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Summer 2008

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HORSE HEALTH

Home on the range

Chuck Knibbe found that his calling was back at the ranch

Here & There

Summer festivals and events are happening all over America. We can't list them all, but here are some you might find worth attending:

MINNESOTA HOMEGROWN KICKOFF
Richmond, Minn., May 30-June 1
Enjoy jam sessions by more than 25 regional bluegrass and old-time bands, dances, music workshops, and crafts. Explore the campground's horseback riding, shing, and swimming. At El Rancho Mañana Campground & Riding Stables. Admission charged. For information, call 800-635-3037.

Photo by Jan Bengten

Brightly-colored hot air balloons will dot the sky over Canton, Miss., at the Mississippi Championship Hot Air Balloon Race.

68TH ANNUAL WHOOP-UP TRAIL DAYS AND RHUBARB FESTIVAL
Conrad, Mont., June 6-8
A children's carnival, antique motor show, rodeos, and parades are all part of the fun. On Saturday, satisfy your appetite with a free pancake breakfast or stroll Main Street for a taste of all things rhubarb — pies, cookies, jellies, ice cream, and more. Various locations in Conrad. Admission charged for rodeos only. For information, call 406-271-7791.

WAH-SHUN-GAH DAYS
Council Grove, Kan., June 20-22
Pounding drums, ceremonial dances, and colorful costumes of the Kaw Nation's powwow de ne this festival, named for the tribe's last full-blooded chief. Also features carnival, parade, auto show, storytellers, magicians, jugglers, and musicians. Various locations in Council Grove. Admission charged. For information, call 800-732-9211.

BLUEBERRY BASH
Princeton, N.J., June 28-29
Roam through fragrant pick-your-own blueberry bushes, then relax on a wagon ride through orchards and elds rife with summer's bounty. Enter your favorite blueberry recipe in the juried bake-off, or enjoy the fruits of owner Pam Mount's labors at her blueberry-inspired buffet. At Terhune Orchards. Free. For information, call 609-924-2310.

AN AMERICAN CELEBRATION AT MOUNT VERNON
Mount Vernon, Va., July 4
Freedom rings throughout the grounds of George Washington's beautifully preserved estate with costumed military re-enactments, a wreath-laying ceremony at Washington's tomb, and a patriotic performance by the National Concert Band of America. Admission charged. For information, call 703-780-2000.

MISSISSIPPI CHAMPIONSHIP HOT AIR BALLOON RACE
Canton, Miss., July 4-6
The sky comes alive with color with competitive balloon ights and dazzling balloon glows at dusk. Live music, a children's play area, and more. At Northpark Mall and Canton Multipurpose and Equine Center. Free. For information, call 601-355-6276.

FINGER LAKES FIBER TRAIL TOUR
Watkins Glen, N.Y., July 9-13
Follow the thread (literally) during this unique adventure where you'll visit alpaca, sheep, and angora goat farms that produce superb eece and wool, learn spinning, knitting, weaving, and dyeing techniques, and browse yarn and crafts shops. Various locations in Finger Lakes Region. Admission charged. For information, call 607-535-9790.

Photo courtesy of Terhune Orchards

It's all blueberries all weekend at the Blueberry Bash in Princeton, N.J., where you can pick your own, enter a bake-off, and enjoy the taste of fresh berries.

BBQ'LOO AND BLUES, TOO!
Waterloo, Iowa, July 18-19
Friendly competition heats up at this 8th annual event as contestants vie for $10,000 in cash and prizes in categories including Barbecue, Chili, Side Dishes, and Desserts. Features live music. At Lincoln Park. Free. For information, call 319-291-2038.

SELMAN BAT WATCH
Freedom, Okla., July 24-26
Discover the prairie on a guided walk to the viewing area, then witness millions of Mexican free-tailed bats ll the sky on their nightly hunt. At Alabaster Caverns State Park. Registration required. Admission charged. For information, call 405-424-0099.

TOM WATSON WATERMELON FESTIVAL
Thomson, Ga., Aug. 2
Test the range of the watermelon slingshot, sample recipes featuring the juicy summertime staple, or go for glory at the watermelon eating or seed spitting contests. Includes crafts, games, food, and live bluegrass music. At Hickory Hill, 502 Hickory Hill Drive. Free. For information, call 706-595-7777.

Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Bluegrass and Old-Time Music Association.

Jam sessions by more than 25 regional bluegrass and old-time bands will provide the soundtrack to the Minnesota Homegrown Kickoff in Richmond, Minn.

Celebrating farming's past

When the Sussex Antique Power Association's annual Engine Show sets up for the 50th year, John Kaufman will be there, too, with his restored farm equipment, just as he has for nearly 30 years.

The annual show, which began ve decades ago in Sussex, Wis., as a simple threshing demonstration among a handful of farmers, now draws thousands to see old steam traction engines, threshing machines, corn shellers, and antique trucks, cars, and tractors.

Kaufman, who calls himself a "John Deere guy," enjoys buying old farm equipment and restoring it back to its original condition. Other farm equipment a cionados appreciate his work, too; he's sold several of his restorations.

A corn picker that he restored and displayed at one Engine Show now sits in Colorado at the home of a collector who has more than 200 of them, he says.

"I don't plan to sell them, but my tastes change," Kaufman explains. "I sold that (corn picker) and bought another one and restored it and sold the second one."

No doubt, collectors will be eyeing Kaufman's displays at this year's Engine Show, which will be held Aug. 23-24 at Sussex Village Park/ Steam Museum. If you see him, stop by and say hello.

If you have participated in an annual event for many years, we'd like to hear about that, too.

And, as always, we genuinely hope you enjoy reading and living Out Here.

Sincerely,

Your friends at Tractor Supply Company

OUT HERE

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LIVING LARGE OFF THE GRID

Families enjoy the comforts of home with no electric bills

By David Frey

Photography by Michael Burke

Linda Parkinson had found the perfect home site. It was surrounded by redwoods on the banks of Northern California's Mad River, with views stretching out to the Paci c Ocean.

The slice of paradise came with a catch, though. It was 20 minutes from town, and hooking up to the power lines was going to cost her $15,000 and leave a line of poles in her front yard.

So Parkinson went ahead and built the house, a 2,000-square-foot dream home outside Aracata, Calif. Instead of tying in with the electric company, though, she powered her home with solar panels, keeping it completely self-suf cient and off the grid.

"I've had no electric bills for 27 years," Parkinson says.

No electric bills and no regrets. Parkinson is among tens of thousands of people across the country, maybe far more, who power their homes with renewable energy and stay off the grid altogether.

For some, it's an environmental statement. For others, it's a political one. For most, though, it's a simple matter of economics. The cost of hooking that perfect piece of land in the country into the grid can simply be too expensive to be worthwhile.

Living off the grid doesn't mean living like a hermit, though. Families can enjoy all the comforts of urban living, but their electricity doesn't come from a power plant. It comes from the sun, or the wind, or water, or sometimes, a combination.

"There's no de ning characteristic of people who do this," says Richard Perez, editor of *Home Power* magazine. "They all want one thing: electricity. And they're moving to a place where it's not available from a utility."

Perez estimates at least 140,000 people across the country have gone off the grid, and the number keeps growing. He's one of them. He built his home on 40 acres in Oregon's Siskiyou Mountains in 1970, nine miles from the nearest power line. He looks out at California's Mount Shasta from his front window. Meanwhile, solar panels give him all the comforts of home, 365 days a year.

"Off the grid, hey, renewables are the best game in town," he says.

'A FINANCIAL CHOICE'

Technology has improved dramatically in recent years, especially in solar panels. Prices have come down, and many states offer incentives for solar power, making it an even more affordable alternative. Wind and microhydroelectric plants can be even less expensive.

Dan and Diane O'Neil split their home's power supply between solar panels and a wind generator at their home outside Billings, Mont., on a bluff overlooking the Yellowstone River.

"We're not trying to make a statement," Dan says. "It was truly a nancial choice for us."

When the O'Neils were told it would cost upwards of $75,000 to connect to the power lines, they decided to be their own power plant.

They built their home with ef - ciency in mind. It's a well-insulated ranchette, with a woodstove for heat in the winter. South-facing windows bring in heat in the winter. Blinds keep it cool in the summer.

They use energy-ef cient appliances, light their home with compact uorescent bulbs, and opt for a low-energy evaporative cooler instead of power-hogging air conditioning on hot summer days.

Their solar panels and wind turbine provide all the heat for the house, and store the energy in batteries for when the sun goes down and the wind stops. At rst, a back-up generator was on standby in case the batteries ran low. Lately, though, they've actually hooked onto the grid, when a neighbor paid for an extension to his house. Even though they can hook into the grid, they rarely do, using it instead as a back-up power supply, just in case.

"I have a dishwasher, a computer, a microwave. All the things everybody else has," Diane says. "You just have to think about it."

That means turning off lights when they're not being used. The O'Neils even switch off their power strips so that the clock on the microwave isn't drawing power when it's not being used.

Living off the grid doesn't mean living like a Luddite — someone who opposes technological innovation. Perez telecommutes from his mountain home, running computers hooked up to the Internet via satellite. Parkinson, an artist, runs a pair of computers, scanners, and printers out of her home.

It's not about getting away from technology, she says. It's about using technology to let people live where and how they want.

In California, where storms and wild res can knock out power to homes, Parkinson says she's never lost power since she built the home in 1981. Friends come to her house to do the laundry when their power is out, she says.

"I've got a 2,000-square-foot custom home that is totally comfortable," she says. "People can't believe we're off the grid."

David Frey writes in Carbondale, Colo.

Linda Parkinson, who must keep a check on her solar battery system's water level, recently upgraded her solar-powered home to a four-panel system, with each panel rated for 180 watts. That means her son, Tyler Kirschner, 17, can keep playing computer games to his heart's content.

INTERESTED IN GOING OFF THE GRID?

Visit *TractorSupply.com/OutHere* for resources to help you decide whether alternative energy is right for you.

Home on the range

Chuck Knibbe found that his calling was back at the ranch

By Carol Davis
Photography by Greg Latza

When Chuck Knibbe makes his way among Texas Hill Country shrubs, persimmon and cypress trees, meadows, and live oaks to check his cattle, he's continuing a ritual performed for 150 years by generations of Knibbes before him.

Knibbe Ranch, at 1,000 acres, is part of a much larger parcel of land bought in 1852 by Chuck's great-great grandfather, Hans Heinrich Dietrich Knibbe. The German immigrant was the rst to settle this territory some 30 miles north of San Antonio, Texas, and, in fact, named the settlement Spring Branch.

Hans Knibbe's original 22,000-acre ranch has been divided among heirs with each passing generation, but on Chuck's piece of ground, most things remain constant: the rolling landscape, occasional droughts, grazing cattle.

And a commitment to the land.

'THEY BUILT THIS COUNTRY'

Knibbe Ranch's landscape hasn't changed much over the generations — but the inhabitants have. The F-1 Tiger Stripe cattle that now forage the land were brought on by Chuck about 15 years ago.

"My dad was a stalwart Hereford man; that and black Angus," Chuck says. "They built this country."

But Herefords and Angus are European cattle, bred for lush pastures and plentiful rainfall. "You take cattle like that and bring them to Texas, well, they're not used to little rain and rocks everywhere," Chuck says. "We expect a cow to survive on a ranch; she has to make it on her own," he says, "but European-type cows have problems when times get rough, like when we have a drought."

As a rancher, he says, you want

Sharon and Chuck Knibbe started their married life off the ranch 42 years ago, but the birth of their two children pointed them back home.

trouble-free livestock because veterinary bills and other expenses lower pro ts.

"When I took over with Herefords, I had to pull at least three calves," Chuck says, meaning that he had to assist cows in birthing.

"Until you've had to pull a calf in 27-degree weather, you have not had a bad experience," he says with a laugh.

So Chuck sought out a way to produce hardy cattle that would sell well to buyers. The answer, Texas cattlemen have found, lies with the Brahman breed.

Brahman cattle, brought to Texas in the mid-19th century because of their ability to withstand the heat, don't taste much good on a plate, but they add hybrid vigor, Chuck says. "They're the toughest animal," he says. "They survive better."

Crossing a hardy Brahman with a Hereford — known for their a-vor — results in a Tiger Stripe, so called because of unique striping down its back.

The Brahman in uence on the European cows produces smaller calves, so birthing is much smoother.

Prickly pear was the saving grace for the Knibbes and other cattle ranchers during a crippling 1950s drought.

Hardy Brahman vigor and Hereford flavor create highly-marketable, hybrid cattle well suited to thrive on rugged Texas rangeland.

"I haven't had to pull a calf since 2000," Chuck says.

A rst-generation offspring of a purebred Brahman and purebred Hereford is referred to by the industry as an F-1 Tiger Stripe.

"That rst cross creates the highest degree of hybrid vigor and they adapt quite well to the Texas Hill Country," he says.

An F-1 female is born with environmental adaptivity, increased milk production, higher fertility, and the heat and disease resistance of her Brahman parent, he says. These traits also bring an optimum price at market.

GOING HOME

Chuck becomes animated and enthusiastic when conversation revolves around his cattle, but there was a time when he had no interest in following in the footsteps of Knibbes who came before him.

"I grew up working this ranch and during the drought in the 1950s, I had decided that ranching wasn't for me," he recalls.

That decade's seven-year drought devastated the region's agriculture and excessive temperatures and low rainfall scorched grasslands that the Knibbes and other ranchers used for grazing.

Ranchers — including Chuck and his father — turned to Texas' prevalent prickly pear cactus to feed their cattle. By burning off the sharp needles, the cows could forage on the cactus, which is extraordinarily high in moisture and nutrients.

"It's like having a silo of food," Chuck says. "It's the second-most important plant out here."

That's why he's never attempted to control the amount of prickly pear on his rangeland.

"You know how you can tell a real cattleman?" he asks. "He doesn't dig up the cactus."

After high school, Chuck, who had had his ll of cattle, ranching, and prickly pear, left for college, determined to make his mark on the world. He met Sharon, got married, and worked for several years as a stockbroker off the ranch.

But with Sharon's gentle prodding, he eventually began to consider returning to the ranch.

"I said, 'You don't know what you have out there,'" recalls Sharon, who herself grew up on a farm near Hereford, Texas.

"It really didn't take a lot of talking to convince him," Sharon says. "We had a little girl, and our son had just been born and we would rather raise them on the ranch than in town."

Ranch ties, indeed, were hard to break. Chuck's father, Lawrence, would live on the ranch for his entire 91 years until his death in 2001. "My dad moved three times in his life, but never more than 300 yards," Chuck says with a laugh. "He said, 'I am a cattleman and I'm going to stay on the ranch.'"

So Chuck and Sharon returned to Spring Branch to eventually take their place as the next generation of Knibbes to run the ranch. They live in the house Chuck grew up in, just a stone's throw from his mother, Marie, now 96.

The Knibbes host thousands in their large enclosed pavilion, which was built to host corporate and private events.

Chuck and Sharon's children Shannon (top, right, with Sharon), and Chad (below, with wife Callie) helped prepare the ranch to host events.

Shannon and Chad, like their father, have left the ranch to make their mark in the world. She's a ight attendant; he's in commercial real estate. They say they'll eventually return, Chuck says, and time will tell.

SHARING THE RANCHING LIFE

Ranching has always been a demanding way of life for those who choose it. Chuck's father and those of his generation struggled through a crippling drought. Now, as pro ts decline and housing and commercial development encroaches upon once-vast rangelands, Chuck and his generation are nding that the true ranching lifestyle is becoming a challenge to maintain.

That's why some ranchers, and farmers, turn to creative ways to bring in additional income. Bed and breakfasts, dude ranches, lodges, u-pick farms, shing, hunting, camps, tours, and greenhouses have become attractions at what once were farms and ranches devoted solely to raising crops or livestock.

"If you love the business, you have to gure other ways of getting business," Chuck explains.

So when Marriott Rivercenter/Riverwalk hotels in San Antonio needed a place to provide ranch adventures for corporate and convention visitors, weddings, and private events, Chuck and Sharon invited the hotel's management to experience it for themselves.

"The people from the Marriott fell in love with the ranch," Sharon says.

So the couple entered into a partnership that brings visitors to the ranch about 70-75 times per year — averaging about 1½ events per week, Chuck says. Groups have reached as large as 4,200 and as small as 40, though most average about 485, he says.

It's not a dude ranch; guests don't do any work. Rather, they enjoy live music by local artists or big names such as the Oak Ridge Boys or Sara Evans, dancing, and dining inside a 12,000-square-foot country hall, a beer garden, a full-scale rodeo arena, trail rides, skeet shooting, hiking, or team-building activities.

"We give ranch tours and show what Texas ranching is all about," Sharon says.

For the Knibbes, it's all about the land, and roots, and cattle. And doing what it takes to continue the life that Hans Knibbe rst made possible all those years ago.

Out Here editor Carol Davis is the granddaughter of Texas farmer Luther B. Hill.

It takes about 20 acres of Texas Hill Country rangeland around Spring Branch to support one cow, so Chuck supplements his herd's diet with quality hay.

BEGINNING A LEGACY

German immigrant Hans Heinrich Dietrich Knibbe founded the ranch more than 150 years ago despite a tragic and challenging journey to America. Read his story and see more photos of Knibbe Ranch by visiting *TractorSupply.com/OutHere*

NAIL GUN SAFETY

'YOU NEED TO KNOW HOW TO USE IT'

By Noble Sprayberry

An air-powered nail gun can make fast work of countless jobs, but failing to give the tool proper respect can turn a quick project into an emergency room visit.

Indeed, a steady increase in the number of injuries since the 1990s caught the attention of the Centers for Disease Control.

A tool once most common on construction and other work sites had expanded in popularity, and consumer-level producers made nail guns accessible to more people, according to a CDC report.

Between 2001 and 2005, the number of consumers visiting emergency rooms as a result of nail gun injuries averaged 14,800 annually.

Proper care and basic knowledge, however, can prevent injuries, says Glen Steinbrunner, director of engineering for Maryland-based Black & Decker. "The nailer is no more dangerous than any other power tool," he says. "But before you pick it up and start using it, you need to know how to use it."

First, read the instructions and other printed materials provided with the nailer, says Steinbrunner, who notes Black & Decker prefers to refer to the tools as nailers, rather than guns.

Failing to follow a simple rule often leads to trouble. "If you're not ring a nail into a workpiece, you shouldn't have air going to the tool," Steinbrunner says.

Nailers are commonly powered by compressed air, and disconnecting the hose from the compressor renders the tool powerless. Too often, though, someone will attempt to clear a jammed nail from the tool without taking this fundamental precaution, he says.

Also, a bit of planning can eliminate many nail jams. Consumers must pay close attention to nd the right combination of nail and nailer, because each tool accepts only a speci c range of nails.

Because many home centers carry generic brands of nails, as opposed to nails from the nailer manufacturer and matched to the tool, always read and follow the nail speci cations detailed in the power tool's literature.

iStock

Each nailer must have a trigger and an actuator tip to prevent firing unless the tip is depressed, such as against a piece of wood, federal regulations require.

Recognizing the need for safe products, federal regulations require nailers to meet detailed standards. Each nailer must have a trigger and an actuator tip to prevent ring unless the tip is depressed, such as against a piece of wood.

Other companies go a step further, offering a trigger lock similar to a gun's safety to prevent an accidental ring, Steinbrunner says.

Also, it's important to never use a nail gun without safety glasses, and always know the thickness of the material being nailed, Steinbrunner says.

Using a 2-inch thick piece of wood and a 2½-inch nail can hurt. "If your hand is on the other side, you can drive a nail right through and into your hand," he says.

Similarly, nailing too close to the edge of the board can cause a nail to skip out of the wood and bounce around unsafely.

"Operating a nail gun is shooting a projectile," Steinbrunner says. "At the end of the day, that's what a nail is. If the nailer isn't used with the proper training, and with the proper precautions in place, it can injure you."

Noble Sprayberry is a freelance writer in Phoenix.

Keep the oil from the soil

Protect your land and groundwater by recycling used motor oil

By Heather Loveridge

Illustration by Tom Milner

Running a farm — large or small — requires motorized equipment, which, in turn, requires regular oil changes for good upkeep. So, what's best to do with the used oil?

Well, you don't want to simply pour it on the ground. Used oil should never be dumped, burned, poured down the drain, put in the trash, or used as dust suppression on dirt roads because it can leach into groundwater, pollute the air, and reduce soil productivity.

Oil from one oil change can contaminate as much as one million gallons of fresh water, which is of particular concern in rural areas where residents rely on well water.

Unfortunately, consumers improperly dispose of about 185 million gallons of used motor oil each year, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates.

Decontaminating polluted groundwater is particularly dif cult because once it reaches an aquifer — the underground layer through which groundwater ows — it spreads more easily, says Bill Simmons, an extension specialist in soil/environmental education at the University of Illinois.

"The soil itself is actually fairly good at cleaning some of the things we put on the surface," says Simmons, who is co-author of *50 Ways Farmers Can Protect Their Groundwater*. "The problem with oil is it's often concentrated in a spot where it's put down and it tends to be dif cult for some microorganisms to break it down."

Oil's solubility and ow presents a particular challenge, he says. "It's one of the heavier, denser materials … in the re nement process," Simmons says. "Oil is so persistent and breaks down so slowly that once it gets into the water it's a real problem. And of course, most of the people in farming areas are on a private water supply so they typically don't have treatment capabilities."

The solution, then, is to recycle. Used motor oil can be reprocessed and used in heating furnaces or in power plants to generate electricity, says the American Petroleum Institute. It also can be re-re ned for use again as engine oil.

When you change your oil, drain the oil into a safe, lidded container and drop it, and your used oil lter, off at the nearest recycling facility.

Tractor Supply stores offer free used oil disposal, as do many service stations and large retail stores with auto service departments. That oil is then recycled.

If you're a farmer, there are some additional considerations when recycling oil. Regulations vary from state to state, but generally small farmers (de ned as those generating less than 300 gallons a year) are grouped in with household do-it-yourselfers and exempt from their state's environmental protection rules.

Large farmers — those who produce more than 300 gallons of used oil yearly — are required to adhere to state regulations. Check with your state's environmental agency for more information, or log on to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency website at *epa.gov* and click on the "Where you live" link to nd out environmental information about your community.

Regardless of your farm's size, be a good steward of your land and properly dispose of used oil by recycling.

Heather Loveridge is a Georgia-based writer.

FREE OIL DISPOSAL

Take your used oil to your local Tractor Supply store. It's convenient — and free.

Fabulous foliage

Drop the blooms and create a flowerless garden

Story & photography by Rita Randolph

Most gardeners think “ owers” when planning their designs, but unfortunately, blooms are ckle, and don’t last that long. If a owering plant goes into any stress due to lack of water, high temperatures, or lack of fertilizer or nutrients, the owers are the rst to go.

By using more ornamental foliage plants, you will always have something beautiful to look at.

There is a leaf color for virtually every chip in a color wheel. Whether you are designing a foundation planting, landscape beds, or containers, foliage color and texture is the perfect backdrop.

Evergreen trees and shrubs are the backbone of any garden, and the green background sets off the foliage color of many other garden plants.

Conifers come in so many enticing colors and textures that many people collect them and plant them all in a concentrated area much like a rock garden.

Dwarf or slow-growing varieties are also well suited for container gardening, where a tall cylindrical shape is center focus and other short fuller ones are situated around the pot for interest and contrast.

Breeders of blooming shrubs have come up with some very colorful foliage in cultivars of many of our old favorites. There are golden foliage and variegated varieties of buddleia, spirea, forsythia, and weigela, and burgundy, bronze, or other colors as well.

Perennial plants such as heuchera, bergenia, and many hardy ferns look great year round. I also combine them in weather-resistant containers where I can enjoy them all year, adding conifers or seasonal annuals.

A great textural addition is the many dwarf ornamental grasses and grass-like plants. Sedges such as the Carex family are extremely beautiful, soft to the touch, and add a strong linear form.

Annuals and lots of tropical foliage plants are now grown side-by-side in owerbeds and containers, keeping the mix colorful and exciting.

By adding the interesting foliage of small grasses and shrubs, there is an endless number of foliage combinations to try.

Rita Randolph is a second-generation greenhouse grower at Randolph’s Greenhouses in Jackson, Tenn.

RITA’S WINNING COMBINATIONS

When designing combinations, I start with a few easy rules.

- Foliage first. If the foliage of a plant or group of plants is interesting and pleasing to the eye, then flowers are a bonus.
- Always break up large foliage with fine-textured foliage. Too many large leaves altogether look chunky, like puzzle pieces that don’t quite fit. Mixing in fine foliage of grasses, ferns, or any small-leafed plant will help blend those large leaves into a pleasing form that moves your eye around the arrangement.
- The rule of three. Select a tall “thriller” plant, medium “filler” size, and a shorter or cascading “spiller” plant. Mix up the heights of groups of plants carefully, so that there is movement, but nothing overpowering in one area unless you are creating a focal point.
- Play around without following the rules. Creativity has its rewards!

START YOUR OWN FOLIAGE GARDEN

Rita Randolph has designed a foliage garden exclusively for *Out Here* readers! Visit *TractorSupply.com/OutHere* to print out your copy of her design and to see examples of foliage gardening.

Natural fencing

Look to nature for decorative landscaping touches

By Amber Stephens

Photography courtesy of Colonial Williamsburg

Fences are the framework of the garden canvas. The right fence blends seamlessly with the landscape, while the wrong one stands like a thistle in a rose garden.

Long before vinyl pickets and chain link made their way into the garden, homesteaders erected fences from nature’s bounty. By using materials common to the landscape, the garden is naturally complemented by materials such as stone, thick hedges, or wood.

While some natural substance walls are functional, others are more decorative than practical. Bucolic rock walls scattered throughout New England, for example, were created as farmers cleared elds of large stones.

“That is the de ning feature of the New England landscape … the rock wall,” says Wesley Greene, garden historian with Colonial Williamsburg, Va.

By using materials common to the landscape, the garden is naturally complemented by materials such as stone, thick hedges, or wood.

Most rock walls are no more than 3 feet tall, Greene says. Above that height, gardeners should use mortar to keep the rocks in place. For a sturdy structure, walls should be at least three to ve rocks thick.

Rock fences designed with permanence in mind also need a proper foundation, especially in cold climates. As winter ice works its way between rocks and expands, the fence can crack, heave, and collapse.

Wattle — or twig — fences, made from woven panels of willow or other exible sticks and branches, make good natural fencing where heavy stone is in limited supply. Wattle fences date to medieval times, Greene says. “The trick is getting the stick,” he notes.

Some fence makers would practice pollarding—cutting the top branches—young trees to promote more plentiful straight stems the following year. These exible growths could then be woven between natural fence posts to make the wattle fence.

However, homeowners do not need pollarding to gather straight fencing material. Any material that’s straight and exible will work, such as willow, sycamore, or fruit wood.

Greene recommends placing the posts — large branches cut to your preferred height — at least 18 inches apart. While it may be necessary to add a few nails to keep stray pieces in place, weaving green material ensures that the fence ties as it dries.

“It’s not the type of fence you’re going to put up and it will be there 10 years from now,” Greene cautions.

For a more permanent natural fence, consider a living fence made from trees, hedges, brambles, or bushes. Even in desert climates certain cacti, such as the organ pipe, can be planted for an attractive fence.

Some trees, such as thorny honey locust or hawthorn, prevent intruders from crossing through the thicket. In colonial times, closely planted rows of Osage-orange, or hedge-apple, trees were used for livestock fencing because of their thick growing habits.

Forsythias and multi ora rows can be planted close together for a blooming fence. Greene suggests keeping them trimmed to a height of about 4 feet. “With the living fence,” he says, “it’s a constant maintenance.”

A wattle fence, made by writer Amber Stephens and her husband, graces their rural Ohio home.

EQUINE COLIC

Know the signs before it's too late

By Laura Sewell

You stroll into the barn to greet your horse, and upon reaching his stall, see the first sign of trouble: he's skipped breakfast. He never does that.

What comes to mind is a word most horse owners dread — colic.

Equine colic is an umbrella term for serious abdominal pain in horses. Colic's causes are virtually unlimited, ranging from dietary changes to twisted intestines, says Dr. Bob Rednour, of Youngsville, N.C., a veterinarian specializing in large animal care.

But three culprits claim most of the blame.

"About 80 percent of colics are hydration-related," Rednour says. "Horses prefer water between 40 and 80 degrees. If their water is too cold, it's like eating ice cream in the winter."

Without sufficient water consumption, he says, food can become impacted in the horse's digestive system. The same holds true if its diet lacks enough quality hay or grass, causing fiber deficiency.

And, Rednour says, internal parasites are seeing a resurgence.

"Owners aren't keeping up with deworming," he says, adding that even faithfully dewormed horses can become colicky because some parasites are resistant to ivermectin, a top preventative.

The daunting fact is that colic is the most common natural cause of death for horses. But owners can increase a horse's survival chances by beefing up their knowledge of colic's symptoms, as well as learning what they can do until a veterinarian arrives on the scene.

For starters, a horse's failure to eat that first meal of the day — one usually gobbled up — often is the first sign of distress.

If colic is indeed causing the decreased appetite, Rednour says, the horse will soon exhibit fidgety behavior: swishing its tail at its abdomen and hindquarters, pacing nervously back and forth, getting up and down repeatedly, and biting at its sides.

As pain increases, the horse may roll on the ground excessively — more times than needed to scratch an itch. Rolling is particularly dangerous, because it can trigger intestinal twisting.

A colicky horse might also lie down for abnormally long periods, and often will experience an increased heart rate.

"A normal heart rate is between 20 and 40 beats per minute," Rednour says. "If it's too fast, that's a sign of pain."

He suggests horse owners invest in a stethoscope, allowing them to not only monitor heart rates, but also check for gut sounds — noises indicating intestinal movement.

Once colic is suspected, owners should contact a veterinarian immediately. But before the vet makes a house call, Rednour says owners can take several actions to provide comfort, starting with administering such mild anti-inflammatory pain relievers as dipyrone or phenylbutasone.

"Ninety percent of colics that we see are resolved with painkillers," Rednour says.

Then, he says, give the horse a dose of electrolytes — powdered Gatorade mixed in water will do — and encourage additional water intake to ease dehydration. Next, walk the horse for 20-30 minutes, which can jumpstart its intestines and also prevent it from rolling. And let it nibble some fresh grass.

The owner can then determine if symptoms are subsiding. If not, advanced treatments are necessary.

"If the horse is in more pain, the symptoms will become more and more violent," Rednour says. "The vet should come out."

Laura Sewell is a writer based in Brentwood, Tenn.

ON OUR WEBSITE

You can take steps to reduce the risk of colic in your horse. Find out how by visiting *TractorSupply.com/OutHere*

Bob Langrish

A colicky horse will roll on the ground excessively as the pain intensifies.

Legacy of lambs

Program conserves heritage breeds while uplifting youngsters' self-confidence

By Hannah Wolfson

Photography by Ken Brooks

Kim Cogley dreamed of raising sheep, but thought she'd never be able to afford it. Thanks to a program that links young people with the owners of heritage breeds, she didn't have to.

Kim, 13, was one of 16 teenagers chosen to participate in a recent round of the Youth Conservationist Program. Now her two sheep — Arctic, a donated Navajo Churro ewe, and Norman, a young Navajo ram she bought — will be the foundation of her own heritage flock.

They're also two of her best friends, says Kim, who loves to spend time in her family's small barn in Swanton, Md., a 4-acre home where she also breeds rabbits.

Developing that bond with animals is among Youth Conservation Program's goals, director Elaine Ashcraft says.

Virginia residents Richard and Donna Larson started the program 10 years ago when they decided to share one of their Karakul sheep with a youngster in need.

"They felt there were youth out there that would like to raise a purebred animal but their families were financially strapped and could not afford to go out and buy that animal," Ashcraft says.

It's also a way to help promote lesser-known heritage breeds such as Kim's Navajo Churro — the oldest breed in the United States — as well others such as Jacob, Hogg Island, Icelandic, and Leicester Longwool. And it helps the students, who often make presentations when they show their unusual animals, learn confidence and public speaking, Ashcraft says.

Now, applications come from as far away as Alaska and dozens of breeders are involved, including Colonial Williamsburg and Mount Vernon, George Washington's estate.

Since 1998, more than 100 students have received sheep, and several have been successful enough to give some of their own stock back to the program.

Kim hopes to do that some day. Her application letter was among 50 considered by breeder Linda Cummings for one of her Navajos. In fact, several breeders who read the applications themselves, were vying for Kim's participation, Ashcraft says.

She picked up Arctic at last spring's Maryland Sheep and Wool Festival.

Kim Cogley dotes on Arctic, her Navajo Churro ewe, the oldest breed of sheep in the United States.

"I didn't care what breed it was; I was just so excited that I got one," Kim says. "I spent the whole day looking for her."

At the festival she also found a generous and conservation-minded breeder willing to sell her a young ram for $350 — far less than the $1,000 such sheep can fetch.

Her father, Norman, moved equipment out of an outbuilding to make room for the sheep and built fences for them.

"I figured the way this world is...it wouldn't hurt her to mess around with animals. She loves them," says Norman, for whom Kim named her ram. "She'll go down in the pen, and sit there and read to her sheep and that's so neat to watch."

Hannah Wolfson lives and works in Birmingham, Ala.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Learn how to apply to the Youth Conservationist Program to get a heritage breed or how to donate your heritage breeds to the program by visiting *TractorSupply.com/OutHere*

THE EXTENSION SERVICE

Extending knowledge where you live and work

Randy Chlapecka, right, and other extension agents enjoy spending much of their time out in the field educating farmers, such as John "Bubba" Sink.

By Leah Call

Photography by Benjamin Krain

You've recently bought your little piece of land out in the country, and you're ready to embrace the rural lifestyle — but you have a lot to learn.

Where's the best place to plant a fruit tree? How can the lawn be revived? What's the best way to preserve green beans from the garden?

Answers are as close as the Cooperative Extension Service.

"The heart and soul of the county extension agent is just answering those calls from the public," says Randy Chlapecka, county agent with the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service in Newport, Ark.

Since 1914, federal, state, and county governments have partnered to fund the Cooperative Extension Service system, which links the nation's land-grant colleges and universities to the general public — extending research-based information to farms, businesses, families, and young people.

Today, there's an extension office in nearly every county in the United States.

Extension agents are on hand to provide education in one or more of four primary program areas: agriculture, family and consumer science, community development, and 4-H youth development.

Chlapecka, an extension agent for 25 years, specializes in agriculture and spends much of his time educating area farmers on the newest information and recommendations.

"I do trials in the field with new crop varieties and hybrids. Also new fertilizer recommendations, insecticides — any type of product farmers might want to see used in the field," Chlapecka explains.

"We also regularly do a lot of educational meetings in the winter, when the farmers aren't in the field as much."

Fact sheets, production books, other publications, and workshops are available at every county extension office. Most are free. Though each office has a similar framework, the services and information are tailored to meet local needs from county to county.

"We concentrate heavily on row crops like rice and soybeans, corn, sorghum, and wheat," Chlapecka says. "Some counties might have very little row crop production and may be strictly livestock or ornamental horticulture. We try to fit the needs of the people. That's why we are so flexible in the things that we do and what we offer."

Extension agents do a lot more than give advice over the phone. They deliver education where people live and work.

"Most county agents love that direct contact with the public, going to their farm or to a homeowner's yard or garden," Chlapecka says. "That one-to-one contact is a very important part of what we do."

You can even become a Master Gardener with the Master Gardener Program, which trains volunteers to provide horticulture education to the public.

"It's more than just agriculture," Chlapecka says. "We are kind of a clearing house for anything. If you need information, call your extension office."

Leah Call is a freelance writer in Westby, Wis.

★

To contact your local extension office, check the phone book under county government.

GO OUTSIDE | State-of-the-art camping gear makes roughing it a bit smoother

By Johnny Molloy

Camping isn't exactly what it used to be. The days of pitching a single-wall canvas tent are as antiquated as the rotary home phone, due, in part, to ever-advancing technology that entices people to stay indoors with their video games and computers.

A recent Nature Conservancy study revealed that as video game play increased, visits to national parks, camping, fishing, and other outdoor recreation have fallen as much as 25 percent.

But just as technology has crept into our daily home lives, it also has made its way into the back of beyond. And rather than fight an irreversible trend, consider embracing what technology can do in the "new outdoors," where roughing it has never been so smooth.

Now, we're not talking RVs here, but rather simply taking advantage of changes that make tent camping a little easier.

These items just may make spending the night under the stars and exploring the wilderness a little easier — and fun:

Veer

GPS (Global Positioning System) — These handy devices have come a long way in the past few years. Now, you can download topographic or aerial maps onto the GPS and see exactly where you are, where you are going, and where you have been. It's like a real-life outdoor video game, and can be a real lifesaver.

LED headlamp — Leave the clunker flashlight at home. Nowadays, energy-stingy headlamps light the way hands-free and weigh so little you won't even feel them on your head. Or clip a tiny but powerful LED light — operated by a watch battery — to the brim of your ball cap.

Electric airbed pump — Today's portable camping mattresses can be blown up or decompressed using a portable battery-powered pump. Simply slip the pump nozzle into the air mattress, push the "on" button and you have a comfy cradle in moments. With the flick of a switch you can reverse the fan on the pump to let the air out.

Two-way radio — Modern two-way radios are high-powered, long-ranged, and quickly rechargeable. Higher-end models are waterproof and virtually indestructible. You and the kids can stay in touch at the campground or on the trail. Truth is, everybody has fun with these, despite their practicality.

Two-way radios not only provide fun, but they're practical, too.

Corbis

Electric tent — Unbelievably, the latest tents are now wired with multiple DC outlets, all powered by a sealed power pack that can be recharged or connected to a car battery. Run lights, a fan, or charge the two-way radio.

Weather radio — Choose a model built for the outdoors and it will serve you well. Instantaneous local information — no matter where you are — allows you to learn the rain is coming before it comes and clear the picnic table in time. Also, you can set the weather radio to come on when it issues severe weather warnings, such as thunderstorms, flash floods, and/or tornadoes.

Johnny Molloy is a Johnson City, Tenn.-based author of more than 30 outdoor-related books.

Susan Jewell's love for dogs directed her career path from laws to paws.

Good dog!

Fixing dog behavior problems usually requires training the owner, too

By Noble Sprayberry

Photography by Eric Brady

One glance from Cocoa, a boxer mix, told Susan Jewell all she needed to know.

"He gave me that look that says, 'I'll chew you up,'" she says. "I had to decide at that moment who would win."

She put more on the line than risking a nip from the 45-pound dog. She hoped to save the life of an animal already responsible for biting his owner, an owner ready to euthanize the pet.

For Jewell, who runs Oak View Dog Training in Jewell Ridge, Va., the complaint was all too common. The dog ruled the home, knowing no boundaries and willing to back up the attitude with sharp teeth.

But Cocoa responded to sessions at Jewell's dog training kennel. "As far as I know, he is still with the family," she says.

Jewell, though, has no mysterious formula for taming a canine, offering instead common–sense lessons owners with enough interest and time can adopt. "So much of it is how a dog is raised, and all dogs can be trained," she says.

For six years, Jewell, 44, has worked full time to pass along the lessons, training dogs while also informing owners. A criminal justice major in college, she worked for several years as a paralegal but always maintained her interest in dogs.

Dog owners pay for her to take in their pets, who live at the kennel for sessions that usually require three weeks to complete. She also does community workshops on housebreaking and basic dog training.

"People come to me all the time who see their dogs as their little babies, but they're not. That's why people have the problems they have," Jewell says. "The dog doesn't have a normal train of thought about what his normal life should be, which is to play, get dirty, and get tired."

Too often, owners just give up and the animal ends up at a shelter, where many eventually are euthanized.

Lack of uniformed reporting makes tracking the number of animals taken to shelters and euthanized dif cult, according to the American Humane Association. The latest statistics come from a decade-old study.

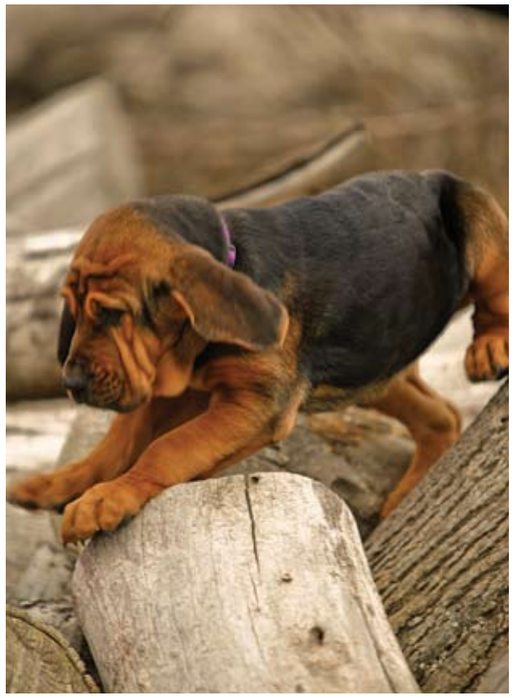
More than 4.3 million animals entered the 1,000 shelters responding to the survey. Of those animals, 64 percent — about 2.7 million — were euthanized. Also, it's a widely accepted statistic that 9.6 million animals are euthanized annually in the United States, the association says.

MAKE THE RIGHT FIT

When it comes to dogs, a mistake often occurs with the initial selection, Jewell says.

Simi, a yellow Labrador retriever being trained for obedience, waits for Susan's command.

Too often, owners just give up and the animal ends up at a shelter.



Dogs should best be obedience trained when they're young, such as Julie, a bloodhound puppy, but nearly any dog can learn, with the right instruction.

Potential dog owners need to answer key questions such as these: Do you want a large or small dog? Do you have children? Does the house have a fenced yard? Does someone in the home suffer from allergies? If the owner travels often, who will care for the animal?

Take the time to research a breed's characteristics before adopting, either from a shelter or individual. It's important to determine whether your living circumstances are right for the dog you want.

"Terriers will dig the daylights out of stuff if they don't have something to do," she says. "But even with breed characteristics, the right environment can control those quirks. A beagle living in an apartment can work fairly well if that dog is provided enough exercise outside the apartment."

But even after selecting the perfect breed, a dog owner's responsibilities only just begin. All dogs can learn, and two 15-minute sessions daily can often ingrain basic commands, Jewell says. "Training obedience is basically expectation and consistency," she says.

Dogs will test the boundaries of their own dominance within a home. A dog who jumps up to welcome an owner home may seem cute, but in reality the dog is disrespecting the owner.

The idea of dominance plays into Jewell's training, letting the dog understand just who leads the pack. For example, training a dog to stay off the furniture or out of the kitchen requires no shouted commands or special tricks. Simply blocking the animal's path, putting the owner's body in the way, and making a shooing noise can often suf ce, Jewell says. Done consistently, this method can teach good habits.

In the end, though, the human more than the canine determines how well a dog ts into a home. "If you don't make it a priority, it won't become a priority on its own," she says.

When Nancy May and her husband, Bob, took two 5-year-old Corgies into their home, May was unsure if the pair of older dogs could be trained. She just knew they needed the help.

"We were trying to walk the two together, but one was going one way and the other was going the other way," she says.

They sent the dogs to Jewell, who kept them for ve weeks.

"Now when I take them places I can depend on them to sit when I say sit and to stay when I say stay," May says. "I see other owners struggling, but I'm so proud of my dogs. They're like my children."

Noble Sprayberry is a Phoenix-based writer.

ON OUR WEBSITE

Read Susan Jewell's advice on her most-requested behavior problems and see which resources can help you train your dog by visiting *TractorSupply.com/OutHere*

Roasted Green Beans with Peppers & Onions

Chicken Shish-Kabobs

Favorite Family Recipes

The best recipes are those passed along as family favorites

Photography by Mark Mosrie
Food styling by Whitney Kemp

Summer eating just calls for fresh fruits and vegetables. Enjoy summer's bounty with these tasty recipes from our readers.

CHICKEN SHISH-KABOBS

"These are a hit at our kids' birthday parties and we custom-make them if someone doesn't like some of the veggies," says Katherine Oakley, of LaGrange, Ind. "Sometimes we cut up smoked sausage and alternate with chicken before grilling."

4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
2 dozen mushrooms
3 red or green bell peppers
2 onions

2 dozen cherry tomatoes
Pineapple to taste
Smoked sausage (optional)

Marinade:
2 cups olive oil
2 cups lemon juice
4 or 5 Tbsp. fresh oregano
1 tsp. pepper

① Combine marinade ingredients.
② Cut each chicken breast into ve chunks.
③ Marinate chicken overnight.
④ Two or three hours before cooking, put chicken on skewers, alternating with mushrooms, red or green peppers, onions, cherry tomatoes, and pineapple.
⑤ Marinate an additional two to three hours, then grill. Serves 4-8, depending on how much you put on each skewer.

ROASTED GREEN BEANS WITH PEPPERS AND ONIONS

Diana Sullivan, of New Haven, Ky., likes to try new, healthy recipes. "I like to have a lot of low-fat, low-calorie dishes and this is one of them," she says. "It's a new recipe that we started using last year, and we've really enjoyed it."

1 lb. whole frozen (thawed) or fresh green beans (ends trimmed)
1 red pepper, cut into thin strips
1 large onion, cut into thin strips
1 yellow pepper, cut into thin strips
½ cup balsamic vinaigrette dressing
½ cup shredded low-moisture part-skim mozzarella cheese

① Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
② Toss vegetables with dressing in a large roasting pan.
③ Bake 15 minutes, stir, then bake an additional 15 minutes or until vegetables are tender.
④ Sprinkle with cheese. Bake an additional 2-3 minutes or until the cheese is melted.
Serves 6.

HOT DAY – COOL DISH

"This is a simple but quite tasty recipe I use for an abundance of summer vegetables," writes Judith A. Miller of Ottumwa, Iowa. "It is especially good on very hot days."

6 ripe plum tomatoes
½ large cucumber

Hot Day—Cool Dish

½ large sweet/mild onion
Sprig of fresh parsley
6 salad olives
¾ cup Italian salad dressing
Feta cheese to taste (optional)

① Chop all vegetables into small pieces and mix well.
② Add dressing.
③ Mix and serve.
Tip: This dish is best when left in the refrigerator overnight, or at least several hours. Serves 4-6.

Spinach Salad

SPINACH SALAD

When Ruth Schnell, of Chicora, Pa., asks what dish to bring to a potluck get-together, the answer is always the same: spinach salad. "I have used fresh pineapple, peaches, Mandarin oranges, and any other fruit that is in season," she writes.

1 bag spinach
1 pint strawberries (or more, to taste)

Dressing:
½ cup corn oil
5 Tbsp. sugar
3 Tbsp. cider vinegar
2 tsp. grated onion
1 tsp. dry mustard
½ tsp. salt
1 Tbsp. poppy seeds

① Combine dressing ingredients.
② Just before serving, add dressing to salad mixture and toss.

Other options: use fresh peaches, pineapple, blueberries, Mandarin oranges, and other fruit that is in season. Serves 4-6.

(FRESH BERRIES) STRAWBERRY PIE

"My mother-in-law gave me this recipe probably 40 years ago and her mother gave it to her," says Helen R. Rankin, of Mount Holly, N.C. "Not a whole lot of people make strawberry pies like this. I give it to my friends and they can't believe how simple and delicious it is."

She also prefers the simplicity of a ready-made piecrust, though you can make your own, if you prefer. Be sure to make or buy enough to cover the pie, also.

1 to 1½ cups sugar
1/3 cup all-purpose flour
½ tsp. cinnamon
4 cups chopped fresh strawberries
1½ tbsp. butter

Strawberry Pie

① Mix sugar, our, and cinnamon thoroughly.
② Add strawberries and mix lightly.
③ Pour mixture into pie shell.
④ Dot with butter.
⑤ Cover pan with top crust and cut several slits in it.
⑥ Bake at 425 degrees for 35 to 45 minutes or until crust is browned and juice begins to bubble through slits in crust. Serves 6.

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Eating locally

‘Locavores’ commit to eating fresh, local products

By Laurena Mayne Davis Photography by Jason Houston

Self-professed foodie Robin McDermott of Waitsfield, Vt., chooses to buy local meats, dairy, fruits, and vegetables for some smart reasons:

- She wants to support local farmers.
- It takes less energy than importing foods from somewhere else.
- Fresh food tastes better.

“Probably four years ago if you told me we would be eating like this, I would think, how?” she says of eating local foods in season, preserving much of the bounty, and learning to live without the rest. “But now it just seems it’s what we do.”

McDermott is among those who describe themselves as “locavores” or alternately “localvores” — people who seek out locally grown food, often from farmers’ markets and small farms and ranches.

Four San Francisco women started the locavore movement in 2005, encouraging people to eat food produced within a 100-mile radius of where they live.

The movement aims to mobilize consumers to use their grocery buying power to redirect dollars to local farming. The idea has spread quickly. “Locavore” was the *New Oxford American Dictionary*’s 2007 Word of the Year, and local chapters have sprouted up around the country.

McDermott co-founded and directs the Mad River Valley Localvores in Vermont. The congenial group compiles local food sources, swaps recipes, and sponsors Eat Local one-week challenges, a fun way for the curious to try eating locally.

It’s not an all-or-nothing proposition. “We don’t advocate that people eat 100 percent local all the time,” McDermott says. Common exemptions are the “Marco Polo Rules” that allow use of the salt and spices that sailors of yore would have carried in their pockets. Others choose wild cards, such as coffee, chocolate, or fish.

Over the long run, eating locally can be less expensive, particularly if people grow, and preserve, their own food, says Robin McDermott, a local-food advocate.

“It really helps you start thinking of where everything you’re eating is coming from,” says McDermott, who still buys about 20 items, including cat food and locally grown sprouts, at the grocery store.

RURAL ‘ROCK STARS’

Undoubtedly, American consumers have an increasingly distant relationship with their dinner choices. Food sold in U.S. supermarkets averages some 1,500 miles from farm to plate — a 25 percent increase from 1980, according to Worldwatch Institute.

Not so in Vermont, where 27 percent of the land is devoted to agriculture. Vermont is a leader in direct farm-to-consumer sales, specialty agriculture products, and agritourism, where tourists include farm experiences as part of their vacation plans.

Fresh produce, maple sugaring, and the explosion of scarlet fall leaves all add to the tourism draw. Not surprisingly, farmers are appreciated and revered in the Mad River Valley, McDermott says, so much so that she describes them, only half-jokingly, as the local “rock stars.”

Dave Hartshorn of Santa Davida Farm is one such local celebrity. Eighteen years ago he converted his family’s dairy to a certified organic farm, which grows

David Hartshorn has increased the amount and variety of his organic produce to accommodate rising numbers of “localvores” around Waitsfield, Vt.

local favorites including raspberries, strawberries, sweet corn, pumpkins, and heirloom tomatoes.

Hartshorn credits New England’s climate and soil for his flavorful produce.

“Whatever conditions that I have on my farm naturally — the soil — the flavor is better than most,” Hartshorn says. “Nobody grows sweeter baby carrots than I do. Nobody.”

The family is resourceful. Hartshorn’s father runs a sawmill, and they oversee some 5,000 maple sugar taps on a family plot of trees, some of which are upwards of 400 years old.

In addition to his farm stand, Hartshorn regularly attends a local farmers’ market, sometimes getting there at 2 a.m. to stack 2,000 ears of sweet corn in a pineapple shape by the illumination of the truck headlights. In an effort to draw attention to your stand, “You set up a work of art,” Hartshorn explains.

It’s particularly at the farmers’ market that Hartshorn has developed a devoted and reciprocal relationship with locavores.

He participates in Community Supported Agriculture, in which buyers typically subscribe in the spring for weekly baskets of whatever produce is in season throughout the growing season.

As for the outlook for small farms, “I think it’s the best it’s ever been,” Hartshorn says of a new awareness of sustainable agriculture. “Finally, on a few acres you can grow high-value crops.”

He sells produce directly to local schools and is involved in planning a class on “sustainable communities,” where students will intern at his farm. Hartshorn also grows gardens on-site for area restaurants, and confers with local chefs.

Instead of chefs designing weekly menus from what is offloaded from the semis of large-scale wholesale food providers, they call up area growers to see what’s been recently picked, plucked, or dug.

“They call up and ask, ‘What should we run as a special this week?’” Hartshorn says.

MAKING IT MAKE SENSE

One of those chefs at the other end of the line is Michael Flanagan of Michael’s Good to Go takeout restaurant. A “guerilla restaurateur,” Flanagan and his wife Jewls Cohen sell to-go lunch and dinners out of an 800-square-foot leased space with a few benches inside, a barbecue grill smoking meat out front, and a dedication to meals that are “less expensive and focused on local ingredients,” Flanagan says.

Good to Go serves all locally raised meat. Many seasonal vegetables are purchased from Santa Davida Farm. “I buy literally tons,” Flanagan says of the butternut squash he roasts and freezes for winter soups, and the sweet corn he steams and saves — cobs, too — for chowder. Tomatoes, onions, garlic, and smoked chilis are combined into chipotle sauce.

Last summer, Flanagan assessed what produce he was not buying

(continued on next page)

The fare at Michael Flanagan and Jewls Cohen’s takeout restaurant is served up from primarily local ingredients.

Flanagan works with local farmers to keep costs in an affordable range for customers.

locally — sweet potatoes and Napa cabbage — and asked Hartshorn if he could come close to the price he already was paying.

"It has to work for both you and the farmer," Flanagan says. "He and I both know for it to make sense it can't be more than a third more."

Cost, McDermott agrees, is a practical consideration for businesses and individuals alike. Locally grown foods can be more expensive, pound for pound, than the homogenous bulk produce shipped to local grocery stores.

"That's the biggest hurdle for people," McDermott says. But she adds that, over the long run, eating locally can be the less expensive option, particularly if people grow some of their own food. Being aware of the labor of food-production also brings a greater sense of thrift.

"If I buy a chicken from a local farmer, I'm spending $12 to $15, and so I make a lot out of that chicken, whereas if you buy the $4.99 roast chicken in the store, you eat half of it and maybe throw the rest out," McDermott says.

The additional work of growing, canning, freezing, and shopping small farms is worth it for her community, the environment, and her taste buds, McDermott says.

"We're eating better," she says, "than we have ever eaten."

Colorado writer Laurena Mayne Davis started making her own yogurt, bread, and sprouts after researching this story.

READY TO BE A LOCAVORE?

Visit *TractorSupply.com/OutHere* for Robin McDermott, Dave Hartshorn, and Michael Flanagan's advice on speci c ways that you can begin to support your local farmers by eating locally. You'll also nd how to locate a CSA near you.

What, exactly, is Community Supported Agriculture?

Community Supported Agriculture describes an increasingly popular kind of partnership between local farmers and nearby consumers who value having fresh, healthy food grown in their own community.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture explains: "Typically, members or 'shareholders' of the farm or garden pledge in advance to cover the anticipated costs of the farm operation and farmer's salary. In return, they receive shares in the farm's bounty throughout the growing season … By direct sales to community members, who have provided the farmer with working capital in advance, growers receive better prices for their crops, gain some financial security, and are relieved of much of the burden of marketing."

A range of CSA options are available, so members can choose one that works best for them. Some, for example, include farm labor as part of the members' investment. Some CSAs deliver produce to a common pick-up spot, while others require you to come get it.

CSAs have been successful in Japan since the 1960s. Jan VanderTuin of Switzerland introduced the idea to the United States in the mid-1980s when he visited Robyn Van En's Indian Line Farm in South Egremont, Mass.

Van En became an early CSA advocate in the United States; indeed, an agricultural center at Wilson College in Chambersburg, Pa. — The Robyn Van En Center — is named for her. The national resource center includes CSA history, useful links, and a searchable database to locate CSAs by ZIP code.

Write a family cookbook

Create an heirloom that combines your family's history and good taste

When Wendy Whipple couldn't find a guide to help her write her family cookbook, she wrote one herself.

By Laurena Mayne Davis Photography by Teresa Scarbrough

Wendy Whipple believes a family's history can be measured in the tablespoon of baking powder in buttermilk biscuits, and the walnut-sized piece of butter in pecan pie. Recipes are more than step-by-step cooking instructions, says Whipple. "Recipes are an important piece of your family's history."

The Matteson, Ill., wife, mother, writer, and genealogist set out to self-publish her family's recipes, including the touching recollections and funny anecdotes behind them. But when Whipple went looking for a guide to help plan her publication, she found the marketplace lacking.

So she navigated the process on her own, then wrote a book to help others: *Creating an Heirloom: Writing Your Family's Cookbook*. Whether for a family reunion, or wedding or Christmas present, a family cookbook is a way to share recipes and lore with scattered relations and new generations.

First of all, don't forget that it's the cooking mistakes and the storytelling behind the food that make such a collection an heirloom and not just a retyping of the contents of a recipe box.

As for her own cooking mistakes, "My grandmother, my mother and I have had issues with pies," Whipple acknowledges.

The story of three generations of pie disasters made her book: her grandmother forgetting to add sugar to a lemon meringue, her mother overlooking the fact that cherries had to be pitted, and her substitution of whiskey for bourbon in a sweet potato pie that was still 100 proof after two hours of baking.

To get these kinds of stories, Whipple advises asking relatives for special recipes and their stories at least six months before planning to publish.

Although she followed up with a phone call if any ingredients struck her as being out of proportion, Whipple didn't eld-test the recipes herself. "I gure with a family cookbook it's been tested for generations."

Consider including photographs, a family tree, and even scanned-in recipe cards showing the handwriting of the original cook.

When it comes to the design and publication of the book, there is a range of options available, depending on budget, number of books needed and the computer skills of the cookbook compiler.

A word-processing program will suf ce for a basic layout. People more comfortable with desktop publishing can add more artwork. There is easy ll-in-the-blank software just for cookbooks. A number of printers also will print on-demand.

As a genealogist, Whipple urges everyone to scan old recipes, newspaper clippings, and photos as a backup, and to store the originals in a cool, dry place.

"Look at it as something priceless and precious and irreplaceable," she says, "and then do something with it."

Laurena Mayne Davis is the author of her own family cookbook.

ON OUR WEBSITE

Ready to compile your family's cookbook?
Visit *TractorSupply.com/OutHere* for:

- How to get a copy of Wendy Whipple's book
- How to get more information from her website
- Recipes from Wendy's book

The candle maker

Christine Sullivan discovers her artistry — and a new career

By Laura Flynn McCarthy

Photography by Lori Duff

Growing up, Christine Sullivan, never thought she was artistic. "My sister and my mother were the crafty people in the family," she says. "Not me."

She was perfectly happy working a 9-to-5 secretarial job in a micro lm company. Then, she visited her sister in Maine.

"My sister had a small candle business in her home that she was giving up because she was moving, and she asked me if I wanted her equipment and supplies," Christine recalls. "My ancé said, 'Go ahead; it might be a way to make a little extra money.' I've hardly seen him since," she laughs. "I've been so busy in the shop."

And so she became owner of Scents of New England Candles in Raymond, N.H.

At rst, things didn't go very well. "My sister made it sound so easy," Christine says. "She said, 'just pour some wax and stick a wick in it.' That's what I did, and it was horrible. The oil oated to the top and the wick was off-center."

Trial-and-error quickly became her business model. "I had to learn about getting the right weight of wax for different size candles and how to add the right amount of fragrance oil to achieve the scent I wanted," she says. "In some cases I'd make 40 or 50 test candles before I came up with one I liked."

Christine read everything she could nd on candle making and began a system of experimentation that continues today. She tested various waxes, sampled dozens of fragrance oils, and made templates to center the wicks just right, all to create candles that burn well, look pretty, and smell great.

She was having so much fun that time ew and in the process she discovered something about herself: there was a talented craftsperson hidden inside of her.

CREATING ATMOSPHERE

Eventually, Christine found ways for her candles to stand out from others. She formulated her own wax blend and developed New England-inspired designs such as snow ake luminarias and primitive "Grubby Colonials." Her aromas include maple syrup, apple pie, and White Mountain pine.

"The bakery scents are my favorites," she says. "They remind me of being in my grandmother's kitchen as a little girl."

Indeed, such personal connections to scents are a large reason why candles have become so popular, Christine theorizes. "People like to create certain atmospheres in their homes and candles help you do that," she says.

Christine's infectious sense of humor drives many of her designs, including her bestselling candle, the colonial electric.

"I loved electric candles, but most of the designs I saw were boring, and I started thinking, 'Wouldn't it be cool if it looked like the candle was melting down the outside?' I did some funky experimentation and came up with this design and it's been a huge hit."

Initially, she sold her candles at crafts fairs. Now, Christine markets directly to individual customers online and wholesale to retail stores nationwide.

Gone is her 9-to-5 workday, and she's never been happier.

She begins her day at 7 a.m. in her shop in her home's basement and frequently works well into the evening, turning out an average of 60 candles a day.

"I love working from home and being with my three dogs during the day, and I have wonderful customers who know that this business is run out of my home so there are no 11-o'clock-at-night phone calls," she says. "Most of the retail stores I sell to are run by women, too, and it's fabulous because we're all women working together. I couldn't imagine doing anything else."

Laura Flynn McCarthy is a New Hampshire-based freelance writer.

"The great thing about candlemaking is that mistakes are easy to correct," Christine says. "Wax is very forgiving; if you mess up you just throw it back in the pot and re-melt it."

BUY A QUALITY CANDLE

Most people buy candles because they like the way they smell," candle maker Christine Sullivan says. "You can't tell if a candle is going to burn well just by smelling it."

She offers four tips for buying a high-quality scented candle:

- Open the lid and look at the wick. It should be centered in the middle of the candle. A centered wick ensures an even melt pool on the top, which helps release the scent.
- If the candle jar's diameter is 4 inches or more, buy it only if it has a double wick.
- Avoid candles that have oil on the top — an indication that the ingredients aren't mixed properly and the candle probably won't burn well.
- Don't buy candles filled right to the top; they could overflow when you burn them. There should be ¼ inch to ½ inch space between the top of the wax and the top of the container.

ON OUR WEBSITE

Interested in trying your hand at making a candle? Visit *TractorSupply.com/OutHere,* where Christine walks you through a step-by-step of making a simple votive candle.

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As much as I converse with sages and heroes, they have very little of my love and admiration. I long for rural and domestic scene, for the warbling of birds and the prattling of my children.

— John Adams

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