

Views from VanDeWalle

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Nebraska Extension Showcasing 4-H'ers at County Fairs

Nebraska Extension is working to make sure all 4-H'ers across the state have the opportunity to showcase their hard work come county fair time this summer. Since COVID-19 hit, rest assured Nebraska 4-H faculty and staff have been diligently working on numerous plans and options to celebrate our youth and showcase their hard work. Recently, our Dean and Director, Chuck Hibberd released an article which also describes our efforts.

County fair boards and agricultural societies in Nebraska's 93 counties are determining what their county fairs will look like – or whether to have them at all -- as the state responds to COVID-19. Nebraska Extension is working with these groups to design in-person or virtual 4-H experiences or a combination of both appropriate for each county. *Recommendations of both the governor's office and Nebraska's district health departments will determine what strategies will work best on a county-by-county basis.*

"We are absolutely committed to making sure all youth who take part in 4-H across Nebraska have the opportunity to exhibit their hard work at a fair," said Chuck Hibberd, dean and director of Nebraska Extension. "We are equally committed to protecting the health and safety of our youth, volunteers, judges and spectators.

Nebraska has one of the highest 4-H participation rates in the nation, with one in three – a total of over 140,000 -- youth engaged in the program. Nebraska Extension began adapting 2020 4-H programming to virtual formats back in March, when social distancing and other directed health measures were first put in place. Locally, I'm proud to say that Clay and Fillmore Counties actually reach one in two – youth engaged in the program.

"Fairs may look different than they have in the past with social distancing, different arrangements for livestock shows, and the possible option for virtual shows; we also know that the fair experience is an important part of a 4-H'ers summer," Hibberd said. "We are excited to be able to make that happen."

Additional information for county fairs will be available as details are finalized. Please be patient with our staff and council members as we work through options.

Online Gardening Program

There has been a huge interest in gardening during this time period. For some people, this might be their first time with a garden and for some, we've been gardening for years, but are always looking for tips to improve productivity. If you fit into one of those categories, join Nicole Stoner, Gage County Extension Educator, for an online seminar about managing your backyard garden on Tuesday, June 2, 2020, 6:30 PM – 7:30 PM. To receive the Zoom login, contact Nicole by Friday, May 29, 2020 at nstoner2@unl.edu.

Bagworms

One common horticultural pest our office receives questions on is bagworms. Bagworms feed on the foliage of a wide variety of trees and shrubs, but are of most concern for evergreens, especially

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junipers. Bagworms overwinter as eggs in their bags which are attached to tree branches. The eggs hatch in mid-May to early June. As bagworms grow, leaf fragments are added to bags which often grow to 2 inches in length by the end of the summer. The earliest signs of bagworm injury in evergreens are brown or stressed needles at the tips of branches. Heavy infestations of older bagworms may completely defoliate a tree or shrub and if severe enough can kill the tree or shrub. Less severe injury will slow growth and stunt plants.

To control bagworms on small trees or small infestations, remove the bags by pulling them off the branches and immersing them in soapy water. If you place the bags next to the tree, the larvae might return to the host plants. If you have bagworms in a windbreak or large tree, insecticides are most effective when applied during early bagworm development. For early season damage, insecticides from mid to late June when bags are less than ½ inch in length are effective. By late August, chemical control is no longer effective as the bagworms have ceased feeding and are enclosed within their bags.

Reduced-risk insecticides to use contain *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) and insecticidal soaps are quite effective on young bagworm larvae but may require repeated applications. Additional insecticide options for bagworms include: acephate, bifenthrin, carbaryl, cyfluthrin, malathion or others. As always, be sure to read and follow all label instructions and use all insecticides with caution to avoid exposure to humans, pets, wildlife and other non-target organisms.

For more information, check out Nebraska Extension's NebGuide on bagworms which can be accessed online through extension.unl.edu website or in our office.