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Grow local, buy local

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

The “buy local” campaign is more than local business organizations encouraging people to shop in their local McLean County community.

Nowadays, the local, state and even national campaign extends to “buy local, grow local.” It encourages people to not only buy locally grown food and produce, but to grow their own.

“For me, I always look at it as if I buy something here in Washburn or other local communities, then I’m helping that person and the community,” described McLean County North Dakota State University Extension Agent Calla Edwards.

However, “buy local, grow local” is more than encouraging business commerce – it’s about getting Americans to eat healthier. The main reason the trend is growing nationally, Edwards explained, is people are becoming more health-conscious. They want to know who grows their food and how it’s grown, she added.

The N.D. Department of Agriculture has been working to promote and expand the movement through its Local Foods Initiative since 2008, including farmers markets.

Local foods aren’t limited to those grown or raised within a small geographical proximity to one’s location. The agency considers anything grown or raised in North Dakota sold directly to the end user as local foods.

Another benefit to the local food movement is it connects growers directly with consumers, helping people relate to one’s community, county or region – and each other.

Consumers, by purchasing directly at a farmers market, for example, can meet and get to know growers, which also helps them know their food is healthy and fresh. It wasn’t picked early from a vegetable or fruit farm hundreds of miles away, so it could age on a store shelf. It wasn’t treated with chemicals to prevent decay.

“Buy local, grow local” takes on an array of meanings, just as the N.D. Department of Agriculture defines local foods. It can be purchasing seasonal fruits and vegetables



The “grow local, buy local” concept in fruits, vegetables and even meats is a nationwide movement geared toward healthier eating. At the same time, it helps grow local economies, even in McLean County, by supporting local gardeners and farmers markets. The communities of Garrison, Washburn and Parshall have farmers markets each summer. “Grow local, buy local” could even extend to a year-around greenhouse if a potential commercial greenhouse under consideration at Coal Creek Station near Underwood comes to fruition.



While many gardeners continue planting in large gardens, a trend stretching across the country finds gardeners seeking small spaces as well, even incorporating containers into their garden art and landscaping. North Dakota State University McLean County Extension Agent Calla Edwards said container gardening works well for people with small spaces. It also allows people who are challenged physically in working with large gardens to still raise their own produce, only on a smaller scale.

at a farmers market, whether in Minot or Bismarck, or those in McLean County at Garrison, Parshall and Washburn.

Washburn's Lewis and Clark Farmers Market, for example, begins in June and takes place at the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center.

Garrison's farmers market is typically held on Saturday mornings, Garrison Chamber of Commerce

spokesperson McKaila Matteson described.

Another way to grow local is through community gardens, Edwards added. A community garden is a tract of land in a community where people can access a plot so they can grow their own produce. They're typically organized in a couple of different ways, Edward explained.

The most common form of community garden is often an empty lot or space where organizers rent plots of a particular footage. Gardeners plant, water, fertilize, weed and harvest their own produce from their own plot.

Less common, another form of community garden is more of a communal format where participants share in the garden's care and its bounty. However, unless participants document when the garden has been watered, fertilized or weeded, it's more difficult to know the area has been properly tended, Edwards cautioned.

To start a community garden, Edwards recommends organizers identify a location with full sun and adequate water source, such as a water tank or water hookup, make certain the property owner approves the site use, develop adequate promotion, determine specific rules and requirements, and develop an agreement form for all participants.

The Garrison community garden is in its third year, described Garrison Area Improvement Association (GAIA) Manager

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Growing a container garden

Times change with all things in life. Gardening isn't any different.

Back in the day when "buy local, grow local" wasn't a movement to encourage local economies and healthier eating, "buy local, grow local" was a matter of necessity. People raised their own food because it was cheaper. Country folks grew their own meat and poultry, as well, aided when the advent of electricity came to rural America through the rural electric cooperative system.

Calla Edwards, McLean County North Dakota State University Extension Agent, described how her

grandparents tended a large garden with wide spaces between long rows. It meant lots of weeding and hoeing and work. Yet it also meant fresh vegetables.

While it's true those large gardens still grace the landscape, many people – especially those new to gardening and the "buy local, grow local" philosophy – are thinking small scale.

People are more interested in growing vegetables in containers, for example, Edwards explained. It's possible to grow tomatoes, peppers, salad greens and even potatoes with

proper growing media and adequate water in something as small as a 5-gallon container.

Elevated or raised beds are also increasingly popular among gardeners, Edwards added, offering less bending and kneeling.

However, growing vegetables in smaller spaces isn't Utopia - it provides its own challenges if not done properly. Texas A&M University has a short guide for interested gardeners, <https://aggiehorticulture.tamu.edu/vegetable/files/2013/09/EHT-062.pdf>.

Share produce with others

Calla Edwards, McLean County North Dakota State University (NDSU) Extension Agent, encourages gardeners to share their wealth.

Their wealth of vegetables, that is, through the “Veggies for the Pantry” initiative providing fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables to area food pantries.

NDSU Extension master gardeners in Fargo-Moorhead founded Veggies for the Pantry in 2016, Edwards explained, collecting and donating surplus homegrown fruits and vegetables to the Fargo Emergency Food Pantry. They even established collection points and delivered produce to the pantry. It grew in 2017 to include 11 collection points, including in West Fargo and Dilworth, Minn.

Their 2016 efforts delivered more than 2,000 pounds of produce. In 2017, that grew to nearly 6,000 pounds and expanded to include donations to a Moorhead, Minn., food pantry.

However, the initiative didn’t

just grow in the Fargo-Moorhead area, Edwards continued. Master gardeners in McLean, McKenzie and Ramsey counties joined the effort to help food pantries in their local area in 2017. McLean County master gardeners collected more than 650 pounds of produce that first year to donate to county food pantries.

Edwards stressed that Veggies for the Pantry isn’t simply a program limited to produce grown by master gardeners, who are people completing NDSU’s educational Master Gardener Program and includes volunteering in some capacity as garden ambassadors. Anyone can donate extra fruits and vegetables to their local food pantry.

For example, the Lord’s Food Pantry in Max accepts donations at the Max City Hall, Main St., or Our Savior Lutheran Church, 504 Carvell St., in Max. The food pantry is available the third Monday of every month at city hall.

The N.D. Department of Commerce maintains a website with food pantries across the state. Its list



of McLean County food pantries includes Underwood’s Community Cupboard, Turtle Lake’s Lord’s Pantry, Wilton Food Pantry and the McLean Family Resource Center, Washburn, in addition to the Lord’s Food Pantry in Max.

Know the regulations

The “buy local, grow local” movement also carries with it an array of rules, regulations and laws for growers, helping ensure consumer safety depending on the type of food to be sold.

The N.D. Department of Agriculture’s Local Foods Initiative has a farm-to-market guide available on its website, <https://www.nd.gov/ndda/sites/default/files/legacy/resource/FarmToMarketGuide.pdf>, to assist potential growers and producers in getting products to market. It provides a wealth of information on direct marketing,

taxes, insurance and health and safety codes.

McLean County residents can also get local food health and safety codes from the First District Health Unit, which serves the county, at 801 11th Ave. S.W., Minot, ND 58702, telephone 701-852-1376, or their website, www.fdhu.org.

The First District Health Unit doesn’t require permits from its office for the sale of uncut, raw fruits and vegetables or eggs sold by the producer or flock owner. However, it regulates other foods.

The North Dakota Farmers

Market and Growers Association also provides resources and information, www.ndfarmersmarkets.org/. The Entrepreneurial Center for Horticulture, Dakota College, in Bottineau administers the association. Membership is geared to anyone engaged in production or direct marketing promotion of fresh grown or processed North Dakota products.

Beat the Heat this summer



75°

Install and set a programmable thermostat. It could save up to 10 percent on heating and cooling costs a year.



Use a fan. Ceiling fans will allow you to raise the thermostat setting 4 degrees without impacting your comfort.



Insulate your attic and seal cracks and openings to prevent warm air from leaking into your home.



Don't heat your home with appliances. On a hot day, consider using an outdoor grill rather than an oven.



Insulate and seal ducts to prevent air loss.



Install energy-efficient window coverings that let natural light in and prevent solar heat gain.

As summer starts to heat up and temperatures rise, many of us are cranking up the air conditioners to stay cool. It should come as no surprise that air conditioners use about 5 percent of all the electricity produced in the U.S., according to the U.S. Department of Energy.

This summer, instead of blasting the air conditioner (and blowing your electricity bills through the roof), you can take simple actions that will help you beat the heat. For example, replacing

a dirty, clogged air filter with a clean one can lower your air conditioner's energy consumption by 5-15 percent, while using a ceiling fan will allow you to raise the thermostat setting about 4 degrees without impacting your comfort.

With just a few small changes, you can relax in comfort this summer while saving some cold, hard cash.

Here are some tips from McLean Electric Cooperative:



Heat pump systems located outside a home should be cleaned twice a year – in the spring and fall. In addition, be certain to check electrical connections annually and replace or righted as needed.

Summer cooling efficiency tips

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

The phrase, “location, location, location,” applies to more than real estate: The location of a home’s outdoor air-conditioning unit and heat pump makes a difference in the amount of routine servicing they need.

Outdoor units tend to plug up more than those located within a home, Garrison Furnace and Stove owner Curtiss Moe explained, whether it’s seeds from cottonwood trees and other debris for city dwellers, or dust and dirt from a rural yard or farm, efficiency is reduced when a unit becomes plugged.

Outside air conditioners should be properly serviced annually, Moe continued. Professionals clean units by spraying it with a special dirt release chemical, he explained.

Electrical connections on HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) units should also be

tightened or replaced as needed from the meter to the unit, he added.

While outdoor air-conditioning units can get by with an annual cleaning, Moe recommends outdoor heat pumps be cleaned in the spring and fall because they’re used for both heating and cooling.

Indoor air-conditioning units should have their coils checked and cleaned every three to five years. “It doesn’t need to be done annually unless you have pets or allergies,” Moe added. However, it’s important to check filters monthly.

In addition, keep all registers open.

And don’t forget about a home’s heating and cooling ductwork. How often the entire duct system needs to be cleaned also varies depending on the presence or lack of pets and allergies.

Timing isn’t a factor when it comes to cleaning ducts. “It can be

done anytime,” Moe continued. When professionals clean duct works, “what we use is like a shop vac on steroids,” he explained, in order to best access all of the ducts throughout a home.

Attics are an area people tend to forget about or at the least, neglect, Moe described. Any attic should be properly ventilated. Opening an attic in the summer is akin to opening an oven – it serves to trap heat.

“If most attics were power ventilated, then your power bill would go down dramatically,” Moe described.

Another energy-savings tip: Consider a ground-source heat pump for new home construction. Typically called geothermal, a ground-source heat pump is essentially the same thing as a heat pump, but it absorbs heat from the earth.

Ground-source heat pumps can increase energy efficiency by almost 400 percent, Moe explained. However, it’s critical that they are installed properly for long-term benefits. The upfront cost is higher for ground-source heat pumps, but long-term energy expenses are less.

So rather than rack up large summer cooling expenses this year, homeowners can save money if they take the same approach to their heating and cooling systems as they would their vehicles – routine maintenance on a regular schedule can reduce a lot of anxiety over unexpected and large heating and cooling expenses. ■



LIGHTNING PROTECTION PREVENTING A DIRECT STRIKE

In the first quarter of 2017 alone, thunderstorms caused a record **\$5.7 billion** in losses, and lightning kills an average of **30 people a year**. Learn how to keep you, your family, and property safe from lightning.

▶ LIGHTNING IS DEADLY

22,600

An average of 22,600 fires were caused by **lightning** between 2007 and 2011.

According to Aon Benfield's Impact Forecasting, **insured losses** from lightning strikes are at an **all-time high**.



▶ LIGHTNING IS FAR REACHING

1/3 of all lightning related injuries occur indoors – stay away from:



Corded phones



Electronics



Plumbing

10

Lightning can strike **10 miles** from a thunderstorm.

30

people die a year from lightning strikes according to the National Weather Service.



Lightning can strike **anywhere**, not just the tallest objects.

▶ LIGHTNING PROTECTION

Power surges caused by lightning can damage the electronics in your home.



Lightning protection systems **intercept lightning strikes** and provide a grounding path for dangerous electricity to **discharge safely**, leaving occupants and homes safe from harm.



Panel box surge protective devices (SPDs) serve as the **first line of defense** against harmful home electrical surges, limiting voltages by diverting currents at the electrical service entrance. Only a **qualified electrician** should install SPDs.



Point-of-use surge protective devices protect electronics plugged into the device from surges, must be **replaced** over time or after a major surge event.



Power strips **DO NOT** provide surge protection.



No surge device can handle a **direct lightning strike**. Unplug sensitive electronics **WELL** before a storm to prevent damage.

Co-op protects against lightning strikes

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

When a good, old-fashioned North Dakota thunderstorm gets rocking and rolling across the countryside, McLean Electric Cooperative (MEC) members can likely put the blame on lightning if a storm causes an electrical outage.

Granted, wind is also a major culprit in thunderstorms, but if there is a lightning storm, those brilliant flashes of energy streaking from the sky to the ground are likely to cause blinks and outages. That's why McLean Electric installs lightning arrestors on all overhead transformers, described MEC Operations Manager Keith Thelen. Arrestors can still burn out with lightning strikes, he added, "but it will reduce some of the problems."

Lightning and wind are two reasons McLean Electric continues expanding its use of underground power lines when building new line compared to overhead. Underground cable typically isn't as susceptible to weather conditions.

In addition, it continues improving in quality, while at the same time becoming more cost-effective – especially when factoring in outage time involved with overhead lines.

When existing overhead lines are converted to underground on long distances, McLean Electric now buries the shorter taps off the main line, as well, because otherwise the short overhead line would act as a lightning rod and potentially attract a lightning strike.

Lightning can cause an array of problems for overhead lines: It can hit cross-arms or the electrical line itself, for example. "Anything that's up in the air," Thelen added. Lightning can damage meters.



It can burn or blow up a pole. "It can take more than one pole, too," Thelen said. "Even with an arrestor, if a lightning strike is close enough, it can burn out a transformer."

Arrestors are also used inside on pad-mount transformers.

To help reduce outages, breakers on a line will shut down when a lightning strike occurs to decrease the chance of a full outage. If a strike isn't too close and there isn't any damage to the line, breakers will close and automatically re-energize so there isn't an outage, Thelen described.

As dangerous as lightning is for the public when outside during a lightning or thunderstorm, it's even more dangerous for lineworkers to

be out working during a lightning event. When atop a pole, they're often the highest point – and lightning strikes the highest point.

While the mantra of a rural electric cooperative is to restore electricity as quickly as possible when outages occur, safety is the paramount consideration for electrical workers at all times.

Lineworkers will stay in their vehicles until a storm goes through, simply because they are at great risk, especially if any lightning hits the line while they're in a bucket truck or on a pole even though the bucket truck is grounded. "It (lightning) doesn't have to be in the immediate area, it can be several miles away," Thelen added. ■



A young tomato plant has lots of growing to do before it will begin producing a bounty for its gardener. Gardeners can donate excess fruits and vegetables to area food pantries, including ones located in Max, Turtle Lake, Underwood and Wilton.

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Lindsay Bofenkamp. The organization developed the program in conjunction with CHI St. Alexius Health-Garrison Hospital, property owners, as a way to encourage healthy eating and living.

The community garden encourages people to get outside in a healthy activity and environment, Bofenkamp described. Community gardens also add to the quality of life, she added, by providing the

opportunity for people to garden who otherwise might not have the space. Interest in the community garden continues to grow, she added.

Granted, McLean County and North Dakota aren't exactly the mecca for all fruits and vegetables, given the Northern Great Plains location.

Fresh oranges, lemons and spinach in December?

Nope, not happening – yet.

While winter is the time of

year when “buy local, grow local” generally doesn't apply to fruits and vegetables, that could be changing through projects such as Great River Energy's (GRE) potential year-round commercial greenhouse at Coal Creek Station, a coal-based power plant near Underwood. A feasibility study is underway to analyze the project, which would use excess heat from the power plant.

Yet North Dakota's glorious summers still allow residents to apply the mantra “buy local, grow local.”

Life on the prairie means people can enjoy fresh rhubarb, unlike their southern counterparts. It means – if they're really lucky – they might know of a secret juneberry patch.

And it's tough to beat the taste of fresh peas straight from the garden or a carrot hastily wiped clean on one's pants.

The next best thing is to contact a local grower, rent a plot in a community garden, join a CSA (community supported agriculture), or check out an upcoming farmers market.

It's healthier and helps grow the local economy – throughout McLean County and North Dakota. ■

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