

This calls for a celebration. Sixty-six years and still growing! On Thursday, April 5, 2018, NET's longest running locally produced television series will once again air its first show for the new season. This renowned television series is designed to guide



both rural and urban gardeners from seedtime through harvest. I am referring to the famous television series called *Backyard Farmer*. I can honestly say I have been a devoted viewer of *Backyard Farmer* for almost sixty-six years.

*BYF*, as it is often called, focuses on gardening questions from viewers. Topics range from fruits, vegetables, insects, turf, annuals, perennials, weeds, wildlife, trees and shrubs. A panel of experts from Nebraska Extension and University of Nebraska–Lincoln's landscape services offer research-based recommendations. The series also includes demonstrations and information on a variety of landscaping and outdoor projects. Each program provides the viewers with a lively discussion on plant and pest photos and samples sent in by gardeners from across the state.

One advantage of working for UNL Extension is that I have worked with many of the *Backyard Farmer* panel members. I regard these colleagues as friends. Rest assured I personally call upon their expert advice frequently. When people ask questions of me that I cannot answer, I generally reply, "Sorry, I don't know the answer to that. Allow me to check it out, and I'll get back with you." Guess who I call? You guessed it; the *Backyard Farmer* experts, of course!

The beginning of this year's season focuses on how all plants, insects, diseases and critters that inhabit the landscape and gardens wake up in the spring. In addition, Ken Dewey, a climatologist and professor of natural resources and geography with the university, will be on the show offering a weather outlook for the upcoming gardening season

Both the set and the staff have changed over the years. Through those years, one thing has remained the same. A rotating cadre of extension experts offering advice from asters to zinnias and from bugs to bunnies has provided research-based advice.

With the advent of the computer and related technology, the *Backyard Farmer* program has taken on a new look. The entire program is now video streamed on the *Backyard Farmer* web site: [www.byf.unl.edu](http://www.byf.unl.edu). Viewers can e-mail their gardening questions to this same site. Now, through assorted social media networks, viewers can also address their concerns with the panelists.

*BYF* is coming off its highest-rated season. Now, Facebook, YouTube and other social media sites provide opportunity for viewers to continue conversations started on Thursdays' live show. *BYF's* audience on social media continues to grow. The show's YouTube page recently surpassed 5.5 million views.

I share with you one more tidbit of excitement. *Backyard Farmer* viewers will have the opportunity to attend the filming of select live-to-tape episodes throughout the coming season. A special show will be filmed at Harmon Park in Kearney on June 3 and at the Nebraska State Fair in Grand Island on August 29. More will be announced at later date regarding these two special events.

*Backyard Farmer*, sixty-six years and still growing! Join in the celebration Thursday evening, April 5, 2018, on NET at 7:00 p.m. Do not forget.