Invasive species adapt to change faster than natives

By Michelle Nijhuis, Smithsonian

Since the beginning of the 20th century, the growing season in many areas of the lower 48 states has expanded by about two weeks. Frosts end earlier in the spring and begin later in the fall. To gardeners in Maine, Wisconsin and Montana, that might seem a blessing. What's not to like about more lettuce or riper tomatoes?

The longer seasons, however, are also helping invasive plants annex American soil; extended springs mean they can more quickly push aside native species and transform ecosystems.

Researchers found that many nonnative species are changing their flowering schedule in concert with the longer growing season. By contrast, indigenous species have been, on average, much slower to react to the new conditions.

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

• Nov. 30 is Small Business Saturday. The first five businesses that have not previously advertised with *Lake Tahoe News* that sign a six-month or longer contract will receive 25 percent discount. Offer expires Dec. 6. Email info@LakeTahoeNews.net with Ad Special in the subject line to get started.

• Mount Rose has joined the list of Tahoe area resorts that

are now open.

• Truckee is banning plastic bags at grocery stores beginning Christmas Day. The law will be enforced starting June 1, 2014.

• The Accommodation Station in South Lake Tahoe is now called Lake Tahoe Lodging Company.

Family farmers still matter in the U.S.

By Danielle Nierenberg, Barbara Gemmill-Herren, Benjamin Graub and Caterina Batello, Huffington Post

On Thanksgiving we express gratitude for the abundance on our holiday tables, but rarely do we thank the people who grew, harvested, and processed that food.

But a very diverse group of family farmers around the world, and at home, deserve our support – according to the U.S. Census Bureau, 98 percent of American farmers are family farmers. The United Nations recently declared 2014 as the International Year of Family Farming, celebrating the global community of family farmers. Forthcoming reports by the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization and Food Tank: The Food Think Tank suggest that through local knowledge and sustainable, innovative farming methods, family farmers can improve yields and create a more nutrient-dense and diverse food system. They're even key players in job creation and healthy economies, supplying jobs to millions and boosting local markets.

In the United States, however, small and medium-size family farms are suffering. One bad harvest, a rejected bank loan, and too much or too little rain can drive farms out of business. In 2012, for example, a “once in a generation” drought cost farmers about $35 billion and reduced American GDP by up to 1 percent.

But in many parts of the country, farmers are finding ways to create resilience on farms.

Read the whole story

People are what matter most on Thanksgiving

By Corey Mintz, New York Times

TORONTO — In Canada, where I’m from, Thanksgiving is over already. We celebrated on your Columbus Day, and if it offers any solace as you grow increasingly (or maybe just a little bit) anxious in these final hours, ours turned out fine.

We ate pretty much the same things you will cook tomorrow. I’m sure your menu and your meal will be swell. But I am here to argue that it matters less than you imagine.

Over the last few years, I’ve held 201 dinner parties for a newspaper column up here (mine, actually) called Fed. I’ve learned that the food is less important than the company and a little bit of graciousness. Call it hospitality, or entertaining.

A generation of food television, with its ticking clocks and well-lit close-ups, has brainwashed us into believing dinner is a competition. Our manners have atrophied. We are now willing to put so much thought and effort into what we eat — making cronuts at home, name-checking the latest hot restaurants, leading a torch-and-pitchfork mob against gluten — that we've lost our understanding of how to eat with people.

We have been reduced to a society of boors by stripping dinner of joy in our attempts to reproduce complicated chef food in our homes.

If I were to offer Thanksgiving advice, it wouldn't be about what kind of bird to buy or which dessert to bake. It would be to remember that you are hosting a version of a dinner party, and that the same etiquette — taking your guests' coats and getting them a drink, making them feel comfortable, feeding them in a timely manner, serving food with confidence and ending the evening on a high note — is just as appreciated by your family as by anyone else you would bring to your table. Maybe more.

The focus should be on making your guests feel good. At Thanksgiving, you have two advantages: knowing everyone pretty well and the theme of expressing gratitude. It's a good time to tell your sister not just that she looks great with bangs, but also that you appreciate her watching the kids.

Bottom line: make people feel welcome, appreciated and a little special.

Read the whole story

Editorial: It’s getting harder to be thankful

We seem to have forgotten how to give thanks. It’s not about what’s on the table or even who is around it. And it’s certainly not about what is on sale today.

Thanks and giving are two things we should embrace every day – not just the fourth Thursday in November.

We seem to have become a society more of takers than givers. We keep what’s ours and don’t share. And we begrudge those who can’t provide for themselves.

Sometimes it’s a struggle to be thankful when you don’t know where the rent or the mortgage payment is going to come from, or if any meal, let alone a well-balanced one, will be on the table, or if that threadbare jacket will survive one more winter. Thanksgiving can seem like an afterthought.

It’s hard to be thankful when the basic necessities of life – food, shelter, clothing – are hard to come by.

Sometimes it’s a struggle to be thankful when we get used to abundance – the full table, the overflowing shopping bags – we expect it – having forgotten to be thankful for what we have.

Ironically, some of the biggest givers are those without abundance.

While economists say we are out of the recession, ask your neighbor if that’s true. Hundreds of millions of dollars were spent this year in the greater Lake Tahoe area on public and private infrastructure improvements. Ask around how many locals were working those jobs. So many in the basin work for the government – steady employment with outstanding benefits. The other spectrum is minimum wage jobs filled with

uncertainty and decreasing benefits.

Ours is not a robust economy. The chasm between the haves and have nots is growing. Middle class – it hardly exists in the basin and is diminishing elsewhere as well. This group is on the fringe, barely hanging on – one step from qualifying for aid, one step from losing their home, one step from being a have not.

But perhaps for today we can find some common ground to be thankful for. Take a look outside. Something brought you to Lake Tahoe or keeps you here. Those mountains, that lake. We are lucky and should be thankful to live in such an incredibly beautiful place.

While nature's beauty will not solve our problems, it can lead us to a place of happiness. From there, perhaps we begin to look at things with less despair. Perhaps we reach out to our neighbors and break bread together, or just say hello or wave for a change. It won't get the bills paid or put food in our stomachs, but social scientists say attitude is a huge contributor to how things can affect us.

There is no better day than Thanksgiving to take a look around and be grateful for what you do have. Don't think about what you don't have. And take another moment to share with someone why you are thankful they are in your life. It might require picking up the phone, sending an email or text, or even writing a note to that person.

It's time we all give a little more thanks.

Happy Thanksgiving from *Lake Tahoe News*!

WikiLeaks founder unlikely to face charges

By Sari Horwitz, Washington Post

The Justice Department has all but concluded it will not bring charges against WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange for publishing classified documents because government lawyers said they could not do so without also prosecuting U.S. news organizations and journalists, according to U.S. officials.

The officials stressed that a formal decision has not been made, and a grand jury investigating WikiLeaks remains impaneled, but they said there is little possibility of bringing a case against Assange, unless he is implicated in criminal activity other than releasing online top-secret military and diplomatic documents.

The Obama administration has charged government employees and contractors who leak classified information – such as former National Security Agency contractor Edward Snowden and former Army intelligence analyst Bradley Manning – with violations of the Espionage Act. But officials said that although Assange published classified documents, he did not leak them, something they said significantly affects their legal analysis.

Read the whole story

Sugar Bowl event benefits

Sierra Avalanche Center

Sugar Bowl Resort will host the Backcountry Ball on Dec. 13.

It is an evening of food, drink and music benefiting the Sierra Avalanche Center. It will feature a presentation by legendary big mountain snowboarder Jeremy Jones.

The event will be at Sugar Bowl Resort’s Mt. Judah Lodge from 5-10pm. Tickets are $15 in advance and $20 at the door, and are available online.

The event includes a pasta buffet dinner and live music by the Sierra Drifters.

Vendors will be showcasing the latest backcountry gear.

California losing its stature as turkey producer

By Phillip Reese, Sacramento Bee

There’s an ever-dwindling chance each year that the turkey on your Thanksgiving table was raised in California.

California farmers will produce about 13.5 million head of turkey this year, the lowest number since 1956, according to the latest estimates from the National Agricultural Statistics Service.

It’s not that turkeys are getting a reprieve; several other states have seen turkey production increase over the last few

decades.

In 1990, California produced 30 million head of turkey, more than all other states except Minnesota and North Carolina. Last year, California ranked seventh.

Read the whole story

Faster check in available at Reno airport

Reno-Tahoe International Airport now offers the “pre-check” screening program.

To use it, people must be a U.S. citizen and in a frequent-flier program for Alaska, American, Delta, Southwest, United or US Airways.

The Transportation Security Administration program allows pre-approved fliers to keep their shoes on, as well as light outerwear and belts. Laptops can stay in their cases.

Obamacare could raise premiums at workplaces

By Scott Cohn, MSNBC

The estimated 149 million Americans under age 65 who get their health insurance through their employers could be the next

group to feel the impact of the Affordable Care Act.

Open enrollment for 2014 is about to begin at thousands of companies, and many employers are blaming Obamacare—at least in part—for cost increases they are passing on to their workers.

Employees' costs are expected to rise 5 to 7 percent next year, according to early estimates. Those annual increases have been a fixture for years. But in some 2014 open enrollment documents reviewed by CNBC, companies are specifically citing the law as a factor in next year's pricing.

"(F)ederally mandated health care changes will require Comcast-NBCUniversal to pay new fees and implement plan design changes that will contribute to the increased cost of our plans," says the open enrollment guide for CNBC.com's parent company, where employee health care premiums are rising by double digits, and deductibles in some cases are doubling. The guide also cites rising health care delivery costs not directly related to the new law.

Other employers have adopted similar language.

Read the whole story