

WINTER, WHAT WINTER?

By the time you read this, I hope winter has showed up!

Though I could happily skip the wind, icy roads, and chilly temps, I'm ready for the snow, rain, or precipitation in whatever form.

I think we all have our fingers crossed for some substantial snowpack and a couple of wet snowfalls this spring to keep our land healthy and productive; however, drought is a common occurrence in Wyoming, so we adapt and move forward.

Drought in the West brings along its often-unwelcome companion – wildfire. If your property was burned this year, you may be considering what to do. Our article **“What to expect following a wildfire”** can provide an idea of what to expect in the aftermath of a fire, what potential issues to be aware of, and how recovery might proceed. For those fortunate enough to have avoided wildfire, take time to consider implementing defensible space around your place (whether in a forested, grass, or sagebrush-dominated landscape) and to plan for possible future evacuations. Time and effort invested now can pay big dividends down the line.

Predicting weather and wildfires can be an iffy endeavor – perhaps a safer prediction is that the price of energy will rise over the long-term. If

you are thinking along those lines – energy conservation is the first, most economical place to start.



Jennifer Thompson

Consider a home energy audit conducted by a local contractor or your utility company. An energy audit can help you best target efficiency efforts and get the most bang for your buck. The article **“Home energy audit can identify energy thieves in your home”** takes you through this process and highlights common energy loss culprits. As you consider efficiency improvements to your home or begin to consider alternative or renewable energy sources, be sure to check out the article **“An update of incentives for energy efficiency and renewable energy: Navigating through the fog”** to help determine potential financial incentives.

Winter can be a time of reflection and planning. If your plans for the year ahead include home-grown or local produce, you'll find **“Up for the challenge: Gardening in Wyoming”** and **“Community Supported Agriculture links consumers with producers; provides fresh vegetables, manages risk”** of interest. If considering some of those “fast growing trees” you've seen advertised, think again, and read **“Your landscape will thank you for choosing the right tree for the right location”** for tips to choosing trees that will be successful for the long haul.

Whatever you do once winter does arrive, take time to find a comfy chair and put your feet up to enjoy some rest. If you find your eye caught by some bright feathers outside while you relax, see our article on bird migration **“Fantastic in feathers”** to learn some more about those feathered wonders and then check out **“Insects have cool strategies to weather winter extremes”** to learn how one of their most important food sources (insects) survive the harsh conditions winter can dish out.

Personally, I'm happy to be tucked inside my increasingly snug home and out of the wind! Wishing you the best in the year to come!

We'll soon be publishing a guide to living with wildfire that can help you take proactive steps to limit risk and how to deal with a fire's aftermath.