



Nov/Dec 2017

# Garden to Table

News from the Yard, Garden and Locally Grown

## Recipe of the Month

For holiday guests you weren't expecting but are delighted to see!

### Hurry Up Baked Apples

#### Ingredients:

- 2 medium size tart apples (Granny Smith, Braeburn, Cortland, Jonathan, Fuji)
- 1 teaspoon white or brown sugar, packed
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 2 tablespoons oatmeal
- 2 tablespoons (total) raisins, sweetened dried cranberries, chopped walnuts or other nuts
- 1 container (6-ounces) low fat vanilla yogurt



#### Directions:

1. Cut apples in half lengthwise. Use spoon to remove cores and hollow out a space 1" or more deep. Arrange apple halves, cut sides up, in microwavable dish. Cut thin slices off bottoms to keep from tipping.
2. Combine sugar, cinnamon, oatmeal, raisins, cranberries, and nuts. Fill each apple half with sugar mixture.
3. Cover with plastic wrap. Fold back one edge 1/4" to vent steam.
4. Microwave 3-3 1/2 minutes or until apples can be cut easily. Remove from microwave. Let sit a few minutes.
5. Spoon yogurt over the top. Serves 4

See nutritional information at ISU Extension and Outreach website, [Spend Smart. Eat Smart Spend.](#)

## In the news...

Congratulations to the **graduates** of our 2017 **Master Gardener** training!

Please welcome them and help them connect to meaningful local volunteer projects.



### Rock Rapids Community Garden

Breaking ground on the garden—we took soil samples and soon the plots will be tilled and will rest over the winter.

The site is located about 2 blocks south of the Lyon County Fairgrounds.



Send an email to [rrcommunitygarden@gmail.com](mailto:rrcommunitygarden@gmail.com), if you are interested in a plot for 2018.

## I spy with my little eye...Cut Christmas Trees in the Stores!

Beth Doran, Master Gardener, shares some tips on selecting the "perfect" Christmas tree for your holiday season.\*



First, pick out a tree that fits your holiday season. Spruces will drop their needles the quickest followed by firs and pines, respectively. Of the pines, Scotch and red pines retain their needles longer than white pine. You can also perform some simple tests to determine freshness:

- Look for a healthy green color (Scotch pines have a natural yellow tint)
- Select a tree having a fragrant odor
- Check for a sticky resin on the butt end that transfers easily to your hands
- Feel the needles to see if they are pliable
- Bounce the tree lightly on the ground to see how many needles fall off
- Examine the tree for strong branches

The most important thing to maintain a fresh Christmas tree is to make sure it can take up water. Make a cut 1/2 to 1-inch above the original cut perpendicular to the stem and then two diagonal cuts on the butt end just prior to putting it in the stand. Check the water level daily as the tree may uptake 1-2 quarts of water daily. Do NOT let the tree dry out.

\*Excerpt from ISU Extension and Outreach Clippings article, *Making Memories with the Christmas Tree*, published November 20, 2017.



# November/December



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
19 Click <u>underlined links</u> for more information on the topic...	20 	21	22 <u>Protect your hybrid tea roses this winter with soil and mulch</u>	23 HAPPY THANKSGIVING 	24	25
26	27 <u>Is your lawn mower winterized and garden tools cleaned and stored</u>	28 	29	30 <u>Protect young trees and shrubs from rabbit damage with wire fencing</u>	1 December	2
3 Check the water level in the Christmas tree reservoir	4	5	6 <u>Clean birdfeeders and refill</u>	7 	8	9 <u>Prune oak trees in winter</u>
10 	11	12 HANUKKAH BEGINS AT SUNDOWN	13	14 <u>Poinsettia care</u>	15	16 
17	18	19	20 <u>Visit a holiday poinsettia show</u>	21	22 	23
24 31 HAPPY NEW YEAR'S EVE!	25 MERRY CHRISTMAS	26 	27	28 <u>Winter care of houseplants</u>	29	30



## 2018 Growing Together Mini Grants

The Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Master Gardener program has teamed up with Human Sciences Extension staff to increase food security in Iowa. Thanks to U.S. Department of Agriculture SNAP-Education funding, mini grants will be awarded to Master Gardeners again in 2018 ([read the guidelines here](#)).

Multiple counties may partner together for one application submitted through the extension office so if you have a project in mind that meets the grant criteria, please contact me as I plan to submit an application. The grant deadline is Jan 11, 2018 but grant participants will meet sometime in December to finalize the projects to be included in our grant application.

## Volunteer Service Opportunities

Master Gardeners' volunteer time and service in Northwest Iowa communities that resulted in over \$4,000 worth of service (nearly 200 hours)!

We donated over 1500 pounds of fresh produce to area food pantries!

If you are in need of volunteer service hours, please let me know. Master gardeners need a minimum of 20 volunteer hours to remain active.

## Continuing Education

If you are in need of continuing education hours, please let me know. Master gardeners need a minimum of 10 continuing education hours to remain active.

## ***Enter Your Hours by December 31***

Since 1979, Iowa Master Gardener volunteers have been extending the impact of Iowa State University Extension and Outreach to hundreds of thousands of people.

Don't wait until the garden is iced over to report your Master Gardener volunteer and continuing education hours for the year. Log in to the Volunteer Reporting System here:

<https://mastergardenerhours.hort.iastate.edu/>

**Thank you for all that you do!**

# Topics on Yard, Garden & Local Food

## New Year's Resolution: Garden More It's Good for You

Of course, we all know about the nutritional benefits of growing your own food. Eating ripened vegetables and fruits right off the vine is superior in nutritional quality than items trucked hundreds or thousands of miles to reach the store shelf. Plus many studies have reported that families with vegetable gardens just eat more vegetables. Often times, they not only eat more vegetables but try a more varied selection of them. Gardeners are more likely to enjoy greens such as mustard, Swiss chards and collards, more cabbage, zucchini, peppers and squash in addition to commonly consumed vegetables like tomatoes, carrots and corn. This is true for children as well. It seems even a finicky eater will sample his or her own garden creation.

Then there are the physical benefits of gardening. Did you know that a person weighing 154 pounds can burn 330 calories in an hour by doing light gardening or yard work? According to the USDA, adults gain substantial health benefits by doing at least 150 minutes (2 hours and 30 minutes) a week of moderate-intensity physical exercise such as light gardening or yard work.

Regular physical activity can reduce your risk of chronic diseases. Gardening provides the type of exercise generally described by experts as beneficial toward keeping fit. It improves balance, range of motion and builds physical endurance. Gardening also gives us strength training. One gallon of water equals about 8 pounds. So when you are carrying that decorative watering can to hydrate your flowers or hauling a large bag of potting soil, keep telling yourself that these weight-bearing exercises are lowering your risk of osteoporosis.

One thing we may not think much about is the restorative benefits of gardening. It has long been understood that environment influences one's emotional well-being and that having greenery around helps us relax. Research shows that interacting with plants can reduce stress and there is growing evidence from studies done in hospitals that just viewing gardens or greenery can greatly aid with a patient's recovery. The positive effects of gardening on a person's mental and physical health have given rise to an entire profession called therapeutic horticulture. Plants restorative benefits have triggered the creation of "healing gardens" at hospitals, nursing homes, senior centers and correctional institutions. Many schools have also incorporated gardening into their curriculum. Students who work together on horticultural projects gain social skills as they learn how to respect one another and work cooperatively. Gardening helps them build self-esteem and teaches patience.



Actually, gardening teaches all of us about patience. Gardening offers numerous rewards though we have to wait for many of them. In a world where the appeal of instant gratification seems all too prevalent, gardening insists on an investment in the future. Gardens allow for your world to slow down and take a pace directed by nature. It is nice to be able to sit back and simply wait for nature to take its course. Though the wait for a flower that is just about ready to bloom or a fruit that is nearly ripe can sometimes drive you crazy, we are eventually rewarded with a beautiful blossom or a delicious bite to eat. And the joy it brings reminds us that the wait was worth it.

So, for a New Year's resolution, add gardening to the list. If you don't have a space of your own, think about gardening with friends or joining a community garden. Together with the nutritional, physical and restorative benefits, gardening keeps us growing and connected. There are always new plants or new gardening techniques to learn and new opportunities to share with other gardeners.

# Yard and Garden: Construct a Homemade Christmas Wreath

By Richard Jauron, Greg Wallace | [Article published Wednesday, November 15](#)

It might be hard to believe, but the Christmas season is just around the corner. One way to make the holiday season memorable is with a wreath, and a fresh, homemade wreath can really brighten a gathering. Making a wreath isn't as difficult as you might think.

## ***What materials are needed to construct a fresh Christmas wreath?***

Materials needed to construct a Christmas wreath include a pruning shears, scissors, wreath frame, No. 22 or 24 gauge florist wire, wire cutter and evergreen branches. Decorative materials, such as ribbon (bows), pine cones, holly, various fruits and ornaments may be used to finish the wreath.

Box style wire frames, florist wire, bows and other materials can be purchased at craft or hobby stores. Box style wire wreath frames are commonly available in 8- to 24-inch-diameter sizes. A 16-inch-diameter wreath frame is ideal for most home decorations.

Evergreen branches (greens) can be obtained from the home landscape. A small amount of judicious pruning won't harm trees and shrubs. Greens also may be purchased from garden centers, florist shops, and Christmas tree lots or farms. Additional materials, such as pine cones, can be purchased or collected outdoors.

## ***What is the proper way to construct a Christmas wreath?***

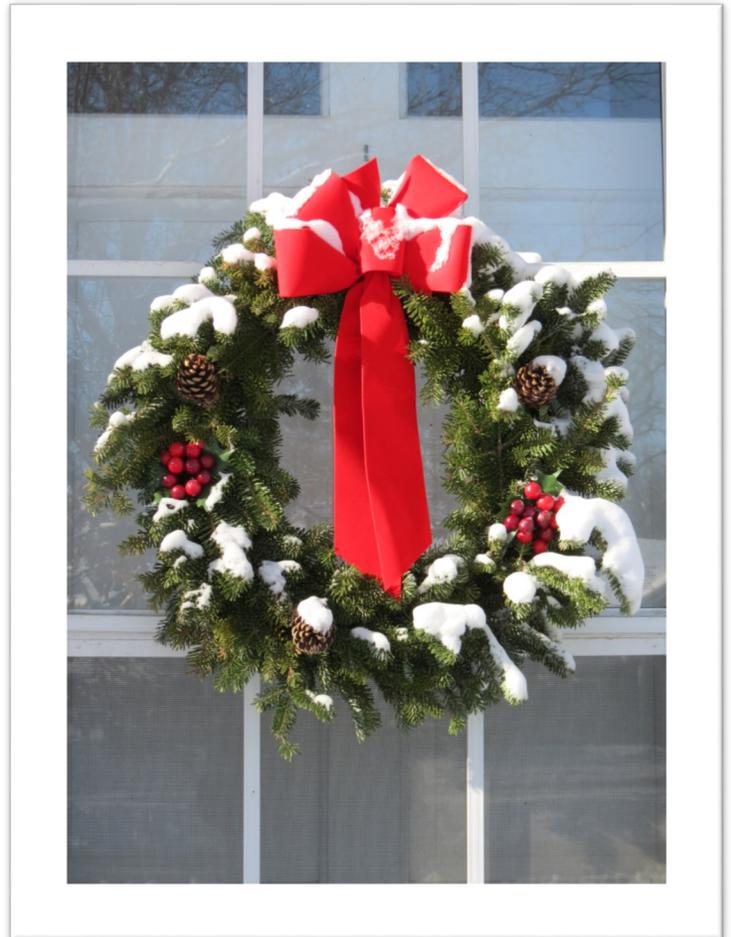
Begin by cutting the greens into six-to-eight-inch sections. Next, firmly attach the end of the wire roll to the frame. Place a small bundle of greens on the frame; then fasten the base of the twigs tightly to the frame with two or three turns of the wire. Position the second bundle of greens so as to cover the base of the first group.

Continue this procedure around the frame, placing the groups close together to produce a thick, full wreath. Tuck the base of the final bundle of greens beneath the foliage of the first group and fasten it to the frame. Decorate the wreath with a bow, cones, ornaments, etc. Wire each item separately and fasten it to the frame. Finally, attach a wire hanger to the top of the wreath frame. The wreath is now ready for hanging.

## ***How long can I expect a wreath to remain fresh?***

Wreaths hung outdoors should remain fresh for three to four weeks. The average life of an indoor wreath, however, is about seven to 10 days. Indoor wreaths should be promptly removed when they become dry. The life of an indoor wreath can be prolonged by hanging it up only during special holiday occasions. Place the wreath in a plastic bag and store in a cool location, such as a garage, during the remaining time.

Iowa State University Extension and Outreach horticulturists can help answer questions about creating a fresh Christmas wreath. To have additional questions answered, contact the ISU Hortline at 515-294-3108 or [hortline@iastate.edu](mailto:hortline@iastate.edu).



# Save the Date

## Fall Farminars from the Practical Farmers of Iowa (PFI)

Every Tuesday evening starting at 7pm. Webinars are free and open to the public. See [PFI](#) for a complete schedule.

**Nov. 19-20**

[17th Iowa Organic Conference](#), Iowa City, IA.

**Nov 28**

**Holiday Design Workshop**, at the Woodbury County Extension Office, Sioux City. [Register here](#).

**Dec 7**

**National Farm to School Network Webinar: Trending Topics: Youth Engagement through Farm to School, 2-3pm ET**

Farm to school initiatives across the country are changing the way young people view and consume fresh, local foods and interact with their community. This month's focus on youth engagement through farm to school will highlight unique approaches and initiatives to engage youth in their communities and food systems and empower youth to be leaders and active voices in the farm to school movement. Join us for the webinar to hear speakers from as they discuss initiatives, best practices, resources and more to boost youth engagement in farm to school. [Register here](#).

**Jan 27, 2018**

**Seed Starting and Swapping.** Join us for a seed starting workshop. We'll be planting geraniums seeds. There will also be an opportunity to swap seeds, garden tools, gardening books and gardening stories. We'll have apple cider and treats.

Location: Sibley Public Library

Time: 10am-11:30am

Free and open to the public

**Jun 13-16, 2018**

[Upper Midwest Regional Master Gardener Conference](#), Chaska, MN

**Sep 20-27, 2018**

**Gardens & Culture tour to Normandy, France**. Registration and deposit for the tour is due Dec. 1, 2017. [Click here for details](#).

**Sep 28-30**

**South Dakota Master Gardener Update: Spreading Our Roots Through Service**, annual master gardener conference in Sioux Falls.

**Upcoming Master Gardener Meet and Greets starting in December! Stay tuned!**

## Decorating with Holiday Greenery

Everyone has their own tradition as to when to put up the Christmas decorations. With my family, it is right after Thanksgiving. To gather decorative greenery, many of us can start right in our own backyard. I am able to collect pine boughs and pine cones, and juniper branches adorned with miniature, blue berries. Branches from our Japanese yew add dark green color highlighted with bright, red berries. I first collect items I find on the ground but will also trim a branch or two off a plant. If you are gathering live greenery, remember that you are actually pruning the plant so carefully decide where to make a cut and how many branches to take. For greenery I don't have in my yard such as cedar or boxwood, I will check at local garden centers. I will also ask for the tree trimmings from garden centers selling Christmas trees. Keep in mind that some holiday greenery such as the yew are poisonous and should be kept clear of children and pets.

Evergreen boughs of pine, fir, cedar, or spruce work well as a base when creating displays for table tops, fireplace mantels and baskets. Sprigs of these needle evergreens can also create festive wreaths and door swags. Boxwood branches too make a striking wreath.

Another interesting decoration is the evergreen kissing ball. This is a traditional decoration often made with fir, spruce or boxwood greenery and was commonly hung in archways or on porches. A renewed interest in using the kissing ball in lieu of mistletoe has come about in the last few years.

To enhance your decorations add pine cones, cinnamon sticks, fresh herbs, or dried flowers for a one-of-a-kind presentation. Decorating with fruits as well can draw attention. Perhaps this year try placing a pineapple on top of your mantel-piece. The pineapple is a symbol of hospitality. Cranberries can be placed in a clear vase for a burst of holiday red color or, of course, strung with popcorn for an old fashion garland.



## Quick Links

[Find us on Facebook](#)

[Iowa Master Gardener](#)

[MG Hours Online](#)

[Yard & Garden FAQs](#)

[Hort & Home Pest News](#)

[Flavors of Northwest Iowa](#)



**FLAVORS OF NORTHWEST IOWA**  
Locally Grown Food and Culture

**For questions, comments or to contribute an article or photo**  
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