February 2010

This newsletter is designed to provide educational information and program updates to benefit you and your family.

If you have questions about these or other programs, don’t hesitate to call us at 217-287-7246. The University of Illinois Extension Christian County is dedicated to working for you.

Sincerely

Linda L. Smith, County Extension Director

Gary Letterly, Natural Resources Educator

Nancy Briggs, FSNE Program Coordinator

Jodi Heberling, 4-H Community Worker

Ann Lupton, Ag Literacy Program Coordinator

---

**Intermediate Sewing Classes to Start February 3**

Joan Swearingen, longtime Stonington Night HCEA member and retired Edinburg home economics teacher, will be teaching an intermediate sewing class beginning on Wednesday, February 3 from 6:30—9:00 p.m. and continuing for the next 5 Wednesday evenings. Participants will learn how to work with facings and interfacings, as well as setting in sleeves.

Intermediate sewers will need to have some basic sewing experience, including how to operate a sewing machine, straighten fabric, cut out a pattern and sewing seams.

Participants will also need to have access to a sewing machine that can be brought to each class.

Classes will be held at the University of Illinois Extension office in Taylorville, located at 1120 N. Webster St., in Taylorville. The cost of the class is $25 per person, (make checks payable to: Christian County HCEA), and payment is due by Friday, January 29. Class size is limited to the first eight participants, so register today by calling the U of I Extension office 287-7246.

---

**Soil & Water Management Workshops—February 10**

University of Illinois Extension will host a **Soil and Water Management Workshop for Certified Crop Advisors on February 10, 2010**. The workshop is planned to provide **4.5 hours of CEU’s in Soil and Water Management**.

This workshop will include both “live” and distance presentations.

Registration for Certified Crop Advisors and others interested in the workshop will be **$45 per person**. Lunch will be provided to pre-registered participants. Pre-paid registration is required no later than Monday, February 1. The workshop is scheduled to run from 9:00 a.m. to 2:15 p.m.

(continued on page 2)
8:30 a.m. Registration
9:00 a.m. Presentations
♦ Gulf Hypoxia
♦ Biochar - What is it?
♦ Cover crops research and farm conservation programs update
♦ New Tillage tools
♦ Using the Web Soil Survey
♦ Cap and trade (Carbon Credits) Where do things stand?
2:15 p.m. Adjournment

Beginning Beekeeping Class —February 16

The Sangamon Valley Beekeepers Association (SVBA) is offering a 6 week Beginning Beekeeping Class starting on Tuesday, February 16th, 2010. The classes will be held at the old Fire Station on the corner of 27th St and E William Street Rd, Decatur IL.

All classes will be hands-on and will cover what a beginning Beekeeper needs to know about Hive Components, Hive Management, Starting your own Colony and Harvesting Honey. Class will meet from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. on consecutive Tuesdays.

The instructors are experienced local beekeepers. A special guest speaker, David Burns, the Central Regional Director of the Illinois State Beekeeping Association will join us one week to discuss Urban Beekeeping. Tuition for the series is $60 and class size maximum is 25 participants.

This is an excellent opportunity for individuals interested in becoming a beekeeper or just learning more about honeybees.

Individuals who complete the classes and choose to start their own colony will receive personal mentoring from SVBA instructors throughout the 2010 honey season.

For more information or to register, contact Pam Schnake at SangamonValleyBeekeepers@yahoo.com or phone 422-3357.

U of I Extension Offers Water Smart Gardening Workshop—February 18

Water is essential for plant growth, and even though the past two years may make you think otherwise, water is also a valuable commodity, whether you have to pay for it, haul it, or wait for rainfall to fill your wells, cisterns and ponds.

U of I Extension will be offering a “WaterSmart Gardening” program on Thursday, February 18 at 7:00 p.m. to help you manage your water resources, the amount of water needed by your plants, your time, and of course your bank account.

WaterSmart Gardening is a program to help you look at ways to manage the amount of time and watering needed to maintain an attractive landscape. The class will look at watering techniques and landscape management practices that can cut down the need for watering.

Join us on Thursday, February 18 at 7:00 p.m. in the U of I Extension Christian County office located at 1120 N. Webster St., in Taylorville to help you keep your landscape looking its best. The workshop will be taught by David Robson, University of Illinois Extension Educator, Horticulture. This program is sponsored by the U of I Extension in Christian County. For more information, contact Linda L. Smith, County Extension Director, at /287-7246.
Pesticide Safety Program (PSEP) Testing—February 22

The University of Illinois Extension Christian County will be conducting a Pesticide Safety Education testing program on Monday, February 22, 2010 at the Extension office located at 1120 N. Webster St. in Taylorville.

This program will test private pesticide applicators needing re-certification. The certification exam is based on information found in the training manual available from the Christian County Extension Unit Office.

The testing program will start promptly at **10:00 a.m. on Monday, February 22.**

Advance registration is required no later than Thursday, February 18, 2010. There is no fee to attend the “Test Only” session.

Pesticide Safety Program (PSEP) Online Training

We are introducing the new **Private PSEP Online Training** website. It includes eight modules including:

- Understanding Pesticides
- Pesticides in the Environment
- Integrated Pest Management
- Human Pesticide Protection
- Labels and Labeling
- Equipment & Calibration Part 1
- Equipment & Calibration Part 2
- Pesticide Laws and Regulations

There is a $25 fee to register and take the course. Users will have access to the training materials for one year from the date of purchase so they can go back and refer to the information.

The site is available at [http://web.extension.uiuc.edu/privatepsep/](http://web.extension.uiuc.edu/privatepsep/), or on the U of I Extension Christian County website at www.extension.illinois.edu/christian. As in the past, U of I Extension Christian County will offer a training and testing session in the fall of 2010.

2010 Horticulture— “4 Seasons Gardening” Telenet Topic— “Ferns in the Landscape”

The 2010 winter sessions of “4 Seasons Gardening” will be offered starting in February at the U of I Extension office at 1120 N. Webster St. in Taylorville. Programs will be geared to the interests of homeowners and gardeners.

Topics will be presented by Extension Staff via telenet starting promptly at 1:00 p.m. for all afternoon sessions and 7:00 p.m. for evening sessions.

* Ferns in the Landscape : February 23 (1:00 p.m.) & February 25 (7:00 p.m.)

Please call 287-7246 one week prior of the specific presentation you would like to attend.

A registration fee of $5 will be assessed for color copies of handout materials.
How to Avoid Marrying a Jerk or Jerkette Program—February 23, 25 and March 2

Relationships fail for many different reasons. The result is typically hurt and disappointment. The most frustrating relationship failures are those that could have been avoided. The old saying "love is blind" is all too often true. However, it is possible to learn what to look for in a healthy, positive relationship, including how to spot and heed the warning signs or "red flags" of relationship trouble ahead.

The program will be held from 6:00—9:00 p.m. at the University of Illinois Extension Christian County office, located at 1120 N. Webster St., Taylorville, IL.

This program is based on relationships research, presented with humor, and will help those who participate learn about:

► The major areas that predict what a person will be like in marriage
► The 5 bonding connectors that keep a relationship in balance as it grows

Children who have lived through their parents' divorce often fear commitment when they reach adulthood. Through activities and discussions, participants will gain the skills for predicting what their romantic partner will be like in marriage. Along with this knowledge of their partner, participants will learn how to value and keep a balance between the messages from their minds and their hearts.

The cost for this program is $5 per person and includes all three sessions. (Pre-paid registration can be made at the University of Illinois Extension office, located at 1120 N. Webster St., Taylorville, IL or online at www.extension.uiuc.edu/christian. The deadline for pre-paid registration is Monday, February 15, 2010.

Spring 2010 Local Government Tele-Institute Schedule—February 25

"Green-Collar" Jobs: Workforce Development in the New Economy—February 25, 2010

Facing unemployment rates not seen since the 1980s, state and local governments across the nation are struggling with the challenges of a workforce in unprecedented transition. "Green-collar" job development is being championed as a strategy for economic revitalization. What exactly qualifies as a "green-collar" job sector: renewable fuels; urban agriculture; energy efficiency; green construction and retrofitting; etc.? How can communities in Illinois best position themselves to capitalize on the employment opportunities presented by the new economy?

This session will focus on development strategies at the state and local level, including associated industry initiatives and worker (re)training concepts, as well as discussing the importance of collaborations among communities, businesses and educational institutions, for supporting job creation in the emerging green economy.

The program will be held from 3:00—5:00 p.m. at the University of Illinois Extension Christian County office, 1120 N. Webster St., Taylorville, IL. Preregister by calling the U of I Extension office at 287-7246.
The Annual Christian County Ag Literacy Pancake and Sausage Breakfast will be held March 6, 2010 from 6:30 – 9:30 a.m. at the Christian County Extension Office, located at 1120 N. Webster St. in Taylorville. Tickets are $5 each and are available in advance at the University of Illinois Extension Office, the Christian County Soil and Water District Office, and the Christian County Farm Bureau Office. Tickets may also be purchased at the door the day of the event.

The theme of this year’s breakfast centers around National Food Checkout Week, a celebration of the U.S. farmer’s ability to produce the safest and most abundant food supply in the world. Proceeds from the breakfast will help fund the Ag Literacy program which delivers hands-on agriculture-based lessons to over 6,000 students throughout Christian County annually.

Come on out and enjoy a great breakfast and good fellowship. We look forward to seeing you there!

Gardeners Day 2010—March 20

Join us for the first day of spring at “Gardener’s Day” on Saturday, March 20, at the U of I Extension Building #30, Illinois State Fair-grounds, Springfield, IL. Registration starts at 8:00 a.m. and the first of nine seminars will begin at 8:45 a.m. and run through 12:05 p.m.

Nine one-hour seminars will be offered in three sessions by U of I Extension specialists and local horticulture experts.

Topics include: Creating a Haven for Birds in Your Back Yard; Terrific Trees; Prune it Right; Herb Accents for the Home; Small Fruits for the Home Landscape; and Small Space Vegetable Gardening.

Gardener’s Day is presented by U of I Extension Sangamon-Menard Unit Master Gardeners. Pre-registration is highly encouraged. Registration fee is $10 in advance (before March 12) and $12 at the door. To view a brochure and register online, visit the Sangamon-Menard website, www.extension.uiuc.edu/sangamonmenard.

Master Food Preserver Program Offered

Do you enjoy canning and preserving fruits and vegetables? Would you enjoy teaching others how to preserve foods safely?

The Master Food Preserver Program is an opportunity for experienced food preservers to learn about the latest techniques and home food preservation equipment and become certified as Master Food Preservers. This series of the Master Food Preserver classes will be held June 2, 3, 4, 8, and 9, 2010 in the Lincoln Room at the U of I Extension Building, #30, IL State Fairgrounds, Springfield, IL from 9:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m.

The cost of the program is $175, which includes University of Illinois Master Food Preserver Notebook, food preservation materials, and food used in the lab practical.

To become certified, participants enroll in 5 days of educational classes that provide instruction on handling and preserving food safely using the latest equipment and techniques. The Master Food Preserver Program contains five units, including: Food Safety and Freezing Foods, Canning High Acid Foods with a Water Bath Canner; Canning Low Acid Foods with a Pressure Canner; Pickling and Drying Foods, and Jams and Jellies.

Each unit consists of instruction, including hands-on laboratory food preservation activity. Methods used are USDA’s recommended procedures for canning, freezing and drying foods.

To register or if you need more information, please contact the U of I Extension Christian County office at 287-7246. The deadline for registration is Tuesday, May 25, 2010.
Recipes for Your Eating Enjoyment

Tortellini Soup

Directions:
1 can chicken broth (small)
1 c. tomatoes, diced
1 c. celery, chopped
1 c. green pepper, diced
1 c. onion, chopped
1 jar salsa (mild, medium or hot)
1 c. carrots, diced
2 c. water
½ pkg tortellini

Ingredients:
1. Mix all ingredients except tortellini in a large saucepan.
2. Cook until vegetables are tender.
3. Add tortellini at the end of cooking time.

Yield: 6 servings.
Per serving: Calories 250 (Calories from Fat 70); Total Fat 8 grams, Cholesterol 45 milligrams, Sodium 1180 milligrams, Carbohydrate 33 grams, Protein 11 grams (analysis is for regular sodium content broth not the reduced.)

Horticulture for the Homeowner—Trim or Prune, When is the Best Time?

The wet fall, snowy and very cold December and January will result in most of our “extra” outdoor work being put off until the first “nice” days in February and March ... well at least that is the plan. Let’s face it, we have been pretty spoiled with extended fall weather and somewhat mild early winter weather over the past few years when landscape trees needed our attention.

Some trees will perform better if left alone until the “dead” of winter to make any corrective cuts on branches to improve their structure. Most of the oak tree family members should be on your list to make-no-cuts until the “dead” of winter. Oak trees are susceptible to a variety of plant pathogens that are vectored (moved) from diseased plants to healthy ones throughout the growing season. Diseases are vectored in most cases by insects, wind, rain, and trimming tools. If we wait until very cold winter weather, we eliminate a few of the potential plant disease carriers. Some of the “wilt” diseases of oak can be fatal to susceptible oak family members. So, cold is good when pruning an oak.

One set of rules does “trump” the winter weather rule. When a tree poses a risk to people or property if left untouched, or the tree has damage or shows signs of plant disease, then go ahead and trim off what is needed. Pruning before sap begins to flow as spring approaches has been a standby method of determining if it’s too late to start shearing. Maple tree varieties “bleed” sap profusely when a branch is snapped or cut between winter and spring. The resulting wet areas and dripping branches only seem to be a problem if insects are attracted to the area later in the year. Even the constant dripping of sap can unnerve a seasoned gardener, but it actually causes no harm to the tree.

Lastly, a very good general rule to pruning on a tree follows the saying, “never prune while leaves are forming or falling.” This will keep you out of lots of trouble and reduce some of the tree trimming and pruning guesswork.
**4-H & Youth Programming Update**

Ownership deadlines will soon be approaching for many 4-H live animal projects. If you plan to show live animals at this year’s Christian County 4-H Fair, be aware of the required ownership dates.

Beef steers must be owned by January 31, 2010, and need to be tattooed on Saturday, February 6, 2010 at Northside Veterinary Clinic. **Any individuals** wanting to show premiere steers at the Illinois State Fair may attend. Please notify the Extension office with the number of steers or heifers you’ll be bringing. We will be using EID tags again in 2010 and exhibitors will be required to pay for the electronic tags.

Time is running out for joining 4-H and experiencing it the year round. The enrollment deadline is Thursday, May 1, but to really get the best 4-H experience, get involved now. 4-H is an excellent opportunity to meet new friends and expand horizons for all ages.

4-H Federation is working on the “Jump Start Green Fling” to be held on February 12, 2010. An evening at the YMCA is planned with games and activities for all county 4-H Members from 6:00--9:00 p.m.

Shooting Sports in Christian county are getting closer to becoming a reality. Three additional volunteers will be trained in March or early April. Then we will begin to plan some activities and start working on becoming a functioning club.

Fire arms must be treated with the utmost respect and we are developing a firm base to allow continued growth and support in this popular pastime area. We will continue to secure adults who have some expertise in shooting sports and who are willing to work with youth as we put this program into operation.

4-H is open to all youth (not just farm kids) between the ages of 8 & 18. In most cases 4-H clubs meet once a month all year long. There is no fee to join or dues to pay. The only expense is the cost of the projects the children make and keep.

Submitted by Jodi Heberling, 4-H Community Worker

---

**2009 Rockford Map Plat Book**

The Christian County 4-H Foundation is now selling copies of the 2009 Christian County Plat Book published by Rockford Map Co. Copies are available at the U of I Extension Office and the Christian County Soil and Water Conservation District office for a cost of $35.

If you wish to have a plat book mailed and billed directly to a residence of your choice, please include an additional $5 for postage and handling, and send it to the U of I Extension Christian County, 1120 N. Webster St., Taylorville, IL 62568. You may also access the order form on the homepage at www.extension.uiuc.edu/christian under the “Program Registration” section.

---

**Please help us cut down on postage costs!**

We will continue to send a paper copy to those who do not have e-mail access, but if you would like your Extension newsletter sent electronically, please e-mail your name and e-mail address to christian_co@extension.uiuc.edu to let us know.

Thank you again for your support of the University of Illinois Extension Christian County program.
Radon Resistant Construction Steps Can Reduce Health Risk

The safety of your family is one of the most important considerations when building a new home. You may be concerned about fumes from new building materials. But you should also be concerned about exposure to radon gas.

Radon is a radioactive gas that comes from breakdown of uranium in the soil and enters homes through cracks in the foundation. Excessive radon exposure can lead to lung cancer, causing the deaths of approximately 21,000 people each year in the U.S.

If you are building a new home, talk to your builder about installing a passive radon resistant system in your home. Simple steps required to deter radon may cost from $350 to $500. This is an inexpensive way to ensure your family's safety from the dangers of radon. The builders may already incorporate many of these steps to reduce moisture and increase the home's energy efficiency. You may wish to have a licensed radon mitigator work with the builder to install the passive system. See this website for more information on building a passive radon resistant system for new home construction: http://www.epa.gov/radon/rmc/index.html and www.TakeActionOnRadon.uiuc.edu. The Illinois Emergency Management Agency Radon Program (IEMA) also has information and instructions on building homes with a passive radon resistant system. Contact IEMA at 1-800-325-1245.

The UI Extension office is offering a free radon test kit to the first 20 people requesting them.

Radon detectors are also available by going online to www.radon.illinois.gov or call IEMA at 1-800-325-1245 to request the free radon test kit directly from IEMA. Radon detectors are easy to use and low-cost. Homes with high radon levels can be fixed.

For more information about how to test your home for radon, visit the radon web site: www.TakeActionOnRadon.uiuc.edu. Radon information is also available at the Illinois Emergency Management Agency Radon Program at 1-800-325-1245.