

[MUSIC] Hey Wyoming. Welcome to the Lawn and Garden podcast, with the University of Wyoming extension specialist, Jeff Edwards and co-host Jerry Erschabeck. Originally aired on KGOS and KERM in Torrington, join Jeff, Jerry and all their special guests as they talk all things gardening from the great state of Wyoming. From plant variants to weather event, to pesticides and pollinators. Our lawn and gardening podcasts helps you improve your home garden as well as your small acreage. Let's welcome Jeff Edwards and Jerry Erschabeck.

Good morning, everybody. This is Jeff Edwards and Jerry Erschabeck for the KGOS KERM Lawn and Garden program. Good morning, Jerry. How are you?

Hey, I'm doing really good. Thanks.

Good to see you. Good to hear from you. Our guests today are Caitlin Youngquist, who is an extension educator up in the whirlwind area. We have also with us Lori Dickinson, she's an extension educator for the Sensible Nutrition program, and she is in Sheridan. Good morning, ladies. Glad to have you along with us.

Good morning.

Thanks for having us. [OVERLAPPING]

[LAUGHTER] We'll work through all those issues. What we'd like to do today is take a few minutes and listen to our sponsors, and then we will be back with our program.

[MUSIC] This summer, Wyoming first lady, Jennie Gordon's, Wyoming Hunger Initiative, Sensible Nutrition Program, and the University of Wyoming Extension are partnering to launch a program called Grow a Little Extra. We invite you to join us in growing a little extra to donate fresh produce to local anti-hunger organizations that support our neighbors facing food insecurity. Stop by your local extension office to pick up your free seats, or donate extra from your garden harvest. For more information, visit www.nohungerwyo.org/grow.

All right everybody. Good morning. This is Jeff Edwards and Jerry Erschabeck for the KGOS KERM Lawn and Garden program, along with our guests, Caitlin Youngquist and Lori Dickinson. We have a variety of things to talk about today. Caitlin has initiated a program with a group of people called Grow a Little Extra, she and a team of people. We'll be spending some time talking about that. I think, unless Jerry you have something that you would like to kick us off with this morning, we can just jump into our program.

Not pressing at the moment, but I will want to talk about some cicadas.

Sounds good to me. Caitlin and Lori, I'm going to turn the floor over to you and let's talk about Growing a Little Extra.

Thanks Jeff. This is a new program we're pretty excited about in collaboration with the Wyoming Hunger Initiative. The Wyoming Hunger Initiative is the project of Wyoming First Lady, Jennie Gordon, and her focus has really been to address hunger

issues across the state. They've been doing a lot of great work including the food from the field and food from the farm and ranch program. What we started this spring, Lori and I put our heads together and realized there's an opportunity for encouraging Wyoming gardeners to plan ahead and plant a little extra in your garden with the intention of growing food to donate and sharing in their community, people, agencies or organizations that could benefit. We were able to work with Wyoming Hunger Initiative and the First Lady's office and roll out the program at the end of last month. Just really encouraging folks to plan ahead and go little extra in their home gardens and also working with existing organizations like churches, schools, and community groups to either expand or put in a new community garden with purpose of, again, growing food to donate. It's been just a really fun thing to work with the crew at Sensible Nutrition extension, Master Gardeners, and for the First Lady's office and roll this program out.

Caitlin, some communities I know have difficulty accepting fresh food items to donate. How is that going to be overcome by the project?

We're working closely with the Sensible Nutrition educators in every county, and so we're asking folks to do if they would like to participate in this program. First of all, let me say that anybody can grow anything they want and give it to anybody they want. We're not at all trying to limit that or control where it goes or who grows what, who donates what. I know a lot of people already did that. What we're trying to do is increase the amount of food that's being grown and donated, and work with our local Sensible Nutrition educators around the state to help aggregate that, and distribute it and get it to the folks who can use it. They are tied into their communities. They know what social service agencies, what individuals, and what food pantries can use it. Maybe I'll let Lori talk a little bit more about that as she's really involved on that side of it.

Okay.

Sensible Nutrition is a program that's through the University of Wyoming, but it's a SNAP-Ed funded program. Meaning it's a federally funded program. The purpose of the program is to help people have a better understanding of nutrition and learn how to budget and make their dollar go a little farther. We teach cooking skills, we teach budgeting skills, and we teach nutrition, and we really try to encourage people to eat healthier.

[OVERLAPPING] Lori, sorry to interrupt, you said SNAP-Ed. Is that an acronym for something?

Yes. Snap is what people used to think of as food stamps but it's called snap.

[OVERLAPPING] You don't have to qualify for a snap in order to be part of the program. Especially now during COVID, a lot more people qualify. You can go to a link to our website and it'll show you right away whether your family qualifies for it. But we're the educational component of it. There's something like us in every state, but the University of Wyoming, since our nutrition program is very unique in a lot of ways, we've done a really great job of connecting with different agencies to make

sure that we can be as helpful as possible for those in need.

Perfect.

Lori, if I do grow some extra food, we were down here at Goshen, who would I contact to try to deliver that food to?

That's a great question. We try to work out a lot of the details ahead of time just because we really want this to be a program that is effective and easy on everyone involved. That's where University of Wyoming Extension offices are going to come in. If you're going to contact your extension office in your area, and more than likely you will just drop it off at the office, and that way the educators like me in that office will be able to take the produce and we'll know who to get it to and when. That way it's always going to be a little bit easier on agencies to accept it if they already know what's coming and are prepared. It's also going to be a way for us to quantify, to see that the program is working. Hopefully we can build on it and expand it maybe next year. Also though, it's really important because we have a lot of smaller food pantries and agencies that except food, but they may only do it once a month or they might only do it on Thursdays. If you had an agency that only accepted food on Thursdays and someone with really good intentions dropped off a ton of tomatoes on their doorstep Friday morning, it would sit out in the sun until next week and we want to avoid anything like that. The Sensible Nutrition educators are already connected with agencies and we're going to work that out ahead of time. I know if I get that big batch of tomatoes, I know exactly who can accept it within a day or two.

Sure. Especially maybe even call ahead and say here I come with my tomatoes and my zucchinis [OVERLAPPING].

Absolutely. We look at it as the end result is going to be getting fresh produce to people in need in our communities. But then we have all these extra bonus results of which are going to be getting people marks connected with extension, and getting and making sure that people are just aware of the needs in their communities.

Will you have a little flyer that goes along with the food supplements that are going out? Here's how the cook them.

Absolutely. We want to make sure that everyone, because you can give somebody a Zucchini but that doesn't mean that there to get to know what to do with it.

[OVERLAPPING] We're going to actually have recipes that goes out with it and links to our website as well, so that we'll make it as easy as possible for people to be successful. We're also working with a number of programs like I'm working with the food group in Sheridan, and they're going to be one of the recipients of our produce in our area. We're working out ahead of time that when they give out their boxes, we'll have all kinds of recipes and nutritional information and stuff specifically with what's going to be donated at that time.

Very interesting. You'll basically have a key of information in there about what's what and how to prepare it.

Absolutely. That's what we're shooting for.

Perfect.

The other thing Jeff is that we have some seeds to give away. We picked out four or five different crops that we thought would do really well in Wyoming and be very productive for this program. The Wyoming Hunger Initiative bought those seeds in bulk and repackage them. We have those seeds available for free in extension offices around the state. If a person is interested in putting in a little extra in their garden, growing a little extra, they're welcome to stop by at a local extension office and pick up some seeds if they want. If not, they can just grow whatever it is they would like to grow. But that's just a fun way to promote the program. We've been advertising and promoting it in some of the different greenhouses and gardens centers around the states as well.

Okay. Very good.

Caitlin, what seeds are those?

We have some squash and spinach, cabbage and broccoli.

Green beans and carrots.

Yeah.

Are you providing instructions on how to grow them too, in case people are not very good gardeners or new gardeners?

Yeah. Like any seed packet, there's information that comes with them on the plants, and how to fit them and such. The purpose of this program is not to start new gardeners. Master Gardener Program and UW Extension has a tremendous amount of resources in horticulture and gardening for anybody who's looking for information, and I know Cent\$ible Nutrition is even starting to promote gardening through some of their programs. The purpose of this program specifically is just to encourage established gardeners, anybody who's already gardening to just garden more, and grow more, and not just give away whatever they happen to have leftover, but to actually plan ahead, and with the intention of growing extra to share. That's really the purpose of this program, and people are already doing that around the states on famine. We just encouraging more people to do that and helping them connect with those who can use the produce.

I think the best part of this is that working through Cent\$ible Nutrition to get it to the right people. I know people in Goshen County produce a lot of extra and they are always asking, "Well, what can I do with it?" Now that we know that we have an outlet for it, that will be great.

Where do you think that most of this food will come from? You said something about a contest.

Yeah. The University of Wyoming Extension administrators have challenged us all throughout the different counties to see what employees can grow the most. We've been encouraged to form teams of four individuals within each county and employees grow in our own home gardens, bring their produce in and weigh it and at the end of the season, whichever team has weighed in the most food, will get surprised, I think they're giving us tickets to a football game or something. [OVERLAPPING] That's been a fun way to encourage employees to participate in their own home gardens as well.

I suggested everybody grow potatoes and cabbage. [OVERLAPPING]

Right. That would be good. [OVERLAPPING]

It's a weight-based thing, right? [LAUGHTER]

Very strategic in your gardening. Absolutely.

Lori and I both managed community gardens in our own communities that with the purpose of giving food away. Our gardens do not have the tea patch style where a person can rent a plot, but we work with different agencies and organizations specifically to grow food to share. What we found over the last several years is there are certain things that lend themselves better to that kind of food distribution than others. That's why we picked some of those things like squash, cabbage, green beans, potatoes, onions, tomatoes. Those all seem to do really well. They produce a lot of food, people know what to do with them, they don't need to necessarily be stored in refrigeration right away. Carrots are another good one. Things like lettuce and spinach, those are a little bit harder unless you know someone right away. Our local senior center has a salad bar every day and so they can always incorporate some greens. But a lot of agencies aren't really set up for that or then they have been handled differently and all that. Encouraging folks to think about donating produce that handles and stores well and that everyone knows how to use. Winter squash is another really good one because it can be stored, of course, for several months and you can distribute it slowly over time that works really well. Corn is one that we don't do much anymore because it takes up so much space and then we don't really donate as well. There are some local folks here who grow a lot of really good sweetcorn, sell it for very inexpensively, and so that's another one that doesn't do as well in terms of donation. Broccoli and cauliflower are good ones. Just thinking about what can be handled well and stored easily and that everybody knows how to use.

It's going to be traditional things that people are used to, I guess is the comment. It's not like you're going to get a bunch of eggplant and not know what to do with it. [LAUGHTER]

[inaudible 00:13:21]

Well, I think that's where connecting with the Cent\$ible Nutrition educator in your community will know maybe where some of that goes, and we always have a

request every year from a few folks at the local senior center that they love eggplant, but they are one of the only ones. It really depends on who you're working with, and what some of the requests are, and getting to know your community. I know Lori last year you did some making some freezer meals even at the end of the season with the Girl Scouts.

Okay.

Yeah, I did. What we did is with our last harvest, we were able to utilize the kitchen of the local high school. Luckily one of the Girl Scout leaders is the head cook at the high school, so we got permission from the school district, and because that is a clean certified kitchen space, we were able to put together some freezer meals, and what we did is we actually layered all the different vegetables. We prepared them, we roasted the squash, and we put down the tomatoes, and we layered it so they look like little rainbows, and we froze them, and then later in the season and throughout the winter, we've been able to distribute them with a little packet of seasoning and instructions. With all the veggies in there, and little packet of seasoning, and two quarts of water, you could have a great soup, but that's all you had. But then we also talked about adding different types of protein or a can of beans and things like that. We're coming up with ways to try to extend the harvest throughout the holiday season. Actually throughout January even, we distributed those to some local veterans groups that are in need as well.

That's a great idea to pre-condition everything and prep them, so that it's ready to go, and makes it a little bit easier. That's just great.

I should say though with the donations, it's really important that none of that is prepped as people are dropping it off; so don't wash it, don't cut it up or anything like that, and drop it off. If we're going to do that again or if other agencies which I really hope they do and we've talked about maybe doing an initiative with more canning and different types of freezing and preservation, then I will talk about food safety aspects of that as well before you start prepping things and handing it out.

I got to ask this. Personally, I'd be really disappointed if my box contained a bunch of beets [LAUGHTER].

You can send all your beets, Jeff.

Okay. All right. [LAUGHTER]

Plenty people like beets, and then I would challenge you to find a recipe that you could use beets for that you like.

Oh no, [OVERLAPPING] that's impossible for me. [OVERLAPPING]

Not for Jeff. [LAUGHTER]

Jeff, I'm going to challenge you. Have you ever had beet chocolate cake?

You cannot hide a beet anywhere that I [inaudible 00:15:57]

Oh, yeah, you can.

I think that is a challenge, Caitlin. We're going to have to work on that.

Now I've always said, I really like the golden beet, but I think all the rest of them taste like dirt. But I have had some of that chocolate beet cake. It's really quite good.

I have to admit, I really enjoy cake. [LAUGHTER] If you can hide a beet in cake and that's the only way I can eat them, I guess I could manage that. [LAUGHTER] But that might be ruining two things for me, I don't know. [LAUGHTER].

There's always somebody in the crowd, right?

It's usually me. [LAUGHTER]

Yeah.

If people wanted to grow different things, and if people have eggplants and beets, or things that maybe not everyone likes, or if someone wants to just grow something really unique and different, we will absolutely make sure that people understand how to prepare it. It probably won't happen this year just with COVID restrictions. But in the past, I've actually volunteered at the food pantry and I've made things with zucchini, or whatever vegetable it was, and then I could give out samples, and then I could give them the recipe and what they needed to make it. Because again, it's one thing saying, "Hey, you can do this with it." It's another thing if people really understand, "Okay, that is easy, and I have the process, and I tried it and that's good." [OVERLAPPING]

Lori, don't you think that roasting vegetables is probably one of the easiest ways to fix a vegetable?

Absolutely. I don't know about fixing. But [LAUGHTER].

Well, preparing and cooking. [LAUGHTER]

Sorry, I'm still on the cake beet, hiding beet, [LAUGHTER] Absolutely, roasting vegetables is super simple. Just chop them up, you want to have somewhat uniform-sized veggies and toss them with a little bit of olive oil and some seasoning and roast them. You put them in the oven at 425 and depending on the thickness and type of vegetable, usually 15, 20 minutes, you have some version of some kind of veggie french fryish, and it tastes fabulous.

We like carrots and parsnips, personally.

Nice.

Yeah, I really do.

It brings out the sweetness. Roasting usually brings out a the sugar content a little bit in that and brings up the sweetness. Very often people that think they don't like a vegetable, they really will like it if it's roasted.

For kids, if they like spaghetti or spaghetti and meatballs, you can hide a bunch of vegetables in that. Just spin them up in your blender, put it in your sauce. Man, best sauce.

No, absolutely.

Put beets in there too, Jeff.

Yeah. [OVERLAPPING]

I knew that was coming. [OVERLAPPING]

I know Jeff is going to be scared to eat anything any of us prepare from here on out.

Yes. [LAUGHTER].

In our family it was always, you have to try one thing, you have to try one bite, you have to try a bite of everything. Usually, that worked. Our granddaughter started crying over sweet potatoes. Just didn't want it, and then, hey, she thought that that was really good after a while.

Jerry, when I was a kid, that was rule of my house too. I basically had to clean my plate regardless of what it was. As an adult, I don't have to do that anymore.

[LAUGHTER]

I still have to clean my plate because I've been integrated so long, I need to push away. [NOISE]

Exactly.

Hey, we're rolling up on a half an hour. I think it's time to take a break and we'll listen to our sponsors and we'll be back right after this. [MUSIC]

Looking for the best way to keep up with all the news from University of Wyoming Extension, the College of Agriculture, and Wyoming Ag Experiment Stations? The uwagnews.com website, features real-time education, research and extension events, and feature stories from across the state. Bookmark uwagnews.com today and subscribe to our monthly email newsletter, uwagnews.com, growing people, knowledge, and communities.

Okay, we're back. This is Jeff Edwards and Jerry Erschabeck for the KGOS/KERM Lawn and Garden program. We've been speaking with Caitlin Youngquist and Lori Dickinson, both from UW Extension, about the Grow a Little Extra program that they're having go in the state. But I think we've covered that pretty good. I don't know ladies, is there anything else that you'd like to add to it, other than I'd like to emphasize that it is a statewide program available in every county in Wyoming,

right?

Correct. There are many similar programs I think in other places around the country and we modeled this one on some similar programs, but we're really excited we're rolled out across the state. The other thing I would like to just mention really briefly about the Wyoming Hunger Initiative which is the, Wyoming First Lady, Jennie Gordon, this is her effort to the Governors Residence Foundation and funding some of these projects and they also have the Food From the Field program, which is encouraging hunters to work with their local custom processors to get their deer or El Gran will donate it through food pantry system. If you are hunter and you have an animal that you're not going to use the meat from, please work with your local meat processor to get back your meat into the food pantry system. It's a great opportunity also to contribute cost state.

If we then locally, we wanted to know more about these programs, we should just call our county extension?

Yes.

All right.

Also the extension website has lots of information and you can also go to the Wyoming Hunger Initiative site and they are linked to all of our information as well since we're all working together on this.

What a great program. I think this is really cool.

Yeah.

Jeff, don't we have a couple of standing walls, growing walls, that are community-based?

Yeah. I'm trying to come up with the right name for those, they are hydroponic grow walls. Caitlin, do you know what they are, what they're called?

Vertical.

Vertical gardening.

Something like that. Yeah, vertical gardening.

There's one at Fort Laramie. I believe that the Torrington Community Center has one too?

Yes.

Jerry?

Yeah.

Okay.

Then as well, doesn't Fort Laramie have a community garden that they give food away?

Yeah.

Just with the kids.

No, well, that's kind of the intent. They're just getting going this year. I believe some of it they will give away.

How does the food get distributed from the vertical wall gardening?

I think that depends on who's growing it. [LAUGHTER] I don't know how that gets distributed.

Yeah. [LAUGHTER] I'm just curious. [OVERLAPPING]

It's an individual production and distribution mechanism.

Okay.

Yeah. Caitlin, you had some other gardening things that you would like to talk about today. Do you want to launch in on those and Lori, anything else that you'd like to talk about today, time is yours.

[OVERLAPPING] I always like to talk about dirt and I always like to talk about getting rid of your rototiller, that's my favorite thing.

Okay, I'm going to interrupt you a second before we go on any further. Jerry, two weeks ago asked me, "When is it dirt, and when is it soil," right?

[OVERLAPPING] That's right, and you said, "When it's under your fingernails, it's dirt, and the rest of times it's soil."

That was my answer. Is that a good enough answer?

The soil is a living system. That's the shortest answer. It's a living system of plants and insects, microorganisms and mineral particles basically. When it's no longer a living system, when it's on your genes or under your fingernails, then you can call it dirt. Now, I call it dirt lovingly because as a soil scientist I feel like I've learned that right but nobody else's loved to do that. [LAUGHTER]

Because I've been corrected several times and that I like to be socially correct.

There you got it, from the soil scientist, [inaudible 00:24:01]. [OVERLAPPING]

Treat your soil with tender, loving care. It's dirt when it's on your genes or under your fingernails or when you are checking in around in the driveway or something. But I really have been enjoying experimenting with rototill in our community garden. I know Lori has started a little bit with hers and I would be curious to hear that an earlier phase with it. They have some different challenges in their garden than we

do. Community garden in Wyoming is about 1/3 of an acre. We have pretty good soil to start with, but we have not been rototilling anything in that garden now for about three years on one section and about five years on the other and it was fun this spring if we got digging up garden soil, how much the soil's improved and it's just full of worms and has beautiful structure. In some of our beds, we didn't even use a shovel, we just directly transplanted right into the soil from last year and then in some other beds that were a little rougher, [inaudible 00:24:51] come out over the soil and we would work compaction, we worked with a boxplot and a shovel and our hands. Then we use a very heavy mulch system, which helps maintain moisture, protect the worms, and also cut down greatly on weeds. We have very few weeds now in the garden and that's the one of the biggest benefits.

Caitlin, one of the things about having a nice profile in your garden is either walking in designated places so that you're not walking over the places that you're planting and compacting in, right?

Yeah.

You've got a space where you know that you're going to grow and that's the space that you're augmenting [OVERLAPPING] and those types of things.

We use the drip system and we keep those rows year-to-year, we rotate the crops through them as opposed to maybe a system where it's a blank slate every year and you till up the whole thing spring and fall, and lay out your beds in each year.

All right, timeout. Couple of weeks ago Jerry had his [OVERLAPPING] rototilling party.

Party. [LAUGHTER]

Your comments about everything is a clean slate. That is, you are describing a jury, I hate call you out on this, but she is describing you, man.

Well, I know. To a point and so everybody knows a little bit about somebody but not everything. I'm leaving all my walkways until you'd be [OVERLAPPING] priming. I'm making sure that I have a great walkways right off the get-go and leave those alone so that they're a hard path and I find it that works really a lot better for me because I don't trip or fall on hard path nearly as much as on soft soil. But I do like the idea of getting in there and again getting some worms out of you. I think that if you see that you have worms, you probably have really good soil.

Worms are a good indicator for sure and you'll have worms even if you do rototill. Next time you're up this way Jerry, if you ever used to wander up towards Wyoming comes to your soil for sure. But one thing I've noticed is we've just gone from a lot of worms to a massive amount of worms and it's been really interesting when you pull that soil apart in the spring and look at it, how many holes are in that soil from the worms and then all the worm castings that you can actually just see as you pull that soil apart. That's been really fun. We have a garden across that 1/3 of an acre. Goes from maybe a loamy texture to like a clay loam cross and I can really tell the difference as that, it's a little bit more clay and it gets heavier and stickier and we

have to work a little harder to break it apart and I know with time it will catch up, but I haven't really noticed the soil texture makes a big difference in terms of compaction and workability of that soil.

Do you do a double dig system or do you use a potato fork to lift it?

We use a broad fork, well those ones that you stand on that has two handles, one on each side. We use that and a shovel and like I said, some of our rows this year we just pulled back with thick straw mulch to go a little [inaudible 00:27:57] and just transplanted in some broccoli stalks and that was it. We didn't do anything else to the soil. That was fun.

Straw mulch, do you just normally go ahead and pick out all the weed that starts to grow then?

We haven't had much of an issue with that. The straw we have right now is pretty old and it's been out in the rain for awhile and I think a lot of those probably germinated in time. That's the case. But then also we were putting it on so thick, there's just not much growing in there besides the plants that's been planted and then we use it in the fall, we use heavy flakes, we lay a flakes out across all beds in the fall, so that doesn't blow away and it's really thick protection. Then in the spring, what we do is we pull out a lot of that mulch back, we work the soil as needed plant into it. As the plants start coming up, we'll push that mulch back in depending on if it's something like a lettuce or if it's a transplant we have different ways of managing it. The biggest challenge I've found is that there's a lot of handling material like if the straw doesn't breakdown, that's the point as it covers that soil and protects and it insulates it. One thing I've started experimenting with a little bit is wool, and thus I think they are really unique and very valuable. Garden soil protect product really is wool.

How does that work? [LAUGHTER]

So wait a minute, when you're talking about wool, you're not talking about turning sheep loose in your garden, right? You're talking about the end product.

Right.

Make it I'll lay down in the garden [LAUGHTER].

Yeah. There's a company out of Utah that this is where I got the idea. They sell a pelleted wool product as a fertilizer, slow-release fertilizer and they market it for using in horticultural situations and potted plants and such to hold water and provide US soybeans nutrient source. That's where I got the idea and I started on a little research and looking around spirit wool is very commonly used in garden and landscape products in New Zealand, Australia, and the UK. There several manufacturers of wool pellets or wool landscape fabric or weed barrier to various things. What we've been doing is just using it. The wool market fluctuates quite a bit. Those who are raising sheep sometimes they can sell their wool and have to pay

the cost of the shearer sometimes they can't really depends on the quality of the wool. Wool that comes off the bellies and the butts of the sheep they're called tag wool is usually dirty and very low-quality, and it's not worth very much. There is also black wool or wool from sheep that just doesn't have the same value. That's the thing you can pick up for pretty inexpensive or even for free and use in your garden. Looking at some of these garden products, it's interesting to think about alternative markets for some of this low-quality, low-value wool products. I picked up a couple of bales of wool from some local ranchers here, and we've been starting to experiment with it just as a mulch, lay it down basically as a blanket or across the soil and around the plants like you would if it was a grass clippings or a leaf mulch same way. Well, it looks like a little wool blanket. It looks like clouds right down on the garden. It's actually neat.

Little puppy clouds [LAUGHTER].

Yeah, the other thing is mixing it in the soil, mixing it in the potted plants. Can you imagine the amount of water it would hold right in that wool? It's about nine or 10 percent nitrogen, which is pretty high for an organic soil amendment, organic fertilizer, really.

How long does it take to break down, Kayla?

I don't know yet. The reading I've been doing is I'm thinking is a one to two years and I just got a lot more biological activity of your slow and the moisture because are so so dry here in the winter especially. I think that's another interesting thing. Anyway, so it works for me but I would really encourage folks ask around if you know someone who has a few sheep, often they've got some wool stored in the barn they never could sell it or they didn't get around to it or whatever. Ask around and try and experiment a little bit. Let me know. I'm really curious. I think there is some real long-term opportunities for sure of this product.

Thinking about conserving water in that the polyacrylamide products that are not considered organic. It'd be interesting to compare the two side-by-side as far as moisture retention and productivity, and because the polyacrylamide things supposedly does the same thing, but it doesn't have any added benefit. Yeah, very interesting.

Yeah. There's some real potential. I think I'm going to try putting some in my product plants like the pots you put on your porch with your annuals and I mean flowers or whatever. Things like that. I think I'll try it in some of those. I also thought I'd be interested to try for seed starting and all those little spammable pit disks people use. I wonder about wool way also. I think there is lots of ways to experiment. I would really encourage folks to try it. It's got a lot of nutrients and mineral nutrients in it. It going to break down the soil. The only downside I see is that there's a potential for weeds that are caught in that fleece. We'll see if those seeds germinate or not we've got on the soil. I don't anticipate it to be a big problem, but it's something that I'll be curious to see what happens there.

You've talked about manufacturing products from New Zealand. Are they actually pelletizing it and processing it?

No.

Okay.

There's a Utah company that's pelletizing it. There is a company out of the UK and it sells, you can buy online. They call it a slug return and it's pelletized wool. I guess when you spread around your plants and then it gets wet and puffs up, the sludge won't grow over it. That's their claim. Those are the two pelletized products I've found. There are some companies in New Zealand and the UK that make landscape fabric out of wool for things like planting windbreaks, erosion control, roadside. What you might use are synthetic fabric for here. Not to replace that heavy-duty plastic woolen lam. We'd permanently barrier, but more at biodegradable type, temporary weed barrier. Think about supplanting windbreak or something and you want to. There is some of those products out there that I'm pretty intrigued by. Montana State University and Montana Department of Transportation did a little bit of research with some wall and stop products for like erosion control on road cuts. There's some stuff going on out there. I think there is some unique opportunities, and particularly for garden and landscape applications.

Well, very interested in that, we'd like to hear what happens after you get done studying it.

I'll keep you posted Jack.

Okay.

Again, and if I were using it, it just ball up into my tiller. [LAUGHTER]

Maybe not.

Or maybe not.

Because here is my thoughts. This spring is a fair amount of moving straw and then putting it back on. It's hustle with our no-till system, I thought. We had covered the entire garden in wool last fall. Let it sit all winter and then you could just turn them with a shovel or the dreaded rototiller if you chose [LAUGHTER].

Or not.

Or not. I think it made in the long-term, I hope would make that materials handling part of it with heavy straw mulch easier? I don't know. let me know. Try some Jerry, would you and let me know?

I will. I've also experimented with alfalfa just because of the fact that there is no seeds and most of the alfalfa I've ever gotten is very weed-free and it's just alfalfa.

It usually, it won't be treated, there won't be any herbicide residue.

Yes.

Herbicide on it. It just maybe some nitrogen and so I too take the flake and I'm trying, and we planted marigolds or I'm morning glories on a fence. I'm really trying hard to get rid of them and I find that the alfalfa in flakes keeps that germination rate down and so it works pretty good. I've also thought of doing that very same thing, putting cardboard down. Again, just on my walkways and keep my rows open, and using cardboard and alfalfa as my walkway blockers. Then maybe scatter a little bit of alfalfa in the row once the row is coming up.

Yeah, I think alfalfa is one of the absolute best garden amendments and it's a lot higher in nitrogen and phosphorus well, all nutrients really than straw. It's a great mulching sum and if a person can get a hold of some old alfalfa bits, maybe moldy or if someone can't feed, so it's cheap or free. But yes, alfalfa is great.

So I'm really trying harder to reduce my rototilling events. But I grew wheat last fall. It was up about five inches or six inches or so when we rode a tilde and of course, it didn't go under all at once. I've let some of it now just cook and I'll have to go over it one more time. But this time I'll spread my fertilizer. I'll try to do as many things that I have to do and make a one past deal.

Yeah, I think that's better. You're making progress Jerry.

[LAUGHTER] There's room for improvement everywhere.

There's hope for you yet.

Yeah.

But you always need a little rototilling therapy in the spring, I think.

Lori has been experimenting I know in their community garden and she had a big issue with fissiles. Fissiles and morning glory or bindweed are two things that will be spread or worsened with tillage because as you chop them up and spread them out bubbles little bit more plants. So if you are dealing with thistles or morning glory or bind weeding in your garden, the heavy mulch, cardboard, and composts are different heavy mulch methods without disturbance can really help you getting enough foothold with those weeds.

Lori, have you had success in some of the things that you've been doing in your gardens?

Oh, absolutely. I still do have some issues with fissile, but the areas that we have been able to put more layers down for the no-till method are definitely this all in a lot less weeding. To me, and I don't have a background, and my background's more in social work and the community connection aspect of it. But I've always gardened a little bit, but I'm definitely not anywhere near an expert in any of that. Though the no-till concept it goes against what you think because you're like no, you go out there in spring you clean everything out of there and then you amend the soil and

then you till. That's what we've always done and that's just you think that's what you need to do. But Caitlin showed me a better way, Jerry [LAUGHTER]. Even while we're doing it, I trusted her, I know she's brilliant, and knows what she's talking about. But even as we're doing it, I was like, I don't know, I think we're going have to tear this all up next year.

It's hard.

There's a couple of reasons why we did no-till, I should say we have part of the garden no-till, and part of it just more traditional, and that was imparted so we can have an experiment. Also, because we ran out of time before the snow came, so we decided to keep part of it as an experiment, which has been fun to do because even though this is only the second year that we're doing the no-till section, you really can tell a huge difference, the soil is amazing. There's way more worms in the area than in no-till areas. But another reason we did it is because it keeps the weeds down and keeps the moisture content down with putting them doing no-till. Then the last spring, we also put in drip lines that I didn't have my first year. Both of those things should in effect, save on resources, save on water, save on human time as a resource for sure for volunteers. We knew that going in in theory, but last year because of COVID, I was not able to have other people out in the garden, so I did not have all my volunteers, and I can tell you for sure, I would not have been successful last year, had I not done no-till and had I not put a drip line. Because it really, really cut back on the time needed to be in the garden and weeding and such. A big convert to no-till.

Very good. Lori, do you use a timer on your watering system?

I don't at this time because it's near my office. I just go out, and it gives me a chance to get up on my desk and walked out and turn it. On weekends, I come out and take my dog for a walk and go turn on. I think it's probably a good idea. It's the least expensive setup, and part of that did not have a timer, but they're not that expensive to put in and I would recommend it, especially if you do have a larger garden. I think it would be really helpful for a lot of people, but it's not necessary per se.

Yeah. For me, personally, I have timers on everything, because I get distracted easily. [LAUGHTER] It helps me out a lot, I don't have to worry about watering or if I watered that particular day.

I think it probably would be, I probably will put one in eventually, and that is a great idea. I do set my alarm just because I'm always afraid I'm going to go home and forget. Or in the middle of the night, did they shut the water off? So that would definitely help in that regard.

[LAUGHTER] I know it's on a timer.

I got a water change and I was filling my pond and walked away. In Cheyenne, I called one of my neighbors and said, "Hey, you suppose you could walk up to my

house and shut my water off?" I was so embarrassed because that happened. [LAUGHTER] Well, how clean the water was that pond?

It happens.

It does happen.

Wait a minute. Is that why your fish were out? Did they float out?

No. [LAUGHTER] The reason why the pond had gotten too low and it froze over the bad winter that we had down this way. Our overnight lows got to be so cold that it just finally got to the bottom of the pond and frozen.

You're going to [inaudible 00:41:47] those fish every once in a while?

Oh, yeah. Boy, that water was just, but to the point when you take that fish water, that aquatic water, and the leaves and stuff that are down there, I put those on my iris, and they seem like they jumped three inches.

Yeah. I believe.

They did. [LAUGHTER].

Oh my God, what are you giving me now?

Now, the other part of that is, it's an aquaponic system. Part of that is you have to be able to eat the fish too, right?

Sure. [LAUGHTER] My brother said he's got to catch us a carp and put it in the pond, and I said, "Okay, we can try that." Everything's a good trial. Lori, I really appreciate the idea that you went to that mile and you said, "Okay. I believe," and you went after it, and saw that it was easier for you. As an older guy that still wants to get out there and garden, that Taylor has seemingly been one of those things that has helped me get out there, and it pulls me along.

If that works for you and certainly the point of gardening is at some point to have something to show at the end of it. But really, it's a lot more than that. If that's yours, then place behind your rototiller, there's value in that as well.

It is. [LAUGHTER]

Well, rototilling Jerry. Recreational rototilling.

Yeah. I've heard that comment, RJ, Recreational Jerry, so yeah. I'm trying to do far less of it. Myrna said the other day she's my wife says, "We've been rototilling for 37 years. I think we're should be done rototilling." I said, "Well, we have some different things to dry then?"

One thing I'd recommend too that we've tried and we're doing in our garden is we've built, my son helps and volunteers in the garden, and he built some archways

and some vertical pieces, so we're actually growing tomatoes and squash and things all vertically. We have plenty of space. For us, it's not a matter of necessarily that we need to do it as much we're just trying to do different things. I have a great group of master gardeners here. They were hoping to attend to turn on our garden into a teaching garden as well, so we can experiment to try these different things. If you only had like a 10 by 10 garden plot or a small backyard, but you still want it to grow some squash, you can very easily put zucchini to it and have it take over your whole yard. But if you planted squash that grow on a vine like acorn squash, spaghetti squash, butternut squash, you could very easily only use a square foot in theory, and then have it trained to go up your fence or to grow vertical, which is fun. Especially if you have people that have mobility issues or are having a harder time getting down to the ground, you can start growing tomatoes on a string and you can grow things up so you don't have to bend over, and then it also saves on space, which is fun. It leads itself to lots of interesting applications and smaller yards and such.

What I'm hearing is, number 1, I need more volunteers in my garden so I can teach them my method.

Yes.

Your bad habits?

Yeah. My bad habits. I have also done some of that vertical growing pumpkins, especially this small Jack Be Littles and some of the little pie pumpkins, and even as well as cucumbers. You can train up on a trellis and you can grow a lot of food product in a small place if you grow up.

Yeah. Absolutely.

Mulching the bottom of it to keep it nice and cool so it doesn't get too hot.

I actually prefer growing cucumbers on a trellis. They're easier to pick. You don't have to search through the canopy to find them, and so works out really well.

Have to ask, [inaudible 00:45:55]?

[inaudible 00:46:03]. [LAUGHTER]

I don't think you can grow a beat on a vertical wall though.

Well, you could grow it on a vertical wall, but I don't think you can put it in a trellis.

[LAUGHTER] Probably not.

I'm not going to try either. Hey. Well, I think we're getting close to the end of our program.

Hey, I've had a really good time with both of you woman and Jeff. Appreciate you being on our show. Please, if you would think that you would like to come back and

visit with us again, we'd love to have you.

Maybe in the fall after your program is wrapping up, we could have you on again and you could give us an update.

That sounds great. Thanks for the invite, it's always fun to visit you guys.

We enjoy it as well. Thank you, Lori, for being on first-time. We appreciate having you here.

Thanks for having me.

[MUSIC] You've been listening to Lawn and Garden with the University of Wyoming Extension specialist, Jeff Edwards and co-host Jerry Erschabeck. As the snow melts and the sun break, the University of Wyoming Extension has many upcoming virtual and hybrid learning programs available to you. [inaudible 00:47:06] for details on new events and how to make your garden flourish. Good day, and happy gardening.
[MUSIC]