

The Anniston Star

# Spring home AND garden

2026





Sourdough bread is Stephanie Lindley's specialty.

# I like bread ... and butter

By **SHERRY KUGHN**  
Star staff writer

**O**XFORD, Ala. (AP) — Stephanie Lindley envisions a bakery that feels less like a storefront and more like stepping into a medieval tavern.

Lindley, 38, a full-time student at Gadsden State Community College's Ayers Campus, is pursuing a degree in entrepreneurship with plans to open a bakery called Mossy Hollow. Inspired by fantasy novels set in "ye olde" taverns of ancient England and the colonial charm of northeastern American cities, she hopes to create a space filled with the atmosphere of forests, history and perhaps even a hint of fairies.

"I want it to feel like a medieval tavern when you walk in," Lindley said. "Warm, welcoming and a little magical."

A Calhoun County native who lived in Munford before settling in Oxford, Lindley has long enjoyed baking. For years, she made traditional yeast breads, which can be prepared in a couple of hours. But as her children — now 12 and 16 — grew older, she found herself wanting a hobby that required more focus.

"Feeding the starter, folding the dough, and watching for bubbles instead of the clock gives me small, intentional things to focus on," she said. "Baking sourdough keeps my hands and brain busy."

Unlike yeast bread, sourdough requires patience and precision. Creating a starter from scratch can take two to three weeks. Once established, baking a loaf can take 12 to 18 hours.

Lindley compares the process to raising children.

"It requires a lot more parenting," she said. "Like small children, it's more sensitive to the environment. You have to check on it, stretch it, pull it. The good thing is it doesn't misbehave like a child."

She keeps her starter warm in the microwave with the light on to maintain consistent heat, waiting eight to 12 hours after feeding it before preparing dough. Each loaf must be carefully shaped, baked and then allowed to cool completely — no matter how tempting it is to slice into it immediately.

"You have to make it sit and cool down," she said.

For now, Lindley practices her craft at home, where her husband and children happily sample her creations. She dreams of one day owning a bread oven large enough to bake a dozen loaves at a time.

"Until then, I am here in my kitchen, pulling loaves from the oven, making grilled cheese sandwiches on fresh slices, and curling up with a good book," she said. "It is a small beginning, but it is one I truly love."

## **Sourdough starter**

To make a sourdough starter, you'll need whole-wheat flour, all-purpose flour, room-temperature water, a clean jar or container, and a spoon or spatula.

### **DAY 1**

Place  $\frac{3}{4}$  c + 2 t whole-wheat flour and  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup + 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  t water into a clean jar, stir until smooth, then cover the jar loosely and let it rest at room temperature for 24 hours.

### **DAY 2 THROUGH DAY 6**

Stir the starter, discard all but about  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup from the jar, then feed the remaining starter with  $\frac{1}{3}$  c + 1 t whole-wheat flour,  $\frac{1}{3}$  c + 1 t all-purpose flour, and  $\frac{1}{2}$  c minus 1 t water; stir well until smooth, cover loosely, and let it rest at room temperature for another 24 hours, repeating this feeding daily as small bubbles form and the smell becomes mildly tangy.

### **DAY 7 AND BEYOND FOR MAINTENANCE**

Discard all but 1 T starter, then feed it with  $\frac{1}{4}$  c whole-wheat flour,  $\frac{1}{2}$  c + 2 tall-purposes flour, and 6 T + 2 teaspoons water, stir well, cover loosely, and let it rise at room temperature until the starter becomes active, bubbly, and ready to bake with. Stir well, cover loosely, and let rise at room temperature. Your starter should now be active, bubbly, and ready to bake with.

## **Simple Overnight Sourdough Bread**

Make your starter or ask a breadmaker friend to give you some. (Note that it takes at least a week to make your own.)

- 1 c and 6 tsp. of warm water
- $\frac{1}{2}$  c active sourdough starter, just past peak
- 4 c and 8 tsp. of bread flour



Homemade butter by Diana Cash.



Stephanie Lindley removes a loaf of fresh baked bread from the oven.

- 2 tsp. of fine salt

In a large bowl, stir together the water and starter. Add the flour and salt, mixing until a shaggy dough forms with no dry patches. Cover and let rest 30 minutes. Using damp fingers, gently stretch one side of the dough up and fold it over itself.

Turn the bowl and repeat until you've folded all sides. Do three folds about 20 minutes apart. Then two folds over the next hour. The dough should be smoother and more elastic. Cover and let the dough rise at room temperature until four to eight hours later when the dough is doubled in size, bubbly and domed, slightly jiggle when the bowl is shaken and pulls cleanly from the sides of the bowl, which may take four to eight hours. Turn the dough onto a lightly floured surface. Gently pre-shape into a round and let rest for 30 minutes. Shape again by pulling the edges toward the center to create surface tension.

Place seam-side up in a floured bowl. Cover and refrigerate 8–16 hours. This step improves flavor and helps the loaf hold its shape while baking. Place a Dutch oven and heat it to 450. Bake in a Dutch oven for 25 minutes, covered. Turn the cold dough onto parchment, score the top, and carefully lower into the hot Dutch oven covered and 20-25 minutes uncovered.

...And Butter

## **Homemade butter**

Diana Cash is the wife of Anniston Star editor Tim Cash. She is a great cook and was kind enough to share her directions for making butter.

"It's easier than you think to make butter," Diana said. "All you need is a stand mixer and heavy whipping cream."

Place 2 c of heavy whipping cream

## **AT A GLANCE**

- Stephanie Lindley, 38, who studies entrepreneurship at Gadsden State's Ayers Campus, plans to open Mossy Hollow, a medieval tavern-themed bakery.

- Lindley is inspired by fantasy novels and colonial-era charm.

- Anniston resident Diana Cash shares the steps for making butter.

into your bowl. Using the whisk attachment, slowly begin to whip the cream. As the cream begins to thicken slowly increase the speed. The cream will thicken and get to the whipped cream phase.

Place a kitchen towel over your mixer to keep the liquid from splashing out. Keep whipping until it separates into butter and buttermilk. Once separated, remove all of the butter pieces from the bowl.

You will then wash the butter with cold water. Diana prefers to wash the butter in a bowl by kneading it and replacing the cold water as needed until the water is clear. Once you've washed the butter, you will keep kneading it until all of the liquid is removed. At this point, you can salt your butter or leave it unsalted.

Store in an airtight container for up to two weeks in the fridge. You will also want to store your buttermilk in an airtight container and use it in recipes to make pancakes or biscuits.



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# Tips from the pros for spring cleaning

By **SHERRY KUGHN**  
Star staff writer

**H**EFLIN — For 15 years, Billy Burger and Tabitha Jeffares have built a business around something many people avoid: deep cleaning homes and organizing spaces.

As the owners of Spotlessly Clean House Cleaning & Janitorial Services, Burger and Jeffares were recognized as a 2025 Neighborhood Fave on Nextdoor, a community-based platform where residents recommend local businesses.

If you're getting ready to do some spring cleaning, Burger and Jeffares are offering a few practical tips for maintaining a cleaner home.

For starters, they have learned, from experience, to declutter before cleaning.

"One of the biggest mistakes homeowners make is trying to clean before decluttering," Burger said. "Removing excess items first makes cleaning far more efficient."

Spring cleaning is about more than appearances, Burger added.

"It isn't just about appearance. It is about resetting the home after months of winter buildup," he said.

He said the most overlooked areas often make the biggest difference and added that people forget about cleaning baseboards, ceiling fans and cabinet fronts.

### Clean from top to bottom

Start with ceiling fans, vents and light fixtures so dust falls downward. Next up are shelves and counters, then baseboards. Save mopping and vacuuming for last to keep floors clean after everything else is finished.

Use separate tools for kitchen and bathroom

Keep cloths and sponges separate for kitchens and bathrooms to reduce



cross-contamination.

Focus on "high-touch" areas such as light switches, faucets and handles. Change cloths often—fresh microfiber makes a big difference.

### Five-minute resets can make the job easier

A quick five minute daily reset in the kitchen and bathroom can prevent the sticky grime buildup that makes deep cleaning much harder later," Burger said.

In the kitchen, do a quick sink rinse and wipe countertops and the stove. In the bathroom, wipe out the sink, faucets and handles.

### Use the right product and allow it time to work

"Many disinfectants and degreasers need a short time to dwell to work properly," Burger said. "Don't spray and immediately wipe. Give it a moment." He said it's one of the biggest differences between something looking clean and actually being sanitized.

Burger and Jeffares provide services ranging from residential homes to business cleaning. They also assist clients with moving in or out, post-construction cleanup and organizational projects such as closets, shelving and sheds.

Their service area includes



Heflin couple Billy Burger and Tabitha Jeffares celebrate 15 years operating Spotlessly Clean house cleaning business across East Alabama and West Georgia.



Burger demonstrates a specialized cleaning brush for vents, ceiling fans, corners and more.

Calhoun, Cleburne and Talladega counties as well as parts of West Georgia. They offer free customized

quotes. Schedule yours by calling (256) 201-7023 or visiting <https://tabbysspotlesslyclean.com/>

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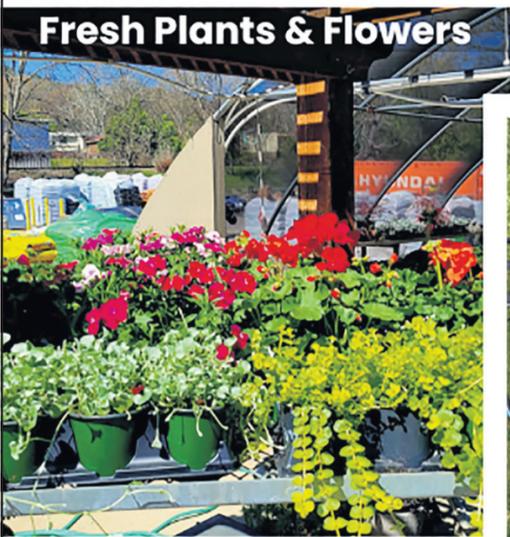
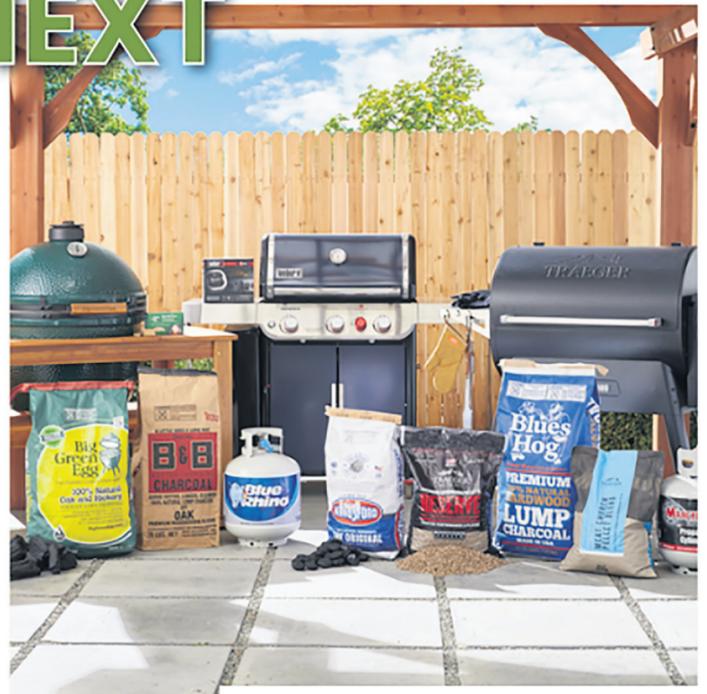
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# The Southern Gardener: Native azaleas

By **SHERRY BLANTON**

Spring brings new faces every day. Dogwoods, evergreen azaleas, and colorful perennials decorate our gardens. One plant is particularly captivating, the native azalea, probably the queen of native plants. The big fat buds on this deciduous shrub begin to open in very early spring mesmerizing the gardener. Few deciduous plants sport such gorgeous blooms.

During the winter, however, the natives' gangly bare branches are hardly noticed. Most native azaleas look more like a small upright tree instead of the shrub form of the evergreen azalea which keeps its leaves all year long.

Once the colorful flowers cover the limbs these magnificent azaleas will garner center stage in the garden. Not only are these flowers flamboyant, many can also be highly fragrant allowing them to be mistakenly called "wild honeysuckle."

As a native it hails from the United States, particularly the South. Evergreen azaleas, such as the Kurume hybrids (for example 'Coral Bells'), originated outside of the United States. Seventeen species of native azaleas can be found growing across the southeast. We have at least ten different ones growing in Alabama. So many choices; we can have native azaleas blooming from early spring throughout the summer.

The first native to bloom is the Piedmont azalea. It has fragrant white to pink flowers and can grow up to fifteen feet tall. It can be found growing

wild as well as in our landscapes.

The Florida azalea with fragrant yellow to pale orange flowers blooms in late March to early April. It can reach fifteen feet also.

The Oconee azalea (which is not native to Alabama but to west central Georgia to South Carolina) blooms in late March through April. This non-fragrant azalea has bright flowers in yellow, orange, and red orange. Since it only reaches from six to eight feet tall, it may fit more easily if you have only a small place available.

The Alabama azalea bears snow-white yellow blooms with a yellow blotch and smells like lemons. Some remain low shrubs while others grow four to twelve feet tall. Blooming time is in

April and it is frequently found growing wild in much of Alabama and adjacent states, though not as common as in the past because of changes in our forests.

The Plumleaf azalea is only native to a small area in southwestern Georgia and southeastern Alabama. It can grow in our area and can reach twenty feet tall. The Plumleaf has non-fragrant orange-red to deep red flowers and can grow to twenty feet tall. This remarkable azalea blooms from July to September allowing the gardener to have native azaleas in bloom for almost seven months!

These are just a sample of natives available to us in Alabama. Other species have different mature sizes, different bloom times, and different blooms. Explore and find the perfect native azalea for your landscape.



There has been breeding of azalea hybrids outside the United States, mainly in cooler climates. Sadly these beauties, such as the Exbury hybrids, do not fare well in our heat. There are hybrids such as the Aromi Hybrid which take our summer temperatures better. A word of caution, learn where the hybrids were developed. Many years ago I planted non-heat tolerant native azaleas. They passed away in the Alabama heat the first year, much to my chagrin.

As with all plants it is essential to plant the native azalea in the right place. Native azaleas planted in heavy shade are slow to grow and produce few blooms. Filtered shade is the best situation. Early blooming natives can tolerate more sun. Too much sun can be harmful to later blooming species.

When planting the azalea, be certain not to plant it too deeply. The root ball should be almost an inch above grade. Mulch well to keep the soil from drying out.

Native azaleas prefer moist, acidic, well-drained soil. The Alabama azalea handles drier woodland conditions.

Avoid over watering all native azaleas to discourage root rot.

I had a site stricken with Phytophthora root rot (leaf loss, reduced vigor, branch dieback and wilting). I removed the plant and planned to use only plants resistant to root rot in containers. Should an azalea develop this disease remove it immediately and avoid planting azaleas in the same spot. Choose a root rot alternative species. Improve the drainage; to be on the safe side I might not use a plant in the same area even it is considered safe from root rot.

Native azaleas fit beautifully in a woodland setting or as a specimen planting. Plant close to a walkway or place where people gather, if possible, to enjoy their delicious fragrance.

Native azaleas set their buds in mid to late summer; pruning after this time will remove next year's flowers.

Native azaleas have become easier to find in the trade over the years. Choose several and have the vibrant flowers blooming spring and summer.

Thank you to the Alabama Extension and "Native Azaleas for Alabama."

# Help! I've fallen and I can't get up!

By **FAITH DORN**  
Star Correspondent

Each year, 37 million falls occur among adults age 65 and older. (CDC)

People of all ages are susceptible to health complications from falls including abrasions, fractures or traumatic brain injuries. Not all falls cause injuries or fatalities, but they can still have adverse effects on the people who fell.

The CDC reports that even if someone who fell was not injured, they can become afraid of falling which, in turn, leads them to become less active causing them to become weaker and increasing their chances of falling again.

After a fall, some patients need a mobility aid such as a cane, walker or rollator.

Terry Grizzard, owner of Grizzard Living Aids, knows firsthand the frustration that can come with being required to use a mobility aid.

"People can be stubborn and prideful. They don't like change, and they don't want to admit they really need it," Grizzard said.

"I had back surgery, and I had to use a walker. I couldn't wait to get away from it," said Grizzard.

Grizzard and his team install chairlifts, stairlifts and other living aids. Grizzard's favorite part of the business is the stairlifts because they

can help people stay in their homes. He equates some customers' initial hesitation to purchase a stairlift to an appliance purchase his father made.

"I remember when my daddy brought a dishwasher home. My mom was so offended. Five or six years later when it broke, she was wondering when he was going to get it fixed," Grizzard said with a laugh.

Grizzard says that in his more than 30 year career, Grizzard Living Aids has installed over 1,000 stairlifts.

"Our slogan is 'Improving lives through better mobility,' and it is such a good feeling to be able to go home at night and know you've helped somebody," said Grizzard.

New stairlifts start at \$4,500 through Grizzard Living Aids, and that price includes the required permit and inspection.

Grizzard emphasizes that falling in the home is not just relegated to stairs.

Individuals and caregivers need to remove tripping hazards like clutter, loose rugs or torn carpet.

Grab bars and nonslip mats can improve safety in bathrooms.

Grizzard recommends adequate lighting, and in the case of homes with stairs, having light switches at the top and bottom of the stairway.

Familiarizing yourself with your medications and side effects or contraindications can potentially decrease your fall risk. Being mindful

of your blood pressure and blood sugar is also important.

"No one intends to fall. They think they won't need to use their walker or cane or rollator on a short trip to get to the bathroom or kitchen or check the mail, but they do," Grizzard said.

Not all falls are preventable, but if

you work to minimize the hazards in your environment, you can decrease your fall risk.

Visit [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) to search for more detailed resources for patients and caregivers about proper footwear, a home fall prevention checklist and more.

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