



FARM AND HOME NEWS



CHARLIE BAIER, Iowa State University Howard County Extension Education Director

FOR THE WEEK OF November 28, 2005

Christmas Trees

Each year in the United States, more than 22 million Christmas trees are harvested. This tradition, of live Christmas trees dating back to the 16th century in Strasbourg, Germany. Natural Christmas trees are renewable, In fact, each year more than 69 percent of trees sold are recycled by community programs into useful mulch for flowers and trees or for fish habitat in Iowa lakes and ponds. If you have the space on your property, a used Christmas tree makes a great home for small animals to over-winter. Iowa has approximately 150 growers, producing trees for choose and cut operations and retail lots. For a list of Iowa growers visit the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship's Web site at <http://www.agriculture.state.ia.us/christmastree.asp> The Christmas tree brings such joy into our homes, so remember to give your grower a smile and a pat on the back for a job well done.

Women, Land and Legacy Meeting to Be Held

A meeting of the Women, Land and Legacy will be held on Thursday, December 1, 2005 at 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Grange Hall at the Cresco Union Savings Bank in Cresco. This meeting will feature the topics of estate planning, wills, and trusts, with Todd Kowalke, attorney, will be there to answer all of your questions. Refreshments and door prizes will be provided by volunteers of the Women, Land and Legacy group. The meeting will last two hours or less. Bring an interested friend, neighbor or relative. Please RSVP to Howard Soil and Water Conservation District Office/NRCS at 563-547-3040.

UPCOMING MEETINGS INFORM PRODUCERS ON ORGANIC FARM PRODUCTION

Producers and producer groups interested in learning about organic markets and the transition from traditional production to organic production are invited to attend an "Is Organic Farming Right For Me?" workshop located throughout Iowa on Dec. 14, 2005; Jan. 24, 26, 31 or Feb. 2, 2006. The meetings are sponsored by Iowa State University Extension Value Added Agriculture Program, with assistance from the ISU Organic Agriculture Program.

"Demand from consumers for organic food is outpacing supply," said Margaret Smith, program specialist for the Value Added Agriculture Program at Iowa State University Extension. "However, lack of knowledge on the transition to organic production is an intimidating factor preventing many producers from considering a switch." Topics include a look at organic markets, including grain, beef and dairy. A local organic buyer will discuss marketing of organic products at each workshop. Extension specialists discuss the transition itself, including economics, cash flow, regulations and the certification process and production issues such as segregation of grain, fertility and weed management and livestock production. A panel of organic producers will share their experiences in transitioning to organic and marketing their products. Meeting locations include: Dec. 14 - Prairie's Edge Nature Center, Cresco; Jan. 24 - US Bank Community Meeting Room, Vinton; Jan. 26 - Hotel Ottumwa, Ottumwa; Jan. 31- Lakeshore Family Restaurant, Storm Lake and Feb. 2 - Midwest Opportunities Building, Turner Room, Corning. Pre-registration is strongly encouraged. The cost of the workshop is \$15 or \$20 at the door and includes lunch, breaks and materials. Producers can register by calling the Value Added Ag office at 515-294-0588 or filling out a registration form located on <http://www.agmrc.org/agmrc/calendar/valueaddedseriesbroch.pdf> For more information, contact Margaret Smith or Madeline Schultz at the Value Added Agriculture Program at (515) 294-0588 or schultz@iastate.edu.

EXTENSION WEEK

I would like to thank everyone who stopped by our office to help us celebrate extension in Iowa. The extension idea was developed when a group of Sioux County farmers asked Iowa State College if its research about corn planting was applicable in northwest Iowa. A cooperative venture between the farmers and the college to answer that question was the beginning of Extensions effort to bring educational opportunities to all people. Over the years, ISU Extension agricultural programs have introduced farmers to soil conservation practices, vaccination standards, and crop management techniques. Extension has given demonstrations in fields and on research farms. Education has been delivered on corn trains, in the cabs of farmers' pick-ups, along the sides of fields, and in classrooms. Today's ISU Extension agriculture programs are organized under the heading of Agriculture and Natural Resource. Extension has field specialists in agriculture engineering, crops, beef/beef forage, dairy/dairy forage, farm management, horticulture, livestock and swine. These field specialists serve the agricultural needs of citizens across our county and the state. Congratulation to Trent Kuhn of Cresco who winning the drawing for the Iowa State University Basketball.