



STRENGTHENING OKLAHOMA FAMILIES

Family and Consumer Science News

Safety is a priority during storm season

Spring officially begins March 20, and if you've lived in Oklahoma for any length of time, you know this time of year is the beginning of storm season. Being prepared for storms before they arrive is one way to help ensure you and your family stay safe.

When the tornado sirens are going off in your community, that is not the time to develop a family safety plan. Nor is it the time to make sure your storm shelter is not full of snakes and spiders or so many boxes of stuff there is no room for anyone, said Gina Peek, Oklahoma State University Cooperative Extension housing and consumer specialist.

"Springtime brings about many changes, including the weather," Pee said. "A week of sunny weather can be followed by extreme storms. Sometimes this happens in the same day, so it's a good idea to always be prepared. When severe weather hits unexpectedly, the risk of injury and death increases."

Spring thunderstorms occur whenever warm, moist air collides with cool, dry air. These storms can bring flooding and tornadoes, so preparing your emergency plan now is essential.

"The first thing you need to do is prepare your family for storm season. Sit down together and make an action plan. Write it down. Study your home and determine the safest place where you can shelter in place if you don't have a storm shelter," Peek said. "A room in the basement is a good example. Also consider an interior room on the lowest level away from doors, windows and outside walls."

Everyone should have an emergency kit on hand. If you have a shelter at home, store the kit in there. If not, put the kit in a plastic tote or bag that can be quickly scooped up and taken with you to a shelter. Some things to include are a flashlight, weather radio, extra batteries, personal hygiene items, first-aid kit, important phone numbers and insurance information. Always try to keep your wallet or purse with you in the event you need identification, and if possible, have blankets or sleeping bags available.

"Include all medications you may be taking, along with a three- to -five-day supply of water and nonperishable foods. If you've got pets, make sure you have supplies for your furry friends, too," she said. "If you're unable to shelter in place, make sure the location you plan to go is pet friendly."

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Blackberry Scones – Oklahoma Gardening

2 cups flour
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 cup sugar
1 tablespoon baking powder
6 tablespoons cold butter
2 large eggs
6 tablespoons plain yogurt
1 cup diced frozen peach slices
1/2 cup frozen blackberries
1 teaspoon coarse sugar



Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
Whisk together flour, 1/4 cup sugar, salt and baking powder in a large bowl.
Cut in the butter until mixture resembles crumbs.
In a separate bowl whisk together eggs and yogurt. Fold egg mixture into the flour mixture.
Gently stir in diced peached and blackberries.
Using a small amount of flour knead the dough into a disc shape. Slice into wedges.
Transfer wedges to the parchment lined baking sheet. Sprinkle with coarse sugar.
Bake 15 to 20 minutes, until tops are golden brown. Yield: 6 scones.

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1

Servings Per Recipe: 1

Amount Per Serving

Calories 371

% Daily Value *

Total Fat 14g	22%	
Saturated Fat 8g	40%	
Cholesterol 104mg	35%	
Sodium 573mg	24%	
Total Carbohydrate 54g		18%
Dietary Fiber 2g	10%	
Protein 7g		
Vitamin A 15%		
Vitamin C 66%		
Calcium 18%		
Iron 15%		

* The Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet, so your values may change depending on your calorie needs. The values here may not be 100% accurate because the recipes have not been professionally evaluated nor have they been evaluated by the U.S. FDA.

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For those with children in the home, encourage them to keep a few treasured items in a backpack or small bag they can quickly take to a shelter. These items may be of comfort to a child while taking shelter.

Something else to consider before a storm is to take a short video showing the contents of your home. Many people have smart phones with video capabilities, so this should be fairly easy to accomplish. This video may be helpful for insurance purposes.

“As we all know in Oklahoma, severe storms can spring up quickly, leaving little time to prepare,” Peek said. “This is why it’s so important to be prepared ahead of time. Having a plan and an emergency kit ready can help give you some peace of mind as we begin another storm season.”

Women & Heart Health- American Heart Association

Did you know that heart disease is the number one killer of American women, and stroke is fourth? The good news is there are steps you can take to lower your risk of heart disease and stroke at any age. Here are some healthy habits for heart health:

- Eat more fruit and vegetables, and aim for variety.
- Eat more whole-grain foods, including whole-wheat bread, rye bread, and brown rice.
- Use olive, canola, or corn oil when cooking, and limit your saturated fats. You find saturated fat in foods like pizza, ice cream, and fried chicken.
- Eat more lean proteins, such as skinless poultry, fish, and vegetable protein like legumes and lentils.
- Read food labels to make healthy food choices.
- Limit sodium intake.
- Cut down on sugar-sweetened drinks.
- Eat plenty of calcium-rich foods, such as dairy products and dark leafy greens.

Staying physically active can increase your length and quality of life and help reduce the risk of heart disease. It also leads to an overall reduction in blood pressure and can boost levels of good cholesterol. You should try to get at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity each day, such as brisk walking.



Pinterest Garden Tip:

Instead of filling large planters with soil, slice lightweight pool noodles into discs. Place the discs in the bottom of large planters to take up space and reduce the weight of the pot.

Pretty problems from Bradford Pear Trees

There are plenty of reasons people choose to plant Bradford pear trees on their property. They are the same reasons cities, parks, grocery stores and neighborhoods line roadways with them.

Their white flowers are beautiful in the early spring. They are extremely resilient and drought tolerant. They have excellent foliage all summer long, regardless of the terrible living conditions Oklahoma can throw at them.

All that is great, but there are some major downfalls to the tree. Some are obvious, like their awful smell, while others are a bit more subtle.

This is the time of year when retailers and nurseries ramp up their tree, flower and shrub sales. Homeowners should be mindful of varieties friendly to Oklahoma's natural environment.



"I always look forward to visiting my local plant nursery to see what is available that might fit somewhere around my home," said Dwayne Elmore, Oklahoma State University Cooperative Extension wildlife specialist. "However, every year I notice plants being sold that are invasive in Oklahoma or in surrounding states. Many of these plants are purchased by homeowners who may be unknowingly opening Pandora's Box."

Invasiveness: Bradford pear trees, among other invasive species, have become a popular choice for landowners over the years to add beauty to their property. However, that beauty spreads like wildfire into other areas and chokes out native plant life.

"This attractive tree is common in landscapes across much of eastern Oklahoma and is rapidly invading adjacent prairie and forest openings," said Elmore.

While these trees can't literally pack their bags and move from a backyard to an open prairie, they do have a particular set of characteristics that allow for easy spreading.

"The reason they are so gorgeous is because they have a ton of flowers, but then the ton of flowers turn into a ton of fruit, and the fruit is loved by the birds, which spread it everywhere," said Lou Anella, a professor in OSU's Department of Horticulture and Landscape Architecture and director of The Botanic Garden at OSU. "Some other plants have seeds that will just fall straight down and most of them will die in the shade of the plants they are under."

Bradford pear trees are adapted for Oklahoma climatic conditions.

"Occasionally, the cultivars produce viable offspring (seed) that are much more fertile and seem to be more invasive," said Karen Hickman, professor in OSU's Department of Natural Resource Ecology and Management. "These trees are spreading rapidly from the original sites."

Some of the more popular places to find the thorny seedling versions of the commercially produced and often planted Bradford pear trees are along fence rows and below power lines, both common hangouts for defecating birds.

Weak structure: Bradford pear trees have been a popular ornamental because they have early and abundant flowers and bright fall color. However, they are short-lived and are easily ravaged by Oklahoma winds and ice storms.

As a Bradford pear tree grows, it forms a lot of branches in the same area, creating a weak spot. While the flowers are pretty, the narrow branch angles and density of branches in the same area create weak spots, often causing the tree to split.

“Bradford pears break up when they get old,” said Anella. “They have very, very weak branch structure and they fall apart.”

A heavy wind, much less a tornado, would be crippling to adult Bradford pear trees. That is not good news for a tree that can reach 30 feet tall and 20 feet wide.

“Also, due to their dense growth form, they are a terrible choice for public places such as shopping center parking lots,” Elmore said. “They tend to congregate birds such as starling and grackles, which then defecate on automobiles.”

Treatment: The best advice is to just not plant Bradford pear trees, but sometimes it is too late for that.

“If you have just small seedlings, mowing or burning can kill the seedlings,” said Elmore. “But once you have established trees, they’ll resprout so you have to use some type of herbicide control to keep them from sprouting.”

Trees can be cut down, followed by a herbicide treatment to the remaining base, or the chemical can be injected into the stem. Either option is significantly better than just leaving them alone.

“I would highly encourage people not to plant them, and to remove them if they already have planted them,” Elmore said. “Consider enjoying the blossoms one more time this spring and then as soon as the flowers fade, remove the tree before it seeds.”

Alternative selections: As the word continues to spread about the downsides to Bradford pear trees, homeowners are looking for alternatives. OSU fact sheet “Problem Horticultural Plants” lists the Eastern redbud, American plum, Mexican plum and Carolina buckthorn as good choices.

Options for replacements are good to have as some plant nurseries, like Big Creek Nursery and Landscape, LLC, in Stillwater, Oklahoma, have begun trying to turn people away from the Bradfords.

“We do not stock them, but we will sometimes special order them. The demand is still quite high, but we are trying to turn people onto other varieties,” said Big Creek owner/manager, J.D. Oldsen. “I discourage people from buying that tree, because for the most part, it is a tree that needs to disappear.”

When deciding what plants to choose for landscape purposes, homeowners should talk to their county Extension educator about options or visit the Oklahoma Invasive Plant Council at ok-invasive-plant-council.org/.

“With a little knowledge and planning, homeowners can help protect native plants and wildlife by being diligent in their landscape choices,” Elmore said.



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- Dates to Remember
- *OHCE District Meeting – April 3rd at Asbury United Methodist 6767 S Mingo Rd, Tulsa, OK 74133
 - *March 17th – National Quilting Day
 - *March 24 @ 2:00 pm - 10:00 pm 2018 Bacone College Spring Powwow
 - *March 28-30 - Litter Free Starts With Me! Mayor Azalea Clean Up
 - *March 30th – Good Friday
 - *March 30th - Take a Walk in the Park Day
 - *April 1st - Easter
 - *April 1st- April Fool's Day





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