Prairie County Homemakers,

Spring is officially upon us! If you have spring fever, we have a wide variety of Extension lawn, garden, and ornamental publications available for free. Stop by the Extension Office and pick some up to get a head start on your yard and garden planning this spring.

The Homemaker Spring Council Meeting is scheduled for April 24, 2018 at 7 p.m. at the Prairie County Courthouse. An agenda was included with the March newsletter for your club to review.

Sincerely,

Sharla Sackman
Prairie County Extension Agent

Save the Date!
Spring Council Meeting
April 24, 2018 ~ 7:00p.m.
Prairie County Courthouse
Practice “Mise En Place” to Prevent Recipe Mistakes

From aliceheneman.com

Avoid missing recipe ingredients by practicing “mise en place!”

Pronounced (MEEZ ahh plahs), this is a French term that means to have all your ingredients assembled before starting a recipe.

This is why it is so important …

By practicing mise en place, you may avoid such cooking catastrophes as:

- Forgetting to add the baking power to a batch of cookies.
- Discovering you needed to do some time-consuming preparation before starting a recipe, such as letting some ingredients come to room temperature.
- Learning you are missing an important ingredient and you don’t have time to go to the store.
- Frantically slicing, dicing, measuring, etc. each ingredient as you need it.

Mise en place also makes complicated recipes more fun to prepare when you’re no longer juggling several preparation steps at once.

I like to use small dishes and custard cups to hold many of my items. You may also be able to find “mini” or “pinch” bowls in a local or online store that sells cooking equipment.

**Chicken & Pear Salad**

**Ingredients:**

- 2 c. pears, diced (fresh or canned)
- 1/4 c. celery chopped
- 1/2 c. onion, chopped (sweet onion will be most mild)
- 1/4 c. raisins
- 1 c. cooked chicken, diced
- 2 T low fat plain yogurt
- 2 T mayonnaise
- 1/8 tsp salt
- Dash of pepper
- 1 T lime juice

**Directions:**

1. In a large bowl, combine all ingredients. Mix well. Serve now or chill.
2. Refrigerate any leftovers within 2 hours.
Many times, a weed-free lawn can seem like something that only occurs in televised golf tournaments. I don’t know about you, but every spring I struggle to keep dandelion, nutsedge, and quackgrass from taking over my lawn.

While herbicides can help manage weeds in lawns, no single product will work against all weeds. For example, products that contain 2,4-D are designed for broadleaf weeds and won’t work for grasses. Unless care is taken, herbicides can be dangerous to lawns, flowers, pets, and people. A successful weed management program takes advantage of many approaches including cultural practices, mowing, and, if necessary, herbicides.

The key to managing weeds is to outcompete them with a dense and vigorous lawn. Most weeds have very little chance of establishing if thick grass blocks sunlight, captures moisture and takes advantage of available nutrients.

A good fertilization program can help grow a dense and competitive lawn. Be aware that too much fertilizer, while helping to nurture a lawn, will also feed the weeds. Also, too little fertilizer can lead to a sparse and uncompetitive lawn. In Montana, one or two applications of fertilizer per year are usually enough. When purchasing fertilizer, choose a high percentage of controlled-release nitrogen to provide a slow, steady nutrient supply. Consider having soil tested to know how much fertilizer is needed.

Mowing can help manage weeds, but it can also hurt your lawn. Frequent mowing weakens grass by reducing its ability to capture enough sunlight and produce food. Moreover, a short lawn allows too much sunlight to reach the soil surface, helping weed seeds sprout and grow. Mowing at the highest possible level – usually between 2 and 4 inches – will help manage unwanted weeds.

Frequency and timing of watering are also crucial to healthy lawns. Usually, lawns need about 1 inch of water per week. As a general rule, the best approach is to water lawns infrequently and deeply. Providing a lawn with infrequent, deep soakings helps grow deeprooted grasses and prevents the germination and growth of shallow-rooted weeds.

Identifying weeds is also essential to reduce their spread and abundance. Grass and broadleaf weeds that are found in lawns fall into two main groups: annuals and perennials. An annual is a plant that dies at the end of each growing season and new plants are produced each year from seeds. Annual weeds, such as crabgrass and shepherd’s-purse, are not that difficult to control. Preventing seed production in annual weeds by mowing or other means is often effective.

A perennial plant, on the other hand, lives for more than one year and grows back from the roots each year. Perennials also produce seeds, which can give rise to new plants. To effectively control deep-rooted perennials, such as Canada thistle or bindweed, concentrate efforts on managing roots. Roots of perennials often have vegetative buds, growing deep in soil. These buds can give rise to new, independent plants. Certain herbicides, such as those containing glyphosate, can move within the plant, down into the root system. A fall application is usually recommended to maximize herbicide translocation to the root system.

If you are not sure of the identity of a weed, take a sample to your county Extension agent or county weed office. They will also help design a weed management program that integrates as many practices as possible.

Believe it or not, hand-pulling is still one of the best defenses against weeds. Pulling annual weeds before they flower and seed is the simplest way to prevent them from spreading.

Hand-pulling is easier when soil is moist. A sharp spade or digger can help do the job.

When using an herbicide, choose one that is labeled for the type of lawn you have and is effective against the weeds you have. Before spraying any herbicide, read the label and follow directions carefully. Some herbicides work within a certain temperature range; others need to be applied at a specific time of year. When used incorrectly, herbicides can injure or kill turf and other desirable plants.

If efforts to get a weed-free manicured lawn – one that is the envy of a professional golfcourse manager – don’t work, relax and enjoy the summer anyway. I don’t know about you, but I’m learning to live with my dandelions.
Should You Aerate Your Lawn?

by Tom Kalb, Extension Horticulturist, North Dakota State University

Is lawn aeration necessary?
Almost all lawns will benefit from aeration, and a great lawn demands it. That said, most lawns do not need it. Lawns suffering from heavy foot traffic, excessive thatch (>1 inch thick) or grown on heavy soils will benefit most.

What are the benefits?
Aeration will:
- Invigorate roots and stimulate new growth.
- Reduce soil compaction.
- Reduce thatch accumulation.
- Enhance movement of water and nutrients into the soil.
- Smooth out bumpy lawns.

When is the best time?
Late August to mid-September, after the lawn has broken out of its summer dormancy. These lawns are primed for optimal growth. Spring is another good time.

Which machine is best?
Hollow tine or core aerators are best. These have hollow metal tubes that remove plugs out of the soil. These aerators are available at rental agencies. Lawn care services will offer aeration. Avoid solid-tine or spiking devices that may compact the soil.

Any special tips?
Remove cores as deeply as possible, about three inches. The soil should be moist but not wet. Tines cannot dig deeply in dry soils and tines will get plugged in wet soils. A few passes are usually needed.

After aeration, what’s my next step to a great lawn?
Let the cores dry for a couple days and mow them to break them up. Aerated lawns respond well to fertilization or overseeding; this can be done immediately after aerating.

How often should I aerate?
Aerate your turf once every 1–5 years for optimal growth. Turf on heavy soils or suffering from heavy foot traffic will benefit from more frequent aeration.
Prairie Fare: Are Eggs Healthful?
By Julie Garden-Robinson, NDSU Extension Service Food and Nutrition Specialist

I remember going to my daughter’s preschool for “green eggs and ham” day.

Yes, the food was dyed green in honor of the Dr. Seuss book that inspired the menu, and the kids were quite excited.

Unfortunately, I associate green ham with moldy ham, but I ate the emerald-colored ham and eggs, and forced a smile. Although my daughter was a fan of the book, I don’t remember her eating the green food very readily.

I have been a big fan of eggs ever since I was a preschooler, and that’s a long time ago. At this time of the year, egg-coloring kits, plastic eggs and colorful foil-covered eggs greet us in many stores. The eggs are filled with chocolate, peanut butter, marshmallows or other decadent fillings.

Real eggs are filled with even better things. They are an excellent source of protein, with 6 grams of protein per 70-calorie egg. The high-quality protein in eggs is the gold standard for nutrition because it is digested easily. Eggs are a good food for preserving and maintaining muscle tissue throughout life.

When you enjoy an egg for breakfast, researchers have shown that you are less likely to become hungry quickly. A protein-rich start to your day can help with weight management because you might consume fewer calories for lunch.

In other words, you may not reach for those chocolate-filled eggs as a midmorning snack when you have a satisfying breakfast.

Don’t forget to include eggs in your diet for another reason. Eggs provide choline, a natural chemical that helps with brain, nerve and, potentially, memory health.

Let those colorful candy eggs inspire you, too. Eggs are an excellent source of lutein and zeaxanthin, which are part of the carotenoid family of pigments. Carotenoids provide the gold color in the yolk. These pigments feed our eyes with nutrition to help prevent age-related macular degeneration and cataracts, which can impair your eyesight.

You might remember the cautions about eating eggs from a few years ago. Eggs naturally contain cholesterol, but the cholesterol in eggs does not become cholesterol in your body. Eggs in moderation are considered fine.

Unless your health-care provider directs you differently, most people can have at least an egg a day without changing their blood cholesterol parameters. Trans fat and some types of saturated fat stimulate the liver to produce blood cholesterol, so read Nutrition Facts labels to learn more about the nutrition in the food you select.

Remember a few food safety tips as you enjoy eggs in a variety of ways. Eggs last at least three weeks.
beyond the “sell by” date when stored between 33 and 40 F in the main section of your refrigerator. The door of a refrigerator usually does not keep food as cold as the main section.

A fairly small percentage of eggs contains salmonella bacteria, but you can’t tell which ones do. Therefore, handle eggs safely and avoid cross-contamination by washing your hands and surfaces that come in contact with eggs. Food safety experts advise cooking eggs until the whites and yolks are firm.

Some restaurants will cook eggs to your liking, but they probably have a warning on their menu.

Hard-cooked eggs provide an on-the-go breakfast, an easy add-in to any lunch and a protein-packed snack. If you have leftover hard-cooked eggs, use them within a week of hard-cooking them. Try making egg salad or slice them on a salad. Make deviled eggs or potato salad with eggs. Slice onto a toasted English muffin, add some cheese and pop in the microwave for a short time to warm your sandwich.

Here’s a breakfast or brunch recipe featuring eggs, cheese and some nice green broccoli. The recipe is adapted from the Midwest Dairy Council. Serve with fresh fruit and milk for a satisfying breakfast.

**Power-up Muffin Cups**

Nonstick cooking spray  
8 large eggs  
1 3/4 c. plain Greek yogurt  
1 tsp. onion powder  
1 tsp. garlic powder  
1/2 tsp. salt  
1/4 tsp. black pepper, freshly ground  
1 1/4 c. shredded mozzarella cheese, divided  
1 1/4 c. shredded cheddar cheese  
1 1/2 c. broccoli, chopped  
1 1/2 c. whole-grain soft bread cubes

Preheat the oven to 375 F. Coat a standard 12-serving nonstick muffin tin with nonstick cooking spray. In a large bowl, beat the eggs and yogurt until thoroughly combined. Whisk in the onion powder, garlic powder, salt and pepper. Stir in 3/4 cup of the mozzarella cheese, all of the cheddar cheese, the broccoli and the bread; mix thoroughly. Let stand for 10 minutes. Stir thoroughly, then divide the mixture evenly among prepared muffin cups. (The cups will be about two-thirds full.) Top evenly with the remaining 1/2 cup shredded mozzarella cheese. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes or until the tops are golden brown. Let stand for five minutes before serving.

Makes six servings, two muffins each. Each serving has 340 calories, 20 grams (g) fat, 30 g protein, 12 g carbohydrate, 1 g fiber and 680 milligrams sodium.
Un-Cluttering Your Clothes Closet

Know yourself, and think use . . . .

1. If it’s not flattering to you - the color or the cut is wrong - pull it out.
2. If it doesn’t fit or it’s not comfortable - you suck in your stomach, you can’t bend over or move your arms, or it’s itchy - pull it out.
3. If it’s too complicated - if you have to wrap or tuck or tie it just so, or if you have to remember to straighten the sash or pull the bodice up every ten minutes, pull it out.
4. If it’s too fragile - if you can only wear it where there won’t be food or drink or animals or children, where it won’t be too hot because you don’t want to sweat in it or too cold because a coat or jacket will wrinkle it - pull it out.
5. If it’s badly damaged or has an important part missing that you probably won’t be able to replace - pull it out.
6. If it needs to be altered or repaired before you can wear it - pull it out.
7. If you wear it never or very rarely (because your lifestyle has changed or it just isn’t called for more that once a half-century), or if you can only wear it with certain things (that you don’t have or really like to wear) - pull it out!

Leave in the closet everything you wear consistently and feel good in; and make two piles of all the rest.

ONE Needs to be cleaned or repaired - there’s some practical reason you’re not wearing it.

TWO Is out of style or doesn’t fit or you’ve decided you just don’t want to fuss with it any more.

Take pile 2 to your favorite charity, or if you’re not tough enough, to the garage. If four weeks you’ll get rid of it easily because it’s been so nice having it out of your way in the closet . . .
Pile 1 - clean or fix (several of these pieces, when you look at them closely will join pile 2).
Arrange what’s left in the closet according to color coordination and needs. (And when you see something on sale, think about how it will fit in with your basic wardrobe and how often you’ll wear it - not just how much you’ll save.)
Orange & Sweet Potato Pork Chops

Alice Henneman, MS, RDN, Extension Educator
UNL Extension in Lancaster County
Web: http://food.unl.edu E-mail: ahenneman1@unl.edu

This recipe is a great source of protein and the sweet potatoes add important vitamin A. Thanks to the orange and cinnamon flavoring, you may be able to skip the salt entirely.

Once you’ve assembled this main dish, you’re free to do something else while it is baking. Read the paper, take a walk, put in a load of wash or just relax! I had company the night I prepared this and it was easy to toss in an extra pork chop and add another sweet potato.

Makes: 2 servings

Ingredients

- 2 loin pork chops
- 1 sweet potato (peeled)
- 1/2 orange (sliced)
- 1 dash cinnamon
- 1 dash salt (optional)
- 1 dash black pepper (optional)

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. In a medium skillet, brown pork chops in a small amount of oil.
3. Cut sweet potato into 1/2-inch slices.
4. Place meat and sweet potato slices in a baking dish and top with orange slices; sprinkle with seasonings.
5. Cover and bake for 1 hour until meat is tender. Pork is safely cooked when it has been heated to 145 degrees F, followed by a 3 minute rest.

Nutrition Facts: Calories, 270; Calories from Fat, 100; Total Fat, 11g; Saturated Fat, 4g; Trans Fat, 0g; Cholesterol, 65 mg; Sodium, 85mg; Total Carbohydrate, 17g; Dietary Fiber, 3g; Sugars, 6g; Protein, 25g.

Source: Adapted slightly from Simply Seniors Cookbook, Utah Family Nutrition Program, Utah State University Extension, available at Food Stamp Nutrition Connection Recipe Finder

Alice’s Notes: In assembling this dish, I put the sweet potatoes on the bottom, followed by a sprinkling of cinnamon. Next came the pork which lent flavor to the sweet potatoes as it baked. Then, I added a dash of pepper on top of the pork.
Growing & Harvesting

Grow. Several leafy greens are grown as spring and fall crops in Montana. Plant initial crop in spring when soil temperatures reach a minimum of 35°F (spinach, lettuce, arugula), 40°F (chard) or 50°F (mustard). Small seeded greens such as lettuce and arugula can be directly sown and do not require soil cover to germinate. Larger seeds such as spinach and chard can be covered with ¼-inch of soil. Plants should be thinned to approximately 2-6 inch spacing in rows 12-24 inches apart. Most leafy greens will create a seed stalk as summer temperatures increase. A late season crop can be achieved by planting 6 to 8 weeks prior to the first fall frost. Visit www.msueextension.org for more information or contact your Extension office.

Harvest. Depending on species and variety, leafy greens can be harvested at 40-50 days maturity either by removing the whole plant at soil level or selecting older leaves, allowing the remaining leaves to mature for future harvests. Heading and semi-heading lettuce varieties take several more days to mature and are harvested as whole plants.

Selection

Choose brightly colored greens with firm, crispy leaves. Avoid dried-out, yellow, wilted, dull-looking or slimy leaves. Young tender leaves are preferred. Once plants have bolted, leaves tend to be tough and bitter. Early harvest ensures the best flavor.

Storage

Store unwashed greens in a bag in the coolest part of the refrigerator for up to one week.

Nutrition Information

Greens are cholesterol free and low in calories and sodium. Most of these plants are referred to as super foods because they contain phytochemicals, which promote long term health as part of a nutritious diet. They are also good sources of Vitamin A, C, K, protein and fiber. Greens are high in folate, a nutrient important for fetal development and calcium.

Uses

Prior to preparing, wash greens thoroughly in cool running water. Cooked greens reduce in size by 75% compared to fresh greens.

Blanch or Boil. Remove dried or thick stems. Cover the raw greens with water and bring to a boil. Add greens and blanch: collard, 8-15 minutes; beet, turnip, and mustard greens, 5-8 minutes; chard, 2-4 minutes; baby greens, less than a minute. Cook until desired tenderness.

Braise. Cut large greens and keep small greens whole. Remove dried or thick stems. Drizzle cooking oil in a heated pan, add seasonings if desired. Cook greens over low heat for about 20 minutes or until desired tenderness. This method is ideal for collards, chard, and kale.

Salad. Add a variety of raw greens to salads for added flavor, texture, and visual appeal. To serve tougher greens raw, massage the finely cut greens with acidic dressing. This will tenderize the greens and enhance the flavor.

Soup or Entrée. Add greens to soups and entrees such as lasagna, quiche, or pizza.

Steam. Remove dried or thick stems. Place greens in a pan in a steam rack with a small amount of water and seasonings if desired. Cook on medium heat for 2-4 minutes (depending on size and age of greens), or until desired tenderness.
Preparation: Step-by-Step

Wash hands. Thoroughly rinse greens to remove any dirt. Dry with a towel or in a salad spinner. Rewash greens if needed.

Cut off end of stems using a knife. For large greens, such as chard and collards, slice on both sides of the stem to remove. Remove the stem and discard.

Stack greens and slice into 1/4- to 1/2 inch sections.

For small or delicate greens, such as lettuce, spinach and mustard greens, can be hand torn or left whole.

For More Information:
Montana State University Extension: www.msuextension.org
MSU Extension Master Gardener: www.mtmastergardener.org
MSU Extension Food and Nutrition: www.msuextension.org/nutrition
MSU Extension Nutrition Education Programs: www.buyeatlivebetter.org

Date of Publication: November 2015

Information Courtesy of: