

SENIOR SCOOP

May/June 2021

SERVING TIOGA COUNTY SENIORS

The Senior SCOOP is a bi-monthly newsletter published for all Tioga County Senior Citizens by Tioga Opportunities, Inc. and volunteer Senior Citizens.



Tips for Planning A Senior Friendly Container Garden

by Sunrise Senior Living, March 2021

After a long winter likely spent indoors, getting outside can give the spirit a boost. Gardening is an activity older adults can safely enjoy even amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Fortunately, gardening doesn't require a large plot of land to reap the mental and physical health benefits.

There are many health benefits of planting and tending to a garden. It's a hobby that is linked to lower blood pressure, better core strength, and reduced stress. Of course, that's in addition to having fresh flowers to bring indoors all summer long and a bounty of homegrown herbs and vegetables.

Seniors with limited space or a mobility challenge can plant flowers, herbs, and vegetables in containers and raised beds. It's a great way to connect with nature. Containers, window boxes, and raised flower beds all lend themselves to senior-friendly gardens. You can make it even easier by choosing resin or plastic blend pots that are lighter to move than those made from concrete or terra-cotta.

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Strengthen Your Financial Health and Plan for a Better Future

April is Financial Literacy Month—and with everything that's happening in the economy, it's a great time to examine your finances. By taking stock of your financial health, you'll reduce your money-related stress today while setting yourself up for a brighter financial future.

Become more intentional with your spending.

Broadly speaking, you can bucket your spending into two categories: wants and needs. In challenging financial times, you should aim to drive down your spending on the "wants," also known as the "nice-to-haves." The trick is to get in touch with your own values and determine what really matters to you. These may be areas where you don't want to compromise.

To improve your financial health, take a close look at every line item in your budget and ask, "What's really important? What can you cut out?"

By asking yourself these questions, you can set your sights on how much you need to earn to have the life you want.

Source: <https://www.advanceamerica.net/money-saving-tips/credit/4-things-you-can-do-today-to-improve-your-finances>



Here are a few tips about growing herbs, vegetables, or flowers in containers. These can help you keep your pots thriving all through the season:

Favorite plants: Do you love the cheerfulness of a geranium or a petunia? Or is the simplicity of a Gerber daisy more your style? You'll want to flip through garden magazines or visit sites like Proven Winners for ideas. You will also need to consider the light in your designated space. Is your patio or the area where you'll place your containers in full sun? Or is it mostly in shade? Your garden's success depends on matching the plant's sun/shade requirements with your space.

Container choice: Another important factor for your container garden is the pot you will use. Some containers are better than others. If you use a metal container and it is placed in full sun, the roots may overheat. A pot made out of wood treated with chemicals might result in those chemicals leeching into the soil your herbs or vegetables grow in. If your plants have deep roots, you'll need a taller container. The opposite is true if you plan to grow flowers in a hanging basket which isn't very deep.

Good soil: The foundation of a thriving container garden is healthy soil. For containers, an organic material that holds water is best. Check your local garden center to see if they carry a region-specific mix. It's a good way to ensure the soil you use is appropriate for where you live. If you can't find one, most home improvement stores sell prepackaged potting soil offered by name brands like Miracle-Gro. Look for one specifically designed for use with container gardens.

Proper drainage: Another garden essential is drainage. This is what protects the roots of a plant from rotting. If your container doesn't have drainage holes, you can usually add them. Placing a small piece of screen over the hole will keep the dirt from washing away. If it's not possible to drill holes, cover the bottom of the pot with a layer of stone or gravel.

A raised or elevated bed is another senior-friendly gardening solution, especially for those who struggle with balance or mobility. These kits can be purchased at a local lumber store or at online gardening sites, such as Gardener's Supply.

In addition to the tips outlined above, here are a few more suggestions to help you plan your raised garden bed:

Depth: A raised bed should be deep enough to accommodate 6–12 inches of soil. Keep that in mind when you are deciding which kit to purchase. Soil that is a combination of topsoil, coconut coir (for drainage), and compost is a good choice for raised garden beds. It might also help to add a top layer of mulch once you finish planting. This will protect moisture in the soil so you don't have to water as often.

Drainage: Like container gardens, good drainage is a necessity. Make sure to add drainage holes or a layer of crushed stone or pea gravel to the bottom of the raised bed.

Plants: Research which plants perform best in raised beds.

A general rule of thumb is to opt for root vegetables, such as carrots, radishes, and beets, and leafy greens.

One last tip to remember is that container gardens and raised beds will require more frequent watering than in-ground gardens. If it's tough for you to drag a hose or watering can around, try to locate your garden near a water source.

Stay Safe Gardening

You'll want to know and follow a few safety precautions. Stay hydrated, especially on hot, humid days. Also, wear sunscreen and a hat that shields your face. Finally, plan your gardening tasks for early morning or evening so you can avoid being outdoors during the hottest times of day.

Whether you decide to grow a traditional garden or to create one in a container, having the right tools matters. The article 6 Garden Tools That Can Help Keep an Older Gardener Safe offers some suggestions you might find helpful, too.

GSNYPENN's Sweet Support Gift of Caring Service Project

Girl Scouts from the NYPENN Pathways Council sold 1,260,493 boxes of cookies during the 2021 cookie program which concluded on March 28. Of those sales, 24,556 boxes were purchased by customers through the Sweet Support Gift of Caring annual service project.

Each year, the council designates a community partner (or partners) to receive cookie donations. Customers have the opportunity to support local Girl Scouts during the cookie program even if they choose to not take those cookies home. The motto is: "Can't eat them? Treat them!" This season, cookies are being donated to Meals on Wheels programs (9,585 boxes) and local first responders (14,971 boxes) across the council's footprint of 24 counties in New York and two in northern Pennsylvania.

Cookies were sent to Tioga Opportunities, Inc. to provide an extra special treat to our Home Delivered Meals recipients. (Pictured: Bobbi Jo Otis, HDM Specialist, with the donated cookies).



Tioga Opportunities, Inc. to Host Virtual Caregivers Program

Join Tioga Opportunities, Inc. for “Powerful Tools for Caregivers,” an educational program designed to empower caregivers. Powerful Tools for Caregivers gives you the skills to take care of yourself while caring for someone else.

You can benefit from this class whether you are caring for a parent, spouse, friend, etc. This six-week program will provide you with skills to reduce stress, communicate effectively, help you relax, reduce guilt and anger, and much more! The class will meet virtually from 5:30pm-7:00pm every Thursday starting May 13th and ending June 17th. There is no cost to attend this program, and participants receive the course book for free. Seats are limited. Call 607-687-4120, ext. 331 to reserve your spot today!



COMMUNITY ACTION MONTH

THE PROMISE OF COMMUNITY ACTION

Community Action changes people's lives, embodies the spirit of hope, improves communities, and makes America a better place to live. We care about the entire community, and we are dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other.

May is National Community Action Month!

Celebrating our 56th year, Tioga Opportunities, Inc. is proud to be part of the Community Action Network, established to help strengthen communities and empower individuals and families to achieve independence and enrich their quality of life.

Join us during the month of May as we celebrate the collective history, heritage, work, and impact of the Community Action Network. You'll find news, articles, and special features all month long on our Facebook page, website, and local news!

Visit us at www.tiogaopp.org or like us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/TiogaOpportunities

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Healthy Habits

Chronically high blood pressure — or hypertension — can cause damage to your blood vessels and internal organs, including your heart. Currently affecting nearly half of adults in the United States, hypertension has been called a silent threat because the condition itself has no symptoms. However, the effect on your body can be life-threatening over time. Engaging in healthy lifestyle behaviors at all stages of life can help to decrease your risk.

What You Can Do about High Blood Pressure?

The first thing you can do is visit your doctor for routine checkups. Even though high blood pressure rarely shows symptoms, the abnormal force of blood through the arteries, over time, can cause damage to your organs, including your heart, blood vessels, and kidneys. Thus, chronic hypertension increases the risk for cardiovascular disease and other serious health issues.

Know your blood pressure and have it monitored. Regular physicals will determine if your blood pressure is within the healthy limits. A blood pressure of less than 120 over 80 is considered healthy. The top number, known as systolic pressure, often gets more attention when discussing the severity of high blood pressure. However, it is important to keep both numbers in the healthy range. If necessary, your doctor will discuss treatment options and supportive health care.

Age and other Risk Factors

High blood pressure tends to increase with age. Additionally, non-Hispanic Black Americans also are at higher risk of developing pre-hypertension and hypertension than non-Hispanic whites, Hispanics, Asians, Pacific Islanders, American Indians, and Alaska Natives. Social determinants of health and access may play a role. However, anyone can be at risk, especially people with diabetes or those with obesity or who are overweight.

Healthy Lifestyle Choices to Reduce Risk of Hypertension

Focusing on lifestyle changes can help reduce your risk of hypertension. Getting regular physical activity, limiting alcohol intake, avoiding tobacco, and focusing on

Prepared for Tioga Opportunities, Inc.

Adapted from The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, March 2021

a healthful eating style are all ways to help reduce risk. People at risk for high blood pressure may be advised to follow the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension diet to lower their blood pressure. The DASH diet is rich in fruits and vegetables and low in saturated fat and sodium. Studies show that the DASH diet can help lower your blood pressure.

Since most Americans are getting too much sodium from the foods they eat, it is important to learn ways to reduce it. Simply lowering sodium intake may have a significant impact on blood pressure and thus improve overall health.

Keeping up with regular health appointments is also important, especially if you have a chronic condition like diabetes. Remember that high blood pressure rarely shows symptoms, so following a healthy lifestyle can help to lower your risk.



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

Tioga Opportunities, Inc., is looking for volunteers to serve on our Aging Advisory Council.

Be a voice for the needs of older adults and caregivers in Tioga County!

Aging Advisory Council Volunteers help with planning and developing services, and share ideas, guidance, and solutions to meet the needs of older adults in Tioga County.

The Aging Advisory Council meets monthly for approximately one hour.



If you are interested in volunteering on our Aging Advisory Council call Tioga Opportunities, Inc. at 687-4120 ext. 315.



Parmesan Peas

Recipe from FoodHero.Org

This easy recipe brings the taste of fresh seasonal produce to your dinner table!

Ingredients:

- 1 1/2 tsp. margarine or butter
- 3 1/2 cups peas (approx. 2- 14.5 ounce cans or 16 ounces frozen)
- 1 1/2 tsp. lemon juice
- 1/4 tsp. black pepper
- 1/3 cup grated parmesan cheese

Directions:

1. Drain and rinse canned peas.
2. Heat margarine or butter in a medium skillet over medium heat.
3. Add peas and cook 2-3 minutes or until peas are heated through.
4. Add lemon juice and pepper and mix well. Sprinkle with parmesan cheese and serve warm.
5. Refrigerate leftovers.

Prep Time	10 mins
Cook Time	5 mins
Total Time	15 mins
Yield	7 servings



Quick Tip–

Try a different type of cheese, or blend your favorite cheeses together.



3 Simple Ways to Start Your Day Strong

- 1) Choose your first sounds: Rather than starting the day off with an alarm that makes your body tense, choose a gentle and soothing alarm—chimes, bells, more relaxing music, whatever it might be. This allows your body to take in something soothing to start the day.
- 2) Hydrate before you caffeinate: Rather than going straight for coffee or tea, see if you can drink a glass of water. Your body is dehydrated—your body needs water, you have not drunk water all night long. Then move to your cup of coffee or tea.
- 3) Observe nature: Instead of grabbing your phone or watching TV, start your day by enjoying the world around you. Allow your eyes and body to take in the sky, the trees, the bugs in the grass. You'll be able to start your day with a more rich perspective and sense of interconnectedness. *Adapted from mindful.org*



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The Emergency Broadband Benefit

Helping Households Connect During the Pandemic



A new program from the FCC (Federal Communications Commission) called The Emergency Broadband Benefit has been announced to help households struggling to pay for internet service during the pandemic. This new benefit will connect eligible households to jobs, critical healthcare services, and virtual classrooms.

The Emergency Broadband Benefit will provide a discount of up to \$50 per month towards broadband service for eligible households and up to \$75 per month for households on Tribal lands. Eligible households can also receive a one-time discount of up to \$100 to purchase a laptop, desktop computer, or tablet from participating providers if they contribute more than \$10 and less than \$50 toward the purchase price. The Emergency Broadband Benefit is limited to one monthly service discount and one device discount per household.

Who Is Eligible for the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program?

A household is eligible if one member of the household meets at least one of the criteria below:

- Qualifies for the Lifeline program;
- Receives benefits under the free and reduced-price school lunch program or the school breakfast program, including through the USDA Community Eligibility Provision, or did so in the 2019-2020 school year;
- Received a Federal Pell Grant during the current award year;
- Experienced a substantial loss of income since February 29, 2020 and the household had a total income in 2020 below \$99,000 for single filers and \$198,000 for joint filers; or
- Meets the eligibility criteria for a participating providers' existing low-income or COVID-19 program.

When Can I Sign Up for the Benefit?

The program has been authorized by the FCC, but the start date has not yet been established. The FCC is working to make the benefit available as quickly as possible. Visit the Broadband Benefit Consumer FAQ at this link <https://www.fcc.gov/consumer-faq-emergency-broadband-benefit> for more information about the benefit and please continue to check back here for program updates.

TAKE ACTION!

There is power in numbers.
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Are You Registered to Vote?

Registration Deadlines are Coming Soon!

Friday, May 28, 2021 is the voter registration deadline for the June 22, 2021 Primary Election.

Applications must be postmarked no later than May 28, 2021 and received by a Board of Elections Office no later than June 2, 2021 to be eligible to vote in the Primary.

To ensure information is processed and entered in time for the Primary Election, notices of change of address from registered voters must be received by a Board of Elections Office by June 2, 2021.

Tioga Opportunities, Inc. is a voter registration site and would be happy to assist with any voting questions.

Please contact us at 607-687-4120, ext. 331.

We Welcome Gifts In Honor and In Memory

Remember your friends or loved ones by sending or suggesting a monetary gift to the Aging Programs IN HONOR or IN MEMORY of a relative or friend.

We will recognize all such donations in the format requested by the donor (by name or anonymous). These gifts exclusively benefit the many programs we offer older adults throughout Tioga County.

We thank you for your kind support.

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Have you wondered how you can make a difference during the COVID-19 pandemic?

AmeriCorps Seniors

We are looking for new volunteer drivers to join our team!



Home Delivered Meals Delivery
Deliver nutritious meals to home-bound older adults residing in Tioga County.



Medical Transportation
Assist with transporting older adults to critical medical and COVID-19 vaccination appointments.

- Volunteers will receive pre-service orientation, assignment-specific training, and supplemental insurance while on duty.
- Mileage and meal reimbursement will be provided.
- COVID-19 safety protocols are in place to protect volunteers and clients.



Call 687-4120 ext. 315 for more information on volunteer opportunities and to apply today!



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