

Ask an Expert Guidelines

The guidelines below are suggestions for answering questions in Ask an Expert. For any questions about Ask an Expert please contact: Gwyn Shelle, Instructional Technology Specialist - MSU Extension, at heyboerg@msu.edu or 517-432-5131.

- **Related Questions.** You may search for answers written by other experts by using the Search field on the Ask an Expert page: <https://ask.extension.org/>. This is a database of Ask an Expert questions/answers from around the country that have been marked “public” by the person submitting the question. Feel free to cut and paste portions or all of any relevant information you find there. This is not plagiarism.
- **Response Time.** Try to answer each question within 48 hours. If you need help ask a colleague. If you know you won’t have time to answer the question re-assign the question to a wrangler.
- **Always respond.** If it is an inconvenient time for you, or if the question is not in your areas of expertise, please reassign the question by using the “Assign to someone else” link on the Ask an Expert screen. If you don’t know who to assign it to, click “Hand off to a Question Wrangler.”
- **Be brief and precise.** Answers should be concise, with the exact answer in the first two sentences, if possible, with explanation and elaboration following. Indicate any specific differences due to geographic location or other conditions. Use language that is broadly understood, define scientific terminology, and avoid jargon.
- **Include links.** Refer to articles and websites as appropriate, and provide source information for quotes or references. One of the best places to find research-based information is the ‘Search’ website <http://www.extension.org/search> because it searches the websites of universities in the eXtension system.
- **Omit opinion.** As representatives of land grant institutions, our role is to help others learn by providing them with unbiased, research based, peer-reviewed information. If individuals have the facts or information at their disposal, they can make educated decisions for their specific situations.
- **Use spell check.** Verify that your responses are both grammatically correct and spelled correctly. Cutting and pasting from Word helps ensure correct spelling.
- **When a question is broad, vague, or esoteric...** Don’t just ignore it. You can ask for more information or clarification or you may decide to refer them to additional sources so they can find their own answer. e.g., *"Your question requires an answer beyond the scope of the space provided for this interaction, but here are a few links or articles that might provide you with related information you have requested."*