Basic Home Maintenance Course

Neglecting the minor repairs around your home will lead to even more expense in the future and lessen a home’s market value. Have you wanted to make those basic home repairs but didn’t know where to start? This five class series Basic Home Maintenance Course will show you how. Beginning Tuesday, August 16, from 5:30 – 7:30pm. The remaining dates for the course are August 23, 30, and September 6 and 13. Some of the topics to be covered are: saving on your heating and cooling bills, basic plumbing repairs, interior and exterior maintenance, landscaping and lawn care, indoor air quality, common household pests, etc. The fee of $20.00 includes all materials and handouts for this five series course.

Hands-On Canning Workshops This Summer

It’s Pickling Time! Tuesday, July 12, 2011 - 9am to 1pm
Come learn how to make a simple dill pickle and preserve those little pickling cucumbers for the long fall and winter months. This class will also discuss how to make relishes and other pickled products. Cost $10.

Canning Beans Safely! Tuesday, July 26, 2011 - 9am to 3pm
One of the most popular foods to can is beans, but it can also be one of the riskiest to eat if not canned safely. Come, can beans together with us and learn the latest recommendations for canning your beans to use later in those wintertime casseroles. This class will cover using weighted and gauge pressure canners as well as discuss the importance of adjusting pounds of pressure for canning at higher altitudes. Cost $10

Putting Tomatoes By! Thursday, July 28, 2011- 9am to 2pm
One of the best foods for learning how to can is tomatoes. In this hands-on class we cover canning tomatoes with a water bath canner and a pressure canner. Because we cover both methods of canning, this class allows you to experience both techniques. We will also discuss freezing and dehydrating tomatoes as other options for preserving them for future use. Cost $10

All classes are held at the Buncombe County Cooperative Extension. Pre registration and pre payment are required for all classes. If you need more information on any class, please call the Extension Center at 828-255-5522.
Saving on Summer Cooling Expenses

With cooling systems working harder to handle rising temperatures, summer is the ideal time to focus on ways to save energy, and save money on cooling.

- **Set your thermostat** on the highest comfortable setting. If you’re leaving for the day, turn it up a couple of degrees. Don’t turn your cooling system off unless you’ll be gone for an extended period of time.
- **Clean or change your filters** monthly to keep your system running at peak performance.
- **Use a ceiling fan or portable fan** to supplement your air conditioning. A fan can make you feel three to four degrees cooler so you can set your thermostat a few degrees higher and save on cooling costs. Use in occupied rooms since fans cool people, not rooms.
- **Switch your central air conditioning to “auto”** for better cooling and humidity control versus keeping the system switched "on" continuously.
- **Close blinds, drapes and shades** during the hottest part of the day to keep the sun’s rays from heating your house.
- **Promptly repair your air conditioning system** if it’s not cooling properly. An inefficient unit can lead to extremely high bills. Plus, you could qualify for a Progress Energy rebate.
- **Closely monitor older air conditioning equipment** – especially temperature settings, hours of operation and filter condition.
- **Use your microwave** or countertop appliances for cooking instead of the oven or stove.
- **Properly insulate your home.** In existing homes, wall insulation may be too expensive to install, so concentrate on attic and floor insulation. In our area aim for the following insulation levels:
  - Ceiling: R-30
  - Wall: R-11 to R-19
  - Floor: R-19

Source: Progress Energy

Maintaining Your HE Washer

Did you know washing machine manufacturers recommend that you may need to perform a periodic machine maintenance once per week — or at minimum, once a month — to ensure that your HE washer remains clean and free from any soil buildups?

A “maintenance cycle” involves running a full wash cycle without any laundry in the machine.

- Some HE washers are equipped with a special cycle. Check the use and care guide to see if your machine has one. If it does, follow the manufacturer’s recommendations.
- If your HE washer doesn’t have an automated maintenance cycle, you may perform this function manually by following the suggestions below:

  1. Select the hot water setting. If there is no hot water setting, then select a “white” or a “stain” cycle setting. (Note: do not put laundry in the washer.)
  2. Select the “extra rinse” option, if offered.
  3. Add liquid chlorine bleach to the bleach dispenser. Fill to its maximum level.
  4. Run the cycle through its completion.
  5. If the HE washer does not have a second rinse option, manually select an additional rinse cycle to ensure that no chlorine bleach remains in your washer.
  6. If your HE washer still has unpleasant odors, you may need to repeat steps 1 through 5 as necessary.

Source: Soap and Detergent Association
The New MyPlate Replaces the MyPyramid

Earlier this year, the government released the Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2010. To go along with the updated guidelines, the new MyPlate was introduced as a tool to help us decide how to eat healthier.

For years, the concept of proportioning your plate has been used in recommendations for managing diabetes and in the prevention of many chronic diseases and cancer. With the current recommendations to eat more vegetables, fruits and whole grains, and eat smaller portions of proteins, processed-grains and to include dairy or dairy alternatives like fortified soy milk, the MyPlate design reminds people how that looks during a meal.

Food guides date back to 1916 when we had “Food for Young Children” and “How to Select Food”, which lasted until the 1930’s. This first guide established guidance based on food groups and household measures. Its focus was on “protective foods”. In 1940 the guidance changed to “A Guide to Good Eating (Basic Seven)”. This guide was a foundation diet for nutrient adequacy. It included the daily number of servings needed from each of seven food groups. It lacked specific serving sizes and was considered too complex.

Our longest running guide to date has been the “Food for Fitness, A Daily Food Guide (Basic Four)”. This guide began in 1956 and was based on goals for nutrient adequacy and was a foundation diet approach. It specified amounts from four food groups, the Milk Group, Meat Group, Vegetable and Fruit Group and Bread and Cereal Group. The Addition of guidance on the need to moderate intake of fats, sweets, and alcohol came in 1979 after the 1977 Dietary Guidelines. The 1979 guide was the “Hassle-Free Daily Food Guide”.

In 1984, there was the “Food Wheel: A pattern for Daily Food Choices”. This was the first to take a full diet approach and have goals for both nutrient adequacy and moderation. They further divided the foods into five food groups, separating out the fruit group and vegetable group. The recommendations gave information on amounts at three calorie levels to better match the variety in needs of the general population.

“The Food Guide Pyramid” was introduced in 1992 after much consumer research. It continued to give goals based on nutrient adequacy and moderation. The illustration focused on variety, moderation and proportion. The concept of using visualizations of fats and sugars, at the top of the pyramid, indicated the need to limit these types of added calories. It included a daily amount range for each of the five food groups across three calorie levels. It also included serving sizes.

In 2005, they updated the Food Guide Pyramid and created the MyPyramid based on the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. With the increase use of the internet and interactive websites, the USDA created the MyPyramid website with tools that allowed individuals to track their intake and physical activity and calorie needs. They created 12 calorie levels based on activity and nutritional needs, age and gender. This illustration included a band for oils and they incorporated physical activity by the person going up the steps. The use of “My” in the title, helped focus on the personalization of the resources that were developed.

With the latest guidelines and MyPlate illustration, the intent is that the general population will use the familiar mealtime symbol as a reminder to choose healthy foods when we eat. It also hopes to better indicate the need to increase the amounts of fruits and vegetables while getting variety in our daily intake and include a wide variety of protein foods and not just meats. There will always be adaptations to these guides and illustrations to further help those making decision to eat in a healthier way, but hopefully, with the basic design of getting half our intake in vegetables and fruits, we will see increase intakes of these across all our populations.
Protect Against the Sun

In the past, many individuals held the idea that having a suntan in the summer made them look healthy and it was something to strive for while out in the sun. Times have changed and we now know that sunburn and tanning are short-term results of unprotected UV exposure and signs of skin damage. Long-term exposure can cause prematurely aged skin, wrinkles, loss of skin elasticity, dark patches (sometimes called age spots or liver spots), and pre-cancerous skin changes (such as dry, scaly, rough patches called actinic keratoses).

Skin cancers are one result of getting too much sun, but there are other effects as well. The sun’s UV rays also increase a person’s risk of cataracts and certain other eye problems and can suppress the skin’s immune system. Dark-skinned people are generally less likely to get skin cancer than light-skinned people, but they can still get cataracts and suppression of the skin’s immune system.

It isn’t possible or practical to avoid sunlight completely and there are some steps you can take to limit your exposure to UV rays. Sun protection/sunscreen is not just for the days at the lake, beach or pool but should be used everyday throughout the year before going outside, even on slightly cloudy or cool days. The phrase "Slip! Slop! Slap!… and Wrap" can help you remember the 4 key steps you can take to protect yourself from UV rays:

- Slip on a shirt.
- Slop on sunscreen.
- Slap on a hat.
- Wrap on sunglasses to protect the eyes and sensitive skin around them.

These steps complement each other, and they provide the best protection when used together. Sunscreens come in many forms, including ointments, creams, gels, lotions, wax sticks, and sprays. Follow the directions on the package for using a sunscreen product on babies less than 6 months old. All products do not have the same ingredients; if you or your child’s skin reacts badly to one product, try another one or call a doctor. Using products with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 30 are recommended. The SPF number represents the level of protection against UVB rays provided by the sunscreen – a higher number means more protection.

Most sunscreen products are effective for at least 2 to 3 years, but after a long time in storage you may need to shake the bottle to remix the sunscreen ingredients. Apply the sunscreen properly by always following the label directions. When putting it on, pay close attention to your face, ears, hands, arms, and any other areas not covered by clothing. If you're going to wear insect repellent or makeup, put on the sunscreen first.

About 1 ounce of sunscreen (about a palm full) should be used to cover the arms, legs, neck, and face of the average adult. For best results, most sunscreens must be applied 20 – 30 minutes before going outside and reapplied at least every 2 hours and even more often if you are swimming or sweating. Products labeled "waterproof" may provide protection for at least 80 minutes even when you are swimming or sweating. Products that are "water resistant" may protect for only 40 minutes.

People of all skin colors can get skin cancer from the sun’s UV rays. Those who are most likely to get skin cancer from these rays have:

- Lighter natural skin color
- Skin that burns, freckles, gets red easily, or becomes painful from the sun.
- Blond or red hair.
- Blue or green eyes.
- A family member who has had skin cancer.
Making Family Reunions Fun For Everyone

Summer is the time to gather up the family, make that trip and attend the Family Reunion or Gathering. Many times with the way our families have spread out our kids as well as ourselves, may not know the other family members who are attending very well. There are ways to make getting to know your extended family fun for the whole family and learn some of your family history or create new family friends with those you don’t get to see often.

- **Storytelling:** Sit around in a group and tell stories about yourself and your family. Focus on categories like the most embarrassing, the oldest story, the most unique story and remember to let the kids tell stories also. The stories from some of your oldest relatives will be an opportunity to share with the younger members what our country and communities were like in the past and not just about our families.
- **Family Video:** Create a video. You can give the task to some of your media savvy youths and let them run with it. Suggest they interview different families about what they are doing now, or what past reunions were like or what life was like when they were young.
- **Photo Activities:** Plan a group photo. You can also let the kids or other family members create a slide show of photos taken during the gathering. This slide show can be shown at the end or sent to families after the gathering. The photos taken can also become a photo scrapbook or collage that you make with your family when you get back home. Remind families to bring old photos to share.
- **Kid Activity Stations/Tables:** Remember that kids like to stay active. They easily get bored when adults sit around talking and reminiscing. Set up craft or art tables, have games or sports activities ready for use.
- **Create a Family Tree:** Use a wall or long table with poster boards, or other paper to create your family tree. Have families add to the tree and see how it grows during the week.
- **Create a Family Time Capsule:** Tell attendees to bring something to put in a box or container which will be closed up and opened at a later date. Suggestions are old photographs or other family memorabilia. Pick a date in 10 to 20 years to open up the capsule and see what was put inside. If you wait too long many of the current family members may not be there to enjoy opening it.

Lastly, remember to talk with your children and share with them the memories you have of growing up and other memories of extended family interactions so that they can recognize and feel connected to those they meet at the gathering.

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**Farmer’s Market Salsa**

**Ingredients:**
- 4 large ripe tomatoes
- ¼ cup chopped onion
- ¼ cup chopped cilantro
- 1 Tablespoon chopped fresh oregano
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 teaspoon minced jalapeno chili, or to taste
- 1 Tablespoon olive oil
- 2 teaspoons lime juice
- Salt and pepper to taste

**Directions:**
Cut the tomatoes into quarters and remove the seeds. Chop the tomatoes and place in a medium bowl. Add the onion, cilantro, oregano, garlic, jalapeno chili, olive oil, lime juice, salt and pepper and mix well. Let stand, loosely covered at room temperature for 10 to 15 minutes for the flavors to blend. Serve immediately, or store in the refrigerator for later use. Serving size: ⅛ of recipe.

Per serving: calories 35; protein 1g; carbohydrates 5g; total fat 2g; 44% calories from fat; cholesterol 0g; fiber 1g; sodium 5g; sugar 3g.

*Source: Living Well™ More than a Cookbook, National Association of Family and Consumer Sciences*
Enjoy A Mosquito Free Backyard

Just as we find some time to enjoy our yard and entertain at a cookout, the mosquitoes arrive as uninvited guests. Reducing the mosquito population is something to work on throughout the summer and not just the day prior to your special event. Recent rains and warm weather are closely followed by increases in mosquito activity, particularly with the Asian tiger mosquito. Most people still think of swamps, ponds, etc. as the source of the mosquitoes that show up in their yards. However, in most residential areas the source is more likely to be all of those small and inconspicuous water sources that are prime mosquito breeding sites. So, before you start planning a chemical assault on the yard as the solution to your mosquito problems, start with the more simple and more long-term approach of eliminating "collectibles". Inspect the yard paying particular attention to the following areas:

♦ Bird baths - simply flush them out with a garden hose. The birds will also appreciate the fresh water. For horse owners with water troughs near stalls or out in pastures, one option is to use a product such as "Mosquito Dunks" which contain the 'Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis' and are labeled for use in animal watering containers. Although you can use them in water bowls for dogs, it is far simpler (and better for the animals) if you 'tip and toss' the water and replenish it with fresh water.
♦ Old cans, tires, etc. - empty them and get rid of them.
♦ Outdoor flower pots - empty the water from the dishes/trays underneath them. Plants have plenty of water without the overflow. This also helps reduce fungus gnat problems.
♦ Remove all of the built-up debris from gutters, as the water and decaying material attract mosquitoes.
♦ Tarps covering boats, grills, etc. collect pockets of water that can remain for 1-2 weeks.
♦ Kids' pools - if they're not being used by kids, they're probably being used by the mosquitoes. Same thing applies to pools (in ground or above ground) that aren't maintained (such as on properties in foreclosure).
♦ Drainage ditches - they're meant to collect water *temporarily*. Keep them free of debris so that water flows out.
♦ Decorative fish ponds can be a source of mosquitoes if they contain a lot of vegetation which provides hiding places for the mosquito larvae. 'Mosquito Dunks' are an option here.
♦ Tree holes - When limbs fall off trees, the remaining hole in the trunk can collect water. Flush that out or put a small piece of a mosquito dunk into it.

Mosquitoes may be resting in trees and shrubs during the day. However, controlling the mosquito problem by treating the shrubs and trees is debatable. Similarly, people that use outdoor foggers will definitely kill mosquitoes but depending on the time of day/evening that they use it, they may be missing the peak activity. Two other issues about using outdoor foggers are important. First, safety is critical. Make sure you're standing upwind from the direction the fog is being applied and wear appropriate protective equipment to prevent the fog from getting into your eyes and lungs or on your skin. Second, know where the fog is going. Some of your neighbors may not want chemicals drifting onto their property (particularly if they're outside eating at the time!) Same thing applies to the automated misting systems that some people have installed on their homes.

One other point to remember - mosquitoes have no concept of property lines. Mosquito management takes a neighborhood effort to be truly effective.

For additional information: http://insects.ncsu.edu/Urban/mosquito.htm
Safe Summertime Grilling

As the summer months get on their way, we find ourselves using that grill more and more. Whether you are grilling red meat, poultry, pork or seafood, you need to make sure that you cook it thoroughly. Summer vegetables are also tasty when grilled, but you don’t want to end up crossing them with uncooked or undercooked meat products.

Here are a few things to remember so that we end up with a safe tasty grilled meal.

- Start with clean hands, utensils, dishes and work surfaces. If away from home, take some disposable wipes.
- Make sure you have your instant read thermometer out and ready to use.
- Keep meats cold until the grill is hot and ready to cook them. If away from home, keep them in the cooler with ice.
- Do all marinating in the refrigerator or cooler. Do not marinade on the counter.
- If you pre-cook foods, immediately put them on the grill. The warm pre-cooked foods are a perfect environment for bacteria and other microorganisms to grow.
- Once food is on the grill, cook it thoroughly to the needed internal temperature. Meat and poultry cooked on a grill often brown quickly and may appear done on the outside, but still may not have reached a safe minimum internal temperature to kill any harmful bacteria.
- Pork, lamb, veal, and whole cuts of beef should be cooked to 145° F, as measured by a food thermometer placed in the thickest part of the meat, followed by a three-minute rest time before carving or consuming. Hamburgers and other ground beef should reach 160° F. All poultry should reach a minimum temperature of 165° F. Fish should be cooked to 145° F. Fully cooked meats, like hot dogs, should be grilled to 165° F or until steaming hot.
- Keep all plates and utensils used with the raw meats, poultry and seafood separate from any cooked foods. Take them back to the kitchen to be cleaned and use new, clean plates for fully cooked food and clean utensils.
- Grill vegetables, that need less time to cook, separate from meats that need longer cooking time. You can use foil or special grilling pans.
- Check out recipes with specific marinades for vegetables.
- Refrigerate leftovers within 1 hour during summer days when the temperature reaches over 90° F.

Some important safety tips when grilling to prevent injuries or fires:

- Be careful lighting the fire. Never use gasoline, fuel oil or kerosene.
- Keep clothes and hair restrained. Roll up shirt sleeves, tuck shirts in and avoid wearing loose, flowing skirts or scarves. Keep long hair out of the way with ties or restrictive hats.
- Use long-handled utensils and potholders. Keep cookware handles turned to one side away from the heat. Keep a water spray bottle or hose close by in case of a flare up.
- Be sure the fire is completely out before you leave it.
- Gas and charcoal BBQ grills must only be used outdoors.
- Keep a three foot “safe zone” around the grill from children and pets.
- Position the grill away from siding, deck railings, and out from overhanging eaves and plants.
Rain Barrel Sale!

This 80-gallon barrel from Rain Barrel USA (a North Carolina company) measures 37 inches high and 28 inches wide. It is made of 20% recycled high-density polypropylene. The heavy concave lid channels water flow into the barrel. The screened entry blocks leaves, debris and insects; the dark green color discourages algae growth. The barrel has two overflow ports to move water away from your home, and it comes complete with fittings and installation instructions. You can find more information at: http://www.rainbarrelusa.com/80%20Gallon.html

80 gallon barrel - $110 + tax
Payable by cash or by check made payable to “Buncombe County”

To purchase a barrel, come to the Buncombe County Center of NC Cooperative Extension, 94 Coxe Avenue, Asheville, NC 28801 (corner of Coxe and Hilliard) or call 828-255-5522.

What Works – What Doesn’t

Although there are a variety of products advertised touting their claims to protect us from biting insects, many have not been proven to be effective. The repellents known to be effective in protection are the following:

DEET repels a greater variety of insects, and is recognized as the most effective active ingredient in repellents. DEET containing products of 10-30% active ingredient should be effective. Choose the formulation that best suits your needs and follow precautions and recommendations on the container.

Two additional repellents added to the list by the CDC are Picaridian and oil of lemon eucalyptus. Evidence indicates that Picaridian works well and is often compared with DEET products of similar concentration. Oil of eucalyptus is a plant-based mosquito repellent with protection time similar to low concentration DEET products.

All of the insect repellents listed above have precautions and recommendations for their use with small children, so please read the label.

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