

We need your help!

Volunteers are needed for **earth wellness festival** on Thursday, March 23 at Southeast Community College in Lincoln. Approximately 3,000 fifth-graders participate in this annual event that involves students in creative and innovative environmental education activities.

Friends-Neighbors-Co-workers-Students-4-H/FFA Members

Each year, over 250 volunteers take part in **earth wellness festival** activities—people just like you:

- high school students
- college students/student teachers
- business/industry employees
- parents/grandparents
- service club members
- involved citizens

No experience is needed. Just a desire to help make a difference in our community.

As classroom escorts, bus greeters, presenter and registration assistants; volunteers are essential to the success of this event. You may choose to volunteer all day (8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.) or morning only (8:30 a.m.-noon). In return, you receive a festival t-shirt, a free lunch, an invite to our celebration party following the event and an opportunity to participate in a rewarding volunteer experience.

Please contact Soni at (402) 441-7180 for more information. For your convenience, you can register with Soni over the phone or email her at scochran2@unl.edu. (SC)



Roosting birds making a mess?

Starlings and pigeons are similar because both species are gregarious and like to roost in groups. They make a mess below roosting sites. These birds can be difficult to eliminate from a specific location once they become established.

Frightening sound or visual devices such as alarms, electronically produced noises, plastic owls and rubber snakes can be used, but these tactics work only until the birds grow accustomed to them.

Using a toxic bait is another option, but only licensed wildlife management professionals can use bait products that are not available to the general public. The problem with using a toxicant as the sole method of control is that, after the baiting is over, other birds may find and

use the roosting site.

The most effective, safe, economical (in the long term) and humane way to solve this problem is to disable nesting and roosting sites by making the roost unpleasant or less suitable for roosting or nesting. This is known a "habitat modification."

Pigeons like to roost on ledges. Habitat modification of ledges can include making the angle steep or stretching a thin wire an inch or two above the surface so the birds can't perch comfortably. Another method is to attach strips of spikes, known as "porcupine wires" to ledges. Initially, these methods can take time and some expense, but the payoff is a long term, inexpensive solution.

Starlings like to be close to other members of their flock

when they roost in trees at night. One way to discourage roosting in a tree is to prune inside branches so there are not as many perching locations.

We strongly encourage habitat modification for many bird and wildlife problems as the most humane, best long-term solution to the problem. If you don't feel equipped to handle the carpentry work necessary, try to find a wildlife management professional who offers these long term solutions. (BPO)



Dust mites

Do you sneeze and wheeze after you dust or clean your closets? If so, you may be allergic to dust and its components.

The most potent house-dust allergens are caused by microscopic cast skins and feces of dust mites. These microscopic parts induce allergies (sneezing, itchy eyes or asthma) in some individuals. Other important allergens are produced by silverfish, cockroaches, itch mites, booklice and pet dander. If you suspect you have an allergy, you should consult with an allergist who can identify specific allergens, using a simple "scratch test."

In an accompanying article, we discuss the recall of AllerCare, a product marketed to control dust mite. At the present time, we recommend only non-chemical control tactics to help reduce dust mite populations. The rest of this article will emphasize non-chemical control tactics associated with dust allergies and house dust mites.

Biology. House dust mites are so tiny that they are virtually invisible without magnification. They do not bite people, but feed on shed skin scales, animal

dander, pollen, fungi and bacteria. Dust mites obtain water from the air and the environment, so they survive best at higher relative humidities (70-80%). They do not survive well at low relative humidities.

Dust Mite Management. Several tactics should be used at the same time to reduce dust mite populations. Complete elimination of house dust mites is not realistic, but management should include making the environment inhospitable to dust mites, as well as, reducing exposure to allergens. Sleeping and lounging areas, places we spend much of our time, deserve the most attention.

The following hints may be helpful in reducing dust mites:

•**Select appropriate furnishings.** Avoid furniture that collects dust as well as wool fabrics/rugs, because wool sheds particles and is eaten by insects. Whenever possible, use washable window treatments and rugs. Keep surfaces free of clutter and knickknacks that collect dust. Enclosing mattresses in plastic greatly decreases populations of mites in the bed. Replace feather pillows and down quilts with

synthetic fibers.

•**Avoid furry of feathered pets.** Pets that have fur or feather contribute dander to the dust (another allergen) and increase the food source for mites. If you are a pet lover, locate their sleeping quarters as far from yours as possible and furnish their sleeping quarters so they can be cleaned easily.

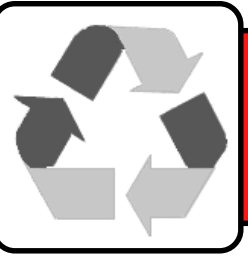
•**Keep humidity low.** The humidity in the house should be kept below 70%, not difficult in the wintertime. During the summer, it might be useful to run dehumidifiers, especially in bedrooms and lounging areas.

•**Reducing air infiltration.** Airing out the house with open windows allows the entry of pollen which is a food source for mites, as well as, a common allergen. Minimize incoming air by caulking cracks around windows, doors and other openings.

•**Dust management:** Regular, thorough vacuuming of carpets, furniture and draperies will help reduce exposure to dust mite allergens. Use a specially designed vacuum cleaner with a

continued on page 11

Environmental Focus



Beekeeping for fun and profit!



Beginning Beekeeping Workshop: February 29 and March 1

In Nebraska, approximately 700 beekeepers manage about 115,000 colonies of honeybees. The annual honey production ranges from 5 to 11 million pounds, depending on flora availability and weather conditions. With optimal weather conditions and flora availability, a properly managed colony can produce 100 pounds or more of honey annually. A more realistic, six-year average for honey production is about 75 pounds annually per colony.

Honeybees play an important role as pollinators of many fruit, vegetable and seed crops. Serious gardeners may want to keep bees for the pollination benefits alone. Nebraska crops requiring bee pollination are: alfalfa, clover and vetch seed, canola, sunflowers, melons, squash, cucumbers, pumpkins, apples, cherries, pears and raspberries. Bees also pollinate many plants important to wildlife and soil conservation, as well as, wildflowers that beautify Nebraska's landscape.

For the beginner, buying all new equipment with packaged bees is the best way to start. An established hive can be overwhelming for the beginner who does not know how to deal with swarms, re-queening and colony defensiveness. Buying new equipment will allow you to learn the individual parts of the hive while putting it together. With packaged bees, you can gain valuable experience working with a small colony and gain experience as the colony grows. Two to four colonies are ideal for beginning beekeepers.

New beekeepers will need to learn as much as possible about working with bees, including the proper clothing and equipment, as well as, bee biology, behavior and hive management.

Learn about beekeeping in two 3-hour workshops and one Saturday hands-on lab session. Cooperative Extension Apiarist Marion Ellis will teach *A Beginner's Beekeeping Workshop* February 29 and March 1, 6:30-9:30 p.m. at the Lancaster Extension Education Center. The practical, hands-on lab session will be April 8, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. at the Apiculture Laboratory at the Agricultural Research and Development Center, Ithaca, Nebraska. Participants will learn how to install packaged bees at the lab session on April 8.

The basic cost of this workshop is \$20 and includes written materials. Call (402) 441-7180 for a registration form or for more information. Please preregister by February 25. (BPO)

EPA announces recall of AllerCare

On January 14, 2000, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced that SC Johnson and Son, Inc. will immediately stop production and shipment of two dust mite pesticidal products and will remove them from the marketplace. The two products are: AllerCare Dust Mite Carpet Powder (EPA Registration Number 4822-433) and AllerCare Dust Mite Allergen Spray for Carpet and Upholstery. Both of these products contain the active ingredient, benzyl benzoate for use in controlling dust mites, a common source of household allergens.

Since the fall of 1999, both EPA and SC Johnson have received numerous reports of adverse health reactions in humans and pets exposed to AllerCare products. To date, there have been more than 400 incidents reported. Allergy and asthma sufferers, which include children, seem to be most negatively affected by use of these products. The incidents

reported range from severe to minor reactions, including asthma attacks, respiratory problems, burning sensations and skin irritation. In most cases, the reported effects began within 15-30 minutes after use of the product.

If you have used one or both of these products and have not had a reaction, there is no reason to be concerned. If you have had an adverse reaction, you can report your reaction to a physician or Mike Holmquist at the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department (441-8041). If you have severe allergies or asthma, do not use these products until you have consulted with your allergist or other physician. If you have any unused or open containers of these products, you may contact SC Johnson toll free at 1-877-255-3722 for instructions on where to take the product for recovery or for a product refund. Source: USEPA. Questions & Answer Fact Sheet at: http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/citizens/allercareq_a.htm (BPO)