## Healthy Acres Newsletter





### It's All About the Fair!

Kelly Moore, FCS Extension Agent

Whether you're thinking about entering a jar of jam made from the fruit found in your backyard, or the fruit and vegetables you picked up from a local Farmer's Market, your preservation efforts will bring personal satisfaction, better toast, and possibly, some spending money. The Western Montana Fair provides many opportunities to showcase your home-preserved foods. The **Culinary Arts Department provides 22** divisions comprised of multiple categories, in which to enter your most ribbon-worthy creations.

The Western Montana Fair Exhibit handbook contains a complete list. Fermented products, breads, cakes, cookies, pies, refrigerated items, candy, cookies, wines, brews, and ales are just a few of the entry options. Many first-time entries have received blue ribbons. Entries receiving a prize ribbon may be eligible for cash prizes from \$3 for third place to \$25 for Grand Champion winners. If you are unable to enter an item into the Culinary Dept. classes, viewing the vast array of delectable food is still well worth the time and effort!



This year, the exhibits will be in the Lupine Lab at the Rocky Mountain Gardens and Exploration Center. The following MSU Extension link will provide valuable, research-based information on home canning safety, necessary equipment, as well as a link to tested recipes from the National Center for Home Food Preservation.

Food Safety & Preservation



#### **Upcoming Classes**

**August 28<sup>th</sup> -** Cooking with the Season, Late Summer Salad from the Garden with Missoula Commissioner Josh Slotnick

**September 4**<sup>th</sup> - Garden Fresh Pasta Sauce

**September 11<sup>th</sup> -** Guest Chef Bert Gahagan, Director, Big Sky Culinary Institute

**September 30**<sup>th</sup> - Tomato Canning Time!

### In this issue:

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### Equine & Livestock Needs Assessment Survey

Natalie Sullivan, MS PAS Agriculture, Equine, and Livestock MSU Extension Agent

Calling all horse and livestock land stewards in Western Montana! Our goal is 300+ responses. Do you have 5 minutes to shape the future success of our agricultural communities? We need your input.

To identify the needs in our local equine & livestock communities and fulfill the Extension mission, Montana State University Extension is interested in learning more about the interactions between your land, animals, and natural resources. What are our collective challenges and what are our strengths? Your response will help us develop programming and resources that are relevant and useful to our local communities. No need, want, or idea is too big! Survey responses are confidential, and information gathered will not be used outside of MSU Extension.

In order to participate, you must 1) be a resident of Montana, 2) own/rent/lease property, and 3) manage one or more of the following.

- Horses, mules or donkeys
- Swine
- Small ruminants (i.e. sheep, goats, llamas, alpacas)
- Large Ruminants (i.e. cattle, elk, bison)
- \*We are NOT including rabbits or poultry in the current survey.

The results of this survey will be used in the following ways;

- Quantify and qualify the needs of Missoula County equine and livestock land stewards for grant writing and resource allocation.
- Identify the perennial concerns of equine and livestock land stewards that are too big for one person to tackle.
- Introduce the equine, livestock and agricultural communities to Missoula County's new MSU Extension agent, Natalie Sullivan.
- Identify educational topics that are of the highest interest to the community.
- Focus MSU Extension office's resources, networks, and budget for the greatest positive impact on the people, the animals, and the land.

Thank you for participating. **Survey Link** 

### Missoula County MSU Extension Forage Week August 16 through the 30th



WHAT IS FORAGE WEEK? Schedule an MSU Extension agent to come to your haystack and teach you how to sample forages! For two focused weeks in August, the Agriculture, Equine, and Livestock agent will reserve time to visit you. She'll teach you how to take core samples, how to send in a representative sample to an appropriate laboratory, and then explain how to interpret the results.

Questions that a Forage Test can answer:

- Will the hay meet my animal's nutrient requirements?
- Is my forage high in non-structural carbohydrates?
- Will my animals get fat or skinny on this hay?
- How should I supplement this winter?
- Did my hay growing and harvesting program get the results that I wanted?

Want to do it yourself? Rent the Penn State Forage Probe for free, get forms and lab links, and get help interpreting the results. The probe is rentable for a 48-hour period throughout the year. You must pick up and drop off at the Missoula County Department of Ecology and Extension, 1075 South Avenue West, Missoula, MT 59801.

A NOTE ABOUT NITRATE TESTING: A reminder that you must schedule an in-office appointment to have your forages tested for nitrates. The Nitrate Strip Testing is FREE at the MCDEE office.



# How to Keep Your Garden Bursting with Color in Late Summer

Sandy Perrin, Plant Clinic Technician

As the long days of summer begin to shorten, many gardens start to lose the vibrant color that made them shine in June and July. But with a little planning and the right plant choices, your garden can stay lively and beautiful well into late summer—and even into fall.

#### Why Gardens Fade in Late Summer

Most perennial gardens hit their peak from late May through July, offering a brilliant but brief display of blooms. By August, many of those early stars are spent, leaving behind tired, fading foliage. The key to keeping your garden vibrant is to introduce late-blooming perennials that take the stage just as summer begins to wind down.

#### Perennials That Shine from August On

Looking for low-maintenance options? These hardy, reliable perennials come back year after year, offering bold color just when your garden needs it most:

- Joe Pye Weed (Eutrochium purpureum)
- Sedum 'Autumn Joy'
- Japanese Anemone (Anemone x hybrida, A. hupehensis japonica)
- False Sunflower (Heliopsis spp.)
- Fall Aster (Aster spp.)
- Black-eyed Susans (Rudbeckia fulgida)
- Russian Sage (Perovskia atriplicifolia)
- Heuchera (Coral Bells) try dark or amber foliage varieties
- Sea Holly (Eryngium)
- Hardy Mums (Morden Series)
- Little Bluestem Grass (Schizachyrium scoparium 'Blue Heaven')
- Fall Crocus (Colchicum autumnale)
- Coneflower (Echinacea spp.)
- Tall Garden Phlox (Phlox paniculata)
- Lavender
- Bluebeard (Caryopteris)

#### **Tips to Extend the Blooming Season**

To keep the color going strong through late summer and into fall, follow these simple garden care strategies:

- Fertilize wisely: A slow-release fertilizer supports healthy growth and continued blooming.
- Deadhead often: Removing spent flowers encourages many plants to keep blooming.
- Choose plants with bold foliage: Varieties with colorful or textured leaves keep your garden visually interesting even between blooms.
- Water regularly: Late summer heat can stress plants, so be sure they're well-watered.
- Mulch generously: Apply 2–3 inches of ground bark or finished wood-based compost to retain moisture and protect roots.

With a few thoughtful additions and some late-season TLC, your garden can continue to dazzle well beyond July. Embrace the beauty of the season and enjoy a garden that glows with color right through to fall!





## Ornamental to Invasive: Monitoring Fragrant Waterlily

Fragrant water-lily (FWL) is a perennial, aquatic lily native to Eastern North American but invasive in the Western United States. FWL has been documented within Missoula County since the early 1900s, however, there is still much to learn about how this lily impacts native ecosystems once it becomes established.

Since 2019, Missoula County Aquatic Invasive Species team has been researching the impacts of FWL on native plant communities and water quality to better understand the threat it poses to our waters and create treatment/control plans for infected water bodies within the Missoula County.



In 2019, the aquatic invasive species district created monitoring plots (defined areas of study), within several of the lakes in the Clearwater Chain of Lakes. These plots are monitored every month from April through October for changes in plant community composition and to track the potential expansion of FWL within the native communities.

To accomplish this monitoring, the AIS team takes out the yellow Winona canoe and a couple GoPro cameras. Our crews paddle to each subplot to take overhead photos of the emergent foliage as well as the submerged plants. These photos are then compared using grid-point intercept software to quantify the change in abundance of these aquatic plant species over time.

### Invasive Species Alert: Rush Skeletonweed



Rush skeletonweed is beginning to emerge around Missoula County, particularly along the I-90 corridor and other disturbed areas. This invasive, noxious weed is easily overlooked in its early stages but can rapidly spread if not addressed. Native to Eurasia, rush skeletonweed (Chondrilla juncea) is a deeprooted perennial that thrives in dry, disturbed soils. It has wiry, branching stems that ooze milky sap when broken and can grow up to 4 feet tall. In its early growth, the plant forms a basal rosette that closely resembles a dandelion's. As it matures, the stem becomes nearly leafless and gives the plant its characteristic "skeleton-like" appearance, making identification difficult.

Rush skeletonweed produces small, yellow, dandelion-like flowers that closely resemble those of sow thistle and prickly lettuce. These flowers mature into seeds topped with parachute-like tufts (pappus), enabling them to travel long distances on the wind. Along interstates and roadways, wind currents and vehicle traffic aid in the widespread dispersal of seeds, making containment especially difficult. Each plant is capable of producing thousands of seeds, contributing to its rapid spread. Early detection and removal are critical. Landowners, road crews, and the public are encouraged to report sightings to help manage and control this aggressive invader in Missoula County.

Contact Layne if you suspect an infestion 406-258-3434



### Updates from the Garden

#### **New developments:**

- You may notice a new structure in the Northeast corner of the Gardens. This hardy kiwi arbor was designed and built by David Boden of Chisel & Mallot Woodwork. Located in the berry and small-fruit orchard, the space will provide a shady oasis once the hardy kiwis, vigorous viners, get established.
- This new addition also provided an opportunity for a
  volunteer event to install a paver patio underneath
  the arbor. Led by Justin Rettenmayer of Garden City
  Florascaping, a dozen garden staff and volunteers
  spent a day learning the process of laying pavers,
  resulting in a gorgeous patio and pathway.



The **Trial Gardens** are made up of fourteen 50-foot beds in the center of Rocky Mountain Gardens. The area, dedicated to experimentation and demonstration, changes annually. This year the Trial Gardens include the following:

- Paste Tomatoes: a dozen varieties of unusual and heirloom paste tomatoes chosen for their flavor both fresh and processed; managed by RMG staff & volunteers.
- Dahlias: nearly 50 varieties of dahlias; many grown from the tubers from last year's dahlia patch; managed by volunteer Amy Zanzig.
- **Cover crops**: four different cover crop mixes, each with particular benefits to the soil; managed by RMG staff.
- Dry Beans: a variety of bush-style dry beans; managed by Master Gardeners.
- Veggies for Cultivate & Cook: crops used in this year's Cultivate & Cook workshop series; managed by Plant Clinic Coordinator Sandy Perrin.



**Garden volunteers** continue to amaze us with their dedication to this project.

- We've hosted over 50 volunteer events since March, with volunteers contributing over 900 hours to the Gardens.
- Becoming a Garden Ambassador is a new volunteer opportunity that allows us to be open on Saturdays.
   These volunteers open and close the garden gates and ensure a safe and welcoming environment for all visitors.
- Garden Specialists are another development this season.
   These individuals dedicate their time to specific areas of the garden, including tomatoes, native plants, and annual flowers.



### Updates from the Garden

continued

#### Next up:

As we work to keep up with general garden maintenance, we're keeping our eyes on the horizon. **Molly Sutton, Sutton Garden Design**, will soon be installing the **A to Z Garden** along the western edge of the Gardens. This strip, located outside the garden fence, will be full of plants alphabetized by their scientific names- a true plant nerd's delight!

Now that the kiwi arbor and patio are in, we're excited to plant the hardy kiwis, berries, and small fruits to complete the space.

Last but not least, we continue to finalize plans for the outdoor classroom and veggie patch. This complex piece of the puzzle runs the length of the western edge of the Gardens. Destined to include shade shelters, raised beds, accessible pathways, and more, we are slowly but surely moving towards breaking ground on this part of the project.

Visit, volunteer, or join a workshop. Whatever brings you to the Gardens, we hope to see you soon!



### Grow with Us - Become a Member Today!

The Rocky Mountain Gardens and Exploration Center is an educational facility featuring hands-on activities and innovative programs led by the Missoula County Department of Ecology and Extension.

From soil to supper, our programs engage all ages in learning about the natural world and how to care for it.

Now is the perfect time to become a member or renew your annual membership! Your membership supports public programming that promotes sustainable land management, pollinator conservation, gardening, nutrition, and youth development.

Membership also ensures free admission to the Gardens for all visitors and helps provide essential garden maintenance throughout the seasons.

Member benefits include:

- Early access to events, classes, and seasonal opportunities
- Reduced fees for MCDEE programs and workshops
- Exclusive member-only discounts at local partner businesses

Join today and inspire a lifelong connection with nature.

Join here:

Become a member!



Healthy Acres Healthy Communities Foundation is a 501 c 3 non-profit providing philanthropic support to the programs of the Missoula County Department of Ecology and Extension.





# What's Happening at the Home Upgrade Hub?

Missoula County's Home Upgrade Hub is up and running, offering free, personalized support to residents looking to make their homes more comfortable, efficient, and climate-resilient. Whether you're just starting to think about home upgrades or already knee-deep in planning, we're here to help you take the next step.

#### Our current services include:

- 1-on-1 Consultations Meet with a staff member to talk through your home energy questions, goals, and priorities.
- On-Site Comfort Assessments We'll visit your home to help identify sources of discomfort like drafts, uneven temperatures, or indoor air quality issues.
- Appliance Upgrade Advice From water heaters to stoves, we can help you understand when and why to upgrade—and what to upgrade to.
- Budgeting Support Learn how to plan and prioritize your upgrades over time, with guidance on incentives and rebates.
- Contractor Navigation We'll help you understand what to look for in a contractor and connect you with professionals familiar with energy retrofits.



#### **Upcoming Events & Workshops**

We've also got a full lineup of community events to help demystify home energy upgrades and give you hands-on learning opportunities:

#### August 28 - Heat Pump 101

Learn how heat pumps work, bust common myths, explore their benefits, and hear real-life examples. We'll also talk about what barriers exist—and how to budget for them.

#### September 18 - Air Sealing Demo Day

Get hands-on with air sealing! We'll showcase highimpact areas in the home and demonstrate practical air sealing techniques using interactive models.

### October 3 – Lunch & Learn: Resiliency Inside and Outside of your Home

This session is a part of Climate Smart Missoula's Climate Solutions Week! We will focus on both wildfire and wildfire smoke preparedness and home energy resilience:

- $\cdot$  Outside: Ignition zones, vegetation management, and home hardening
- · Inside: Air sealing, induction stoves, heat pumps, and improving indoor air quality

### October 22 (4-Week Series) – Planning Your Home Retrofit

Every Wednesday evening for four weeks, this series walks you through the full retrofit journey:

- Week 1 Assessing Your Home
- Week 2 Planning Your Home Retrofit
- Week 3 Creating Your Home Energy Retrofit Roadmap
- Week 4 Low-Hanging Fruit: Your Home's Envelope

Whether you're looking for immediate improvements or thinking long term, the Home Upgrade Hub is here to guide you. Want to learn more or schedule a consult?

Contact Corey Dadds or Callye Foster: <u>Cdadds@missoulacounty.us</u> Cefoster@missoulacounty.us

Let's make your home healthier, more efficient, and more comfortable—together.



### Grow with Us - Become a Missoula Master Gardener!

Sarah Holden, Horticulturist Extension Agent

Master Gardeners are a vital extension of Missoula County Extension, serving our community through education, outreach, and hands-on garden projects. These trained volunteers give presentations to local clubs and schools, help create native plant gardens across the county, and share research-based gardening knowledge with the public.

The Master Gardener program is a dynamic 10-week course offered each Spring and Fall, combining classroom discussions with hands-on labs covering a wide range of horticultural topics.

Fall 2025 session begins Saturday, September 27 Classes run 9:00 AM-12:00 PM every Saturday for 10 weeks \$250 registration includes your course manual and supplies



If you're ready to deepen your gardening knowledge, connect with an amazing community, and volunteer to make a difference, sign up today and let your garden journey begin!

Register for Master Gardener

### Gardening in Montana



### New to Gardening? New to Montana?

Join Horticulturist Sarah Holden for a brand-new 6-class gardening series starting September 2, 2025!
This bi-weekly workshop series is perfect for those who want to dig into the basics of gardening—no Master Gardener training required. Whether you're new to the area or just looking to turn your black thumb green, this is your chance to grow with confidence.

Wednesdays at 10:00 AM in September and October. Each class focuses on a different practical gardening topic which are fun, approachable, and designed with beginners in mind.

Come learn, laugh, and get your hands dirty with us—because everyone can be a gardener with the right tools and support!

Register for Gardening in Montana



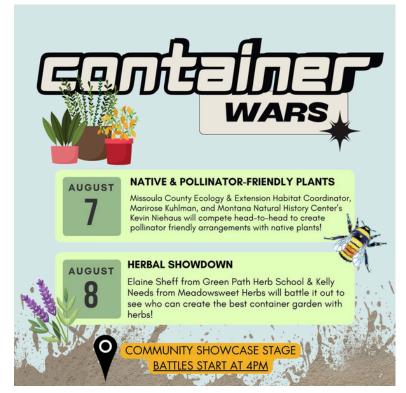
### Come see us at the Western MT Fair!

### Container Wars August 7th & 8th

## Back by popular demand—Container Wars is returning to the Western Montana Fair!

Join us on Thursday, August 7th, from 4–5 PM at the Community Showcase Stage for a thrilling showdown of pollinator power! Watch Marirose Kuhlman, Missoula County Habitat Coordinator and pollinator expert, face off against the Montana Natural History Center in a battle to build the ultimate native plant container. Learn all about pollinators, native plants, and the incredible community programs these organizations offer—plus score free native seeds, plants, and fun giveaways!

Then, don't miss Round Two on Friday, August 8th, 4-5 pm, when the battlefield turns herbal. Two founding forces behind the Montana Herbal Festival, **Kelly Needs of Meadowsweet Herbs and Elaine Sheff of Green Path Herb School**, will go leaf-to-leaf crafting the most inspiring herbal container garden. Will it soothe, nourish, or spice things up? Come find out—and grab your raffle tickets for a chance to take one of these winning creations home!



Tickets are available for purchase during the Battles and at the MSU Extension Master Gardener booth in the GW Marks Exploration Center. Six containers will be raffled off Monday, August 11<sup>th</sup>, proceeds going to the Junior Master Gardener program.

### Western Montana 4-H and FFA Livestock Auction

#### What is the Sale all about?

The 4-H and FFA livestock sale is where 4-H and FFA youth who are participating in market animal projects sell their project animal. The proceeds of each sale go to the individual 4-H and FFA members. Many of these young people put their sale earnings toward college, in addition to using the money to offset the costs of raising their animals and purchase a new market animal for the next year.

When you purchase a 4-H or FFA animal at the sale, you are getting a high-quality product. Market animals are raised individually in the best conditions and on the best feed available.

#### How does the Sale work?

On the day of the sale, the barns and the sale arena are open at 7:00 a.m. You sign up for the sale in the arena. You will be given a numbered card for bidding, and you will be asked where you want your purchase slaughtered and which butcher you want to process the meat. When you bid on all animals, except rabbits and poultry, you are bidding by the pound, live weight. For meat rabbits and poultry, you bid by the pen – which consists of three animals.

#### OK, I'm the High Bidder. Now what?

You will be billed by the Sale Committee. The processing costs are separate from your purchase at the auction. Generally, your butcher will include the slaughter fee, in addition to a per-pound cut/wrap fee, in their final bill to you for processing the meat.

On Sunday after the sale, all the market animals are shipped to area processors, and the carcasses are graded that week as part of the 4-H and FFA market project. After this, the carcass is delivered to or picked up by your butcher for cutting and wrapping. You should contact your butcher in case they need to make arrangements to transport the meat to their facility.

#### **Tax-deductible Purchase**

You may purchase an animal as a goodwill gift or as a donation to a charity.

For more information, check out the **Auction Flyer!** 







### Missoula 4-H. 2025 Pig Raffle.

Proceeds Benefit Missoula County 4-H Council & Clubs

A 501(c)(3) Non-profit: EIN: 26-0106860 https://missoulaeduplace.org/4-h

GRAND PRIZE: 1/2 Cut/Wrapped Hog + Blackstone Grill

BABY BACK RIBS

SECOND PRIZE: 1/2 Cut/Wrapped Hog

Third Prize: Montana Knife Co. Blackfoot 2.0 knife Fourth Prize: One of Three \$100 Gift Cards

#### **TICKETS**

\$5 each or 5 for \$20

Available at the Missoula County Extension Office or from 4-H Members County-wide

#### DRAWING

**Need Not Be Present to Win** 

September 11<sup>th</sup>, 7pm at the Missoula County MSU Extension Office (At the 4-H Livestock Committee meeting)

### **INCENTIVES**

\$100 Cash Prize for the 4-H Member who Sells the Most Tickets \$100 Gift Card for the 4-H Member who sells the 2<sup>nd</sup> Most Tickets \$50 Cash Prize for the 4-H Member who sells the 3<sup>rd</sup> Most Tickets Half of the proceeds stay with the 4-H Clubs, Half to the Missoula County 4-H Council



HAM















## Flowering Bee Lawn Lucas LaPointe, Big Sky Watershed Corps Member

Did you know that Missoula County has a Flowering Bee Lawn program? This program was started in 2023 with a select group of participants, with the goal of seeing how well a Flowering Bee Lawn seed mix could establish in Missoula County. The seed mix used by Missoula County was originally developed and tested by the University of Minnesota Extension, and is comprised of low-growing, flowering ground cover plants including Dutch White Clover (Trifolium repens), Self Heal (Prunella vulgaris), and Creeping Thyme (Thymus serpyllum) as well as fine fescues, which are a more drought tolerant grass alternative to traditional turf grasses. The Flowering Bee Lawns were established through a combination of mowing existing lawns short (~1 inch), raking out lawn thatch and scarifying the soil, and then overseeding with the Flowering Bee Lawn seed mix. The purpose of Flowering Bee Lawns is to provide sources of pollen and nectar for bees living in urban environments. While they are not optimal pollinator habitat, they can still provide crucial forage for these pollinators in comparison to a typical monoculture lawn.

Since its inception in 2023, surveys have been conducted by Missoula County staff periodically. During the program's first year, two rounds of surveys were conducted, one in early summer and one in the fall. The goal of these initial surveys was to gauge the establishment of the seed mix, checking to see if the fine fescues and seedlings of the ground cover plants were present. In 2024, no surveys were conducted, but now in 2025, they have resumed. In 2025, our surveys are roughly the same, but rather than checking for seedlings, the focus has shifted to looking for mature plants now that they have had multiple years to establish. Results from the surveys have been mixed, with some plots establishing extremely well, and others not seeing the same success. Regardless, the program

has shown that Flowering Bee Lawns can be successful in Missoula County, the State of Montana, and has also given insight into how different preparation and care routines can affect how well a bee lawn may or may not establish.

If you are interested in starting your own Flowering Bee Lawn, the Missoula County Department of Ecology and Extension has its seed mix for sale. You can also visit our website for additional resources on Flowering Bee Lawns. or come into our office to speak with a staff member and determine if a Flowering Bee Lawn is right for you.

**Upcoming ReWild Your Yard workshop on September** 6th, check out our website calendar to register.



### When it Rains, It Doesn't Always Pour A Day in the Field with Tyler Brett with Montana Biocontrol





At 8:30, on the morning of June 2, I jumped in the truck and hit the road for a 3-hour drive to Conrad, MT. I was headed there to meet up with my sister Abby, who's working for the DNRC this summer as a Land Use Specialist. Once I got into town, we grabbed a quick lunch and headed out to the worksite for the day. This site had some pretty odd-looking Whitetop plants. They were short, spread out, pale in color, and some had already flowered while others hadn't even started budding.

Our job today was to release Whitetop Gall Mites, a newer biocontrol that's been approved for use. Since the mites are microscopic, I showed Abby how to release them properly. We took infested stems from another site, surrounded them with healthy stems at the new location, and bundled them together with twine. Each spot got flagged and recorded with a GPS point so we can come back and monitor later. While we were working, I noticed some dark clouds rolling in. I pointed them out to Abby, and we both agreed we should try to finish up quickly. I felt one raindrop... then nothing. We managed to get all 30 stems released and then moved on to setting up our monitoring transect.

The transect was about 100 meters from the release points. We laid down a 20-meter tape and placed a frame every 2 meters. I explained how this helps us track Whitetop growth over time and monitor how far and fast the mites spread. Halfway through, the sky had darkened and then I felt another drop, and then another. We hustled to finish the transect, estimating the percent of plant coverage in each frame as fast as we could. Just as we wrapped up the last one, the rain stopped, and the clouds started to clear. Classic Montana.

We packed up our gear and drove back to Abby's office to end the day. Getting to do fieldwork with my sister was a great way to kick off the season. It is one of those moments that reminds me why I love this job.



# Join us for an evening of Culinary Connection

Savor an unforgettable meal crafted by Missoula's finest chefs. Enjoy live music by local jazz musician, Dylan Bautista, and take part in the silent and live auctions.

Proceeds from this year's event will support the **Honeyberry Culinary Classroom** and its educational programming for all ages. These programs build lifelong skills in health and nutrition and boost participants' confidence in the kitchen.

For more information or to reserve a seat, contact <u>jenkins@healthyacres.org</u> or visit healthyacres.org