

Spring and Summer
How to Guide



*Controlling
Nuisance
Moles*

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Controlling Nuisance Moles

By Nancy Olsen

Moles are small mammals that spend most of their lives in underground burrows. There are three species of moles in North Carolina: the eastern mole (*Scalopus aquaticus*), the hairytailed mole (*Parascalops breweri*) and the star-nosed mole (*Condylura cristata*).



All are similar in general appearance, with a long tapered snout, lacking external ears, and has small, barely noticeable eyes. Moles have a short neck, and the muscular forelegs support broad, heavily clawed feet. The animals hind legs, feet and tail are small. The fur is short, velvety, dark gray to black and offers no resistance when brushed in either direction; this enables the mole to travel either backward or forward within burrows.

Overall length ranges from 5 to 8 inches.

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Strawberry Salad with Cream Cheese Topping

By Ann Kinlaw

Strawberry Layer

6 oz. sugar-free strawberry jello

2 Cups hot water

1 ½ cups of fresh strawberries or 10 oz. of frozen

Medium can of crushed pineapple

¼ cup cold water

¾ cup chopped pecans

Dissolve the jello in the hot water. Add the strawberries, crushed pineapple, including juice, water and pecans. Pour into a 11x13 dish and place in refrigerator to jell.

Topping

8 oz. low fat cream cheese, softened

8 oz. container of fat free cool whip

1 ½ cups of powdered sugar

Using electric mixer, beat the cream cheese until smooth. Add the cool whip, mix well. Add sugar and mix until smooth. When the salad is jelled, place the topping on the top of salad and smooth around all edges. (Optional: May sprinkle with chopped pecans.) Place back in refrigerator for 2-3 hours until well chilled.

7 tips to guard against wildlife infestations

By Charlotte Smith

When it comes to wildlife infestations, most people want an expert's assistance. During the spring and summer homeowners sometimes find their homes invaded by wild animals. To offer some advice on the issue we consulted with Tommy Rains, Owner of Cape Fear Wildlife Control. Rains is only the second recipient of the National Wildlife Control Operators Association's 2016 Outstanding Operator Award in North America. He has received the Super Service Award from Angie's List for the last 5 years. Rains has also earned the affectionate title of "Critter Getter" by many in southeastern North Carolina. Rains said, "I love helping people and I'm an animal lover as well."

Some people may enjoy watching birds, squirrels, rabbits, raccoons, and other feral creatures play. However, these untamed animals can become expensive problems for homeowners. Not only is property occasionally damaged by these seemingly harmless living beings, but they can also carry diseases, fleas and ticks.



Rains said homeowners should listen for noises in attics, walls, chimneys and under their homes as signs of a wildlife infestation. Squirrels and mice are the most common problem makers for property owners in this area according to Rains. He also mentioned raccoons, birds and bats as other trouble causing critters.

"Bats are the most dangerous when they get in your house." Rains said, "Most people don't realize they have bats unless the bats enter the living quarters, homeowners find bat droppings or detect a pungent odor." Any bat found where someone has been sleeping needs to be captured by animal control and sent to Raleigh for proper testing by the State, Rains explained.



Property owners looking for some quick tips to guard against wildlife infestations, look no further.

Expert Rains gave several suggestions:

1. Have your home inspected by a professional for gaps to keep squirrels, bats and mice out.
2. Have your chimney cleaned and make sure your chimney is properly sealed with a chimney cap.
3. Cover exhaust fan openings, attic vents if possible.
4. If pets are looking up at your building, inspect where the pets are looking. Pets hear noises humans can not hear.
5. Pet food & water dishes should be kept indoors to keep raccoons, deer & squirrels away. Also, store food in airtight containers.
6. Older homes have more air gaps. Replace loose mortar and weather stripping around the basement foundation and windows.
7. Keep attics, basements and crawl spaces well ventilated and dry.

Even with the helpful information from our wildlife expert, you may not be able to address an encounter with the critters of the outdoors. Rains' motto is "helping animals with their people problems since 1998," so you may want to call him for assistance. For more information you may visit capefearwildlife.com.



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Controlling Nuisance Moles *cont.*

By Nancy Olsen

The male mole will dig tunnels every which way in no particular manner and rarely use the same tunnel twice. They are looking for females and food. There is little chance of trapping and poisoning the male mole. The female mole has a den and the best time of the year to kill her is in early spring (Feb-April). She will go back to the den to raise her young and will use the same tunnels over and over in search of food. Her tunnels will radiate out from under a rock, tree root, corner of the house or something similar. Mash the tunnels and notice where they radiate from as they pop up again. When you figure out where the den is then you have a better chance of trapping and poisoning the female mole. Caster Beans are great for this situation.



Moles can be found in a variety of locations, including the lawn, where the activity usually shows up as ridges of upheaved soil created where the runways were constructed as the animals moved about foraging for food. Some of these tunnels are used as travel lanes and may be abandoned immediately after being dug. Mounds of soil called mole hills may be brought to the surface of the ground as moles dig deep, permanent tunnels and nest cavities. Moles prefer loose, sandy loam soils and avoid heavy, clay soils.



Moles have high energy requirements. They actively feed day and night all times of the year. They feed on mature insects and snail larvae, spiders, small vertebrates, earthworms, and occasionally take small amounts of vegetation. Earthworms and white grubs are favorite foods. Having moles may indicate the real problem in the yard is grubs in the turfgrass and it may be necessary to treat with an insecticide for controlling grubs Diazinon (Spectracide) or milky disease spore. Follow the label for use.

Moles breed in late winter or spring and have a gestation period of about 4 to 6 weeks. Single annual litters of two to five young are born in March, April, or May. Young are helpless, but growth and development occur rapidly. About four weeks after birth, the moles leave the nest and fend for themselves.



The upheaved ridges of mole tunnels make lawn mowing difficult. Since the roots are disturbed, grass may turn brown and unsightly.

Moles rarely eat flower bulbs, ornamentals, or other vegetative material while tunneling, but plants may be physically disturbed as moles tunnel in search of animal organisms in the soil. Mole activity may indirectly damage vegetation, but their feeding on insects and other soil organisms is beneficial.

There are a variety of methods for mole control. Cultural methods, repellents, toxicants, fumigants, traps and various home remedies.



The use of insecticides (mentioned above) is often used to rid the yard of grubs, however, before leaving the area the moles may increase their digging in search of food, thereby possibly increasing damage to turf or garden areas.

Poisoning moles with grain are seldom effective as moles normally do not consume grain. Trapping moles is also very common place in mole control. Caster Beans have been a good mole control, as long as you take your time in preparing (for the female mole) to use caster beans.



For additional information on moles and your yard questions call Nancy Olsen at the Bladen County Cooperative Extension Service office number is 862-4591 or come by 450 Smith Circle Dr., Elizabethtown.

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Summer Recipes from Erin's Recipe Box

By Erin Smith

Summertime is the time for great food, outdoor entertaining and gatherings with friends. It is also a great time for fresh vegetables from your summer garden. Below are a few recipes from our General Manager's Family Recipe Box to help you with your summer entertaining ideas.

Great Summer Pasta Salad

1 lb. box of bow tie pasta, cooked, drained, and cooled
1 1 lb. package boneless, skinless chicken breasts cooked and cubed.
1 Tablespoon of Olive Oil
2 cloves of fresh garlic
1 pint of cherry tomatoes chopped
1 medium cucumber chopped
1 15 oz. can of green sweet peas, drained
Fresh ground black pepper to taste
1 cup of Italian Vinaigrette salad dressing Grated Parmesan Cheese to taste.

Cook pasta according to package directions. Drain and cool. While pasta is cooling, add olive oil to skillet and heat. Add boneless, skinless chicken breasts and two cloves of garlic to pan and sear in skillet. Cook chicken until done. Take up chicken from skillet and cut into cubes.

Place cooled pasta, chicken and vegetables in a large mixing bowl and toss with dressing, black pepper and cheese. Refrigerate until serving.

Cornbread Salad

1 pan of corn bread, cooled and crumbled
1 medium onion, chopped
1 clove of Garlic, chopped
1 medium green bell pepper, chopped
1 large jar of pimentos, drained
1 cup of diced fresh tomatoes
1 medium cucumber, diced
1 15 oz. can of yellow corn, drained
1 pound of bacon, cooked crispy and crumbled
1 pkg. of Hidden Valley Ranch Ranch Dressing mix
2 cups of mayonnaise

Bake cornbread and crumble and set aside to cool. In a separate bowl add mayonnaise and ranch dressing and mix well. Add onion, garlic, bell pepper, drained pimentos, drained corn, cucumber, bacon and tomatoes to corn bread and mix well. Add dressing to corn bread mix and mix well. Refrigerate until serving. Garnish with tomato and cucumber slices, if desired.

Grandma's Green Jello

This is one of my all time favorite recipes and reminds me of childhood summers with my grandmother.

2 packages of lime flavored Jello mix
2 cups of boiling water
1 15 oz. tub of cottage cheese
4 stalks of celery, chopped
1 15 oz. can of pineapple chunks, drained
1 cup of pecans, chopped

In a 9 x 13 inch baking dish add lime Jello mix. Stir in two cups of boiling water and mix well. Add cottage cheese, pineapple chunks, celery and pecans, stirring well after each addition. Refrigerate about 2 hours or until firmly set. Slice into squares and serve on lettuce leaf. Garnish each slice with a cherry if desired.

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Unique Finger Foods for your Bridal Shower or Tea Party

By: Dora Brogdon

There are many things that make up a wedding including, a Bridal Shower. Each one needs constant attention to make sure everything goes according to plan, especially the food that will be served. Food is something that can make and break an event. If people don't like it and you worked hard on the decorations, the guests will only remember the food. To make a wedding and bridal shower memorable, you need to make the food unforgettable. We have some unique suggestions you may want to try for your next Bridal Shower or Tea Party.

Whether it is for a Wedding or a tea party themed Bridal Shower, Tea Bag Cookies can add a unique touch to the event they will be something guests can remember. These dainty, tea bag shaped cookies are surprisingly easy to make. Simply cut your favorite cookie dough into squares and cut off the top ends to resemble a tea bag and then decorate the cookies. Don't forget to make a small hole in the top end of the cookie with a straw and tie thread and attach decoration to thread to resemble a tea bag.

If someone on the invitation list is not a cookie lover, then Peaches and Cream Mini Cupcakes will definitely work! These little cupcakes will remind anyone of those joyful summer days of childhood.

Now if your Wedding or Bridal Shower has a combined Southern and Seafood theme, Crab Cake Hush Puppies will be perfect for the job!

Another cookie which will also be a perfect addition is the Mint Chocolate Chip Cookie. These are one of my personal favorites, mainly because I love both mint and chocolate, but you can never turn down a childhood favorite.

Our last finger food is the Strawberry Bruschetta! These small delights will certainly make a wedding unique and memorable!



Homemade Ice Cream

This is a Smith family favorite for late summer afternoons.

In an Ice Cream Freezer add the following and mix together:

1 14 oz. can of Eagle Brand Sweetened Condensed Milk

2 pints of Half and Half

2 pints of Whipping Cream
(do not use nondairy varieties)

2 teaspoons of Pure Vanilla Extract

1 pint of fresh, seasonal fruit, washed and drained

NOTE:

Do not add sugar to fruit. Do not heat on the stove top.

Freeze according to manufacturer's directions for ice cream maker. Makes four quarts of homemade ice cream. Serve with your favorite ice cream toppings.

*Homemade Ice Cream
recipe by Erin Smith*





How to Guide for Tips for an Outdoors Wedding

By Tori Chestnutt

Spring and summer is coming, which means wedding season is upon us. Have you ever considered having a an outdoor wedding? Of course you have! They are beautiful, atmospheric, and romantic for your special day. However, having an outdoor wedding is not the easiest to plan for, due to the unpredictability of the weather.

Many concerns are associated with an outdoor wedding, because you want your wedding day to be a fairy tale without any hiccups. Below are some tips when planning for an outdoor wedding to help the execution of your day run as smoothly as possible.

1. Plan for wind.
2. Look up wedding dates in the Farmers Almanac for weather.
3. Have a backup plan if weather is not as planned.
4. Make your guests comfort a priority.
5. If it is a hot day, have wedding programs printed on wooden handled fan.
6. Inform guests ahead of time if they will be walking in grass due to heels sinking.



Choosing the correct cut of meat for your barbecue

By Erin Smith

Nothing says Summer has arrived like firing up the grill and cooking the perfect steak or brisket. For many folks, choosing the correct cut of meat for the grill can be an often times confusing task.

Many Chef's agree, knowing the cuts of meat is important when it comes to getting the best flavor from your grilled meats. Also, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) issues grades for meat. Most folks are familiar with the USDA Grade A seen on steaks.

Some options for those who are seeking to prepare barbecue on their grill are briskets, beef tips, spare ribs, baby back ribs, pork shoulders and pork tenderloins. These are just a few of a variety of cuts of meats from which you can choose.

Briskets are cuts of beef which come from the breast or lower chest of the cow and can are a fatter cut of meat. Briskets usually require a longer cooking time according to Texas Barbecue.

Beef tips come from the tenderloin or sirloin of the cow. They work well with various marinades, according to Cook's Illustrated.

Spare ribs come from the the belly of the pig's rib cage and baby back ribs are cut from there the rib cage meets the spine of the pig. Baby back ribs do not come from a baby pig but rather get their name because the area of the upper ribs where the cut of meat comes from is referred to as the baby because they are shorter than the spare ribs, according to kitchen.com.

Some barbecue enthusiasts enjoy slow-cooking pork shoulders, sometimes called a Boston Butt, according to kitchen.com. Once cooked, the meat is often chopped or sliced and served with a tangy barbecue sauce.

Pork tenderloin is another favorite cut of meat that many barbecue enthusiasts like to slow-cook on their grills. The tenderloin is a muscle located along the spine of the pig, according to kitchen.com. It can be marinated in your favorite barbecue sauce prior to grilling or the tenderloin can be basted as it grills.

So, if you want to prepare some barbecue or simply grill a wonderful cut of meat this summer, try one of these cuts of meats on your grill pared with your favorite marinade or barbecue sauce.

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9 Tips for Gardening to Attract

Even if you can't keep bees yourself, you can still encourage them to your garden.

General Gardening Advice for Attracting Bees and Other Pollinators

1. Use local native plants. Research suggests native plants are four times more attractive to native bees than exotic flowers. They are usually well adapted to your growing conditions and can thrive with minimum attention. In gardens, heirloom varieties of herbs and perennials can also provide good foraging.
2. Provide fresh water that is very shallow as bees have little short legs.
3. Don't use pesticides. Most pesticides are not selective. You are killing off the beneficial bugs along with the pests. If you must use a pesticide, start with the least toxic one and follow the label instructions to the letter, it's the law.
4. Plant for flowers that boom in sequence.
5. Choose several colors of flowers. Bees have good color vision to help them find flowers and the nectar and pollen they offer. Flower colors that particularly attract bees are blue, purple, violet, white, and yellow, which are better than pink, orange and red.
6. Plant flowers in clumps. Flowers clustered into clumps of one species will attract more pollinators than individual plants scattered through the habitat patch. Where space allows, make the clumps four feet or more in diameter.
7. Include flowers of different shapes. There are four thousand different species of bees in North America, and they are all different sizes, have different tongue lengths, and will feed on different shaped flowers. Consequently, providing a range of flower shapes means more bees can benefit.
8. Have a diversity of plants flowering all season. Most bee species are generalists, feeding on a range of plants through their life cycle. Having several plant species flowering at once, and a sequence of plants flowering through spring, summer, and fall, you can support a range of bee species that fly at different times of the season.
9. Plant where bees will visit. Bees favor sunny spots over shade and need some shelter from strong winds.

If you are having questions about your yard and garden, please call the Bladen County Cooperative Extension office, (910) 862-4591 and visit with Nancy Olsen, Consumer Horticulture Agent, or come by the office, 450 Smith Circle Dr., Elizabethtown, NC.



Photos by Erin Smith



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