

# EFNEP Programs Help Break Cycle Of Poor Nutrition And Poverty

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP), a federally funded program offered by Penn State Cooperative Extension to low-income families throughout Pennsylvania.

EFNEP paraprofessionals help thousands of families — especially those with young children — and pregnant teens choose a healthful diet on a limited income.

"Families living on an extremely tight budget often are chronically undernourished," says Judith Heald, EFNEP program manager in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences. "They often

have limited access to affordable, healthful foods, including fresh fruits and vegetables. Their diets are likely to be deficient in vitamins A and C, calcium and iron."

One in six Pennsylvanians age 17 or younger lives below the poverty level — that's nearly 440,000 children. Long-term, chronic undernutrition slows learning and cognitive development, lowers motivation and hinders concentration.

Poorly nourished children and teens also have weakened resistance to viruses and other infections. In addition, approximately 40 percent of all girls in low-income families become pregnant at least once before they reach age

20. Many of these girls make nutritionally poor food choices.

Of the infants born to teenagers who gain less than 20 pounds during pregnancy, more than 15 percent have low birth weights. These low-birth-weight babies are more prone to a wide range of health problems and disabilities.

"Participants in EFNEP programs learn ways to stretch food dollars and provide nutritious meals for their families," says Heald. "This includes information on preparing food, food safety, reading food labels, making good use of food stamps and other resources, eating sensibly during pregnancy and feeding babies and children."

Surveys show that upon entering EFNEP programs, only one-third of the participants had diets containing recommended quantities of foods from all five food groups. This number increased to more than three-fourths by completion of the programs.

But EFNEP paraprofessionals and volunteers do more than teach nutrition. They help participants further their education, find jobs and become more self-sufficient.

Graduates often report that they are making use of educational-assistance programs and other services. Many have returned to the workforce or have enrolled in high school, general-equivalency diploma (GED) classes or job train-

ing. Others have had their children returned to them from foster care.

For many clients, EFNEP programs have been a starting point for turning their lives around. "I learned how to prepare creative and nutritious meals on a low budget," says Denita Anderson, a mother of six in Meadville. "When you have a big family, that means a lot."

"But that was just the beginning," Anderson says. "The program also helped me make contacts to further my education. Thanks to the encouragement I got through EFNEP, I'm going to attend Penn State and major in agricultural business."

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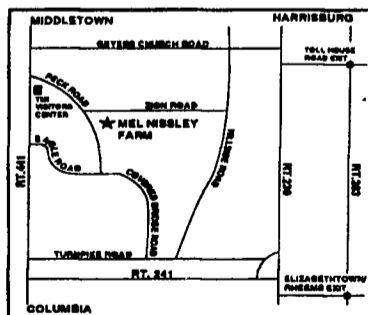
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## Prevent Fire Blight In Woody Ornamentals

UNIVERSITY PARK, Pa. — With proper management, you can extinguish fire blight before it damages the woody ornamentals in your landscape, says an expert in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences.

"Fire blight is a disease that can attack more than 75 species of trees and shrubs," says Dr. Gary Moorman, associate professor of plant pathology. "Susceptible plants include apple, pear, quince, mountain ash, crabapple, hawthorn, cotoneaster, serviceberry and pyracantha."

Infected plants display a variety of symptoms. Twigs, branches and leaders on trees and shrubs wilt and blacken, especially during flowering. Affected twigs and branches may bend over into the shape of a shepherd's crook. Blackened flower parts remain attached to the tree. Cream-colored liquid may ooze out of the cankers and run down the trunk and branches in the spring if conditions are very wet.

"The bacterium that causes fire blight overwinters on infected plants in darkened, slightly sunken cankers," Moorman says. "In the spring, the bacteria are spread by insects, rain, wind and birds. Although plants are most susceptible during flowering and new shoot development, fire blight can continue to spread later in the season."

Certain conditions promote fire blight. "Fertilization practices that produce very succulent growth can make plants more susceptible," says Moorman. "Temperatures between 70 and 81 degrees Fahrenheit, combined with high relative humidity and rainfall during flowering, provide optimum conditions for the disease. Injury due to hail or wind-blown soil opens plant tissue to infection."

Moorman says to avoid fire blight, you should grow resistant varieties when ever possible. "Purchase and plant only disease-free trees and shrubs, and remove severely infected plants."

Once the disease has begun, Moorman recommends a three-pronged management strategy:

- During the growing season, inspect susceptible plants and prune infected tissues. Look for blackened twigs, branches and flower parts. Find the sunken, darkened cankers on the wood. Prune when the weather is dry, cutting at least 12 inches below the canker. Disinfect pruning tools between cuts by placing them in one part household bleach to nine parts water for 10 minutes, then rinsing them in clean water.

- During the dormant season, prune infected tissues by cutting at least four inches below the canker. Disinfect pruning tools between cuts.

- If necessary, use a chemical that is registered for use on the type of plant infected or contact a professional landscaper or arborist for treatment. When using pesticides, be sure to read and follow all directions and safety precautions on labels.

For more information on plant diseases, contact the Penn State Cooperative Extension office in your county.

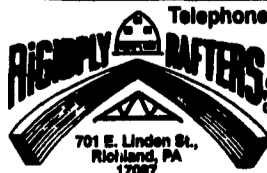
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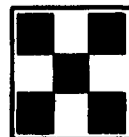
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