

Prepare Fireplaces and Woodburning Stoves for Safe Use this Winter

Lorene Bartos
UNL Extension Educator

Every year, at least 12,000 Americans die in residential fires, according to statistics from the National Fire Protection Association. Because of the risks associated with fires, it's important to understand and practice safety tips when using indoor fireplaces and woodburning stoves this winter.

- Put a shield around the fireplace to prevent sparks from flying out and starting a fire. Glass grates, which enclose the fireplace entirely, are the most effective. Wire mesh grates, though not as impenetrable, also stop most sparks. Make sure the fireplace draws properly so smoke doesn't blow back into the living area.
- In case ashes, sparks or smoke escape the fireplace, make sure the area surrounding the fireplace is clear of flammable items, including carpet. The



Soni Cochran, UNL Extension in Lancaster County

chimney sweep or clean the chimney flue and damp once a year with a big brush. For woodburning heaters and stove pipes, take time to clean and check for buildup and other problems or hire a chimney cleaner to do so before it gets cold.

- Choose wood types depending on the type of fire desired. If a fireplace is for aesthetic reasons, burn cottonwood, maple or elm, which create bright flames.

- If the fireplace is used for heat, burn harder, heavier woods such as oak and ash.
- Correctly manage woodburning stoves or heaters. Often, fires from woodburning stoves start when the residents are gone or asleep. To guard against this, adjust the air intake vents before leaving the stove alone. Don't leave woodburning stoves alone unless the heater can be prepared for an amount of unsupervised time.

best hearths are made of non-combustible brick or linoleum.

- Clean fireplaces, woodburning heaters and stove pipes regularly. Ash or creosote build-up in the flue or pipes can catch fire if the build-up has accumulated over time and the fire temperature is hot. Eliminate creosote by burning big, hot fires instead of small, smoky or wet ones that lead to build-up. Hire a

Choose Decay Resistant Wood for Buildings, Fenceposts

"All wood is subject to decay. However, the rate at which it decays can vary due to its use and the wood's natural composition," says Dennis Adams, forestry specialist.

Decay is caused by different types of fungi. Fungi are best suited for warm, moist places, such as areas where wood has contact with the ground. These locations are more likely to result in rotting wood.

Chemical preservatives, such as creosote, chromated

copper or arsenate, are commonly used to prolong the life of wood used for building purposes. However, some woods are naturally resistant to decay. These species are equipped with metabolic processes that better deposit resins and oils that are toxic to fungi.

Not all parts of the tree are created equally. Some areas contain the naturally resistant properties while others do not. In most species, only the dark heartwood of the tree is

resistant. The outer sapwood is not.

Very resistant species include osage orange, black locust and red mulberry. These species work best for fence posts. Resistant species include junipers such as eastern red cedar, bur oak and black walnut. Honey locust and white pine are moderately resistant while species such as cottonwood and willow should not be used at all where decay is a problem.

Why Leaves Fall

Dennis Adams
UNL Forester

Shorter day length, not frost or low temperatures, is the main reason trees lose their leaves each fall.

As day length shortens in the fall, chemical changes take place in the leaf stalk. Where the leaf stalk and twig join, conducting vessels, which transport food and water between the leaf and other parts of the tree, become blocked. Then an abscission layer forms. The substance binding the two parts together breaks down, and the leaf is easily separated from the tree by fall rains or wind.

Leaf drop is governed by Mother Nature, and each tree species responds differently. For instance, black walnut and green ash are among the first to drop their leaves. However, oak, linden and maple trees

commonly hold their leaves late into fall. Some trees, such as red oak and pin oak, may retain their leaves all winter even though the leaves are dry and dead.

Trees kept warm artificially will still lose their leaves as day length shortens. However, trees lighted artificially, for time periods corresponding to summer day length, will retain their leaves long after temperatures have dropped to wintry levels.

No one knows for sure why seasonal behavior is more a response to light than to other environmental conditions. Perhaps the reason is simply that most seasonal changes, such as temperature or rainfall, may vary from year to year, while the hours of daylight are not governed by climatic factors. Day length is the result of the regular movement of the earth around the sun and does not vary from year to year.

Storing a Tractor

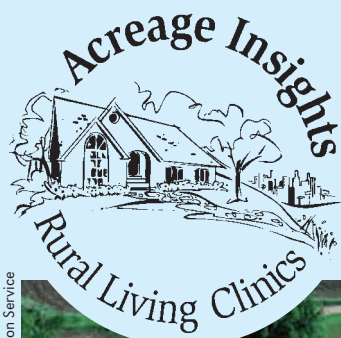
If storing a tractor for any length of time, you may want to take a few precautionary measures to avoid future difficulty.

- Store tractor under cover. If impossible, be sure to cover air stack and exhaust pipe.
- Drain radiator and engine block.
- Drain both fuel tanks and carburetor.
- Leave radiator and fuel caps slightly loose to protect gaskets.
- Block tractor up to remove weight from tires and to keep tires from contact with moist floor.

- Remove battery and store.
- Remove spark plugs and pour a small quantity of light motor oil on piston tops. Crank engine over a few times and replace spark plugs.
- Before putting the tractor back to work be sure to service it completely and replace all fluids.



Vicki Jedlicka, UNL Extension in Lancaster County



University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension presents a series of programs, entitled Acreage Insights-Rural Living Clinics, targeting acreage owners and specifically designed to provide knowledge and skills to better 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. For more information, contact Sarah Browning at (402) 727-2775.



Lynn Betts, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Tuesday, Oct. 9

Fire on the Acreage

Fire has always been part of the rural landscape. If you choose to live within that rural landscape, it pays to know how to make your acreage as fire resistant as possible. Using prescribed fire as a tool is often another important part of rural living. Both of these "burning issues" will be discussed in "Fire on the Acreage."

Thursday, Nov. 8

Organic Production

Small scale production of organic vegetables, livestock and other crops is becoming more popular each year with acreage owners as well as farmers market producers. This program will be an overview of organic production. We'll be discussing vegetables, livestock and other crops, along with basic production, marketing opportunities and how to become certified as an organic producer.



CLINICS ARE \$10/PERSON ADVANCED REGISTRATION; \$15/PERSON AT THE DOOR
Preregistration deadline is 3 working days before clinic.

REGISTRATION FORM

PLEASE CHECK WHICH CLINIC(S) YOU ARE REGISTERING FOR

Fire on the Acreage
 Lincoln—Oct. 9

Organic Production
 Lincoln—Nov. 8

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

\$10/person advanced registration

Preregistration deadline:
3 working days before clinic.

Number attending _____

Amount enclosed \$ _____

Mail completed registration form and check (payable to UNL Extension) to:
UNL Extension in Dodge County
Acreage Insights
1206 W. 23rd St.
Fremont, NE 68025

We assure reasonable accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act. For assistance, or if you require language interpretation, contact Extension in Dodge County at (402) 727-2775 three weeks prior to date of clinic.