiday.
 - Chop veggies for dressing or veggie trays a few days before
 - Make salads a few days before
 - Set the table the day before
- Most importantly, enjoy the time together! Holidays are usually such a whirlwind of worry and work—relax, enjoy the less harried atmosphere, connect with your children, tell stories of your family's Thanksgivings from the past...

How Long Do Holiday Leftovers Last?

Food can spoil faster than you'd think, creating the perfect home for bacteria and potential for food poisoning. Play it safe and freeze or use within the recommended number of days! Check out go.illinois.edu/Leftovers for recipes and to see how long common holiday leftover last.



EAT.MOVE.SAVE.

**Find Your Healthy
Eating Style Today!**
**Free tips and resources
for you and your family**



Monthly e-newsletter
go.illinois.edu/EatMoveSave

Healthy Text Program
go.illinois.edu/HealthyText



November webinars



Build Credit to Your Advantage | Get Savvy Webinar

Wed. Nov 9, 12 PM

Credit can help you obtain the things that matter to you. However, there are often conflicting messages and feelings around credit. Join us to learn about techniques that support positive credit behaviors. We also will cover your responsibilities as a borrower and ways to build a healthy credit history.

Register at go.uillinois.edu/GetSavvyWebinars



Build Better Soils | Everyday Environment Webinar

Thurs. Nov 10, 1 PM

What is going on beneath our feet? Get a crash course on soil science, support the soil that's already there, and learn how you can build healthy soils in your landscape in this session of Everyday Environment led by Abigail Garofalo, Extension natural resources, environment, and energy educator.

Register at go.illinois.edu/BuildBetterSoil



Kick off winter with our fun DIY at home December "I Made That!" Kit

Cultivate meaningful moments this holiday season when enjoying your favorite activities and treats while focusing on health with the December "I MADE That!" kit.

Make the most out of the holiday season by practicing healthy habits highlighted, and add a few extra into the mix with the 12 Days of Wellness activities included in the December booklet. Begin by heading outdoors for a winter scavenger hunt, then warm up inside with one of the yummy holiday treats or another fun activity from the booklet.



The kits include the December: I MADE That booklet, fun activities, and select recipe ingredients to get started. This project is ideal for families to work on together or for youth with cooking experience.

Each kit is \$5 and can be shared by the family or each child can order their own. They will be available for pick-up beginning Dec 5 at our Extension offices in Viola, Milan or Galva.

Register by Nov 29 online at
go.illinois.edu/IMadeThatDecember
or call our office at (309) 756-9978.

ILLINOIS STRONG COUPLES: FREE ONLINE RELATIONSHIP COACHING

Maintaining a strong relationship with your spouse or romantic partner can be a challenge. And when you need help, getting trustworthy and effective relationship support can be just as challenging. IL Extension is here to help with our Illinois Strong Couples project.

Free online help for relationships is just a click away. So whether you are wanting to build greater intimacy and connection, communicate more effectively with your partner, or protect your marriage from divorce, this program is here for you.

Illinois couples who are married, engaged, or have been living together for at least six months can enroll. The self-paced, six-session program is entirely online and uses the scientifically-proven ePREP platform. The program is free to qualifying Illinois couples and includes support from trained program coaches affiliated with Illinois Extension. Discover if the Illinois Strong Couples program is the right fit for your relationship.



A free online relationship program to help Illinois couples build a stronger relationship. Sign up at publish.illinois.edu/strongcouples