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We are pleased to provide you with the information contained in this report. Current educational information is supported by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service.

Included in this report are monthly updates from our different departments; 4-H & Youth Development, Agriculture & Natural Resources, Better Living for Texans, Family & Community Health, and Horticulture.

If you are interested in participating in any of the mentioned AgriLife Extension educational programs throughout the year, please feel welcome to do so.

All Extension programs are sponsored by AgriLife program area committees for anyone's educational benefit. We would like to acknowledge the Extension volunteer base, Extension Specialists, and cooperators who contributed to the planning of all educational information compiled in this educational newsletter.

4-H & YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Steven Baringer, 4-H and Youth Development Extension Agent



Above: Our 4-H participants are quite the creative chefs! Here they are participating in the Denton County 4-H Food Challenge

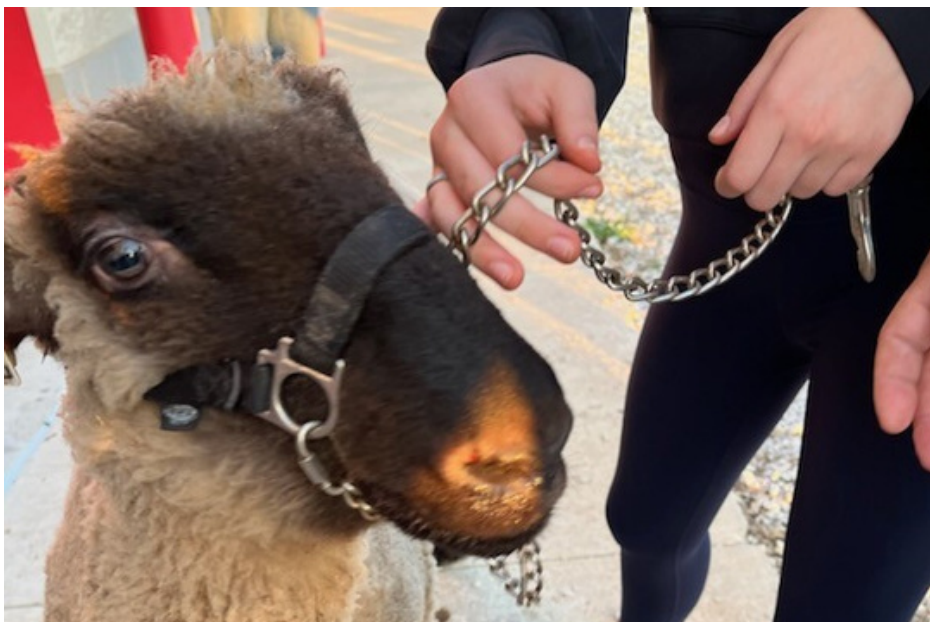
The Denton County 4-H Food Challenge was a thrilling culinary competition that showcased the talent and creativity of young chefs. Participants, ranging from enthusiastic beginners to seasoned home cooks, gathered to demonstrate their culinary skills, teamwork, and innovation. The event, hosted by Denton County 4-H, encouraged contestants to think on their feet and create delicious dishes using a mystery basket of ingredients. With limited time and a pantry stocked with diverse items, competitors showcased their adaptability and resourcefulness. We had 42 students participate in teams of 3-4 people. Each were given a secret ingredient and 40 minutes to prepare a dish!

The atmosphere was charged with excitement and camaraderie as contestants supported one another while striving to impress the judges. The Denton County 4-H Food Challenge not only celebrated the joy of cooking but also emphasized the importance of teamwork, quick thinking, and culinary expertise. It provided a platform for young chefs to hone their skills, gain confidence, and showcase their passion for the culinary arts. Overall, the event was a resounding success, highlighting the culinary talents of Denton County's youth and inspiring future chefs.

AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

Zach A. Davis, Agriculture & Natural Resources Extension Agent

In October, we facilitated three different validations with the 4-H department to complete the validation process for county animals. All sheep and goat projects are validated to ensure they can compete at the local Denton County Youth Fair or at other statewide shows this year. Almost 200 head of animals were validated at three different locations. In addition, we supported youth livestock judges at the Heart of Texas Fair where they competed and had the 8th place senior team in the state. We also completed the planning process for our annual pesticide applicator training that will be held in December.



Above: Our AgriLife team working hard at validation in Ponder.

BETTER LIVING FOR TEXANS

Dusty Fife, Better Living for Texans Extension Agent

WELCOMING BACK DUSTY FIFE!



Above: Dusty Fife embracing her return to Denton County AgriLife Extension with a warm smile.

After a brief hiatus, I am happy to announce that I have returned to my position as the Better Living for Texans Extension Agent. Returning has brought me a sense of familiarity and comfort and a chance to implement new ideas and strategies gained during my time away. Being back with my former colleagues and being in this work environment has brought fresh perspectives, renewed motivation, and a heightened appreciation for my work.

Since returning, I have been busy marketing our programs to new prospects throughout Denton County. I am excited to report that I have made new connections with the Little Elm Public Library and reestablished my relationship with Ann Windle School for the Young. Both locations will host Better Living for Texans programming in the coming months.

As we head into November, I will partner with Thrive Recreation in Lewisville to teach a new program series called **Get the Facts**. The four-session series takes a deep dive into the Nutrition Facts Label.

Join us for
“Get The Facts” at
Thrive in Lewisville
Every Thursday

**November 9 thru
December 7**
from 1 p.m. to 2 p.m.

GET THE FACTS

LEARN ABOUT SODIUM,
FATS, SUGARS &
PORTION SIZE!



#1

Learn about the nutrition fact label

#2

Gain confidence in making healthy choices at the grocery store

#3

Become aware of how nutrients affect your health

#4

Support of friends and community members

#5

Learn practical tips for a healthier life

TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION

BETTER LIVING FOR TEXANS

FAMILY & COMMUNITY HEALTH

Chandani Kothari, Family and Community Health Extension Agent

October kicked off with State Fair Food Challenge contest judging and a recipe demonstration at the AgriLife booth at the fair. It is such a treat to the eyes to watch young children and youth put their cooking skills and nutrition knowledge to use while they create healthy and delicious recipes from scratch with a secret ingredient. I demonstrated two recipes – Grape Tomato and Cilantro Salad, and Rosemary Vegetable Skewers. More than 25 people were in attendance during each of the sessions and we passed out close to 100 samples altogether.

We also had a Sugar-Shockers exhibit at the Wellness Expo fair hosted by RSVP at the Golden Triangle Mall in Denton. More than 100 visitors walked away with giveaways and an awareness of how much sugar is in the different beverages consumed regularly by many of us.



Above: A successful food demonstration at the State Fair Food Challenge.

Upcoming Family & Community Health Events

Nov 9th
Water bath canning Workshop
at MLK Rec Centre

Nov 10
Controlling Blood Pressure at
THRIVE, Lewisville

Dec 9
Senior Health Fair at Flower
Mound Senior Centre

Dec 12
Cholesterol Matters at THRIVE
in Lewisville



Above: Our agent, Chandani, and fall intern, Victoria, at the Wellness Expo at Golden Triangle Mall.

HORTICULTURE

Horticulture Extension

HOLIDAY CACTUS

BY DONNA HULL

It's the time of year to enjoy a few holiday-inspired plants. The garden centers are filled with poinsettias and fresh pine, but don't forget to invite another beauty into your home – the holiday cactus.



Above: The Thanksgiving cactus is full bloom.

There are three holiday cacti – the Thanksgiving cactus, Christmas cactus, and Easter cactus. The first two, which are the most commonly bought and enjoyed by gardeners, are separate species of the genus *Schlumbergera* which bloom in November and December, respectively. And while they are members of the Family Cactaceae, these are not the cacti we think of from dry regions. *Schlumbergera* are native to the higher altitudes of tropical rainforests in Brazil. They are epiphytes, meaning they grow on trees (and sometimes out of rock fractures) in the rainforest, where they receive consistent rainfall and indirect light. The temperatures are moderate, the soil rich in organic matter. Not your desert cactus at all!

Holiday Blooms

Because your home is likely not a perfect substitute for a tropical rainforest (nor would you want it to be!), a little coaxing must be done to get our holiday cactus to bloom. In its native environment, *Schlumbergera* usually blooms at the end of the rainy season, when temperatures and light reach the appropriate levels to set off the formation of buds. Since you are likely aiming for flowering during the holidays, begin the forcing process 6-8 weeks before your preferred bloom time. The forcing process focuses on two growing factors: light and temperature. *Schlumbergera* will begin to form flower buds through a reduction in temperature and an increase in the hours of darkness that they are exposed to. In North Texas, this is a good time to set the plant outdoors (if possible), exposing the plant to 50-55°F with 2-6 hours of complete darkness (no artificial or natural light) or 60-65°F with 12 hours of complete darkness. At 70°F the plant will need 15 hours of darkness. Do not fertilize during this period, and only water when dry to the touch. After the buds have formed, the plant can stay in 65-70 °F, and resume regular watering (keeping the plant moist, not water soaked) and light. Be sure to bring them inside if the temperatures fall below 50°F – they like it cool, but not too cold! If all goes well, you will be rewarded with 6-8 weeks of colorful holiday cactus blooms.

After the Bloom Wears Off

Once they have finished blooming, *Schlumbergera* will need (and deserve) a resting period, typically January through March. Keep the plants in indirect light. Water when dry to the touch and keep the plant in cooler temperatures if possible. Late spring through summer, water regularly and apply a fertilizer periodically at half strength. *Schlumbergera* likes to be slightly root-bound – so only repot every 2-3 years into a slightly larger pot. Come fall, fertilize with a high phosphorus fertilizer, continue watering, and keep your eye on the calendar so that you can begin the forcing process again when the time is right.

UPCOMING EVENTS



**Water Bath Canning Workshop
November 09**

**“Get The Facts” at Thrive in Lewisville
Every Thursday, November 9 - December 7**

**Controlling Your Blood Pressure
November 10**

**Senior Health Fair at Flower Mound Senior Center
December 9**

**Cholestrol Matters at Thrive in Lewisville
December 12**

For more information on these programs go to
<https://denton.agrilife.org/> or call us at 940-349-2882
Don't forget to like and follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram!](#)

