



FARM AND HOME NEWS



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FOR THE WEEK OF May 2, 2005

Alfalfa

Beginning May 2nd, ISU Extension staff will begin field checking and measuring alfalfa fields using the Predictive Equation for Alfalfa Quality (PEAQ) method. PEAQ is a research-based procedure to help alfalfa growers estimate the timing of their first cutting based on quality goals. The first alfalfa cutting is usually the largest yielding harvest of the season and therefore of great economic importance to alfalfa growers and livestock producers such as dairy operations. The PEAQ measurements we take are specific to that alfalfa field but the results we report keep area producers informed and encourages them to take their own measurements.

Measurements are taken twice a week, on one alfalfa field per county. We will do our first trial run on May 2nd and go to June 2nd or until the fields are harvested whichever come first.

Container Garden

Last year my wife attended the container gardening program we offered at Holubs Greenhouse and was delighted. In fact the planter that she made in class hung on the front of our home all season long and looked wonderful.

This workshop will be held on Saturday May 14th from 9:00 10:30 am at Holubs Nursery & Greenhouse 429 8th St. S.E. in Cresco. After a demonstration and explanation of the plants, each participant will receive a 12-inch hanging basket that they will fill with plants they select from the greenhouses.

Cost for this workshop will be \$10.00 plus the price of the plants. To register, please call the Howard County Extension office at 563-547-3001.

Mulch

As we start planning our gardens the subject of mulching comes to mind. Organic mulches serve several important functions in gardens and in landscape planting. Mulches help control annual weeds; conserve soil moisture; reduce soil erosion; reduce the severity of some diseases, such as blight on tomatoes; moderate soil temperature; and provide an attractive background for plantings. When choosing which organic mulch to use consider availability, cost, appearance, function and durability. My favorite is shredded bark mulch. They are available in bulk quantities and also in bags that are easy to handle. They are attractive, weed free, decompose slowly, and are reasonably priced (on sale). The bark mulches are good to use around trees, shrubs, and roses and in the perennial flowerbeds. Apply most organic mulches 2 to 4 inches deep for best results. In my vegetable garden I prefer to use grass clippings. Remember to allow the lawn clippings to dry before applying to the garden. Using fresh green material will produce an unpleasant odor. If the lawn has been treated with a broadleaf herbicide do not use the clippings.