

# Well Preserved

## Planning Ahead For Home Canning

The Well Preserved news column is prepared by Lancaster County Cooperative Extension. It includes food preservation information and questions.

As gardens are being planted with peas, green beans, corn, and other favorites, you begin to visualize a bountiful harvest, some of which may be preserved.

Rhubarb is being picked for traditional sauces and desserts. Strawberries will soon be available for sweet preserves. All are signs that it's time to plan ahead for home canning this summer.

Start by checking your equipment and supplies. Proper equipment in good condition is required for safe, high quality home canned food.

A pressure canner is a must for canning low-acid foods. This includes all vegetables except acidified tomatoes. Meats, fish, and poultry must also be processed in a pressure canner. Dial gauges should be tested for accuracy before each canning season. You can have a dial gauge tested free at your local cooperative extension office.

In Lancaster County there will be someone available each Wednesday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. to test dial gauges. In other counties, call your extension office to set up a time to have the dial gauge tested. You only need to bring the canner lid to have it tested. Pressure canners with weighted gauges do not need testing. Also check your pressure canner to see if the rubber gasket is flexible and soft, not brittle, sticky or cracked. If you need to replace the rubber gasket, make sure you know the brand and



model number of your canner when you go to the store to purchase one.

There are many styles of gaskets available, and you will not be able to judge the thickness and size of the rubber gasket by sight. Check the pliability of the washer on the air vent and the pressure release plug. Hold the lid to the light to make sure any small pipes or vent ports with openings are clean and open all the way through. Small vents can be cleaned with a small brush or a pipe cleaner.

A boiling water canner is needed for canning other foods such as fruits, pickles, acidified tomatoes, jellies and jars. The canner should be deep enough to allow at least one to two inches of water to boil over the tops of the jars. Some of the new boiling water canners are designed for processing jams and jellies and are only deep enough for pint jars. If you plan to can in quart jars, look for a taller canner and measure the height of the canner so that there is space for a rack, the jars, at least one inch of water above the jars, and room for the water to boil rapidly without boiling over.

Both types of canners should

have a rack in the bottom to keep jars off the bottom of the canner. It may be a flat rack or a lift out type rack. Inventory your jars and decide if you need to buy new jars this year. Inspect those you have for nicks, cracks, or chips especially around the top sealing edge. Nicks can prevent lids from sealing.

Very old jars can weaken with age and repeated use and may break under pressure and heat. New jars are a better investment over time than buying used jars at yard sales or flea markets.

Mason-type jars specifically designed for home canning are best. Commercial jars such as mayonnaise jars may be used in boiling water processing, but they may not always seal and are more likely to break.

Avoid using commercial jars in a pressure canner because the higher temperatures and pressure increase the risk of breaking. Although canning jars come in a variety of sizes from half-pint to half-gallon jars, processing times have not been developed for many foods in half-pint, 12-ounce, or 24 ounce jars. If a recipe does not specify a processing time for one of these jars, process according to the time given for the next larger jar. Half-gallon canning jars are only suitable for very acid juices such as apple juice and grape juice. Jars come in both the regular and wide-mouth styles.

Jars that use two-piece self-sealing metal lids are the recommended container in USDA guidelines. Two piece lids consist of a flat metal disc which has a sealing compound around the outer edge and a separate metal screw band. Always use new flat lids. Used lids should be thrown away. The screw bands are reusable if they are not bent, dented or rusted. Do not reuse lids from commercially canned foods for

home canning. Zinc lids and bail-type jars are no longer recommended for home canning; they are more suitable for dry food storage and decorative purposes.

Some other items are helpful for home canning. A jar lifter is essential for easy removal of hot jars from the canner. A jar filler or funnel helps in packing small food items and jams into canning jars. A plastic bubble freer removes air bubbles from jars. Metal knives or objects should not be used as a bubble freer because they can scratch the glass making the jar more susceptible to breakage.

A lid wand has a magnet on the end that helps remove lids from the hot water. A timer or clock is needed to determine the end of the processing time. Many other home canning accessories such as corn cutters, apple slicers, cherry pitters, decorative labels, and special canning spoons are available. Some of these items may simplify the procedures but

are not essential.

Finally, make sure that you have up-to-date canning instructions. The most recently revised edition of the USDA canning guides is dated 1994. Canning books published prior to 1994 will not have safe processing times and/or methods. The National Center for Home Food Preservation has a good web site at <http://www.uga.edu/nchfp>. Watch this column for new publications and web sites for the latest canning information.

Planning ahead can save you time, money, and frustration with home canning. Make it a happy, successful canning season by getting prepared before your harvest is ready.

If you have food preservation questions, a home economist is available to answer questions on Wednesdays 10 a.m.-1 p.m., call (717) 394-6851 or write Penn State Cooperative Extension, Lancaster County, 1383 Arcadia Rd., Rm.1, Lancaster, PA, 17601.

## Master Gardener Program Accepts Applications

DOYLESTOWN (Bucks Co.) — Penn State Cooperative Extension in Bucks County is accepting applications for the Penn State Master Gardener Program.

This program consists of a training course designed to provide experienced gardeners with information and skills necessary to share their experience and training with others. Classes will be weekly on Tuesday mornings from 9 a.m. to noon starting from Aug. 26 through Dec. 16.

The first half of the classes will be at the Montgomery County 4-H Building in Creamery and the second half of the classes will be

at Neshaminy Manor Center in Doylestown. Volunteer positions for Bucks County Master Gardeners are open only to Bucks County residents. Residents of other counties should contact their county extension office for information.

Bucks County residents who are interested in applying to the program should attend an orientation meeting June 3 at 9 a.m. at the Neshaminy Manor Center, Doylestown. For more information, contact Susan Schneck at the Bucks County Cooperative Extension at (215) 345-3283, Tuesdays.

It's 99° in the shade... as if you had time to stand in the shade.

When you can't afford to stop for anything... Nothing runs like a Deere.

Expand your fleet now with  
**ZERO Down**  
**ZERO Interest**  
**ZERO PAYMENTS for 120 Days\***

Start your John Deere fleet expansion with Deere financing to help you:

- Finance your fleet with a zero down, zero interest program
- Benefit from flexible financing terms and rates
- Enjoy best prices and service
- Weigh only 1500 lbs. for easy transport

For more information, contact your local John Deere dealer or call 1-800-447-2639. Deere financing is available at participating dealers.

8-mph John Deere Quik-Trak™ Commercial Walk-Behinds and Pro-Series™ Portable Power Equipment

ADAMSTOWN EQUIPMENT, INC.  
BOWMANVILLE RD  
ADAMSTOWN, PA 19501  
(717) 484-4391

LANDIS BROTHERS, INC.  
2710 MOUNT JOY ROAD  
MANHEIM, PA 17545  
(717) 653-2340

POLE TAVERN EQUIPMENT SALES CORP.  
301 NORTH WHITE HORSE PIKE  
HAMMONTON, NJ 08037  
(609) 704-9440

POLE TAVERN EQUIPMENT SALES CORP.  
670 ROUTE 40  
ELMER, NJ 08318  
(856) 358-2880

VALLEY AG & TURF, L.L.C.  
817 TOBIAS RD  
HALIFAX, PA 17032  
(717) 362-3132

VALLEY AG & TURF, L.L.C.  
WATSONTOWN EXIT I-180  
WATSONTOWN, PA 17777  
(570) 538-3557



See dealer for John Deere financing. The Single Step 2 Year 0% Bonus Warranty is available on John Deere Commercial and Tractor units only. Excludes normal wear items like batteries and tires. Offer valid March 1, 2003 through July 7, 2003 and is subject to approval and John Deere Credit Review. Finance rate 0% APR. In certain cases, a down payment is required. After promotional period, a charge will be applied to the account at 9.9% APR. A \$50.00 monthly fee will be assessed for late payments. Terms, conditions and restrictions apply. Offer subject to credit review. Offer may be available to qualified customers only. Comparison excludes other John Deere Company products.