

Floyd County Extension Newsletter

November 2020

Hello from the Virginia Cooperative Extension office. We hope you enjoy our newsletter, as always, we are here to help with any questions. Our office is open Monday thru Friday 8 am to 5 pm.
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a junk drawer that is calling for attention. Now is the time to reclaim those spaces and to do a bit of fall cleaning.

First let's check for items that no longer have a purpose. I know most kids are not begging to help with cleaning but, how about a scavenger hunt? Provide them with an age appropriate list of things that can leave the home. The list might include; old greeting/Christmas cards, board games missing pieces, outdated reference books, outdated magazines, old CDs, unmatched socks, old maps, clothes that no longer fit, dead batteries, etc. Be sure to set some rules like, which things or rooms are off limits, magazines with dates before August 2020 will be considered old, activity not judged by who is quickest, etc. The 'prizes' could be based on number of items checked off the list.

Make a list for yourself of items only you can access. Items your list: old receipts, broken costume jewelry, broken kitchen tools/equipment, power cords without the matching phone/appliance, old spices, tote bags, "gadgets" that are not being used, adults' clothes that don't fit, outdated medications, seasonal decorations no longer used, etc.

You may be asking, "Now I have all of this stuff that can leave the house what do I do with it?" Consider the items, are any appropriate for a second-hand store? How about recycling or upcycling? Some of the

Cleaning your way into Winter

By Dawn Barnes, Senior Family Consumer Sciences Agent

Now that we are spending more time inside we may be noticing some tasks that we have been putting off or maybe it is the stack (or two) of items that have accumulated in the corner or maybe we have summer things to put away before pulling out winter items. For some us, although we may not admit it, there may be



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items could go into a upcycle/craft box for wintertime craft projects with the kids. Mismatched socks become hand puppets for a kid-created puppet show or maybe old maps are decoupaged on old frames for gifts, the stained or frayed towels may be able to find a home with an animal shelter.

The internet can be your friend, there are websites like <https://earth911.com/> that can provide some guidance for recycling or upcycling items and other sites are filled with ideas for upcycling. Be sure to check websites of organizations/_____ you are considering taking your 'finds' to see what they are accepting or not accepting.

You have cleared spaces in your home, all or most of your 'finds' have left the house

now the time has come for a bit of fall cleaning. There are multiple examples of fall cleaning list that can be accessed and some are more detailed than others and you may complete some of the task on a regular schedule. The list contains tasks such as: clean window treatments, put warm weather clothing away and pull out cold weather clothing, wash small rugs, replace the HVAC filter/s, wash blankets, wipe down cabinet fronts and tops, wipe down walls and baseboards, deep clean the refrigerator and freezer.

After you have finished, take time to celebrate and appreciate the work that has been completed. Hot chocolate for all!!!

Creating an Ecosystem

By Laura Sutphin, 4-H Agent

Temperatures are dropping and sending us all inside, but that doesn't mean you can't find ways to enjoy and learn more about nature. Follow the activity below to learn more about ecosystems and create your own to observe inside your home!

Ecosystems are a mass of living and nonliving things in one place. There are many types of ecosystems. Scientists study ecosystems to understand how organisms relate to, and depend on, other organisms and nonliving things in order to survive. Producers, consumers, and decomposers make up the living organisms in an

ecosystem. Producers, such as plants, make their own food using sunlight, water, and carbon dioxide. Animals, are consumers, they eat other organisms to survive.

Decomposers break down dead organisms and waste products for energy, and release nutrients back into the ecosystem. Create a soda bottle terrarium and watch your own ecosystem grow!

Materials:

- Plastic Bottle
- Plant
- Soil
- Small rocks



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Steps:

1. Cut the bottle half with the assistance of your caregiver.
2. Find some rocks outside and place them in the bottom of the bottle. The rocks will filter the water.
3. Add potting soil on top of the rocks.
4. Stick your finger in the middle of the soil and make a hole. This is where you will place your plant. Fill soil around the roots of plants using your fingers. Press slightly around the bottom of the plant to keep it in place.
5. Give your plant a little water.
6. Shove the top of the bottle over the bottom. If the top is too tight, get a caregiver to slightly cut the sides of the bottle so it will fit.
7. Screw the top back on the bottle.
8. Place in a sunny area. If the soil begins to look dry, drop a small amount of water into the bottle through the cap.

Dinner Talk:

Talk to your family, friends, and siblings about this experiment.

- What happens to the plant inside of the terrarium?
- Why is it important to water the plant? How does the plant get water?

- Why is sun important to the ecosystem?
- What do you think would happen if you added a worm or a bug to the ecosystem?

This activity is sourced from a NC Cooperative Extension, Clemson Cooperative Extension, and USDA. If you are interested in this or other 4-H activities or programs contact our office to get involved!

4-H Dates to Remember

- November 9th – Floyd 4-H Teen Club Meeting & Movie Night, 4:30 pm
- December 7th – 4-H Teen Cluster Game Night
- December – 4-H Dramatic Reading, Presentation, and Public Speaking Contests in schools.
- January 11th – Floyd 4-H Teen Club Meeting

Setting Fruit Trees

By Jon Vest Ag Agent

Setting Fruit Trees

Whether we live in Floyd or the New River Valley, we may obtain good planting results by planting our fruit trees in the fall or early spring. Planting about a month after the first killing frost in the fall or about a month before the last killing frost in the spring is generally recommended. The important thing to remember is that trees should be dormant and that the soil should have



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proper moisture content to be in good working condition.

Soil Preparation

Take soil samples from the top 6" to 12" prior to planting. Soil test kits may be obtained at your local Extension office. Soil pH should be between 6.0 and 7.0 for best growth of fruit trees. Apply lime according to the recommendations over an area of at least 25 square feet before planting.

Preparation of soil where fruit trees are to be planted should be as thorough as if planting a vegetable garden. If the site selected for trees is in a lawn, spade the soil deeply over an area of several square feet to eliminate competition with turf. Where the trees are to be set, dig the holes wide enough to prevent crowding or bending of roots.

Handling Nursery Stock

If you've ordered trees, unpack the bundles immediately and inspect the trees. Roots of nursery stock should not be allowed to freeze or dry out. The roots and packing material should be moist. Check to see if the bark is withered or shrunken. Withered bark indicates the trees have been allowed to dry out in storage or in transit.

If trees cannot be planted immediately, they may be held dormant in the original packing in refrigerated storage for a week or two. If refrigerated storage is not available, trees should be taken out of the bundle and heeled-in carefully in a trench of moist soil in a shaded location.

Planting the Trees

Tree roots must be kept moist at all times. Keeping roots in a container of water for several hours until the tree is planted is an excellent idea.

Prune the roots of young trees, when necessary, to remove broken and damaged material or head back those that are excessively long. If a tree appears so badly scarred or damaged that there is doubt of its survival, it is wise to discard it.

Dig the hole a little deeper and wider than necessary to accommodate the roots, leaving the soil loose in the bottom of the hole. Set the tree at approximately the same depth it grew in the nursery. Never set it so deep, that the union of the scion and rootstock, is below ground level when the hole is filled.

Begin filling the hole with pulverized topsoil, shaking the tree gently to filter the soil among the roots. Tamp firmly and thoroughly with the foot or a well-padded stick. When the hole is about 3/4 full, add water to aid in packing the soil around the roots and increase chances for the tree's survival. After the water has completely soaked in, finish filling the hole, leaving the soil loose on top. Lastly, the addition of "clean" stone or gravel around the immediate perimeter of the trunk will aid in reducing habitat and damage due to rodent feeding.



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