

LIFE

+ HOME

JESUS PROM: BIG FUN AND LITTLE TO FEAR

LIFE + FAITH, PAGE B6



SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2009

SENSIBLE HOME

Pellet or corn stove is clean, efficient



JAMES DULLEY
SYNDICATED COLUMNIST

Question: I am tired of hauling wood indoors for my fireplace. I saw pellet and corn stoves at my home-center store, and they sell the pellets there. Are they convenient to use? Do they heat efficiently? — **Ron H.**

Answer: Wood pellet and corn stoves are convenient and energy-efficient. I have been heating my home office with them for the past 12 years. I use a Paromax Europa corn/pellet stove with battery backup to keep it running during power outages.

Most corn stoves can burn corn, pellets or a mixture of the two. Pellet stoves generally will effectively burn only wood pellets with perhaps a little corn mixed in.

Wood pellets are made from sawdust from wood mills. Ash content in the hardwood is much less than in corn. Corn also burns much differently than wood and requires different combustion air/fuel ratios and ash-removal rates.

For a stove to burn either corn or pellets efficiently, it must have sophisticated controls to keep all these combustion factors in balance. The Europa model uses a dual-firepot design that's easy for the homeowner to change, and it's designed to burn either fuel efficiently and cleanly.

When burning only pellets in my stove, I empty the ash pan about once a week. I fire it down only once a month for cleaning.

I recommend a stove that burns both corn and wood pellets, even though it might cost more initially. Sometimes wood pellets can be difficult to find in winter. I usually buy mine early in September, well before I need to heat my house. Corn is usually available. If you plan to burn all corn, make sure it is dried enough for burning. Standard feed corn might have too much moisture.

With the high ratio of surface area to weight of the fuel, compared with firewood, the combustion is nearly complete. Because of its high efficiency, little heat is left in the exhaust gases, so they can be vented outdoors through a small double-walled metal pipe. The pipe stays cool enough so it won't burn you if you accidentally bump it. This makes it easy and inexpensive to install a stove. With the negative pressure inside the firepot, there never is a smoky odor in the room.

The following companies offer corn and pellet stoves:

American Energy Systems 1-800-495-3196, www.magnumfireplace.com

Even Temp 1-800-331-8862, www.stcroixheat.com

England's Stove Works 1-800-516-3636, www.englishstoves.com

See **DULLEY, B2**



The antebellum Bodley-Bullock House, in Gratz Park, is 195 years old.

THE HOLIDAYS, HISTORY MEET

Designers showcase Bodley-Bullock House



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PHOTOS BY MARK CORNELISON | mcornelison@herald-leader.com

Earlier this week, designer Beth Harper was hard at work creating a Christmas tree on the kitchen ceiling. The showcase opened Friday and runs through Dec. 2.

IF YOU GO

The Nursing Home Ombudsman Agency of the Bluegrass Holiday Showcase

Where: Bodley-Bullock House, in Historic Gratz Park, at Second and Market streets.

When: Through Dec. 2. Hours: 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Tue.-Thu.; 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Fri., Sat; 1-5 p.m. Sun.

Cost: \$10.

Call: (859) 277-9215.

The showcase will feature holiday décor by area designers. Group tours are available. Holiday items will be available for the public to purchase. Proceeds benefit the Nursing Home Ombudsman Agency of the Bluegrass Inc.



Above: Julie McDearmon of the Nursing Home Ombudsman Agency of the Bluegrass hung ornaments created by nursing home residents on the "Silver Bells" tree. The ornaments are available for purchase during the showcase.

Right: Nursing home residents made some of the ornaments.



Santas adorn the piano in the house's main room.



Berea farmer revives the land

Once-depleted ridgetop now produces a variety of organic produce

By **Susan Smith-Durisek**
Contributing Garden Writer

Susana Lein's bountiful harvest this year was gathered from her gardens and fields at Salamander Springs Farm, in the mountains south of Berea.

Through sustainable agricultural practices, this ridgetop farm flourishes on marginal land that had been depleted of topsoil and had no existing infrastructure.

Since 2001, Lein has used the principles of permaculture to build the farm and buildings from scratch and produce non-mechanized, no-till corn for ground corn meal, popcorn, dry beans (pinto and black turtle), and a diverse supply of local and organic produce including garlic,



PHOTOS PROVIDED

Susana Lein shells popcorn with a 1910 International Harvester corn sheller. The multicolored corn is made into cornmeal.

onions, squash, herbs, flowers, and year-round greens and root crops.

Lein grew up on a small farm in Iowa in the 1960s

and '70s before the farm crisis changed the agricultural landscape.

"The farm community in which I grew up no longer

exists," she said. "Huge-scale production of commodity corn and soybeans, and enormous hog factories have replaced smaller, diversified farms. Semi-trailers and giant machinery dominate the landscape. Former farmers now drive miles to work in 'rural development' factories. I was one of a new category of exports of the early '80s — our educated young."

After college, Lein worked almost seven years as a landscape architect and planner in Boston. She began to manage large projects for her firm.

"I recognized my role in paving over the land with unsustainable development and realized that my work

See **PERMACULTURE, B2**



Susana Lein packages and sells popcorn and cornmeal produced at Salamander Springs Farm.

TO LEARN MORE

Salamander Springs Farm
Web site: www.localharvest.org/farms/M5606.

Suggested reading: *Introduction to Permaculture*, by Bill Mollison and Reny Mia Slay (Ten Speed Press, \$38) and *Gaia's Garden: A Homescale Guide to Permaculture* by Toby Hemenway (Chelsea Green Publishing Company, \$24.95).



Read more on Susan Smith Durisek's blog, *Inside/Out & About* at Kentucky.com.