Extension to Families At Work...At Home

What’s in Your Mailbox?

What’s in Your Mailbox? Clever marketers often put the name of a key product or service in an email address. If you need unbiased information you’ll need to look closely to tell if the brochure, webpage, or mail is from a firm or business that has cleverly created a sales document that looks like a source of credible information.

If you need details about Medicare, for example, the best source is Medicare.gov. Your mailbox can contain information sent by Medicare Associates, Medicare Institute, My Medicare, etc. As an Email, it might look like My Medicare.com (not.gov) or Medicare Services.org.

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau released a report in 2013 analyzing the amount of money spent on providing financial education to consumers and the amount spent trying to influence consumer’s decisions about financial products. The report found that for every dollar spent for unbiased education information, $25 is spent on financial marketing. This includes the purchase of mailing lists that were created when you were a customer or you answered questions on a form that ended up creating a profile of you and a resulting prospects list that can easily be generated by a computer. It’s a source of income for magazines, manufacturers, stores, and webpages who sell lists.

You can limit some direct marketing (both postal mail and email) by using the services of DMAChoice.org (https://ww.dmachoice.org). They provide the opt out services to stop most junk mail from landing in your mailbox. Check out their site for more information about marketing and steps you can take to limit the sale of your personal information.

Brenda Schmitt

Schmitt@aastate.edu

641-512-0650
Yard & Garden: Lawn Mowing Tips

Proper mowing practices play a vital role in helping to maintain a healthy, sustainable home lawn. Horticulturists with Iowa State University Extension and Outreach answer questions about lawns and lawn mowing. Homeowners and gardeners with lawn questions should contact horticulturists at Hortline by emailing hotline@iastate.edu or calling 515-294-3108.

What is the proper mowing height for a lawn?

Kentucky bluegrass lawns should be mowed at a height of 2.5 to 3 inches in the spring and fall months. Mow bluegrass lawns at a height of 3 to 3.5 inches in June, July and August. A higher mowing height in summer helps to cool the crowns of the turfgrass plants, encourages deeper rooting and provides more leaf area for photosynthesis during the stressful summer months.

Mowing below the recommended range may scalp the turf and cause the turfgrass to deteriorate. Low mowing heights make the turfgrass more susceptible to drought, high temperature and wear injury. In addition, low mowing heights increase the likelihood of weed problems.

Mowing too high reduces tillering and causes matting of the grass. Reduced tillering results in fewer and coarser plants. Matted grass creates a micro-environment that encourages disease development.

How often should I mow my lawn?

Kentucky bluegrass lawns should be mowed at the height of 2.5 to 3 inches in spring and fall. Set the mower blade to a height of 3 to 3.5 inches during summer.

As a general rule, never remove more than one-third of the total leaf surface at any one mowing. For example, to maintain a lawn at 3 inches, the grass should be mowed when it reaches a height of 4.5 inches.

Mowing frequency is based on the growth rate of the turfgrass. Weather conditions, cultural practices (such as fertilization and irrigation practices) and other factors determine the growth rate of turfgrass.

Kentucky bluegrass and other cool-season grasses grow quickly in spring when weather conditions are favorable. The growth of cool-season grasses slows in summer and then picks up again in fall. Fertilizing and irrigating the lawn on a regular basis promote turfgrass growth. In spring it may be necessary to mow every four to five days, possibly only once every one to two weeks in summer, with more frequent mowing again in the fall.

Should I remove the grass clippings when mowing the lawn?

When the lawn is mowed properly, grass clippings do not need to be removed or bagged. Small clippings filter down into the turf and quickly decompose, returning essential plant nutrients to the soil. Lawn clippings do not significantly contribute to thatch development.

Grass clippings may need to be bagged or raked and removed when mowing extremely tall grass. You also may want to bag the grass clippings and use them as a mulch in vegetable and flower gardens.

What are some good mowing practices?

Whenever possible, mow the lawn when the grass is dry.

Wet grass is more difficult to cut and occasionally clogs rotary mowers. Also, it's safer to mow the lawn when the grass is dry, as there is less risk of slipping and being injured by the mower.

Mow the lawn with a sharp blade.

Sharpen the mower blade each spring. Thereafter, periodically inspect the blade and sharpen as needed. A dull blade tears the ends of the grass blades. The damaged tissue dries out, giving the turf surface a whitish appearance. Also, the torn leaf tissue loses greater amounts of water and increases the possibility of disease problems.
Beef: How can we afford it for Dinner......

It’s almost grilling season but beef prices are high. In fact, they are at an all-time high and are expected to remain high for the next year or two. Why? The number of cattle in the US is low due to high grain prices and dry weather conditions. Cattlemen are increasing their herds but it takes a long time to increase the number of cattle (a calf born in the spring of 2014 would be bred in 2015, might have a calf by 2016 and that calf couldn’t come to market until 2017).

I love grilled hamburgers, but when prices get over $3.50 a pound I start looking for ways to save. Here are 7 ideas.

1. Buy on sale. Meat usually goes on sale for a week at a time. Stock up and freeze the extra. Keep track of the deals on ground beef and only buy when the sales match your “never-pay-more-than” price.

2. Buy in bulk. If a 10# package costs $.20 less per pound you are saving $2.00 by buying the larger package (If you will take the time to package it correctly when you get home and if you have the space in the freezer to keep it).

3. Mix fresh ground turkey, ground chicken or ground pork with ground beef in equal amounts.

4. Switch to ground pork burgers, ground turkey or chicken burgers instead of beef for your patties.

5. Add TVP (textured vegetable protein) to ground beef. Just add the dry nuggets to the raw ground meat and mix together with your hands or a spoon. Use about one part meat to one part TVP; you can adjust these amounts according to your own preferences.

You can freeze the mixture just as you would plain hamburger or ground meat. Just place meal-sized batches of the meat mixture into freezer bags or containers and freeze. Or make patties and freeze. When you’re ready to use some, just thaw the bag like you would normally.

TVP is sold in most grocery stores in a 10-12 ounce bag. A common brand is Bob’s Red Mill, but any brand is fine. You may have to ask someone to help you find it the first time.

6. Add 1/4 - 1/2 cup of crushed cereal, oatmeal, small bread cubes, grated vegetables such as potatoes or carrots, minced mushrooms, cooked rice or mashed beans to the ground beef before you make the patties. The University of Illinois has a publication called Go Further Burgers which gives more details.

7. Instead of having hamburger patties, go with sloppy joes or mairdrites.

For more money saving tips check out our Spend Smart Eat Smart website: http://blogs.extension.iastate.edu/foodsavings/

Our office also has great Healthy Homemade Cookbooks and Healthy Calendars!
Family Storyteller Program beginning May 22

Family storyteller is an early literacy program designed to increase the amount and quality of time parents and young children (ages 3-5) spend together in literacy programs. Bring the magic of books alive in this FREE 6 week program. Each week you will receive a new book, crafts and activities. Prepare your child to grow in independence and succeed in school. Children will: increase their language skills, come to love reading, have special time with parents. Don’t Miss out at the Titonka Public Library beginning Thursday, May 22 through June 26, from 2:30 to 4 pm. If interested call Becky @ 641-584-2261.

Winnebago County Fair
www.winnebagocoiowafair.com
July 17 - 20, 2014

Iowa State Fair
www.iowastatefair.org
August 7-17, 2014

Extension programs are available to all without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age or disability.