



Community Compass



WELCOME!

Welcome to the “Community Compass” - Montana State University Extension in Gallatin County’s newsletter!

Whether you are a frequent friend of the Extension Office or this is the first time you have heard of Extension we are excited to share useful information that can extend into a variety of aspects of your life.

At Extension we provide unbiased research-based education and information that integrates learning, discovery and engagement to strengthen the social, economic, and environmental well-being of individuals, families, and communities in Gallatin County. We are excited to partner with a variety of agencies, community members, organizations, and hopefully you and your family.

In the pages of this quarterly newsletter you will find information for 4-H youth and parents; guidance on managing agriculture and natural resources; and helpful tips for managing your food nutrition. Watch for occasional updates from our great partners and check out the upcoming calendar of events spanning workshops, volunteer opportunities, and important dates.

Also, we are celebrating a new office location and would like to extend an invitation to our open house on May 18 from 4pm to 6pm.

Finally, we welcome your feedback so that this newsletter and our office can best serve your needs. Stop in or drop us a line with your comments and suggestions.

Thanks,

The MSU Extension Gallatin County Office

MSU Extension Gallatin County

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ASK THE PROGRAM MANAGER

KATIE ROBERTSON

The SNAP-Ed program offers nutrition and physical activity classes for youth and adults. Eating Smart, Being Active is an 8 week class series meeting once a week that focuses on easy meal planning, MyPlate, ideas for stretching your food dollar, and tips for increasing physical activity. If you are interested in learning more about the SNAP-Ed program, please contact Katie.

Please like us on social media to get recipes and other tips for active, healthy living.

<https://www.pinterest.com/buyeatlive/>

<https://www.facebook.com/buyeatlivebetter/>

<http://www.buyeatlivebetter.org/>

ASK THE AG AGENT

What are the rodents in my pasture?

Richardson ground squirrels.

Also called “gophers”, yellowish to grey in color, 12 inch long with 2-4 inch tail as an adult. They live in extensive burrows underground with open surface hole.

Voies. Aka field mice or meadow mice, small (less than 8.5 inches), can have short or long tails and are dark brown to gray in color. They create underground and surface tunnel systems with many burrow entrances. The small hole openings have trimmed grass “run ways.”

Pocket gopher. Have mounds of soil on surface and they spend most of their time underground in sealed tunnels. They are 5- 10 inches long, tail has few hairs, have fur-lined cheeks used to carry food, small eyes, small ears, large incisors .

We do not have **moles** in Montana.

TIPS FOR QUALITY FAMILY MEALS

Sitting down to eat a meal with your family is a great way to catch up and spend quality time with each other. Family meals can also reinforce a healthy relationship with food. Here are some ideas for building family traditions, improving nutrition, and reducing stress.

Share positive things that have happened during the day. Perhaps start a mealtime ritual where everyone tells one new thing they learned that day – including mom and dad! Some families assign a topic to mealtime conversations.

Here are some popular ideas:

- Describe something that happened recently which made you feel really happy.
- Someone gave you \$1,000. You have to spend some of it on your family before you can buy anything for yourself. What would you buy for everyone?

- If you could live in a different time and place, where and when would you want to live?
- If you could spend an afternoon with a famous person (living or dead) who is your pick?

If everyone in your family talks at once, take a tip from the Winnetka Alliance for Early Childhood. They suggest borrowing the ‘talking stick’ idea from Native Americans. Only the person holding the stick can talk. You might have a ‘talking cup’ or other special item that gets passed around.

Children, especially younger children, enjoy meals they help fix. If everyone is hungry and in a hurry when they get home, try preparing meals on the weekend or prepare something for the next day AFTER the meal.

Read more about family meals here:

<http://www.buyeatlivebetter.org/documents/factsheets/factsheet%20ofamily-10tipsforfamilymeals%2010.16.pdf>

GRAZING IN THE SPRING

Spring is a good time to consider grazing plans as part of range and pasture management. To do this one needs to understand the basics of grass growth.

What happens above ground impacts a grass plant’s below ground root system. A healthy root system will help a grass plant maximize its ability to access water and nutrients available in the soil. A perennial grass plant will store carbohydrates in its root system in the fall to prepare for winter survival and for spring regrowth. Remember the health you see in a plant above ground is reflected in the below ground root growth.

In the spring, a grass plant is relying on the energy stores in the roots for regrowth until the plant can grow enough leaf area that it is able to photosynthesize energy to sustain its growth. If a grass plant is grazed before it has grown enough leaf area to support itself, it is again relying on its root energy stores for growth. When this occurs repeatedly during the same season or is repeated year after year the grass plant will be disadvantaged and may eventually die. The plant is then less able to out compete other plants that are not as preferred by livestock. This can create a system where livestock are being allowed to “graze out” grasses that are desirable and may lead to weed encroachment while giving weeds an opportunity to “out compete” preferred grasses.

Management techniques for spring pasture include rotating pasture use so the same pasture isn’t always grazed in the same season, delaying grazing to allow grass to mature enough that it can withstand grazing, or to move animals more quickly through a rotation when grass is less mature to decrease the number of times a grass plant is grazed more than once.



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NATURAL RESOURCE CORNER

With warmer temperatures, melting snowpack, and swollen rivers and streams, water is at the front of everyone's mind. The Natural Resources Program at MSU Extension in Gallatin County has been developing a series of resources to help residents of Gallatin County increase their understanding and awareness of current water availability.

The Gallatin County Drought Resiliency Index contains information on County snowpack conditions, statewide surface water supplies, and statewide drought conditions. Data are pulled from sources like the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the U.S. Drought Monitor. As the season changes to spring and then summer, we will begin including more stream flow and reservoir data from the United State Geological Survey (USGS). Currently, these reports are published at the beginning of each month and can be found on the Natural Resources webpage at www.msuextension.org/gallatin/NaturalResourcesDroughtIndex.html.

We are also excited to have officially registered the new Gallatin County Extension offices as a Community Collaborative Rain, Hail, and Snow Network (CoCoRaHS) collection site. CoCoRaHS is a voluntary citizen science network in which participants collect precipitation and other valuable weather data. This data is reported directly to CoCoRaHS and utilized by organizations like the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the National Weather Service. To follow our station's data, visit www.msuextension.org/gallatin/NaturalResourcesCoCoRaHS_Station.html.

GALLATIN COUNTY 4-H CENTENNIAL

Gallatin County 4-H is celebrating its centennial in 2017. Thousands of youth in Gallatin County have learned life skills through the 4-H program over the past 100 years. A 100 year of success would not be possible without the dedication of all the volunteers and staff along with the generous support of the community.

The first 4-H club in Gallatin County was a "Pig Club" for boys only. The young boys learned how to raise a pig to take to the fair. Youth were required to keep records on their projects just as they are required to do today. Clubs for girls were added later and focused on cooking, sewing, and homemaking. Even 100 years ago 4-H followed the motto of "Learn by Doing". Although some things have stayed the same in 4-H many things have changed over the past 100 years.

Unlike 1917 girls are allowed to do any project and outnumber boys in Gallatin County. 4-H roots are in agriculture and that will never change, but 4-H now offers projects outside of agriculture. In Gallatin County shooting sports, robotics, dog and leadership projects are some of the largest projects offered.

4-H has been making a positive impact on youth in Gallatin County for 100 years and will continue for another 100 years as it continues to evolve to meet the needs of the youth in the community.



ASK THE AGENT

BRAD BAUER

I am interested in planting a shelterbelt this spring. Where is a good source for planting materials?

In Gallatin County there are several tree nursery and greenhouses that you can purchase trees and shrubs. However, if you are planning on planting a large area or a large volume you could consider purchasing through the DNRC Conservation Seedling Nursery—<http://dnrc.mt.gov/divisions/forestry/forestry-assistance/conservation-seedling-nursery>

The Seedling Nursery has a wide variety of species that can be used for shelterbelts and general conservation planting. Order early and work with our local Conservation District to pick up your materials this spring at the Conservation District office in Manhattan.

ASK THE AGENT

KELTON JENSEN

When is the best time to sign up for 4-H?

The 4-H year starts October 1 and that is when new families and returning families can enroll. There is a May 1st deadline to enroll and take something to fair, but many of the projects will be all ready started or even over by the May 1st deadline. Animal projects have deadlines based on possession dates and some projects like shooting sports is done by March. If you have a youth that is interested in joining 4-H please call us and talk to us about what projects you are interested in and then check out those projects at the fair.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

April	May	June
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • April 12– May 31: Master Gardener Level 2, Wednesdays 6 p.m.–8:30 p.m. • April 15: 4-H Workshop, Take a Hike 10a.m. –12p.m. • April 17-June 12: Small Acreage Management Course, Mondays 6 p.m.–8:30 p.m. • April 18-Sept 7: Gallatin County Plant Clinic. Tuesdays & Thursdays 1-4pm. • April 21: Tools and Rules: Soil Moisture Monitoring; Billings Fairgrounds-4H Building, 8 a.m.–4 p.m. • April 25: 4-H Workshop, Tech Tools 6p.m.-7:30p.m. • April 25: 4-H Workshop, Citizenship 6p.m.-7:30p.m. • April 29: 4-H Communications Day, 10am-3pm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 2 -Sept 7: Gallatin County Plant Clinic. Tuesdays & Thursdays 1-4pm. • May 4-5: Give Big– Donate to a local non-profit. • April 17-June 12: Small Acreage Management Course, Mondays 6 p.m.–8:30 p.m. • May 11: Forest Hike, Triple Tree, 5:30 p.m. • May 18 : MSU Extension Gallatin County and Gallatin County Weeds Open House 4 p.m.-6 p.m. • May 20: 4-H Stir-Ups Cooking Contest • May 22: Wetland Hike, Cherry Creek Fishing Access Site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • June 1-Sept 7: Gallatin County Plant Clinic. Tuesdays & Thursdays 1-4pm. • April 17-June 12: Small Acreage Management Course, Mondays 6 p.m.–8:30 p.m. • June 13: Ft. Ellis Ag Field Day • June 13-16: 4-H Summer Camp • June 17-Sept 9: Master Gardener Booth at Gallatin Valley Farmers Market • June tbd: Gallatin Beef Producer’s Summer Tour

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