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# Making a Difference

In Tarrant County

## ★ VOLUNTEER AWARDS ★



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The Friend of Extension Award recognizes an individual or organization for outstanding service to the people of Tarrant County by their exceptional support and personal involvement in Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service.



### 2016 John South Spirit of Extension Award

Pepper Hitchcock

The John South Spirit of Extension Award recognizes a program area committee member for exemplary service in the design and delivery of educational programs which enhance the quality of life for the people of Tarrant County.

### 2016 Director's Award

### Lockheed Martin Aeronautics

The Director's Award recognizes Lockheed Martin Aeronautics for providing exemplary experiences for the 4-H youth of Tarrant County.



## Making A Difference in Tarrant County

# Tips to Help Children Make Good Choices

Marian Ross  
County Extension Agent  
Family & Consumer Sciences

Parenting can be very difficult at times, especially when children make decisions that parents disagree with. If a child makes an unwise choice, it doesn't mean the parent is a failure or the child will continue making unhealthy choices. Following are tips for parents on how to successfully help their children make smart decisions.

- **Love is the center of effective parenting.** Fathers and mothers both have what it takes to be effective parents.
- **Make the time you spend with your children count.** Read with them, play games with them, shop with them. Provide opportunities and moments when you are with them and there are opportunities to talk and especially discuss difficult topics.
- **Allow your children to learn from their mistakes when the "prices" are affordable.** Provide opportunities for them to make choices, avoid protecting your children from natural consequences and allow them to learn from their choices.
- **Teach your children how to set goals and solve problems instead of doing it for them.** Set limits on behavior while helping them find solutions.
- **Be honest and specific when praising and encouraging your child.**
- **Be aware of your children's emotions, and help them label their emotions.** Avoid telling your child how he or she should feel. What may not be emotional to you may be really hard for your child.
- **Keep calm if your child comes to you with a serious problem.** Be supportive, empathetic and let them learn from their choices.
- **Be aware of your own emotions and recognize when you need to take a time out.** Remember, it is okay to take time for yourself.
- **Model the words, actions and behaviors you expect from your child.**
- **Responsibility cannot be taught;** it must be "caught and learned" by providing opportunities for children to be responsible. Begin small and add responsibilities.
- **Use thinking words instead of fighting words.** Fighting words: "Don't talk to me like that." Thinking words such as: "You sound upset, I will be glad to listen to you when your voice is calm."
- **Avoid "siding with the enemy" and communicate understanding.**
- **Offer your child choices.** For example: Betty would you rather wear this red jacket or this green sweater. Don't offer a choice to your child you are not willing to follow through on.
- **Mean what you say and say what you mean.** Also realizing what you mean, some children may not understand.
- **Discipline doesn't always need to occur at the moment.** It is okay to tell your child why the choice they made was wrong and let him or her know you need time to think about the best consequence.

Many of us say – "It takes a village..." and it really does when it comes to raising children. Make sure that as you build your village, build it with purpose and variety. If you have people in your village that need assistance find resources such as health organizations, churches, community services as well as family and friends.

Remember perfection isn't part of the job description, parenting is one of the most difficult occupations, but the benefits out way the struggles. It takes time, support and love.

Adapted from: Utah State University Extension; Foster Cline and Jim Fay, "Love and Logic Parenting"

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# Heart Health and Diet: What Really Matters

Robin Hall  
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Heart disease is the leading cause of death for both men and women in the United States, accounting for nearly one in every four deaths. Aside from the immense financial costs associated with heart disease, many people also experience loss of quality of life. Incorporating healthy lifestyle practices helps keep your blood pressure and cholesterol normal, and can prevent the onset of heart disease. So if prevention is key, what are some specific steps you can take in order to prevent this often painful and debilitating disease from affecting you and your loved ones?

## Achieve a Healthy Weight

- People who are overweight (having a body mass index (BMI) of 25 or greater) have a higher risk of heart attack than those at a healthy weight. Some studies propose that the degree of overweight is directly related to the development of coronary heart disease. To calculate your exact BMI value, multiple your weight in pounds by 703, divide by your height in inches, then divide again by your height in inches.
- Experts suggest that a 40-inch waist in men and a 35-inch waist in women predict an increased risk for heart disease.
- Losing as little as 5 to 10 percent of one's current weight can greatly improve one's risk of developing heart disease.

## Be Physically Active

- A recent study found that inactivity is a greater risk factor for heart disease than obesity, high blood pressure, and even smoking in women older than 30 years.
- The American Heart Association (AHA) recommends at least 150 minutes of moderate exercise weekly. This works out to be about 30 minutes per day, 5 days per week. Examples of moderate exercise include walking briskly, water aerobics, ballroom dancing, and general gardening.
- The simplest way for sedentary people to increase their physical activity is to start walking. Consider getting the whole family moving; adding exercise is easier when it is a shared activity. Families can take a walk to the local park, or even play fun games like chase and tag.

## Adopt a Heart-Healthy Eating Plan

- Read the Nutrition Facts label and watch out for foods that have saturated fat or trans fat – these types of fats can raise your blood cholesterol level. The AHA has developed the Heart-Check mark; when you see this symbol on food packaging, it means that the product meets AHA criteria for saturated fat, trans fat, and sodium for a single serving of the food product.
- Based on normal, convenient foods and simple recipes, the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) Diet is rich in fruits, vegetables and low-fat dairy foods, with reduced saturated fat and total fat. This eating plan has been shown to not only lower blood pressure, but it can also lower your risk of stroke and cardiovascular disease.
- Researchers estimate that if all Americans followed heart-healthy eating plans like the DASH Diet heart disease cases would be reduced by 15 % and stroke by 27% nationwide. That translates to 225,000 fewer heart attacks and 100,000 fewer strokes every year.



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# Help Keep Your Brain Healthy As You Age

Markena Minikon  
County Extension Agent  
Nutrition & Health



## Keep Your Mind Active

Being intellectually engaged may benefit the brain. People who engage in meaningful activities, like volunteering or hobbies say they feel happier and healthier. Learning new skills may improve your thinking ability, too. For

example, one study found that older adults who learned quilting or digital photography had more memory improvement than those who only socialized or did less cognitively demanding activities.

Lots of activities can keep your mind active. For example, read books and magazines. Play games. Take or teach a class. Learn a new skill or hobby. Work or volunteer. These types of mentally stimulating activities have not been proven to prevent serious cognitive impairment or Alzheimer's disease, but they can be fun! Scientists think that such activities may protect the brain by establishing "cognitive reserve." They may help the brain become more adaptable in some mental functions, so it can compensate for age-related brain changes and health conditions that affect the brain.

## Stay Connected

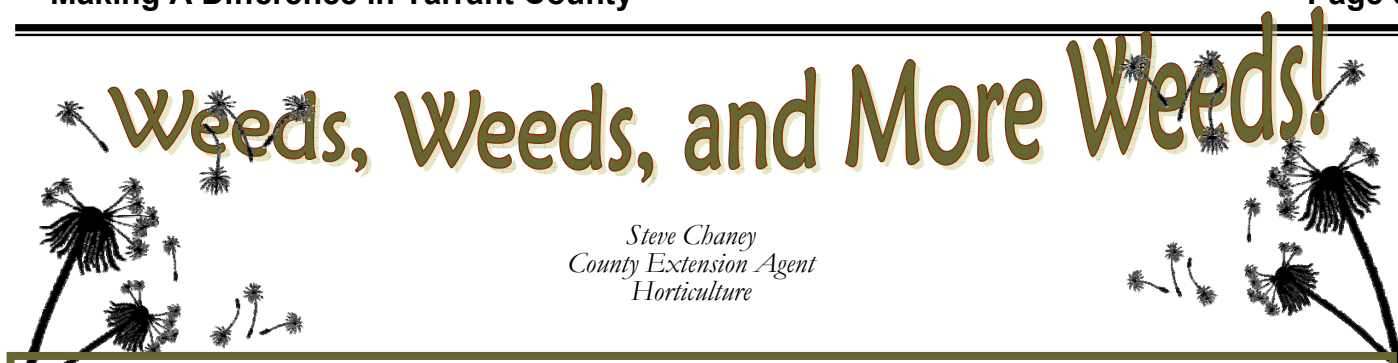
Connecting with other people through social activities and community programs can keep your brain active and help you feel less isolated and more engaged with the world around you. Participating in social activities may lower the risk for some health problems and improve well-being. So, visit with family and friends and you may also join programs through your Area Agency on Aging, senior center, or other community organizations.

We don't know for sure as of yet if any of these actions can prevent or delay Alzheimer's disease and age-related cognitive decline. But some of them have been associated with reduced risk of cognitive impairment and dementia.

Source – National Institute on Aging







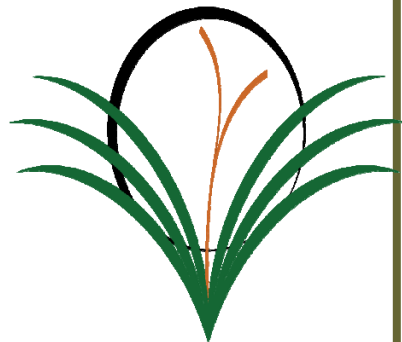
Steve Chaney  
County Extension Agent  
Horticulture

Weeds can be a huge challenge, whether in the lawn, vegetable garden, flower bed, or shrub plantings. Those of you who live in long-established neighborhoods may not agree, but everyone living in new subdivisions or on the outskirts of town agrees with this statement wholeheartedly.

Simply stated, a weed is an unwanted plant. One person's weed is another person's wildflower or native plant. Regardless, if YOU say it is a weed, then it is one. The question is how do you get rid of it in an environmentally friendly way? Selecting effective, environmentally sound management strategies and properly identifying the weeds you hope to manage are critical first steps.

It may sound surprising, but weed-killing chemicals (herbicides) should be the last strategy, not the first. Here are a few strategies you might want to try first before heading off to the local nursery and strolling down the pesticide aisle: First, work on improving and preparing your soil in your beds, as desirable plants grow better and faster in well prepared soil, thereby competing successfully against weeds. Second, prevent weeds from being brought into your landscape in the first place is critical. The primary way nutgrass and many other weeds enter the landscape is through trucked-in, contaminated topsoil or poor-quality turfgrass sod. Third, mowing regularly is the best strategy to keep weeds in check in your lawn. Few weeds can compete with vigorously growing, dense turfgrasses. Fourth, hand pulling weeds from the lawn, planting beds, and vegetable garden remains a sure way to successfully eliminate weeds. Fifth, mulching planting beds and gardens will also deter weeds effectively. Applying 2 to 3 inches of mulch will keep the weed seed from germinating, keep light away from seedlings, retard weed growth, or make the few weeds that do come up that much easier to pull. Using the right herbicide for the right weed is and should always be the final strategy. There are many herbicides that are on the market, many are used incorrectly. Most are chemical herbicides and the label should always be followed to the tee, if it calls for one ounce per gallon then 2 ounces is not better! Organic herbicides are also available yet have limited applications and success.

Know your enemy, and identify or at least classify the weeds you are trying to manage. There are two general types of weeds: broadleaf and grassy. Knowing which one you're dealing with will determine the best management techniques that will be the most successful for you. **Broadleaf** weeds have "broad", as opposed to "narrow grasslike" leaves. Dandelion is perhaps the best known example of a broadleaf weed. Broadleaf weeds are "dicots", having two seed leaves. **Grassy** weeds are similar in appearance to lawn or ornamental grasses. They have narrow leaves and are "monocots" with one seed leaf. Dallisgrass, Johnson grass, nutgrass and even bermudagrass are well known grassy weeds. Once you have identified the type of weed you have, you can choose correctly the right management plan. Will it be "pre-emergence herbicides" or "post-emergence herbicides" or better yet a program incorporating the use of both? Getting rid of weeds is not an overnight process but the sooner you get on a program and stick to it, the sooner you will be weed free!! Remember, read and follow all labels, it's the LAW!!!



## Droughts and Floods and Plants

Laura M. Miller  
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Horticulture



Plants do more than make pretty places. The right plants in the right places can improve the urban environment in many significant ways: buffering the sound of traffic, catching particulate air pollution, bringing down high summer temperatures with shade and built in evaporative cooling systems, even slowing down storm water to minimize flooding.



Adding green infrastructure, or the use of plants to provide ecosystem services like these, can serve as an alternative to the expensive construction of traditional underground storm water management infrastructure, but plants do require ongoing maintenance, and of course, water.



It is a bit ironic to switch from talking about too much water to too little water, but the truth is that our North Texas weather is prone to extremes, hot and then cold, wet and then dry. Landscapes are often called water wasters but in truth, the people watering them are quite probably the real water wasters.

A recent study conducted by AgriLife Research with support from the San Antonio Water System, the cities of Austin and Georgetown and the San Antonio River Authority tested the drought tolerance of 96 ornamental species under four different irrigation regimes: 0% Potential Evapotranspiration (ET<sub>o</sub>), 20% ET<sub>o</sub>, 40% ET<sub>o</sub> and 60% ET<sub>o</sub>. It is estimated that most people apply water at about 70% ET<sub>o</sub>.

Can we use this information? Of course we can. When compared with the San Antonio/Austin area, our average winters are a little colder and wetter, and our average summers are a little hotter and drier. The average annual ET<sub>o</sub> for Dallas/Fort Worth is just 2.38 inches less than San Antonio. If we keep USDA hardiness zones in mind, San Antonio is in zone 8b, while we are in zone 8a, we can look at plant performance and come up with a drought surviving plant list with data to back it up.

How did they get that data? Plants were established for four months under irrigation at 100% ET<sub>o</sub>. Following that, they underwent 12 weeks of drought under one of four ET<sub>o</sub> irrigation treatments, followed by four months recovery under normal rainfall. Growing beds were mulched. A rolling pole barn prevented rainfall from irrigating treatments in the 0% ET<sub>o</sub> beds—quite possibly the same rolling pole barn used in the seminal 60 day turf grass drought survival study of 2008.

Before we talk about plant species, the four month establishment period is very important to note. A similar ongoing University of California Davis study of landscape plant water use has a one year establishment period at 80% ET<sub>o</sub> before the drought treatments are applied. Every plant needs a chance to grow some roots before water becomes severely limited.

Plant appearance was rated on a 0-5 scale that ranged from dead to lush. Plants given a 4 (stable) or 5 (lush) rating were considered to be aesthetically acceptable. Ratings were compiled and a Plant Performance Index was developed.

What can you plant this spring in North Texas if you are planning to spend July and August in Colorado? About one-fifth (21%) of tested plants made it through the 12 week period of drought without any supplemental irrigation or rainfall, and still looked stable or even lush. These survivors include some North Texas favorites like Cenizo, Confetti Lantana, Red Yucca, Turk's Cap, several splendid salvias (Henry Duelberg, Mystic Spires, and Mexican Bush Sage), as well as the hard working ornamental bunch grass trio of Gulf Muhly, Lindheimer Muhly, and Mexican Feathergrass.

With only 20% ET<sub>o</sub>, half of the plants tested had acceptable Plant Performance Index. That's pretty impressive. You can read about it yourself at <http://twri.tamu.edu/publications/reports/2016/tr-495/>.

A Resolution to Consider.....

Shannon Johnson-Lackey  
4-H Extension Agent  
Cooperative Extension Program



A new year often means new resolutions. Some common resolutions that people make are to get in shape, eat right and/or save money. At the beginning, everyone is energized and ready to be a better version of them. This is a time of increased awareness, when gyms report record numbers in new membership, healthy eating classes are at capacity and budgeting worksheets are being printed off and shared at lightning speed. While all of these things are important, maybe we should all RESOLVE TO GET MORE CRAFTY. There's no better feeling than making something with your hands with the people you love. The following craft ideas are kid-friendly, utilizes materials you may already have on hand and has a STEM focus. They were found in the "8 Fun STEM Crafts for Kids" article on the following website: <http://www.parents.com/>

1. Balancing Buddy  
WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Wine cork
- Two 12-inch bamboo skewers
- Toothpick
- Modeling clay
- Decorations (like paper, googly eyes, and paint)

WHAT TO DO

1. Place the cork upright on your work surface. Press the pointy end of a skewer into one side of the cork at a 45-degree angle (the ends should point up); repeat on the opposite side. Press the toothpick into the top center of the cork.
2. Roll two equal-size balls of modeling clay and press them onto the ends of the skewers. Decorate the cork as desired.
3. Place the tip of the toothpick on your finger to see if the toy balances. If it leans to one side, adjust the angles of the skewers until it stands up straight.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Every object has a center of gravity—the point where its mass is evenly distributed. Because the clay balls are heavier than the cork, they bring the center of gravity to the bottom of the toothpick. In order for the toy to "stand," the weight of the balls must also be in balance: Adjusting the skewers helps to compensate for any difference in size and allows Buddy to stay centered.

2. Yardstick Launcher  
WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Clean metal can (like a coffee can)
- Scrapbook paper
- Tape
- Yardstick
- Acrylic paint and paintbrush
- Hot glue
- 4 plastic party cups
- Rubber band
- Ping-pong balls or other small objects

WHAT TO DO

1. Cover the can with scrapbook paper and secure with tape. Paint the yardstick; let dry.
2. Use hot glue to attach the plastic party cups to one end of the yardstick (an adult's job). Secure the can to the middle of the yardstick with a rubber band.
3. Place ping-pong balls or other small objects in the cups, then stomp or press down firmly on the free end of the yardstick to launch the projectiles across the room.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

A lever is a simple machine made from a rigid beam (the yardstick) and a fulcrum (the can). When your child applies downward force to one side, it elicits an opposite reaction, sending the unattached load (the ping-pong balls) flying. You can change the amount of effort it takes to move those balls: The closer the can is to the cups, the less work it takes to move the projectiles.

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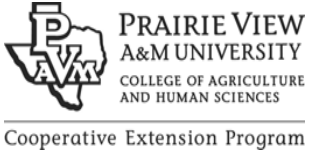
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