

## Alternative Agriculture Provides Opportunities For Enthusiastic Entrepreneur

By Jim Peterson  
UNL Extension Educator

Nebraska agriculture tends to revolve around conventional crops and livestock such as corn, soybeans, cattle, sheep and swine. However, a wide variety of alternative products can be successfully grown and marketed within the state.

The span of alternative products in Nebraska cover a broad range. Pasture-raised poultry and vineyard grapes are two such examples. However, alternative products do not need to be extreme. Garden fruits and vegetables are also an excellent choice for someone interested in alternative agriculture.

Producers should be on the lookout for opportunities to sell their products. One of the easiest ways to begin selling a product is by taking part in a local farmer's market. These events are fun, provide easy access to people who want to buy garden products and provide a starting point for gaining name recognition. Successful vendors must provide consumers with a reason to stop and look at the products they have to offer. This can be done by featuring a particularly unique product and providing customers with a wide variety of products to choose from.

Managing a roadside stand is another option for selling alternative products. Roadside stands

are very convenient because the producer can work around his or her own schedule. However, constant hours of operation and diverse quality products are needed to satisfy customers and ensure future business.

Some producers contact restaurants for possible sales. This is especially common in high-end restaurants where chefs are normally looking for locally grown products that can be featured in their menus. In these situations, it is a good idea to contact chefs to see what types of products they are most interested in.

Local grocery stores may also be willing to sell alternative products. However, providing the store with a steady supply throughout the year is often difficult, if not impossible, to accomplish.

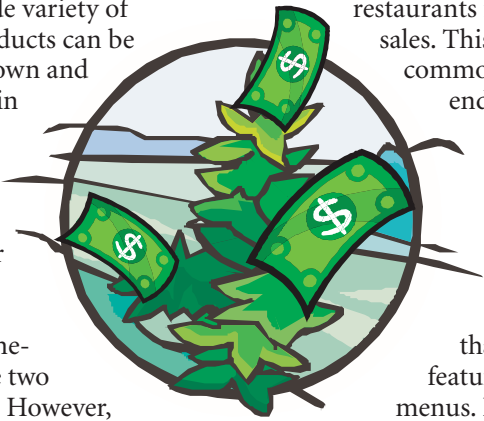
Nebraska recently began its own food co-op to provide a market for alternative products. In the organization, grower members provide the co-op with their products that are then sold directly to consumers, restaurants or the wholesale market. Community Supported Agriculture also is a growing trend in the Midwest. This option allows growers to sell shares to consumers who are interested in their product. For example, a shareholder may receive a bag full of vegetables each week during the growing

season in return for his or her share. This method works well because the buyer and seller share in both the bounty and risk of gardening.

As with all aspects of the marketing world, communication is the key to success. Often times, the best marketing tool is word of mouth. In other words, make sure the product being sold is worth talking about.

Before getting started, producers should develop a marketing plan. There are six points to keep in mind when developing a strategy:

- Make sure the product can be sold to a variety of consumers. Without willing buyers, a product has little value.
- Understand the time involved. Many alternative enterprises require a lot of effort and commitment. This can be especially difficult when working another job at the same time.
- Think realistically when it comes to financing. Many enterprises won't pay back right away.
- Keep in mind the problems that can occur. Disease and insects are two common pests that can hinder production. It is a good idea to consult another producer who can provide expertise on such issues.
- Understand the cultural practices involved. It is important to step back and look at the big picture. Without the proper resources, getting started isn't worth the time and money.
- Know the product's market potential. Find out what consumers want and remember that some enterprises will sell better in certain areas than others.



## Proper Precautions for Chain Saw Safety

By Dennis Adams  
UNL Forestry Specialist

Higher energy costs have given many people the incentive to cut their own firewood. However, users should review safety precautions before handling a chainsaw to avoid serious injury.

Operators should begin by reading the instruction manual. This is especially important in situations involving a first-time user or new model of chain saw. Reread instructions to obtain a clear understanding of the operation process.

While chain saws are more efficient than manual saws, they are more likely to be used incorrectly and cause injury. Most injuries are the result of kickback. Kickback occurs due to the fast rotation of the blade. When the tip of the blade makes contact with the tree, the high rpm's of the chain may cause the chain saw to literally "kickback" out of the operator's control. Uncontrolled kickback often results in injuries to the arms, legs or face.

It is also important to be aware of surroundings when harvesting firewood. An area clear of excess brush or other obstacles is most desirable. This provides an open area for the tree to land and an escape route for harvesters should the tree fall in an unexpected direction. Don't forget to remain aware of what is occurring overhead. Falling branches, known as "widow makers," can cause serious injury or death as well.

Once the tree is down, it is safest to use the bottom of the chain saw bar to cut the wood into sections. This will prevent kickback and make operating the chain saw less work.

Most importantly, never operate a chain saw alone. Having another person present guarantees help is available should any problem or injury occur.



UNIVERSITY OF  
**Nebraska**  
Lincoln **EXTENSION**

**Helping Acreage Owners Manage Their Rural Living Environment with a Focus on Managing Water Resources**

**Saturday, March 17**  
**8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.**

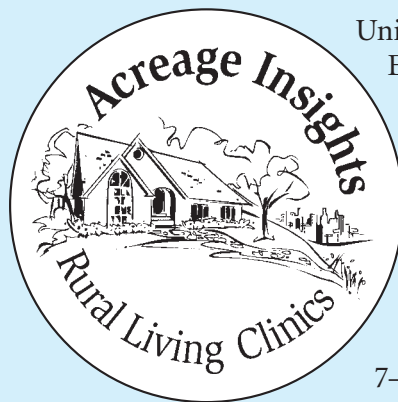
Agriculture Research & Development Center (ARDC)  
Research & Education Building Near Mead, NE

**UNL Extension is expanding its popular series of rural living clinics to include an all day expo for acreage owners!**

Sessions on:  
Drought  
Water resources  
Rain Gardens  
Prairie Grass & Wildflowers  
Woody Landscape Plant Selection  
Turf Management  
Drinking Water Quality  
Septic System Operation & Maintenance  
Water Treatment  
Pond Design

**Cost includes lunch and educational materials:  
\$25/person preregistration • \$35/Person at the door**

Preregistration deadline is March 9



University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension presents a series of clinics designed to help acreage owners manage a rural living environment. The following clinics will be held in Lincoln at the Lancaster Extension Education Center, 444 Cherrycreek Road, from 7-9 p.m.

**Clinics are \$10/person advanced registration; \$15/person at the door**

Preregistration deadline is 3 working days before the clinic.

**Tuesday, March 20**

**Tuesday, April 17**

**Farming for Farmers Markets and Other Direct Markets**

Farmers markets and direct marketing of locally grown produce is stretching the ability of the existing producers to meet the expanding needs. Additional producers are needed to meet this increased demand. Topics will include the selection of vegetable and fruit species, the growing of the produce and finally tips on marketing these products.

**Management of Small Ponds**

Is your pond turbid after a rain? Is your pond covered with a green slime in the summer months? Do rooted pond weeds and/or shoreline vegetation reduce angling access and recreation on the pond? If you answered yes to any of the questions or have questions pertaining to pond management then you will want to attend. This seminar is designed for those who have a 1/2 acre-sized pond or larger.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE ACREAGE EXPO OR RURAL LIVING CLINICS go to <http://acreage.unl.edu> or call Sarah Browning at (402) 727-2775**