

# PINAL COUNTY QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

JANUARY — MARCH 2025

Volume 12, Issue 1

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Cooperative Extension, the outreach arm of the University of Arizona, brings the University to the people.

The faculty and staff in the Pinal County Extension office are part of a non-formal education network bringing research-based information into communities to help people improve their lives.

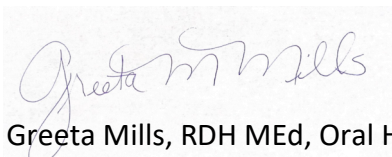
Cooperative Extension is committed to delivering high-quality, relevant educational programs and information to Pinal County citizens and communities.

### Happy 2025!

Our mission as the Extension branch of a land-grant University is to offer practical, research and evidence-based solutions to help improve the lives of folks like you in our communities.

This issue of our quarterly newsletter has several articles about food, whether it be an invitation to join our Master Gardener's course, strategies to help your grocery budget stretch a bit more, accessing food surplus and food banks, how to include your children in the food shopping experience, or tips on pruning citrus fruit trees for health and better production.

If you are looking for information about water management for your landscaping, growing a garden, child development, increased activity for health, 4-H youth development, or would like to join an indoor walking group, please come by our office to chat with a specialist or to pick up a fact sheet.



Greta Mills, RDH MED, Oral Health Professional

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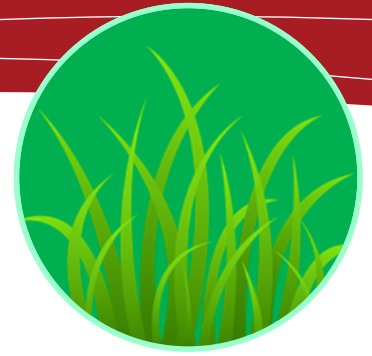
Pinal County Extension Website  
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# HORTICULTURE



## THE DIRT ON HORTICULTURE IN PINAL COUNTY

*Submitted by Anne LeSenne, Assistant Agent, Horticulture*

**MASTER GARDENER CLASS:** If you've ever wanted to become a Master Gardener, or just really need to learn how to successfully garden here in the low desert, our Master Gardener class will be offered in Casa Grande at the Cooperative Extension conference room located at 820 E. Cottonwood Lane, with classes starting January 9<sup>th</sup>. Registration is \$200. Email [annelesenne@arizona.edu](mailto:annelesenne@arizona.edu) to enroll.

**MARICOPA MASTER GARDENER SPRING PLANT SALE:** On March 1<sup>st</sup>, the Maricopa Master Gardeners will be hosting their annual Spring Plant Sale at the Maricopa Agricultural Center, 37860 W Smith Enke Rd, Maricopa AZ 85138. They grow a great selection of herbs, flowers, cacti, succulents and veggies that can take the Arizona heat. The sale starts at 8am and usually sells out by noon. This is your chance to get healthy plants at a great price to jump start your garden.



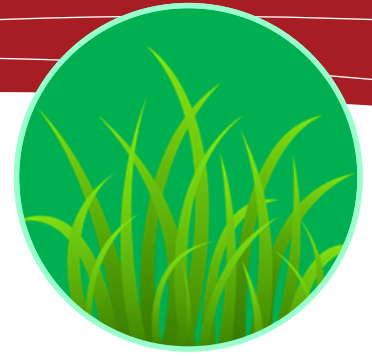
**WATERING TREES & SHRUBS:** After two scalding hot and dry summers, we are all enjoying the cooler weather. Even though it's cooler, don't forget to deep water your trees and shrubs at least monthly. Even mature and native trees need to be watered until the soil is moist 18" down, and smaller shrubs need 12". Their root zone extends to the drip line of the canopy and far beyond, so water the whole root zone to develop a healthy root system. This will help your plants withstand the hot summer months.



**FERTILIZING AND PRUNING YOUR TREES:** This is the time to **fertilize** your Citrus trees with citrus fertilizer. Go to the [Citrus Fertilization Calculator](#) to quickly figure out how much fertilizer your trees need. This is also a great time to **prune** your citrus trees. First remove the 3D's: Dead, Damaged, Diseased. Then prune out the 2C's: Crossing and Competing. Crossing branches are those that cross another branch path or cross back towards the trunk instead of growing out to sunlight. You can also remove any suckers or watersprouts. It is always good practice to remove suckers and watersprouts when they are small, so the tree doesn't waste energy growing them. If you do these three steps, your tree should look much healthier and provide you with more fruit. If your citrus trees are producing lots of fruit, stop by our office and pick up your copy of the **Citrus Fruits Fact sheet** (read page 3 of this newsletter) for some good ideas on how to use your fruit.

These cooler months are also a great time to prune your trees. If you are hiring a company to do this work for you, be sure to hire an ISA (International Society of Arboriculture) certified arborist. These professionals are trained to know how to care for your trees. Go to [Trees Are Good](#) to find a certified arborist who works in your area. Improper pruning can cause damage to your trees.

# HORTICULTURE



...CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

**GROWING YOUR OWN VEGETABLES:** If you've never tried to grow your own healthy veggies in your own backyard, this could be the year to try. Start with a raised bed located in your yard where it will receive six hours of morning sun, then afternoon shade. Fill the raised bed with compost. Locate the bed near a source of water and set up an automatic timer with drip tubing to take care of the irrigation. By mid-March you should be able to plant your garden. Choose vegetables that you enjoy eating and maybe try a few new ones. Refer to the [Vegetable Planting Calendar](#) to see which vegetables should be planted in March. Also select varieties with no more than 75 days to maturity. This will help you make sure to get a good harvest before it gets too hot for flowers to set fruit. We also have a Seed Library in our office and many public libraries where you can receive five packets of seed free.



**CITRUS FRUITS FACT SHEET:** If you are like many Arizona residents, you may have a citrus tree in your yard (or two, or three) that produce hundreds of pounds of fruit every year, which for most people may be more than they can eat fresh.

Some people just let the fruit drop to the ground, as they have run out of ideas of what to do with their bounteous harvest. Others will offer the fruit to neighbors and friends with some degree of success. Either way, having some new ideas for how to make use of this wonderful health promoting fruit would make the harvest much more fun and successful.

Citrus fruits are amazingly versatile and easy to work with, so there may be many creative ways you haven't tried yet.



Stop by our office and pick up your copy of the **Citrus Fruits Fact sheet** for some good ideas on how to use your fruit or email [annelesenne@arizona.edu](mailto:annelesenne@arizona.edu) to receive it electronically.

# FIRST SMILES ORAL HEALTH



## CAVITY PREVENTION IS A FAMILY THING

*Submitted by Greeta Mills, RDH MEd, Oral Health Professional*



Kids learn so much from the adults around them. As a parent and our child's first teacher, we are responsible for so many little things that help our child succeed in life. From learning how to share toys, being kind and gentle with the pets, helping with simple household chores, they also learn lifelong habits that can help them be healthy.

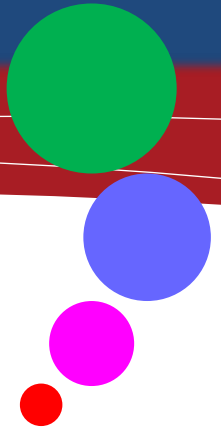
Much of what children learn from us they learn by observation. We model behaviors and they copy us, whether positive or not! They see us wash our hands, we show them how to do it, and they mimic our actions until they are at the point where they can do it on their own.

The same is true for oral care. Our little ones can watch us brush and floss our teeth. Take time to explain that this is something that we do in the morning and at night to keep our bodies and teeth healthy. Even before your child has teeth, you can begin wiping out their mouth with a soft cloth to remove excess milk or formula. Then as they begin to get teeth, begin using a toothpaste that has fluoride in it, just a tiny smear on their brush is all you need. Make an appointment with a dentist for a routine check-up. As they get a little older, let them see you put dental appointments on a calendar which lets them know that teeth and overall good health are important to you and the family.

Help them with their brushing until they are around six or seven years old. They will want to brush by themselves at about two or three years old, but don't have the dexterity to do a really good job until they are a little older. Brushing can be a family thing, put on a favorite song or tooth brushing video and everyone can join into the brushing party! You can create a brushing chart where they get a sticker or star for participating.

As you grocery shop, ask them questions about what they think would be a good snack for their teeth. Explain that snacks that are sticky and made of highly refined flour and sugar feed the "sugar bugs" which leads to cavities. Chips, crackers, and cereal bars fall into that category. Snacks that are high in water like fresh fruits or veggies, or even popcorn or cheese are more tooth-friendly options. Encourage the entire family to drink water between meals, saving things like milk and juice or other drinks for mealtime.

When children see tooth brushing and flossing modeled as a family thing, they will learn good habits from your positive example.



## TRACKING EARLY CHILDHOOD MILESTONES

*Submitted by Sam Colarusso, Community Outreach Assistant II*

Developmental milestones are skills that children reach at a common age range, such as walking by 12 to 14 months or using 4-word sentences by around 4 years of age. Developmental screening tools help parents track early childhood milestones. These are helpful tools because they offer parents a quick way to get a snapshot of their child's development and can identify if there are areas that may need a follow-up. Additionally, it creates an opportunity to celebrate achievements.

The Developmental Sensory Screening (DSS) program in the Cooperative Extension Office provides families, with children 5 and under the opportunity to complete the developmental screening tool Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ). The ASQ-3 covers essential areas of development, broken into sections pertaining to communication, gross motor, fine motor, problem-solving, and personal-social skills. The ASQ-SE is a companion screener that focuses on social-emotional development of young children. These are reliable, fast, and easy-to-use screening tools that recognize parents as the experts of their children.

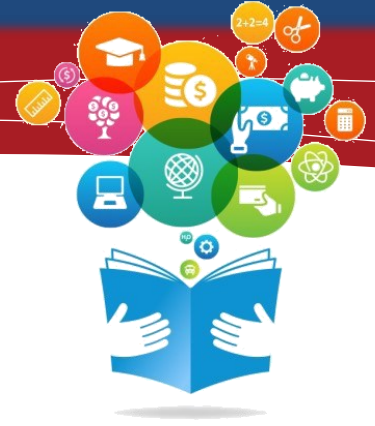
The DSS program provides several ways for families to complete ASQ questionnaires. Parents can make an appointment with one of our screeners by calling 520-374-6221 to schedule an in-person appointment at our Casa Grande office. They can complete the questionnaire with their child in the office and leave with results in hand, along with age specific activities to aid their development. Parents also have the option of completing the screenings online at <https://asqonline.com/family/477598>. Someone from the screening team will email the results and activity packets to the parents.

No matter how parents decide to complete the ASQ milestone questionnaire, the DSS team will assist with referrals when there is an area of concern, or if parents have concerns regardless of results. Children grow so fast and keeping track of what milestones are expected can be challenging. ASQ screening makes it easy to get valuable information about your child's development. Contact the DSS team today to start tracking your child's development.

Call the DSS team at 520-374-6221 or email Program Coordinator Jennie Treadway at [treadway@cals.arizona.edu](mailto:treadway@cals.arizona.edu) to learn more or make an appointment.



# FINANCIAL LITERACY



## STRETCHING YOUR FOOD BUDGET

*Submitted by Muriel Gutierrez, Instructional Specialist*

Sixty thousand (60,000) is the number of hunger-relief organizations across the United States. These are food pantries and community kitchens that operate in almost every community around the country. According to Katie Martin, author of *Reinventing Food Banks and Pantries*, in 2018 alone the Feeding America network dispensed over 4 billion meals to people in need. (Martin, 2021) Food insecurity in our country and in our communities is very real and not just happening in other countries. It's here at home.



From 2018 to 2024 the need has grown substantially, with inflation the cost of food has tightened budgets and families must supplement their monthly groceries. According to *Money Watch*, from 2019 to 2024 eggs have increased by 163%, chicken by 37%, and wheat bread by 45%. (Kelly, 2024) This puts a huge strain on growing families, seniors, and the unhoused. Thankfully, food banks and pantries have helped relieve some of that pressure. These not-for-profit entities, many run by volunteers, work tirelessly and daily to bring food to the many that line the sidewalks or their streets on distribution days. They are spread thin with limited donations of food and money which helps to provide as healthy and as accessible food to those in need that they can.

Many families are unaware that these resources are out there or that they can access them. When budgets are wearing thin, especially when kids are home on break, to supplement thin food budgets, a little extra boost during the holidays, or in an unexpected emergency, these many different pantries/and or banks can help give families a little breathing room to stretch their dollars to pay bills or for an emergency fund.

### Resources:

- Ballard Food Bank  
<https://www.ballardfoodbank.org/>
- Find Help  
<https://www.findhelp.org/>

### Sources:

- Martin, K. S. (2021). *Reinventing Food Banks and pantries: New tools to end hunger*. Island Press.
- Kelly, J. (2024, November 15). *CBS News price tracker shows how much food, gas, utility and housing costs are rising*. CBS News. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/price-tracker/>



## THE GROWING NEED FOR HUNGER RELIEF

*Submitted by Muriel Gutierrez, Instructional Specialist*



Ballard Food Bank –Shopping experience.  
Seattle Washington

In Pinal County alone, there are around 27 food banks or pantries serving our communities. Each one is there to provide a lifeline when things get difficult, be it the beginning, the middle, or the end of the month. It's okay to supplement our food budgets. Pinal County has everything from food boxes, drive-thru food banks, to food rescues (60lbs of produce for a small fee) on different days, every month. These resources help give residents many different opportunities to find food in ways that best suits their needs.

In our ever-changing world, as we continue to learn more about the human psyche and body, and encounter diverse populations in our daily work, we have become increasingly aware of the need to be trauma-informed in many areas of life. One of those areas is food. As humans, we strive to provide for those in our care and when we cannot provide the basics for survival, it's painful. It's traumatizing. Then when one must go and ask for help, it hurts and can be demoralizing.

People feel like they have to hide to feed their families, and it shouldn't be this way. Many food banks and pantries are adopting and adjusting how they make clients feel by changing how they proceed from traditional to client choice - changing how people ask and receive help. Clients moving from restrictive choice to client choice showed a significant consistent increase in food security, self-sufficiency, and self-efficacy. (Martin, 2021)

While moving from traditional to client choice food banks is a vision that we are inspired to work towards, we know it will be a journey. As Katie Martin, states it is "an exciting time in the charitable food system because new organizations are interested in partnering with food banks and pantries". (Martin, 2021) This is true in our own community. U of A, as well as many other entities, are striving for healthy, thriving, and to strengthen our communities starting at foundations. Food, financial literacy, active and healthy living all working to strengthen our communities and help us to be a vibrant community, city, county, and state.

### Websites:

<https://www.ballardfoodbank.org/>

### Resources:

<https://azfoodbanks.org/>

### Sources:

Martin, K. S. (2021). *Reinventing Food Banks and pantries: New tools to end hunger*. Island Press.

# EXPANDED FOOD NUTRITION EDUCATION



## NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

*Submitted by Janet Canales, Community Outreach Assistant II*



As we say goodbye to yet another year', we are faced with the question on making New Years resolution for 2025.

Depending on each person's stage in life, health can either take priority or not when making resolutions. However, I would like to share a few reasons why opting for a healthier 2025 is a great resolution. If times are tough and money is tight right now, being healthy does not have to cost a fortune! Learning how to plan your menus and your shopping trips will help you get the best value both nutritionally and monetarily. Health extends to more than just what we eat, it also includes our mental, social, and physical health. Because who doesn't want

to feel good overall, right? Remember to enjoy the outdoors, get those walks in. The recommended physical activity for adults is 150 minutes weekly with two days of muscle strengthening exercises. If you break those minutes down per day, it is only 30 minutes five times a week! Preparing and enjoying a meal with your loved ones is a wonderful way to bond and make great memories, plus there are benefits to including children in the kitchen with simple and safe tasks.

Let us help you make this year a great one! If you or someone you know would like to participate in our FREE interactive, hands-on Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) classes, where we will talk about how to create a healthy lifestyle for you and your family, please contact us at 520-788-6217 or by email at [ecastill@cals.arizona.edu](mailto:ecastill@cals.arizona.edu).



# NETWORKING NEWS



## DEADLINE TO RECEIVE ARIZONA TRAVEL ID

*Submitted by Chris Crockett, Media Technician, Sr.*

Effective May 7, 2025, only the Arizona Travel ID (driver license or ID card), a US passport, and other federally approved identification will be accepted at TSA airport security checkpoints for domestic travel.

The Arizona Travel ID is the credential that complies with the federal REAL ID Act of 2005. It is available as both a driver's license and identification card. There is a gold start embedded in the card to show that the cardholder has provided added proof of identification to ensure the license or ID meets strict federal requirements. The cost is \$25.00.

Rules for international travel are unchanged, and a valid passport or equivalent will be required to travel outside the United States.

### Current Arizona residents:

You can activate your account or sign in at <https://azmvdnow.gov/home> to start the process. Once your upgrade is approved, you will be notified and can expect your new credential to be mailed in 5-10 business days.

Three categories of identification documents are required – all must be originals or certified copies in English, certified by the issued agency.

The first category is **Proof of Identity** (birth certificate; US Passport; Passport Card). If you need a certified copy of an Arizona birth certificate, the AZ Dept. of Health Services now accepted online orders with expedited processing (<https://www.vitalchek.com/v/vital-records/arizona>).

The second is **Social Security Number**. No document is needed, though you will need to provide your complete social security number. If you want to order a replacement Social Security card, visit the Social Security Administration website to submit your request (<https://www.ssa.gov/number-card/replace-card>).

Finally, take with you to your appointment two printed documents that show **Proof of Arizona Residency** (utility bills; credit card or bank statements; insurance policy). These should show your name and current residential address. If your current legal name is different from the one shown on a document, you must show legal proof of name change, such as a marriage certificate, divorce decree, or court order. If you don't have the required residency documents, you must complete an Arizona Residency Affidavit and supply additional proof of residency (<https://apps.azdot.gov/files/mvd/mvd-forms-lib/40-5143.pdf>).

### No Arizona Driver's License or ID:

Visit an MVD office or Authorized Third Party driver license location with the required documents.

**DON'T WAIT**  
Make your appointment now  
[azmvdnow.gov](https://azmvdnow.gov)

- [Maricopa Master Gardeners](#)
- [Pinal County 4-H](#)
- [Sensory & Developmental Screening](#)



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Esther Turner, Associate Agent—4-H Youth Development

[eturner@cals.arizona.edu](mailto:eturner@cals.arizona.edu)

**4-H** provides educational opportunities for youth to become capable and contributing members of a global community. Children, ages 5-19, learn about healthy lifestyles, animals, plant sciences, and leadership.

Contact: Esther Turner at (520) 340-4815 or [eturner@cals.arizona.edu](mailto:eturner@cals.arizona.edu)

**AZ Health Zone** is a program designed to influence healthy eating and active living in a positive way that promotes health and reduces disease among all people living in Arizona.

Contact: Sybil Peters at (520) 340-4564 or [sybilpeters@arizona.edu](mailto:sybilpeters@arizona.edu)

**Child Care Health Consultations (CCHC)** develops relationships with childcare facilities to provide training to staff that will improve their knowledge and practice in the childcare setting.

Contact: Ashley Dixon at (928) 978-2911 or [adixon@arizona.edu](mailto:adixon@arizona.edu)

**Choose Health Action Teen (CHAT)** is designed to recruit teens to teach younger children the benefits of healthy eating and active living. Teens also participate in community service events.

Contact: Esmeralda Castillo at (520) 788-6217 or [ecastill@cals.arizona.edu](mailto:ecastill@cals.arizona.edu)

**Developmental Screening Program** reaches out to families with children, ages 0-5, to screen for early developmental milestones such as gross and fine motor skills, communication, personal-social skills, and problem-solving capacities.

Contact: Jennie Treadway at (520) 340-4979 or [treadway@cals.arizona.edu](mailto:treadway@cals.arizona.edu)

**Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP)** is a nutrition education class designed to assist limited resource families in eating smart and being active and in acquiring the knowledge, skills, and behavioral changes necessary to contribute to their personal development and the improvement of the total family diet, nutritional and physical well-being.

Contact: Esmeralda Castillo at (520) 788-6217 or [ecastill@cals.arizona.edu](mailto:ecastill@cals.arizona.edu)

**Field Crops Systems** uses research and education efforts to work to improve field crop productivity and global food and fiber supply, farm economic viability, and protecting the environment.

Contact: Avik Mukherjee at (520) 340-4385 or [avikm@arizona.edu](mailto:avikm@arizona.edu)

**Financial Literacy & Positive Discipline Parenting** will help individuals gain the knowledge, self-esteem, self-efficacy and self-awareness to become in control of their finances, and thus improve their lives controlling their financial health. This program will help with daily stressors such as: worrying about electric bills, putting food on the table and wondering if they have somewhere to sleep tomorrow night, which all influences the way individuals interact with their child(ren), their families and their communities.

Contact: Muriel Gutierrez at (520) 374-6254 or [mquierrez5@arizona.edu](mailto:mquierrez5@arizona.edu)

**First Smiles** is an oral health program that provides preventative oral health education, oral screening, referral to dentists for children birth to age five; and fluoride varnishing for children with emergent teeth up to age five.

Contact: Greeta Mills at (520) 340-4973 or [gmills@arizona.edu](mailto:gmills@arizona.edu)

**Horticulture Program** develops and delivers educational information, structured programming, and technical support to the consumer and commercial horticulture sectors, as well as urban agriculture and food systems in Pinal County.

Contact: Anne LeSenne at (520) 340-4450 or [annelesenne@arizona.edu](mailto:annelesenne@arizona.edu)

**MAC (Maricopa Agricultural Center) Farm Ag-Ventures** educational programs include a combination of videos, educational presenters, hands-on learning experiences and tractor-trailer rides around their 2,200 acre farm for a close-up view of what makes a working farm operate.

Contact: Esther Turner at (520) 340-4815 or [eturner@cals.arizona.edu](mailto:eturner@cals.arizona.edu)

**Sensory Screening Program** provides free screenings of children, ages 0-5, for vision and hearing impairments that could affect developmental growth.

Contact: Jennie Treadway at (520) 340-4979 or [treadway@cals.arizona.edu](mailto:treadway@cals.arizona.edu)