Dear Extension Friend

We are proud to welcome two new faces to our extension family, Heather Futch and Barbara Smith will officially begin work on December 15th. Heather is our new Family & Consumer Science Agent and Barbara is our new Horticulture Agent. The 4-H Youth Agent position has been re-advertised and we hope to find that “special person” very soon.

The entire staff of the Baker County Extension Office would like to wish you and your family a safe and happy holiday season.

If we can be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to call.

Sincerely,

Mike Sweat
County Extension Director

Selecting A Christmas Tree

It's once again time to search for that "perfect" Christmas tree. When choosing a “pre-cut” tree remember to select a tree with needles that are a healthy dark green color and bend without breaking. Only a few needles should fall from the tree when the base is knocked on the ground. Once you have the tree home you should saw off ½-1 inch of the base to expose fresh tissue and then water daily.

The other option is to choose a locally grown tree. Varieties such as Red Cedar, Virginia Pine, Spruce Pine, and Leyland Cypress are all available from Christmas tree farms where you will find acres of beautiful shaped trees of every size.

These trees are of excellent quality and will last throughout the holiday season without shedding their leaves. The Christmas tree farm may also offer the opportunity to dig a live tree which can be planted into the landscape after the holidays.
Vegetable Planting for December

**Beets** - Early Wonder, Detroit Dark Red, Cylindra

**Broccoli** - Early Green Sprouting, Waltham 29, Atlantic, Green Comet, Green Duke

**Cabbage** - Gourmet, Marion Market, King Cole, Market Prize, Red Acre, Chieftan Savoy, Rio Verde, Bravo

**Cabbage (Chinese)** - Michihili, Wong Bok, Bok Choy, Napa

**Carrots** - Imperator, Chantenay, Nanates, Gold Pak, Waltham Hicolor, Orlando Gold

**Mustard** - Southern Giant Curled, Florida Broad Leaf

**Onions (Bulbing)** - Excel, Texas Grano, Granex, White Granex, Tropicana Red

**Onions (Bunching)** - White Portugal, Evergreen Beltville Bunching, Perfecto Blanco, Shallots (Multipliers)

**Radishes** - Cherry Belle, Comet, Early Scarlett Globe, White Icicle, Sparkler, Red Prince Champion

Gardening Guide for December

- December is the month to give trees a good dormant oil spraying as there are many insects that live throughout the winter on the trunk and branches of fruiting trees such as peaches, apples, pecans, and persimmons. Thoroughly spraying the trunk and main branches of the trees will smother the insects, thus allowing them to go into the spring free of pests. When buying a dormant oil spray, be sure it is labeled for fruit trees and follow directions and precautions thoroughly.

- For the winter flower bed you should plant only cold hardy annual plants such as carnation (china doll), delphinium, dianthus, foxglove (digitalis), larkspur, ornamental cabbage, ornamental kale, pansy, petunia, shasta daisy, and snapdragon. Be sure to remove old flowers on snaps, petunias and pansies to encourage new blooms. Fertilize monthly at a rate of 2 pounds per 100 square feet with a 6-6-6 fertilizer.

- Late December and January is the best time to move plants in the landscape and to move bare root trees. The old rule of thumb to prune the top 1/3 when transplanting is no longer valid. Research has found that it is best not to remove any of the top growth and let the plant shed naturally if it gets under stress. Root pruning six weeks before digging is still recommended. Root pruning consists of cutting the roots with a spade so the plant can grow feeder roots within the root ball before moving.

- Freezing temperatures can occur anytime in December. When a hard freeze is predicted, irrigation prior to the freeze is the best way to help prevent cold injury as water holds more heat than air spaces in the soil. Don't water during the freeze as this typically causes more cold injury. Other more sensitive plants will require covers to reduce soil heat loss. Make sure covers are not in contact with plant foliage. A light bulb under the cover can provide additional heat. If the cover is plastic, remove the cover during a sunny day or provide ventilation.

- Citrus fruit will be damaged when temperatures fall below 28°F for at least 4 hours. If this type of freeze is predicted, harvest any fruit that is ripe before the freeze. If fruit is not ripe, take a chance and leave the fruit on the tree because fruit will not ripen once picked. If fruit is frozen, it can be used for juice if used within a few days. Citrus trees freeze from top to bottom and from outside to inside. Thicker skinned fruit will freeze quicker than thin skinned fruit. Trees less than 5 years old are the most susceptible to damage. Protect graft unions by banking soil or use a foam/insulation trunk wrap.

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- Bulbous type plants for winter include African lily (Agapanthus), African lily (Moraea), amaryllis, anemone, Aztec lily, calla, crinum, hurricane lily, hyacinth, ixia, kaffir lily, narcissus, walking iris, ranunculus, spider lily, watsonia, and zephyr lily.

Upon request, for individuals with documented print related disabilities, this publication is available in alternative format. Contact the Baker County Extension Service for more information.

For individuals with disabilities requiring special accommodations, please contact the Baker County Extension Service at least 5 working days prior to the program in order for proper consideration to be given to the request.

For TDD service, call the Florida Relay Service Center at 1-800-955-8771
Managing Cool Season Grasses for Forage

Now is the time to apply additional nitrogen to rye-grass and other cool season grasses to increase growth. Extra nitrogen for cool season grasses seeded in a pasture sod is especially important since this type of seeding requires more nitrogen to get comparable growth to that of cool season grasses seeded alone.

Graze cool season grasses when they are 8-10" tall. Do not wait for additional growth to accumulate. Grazing at 8-10" will cause the grass to stool out and will result in a more even distribution of growth through the season. Rationally graze cool season grass pastures. Take animals off when forage is grazed down to a 3" height and rest the pasture for 3-4 weeks before grazing again. Other methods of grazing cool season annual grasses are limit grazing and creep grazing. Limit grazing is the practice of grazing high quality pastures a few hours each day with young beef animals or dairy cattle that need a high level of nutrition. This practice may be especially useful to small land owners or producers who own a few purebreds and want to provide them with some high quality forage. During the short grazing period, animals may obtain some or all of their protein and vitamin requirement. When not on the green pasture, animals can graze dry warm season grass or be fed hay. Be sure to provide mineral supplements to all livestock.

Be aware that excessive amounts of nitrate nitrogen in forages can cause poisoning of livestock. Nitrogen taken up by plants in normally assimilated into proteins and nucleoproteins. Under certain conditions, the rate of uptake may exceed the rate of assimilation and can result in a nitrate level high enough for the forage to be toxic to cattle. Conditions that can cause higher than normal nitrate-nitrogen levels in forages are:

- High levels of soil nitrogen available to plants.
- Deficiencies of nutrients other than nitrogen, particularly phosphorus, sulfur and possibly others.
- Low light intensity. For example, cloudy days or heavy shading.
- Any other climate condition interfering with normal plant growth.

Beef Cattle Management Calendar

- Begin grazing small grain pastures (if ready).
- Check mineral feeder.
- Check for external parasites and treat if needed.
- Deworm cows and heifers prior to winter feeding season.
- Observe regularly for calving difficulties.
- Rotate calving pastures to prevent diseases.
- Watch for scours in calves.
- Investigate health of bulls before you buy.
- Complete review of management plan and update for next year.
- Check replacement heifers to be sure they will be ready to breed 3-4 weeks prior to the main cow herd.
- Check livestock market reports on the Baker County Extension website.
In this issue of Baker Ag Notes:

- Selecting a Christmas Tree
- Vegetable Planting Guide
- November Gardening
- Managing Cool Season Grasses
- Beef Cattle Management Calendar

Poisonous Plant Identification

Our office has received several calls regarding the identification and control of poisonous plants for livestock and pets. Although it may be next to impossible to eliminate all poisonous plants from your property, it is best to have a general knowledge of which plants to look for and periodically check the fence lines and fields for known plants that can harm your animals.

Our website now has the publication: Poisonous Plants of the Southern United States complete with color photos and descriptions of over 55 of the most common poisonous plants in our area. Also included is information on the season of greatest danger, symptoms of poisoning and the plant parts that can harm animals. Plants are listed by common name as well as genus and species.

Find out more about this exciting resource on our web site at http://baker.ifas.ufl.edu