**Horticulture**

Gardening and working with plants can be a joy, but the insects, diseases and other issues that can come up can turn that joy into frustration. Join the Butler County Master Gardeners and KSRE Extension starting in January for our Garden Gossip workshops that can help with those common issues. The first workshop is January 13th starting at 6 pm where to learn about Starting seeds, including how to trouble shoot some issues you might have and how to Propagate Houseplants. Every participant will get at least one houseplant start to go home with.

Workshops are free to attend but please RSVP at https://kstate.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_1GqKiI6nZ9NbSwC so we have enough supplies.

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**Agriculture**

**Natural Disasters in the Livestock World**

If you have any ties to agriculture or anyone involved in agriculture and follow social media, you’ve likely seen the devastating impact dealt to ranchers on December 15th. If you aren’t familiar, look up the *Four County Fire* or search Paradise Fire or northern Kansas fires. My heart cringed for fellow 4-H Show families and ranchers who lost EVERYTHING in those wildfires. At last check, over 100,000 acres burnt, several hundred head of cattle died and ranchers lost houses and barns. Controlling any fire is unimaginable in winds in excess of 80 mph.

One can simply not replace over 100 years’ worth of history and livestock genetics. As with any disaster, there are a number of fundraisers occurring throughout Kansas and other states for the ranchers. If you are inclined to help with this disaster or any other, always vet your sources first to make sure they are legit and they’re going to where they say. If you need any help on the Agriculture side, let me know and I’d be happy to help you.

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**Family Consumer Sciences**

**Tips for preserving popular holiday food gifts**

If you’ve received a beautiful basket filled with fruit and other goodies for Christmas, enjoy it. But, maybe not for too long. If you want the fruit to maintain its freshness, place the fruit in the refrigerator. If the basket contains bananas or other tropical fruits (with the exception of citrus), remove those fruits and store separately. 3-4 weeks is about as long as you can expect to store these fruits without some shriveling and loss of crispness.

**Nuts for the holidays**

Pecans and other nuts are another popular gift during the holiday season. Like fruit, nuts can quickly lose quality if not stored properly. Excessive water loss can lead to shriveled nutmeats, and the fats and oils in nuts can quickly spoil, developing an off-flavor or rancid taste. Store shelled or unshelled nuts in the refrigerator or freezer. Upham said nuts quickly absorb flavors from other stored products so store them in a tightly sealed container. A solid plastic container with a tightly fitting lid is preferred. If nuts are tightly sealed, they can be stored in a freezer for up to one year, but using them within six months is preferred.

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**4-H & Youth Development**

One of my goals for this year is to expand 4-H STEM programming and participation. 4-H projects in STEM are varied and include things to interest many 4-Hers, such as Ag Mechanics, Astronomy, Computer Science, Electricity/Electronics, Renewable Energy, Rocketry, Robotics, Small Engines, Unmanned Aerial Systems and Woodworking.

I’ll be attending a train-the-trainer workshop in Salina in January with plans to host some events later this year. Leaders and adult volunteers with interest and/or experience in any of these projects are encouraged to contact me and register in 4-H Online!

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