



Improving Family,
Resources & Health

CLOSE TO HOME

by Judy Harris

USU Extension Agent in Utah County

USE CREATIVITY TO PICK HOLIDAY GIFTS

If the thought of fighting holiday crowds turns you into a Scrooge, use your creativity to find gifts for those on your list. Look for potential gifts at the grocery, book, hardware, and specialty stores. These may be less crowded than department stores, especially if you can shop at off-peak times.

An office supply store or the stationery section of a large discount store offer possibilities for all ages. A pan of watercolors, brushes and paper for the budding artist; neon-colored paper for the teenage computer user; colored or charcoal pencils, pens, art gum erasers, rulers and compasses for the more serious artist or drafting student; caddies to hold supplies, drawing boards, and bulletin boards are possibilities.

You can find potential gifts at your local grocery store: nuts or dried fruit, an assortment of specialty mixes, ingredients for a favorite recipe, canned meats, etc.

Bookstores are full of gift ideas for all ages including calendars as well as tapes to listen to. Combine a specialty magazine with a related item such as an herb magazine with packets of seeds, trowel and terra cotta pots. Or get a craft magazine with appropriate supplies.

A cookbook makes a great gift for someone who enjoys cooking or *reading* about cooking. If you want to add something, select a specialty pan or unusual ingredient that goes along with the cookbook.

Money Management for Troubled Times

Recent events have changed our lives. This is an appropriate time to examine how we handle money--looking for ways to reduce our risks from a downturn in the economy or threat of job loss.

One of the most important areas to look at is the proportion of our expenses that are "fixed." Fixed expenses are those we cannot cut back if our circumstances change. These include mortgage payments, car loans, payments to the appliance or furniture store, student loans, minimum payments on credit cards, etc. In addition to debts, you may send money to a family member or a charitable organization that you personally consider a fixed expense.

Fixed expenses cannot readily be adjusted if our financial situation takes a turn for the worse. So one of the best ways to *prepare* for tough times is to reduce the proportion of our income going to fixed expenses. The *fewer fixed* expenses we have, the greater ability we have to adjust our spending if the need arises.

Pick one fixed expense--perhaps a high interest credit card--and pay more than the required minimum each month. When that debt is paid in full (this is important!) add that payment to the remaining debt with the highest interest rate. This process is called making fold down payments, or roll over payments, or power payments.

Some motivation would help you stick with the plan. So our office has a computer program that can show you how long it will take to pay off the debts as you are doing now and how much interest that will cost you (scary). Then it calculates the time and interest saved by making power payments (hopeful!). The service is free, and we can run as many scenarios as you want. You don't have to come to the office, although that is more fun. Call Judy at 370-8468. The office is open 8 to 5 with appointments after 5:00 if needed.

Holiday Safety Tips to Avoid Fires & Injuries

Each year, hospital emergency rooms treat over 8,000 people for injuries related to holiday lights, decorations and Christmas trees. In addition, Christmas trees are involved in more than 400 fires annually. Have a safe and happy holiday season by following these safety tips.

Trees

When purchasing an artificial tree, look for the label "Fire Resistant." Although this label does *not* mean the tree won't catch fire, it does indicate the tree will *resist* burning and should extinguish quickly.

When purchasing a *live* tree, check for freshness. A fresh tree is green, needles are hard to pull from branches and when bent between your fingers, needles do not break. The trunk butt of a fresh tree is sticky with resin, and when tapped on the ground, the tree should not lose many needles.

When setting up a tree at home, place it away from fireplaces and radiators. Because heated rooms dry live trees out rapidly, be sure to keep the stand filled with water. Place the tree out of the way of traffic and do not block doorways.

Lights

Indoors or outside, use only lights that have been tested for safety by a recognized testing laboratory, which indicates conformance with safety standards.

Check each set of lights, new or old, for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, or loose connections, and throw out damaged sets.

Use no more than three standard-size sets of lights per single extension cord.

Never use electric lights on a metallic tree. The tree can become charged with electricity from faulty lights, and a person touching a branch could be electrocuted.

Fasten outdoor lights securely to trees, house walls, or other firm supports to protect the lights from wind damage. Use only insulated staples to hold strings in place, not nails or tacks. Or, run strings of lights through hooks available at hardware stores.

Turn off all lights when you go to bed or leave the house. The lights could short out and start a fire.

For added electric shock protection, plug outdoor electric lights and decorations into circuits protected by *ground fault circuit interrupters* (GFCIs). Portable outdoor GFCIs can be purchased where electrical supplies are sold. GFCIs can be installed permanently to household circuits by a qualified electrician.

Decorations

Use only non-combustible or flame-resistant materials to trim a tree. Choose tinsel or artificial icicles of plastic or nonleaded metals. Leaded materials are hazardous if ingested by children.

Never use lighted candles on a tree or near other evergreens. Always use non-flammable holders, and place candles where they will not be knocked down.

In homes with small children, take special care to avoid decorations that are sharp or breakable, keep trimmings with small removable parts out of the reach of children to avoid the child swallowing or inhaling small pieces, and avoid trimmings that resemble candy or food that may tempt a child to eat them.



Wear gloves to avoid eye and skin irritation while decorating with spun glass "angel hair." Follow container directions carefully to avoid lung irritation while decorating with artificial snow sprays.

Fireplaces

Use care with "fire salts," which produce colored flames when thrown on wood fires. They contain heavy metals that can cause intense gastrointestinal irritation and vomiting if eaten. *Keep them away from children.*

Do *not* burn wrapping papers in the fireplace. A flash fire may result as wrappings ignite suddenly and burn intensely.

Chronic Wasting Disease Caution

Chronic Wasting Disease is in the same class of diseases as BSE (mad cow disease). Fortunately CWD has *not* been found in Utah in either deer or elk.

The Utah Department of Ag and Food did a survey of wild elk and deer harvested by hunters and conducted it two different years. All samples (over 600 each year, from all over the state) were negative both years.



However, CWD is present in wild deer and elk in an area of northern Colorado and southern Wyoming. If harvesting either animal from these areas, hunters should wear latex gloves while cleaning and skinning the deer, cutting up the meat, etc. For increased safety they should not eat brain, spinal cord, or retina (eyeball). They should *not* saw across the spinal column. Hunters should avoid the spinal column while removing the meat by knife. (Source: Ciell V. Bagley, DVM, USU Extension Veterinarian, Oct 2001)

Roasting Sunflower & Pumpkin Seeds

For seeds in the shell, heat the oven to 250^E. In a large shallow baking pan combine 2 cups seeds, 1/2 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce, 1 1/2 tablespoons melted butter, 1 1/4 teaspoons salt. Bake, stirring occasionally, until seeds are crisp and dry (approximately 2 hours).

For hulled seeds, bring 1 1/3 cups water and 3 tablespoons salt to boil and pour over 1 2/3 cups hulled seeds in bowl. Cover and let stand at room temperature 12 to 24 hours. Drain liquid from seeds, spread seeds evenly in a 10x15" baking pan and bake in 350^E oven for 25 to 35 minutes (stirring frequently) or till seeds are dry and puffed. Cool, stirring occasionally. Store in airtight container. Roasted pumpkin seeds will stay fresh for up to ten days. (Source: Georgia Lauritzen, USU Extension Food and Nutrition Specialist, as reported in *Margie's Mailbox*, Oct 2001)

Make Ahead Potatoes

8-10 medium potatoes (4-5 pounds)
 1 cup sour cream
 8-ounces cream cheese
 1/4 cup butter
 1/4 cup chopped chives (optional)
 additional butter and paprika to taste

Peel, cook, mash potatoes. Cream together sour cream and cream cheese. Add potatoes to cream cheese mixture, whipping in butter. Stir in chives, if desired. Place in greased casserole. Just before baking dot top with butter & sprinkle with paprika. Bake at 350^E for 1 hour.

Packet on Preparing Turkey

The "Talking Turkey" packet is an excellent resource for anyone wanting to bone up on turkey or for those teaching others. The 5-minute video (in English or Spanish) shows how to roast a moist, tasty turkey. Other materials in the packet include handouts and background pieces, including:

- Timing is *Not* Everything
 - variables that affect roasting time
 - approximate turkey cooking times
- Ten Steps to a Picture-Perfect Turkey
- Stuffing a Turkey Safely
- Top Ten Questions Asked about Turkeys
- Roasting a Frozen Turkey
- Outdoor Grill Directions for a Whole Turkey
- Smoke-cooking Turkey
- Carving Like the Pros
- Picture Showing Placement of Thermometer

Packet may be checked out of our office. \$20 deposit is required; \$19 refunded when packet is returned on time.

Ask Your Question Toll Free

Help is available in November and December from the following companies and agencies:

Butterball Turkey Line	1-800-BUTTERBALL
Reynold's Turkey Line	1-800-745-4000
USDA Meat & Poultry Line	1-800-535-4555
Land O'Lakes Holiday Bakeline	1-800-782-9606

Internet sites:

<http://www.butterball.com>
<http://www.fsis.usda.gov>
<http://www.landolakes.com>

Splendidorous Silver

If you will be pulling out silver dishes and utensils this holiday season, take note of these suggestions.

Preventing tarnish --Tarnish is a natural result of chemicals, such as sulfur compounds in the air. In addition, certain foods, such as eggs, mustard, and mayonnaise can cause tarnish. Salt can both corrode and tarnish silver. To prevent the damaging effects of these and other tarnish-inducing foods, wash silver items as soon as possible after finishing the meal. For best results, wash by hand, using hot water and dishwashing detergent. Rinse with hot water. Towel dry, using a soft, clean dishtowel.

Do not leave silver to drain-dry on a rubber mat. Contact with the rubber can also promote tarnish. Do not put rubber bands on silver as they cause tarnish.

Take care to separate silver utensils from stainless steel. Contact between the two can cause the silver to pit.

In between use, store silver in treated cloth bags, which are available through retailers who carry fine silver and china. Because wax paper does not collect moisture, use it to wrap the silver when storing it for extended periods. Store in a clean, dry area. Avoid storing or displaying silver near heat registers or radiators where it will be exposed to heated air.

Removing tarnish-- Silver with deeply "carved" patterns that are enhanced by an oxide or French gray finish should be hand polished with a high quality silver cream or polish.

Utilitarian silver (no deeply "carved" patterns, or oxidized or French gray finish) may be cleaned by dip or electrolytic methods of cleaning. Here is a procedure for electrolytic cleaning of silver using common supplies:

- Use an enamel pan. Fill with enough water to cover silver. (Silver is not in pan at this point.) Bring to a boil.
- Add 1 tablespoon salt and 1 tablespoon baking soda for each quart of water.
- Place a piece of aluminum foil in pan and add silver. Silver must touch foil or another piece of silver.
- Let stand till silver becomes bright. Remove with tongs.
- Wash, rinse and polish dry. Electrolytic methods give better appearance if followed by a quick, rubbing polish. (Sources: *Cleanliness Facts* by SDA, Nov/Dec 2000 and *Care of Housewares and Surfaces in the Home*, PNW 126)

Candle wax on the carpet!

Act quickly! Delaying may cause the spill to become a permanent stain. Blot liquids with a dry, white absorbent cloth or white paper towels. Gently scrape up semi-solids with a rounded spoon. Break up solids and vacuum.

Pretest any spot removal solution in an inconspicuous area. If color transfers to the cloth or there is damage to the carpet, select another solution!

Apply small amount of solution* to white cloth, and work in gently (do not rub) from the edges of the spill to the center to prevent spreading. Allow solution to remain on spill a few minutes. Be patient. Blot lots.

Continue to use the first agent as long as there is a transfer of the spill to the cloth. Be patient. Complete removal may require repeating the same step several times. Or you may need to move to the next solution.*

When the spill is completely removed, rinse the area with cold water. Blot with dry cloth again and again until all moisture is removed.

*There is a caution for each of these possible solutions:

Dry Cleaning Fluid— A non-flammable spot removal solution is preferred. Exercise caution when using a dry cleaning fluid. Never pour a dry cleaning solution directly onto the carpet or allow a dry cleaning solution to reach the backing. Dry cleaning fluids may destroy latex that holds primary and secondary backings together.

Nail Polish Remover— Two types of nail polish removers are available.

P One type contains acetone, a dry cleaning solvent. Use the same precautions as with other dry cleaning solutions.

P The second type contains amyl acetate, which is used in many paint, oil and grease (POG) removers. Many POG removers leave residues that may cause rapid soiling. When using a POG remover, always rinse the area thoroughly with a dry solvent. (See residue precautions).

Residue precautions— Many spot removal solutions leave residues in the carpet that may attract soil. Thoroughly rinse the area several times with lukewarm tap water. A mist-type sprayer is recommended to prevent overwetting. Blot with paper towels and pat dry after each rinse. Several rinses are often necessary to thoroughly remove residues. Blot lots. (<http://www.carpet-rug.com>)



Hinton Around the Yard & Garden

HORTICULTURE NEWSLETTER
by Adrian C. Hinton,
USU - Utah County Horticulture Agent

GREETINGS FROM THE COUNTY AGENT

Ho Ho Ho!
HAPPY
HOLIDAYS!

Gobble gobble gobble!
Be thankful - someday
you may have to give
all, like I do!



Late fall and early winter is a great time for avid or novice gardeners. Hopefully you have had success in "putting up" all those high quality fruits and vegetables that you have produced. Looking in your freezer or

on your shelves and seeing all that yummy food is a most rewarding sight. Of course you have put all the "new" bottles and packages in the back so that you can eat up last year's and save this year's for later.

This is also a great time to get the whole family involved in looking over last season's successes and reviewing some of the "slippage"!!!

Checking out the new varieties and tools in the current catalogs is another rewarding activity. The USU Extension offices are loaded with timely tips in all the various pamphlets and publications.

Stop by and get signed up for the "On the Home Front" newsletter.

I wish you all a very happy and successful holiday season!



TIMELY TIPS for NOVEMBER/DECEMBER

1. Be sure sprinkling systems, hoses and other water conveyors are drained to prevent freeze damage.
2. Check window screens and door weather stripping to prevent spiders and other bugs from coming in and heat from going out.
3. Remove annual flowers, bulbs and vegetables killed by frost.
4. Keep leaves raked up to prevent snow mold and other problems that can come to your lawn.
5. Repair and paint trellises, arbors, fences, benches and other garden accessories.
6. Mow lawn SHORT to prevent matting from snow and fertilize.
7. Start potting plants like paper whites, amaryllis, hyacinths and crocus in mid-November for Christmas giving.
8. Start ordering catalogs and seeds for next spring.
9. Prepare and plan for a safe and healthy holiday season.
10. Record all your garden/landscape ideas that were successful and those that were not.

CHOOSING THE “PERFECT” TREE FOR CHRISTMAS

by Paul Wilkey, Master Gardener/Horticulture Assistant



With Christmas rapidly approaching, it's time to start thinking of the “perfect” tree. The following are a few simple measures you can take to make your selection easier.

Begin your planning by deciding exactly where in your home you will

be displaying your tree. With this visual perception you will be able to tell what height you will need and whether all four sides of the tree must be suitable for viewing.

You should be careful to choose a tree that is the right height for the place you have chosen for it. Cutting large portions off either end will alter the natural shaping of the tree.

Be sure the tree you select is fresh. This is very important. The needles should be resilient, but not brittle. Try running your fingers down the branch - the needles should stay intact to the twigs.

Try shaking or gently bouncing the tree on the ground to see if the needles are firmly attached. If only a few fall off the tree, it is fresh and with proper care it should retain its freshness and serve you well for the holidays.

Always be sure the branches are firm enough to hold the weight of the ornaments and cords of lights. Also check for a good fragrance and color for the type of tree you have chosen.

By following these simple steps it should help you find a fresh, clean and healthy tree. Or, as we say, “the perfect tree”.

GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOODS VALUED BY UNITED NATIONS

The “Human Development Report 2001: Making New Technologies Work for Human Development” from the

United Nations Development Programme takes an upbeat tone on the progress of the world's nations and among other points, sees great potential in the use of genetically modified (GM) foods in developing countries. It finds that many developing nations might reap great benefits from GM foods, crops, and other organisms. The report acknowledges there are environmental and health risks to be addressed, but it asserts that these risks can be safely managed. One concern is that while the developed nations argue over a GM food's safety, the needs of the developing world are being ignored. For these countries, there is a need for crops that have higher yields, are drought resistant, or provide better nutrition. The report recommends greater public investment in research and development to ensure that biotechnology meets the agricultural needs of the world's poor. The full report can be found at <http://www.undp.org/hdr2001>. (C&EN 7/16/01)

WORD OF THE MONTH

CONVOLUTE

(kawn-voh-loot) From the Latin word *convolvere*, to twine around

By Sherman
Brough

This word is used for a major group of plants (Convolvulaceae) that have flowers that are rolled in bud and unroll as they bloom.

The family Convolvulaceae are mainly tropical herbs, shrubs, trees, and numerous vines. The best known representatives to us in Utah are in the genus *Convolvulus* (with 250 species) and includes morning glory and bind weed. *Ipomoea*, with about 500 species, includes more morning glory but also sweet potato (*Ipomoea batatas*). Also in the family are three species of dodder (*Cuscuta*) in Utah. Dodder is a stringy, parasitic plant found mostly in alfalfa fields and is almost as difficult to eliminate as is bind weed.

Bind weed is one of the most difficult weeds to eradicate because the rhizomes penetrate to such a great depth in the soil – up to ten feet*, and seeds may remain viable for more than fifty years! My front lawn is rapidly becoming a bindweed lawn. It looks like the Milky Way with all the white flowers in a dark green lawn. It actually looks quite nice.

Convolvulaceae does not include *Convallaria*, which comes from a word meaning “valley.” The common name is Lily-of-the-Valley.

* *Some of us would swear they go clear to China!*

PESTICIDES PROVIDE PUBLIC HEALTH BENEFITS

Infectious diseases are coming back strong after a lull in the years following World War II. The ability of disease germs to adapt to the human defense system and intense pressure from antibiotic use, combined with changes in society, have contributed to this comeback of many infectious diseases. Also, there are now several “new” diseases including Legionnaires’ disease, Lyme disease, ehrlichiosis, toxic shock syndrome and Ebola hemorrhagic fever. In just the last four or five years, we’ve seen the appearance of a new strain of bird influenza that attacks humans, a human form of “mad cow” disease, and new drug-resistant forms of *Staphylococcus aureus*. These new or emerging infectious diseases have raised considerable concern in the medical community about possibly devastating disease epidemics.

Many of these emerging or re-emerging infectious diseases are vector-borne, meaning they are transmitted by insects or other arthropods. Since 1975, dengue fever has surfaced in huge outbreaks in more than 100 countries. Some experts estimate that there may be as many as 100 million cases of dengue each year. The more dangerous forms of the disease, dengue hemorrhagic fever (DHF) and dengue shock syndrome (DSS) with internal bleeding and shock, mainly affect children younger than 15 and about 5 percent of the cases result in death. In the 1970’s only nine countries had experienced DHF outbreaks; to date 44 countries have had DHF cases or epidemics.

The malaria situation is worsening as well. There are now an estimated 300 to 500 million cases of malaria each year with 1 to 2 million deaths, mostly children. Several factors are responsible for the resurgence of malaria: 1) insecticide resistance in the vector mosquitoes; 2) drug resistance in the malaria parasite; 3) inadequate funding for malaria control; 4) civil strife with accompanying refugee problems; and 5) increased travel by non-immune expatriates. For example, 2-3 million new cases of malaria have been reported each year recently in Afghanistan as a result of disruption of control, civil disturbance, and migration.

Lyme disease, almost unheard of in 1979, is now the No. 1 tick-borne disease in the United States with about 16,000 cases reported each year. Other tick-borne diseases such as babesiosis and ehrlichiosis are also emerging. Several new *Babesia* species infecting humans have been found. Likewise, there are at least two *Ehrlichia* species in the United States that produce spotted-fever like illnesses. Others will likely be found.

Pesticides are indeed poisons. They are designed to kill things. But the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) registration process, requiring many years of product testing and review, helps ensure that EPA registered products are safe when used according to their label directions. Millions of dollars are invested in testing pesticide products for their relative safety to humans and the environment. Prospective pesticides are tested for harmful effects to adults, children, the unborn, and the environment. Some people claim that pesticides are ruining the environment and causing widespread disease, such as cancer, in the human population. But where is the evidence? Wildlife is rebounding after years of decline. There are more deer and wild turkeys in the U.S. now than at the turn of the century. Raptors are back. People are healthier and living longer. We must have pesticides readily available for use. Not only do we need pesticides, we need a wide variety of them with various labeled uses. Even “older” generation pesticides – such as organophosphates (Ops) – are needed. Pesticide resistance is developing to many of the newer synthetic pyrethroid compounds; keeping the Ops gives pest controllers, farmers, and vector control personnel another option in managing and preventing insect resistance.

I think it is safe to say that there will continue to be increased human population numbers, plenty of infectious diseases (both old and new), and widespread, frequent air travel. This is a combination bound to lead to disease epidemics.

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(ME, 4/01)



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**It's time to renew if your
expiration date is 10/2001**



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FITNESS FOR THE SOUL

Many people enjoy growing plants in the home. Besides adding beauty to the home, plants also can be beneficial.

Plants absorb the carbon dioxide that humans breathe out. In turn, the plants emit free oxygen. Laboratory test shave shown that spider plants can remove about 96 percent of deadly carbon monoxide from the air.

Try these plants to make your home a little more healthy:

- weeping fig
- rubber plant
- ivy
- spider plant
- sweetheart vine
- elephant ear
- peace lily
- pot chrysanthemum
- dragon tree
- palm



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The phone number for USU Extension is 370-8460. If you do not have a touch tone phone, stay on the line and the receptionist will help you. With a touch tone phone, at the greeting press the number of the desired subject area:

- 5) garden, yard, trees, insects
- 2) food, finances, clothing, housing
- 3) pastures, field crops, dairies
- 4) 4-H and youth

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