April 2010 Basic Home Maintenance Course  Are there repairs around your home that need to be done, but you lack the knowledge and skill to do them yourself? The Basic Home Maintenance Course will give you those skills. This series of five, two hour classes will be held evenings from 5:30pm – 7:30pm, on Tuesdays and Thursdays, April 20, 22, 27 and 29, and May 4, 2010. 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 pest, etc. Preregistration is required and the fee of $20 includes all materials.

Canning and Preserving Made Easy  Canning season will be here before we know it so it’s time to get prepared. You want to check your equipment to make sure it is ready for use. Buy new lids to replace the lids used last year. Check your bands and jars to see that they are in good condition. You need to check your gaskets and pressure gauges also. Call our office to set up an appointment for checking the pressure gauge. To learn more about canning or just to brush up on the newest information on food preservation from Canning to Freezing to Drying, come to the Canning and Preserving Made Easy program on April 26th from 6:00 to 9:30 pm. This program will be an introduction to canning, pickling, making jams and jellies, freezing, drying and storage. Preregistration is required and the fee of $10 covers costs for materials.

Successful Aging VIII  The Buncombe County Aging Coordinating Consortium, in collaboration with other local agencies, is offering the eighth annual Successful Aging Event. This event is held annually in Buncombe County during Older Americans Month for older adults, caregivers and anyone interested in aging successfully. This year the event will be held May 25th at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Asheville. The day is filled with fun and informative workshops, entertainment and health screenings. The registration fee of $15.00 includes lunch and all the day’s activities. Preregistration is necessary as space is limited. Brochures are available by calling the NC Cooperative Extension, Buncombe County Center, 828-255-5522 or Council on Aging of Buncombe County, 828-277-8288.
Preventing Ant Invasions

Ants are one of the most common household pests and account for many calls annually to our office. The ants we see around our homes are adults. Although ant species may have individuals of different sizes, the small ants you see will not be growing up to larger-sized ones.

In preparing for tackling an infestation, it is important to inspect both indoors and outside to determine areas of ant activity, nest locations, and type of ant present. Indoors: follow ant trails to locate their entry point, such as electrical outlets or gaps along a baseboard or around a water pipe. Outside: check the foundation, walkways, trees and shrubs, and in mulched areas for trails.

The ants you see in your home are searching for food, water, and shelter. You can make your home less attractive to ants by keeping it as clean as possible. Clean up food spills as soon as they occur. Rinse all food containers prior to putting in trash or recycling. Don’t leave food out on countertops or pet food out continuously. Also check inside and outside for water leaks.

Seldom will spraying an insecticide for ants lead to long-term control. The most effective ant control is accomplished by locating and destroying the nest(s). If the nest is located outside, you can drench it with a ready-to-use insecticidal spray or use a granular bait or granular insecticide.

If the nest is indoors, sanitation, exclusion, and baiting are the most effective. Baits are available in many formulations, from granules to gels to soft, solid materials. Worker ants find the bait, take it back to the colony, and feed it to the queen and brood (young ants). If enough bait is taken and consumed, the entire colony may be killed. Since baits are effective only if they are eaten, you must make sure you use bait acceptable to the ants. Place a small amount of bait where ants are foraging and watch to see if it is eaten or taken by the workers. If the workers don’t show any interest, you will need to try different bait.

In addition to the bait, patience is necessary for controlling ants. Since most ant baits are slow-acting, you may continue to see ants for a week or more after beginning your treatment. During this time, do not disturb or kill the ants with sprays or other treatments.

For additional information on ants, check out:  http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/ent/notes/Urban/ants.htm
For effective baiting:  http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/ent/notes/Urban/antbait.htm

Now Is the Time to Plan for In Season Produce

Now is the time to start planning for the “In Season” vegetables and fruits. In order to maximize the nutritional value and decrease the cost of eating vegetable and fruits, it is advised to “Eat In Season”. Here is some advice to make sure you benefit from our Spring, Summer and Fall seasonal produce.

- Order your CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) delivery. Most of the farms have already started taking orders for their deliveries this year. This is a win-win situation. You get fresh vegetables and fruits throughout the season and the farms get guaranteed customers.

- If you are thinking of planting your own garden now is the time to decide on what you want to plant and start getting your soil and garden ready. If you don’t have space for a garden, you can always plant in containers. Tomatoes and other vegetables can grow well in containers and if on wheels, can be moved around as needed.

- Another alternative to container gardens, if you are tight on space, is to rent space or become involved in a community garden. In our county there are various school and community gardens that allow us to work together to grow our own food.

For more information on CSA’s, getting your own garden ready, or where you might join a community garden, you can contact our office. Remember, eating more vegetables and fruits is connected to weight management and disease prevention.
Avoiding Storm Water Runoff

After seeing the result of all the melting snow flowing across the lawn, it becomes obvious where storm water runoff improvements can be made to avoid future problems. Storm water is water from rain or melting snow that does not soak into the ground. It can flow from rooftops, over paved areas and bare soil, and through sloped lawns. As it flows, this storm water runoff collects and transports the following pollutants:

• Sediment  * Pet waste  * Pesticides  * Fertilizer  * Automobile fluids (oil, grease, gasoline, and antifreeze)  * Deicing products (road salt and fertilizers)

• Grass clippings, leaves, and other yard waste  * Cigarette butts and other litter

Many homeowners are not aware that storm water runoff doesn’t go through the wastewater treatment system. Instead, all our storm water goes directly into streams, wetlands, lakes, estuaries, and oceans. Even a garden hose or a sprinkler’s water can carry pollutants.

For example, a rooftop connected to a gutter system that is adjacent to a sidewalk. This sidewalk may drain to a concrete lined storm sewer leading to a stream. This series of connected impervious areas may be thought of as a “storm water superhighway.”

Now is the time to remedy the runoff challenge before additional moisture comes from our spring rains.

Is all Angina Pain the Same?

Many of us are concerned with Angina. Angina is not a disease itself, but rather a symptom of coronary artery disease (CAD), one of the most common types of heart disease. This symptom is most often chest pain or discomfort that occurs when an area of your heart muscle does not get enough oxygen-rich blood. But is all Angina pain the same? The common pain can be a pressure or squeezing type pain in the chest, but pain in your shoulders, arms, neck, jaw or back can also be Angina. For example, pain in the jaw, if it comes and goes and is associated with physical activity or stress, may be a sign of Angina without the usual chest pain.

Tips for living with Angina:

• Discuss Your Concerns and Treatment of Angina with Your Medical Provider - it is important that your doctor knows your concerns and helps you plan how to control Angina.

• Know Your Pattern of Angina – type and causes of pain, how long it lasts, and if rest and medicine help.

• Know Your Medicines – know what medicines you are taking, if they are nitroglycerin or other nitrates which can interact with other medicines, how to take them, how to store them and talk with your doctor about any concerns or side effects.

• Physical Activity – know what level of activity brings on pain and plan to rest or relax before pain starts, stop and rest or take medicine if pain does occur, and call 911 if pain does not go away or lasts longer than usual.

• Emotional Stress – anger, arguing, and worrying can cause emotional stress. Try to limit stress or use relaxation techniques to limit the effects of stress.

• Eating Smaller Meals – smaller meals may help relieve chest pains if you notice an increase with large meals.

• Know What to Do In Case of Emergency – you and your family need to be prepared for severe attacks. Know the signs and symptoms of heart attacks because angina increases your risk for heart attacks, know how to take medicines such as aspirins and nitroglycerin, and how to access emergency medical care.
Do Video Games Affect Our Children’s Health and Development?

Many parents and grandparents are worried that video games are harming our children’s health. There are physical and emotional health concerns with excess video game playing. With the increase in availability and variety of ways that we can play video games, these concerns have increased. Children have access to games online and on handheld devices as well as the traditional connections to our television. Players can develop “Playstation Thumb” or Nintendoitis” from the overly repetitive strain in their arms and hands from the physical work involved with the controls. There can also be an increase in complaints of headaches and fatigue. There has been some research that suggests that sleep, memory, and verbal thinking can be affected by nighttime video game playing before bedtime.

Video games can also affect children getting up and out playing. Even though there is newer media which encourage being physically active like Wii and “Dance Dance Revolution”, children still spend too much time with video games and other un-educational screen time. There is concern that the violent video games have led to increased aggressive behavior in children. It can be hard for children to separate the video games from reality, especially for young children. Advice for parents is to monitor video game use. As with other screen time, limit non-educational screen times to no more than 2 hours a day for children and adolescents. Ask your children to show you how the game works. This will allow you to see if the game fits into what you want your child playing with or experiencing. Here are two web resources which have guidance on evaluating the appropriateness of media such as video games for your child, [http://www.esrb.org/about/resources.jsp](http://www.esrb.org/about/resources.jsp) and [http://www.commonsensemedia.org/game-reviews/all-ages](http://www.commonsensemedia.org/game-reviews/all-ages).

Cleaning Glass-Ceramic Cooktop

The glass – ceramic, smooth stove cooktop needs to be cleaned routinely to avoid burned on spills from becoming more difficult to remove.

* **For general cleaning** - Use a clean dishcloth with soap and water or with a non-abrasive cleaning powder such as Bon Ami®. Rinse and dry. Or apply a small amount of Cooktop Cleaning Crème with a non-abrasive cloth.

* **For moderate soil, metal marks from cookware or hard water marks** - Gently scrub with a non-abrasive cleaning powder or cooktop cleaning crème. If the stain is not removed, reapply the cleaning crème and cover with damp paper towels. Let stand 30 minutes and scrub again. Rinse and dry.

* **For crusty, burned on soils** - Use a single edge razor blade, placing it at a 30° angle, scrape off the spot. Clean any remaining soil with the cleaning crème.

**To avoid damaging the cooktop**

- Do not use abrasive cleaners such as cleansing powers, scouring pads, etc., as they can scratch the surface.
- Do not use chemical-based cleaning products containing chlorine bleach, ammonia or caustic agents, as they can discolor the surface.
Creating Colorful Eggs the Natural Way

With Easter just around the corner, many of us are thinking of getting our supplies for dyeing our eggs. This year try the natural way to dye eggs. You can involve the kids in helping get things together. See the list below for what items create which colors. You have two choices for dyeing, the boil method and the cold dipping method. The boiling method will create colorful eggs, but these can not be eaten afterwards and are for display only.

- **Boil method:** Place 6-8 eggs in a large pot and add water to cover 1 inch above the eggs. Add some white vinegar (2 Tablespoons per quart of water). Add the dye ingredients (up to 4 cups vegetable solids or 3-4 tablespoons of a colorful spice, like paprika, per quart of water). If using liquids like juice replace water with that liquid. Bring this to a boil. Turn heat to low and simmer for 20-30 minutes. Eggs dyed this way will end up rubbery and inedible, but you can use them for displays or egg hunts.

- **Cold dip Method:** Combine dye materials, vinegar and water in the same measures as in the Boil method. Simmer the liquids for 20-30 minutes without the eggs. Strain and cool the mixtures. Dip hard-boiled eggs in cold dye until desired color is achieved. You can even soak the eggs in the dyed liquids in the refrigerator for several hours or over night. Eggs need to be turned while soaking to ensure even dyeing. Dry dyed eggs on paper towels or in an egg carton. Store in refrigerator until use.

If you choose to use the cold dip method and want to be able to eat your eggs after dyeing them, keep these tips in mind.

- Do not allow eggs to stay out of the refrigerator for more than 2 hours.
- Only hide eggs in spots that are clean. For example, if hiding outside make sure you clean eggs before storing in refrigerator again.
- **Do not** eat the eggs that have been dyed with the boil method.

Try these ingredients to make naturally dyed colorful eggs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Color</th>
<th>Ingredient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orange</td>
<td>Paprika (four Tablespoons per quart of water), carrots, yellow onion skins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue</td>
<td>Canned blueberries, red cabbage leaves (four cups shredded per quart), purple grape juice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red</td>
<td>Lots of red onion skins, pomegranate juice, canned cherries with syrup, raspberries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pink</td>
<td>Cranberry juice, shredded beets (four cups per quart of water), juice from pickled beets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green</td>
<td>Spinach leaves, liquid chlorophyll</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greenish Yellow</td>
<td>Yellow delicious apple peels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellow</td>
<td>Orange or lemon peels, yellow onion skins, carrot tops, chamomile tea, celery seed, ground cumin, ground turmeric or saffron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mocha/brown</td>
<td>One quart brewed coffee, black walnut shells, black tea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other browns</td>
<td>Dill seeds, chili powder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purple or Lavender</td>
<td>Purple grape juice, violet blossoms plus 2 Tablespoons lemon juice, hibiscus tea, Red Zinger tea, red wine, blackberries,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For more information on things to do to make creative eggs this year, call our office.
Convection Cooking?

With more and more of the new ranges having the convection oven feature, there needs to be an understanding of exactly what it is, in order to enable consumers to use this feature more effectively. The definition of convection is, circulating air. In a convection oven, a fan circulates hot air over, under and around the food. The moving air disturbs the cold air around the food, allowing the heat to surround the food, which results in more evenly cooked and browned food, often shorter cooking times at lower temperatures, and the flexibility of using more racks.

Getting the Most from a Convection Oven

- An improper baking temperature will result in overbrowning and uneven results when baking cookies, cakes, etc.
- Improper roasting time – not reducing the roasting time will result in overdone meats. When convection roasting, roasting times should be decreased by 25 - 30 percent (roasting temperatures will remain the same). The benefits of convection roasting are not achieved when the food is covered or placed in a high-sided roaster.
- Using dark pans results in darker browning. Shiny, bright pans are recommended for convection baking of cookies and cakes.
- Using cookie sheets with sides will result in uneven browning because the sides interfere with the flow of air.
- Place pans correctly. When baking cookies on two or three oven racks, center the pans in front of the fan. This will improve air circulation and browning. If baking in pans with sides using two racks (i.e. cakes and pies), stagger pans so one is not directly over the other.
- Don’t crowd the oven racks. Allow at least 1-2 inches of space between the pans, oven walls and oven door.

Common Energy Myths vs. Fact

Some common myths about how we use energy in our homes are:

1. It takes less energy to boil water if you start with hot water from the tap. **Fact:** It takes essentially the same amount of energy (and costs essentially the same amount of money) whether you use hot or cold water. If you use hot water, you’ve already paid to heat the water in the water heater.
2. When an appliance is turned off, it’s really off. **Fact:** Most devices continue to draw power when they’re switched off, sometimes as much power as when they’re on! A large number of electrical products - from air conditioners to VCR’s - cannot be switched completely off without unplugging the device. These products draw power 24 hours a day, often without the knowledge of the consumer.
3. Closing off heating/cooling vents to unused rooms in your home saves energy. **Fact:** Closing off registers does not reduce the amount of air going through your system. It can create more pressure in the system, which will send more air to where it might not be needed. If there are leaks in the duct system, closing registers will make them leak even more. If you have a forced air system, closing off rooms can increase the amount of outside air leaking into the house, and inside (heated or cooled) air leaking out of the house.
4. The energy efficiency tax credit can be carried over to future years. **Fact:** The tax credit for products at 30% up to $1,500 CAN NOT be carried over to future years. You can’t even carry forward tax credit dollars from 2009 to 2010. But you can take part of the $1,500 in 2009, and the rest in 2010 - if they are for separate purchases (i.e., you spend $3,000 on windows in 2009 and get a $900 tax credit on your 2009 taxes, then spend $2,000 on an air conditioner in 2010 and get a $600 tax credit on your 2010 taxes.)
SHOULD YOU BYPASS OR BUY ORGANIC FOODS?

Organic farming is among the fastest growing segments of U. S. Agriculture. In December 2002, the National Organic Standards Board of the U. S. Department of Agriculture established a national standard for the term “organic.” Organic food is defined by how it cannot be made rather than how it can be made. Organic foods must be produced without the use of sewer-sludge fertilizers, most synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, genetic engineering (biotechnology), growth hormones and/or antibiotics. Any produce, grains, meat, dairy, eggs and processed foods can be produced organically. Before a product can be labeled “organic”, a Government-approved certifier inspects the farm where the food is grown to make sure the farmer is following the USDA “organic” guidelines.

Keep These Factors In Mind:

NUTRITION - USDA makes no claims that organically produced food is safer or more nutritious than conventionally produced food.

QUALITY AND APPEARANCE - The difference in organic food is how it is produced, processed and handled. Organic foods may spoil a little quicker because it is not treated with waxes or preservatives. It may also vary some in appearance, but not always.

PESTICIDES - Conventional growers use pesticides to protect their crops. This can leave a residue on produce. Some people buy organic foods to limit their exposure to these residues. Most experts agree that the amount of pesticides found on fruits and vegetables poses very little health risk.

ENVIRONMENT - Organic farming practices are designed to benefit the environment by reducing pollution and conserving water and soil.

COST - Organic foods often cost more than conventional foods. However, there are cost efficient ways to make organic foods work into your budget. Venture beyond the grocery store by shopping at farmers markets, joining a food co-op or a Community Supported Agriculture Farm (CSA).

TASTE - Taste is a personal consideration, so decide for yourself. Finding the freshest food available may have the biggest impact on taste.

Whether you become a fan of organic foods or not, shop wisely and handle your food safely. Read food labels carefully. Buy fruits and vegetables in season. Wash all fruits and vegetables thoroughly with running water to reduce the amount of dirt and bacteria. If you are concerned about pesticides, peel your fruits and vegetables and trim outer leaves of leafy vegetables in addition to washing them thoroughly. For more info call 255-5522.

Oven Baked Chicken Nuggets

**Ingredients**

- 1 egg
- 2 tablespoons milk
- 3 ½ cups cornflakes, crushed
- 1 pound boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cut into nugget sized pieces
- ¼ cup barbeque sauce, ketchup or mustard for dipping sauce
- Non-stick cooking spray

**Directions**

1. Preheat oven to 400°
2. Whisk the egg and milk together in a small mixing bowl with a fork.
3. Place cornflakes in a plastic bag; crush.
4. Dip chicken pieces in egg mixture, then shake with cornflakes to coat.
5. Put coated chicken on a baking sheet coated with non-stick cooking spray.
6. Carefully place pan in oven and bake for 15 minutes.
7. Carefully remove the baking pan from the oven.
8. Serve nuggets with barbeque, ketchup, or mustard dipping sauce.

**Hint:** Experiment with different spices such as Italian seasoning, garlic lemon pepper, paprika, soy sauce, dry ranch dressing mix, etc.

**Nutrition per Serving:** 250 Calories, Total Fat 3g, Saturated Fat 1g, Protein 30g, Total Carbohydrate 24g, Dietary Fiber < 1g, Sodium 480mg, Good source of iron.

Source: Cooking with EFNEP
Recipes for Eating Smart and Moving More Cook Book.
Be Food Safe

Follow these four basic tips for preventing food borne illnesses.

- **Clean** - Start off with clean surfaces, equipment and utensils. Also, clean your hands before preparing foods and anytime you work with uncooked meats, seafood or poultry, cough, touch your face, smoke, or your hands come in contact with dirt.

- **Separate** - Keep raw meat, poultry, and seafood and their juices away from ready-to-eat food.

- **Cook** - Even for experienced cooks, the improper heating and preparation of food means bacteria can survive. Use a food thermometer to check end cooking temperatures. Times may vary due to oven temperatures and slight differences in foods.

- **Chill** - Bacteria spreads fastest at temperatures between 40°F - 140°F, so chilling food properly is one of the most effective ways to reduce the risk of food borne illness. Foods need to get below 40°F within 2 hours to ensure safety at home. Keep refrigerators between 35°F and 40°F. Freezers should be below 0°F for best quality. Use refrigerator thermometers to check temperatures. You can also use food thermometers which read above 0° to check the actual temperature of foods. Store dry goods and non-perishable foods for best quality at temperatures between 50°F and 70°F.

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**Tatting Class, March 19 and 26, 10:00am - 12:00pm**

Tatting is a technique for handcrafting a particularly durable lace constructed by a series of knots and loops. It can be used to make lace edging to be used for decorative pieces. Learn how to make doilies, bookmarks, or other decorative items using the old lace making technique of tatting. Tatting is a very inexpensive hobby and lots of fun to do. You will need to bring 2 Tatting Shuttles, a ball of #10 or thicker mercerized cotton thread (2 balls in different colors can make beginner tatting easier), and sharp scissors. **There is a registration fee of $5.00.**

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