

# Family Community Health Newsletter

July 2023

PLASTIC FREE

We are in the full swing of summer, y'all! Between holidays and vacations, summer is jam packed. Although it's easy to do with everything we can have going on, we can't forget our needs, whether physical or emotional, to keep us healthy. The month of July brings awareness to our dependence and use of plastics, challenging us to cut out plastic wherever possible. With the pool and beach beckoning us to come cool off, July is also UV safety awareness month. Lastly, on July 24th, self-care month, which started June 24th, comes to an end. This symbolic day was chosen because self-care can be practiced 24 hours a day/7 days a week.

SELF CARE

In this issue you'll find recipes, gardening tips, and more information on this month's topics.

I hope you're enjoying your summer even amidst all the severe weather warnings. Don't forget to wear sunscreen and take some time for yourself!

- Sara  
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Howdy! I'm Sara Nicholson, the Family Community Health agent here in Frio County. I live out in Bigfoot on an 8-acre homestead with my husband, son, 3 dogs, 5 ducks, and too-many-to-count chickens. My role at the Extension Office is to educate on various health topics including mental health, diabetes, blood pressure, healthy habits, cooking, gardening, and much more! Interested in taking a class or finding out what Extension has to offer? Don't hesitate to reach out!

# plastic free july

July is rife with reasons and opportunities to celebrate. The combination of warm weather, summer vacations and major holidays predictably leads to weekend barbecues, cookouts and parties.

But when it comes time to decide who's bringing the burgers, chips and desserts, consider calling dibs on the plates and cutlery—it might be the perfect way to participate in Plastic Free July.

Plastic-Free July is a challenge started by the Plastic Free Foundation with the goal of reducing the use of single-use plastics like straws, jugs, and food wrappers. Discarded plastics like these account for some of the most abundant trash in the oceans. Because single-use plastics are designed to be discarded, they often wind up in the trash rather than being repurposed or recycled. Discarded plastics end up in the ocean at an alarming rate—roughly 11 million tons of plastic enter the oceans each year. Hundreds of millions of tons of disposed plastics are already circulating within the world's marine environments.

Removing plastics from the ocean is a costly and difficult task. Some estimates from a study commissioned by the World Wildlife Fund put the cost of cleaning up trash from the oceans at up to \$15 billion per year. That estimate does not account for the cost of proper disposal and processing of waste to limit the amount of trash entering the ocean.

This trash is harmful to marine organisms and the health of the ecosystems that support them. Unfortunately, the impacts of plastics in the ocean are not limited to the visible pieces of garbage caught in ocean currents. Microplastics, or plastic particles less than 5 millimeters in length, are tiny but harmful consequences of plastic pollution. Microplastics are usually either the result of industrial processes or the breakdown of larger plastic objects. In the United States, microplastics called microbeads were once commonly used in health and beauty products as exfoliants—however, these were banned in 2015. Microplastics are the subject of much ongoing research, and the extent of their impacts on human, plant, and animal life remains unknown.

The global Plastic Free July movement helps people learn about and become a part of solutions for plastic pollution. Throughout the month of July, Texas Sea Grant and other programs will provide resources and ideas for reducing individual single-use plastic waste at home, school, and work and beyond. Be sure to tune in to Texas Sea Grant's Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube channels to see plastic free content all through July and beyond! You can also find tips at [plasticfreejuly.org](https://plasticfreejuly.org).



# Summer Safety UV Protection

Are you enjoying your summer? Did you know summer brings the longest days giving us more time to spend outdoors having fun? From vacations, biking, and hiking, or just enjoying ice cream, watermelons, or popsicles, summer brings memories of younger days and family togetherness. As we enjoy making new memories, we can plan for a safe summer by reducing the risk of harmful effects of UV exposure. July has been designated as Ultraviolet (UV) Safety Month by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; whose goal is to spread the word on the harmful effects of UV rays on unprotected skin.

Ultraviolet light is radiation emitted naturally from the sun, but can also be man-made, an example being tanning beds. Classified in wavelengths, UVC light is blocked by the Earth's ozone layer, but the sun's UVA & UVB affect the skin differently with UVA causing wrinkling (premature aging) due to penetrating deeper into the skin and UVB causing sunburns. Overexposure increases risk of developing skin cancer.

Cautions are placed on the times of exposure due to UV radiation being strongest between 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

A benefit of UV radiation is Vitamin D production, which helps calcium and phosphorous to be absorbed by the body and helps in bone development. According to the World Health Organization, 5 to 15 minutes of sun exposure 2 to 3 times a week is recommended. Prolonged UV exposure can cause premature aging, cataracts, and skin cancer, not to mention painful sunburns. The most dangerous UV radiation is artificial indoor tanning. "By taking precautions before we head out the door for summer activities and all-year round, we can reduce the risk of UV radiation by following some simple steps," states Julie Tijerina, Extension Program Specialist with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension.

Here are some recommended safety tips to protect the skin during exposure from Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Specialist Tijerina.

**Stay in the shade:** Look for shaded areas under trees or bring an umbrella or pop-up shelter, especially during peak hours. Know the EPA's shadow rule: If your shadow is taller than you are, UV exposure is lower. If your shadow is shorter than you, UV exposure is higher. Remember that surfaces, such as water, snow, white sand, and cement, reflect the sun's damaging rays and can increase chances of sunburn. Cloudy days do not block the sun's rays, which are just filtered. In higher altitudes, UV exposure is higher due to less atmosphere to absorb UV radiation.

*Continued on next page.*



# Summer Safety UV Protection

**Wear protective clothing:** Thanks to clothing, the skin is partially shielded from UV rays. It is best to wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants made from tightly woven fabric. Be aware that wet clothes offer less protection than dry ones and dark colors offer more protection than light ones. To cover your face and neck, wear wide-brimmed hats.

**Protect the eyes:** Not only do sunglasses help protect the eyes from UV rays, they also reduce cataract risk later in life. Choose UV resistant sunglasses that wrap around and block both UVA and UVB rays; polarized sunglasses just reduce glare.

**Use sunscreen:** Sunscreen works by absorbing, reflecting and scattering sunlight from our skin. The SPF (Sun Protection Factor) number measures how well it blocks UV rays, with higher numbers offering more protection. Don't forget to check the expiration date, those without a date are good for three years, and less if they have been exposed to high temperatures. An SPF of at least 15, offers protection against both UVA and UVB (broad spectrum) radiation. Purchasing the right SPF sunscreen depends on what exposure you will be having fun in. Apply broad-spectrum sunscreen twenty minutes before you head out. Reapply every two hours, after swimming, toweling off, or sweating.

**Avoid indoor tanning:** According to the CDC, the UV radiation from "indoor tanning significantly increases the risk of developing melanoma, basal, and squamous cell cancers." It also causes premature aging of the skin and suppresses the immune system.

**Learn about the UV Index:** In as little as 15 minutes, the sun's UV rays can cause damage to unprotected skin. Plan to check the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's UV Index (<https://www.epa.gov/enviro/uv-index-search>) to determine your favorite vacation spot's UV radiation intensity. Rated on a scale from 1-11, suggestions are offered on how much protection one should plan for.





# Self-care IS EMPOWERMENT

Self-care can mean a number of things to different people; this is because each person is unique in the struggles they face to remain in balance. There are the expected academic challenges that can lead one to be off-balanced in graduate school but there's also those many that are not specifically tied to the completion of coursework. There are self-care needs for diet, physical exercise, emotions, finances, spirituality and professionalism to name a few. No two people have the same struggles as each other, so it is important to take a reflective look at yourself and the areas you are struggling with a deficiency/imbalance in.

Once you have determined the areas of greatest impact in your life, the next thing to do is explore potential ways to support yourself. For some people this means listening to an audiobook before bed to stop a cycle of worrying at night. For others journaling can be cathartic to write down the events of the day for later reflection. Some find it beneficial to read over old emails or letters from friends and family to rebuild bonds of friendship. And others find fulfillment in making their bed each day to gain a sense of accomplishment. All these and more can be used to help realign a person back to total wellness through self-care.

Also remember that just because it is called self-care that does not mean that you have to go through it alone. There are a number of suggestions in this table that utilize professional and group support. Take advantage of whichever works with your comfort level and availability. You do not have to go through anything alone.

*Article taken from <https://grad.tamu.edu/aggie-life/aggie-voice/how-to-cultivate-self>*

# Decluttering Challenge



If you're anything like me, self-care means taking care of things that are screaming out for your attention. This month I'm challenging myself to declutter my (very) small home as I'm noticing a connection between clutter and negative mental health. The challenge is for the month of July (don't worry if you get "behind", there's no such thing), and you're to pick a number 1-10. The number you pick represents the number of items you are to declutter from that space.

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						Closet
Car	Kitchen	Entryway	Bathroom	Bedroom	Kitchen	Closet
Pantry	Carport/ Garage	Closet	Bedroom	Bathroom	Kitchen	Closet
Bedroom	Carport/ Garage	Closet	Living Room	Pantry	Bedroom	Closet
Bathroom	Your Choice				Taken From <i>Organized Chaos</i>	



# Grilled Peach Sundae!

## Ingredients

- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- 2 medium peaches pitted and sliced in half
- 1 cup low fat vanilla Greek yogurt or frozen yogurt
- 4 Tablespoons slivered almonds
- 4 teaspoons agave nectar or honey used for drizzling

## Instructions

Heat grill. Wash and slice peaches in half and remove pits. Brush with olive oil and place cut side down on the grill. Grill for 4 minutes. Remove peaches and place 1 slice in small bowl and top with 1/4 cup of yogurt, almonds and drizzle with 1 teaspoon honey.

## Nutrition Facts

4 servings per container  
Serving size (145g)

Amount per serving  
**Calories 140**

% Daily Value\*

Total Fat 4.5g 6%

Saturated Fat 0g 0%

Trans Fat 0g

Cholesterol 0mg 0%

Sodium 20mg 1%

Total Carbohydrate 21g 8%

Dietary Fiber 2g 7%

Total Sugars 18g

Includes 6g Added Sugars 12%

Protein 6g

Vitamin D 1mcg 6%

Calcium 70mg 6%

Iron 0mg 0%

Potassium 253mg 6%

\*The % Daily Value tells you how much a nutrient in a

serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a

day is used for general nutrition advice.



# CRISPY CRAB TAQUITOS



## Ingredients

### *Crema*

- ½ Cup Plain non-fat Greek Yogurt
- 1 Tsp chili powder
- 1/4 Tsp garlic powder

### *Taquitos*

- 8 oz lump crab meat
- 15 oz low sodium black beans rinsed and drained
- 1/4 Cup Plain non-fat Greek Yogurt
- 2 Tsp chili powder
- 2 Tbs cilantro
- 8 Yellow Corn Tortillas
- Cooking spray

## Instructions

Wash hands and clean cooking area.

Combine all ingredients for crema (non-fat Greek yogurt, chili powder, and garlic powder) in a small bowl and set aside

In a large mixing bowl combine crab meat, black beans, Greek yogurt, chili powder, and cilantro. Set aside.

Warm the tortillas by loosely wrapping them in a damp paper towel and microwave on high for 30 to 45 seconds.

Place approximately ¼ cup of crab and bean mixture into center of a tortilla. Roll tightly, and place open side down. Repeat until you have run out of tortillas.

Preheat air fryer to 400 degrees.

Spray taquitos with cooking spray and place open side down in air fryer. Cook five minutes, flip and cook another five minutes or until desired doneness is reached.

## Nutrition Facts

4 Servings servings per container  
Serving size 2 Taquitos (245g)

Amount per serving

**Calories 250**

	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 2g	3%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 45mg	15%
Sodium 510mg	22%
Total Carbohydrate 37g	13%
Dietary Fiber 8g	29%
Total Sugars 5g	
Includes 1g Added Sugars	2%
Protein 21g	
Vitamin D 0mcg	0%
Calcium 138mg	10%
Iron 3mg	15%
Potassium 431mg	10%

\*The % Daily Value tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

# Summer Gardening: July Checklist

The heat and humidity are turned up high in July for gardeners in Zones 9-10. The evenings are warm, the days are long, and the sun is hot. Gardens are thriving, and you are hopefully enjoying abundant harvests from the vegetable garden, fruit trees, and berry bushes. Your July garden checklist is filled with planting, caring, and harvesting tips for your wonderful crops.

These extreme temperatures and the lack of rain can pose a challenge for gardeners mid-summer, so you will have to be vigilant. Planning for late summer and fall harvests, harvesting crops, watering, and other maintenance tasks take the forefront on the garden to-do list this month.

- The days are hot, and the humidity is at its peak in many areas throughout zone 9-10 so plan to do garden maintenance early in the morning when temperatures are more tolerable.
- Just as your plants need watering this month, it's essential to keep yourself hydrated. Keeping yourself healthy and hydrated will allow you to enjoy your garden and the summer weather far more.
- If you are planning a summer getaway, plan to have someone tend to the basics of your garden, especially watering and harvesting tasks. Reward friends and neighbors with the treat of your harvest while you are away if they are willing to spend some time nurturing your crops.
- Assess what pests are presenting themselves in the garden right now.
- It's harvest time, so assess what you have an abundance of and research some great recipes so you can fully utilize your crops.
- It's hard to believe it, but the planning and planting for your fall crops should be at the forefront of your planning this month! You'll start seeds indoors, so make a list of all the seed starting supplies you need and any seeds you need to acquire.
- When planning for a fall vegetable garden, don't forget about planting some fall flowering plants for pollinators, so they will stick around and nurture your crops. Think about flowering fall perennials; add sunflowers, marigolds, alyssum, nasturtium, cosmos, and more.
- Use your garden journal to sketch out what you planted and where and how plants are growing in their locations. Have you had any pest or disease problems? Write them down, so you can address them at your next visit to your local extension office.

Weeds have been making themselves right at home since the onset of springlike weather. Weeds can compete with plants for water and nutrients, which are hot commodities this month. High on the July Garden Checklist Zones 9-10 is weeding! Continue to stay on top of nuisance weeds, so they don't take over your vegetable or flower gardens and steal their valuable resources.

- Frequently patrol the garden area for weeds and pluck them out whenever you see them.
- Keep other late-spring and early-summer weeds from propagating by adding a couple of inches of organic mulch to the garden beds.
- Use an organic weed control methods to eliminate difficult weeds.



### ***July Garden Pruning***

**Avoid any further pruning of spring-flowering shrubs. These bushes should be setting their buds for next season by this time, so you will want to let them be, so they will have bountiful blooms come springtime!**

**Deadhead spent annual and perennial flowers to encourage secondary blooms.**

**As you prune away dried-up blooms, collect seeds from your best-performing plants and save them in seed envelopes for next year. You'll be pleased that you did! Be sure to label them!**

**Cut back nonfruiting blackberry and raspberry canes.**

**Continue to remove tomato suckers and prune tomato plants to push more energy back into the plant.**

**Continue to shape hedges and shrubs as necessary, avoiding spring-flowering shrubs.**

**Before the 4th of July, cut back fall perennials to avoid plants getting leggy and to encourage a bushy habit with abundant blooms.**

### ***Summer Garden Mulching Benefits***

**A robust layer of mulch will keep your plant roots cool as the temperatures soar in the heat of summer.**

**This is particularly beneficial for your cool-season crops, which seek to bolt in warmer climates.**

**Mulching your garden beds can also help stomp out reseeding weeds and regulate moisture. It also will help keep your soil from eroding. Keep a supply of mulch at the ready and if you see any bare spots in the garden, cover them with some mulch.**

### ***Watering in Zones 9-10***

**July is one of the hottest and driest times of the year for most grow zones. Watering plants deeply and regularly will help to ensure a successful garden. As always, if there are water usage restrictions in place where you live, always adhere to those guidelines. You may even want to consider a rain barrel system so that you can harvest water from rainfalls.**

**Here are some watering considerations that need the most attention this month:**

**Water citrus trees thoroughly and deeply to avoid fruit splitting.**

**Inspect your irrigation system. Troubleshoot any irrigation issues that you may have had and make any necessary adjustments or repairs.**

**The heat is on in July, and containers and hanging baskets need daily watering to keep them thriving. You may have the best success with moving them to a partial shade spot and watering in the morning, as containers can dry out quickly.**

**Keep your vegetable garden well hydrated as well, preferably watering in the early morning, so that plant roots get the most out of the watering session.**

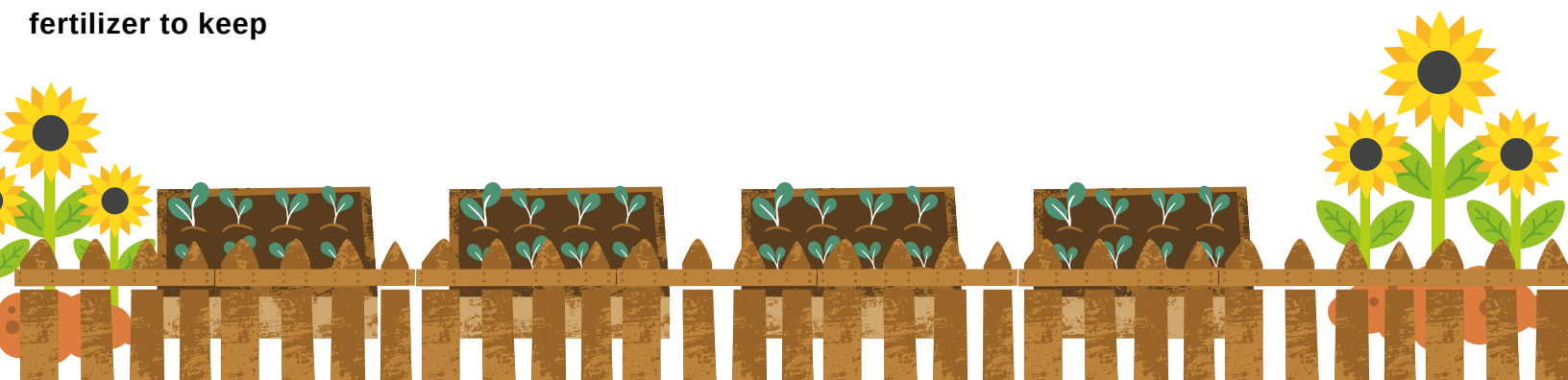
### ***Fertilizing the Summer Lawn & Garden***

**Plants and lawns have been using up nutrients abundantly throughout this growing season. The soil might need some replenishing to keep plants growing healthy and strong so that they are not susceptible to pests and disease.**

**Give lawns a second feeding with an organic lawn fertilizer.**

**Fertilize rose bushes.**

**Hanging plants and containers may need an additional boost of nutrients. Feed them with an organic fertilizer to keep**





### ***Other Must-Dos in the July Garden***

- Add support to fruit tree branches that are heavy with fruit.
- Side dress potato tubers and onions to ensure that they are entirely covered.
- Monitor gardens for pests. Spider mites love the heat, and Japanese beetles are making their presence known throughout July.
- Divide daylilies and irises this month.
- Plant debris can draw pests, encourage disease, and diminish airflow around your plants. Remove any dead leaves from around the base of plants.
- If you have unused garden spaces, plant a vegetable garden cover crop to enrich the soil.
- As you observe your garden, pull out any underperforming annual plantings.
- Continue to take care of the wildlife in your yard by refilling feeders and birdbaths. Cool, fresh water is not only for the birds but also provides pollinators access to clean water.
- Dump any standing water in saucers, low spots, empty pots, etc. Mosquitos are looking to lay their eggs in stagnant water as small as a thimble. Keep mosquitos in your yard to a minimum by patrolling the area for standing water that can be found in even the most unlikely of places.

### ***Seed Starting for Fall Crops***

You can start seeds indoors toward the end of the month, so you have a head start on your fall crop. This is key, especially if you are still harvesting your summer crops. These seedlings can easily be tucked into the garden as you cull spent plants as they reach harvestability.

Some seeds to consider starting indoors include:

- Peas
- Peppers
- Tomatoes
- Eggplant
- Broccoli
- Cauliflower
- Spinach
- Kale
- Beets
- Cabbage
- Squash
- Pumpkins

### ***Outdoor Planting in Zones 9-10***

While most planting is done by midsummer, gardeners must keep looking ahead to make the best of extended harvest opportunities. Right now, you will be planting for a late summer and fall crop.

Plant tomatoes, peppers, and eggplant for a delectable late summer harvest.

Continue succession planting radishes, lettuce, spinach, peas, and more.

Direct sow seeds for beans, squash, turnips, beets, broccoli, carrots, and lettuce for the fall.

