Extension to Families At Work...At Home

Getting Parenting Information “Just in Time”

What can a baby see right after birth? How much should a 1-year-old eat? Should a 3-year-old have a hearing test? These and many more questions keep parents awake at night wondering how they can be a better parent to their children, said Mackenzie Johnson, a human sciences specialist in family life with Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. Fortunately, a free and easily accessible resource is available just in time to provide some answers.

“Parenting is hard and there is so much information available via the Web and social media sites, that parents often are confused about what is best for their children and family,” Johnson said. ISU Extension and Outreach, in partnership with extension specialists across the country, offers a resource called Just in Time Parenting to help eliminate some of the confusion.

“Just in Time Parenting is a series of newsletters designed to deliver research-based information to families in a free, convenient and easy-to-follow format,” explained Johnson. Each newsletter centers on a specific age, starting prenatally and continuing through age 5. Newsletters for the first year of life focus on each specific month, then from age 2 to 5 each newsletter covers a 2-month age span.

All of the newsletters are available for download from the website or can be delivered electronically via email, Johnson said. “Parents and other caregivers can subscribe for free to the newsletters by entering an email address and child’s date of birth, and the newsletters will arrive just in time according to the child’s age.”

Each issue has information on what it’s like to be that age, including “How I Grow and Talk,” “How I Respond” and “How I Understand and Feel,” as well as a “Help Me Learn” section full of ideas on how to engage young children. In addition to features available in every issue, each newsletter includes hot topics related to the specific age focus, such as teething, toilet teaching and safety rules as children become more independent.

“Just in Time Parenting offers ask the expert and frequently asked questions section as well, reassuring parents and caregivers they are not alone in their questions,” Johnson said. Just in Time Parenting is available in both English and Spanish. For more information, check out www.extension.iastate.edu/human sciences/just-time-parenting or contact our office. Another great site for child related information is www.scienc eofparenting.org.
Yard & Garden: Properly Dividing Perennials

AMES, Iowa — Herbaceous perennials (those that die back in the fall and emerge in new growth in the spring) are commonly divided for three reasons: to control size, to rejuvenate plants and to propagate a prized perennial. Horticulturists with Iowa State University Extension and Outreach offer tips on the proper way to divide perennials. To have additional questions answered, contact the ISU Hortline at 515-294-3108 or hortline@iastate.edu.

Do I need to divide the perennials in my garden?

Some perennials, such as garden peonies, can be left undisturbed for 50 or more years. Others need to be divided periodically to contain their spread or to rejuvenate declining plants. Perennials, such as bee balm and obedient plant, are vigorous growers. They grow so rapidly that they begin to crowd out neighboring plants within a few years. Bee balm and other vigorous growers should be divided every two to three years. After dividing the perennials, replant some of the divisions, give others to relatives or neighbors and discard remaining plants in the compost pile. In contrast, the performance of some perennials, such as bearded iris, begins to decline after several years.

If not divided every three to five years, bearded irises usually don’t bloom well because of overcrowding. Declining perennials should be divided to rejuvenate the plants. While division may not be necessary, many perennials can be divided on a periodic basis to obtain more plants. It’s best not to divide butterfly weed, false blue indigo and several other perennials as these plants have deep taproots. Attempts to divide perennials with deep taproots are often unsuccessful.

When should I divide my perennials?

The best time to divide perennials varies with the different plant species. Early spring (just as new growth begins to appear) is the best time to divide aster, chrysanthemum, hosta, bee balm, sedum, yarrow, obedient plant and ornamental grasses. Bearded iris should be divided in July or August. Late summer/early fall is the best time to divide peonies. Daylily, garden phlox and coreopsis can be successfully divided in early spring and late summer/early fall.

How often can I divide my perennials?

If you would like additional plants, many perennials can be divided on a periodic basis. The frequency of division depends on plant vigor. Most fast growing perennials, such as aster, coreopsis, daylily, hosta and garden phlox, can be divided every two to three years. Perennials that grow rather slowly, such as peony, can be divided every four to five years. Some perennials, like false blue indigo and butterfly weed, don’t like to be divided and should be left undisturbed in the garden.

How do I go about dividing perennials in spring?

Dig up the perennials in early spring just as new growth begins to appear. Divide each plant clump into sections with a sharp knife. Each division should contain several shoots and a portion of the root system. Replant the divisions immediately. Keep the newly divided perennials well watered through spring and summer. Most newly divided perennials do not bloom well until their second growing season.

The Extension Office has Perennials for the Sun, Perennials for the Shade, Deciduous Shrubs & Midwest Annuals and Perennials publications available for purchase.
Reconsidering the Egg

Experts have warned against diets high in cholesterol for years and have suggested, for example, limiting egg yolk intake. The previous Dietary Guidelines for Americans® stated that Americans eat too much cholesterol and that high-cholesterol foods like eggs should be limited. Preliminary reports, however, indicate that the 2015 guidelines may no longer consider cholesterol as a nutrient of concern for over-consumption.

New research suggests that dietary cholesterol intake may not significantly increase blood cholesterol levels or increase the risk of heart disease in healthy adults. Saturated fat and trans fat in the diet are of greater concern for keeping blood cholesterol levels down than the actual cholesterol content of food. However, it is still recommended that we consume limited amounts of foods high in saturated fat or trans fat (e.g., butter, margarine, fats in meat, and high-fat dairy).

Eggs are an inexpensive protein food that is relatively low in total fat and saturated fat and rich in vitamins and minerals. Therefore, eggs can be part of a healthy diet. It is still recommended to eat them in moderation and prepare them with low-fat cooking methods like boiling or poaching.

*The Dietary Guidelines for Americans are updated every five years by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Department of Health and Human Services. They provide dietary and physical activity recommendations for Americans ages two years and over to reduce risk of chronic disease and promote overall health.


Too Many Credit Card Offers??

Recently, I was sharing some tips to help people deal with their finances. These questions came up: How many receive credit card offers in the mail? What do you do with those offers that you don’t fill out? Do you throw them away? Do you shred your mail?

All those credit card offers, especially if they’re not carefully disposed of, create a prime risk for identity theft. Would you like to reduce your junk mail and your risk of identity theft?

For more than 15 years, we consumers have had the right to opt out of direct marketing campaigns by notifying the three national credit reporting agencies that we do not want any lists that are shared with businesses seeking new customers. There are two ways to start the process:

1. Call 1-888-567-8688 FREE

2. Or go to www.optoutprescreen.com

You may immediately opt out for a five year period. However, if you wish to opt out permanently, you must “confirm” your request in writing by submitting a signed Permanent Opt-Out Election form.

I signed up for Opt Out for life about 6 years ago. My credit card offers have become almost non-existent. This is one consumer protection program that actually works. Follow this blog at http://blogs.extension.iastate.edu/moneytips/
Spring has arrived here in North Iowa and with that brings questions on yard and garden, home and insects. Extension offers many resources to help you with getting your answers.

- **Insect, Weeds & Tree** can be brought into our office and we can get you some help. There may be a small fee for this service.
- Questions on the **lawn or garden** can be directed to our horticulture specialist in Ames - Richard Jauron at 515-294-3108.
- **Home and family** can be answered by the Answerline 800-262-3804.
- **Well Water tests** are now done by appointment with Ron Kvale. Contact him at 641-585-4763 or 641-903-9214.
- **Soil Sample Kits** can be picked up at our office and sent in for the results, there is a fee for your choice in testing.
- **Radon Test Kits** can be picked up at the Winnebago County Public Health office in Forest City. 641-585-4763

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**Iowa State University Extension & Outreach Resources**

Iowa State University Extension & Outreach is at your fingertips with many blog & resourceful websites

Need information on parenting, gardening, home and garden; the list can go on, here are some to check out!

- **Science of Parenting**— www.scienceofparenting.org
- **Teen Line**—1-800-443-8336 & **Healthy Families** 1-800-369-2229
- **Just in Time parenting**—www.extension.org/parenting
- **Answer Line—Home and Family Questions**—www.extension.iastate.edu/families/answerline 1-800-262-3804
- **Ag Decision Maker**—www.extension.iastate.edu/agdm
- **Beginning Farmer Center**—www.extension.iastate.edu/bfc or call 877-232-1999
- **Iowa Concern Hotline**—www.extension.iastate.edu/iowaconcern—1-800-447-1985
- **Spend Smart Eat Smart**—www.extension.iastate.edu/foodsavings
- **Master Gardener**—www.mastergardener.iastate.edu
  - **4-H**—www.extension.iastate.edu/4h

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