May 1 Deadline for Following Awards Presented at Super Fair

Recipients of the following awards will be recognized at the Lancaster County Super Fair in August. Deadline for applications is May 1. For application forms, call the Lancaster Event Center at 402-441-6546.

Pioneer & Heritage Farm Awards
For the 59th year, the Knights of Ak-Sar-Ben Foundation, along with the Nebraska Farm Bureau and the Nebraska Association of Fair Managers, will recognize Nebraska farm families with the Pioneer Farm Award. The program requires that the land of qualifying families has been consecutively owned by the same family for 150 years or more.

New in 2014, the Heritage Farm Award will recognize Nebraska farm families who have consecutively held ownership of land within the same family for 150 years or more. Applications are online at www.akbarun.org/programs/2-pioneer-farm2-

Good Neighbor Award
Since 1943, the Ak-Sar-Ben Good Neighbor Award has been recognizing unselfish acts of kindness across the Heartland. The award pays tribute to the neighbors and friends who go above and beyond to make Nebraska and Western Iowa a better place. The good deeds range in size and scope but impact those served equally. Recipients are recognized in a special feature of the Omaha World-Herald Sunday paper. Application is online at www.akbarun.org/good-neighbor2.

Ag Society Hall of Fame
At the 2010 Super Fair, the Lancaster County Agricultural Society unveiled a new Ag Society Hall of Fame located at the Lancaster Event Center in the Business Center. This will formally recognize those individuals who have dedicated time and effort to the Lancaster County Agricultural Society beyond the normal volunteer hours and have made significant contributions to the establishment, development, advancement, or improvement of the Lancaster County Fair.

2014 Composting Workshops and Demonstrations

Learn how to be successful with composting by attending a composting workshop or demonstration sponsored by University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension in Lancaster County and the City of Lincoln Recycling Office. At each composting program, two lucky participants will win either a composting thermometer or a composting bin.

Composting Workshops are held at various Lincoln locations:
- Tuesday, April 8, 6 p.m. — Bess Dodson Wolt Library, 6701 S. 14th St.
- Tuesday, April 15, 6 p.m. — Loren Carey Eiseley Library, 1530 Superior St.
- Tuesday, Oct. 7, 6 p.m. — Charles H. Gerle Library, 2400 S. 56th St.
- Tuesday, Oct. 14, 6 p.m. — Anderson Library, 3635 Touzalin Ave.

Composting Demonstrations are presented at the Pioneers Park Nature Center’s backyard composting demonstration area. You will see three types of composting bins and how to use them. Demonstrations will be held:
- Saturday, May 10, 10 a.m.
- Saturday, June 7, 10 a.m.
- Saturday, Sept. 27, 10 a.m.
- Saturday, Oct. 11, 10 a.m.

Ag Estate Planning: Dividing the Asset — Fair vs. Equal

Allan Vyhnaele, UNL Extension Educator, Extension in Platte County

Each year I help teach several Ag Estate Planning workshops across the state conducted by UNL Extension. One of the topics I talk about encompasses how assets are passed to the next generation. One of the key considerations is equal versus break fair.

Many aging parents know they want to be both — fair and equal. Even my mom said that she wanted us to be treated fairly, in her mind, which was treating us boys equally. The goal in this model is the monetary value of the farm business is split for the siblings into equally-sized piece.

However, in some cases, one of the siblings is working that farm enterprise in hopes of taking it over. In this case, for the sake of example, let’s assume there is a four-child family of which one that stayed on the farm. The parents have split the pie equally with each getting 25 percent of the asset. Let’s also assume that the son wants to buy the business when the parents pass. And let’s also assume the other three siblings are agreeable with being bought out at that time.

With current land prices, the ag lenders are typically asking there be a down payment of around 35 percent in order to make a land purchase. So unless that son has a significant cash holding, he may not be in a financial position to make that purchase.

The wildcard here is: Has that farming son been compensated for the more than 20 years they have helped with building and running the business? In some cases, that consideration for compensation has been accounted for. In others, it has not.

If the sibling that has been making the contribution hasn’t been properly compensated for their time investment, then splitting the pie equally may not be fair.

In the family I have described here, maybe the pie is split into five parts. With the non-farm three siblings receiving one piece or 20 percent, and the one farm sibling receiving two parts — or 40 percent. The extra pie piece is recognizing that person’s contribution to the asset base that this business has accumulated with that person’s help. Making this adjustment to the size of pie pieces lets the passing of this asset to the next generation be “fair.”

There are several ways to do this. What I have written about is one example. Each case is different depending on the relative contribution made by family members. Effective communication with all involved will be the key to working this out for your situation.

More importantly, get started with the discussion. Most participants at workshops say when the workshop is over; “This has been great, but I wish I had attended several years ago.” It is never too early to start planning for the future. Please get started.

Growing Asparagus

Sarah Browning, UNL Extension Educator

Asparagus is a well-loved spring vegetable, offering one of the earliest signs for winter’s end and the beginning of a new growing season. It’s not difficult to grow, and once established, can be harvested for many years. Plantings may be productive for 15 years or more with proper establishment and care.

Site Selection & Preparation
Because asparagus is one of the few perennial plants found in the vegetable garden and will be growing on the same site for many years, choose a location in the garden carefully. Asparagus grows well on almost any soil, as long as it is deep, well drained and preferably has a soil pH range of 6.5–7.5. Water-logged soils will lead to root rot, and since mature plant root systems are about 12–18 inches wide. Space rows approximately 6 inches deep and at least 50°F. When the time is right for planting, mix 12-12-12 fertilizer, such as 10-10-10 or 12-12-12.

Finally, weed control is a common problem in the asparagus bed. Be sure to kill all perennial weeds in the area before planting. Mulch, plus pre- and post emergent herbicides can be used for long-term weed control in years to come.

Plant Selection
Asparagus is planted from crowns, which are one-year old dormant root systems. Choose a male cultivar, such as “Jersey Supreme,” “Jersey Giant” or “UC 157,” for the highest yield. Female cultivars like “Mary Washington,” “Martha Washington,” or “Purple Passion” will have fewer, thicker stems and a lower total yield due to energy diverted to seed production. Plug seedling asparagus plants can become a weed problem when using female cultivars.

Planting
Don’t plant until the soil is at least 50°F. When the time is right for planting, dig a trench approximately 6 inches deep and 12–18 inches wide with 4–5 feet apart. Spread 1 lb of triple super phosphate (0-46-0) per 50 feet of row in the bottom of each trench. Place the crowns bud side up in the trench about 1½ feet apart, with the tips of the roots out across the trench. Traditionally, the crowns are then covered with 2 inches of soil. When new shoots emerge, 2 additional inches are added being careful to keep some of the new growth exposed. This process is repeated until the soil is filled to the top of the trench. While most people still plant asparagus this way, new studies have shown this is not necessary and the planting trench can be completely filled with soil after planting. Either way, do not compact the soil over the crowns.

Maintenance
Do not harvest any spears from your asparagus plants during the first year. Plants may be harvested the second year. Harvest when the spears are 6–10 inches in length and just before the heads open, by cutting or snapping the spears off at the soil line.

The third year plants may be harvested for 6–8 weeks. Stop harvesting anytime the majority of spears are less than 3/8” in diameter.