Dear Extension Families,

August brings the start of school and rounds up the 4-H Summer Adventures Program. Only a few exciting activities are left this year! Don’t miss them!

This time of year some farm families are thinking of harvesting crops, food preservation, putting up hay, and all the things that must be done to prepare for winter. It is hard to imagine snow and ice when the temperatures are in the 90’s every day! This month take advantage of the Extension Food Preservation classes that are being offered.

Please support your local farmer’s markets. Saturday mornings you can buy local produce in the parking lot beside United Community Bank. Wednesdays you can visit Stecoah Valley Center to check out their market.

The state and local budgets have finally passed and we can now predict the future. Extension received cuts on both the county and state sides. Unfortunately, these cuts are having negative impacts across North Carolina. Graham County Cooperative Extension is supported by state and county funding and received a fifteen percent budget cut from the county. The impact of this cut is yet to be determined. Our staff will continue to serve the people of Graham County, but some programs may have to be suspended. We appreciate your understanding and patience.

Thank you for your continuing support,

Teresa Garland
County Extension Director

Randy Collins
Extension Agent
Agriculture

Eve Rogers
Extension Agent
Family & Consumer Science

PARENTS CORNER

Do things with your children this summer that you do not have the time or patience to do during the school year. Split activities up into fun things, and not so fun but necessary tasks. Whether you teach your children how to make a banana split, have a friendly water balloon fight, clean out closets, feed the homeless, cook together, garden together, or just watch fireflies, do it together. Let the gift of time, and your attention, create the finest family bonding that you’ve ever experienced.

If you like to read to your children, check out this best seller - “The Read Aloud Handbook” by Jim Trelease.

Points of Interest:
- 4-H Activities
- Learn Canning Basics
- Take Advantage of Tax-Free Holidays

Inside this issue:
- Recipe 2
- Tribute to a volunteer 3
- Tax-Free Holidays 4
- Important Dates 5
- Weeds 6
- Canning 8
- Pam’s Perspective 10
**4-H SUMMER ADVENTURES**

Ewwww...I didn’t know owls eat that! 4-H’ers learned what owls eat by comparing skeletons.

**RECIPE OF THE MONTH**

**Okra Pickles**

3 1/2 pounds small okra pods
1/3 cup canning salt
2 teaspoons dill seed
3 cups water
3 cups vinegar
4 cloves garlic
2 small hot red peppers, halved


Note: When cutting or seeding hot peppers, wear rubber gloves to prevent hands from being burned

Yield: about 4 pints or 2 quarts. This recipe was taken from the Ball Blue Book guide to preserving.

**NC MOUNTAIN STATE FAIR**

September 9-18
WNC Ag Center

A ten day, family oriented, agricultural fair.

- Clogging
- Pig races
- Petting zoo
- Camel rides
- Animal displays
- Rides for all ages
- Vendors
- Craftsmen
- Competitive exhibits

In Graham County, entries and completed forms may be left for the Pony Express at the Cooperative Extension Center at 2439 Tallulah Road by August 19. Bring your non-perishable items wrapped & packed securely for transport. Please label your box with your name & county. Also include a completed entry form inside the box with your items.

To learn more about the Fair, you may visit the website at:
http://www.mountainfair.org/
TRIBUTE TO A VOLUNTEER

Over the past year, 4-H has lost several of its beloved volunteers. One of them was Mary Ellen Green who passed away on May 3, 2011. She was survived by her husband of forty-nine years, Ray Green, one son—Robin, and two sisters—June and Betty. She was a native of Blount County, Tennessee but made her home in Graham County.

Mary Ellen and Ray were active members at First Baptist Church. They also volunteered with the Graham County Rescue Squad. For many years, Mary Ellen was the primary hush puppy maker for the Ramp Diner.

The current Extension staff remembers her best as part of Green’s Foodway. She was always friendly and smiling. Over the years, she often asked about 4-H. The last time I saw her in fact, she told me how she followed 4-H in the paper and praised us for our work with local youth. She continued to care about 4-H and children. Her words meant a lot to me.

She showed her love of children as a 4-H Club Leader at Tapoco. She and Zelma Lee Rogers had a community club at Tapoco and a school club at Mountain View where they touched the lives of dozens of local kids. 4-H appreciates her years of service to our organization, to youth, and to the community. She will be missed. Her legacy lives on.

FREEZER JAM
August 30 5:00
Call to pre-register!
Learn how to turn your favorite fruit into a delicious preserve.
Cost: $5.00

If you have any food preservation questions, call the Graham County Cooperative Extension Center at 479-7979.

The Ball Blue Book is a wonderful guide to preserving and are available at the Graham County Cooperative Extension Center.

CELEBRATE NATIONAL WATER QUALITY MONTH

Water is fast becoming the world’s most valuable resource. Keeping water clean and safe is important to the environment and to human life. What can you do to help? The Environmental Protection Agency has developed this list of things you might do to protect your water shed area:

1. **Become a volunteer monitor.** Monitor water quality conditions, build community awareness about water pollution, and help identify and restore problem sites.

2. **Organize your own trash clean-up** or join a nationwide river cleanup campaign

3. **Build a Rain Garden.** Rain gardens planted with native vegetation help reduce the adverse effects of storm water runoff by soaking up excess rainwater.

4. **Organize a Storm Drain Marking Project.** Rain water that flows into storm drains goes untreated to nearby streams, lakes, and bays. Produce a flyer or door hanger to encourage pollution prevention.

5. **Greenscape Your Yard.** Greenscaping is a set of landscaping practices that can improve your lawn and garden while protecting and preserving natural resources.

6. **Educate Your Community About Water Quality Protection.** Raise awareness about water pollution and storm water runoff.

7. **Advocate for Low Impact Development in Your Community.** Low Impact Development is an approach to land development (or re-development) that works with nature to manage the adverse impacts of storm water.

Source: [http://water.epa.gov/action/adopt/index.cfm](http://water.epa.gov/action/adopt/index.cfm)
North Carolinas tax-free holiday is scheduled for August 5-7 and applies to the following items: clothing foot wear, school supplies under $100, sports and rec equipment under $50, computers under $3500, and computer equipment under $250. Be sure to take advantage of it. Shopping on one of these days could take as much as 10% off of your back to school tab.

Follow these simple tips:

**Plan Ahead -** Plan major purchases around your state’s tax free weekend event. Use that time to purchase not just what you need right then, but what your children will need over the next several months.

**Compare Prices -** Use the sales circulars in your Sunday paper to compare prices on the items you wish to buy. In addition, visit the web sites of several stores where you usually shop. For example, if you tend to buy your kids’ jeans at Old Navy or American Eagle, visit their web sites during tax free week to find out which store is offering the better deal. Do the same for items such as school supplies, computers, and even sneakers. You also could search their websites for coupon codes to save even more.

**Use Coupons to Take Advantage of Special Deals -** If you can use coupons, use them. Some states, however, will not allow consumers to use coupons during a sales tax holiday. Even if coupons are not permitted, though, pay attention to your local stores’ advertisements for "Early Bird" shopping hours and special deals that can add to your savings during tax free weekend.

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**WNC NATURALLY**

**August 6, 2011, The Almond Center, Bryson City, NC**

**August 27, 2011, AB Tech Enka Campus, Candler, NC**

**October 22, 2011, Mill Spring Agricultural Center, Mill Spring, NC**

The WNC Natural Products Project, the NC Natural Products Association, and the WNC Forest Products Project invite you to attend one of these events designed to strengthen the natural products industry in western NC. Growers, wild-harvesters, manufacturers, buyers, and all who are interested in working with or in the natural products industry are invited to attend. This daylong event will consist of short introductory sessions followed by participatory breakout sessions where you choose which topics you want to learn more about. Contact Alison at alison_dressler@ncsu.edu or 828-684-3562. To register on-line, please visit our EventBrite site at: [http://wncnaturallyevents.eventbrite.com/](http://wncnaturallyevents.eventbrite.com/)

**DRYING AND FREEZING FOODS**

**August 16 5:00**

Call to pre-register!

Learn basic drying and freezing techniques of preserving food.

**Cost: $5.00**

**CANNING TOMATOES**

**August 9 5:00**

Call to pre-register!

Demonstration on pressure canning and water bath methods.

**Cost: $5.00**
### IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

#### 4-H & YOUTH ACTIVITIES

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>August 1</td>
<td>Asheville Tourists Game</td>
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<td>August 2</td>
<td>4-H Day at Fontana Village</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 4</td>
<td>Cherokee Legends Day</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 5</td>
<td>Farm to Fork Day Camp</td>
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<td>August 9</td>
<td>End of Summer Cookout</td>
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#### AGRICULTURE

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>August 4</td>
<td>Fresh Market Tomato and Vegetable Field Day</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 6 &amp; 27</td>
<td>WNC Naturally</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 15</td>
<td>Pesticide Recertification Class</td>
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#### FAMILY & CONSUMER SCIENCES

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>August 9</td>
<td>Canning Tomatoes</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 16</td>
<td>Drying and Freezing Foods</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 30</td>
<td>Freezer Jam</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 13</td>
<td>Low Glycemic Index Cooking Classes Start</td>
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#### COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>August 17</td>
<td>Goldenleaf Public Meeting (4:00—RES)</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 19</td>
<td>Pony Express Pickup for Mtn. State Fair</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 9-18</td>
<td>NC Mountain State Fair—Fletcher, NC</td>
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If you are interested in any of these programs call 479-7979 for more information!

#### LOW GLYCEMIC INDEX COOKING CLASSES

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>September 13, 20 &amp; 27</td>
<td>Call the Extension Center at 479-7979 for more details.</td>
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#### Pesticide Recertification Class

The next pesticide certification class has been scheduled for Monday, August 15th at the Clay County Extension Center in Hayesville. The class will cover material for 2 hours of both X & V credits. The class will begin promptly at 1:00 p.m. and will end around 5:00 p.m. For more information, please contact the Clay County Extension Center at (828) 389-6305.
WEEDS ARE NOT ALL BAD

The most common definition of a weed is a plant out of place. Many plants that are considered weeds in the vegetable garden are beneficial wildflowers in other settings. Some, such as the Venice mallow (or flower-of-an-hour), morning glory, and even thistles, have flowers that rival those intentionally planted in flowerbeds. Unfortunately, some of the plants, while attractive in the wild, are too aggressive for use in the home garden and can take over the landscape. Seeds of even very obnoxious wild flowers may be sold occasionally, so care must be used in the selection of wildflowers vs. weeds.

Some weedy plants are edible, providing nutritious variety to the regular diet: dandelions, purslane, chickweed, cress, mustards, and lambsquarters all offer greens; blackberries produce sweet fruits; Jerusalem artichokes (sunchokes) are the tubers of a native sunflower; and, of course, there is always wild asparagus to stalk. Before attempting to eat wild plants, be sure they are properly identified.

Weeds often provide a habitat for various insects, some of which are beneficial to the garden. They provide shelter, pollen, and nectar for bees and predators of garden pests, such as the preying mantis. Wild plants also have other virtues. Parts of some plants are used in natural dyes. Annual weeds can be a good source of nitrogenous materials for the compost pile if pulled before flowering. Many have long roots that bring elements from the subsoil into their aboveground tissues. When these weeds are pulled or tilled and allowed to decay in the garden, the elements are made available to other plants. Finally, the presence of some native plants can indicate certain soil problems - deficiencies, pH changes, and soil compaction - if the gardener knows how to read them.

Using indicator plants to read the environment is a common practice, whether or not it is a conscious activity. For instance, a pasture being invaded by Eastern red cedar indicates low soil fertility and an alkaline pH. Bracken fern is a common indicator of acidic and overgrazed pastures. Cattails or rushes thrive only in wet locations. Similarly, weeping willow indicates that there is plenty of soil moisture present, either in a flowing stream or a high water table. Probably the most commonly known indicator plant is moss growing on the north side of a tree. The shaded side of the tree trunk is cool and moist, the very environment needed for survival of the moss.

Weeds in and around the Garden

Most weeds compete too well with crop plants for water, nutrients, and light. They grow faster than cultured vegetables and are very effective in their reproduction. Classic examples are purslane, lambsquarter, and common dock. Weeds serve as a source of some insect and disease problems, often providing an overwintering site. Occasionally, weeds are an important link in the life cycle of diseases that damage crops.

Cultivation

There are several ways to rid the garden of most problem plants. Since mature weeds extract large quantities of moisture and nutrients from the soil, removing the weeds when they are young is beneficial. Hand pulling suffices for small gardens and raised beds, but a hoe is critical for larger gardens. Manual-powered rotary cultivators do a good job on long rows and pathways; provided the soil is not too wet or dry and the weeds are small. In large gardens with widely spaced rows, a rotary tiller of appropriate size makes the work easy and fast. Manual and powered rotary cultivators are usually unable to turn under weeds close to vegetable plants without damaging the vegetables. Hand pulling or hoeing are best for removing weeds near vegetable plants. Deep cultivation with any instrument is likely to damage roots or stems of crop plants.

Turning annual weeds under, especially before they flower, provides organic matter to the soil. Hand-pulled weeds, except for rhizomatous grasses, may be laid on top of the soil to dry out, then left as a mulch or turned under. However, if rain is predicted within a day or two, remove pulled weeds to the compost pile; otherwise, rain will wash soil around the roots enabling some to survive. Weeds that have started to go to seed and grasses that spread by rhizomes or stolons should not be left in the garden after pulling or they will create new problems. Composting may not destroy the weeds or their seeds if the pile doesn’t heat up sufficiently after they are added. In these cases, despite their potential value as organic...
material, it's better to put them in the trash or burn them, if local ordinances permit, and spread the ashes in the garden. Reducing weed growth near the garden by mowing or other means will also help prevent the spread of weeds and seeds to the garden area and eliminate insect and disease hosts.

Cultivation is best done when the soil is moist, but not wet. Working wet soil will change the structure, especially of heavy clay-type soils. When it is too dry, weeds are difficult to pull and hoeing is difficult. A day or two after a rain or irrigation is probably the best time to cultivate. The work will be much more pleasant done in the cool temperatures of early morning or evening rather than the hottest part of the day. Wear protective clothing if it is necessary to work when it’s hot, and stop frequently for rest and refreshment.

**Mulching**

Thick layers of organic mulch will not allow most annual weeds to poke through, and those that do are usually easily pulled. Weeds with runners are not so easily controlled, and black plastic may be a better choice where these prevail. For paths, newspaper, old carpeting, or other such materials covered with sawdust will provide excellent weed suppression. However, sawdust is not recommended for use close to cultivated plants because of its tendency to crust and because bacteria used to break down the sawdust take nitrogen from the soil, and thus from vegetables.

**Close Spacing**

Once vegetable plants are established, if they have been planted close enough to each other they will shade the soil and prevent the growth of many weed seedlings. This is the effect achieved by a well-planned raised bed or wide-row planting in which plants are spaced so that the foliage of adjacent plants touches, forming a closed canopy at a mature growth stage.

**Other Practices**

Some gardeners are experimenting with various types of no-till gardening to reduce weed problems as well as prevent erosion and moisture loss. One method is the standard farm no-till practice of sowing a fall cover crop and then killing it with a herbicide, and planting vegetables in the dead sod after a recommended waiting period. Although there are no herbicides recommended for use in established home vegetable gardens to kill emerged weeds at the present time, certain herbicides can be used before planting to kill cover crops for no-till practice. See your Extension agent for recommendations. Use of weed-killers normally recommended for lawns or other areas is not advised. One alternative is the use of a living sod, mowed regularly, which has many of the benefits of no-till and does not necessitate the use of herbicides. This practice works well with raised beds, so that only the paths need to be mowed. A fall cover crop can also be killed by covering the area with clean plastic once the weather is warm. Heat will build sufficiently to kill the plants, and then vegetable seed or transplants can be set out after removing the plastic.

The use of cover crops over several seasons or years in a particularly weedy section can also reduce weed problems. However, this method requires leaving that part of the garden uncultivated, reducing growing space. Cover crops must be mown or harvested regularly, which can be time-consuming and/or difficult without appropriate tools. Investigate cover-crop rotations thoroughly before using them to control weeds. All of the above techniques are still in the experimental stage for home gardeners. Try them in small sections of the garden to determine how effective they may be for you.

**Herbicides**

Certain herbicides may be used in or around the home garden. They should always be used according to label instructions and only for crops listed on the label. The wrong herbicide can be very damaging to your garden. Check with your Extension agent for recommendations. Even when used properly, drift from herbicide sprays used on the lawn or in areas surrounding the garden can cause damage to vegetable plants, so take care to spray on windless days and erect barriers to protect plants if necessary. Drift or runoff from pre-emergence herbicides does not damage growing plants, but may prevent seeds from germinating. Be aware that treatment with an herbicide for one type of weed may result in the area being colonized by other weeds that are tolerant to the chemical. Finally, never use an herbicide in the same sprayer you use for insect and disease control. Keep a separate one for weed-killers only.
**HOW CANNING PRESERVES FOOD**

**Canning Basics**

To can means to heat process food in a glass jar with a lid in place. Processing kills microorganisms -- bacteria, yeasts, and molds -- that contaminate food and cause food spoilage and/or foodborne illness. Processing can be done in a water bath canner or a pressure canner, depending on the food's acidity.

Acid foods (all fruits except unacidified figs) can be safely processed in a water bath canner. Acidified tomatoes and figs can also be safely processed in a water bath canner. Microorganisms in or on **acid foods** are easily killed at 212 degrees F (the temperature of boiling water). Low-acid foods (vegetables and tomatoes and figs that are not acidified) must be processed in a pressure canner. The bacteria that produces botulinum toxin cannot grow in acid foods but can grow in low acid foods. These bacteria (*Clostridium botulinum*) have spores that survive hours of boiling water temperature. However, these spores are destroyed within a reasonable time at 240oF (the temperature reached inside a pressure canner set at 10 pounds pressure).

If low-acid food is processed in a water bath canner, *botulinum* spores on the food will survive. In the absence of air, a condition found inside a jar after processing, the spores become living bacteria. As the bacteria grow, they form toxin. Eating even a drop of this potent toxin can be fatal to humans and animals. Over 70% of the cases of botulism have been caused by low-acid foods that were improperly canned at home.

To make sure your home canned foods are safe, carefully follow the canning instructions in this bulletin. Process **acid foods** in a water bath canner and low-acid foods in a pressure canner. Never process any foods in a conventional oven, microwave oven, steamer or dishwasher, as these methods do not kill microorganisms that cause food spoilage and/or foodborne illness.

**Recommended Canning Equipment**

Before each canning season, assemble and examine all canning equipment.

**Canning jars**. Use only standard canning jars (also called Mason jars) with the manufacturer’s name printed on the side. These jars can withstand the temperature extremes of canning. And, the sealing edge is smooth and flat so lids will seal properly.

Never use commercial jars, such as mayonnaise and pickle jars, for home canning.

**Canning lids**. The only safe way to seal a canning jar is with a two-piece canning lid. The set consists of a flat metal lid and a screw band. The lid has a sealing compound around the edge and is enameled on the under side to prevent food from reacting with the metal. The screw band holds the lid in place during processing. A vacuum seal forms during cooling, after the jar is removed from the canner. Screw bands that are in good condition may be reused, but *always use new lids*. Do not use screw bands that are bent or badly rusted.

**Two types of canners**. Use a water bath canner to process acid foods. A water bath canner is a large deep kettle that has a cover and a rack to hold jars. You can also use a big, covered pot that is deep enough to allow water to extend 1 to 2 inches over the tops of the jars with enough room for the water to boil briskly. Also add a rack to keep the jars off the bottom of the pot.

Use a pressure canner to process low acid foods. A pressure canner is a deep, heavy kettle that has a rack on the bottom for jars to stand on. It also has a tight-fitting lid with a gasket, and a pressure gauge. The gasket keeps steam from leaking out around the cover. If the gasket is worn, stretched, or hardened, replace it. There are two types of pressure measuring gauges, dial gauge and weighted gauge.

**Preparing Fruits and Vegetables For Processing**

Select high quality, unblemished fruits and vegetables for canning. Canning will not improve quality. Can them as soon as possible after harvesting.

Thoroughly wash fruits and vegetables before canning even if they will be peeled. Garden soil contains bacteria. **NOTE**: Potatoes must be peeled before canning.

Wash by scrubbing with a vegetable brush and rinsing thoroughly. Or, if more practical, soak in water for several minutes. Lift out of the water so the soil that has been washed off won't settle back on the food. Peel, pit, and/or slice only as much food as you can process at one time.

**Sugar and Salt**

Sugar helps retain the color, shape and texture of canned fruits. Sugar is usually added as a syrup.

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**Getting Canning Equipment Ready**

Wash canning jars in a dishwasher or in hot soapy water, and rinse well. Keep jars hot by leaving them in the dishwasher or hot water until you are ready to fill them. Wash and rinse canning lids and screw bands. Follow the manufacturer’s directions for preparing lids.

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Salt may be added to vegetables and tomatoes before canning. Since its only function is flavor, it can be safely omitted. Canning fruits and vegetables without adding sugar or salt does not affect processing times or microbiological safety.

Packing Instructions
The two methods of packing food into canning jars are raw pack and hot pack. Raw pack is packing raw, prepared food into clean, hot jars and then adding hot liquid. Fruits and most vegetables need to be packed tightly because they will shrink during processing. However, raw corn, Lima beans, and peas should be packed loosely, as they will expand. For hot pack, heat prepared food to boiling or partially cook it. It should be packed loosely while boiling hot into clean, hot jars. Hot pack takes more time but has been found to result in higher quality canned foods.

For either packing method, pack acid foods including acidified tomatoes and acidified figs to within 1/2 inch of the top of the jar. Low acid foods to within 1 inch of the top of the jar.

After food is packed into jars, wipe the jar rims clean. Put on the lid with the sealing compound next to the jar rim. Screw the band down firmly so that it is hand-tight.

Processing in a Water Bath Canner
Use a water bath canner to process acidified tomatoes, acidified figs and all other fruits. A pressure canner can be used to process acid foods but the quality will not be as good.

1. Fill the canner half full with water; then cover and heat. For raw-packed food, have the water hot but not boiling. For hot-packed food, have the water boiling.

2. Using a jar lifter, place jars filled with food on the rack in the canner. If necessary, add boiling water to bring water 1 to 2 inches over the tops of the jars. Do not pour boiling water directly on jars. Cover.

3. When water comes to a rolling boil, start counting the processing time. Keep water at a rolling boil for the entire processing time. Add more boiling water to keep water 1 to 2 inches above jars.

4. As soon as the processing time is up, use a jar lifter to remove jars from canner. If liquid has boiled out of the jars during processing, do not open them to add more. Do not retighten screw bands, even if they are noticeably loose.

Here are some pointers for using a pressure canner:

1. Pour 2 or 3 inches of water in the bottom of the canner and heat to boiling.

2. Set jars on the rack in the canner. If you have two layers of jars in the canner, use a rack between them and stagger the second layer.

3. Fasten the canner cover securely so steam cannot escape except through the vent.

4. Once steam pours steadily from vent, let it escape for 10 minutes to drive all air from the canner. During processing, the canner must be filled with steam, not air, since it is steam that reaches the desired temperature of 240 F.

5. a. If the canner has a weighted gauge, start counting the processing time when it jiggles or rocks. The target pressure for this type of canner is 10 pounds pressure. Adjust heat so that gauge jiggles 2 or 3 times a minute or maintains a slow, steady, rocking motion.

b. If the canner has a dial gauge, bring pressure up quickly to 8 pounds, then adjust the heat to maintain 11 pounds pressure. Start counting the processing time when the gauge registers 11 pounds pressure.

Canning at Altitudes Above 1,000 Feet
If you live at an altitude of more than 1,000 feet, you will need to modify the processing time for acid foods and the pounds pressure you use to process low-acid foods. The processing instructions presented in this bulletin are for altitudes of 0-1000 feet.

Select high quality fruits and vegetables for canning

Select high quality fruits and vegetables for canning

NC State University A&I State University Cooperative Extension
Graham County Center
6. When the processing time is up, turn off the burner. Let the pressure in the canner drop to zero by itself. This may take 45 minutes in a 16-quart canner filled with jars and almost an hour in a 22-quart canner. Do not rush the cooling process.

7. When the pressure has dropped to zero, open the vent or remove the weighted gauge. (With a weighted gauge canner, pressure is completely reduced if no steam escapes when the gauge is nudged or tilted. If steam spurts out, pressure is not yet down.)

8. Remove canner cover carefully, tilting it away from your face so that the rising steam cannot burn your face or hands.

9. Remove jars from canner. If liquid boiled out of jars during processing, do not open jars to add more liquid. Do not retighten screw bands, even if they are noticeably loose.

10. Place hot jars upright to cool on a towel or rack. Leave space between them so air can circulate. Keep jars out of drafts.

Check Seals

Vacuum seals form as the jars cool. When jars are cool (12 to 24 hours after processing), check the seals. If the lid is depressed or concave and will not move when pressed, it is sealed. If sealed, carefully remove screw bands.

If you find an unsealed jar, do one of the following:
- Refrigerate the food and use it within 2 to 3 days.
- Freeze the food. (Drain vegetables before freezing.)
- Reprocess the food. Remove lids, empty the contents into a pan, heat to boiling, pack into clean, hot jars, and put on new lids. Process again for the full time.

If more than 24 hours have gone by since processing, throw out the food. It might be unsafe to eat.

Label and Store Sealed Jars

Label sealed jars with the processing date. Store them in a cool, dry, dark place. Properly stored canned foods will retain their quality for at least a year. Never store canned foods near hot pipes, a range, a furnace, or in direct sunlight because they lose quality.

PAM’S PERSPECTIVE

This month our summer activities have included a “Growing Up Wild” youth day camp. Youth learned about the environment around them, enjoyed lessons about animals, dissected owl pellets, learned the difference between bugs and insects, checked Tallulah Creek for water quality by the type of macro invertebrates found there. We found macro invertebrates that only live in clean water, so we concluded that the water was clean.

Krysta Grindstaff, Noah Hedrick, Josh Jiang and I went to Western Carolina University for Electric Congress. Youth assembled a circuit board that lit up when completed correctly, enjoyed a rafting trip down the Nantahala River & took a train ride. Krysta and I took the train ride while the boys went rafting.

On the 19th our candy making participants made a variety of sweets, cookies, peanut butter balls, chocolate suckers, dipped strawberries, marshmallows, Oreos, peanuts and pretzels in chocolate. Each 4-H’er took home enough treats to cause an extreme sugar high.

We finished up the month with a couple of hikes, a trip to Cherokee and a trip to Franklin to the Gem Mine. Our volunteers this month were Joanne Knight, Jim Lowe, Randy Collins, Denise Patterson and Bobbie Bridges.

Thanks for making 4-H in Graham County the best!