

Extension Cord

The Extension Cord is a regular column highlighting important events and issues affecting the citizens of Ashland and Bayfield County. The articles are written by UW-Extension staff working in Ashland and Bayfield County

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Green Up the Holidays and the New Year – Simplify and Save

December is a great time to reflect on what is really meaningful in our lives. It's a time to think about family, friends, giving gifts, making memories, making ends meet, and staying warm! As we deal with the coming of winter and all of the challenges and joys of the season, consider simplifying your life where you can and helping the planet in the mean time. Here are some ideas you may want to try:

- Recycle your holiday wrapping paper, ribbons, and boxes. Use things you already have on hand to decorate a gift. It's not being "cheap," it's being smart.
- Use the local paper to wrap gifts for those who live far away and might be entertained by news from your town. The comics are good too.
- Think of second hand shopping as REAL shopping. It's the in thing to do these days. Unique treasures are just waiting for you to find them.
- Take a mental inventory of your need for more material things. Learn how to make do with less. Donate usable things you no longer need to a resale shop.
- Talk to your family members about scaling down the holiday gift giving. If you don't want to or can't repeat the extravagance of previous years, start new traditions that focus on quality time instead of quantities of stuff.
- Enjoy old fashioned winter fun with your family and friends. Sledding, skating, and building snowmen cost nothing but can make for hours of fun and fond memory building.
- Make gifts instead of buying them. When you think of the best gifts you've ever received, I bet something hand made comes to mind. These are the things we remember. They're the things we keep. Unless they're cookies.

We all enjoy the smells of the holiday season: cinnamon, pine, citrus, spices. Here are some suggestions for keeping your home smelling great without adding unwanted chemicals to the air. They would make nice gifts too:

- Boiling spices like cinnamon in a little bit of water releases its fragrance
- Essential oils diluted in water can be used as a spray freshener—try a combination of your favorite essential oils like lemon (an especially effective air deodorizer) and cedar
- Add oils to a bowl of water, which adds moisture to dry, inside air during winter months
- *Balsam Bag*: Fill a small muslin bag with balsam needles and tie it up. If you'd like to decorate it, put a piece of cardboard inside the bag before you start filling it. Use an evergreen motif stamp on the outside of the bag using light and dark

green inks, which create a shadowing effect. (Remove the cardboard before filling.)

- *Orange Pomander*: To make an old-fashioned Orange Pomander, simply stick whole cloves into an orange (completely cover or make a pattern), sprinkle with spices if desired, wrap the orange in tissue paper and put in a warm dry place for 3-4 weeks.

Your local UW-Extension offices are staffed with friendly people just waiting to help you find the information you need to “do-it-yourself” and do it earth-friendly. January is a great time to do some reading, learn a new hobby, or plan ahead for spring projects. Here are a few of the publication titles available from your UW-Extension office you may be interested in cuddling up with this winter:

- Guide to Raising Healthy Chickens
- How to Cut Up a Chicken
- Canning Meat, Wild Game, Poultry and Fish Safely
- Bird Feeding—Tips for Beginners & Veterans
- Shelves, Houses and Feeders for Birds and Mammals
- Wildlife Phrenology Calendar—2009
- Knitting Made Easy
- Wisconsin’s Wild Game: Enjoying the Harvest
- From Garden to Table: The Art of Growing and Preserving Vegetables

These publications and many others are available online for viewing, ordering, or printing at <http://learningstore.uwex.edu/>.

The mission of UW-Extension is to extend the knowledge and resources of the University of Wisconsin to people where they live and work. County based educators in the areas of Family Living, Community Resource Development, Agriculture, 4H Youth Development, and Nutrition work in the offices in Bayfield and Ashland Counties. If you haven’t yet discovered this valuable resource in your community, stop in and visit us. Bayfield office: third floor of the Courthouse in Washburn, 373-6104. Ashland office: Ashland Courthouse, ground floor, 682-7017. You can also visit our websites at <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cty/bayfield/> or <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cty/ashland/>.