

Home News

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Welcome...

Welcome to your new-look Home News.

We've taken on board your feedback and given the magazine a fresh look and packed it full of the content you like. There's more news than ever, more insight into our services, even more pieces of advice and guidance and still a chance to win prizes.

We'd love to hear what you think about the magazine and what you'd like to read about.

Send your views to us at marketing@acisgroup.co.uk or write to us at: Marketing, Acis, Acis House, Bridge Street, Gainsborough, DN21 1GG.



What a load of rubbish

"As an organisation, we're committed to providing better homes, better services and better lives"

Beds, sofas and carpets were among five tonnes of rubbish cleared from our Gainsborough streets as part of a community clean-up day in February.

Garden waste, chairs, toys, bicycles, scooters, pushchairs, wood and household waste were also among items collected as part of the operation around the town's north ward.

We were helped by West Lindsey District Council which provided a bin lorry to collect much of the rubbish. Around one tonne was also able to be recycled.

Erica Watkins, area service manager, organised the clean-up. She said: "The conditions weren't great but with some great community spirit we managed to clean up a lot of the rubbish that had been making some streets look very untidy.

"As an organisation, we're committed to providing better homes, better services and better lives for the people and communities we serve. We estimate around 150 people benefited from this rubbish clearance and we can definitely say the areas look a lot better for it."



We're planning lots more clean up activities to support all our neighbourhoods this year. Keep an eye out on our website for more information.

Residents up for award



The group of residents which analyses our performance and looks in-depth at key areas of the organisation has been shortlisted for a regional award.

Our Tenant-Led Scrutiny Panel (TLSP) has been shortlisted in the Team of the Year category at the Northern TPAS Awards which recognise excellence in tenant participation.

The TLSP operates independently from Acis and on behalf of tenants and residents, ensuring we provide resident-centred services of the highest standard. The group is made up of residents Nigel Freeman from Gainsborough, Nigel Hornsey from Welton, Doreen Overbury and Olive Ellis, both from Market Rasen.

They have recently been joined by Ann Pennington from Stow and Russel Coughlin from Sheffield.

The percentage of Acis residents satisfied that their views are being taken into account has risen from 60% in 2010/11, before the TLSP was launched, to 74% according to the most recent customer data.

Nigel Freeman, chair of the TLSP, said: "I feel we play a key role as a critical friend to Acis. More importantly, the views,



"I feel we play a key role as a critical friend to Acis"

recommendations and feedback we give is not just listened to, but is acted on. It's commendable that Acis recognises the value of customer involvement and long may it continue."

Paul Woollam, Acis operations director, said: "The Tenant Led Scrutiny Panel is an integral part of our governance and co-regulation structure, providing an independent review of performance. Its practical and evidenced based approach has

enabled it to make a compelling case for service improvements that have been positively enacted."

Are you interested in joining the panel? Contact Lucy Picksley on 0800 027 2057 or email getinvolved@acisgroup.co.uk for more information.



Bright sparks switch to save

We've supported over a hundred people to save money on their energy bills so far through our #energyexpert workshops.

As part of the no-obligation workshops, we estimate we've saved people more than £13,000 on their energy bills through

switching energy providers and helping people access the Warm Homes Discount for their properties.

If you're interested in finding out more, call Anna Cooper on 0800 027 2057 or register your interest on our website.

New chief executive

Greg Bacon has been appointed as our new chief executive.

Greg joins us from Shoreline Housing Partnership where he held the role of director of finance and resources for the last seven years.

Greg's previous experience includes almost 25 years' work within the UK energy and hospitality sectors.

Acis Chairman Kelly Smith said: "Greg brings a wealth of social housing experience, coupled with the commercial skills needed to ensure we stay on the front foot during what are challenging times for the sector.

"We are in a strong position to not only continue delivering for our residents but also to improve and expand our services."

Watch out for more information on Greg's appointment in your next issue of Home News.

Thank you

Two of our Woodthorpe residents have been thanked for raising the alarm to a fire at the local Tenants and Residents Association (TARA) building.

Robert Russon and partner Jane Wilson notified the emergency services after seeing the fire at the Ulley Road building in February. Members of the Woodthorpe TARA would like to express their thanks formally through home news to them for saving their building.

We've got the drive to succeed

Dozens of our employees have taken part in our new campaign to help save money, look after the environment and keep safe on the region's roads.

As part of our commitment to providing value for money services for the communities in which we work, we've teamed up with two organisations to enhance employee driving standards and ensure we're following proper procedures.

Since February, we've been working with the Eco-Business Driving scheme funded by South Yorkshire Safer Roads Partnership via Inmotion to arrange free training sessions for our drivers. Qualified driving instructors have been showing us how to drive sustainably and safely to reduce fuel consumption.



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Energy management officer Anna Cooper said: "We're about more than bricks and mortar. As an organisation with a fleet of vehicles and dozens of people regularly out driving for us we take our responsibilities very seriously. This includes ensuring our people are safe on the roads and trying to reduce our carbon footprint."

We've also joined forces with Lifewise – an interactive safety centre based in Sheffield – to run a two-hour session for managers to demonstrate the impact of not meeting our duty of care for our company drivers. These sessions include realistic role play exercises, from potential crime scenes to sentencing in courts for irresponsible managers.

Cash for Kids

Did you know residents across Lincolnshire and South Yorkshire can apply for grants to help children who are disabled or disadvantaged?

The Cash for Kids charity is supporting children individually or as a group and the next round of their funding closes in the summer (June 30 for South Yorkshire, July 8 for Lincolnshire).

For more information or to download an application pack, visit www.cashforkids.uk.com

Are you content with your contents insurance?

People say to expect the unexpected. Nobody wants to think about worst case scenarios but what would you do if you lost all your personal possessions?

As one of our tenants, you don't need buildings insurance – we sort that for you. This means things like your kitchen, bathroom and fixtures are all covered by us.

However, we don't cover the contents of your home for example your furniture, your TV or your personal belongings. These would be covered by a home contents insurance policy, making sure the contents of your home are covered just in case things go wrong.

Home contents insurance doesn't have to be costly. We want to give you peace of mind while knowing you're not paying through the roof for it. We have joined forces with the National Housing Federation and Thistle Tenant Risks to offer all our tenants a chance to insure their contents and personal possessions in an easy and affordable way.

This will provide peace of mind, knowing that the contents of your home are insured against fire, theft, storm, burst pipes, flood and other household risks.

What's more, the insurance policy brings multiple benefits including no excess and flexible pay-as-you-go payment options.

Optional extensions for extended accidental damage, personal possessions, wheelchairs and mobility scooters, hearing aids and buildings cover for sheds, garages and greenhouses are also available for an additional premium.

For more information or to apply for cover today you can call 0345 450 7288 or visit www.thistlemyhome.co.uk to request a member of the My Home team to call you.

Terms and conditions, limits and exclusions apply. A copy of the policy wording is available on request.

But don't forget, if you're away from your property for a long period of time do let us know.



Case study

A tenant with another housing association was unfortunate enough to experience a flood in his home due to a burst pipe from the flat above, which caused extensive damage to ceilings, carpets, furniture and other personal possessions. The tenant contacted their landlord who were able to repair ceiling but unfortunately, this tenant had not arranged contents insurance for his property and so the damage to his carpets and contents was not covered.

As a result of not having contents insurance, the tenant was left in the position of having to find a large sum of money in order to replace his carpet and other possessions. He would have been able to claim for all the damage caused under his policy, had he had home contents insurance.

The National Housing Federation My Home Contents Insurance Scheme is a product name arranged and administered on behalf of the National Housing Federation by Thistle Tenant Risks. A trading style of Thistle Insurance Services Limited. Lloyd's Broker.

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The National Housing Federation is an Appointed Representative of Thistle Insurance Services Limited.

Out and with our area service managers

Ruth Barnett (Sheffield) and Charlotte Wright (Gainsborough rural) chat about their roles as area service managers and how they can help you.



What is an area service manager?

Ruth: An area service manager is the first point of call for all our housing customers. We are at the forefront, managing a patch of 500-800 properties each. The job used to be known as an area housing manager but we provide an overall service to customers, not just a house, hence the name change.

What specifically do you do?

Charlotte: Our work is extremely varied. The main part of the role is to help our customers manage and sustain their tenancies. We will also deal with antisocial behaviour, estate management, rent queries and payments, alterations to the property and general estate management.

We allocate properties to potential customers and ensure that the property is suitable for them. I also work closely with our external partners which will include the police, West Lindsey District Council and local support agencies to ensure any support my customers need I can find someone to help them.

Ruth: We deal with everything. We're arguably the busiest team in the business!

Can you describe a typical day?

Ruth: No two days are the same, which is why I really enjoy my job. Forward planning is key so you can get the most out of your day – a fine balance of being proactive and reactive.

I generally check emails as soon as I come in and check the out of hours reports – even before I make a coffee! Then I'll start to advertise any available properties and review matches,

“Every day is different as we are out on our patch as much as possible during the week.”

about...

send out offers, visit and call some customers, and check for any tenancy management queries.

Charlotte: Every day is different as we are out on our patch as much as possible during the week. We could be visiting our customers or going out on our patch for a variety of reasons. This can include managing rents, property inspections, dealing with complaints, looking into potential estate improvements, signposting our customers for support, viewing new properties with potential new customers and signing them up for the new property.

What are the main questions/queries you get asked?

Ruth: There are a few different questions we get asked a lot, including:

- **'Can I have fencing?'**
The answer is that it is different in different areas. The best thing is to ring and chat to one of us for your area and we will be able to advise you best.
- **'How much is my rent?'**
We can tell you how much, and how much you've paid – just ask us.

- **'If I start working, how will my Housing Benefit be affected?'**
This very much depends on how many hours and what your wage will be – you should speak to someone in your local authority to advise you on this.
- **'Can you offer specific appointment times for repairs instead of just AM and PM?'**
This is something we are currently reviewing, but we do offer a service where you can be sent a text message when we are due to arrive. We can even avoid school runs if needed.

Are we changing anything to help our customers?

Ruth: We are in the process of reviewing our entire 'customer journey' from starting out to moving on – which has had direct input from our customers through focus groups. The viewings and sign-ups will be different, and we are rolling out our new tenancy support service, offering support from budgeting advice right through to CV writing. We are also reviewing our repairs service to provide more flexibility to customers. So, yes! Lots. We're always looking to improve.

"Please don't sit dwelling on something - we are here to help"

What's the best piece of advice you could give to customers?

Ruth: If you are worried about something, just ring us. Please don't sit dwelling on something – we are here to help and we can't help you if we don't know. We're a forward-thinking provider and we appreciate any feedback customers can give us so please get in touch and offer your views.



Acis in Bloom 2016



Our garden competition is back by popular demand.

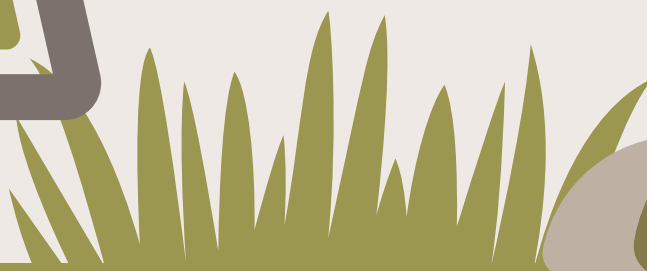
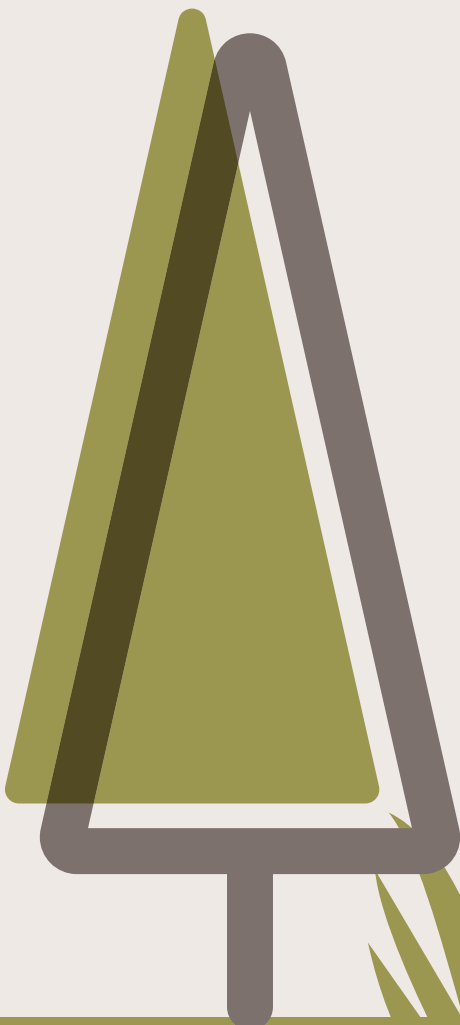
We know many of you love your garden and take pride in its appearance. We've listened to feedback and have relaunched our competition to find the best customer garden spaces. What's more, we've widened the scope to include different categories so you have more chance of being successful.

You could be in with the chance of winning yourself a barrow load of prizes, including vouchers or gardening equipment to continue taking care of your outdoor space.

If you're proud of your gardening achievements then we want to hear from you.

Or perhaps you want to shout about the 'before and after' of your garden space?

Register today and keep an eye out on our website and Facebook page for some tips or get in touch with us if you have any questions about the competition.



Categories are as follows:

-  **Best summer garden**
-  **Best shared garden**
-  **Best creative use of a small space**
-  **Best vegetable plot**
-  **Young gardener award (24 and under)**

You can register by visiting our website or by completing the form below and returning it to us at: Acis In Bloom, Freepost RTSH-THEK-SRRJ, Acis House, Bridge St, Gainsborough DN21 1GG.

Register soon as the competition will close at midnight on Friday 15 July 2016.

Acis In Bloom 2016 registration form

Name:.....

Address:.....

.....

Telephone:.....



Transformation complete

Our residents wanted a better community centre - and that's what we delivered.



Our community centre in Gainsborough has been transformed after a £90,000 makeover – and given a new name.

The former Park Springs Community Centre on Riseholme Road has been reborn as the Gainsborough Uphill Community Centre following the revamp.

It opened its doors in February after an £82,000 grant from WREN and £9,000 grant from West Lindsey District Council helped to transform the building into a purpose-built centre providing much-needed services to local residents of all ages.

More than 50 local dignitaries attended the official opening, with many of the new activities on show including yoga sessions, smoothie tasting, bingo and a knitting workshop.

Although owned by us, the redevelopment has been led by a steering group made up of officials from West Lindsey District Council, Lincolnshire County Council, Lincoln College, Riverside Training, Sills & Betteridge solicitors, Acis, as well as four local residents.

The centre was previously not being used to its potential due to the building's layout and activities on offer. As well as the activities above and thanks to the redevelopment and further community engagement work, the centre will now play host to an array of different activities including employability training, youth performances, mental health services, sewing, table top



"We are delighted to have supported the Gainsborough Uphill Community Centre and pleased that our funding has helped to provide such a fantastic facility for the local community"

sales, IT support, energy saving workshops, baby touch massage, disability awareness sessions and dodgeball.

A further £4,230 grant from IGas has also funded the purchase of three lots of external play equipment to allow a new toddler group to start running from the centre.

The on-site shop has also been transformed and is set to open in the coming months after a competitive tendering process.

Lucy Picksley, Acis' community engagement coordinator, said: "Residents said they wanted a better community centre – and that's what we've given them. It wouldn't have been possible without the leadership of the steering group behind this redevelopment.

Their great leadership has brought residents' vision to life."

The centre's new branding including its logo and 'bringing communities together' strapline were created by local school children who attended last year's Firecracker initiative run in partnership with Lincolnshire Police.

Cheryl Raynor, WREN's grant manager for Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire, said: "We are delighted to have supported the Gainsborough Uphill Community Centre and pleased that our funding has helped to provide such a fantastic facility for the local community. WREN is always happy to consider grant applications for projects that make a difference to local communities and this project demonstrates the different local people can make."

Cllr Owen Bierley, Chairman of the Prosperous Communities Committee at West Lindsey District Council, said: "The Council is delighted to support the development of the community centre and the benefits it will bring to local people in Gainsborough and the surrounding area."



The centre is available for hire. To find out more, call 0800 027 2057. You can also keep up to date with all the activities on the centre's new Facebook page at www.facebook.com/GainsboroughUphillCommunityCentre.

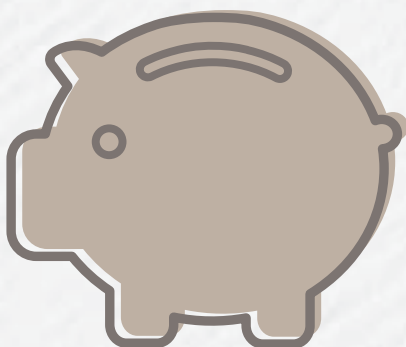
Hidden

The ingrained habits you don't realise are costing you

What are you spending money on without thinking about it?

We've teamed up with the Money Advice Service to tell you the five habits that are probably costing you.

Spending money can be a funny thing. Some things are difficult not to forget you've spent money on – holidays or a house for example. But we all also have little things we spend money on without even considering it – and these can really add up. Here are a few - how many are you guilty of?



Buying lunch out

If you regularly buy a sandwich and drink when you're out, the costs could really add up. But if you bulk buy a loaf of bread; sandwich fillings and a multi-pack of crisps you could see a bigger difference than you think. Plus, don't forget that old adage of not shopping when you're hungry. If you make your lunch before you leave for work, you don't risk rushing out at lunchtime famished and buying more than you need.

Sticking with the same supermarket

It's easy to stick with using the same supermarket. Maybe it's one on your route home or it's just been part of your Sunday routine to take a run over to the same place. By shopping around to see whether you could buy the equivalent products somewhere cheaper, you could be putting money back into your pocket.



habits



Paying to travel short distances

Given many people work within a mile or so of their train station, maybe it's a waste of money to then pay for a bus, underground train or tram fare to complete the journey. For the start there's the benefit of doing some exercise – but you could also save some money too.

The same goes for parents who drive their children relatively short distances to and from school. Could you walk, or ride a bike instead?



Forgetting to add up treats

Some of these small practices become such a ritual they almost become unnoticeable. Buying a newspaper to read on the way to work or a kick-start coffee are purchases so familiar they barely register. Likewise, the habit of picking up a bar of chocolate when you queue for your newspaper may have started as a one-off, but now you don't give it a second thought.



Failing to check your subscriptions

Do you know all of the subscriptions that go out of your bank account every month? From the forgotten gym membership to the expensive TV subscription, it can be easy to overlook these. Perhaps a good habit to pick up is to check your bank statement every month – ignorance isn't always bliss!

For more information, visit www.moneyadvice.service.org.uk



Keeping your communities tidy

We are committed to providing you with clean and tidy areas to live. We regularly undertake estate inspections to take a look at our neighbourhoods and react to any problems that might be happening.

In the last three months, we've found 24 incidents of fly tipping, identified five untidy gardens, removed one caravan, removed an abandoned car and removed numerous supermarket trolleys.

All our customers are invited to join us to check out the areas, raise any concern and suggest any ways of improving your neighbourhoods.

For more information about estate inspections in and around South Yorkshire, please contact Rob Higgins. For information about estate inspections in and around Lincolnshire, please contact your area service manager. They can all be reached on 0800 027 2057 or info@acisgroup.co.uk

Providing value for money



Did you know we carry out in the region of 14,000 repairs to our customers' homes each year, ensuring that every one of them is safe and secure?

But between April and December 2015, our trades team were unable to gain access to 765 properties to carry out repairs where appointments had been arranged. This means we spent £11,500 on visiting properties without being able to do the work.

We don't like that figure, and are sure you don't either. That's why we're making improvements to our repairs processes to ensure our service is run as efficiently as it can be. The more times we gain access first time, the more repairs we can carry out for our customers – more quickly. This ensures we're continuing to provide value for money for you – our customers.

Our new process will mean that if there is no access to be able to carry out any repairs on the agreed time and date, we will let you know by dropping a card through your door. You will need to get in touch with us to rebook a new appointment for us to carry out your repair at a time that's convenient to you.

But we know that things do happen from time to time and long appointment slots are difficult to

manage. That's why from April we will be starting a project whereby we will change the way we make repairs appointments with you in the first place. Based on feedback directly from you, we have decided to move to a new type of appointment system and process – meaning we can be clearer when someone will be attending, and get you a date straight away for most types of appointments.

Please help us to help you and other customers. If you are unable to make an appointment, please contact us at the earliest opportunity to agree an alternative date and time.

This is just one of the significant process changes we have been looking at this year. The more we save by improving processes like this, the better the service we will be able to offer you and your fellow tenants.

Simon Hatchman,
finance director



New houses for Worksop

Nineteen new houses in Worksop have been snapped up by new tenants – even before they were built.

The Priory Mews development in the town has 19 two-bedroom terraced houses and have been built by UK Construction. Although these homes were only completed in February, they were so popular that they had tenants ready and waiting for their new homes since December. All these tenants are busy moving into their new homes. And we look forward to supporting them get settled.

How we're doing



Beating our target



Below our target but within tolerance level



Not meeting our target or tolerance level

Our measure	Target 15/16	Actual (Feb 2016)
Customers satisfied with the overall service provided	86.3%	84.0%
Customers satisfied with the overall quality of their home	83.6%	73.1%
Customers satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live	85.1%	80.6%
Customers satisfied with the overall repairs and maintenance service provided	93.1%	93.6%
Customers satisfied with the final outcome of recent contact	84.6%	79.5%
Customers satisfied with the outcome of an ASB case	93.0%	93.0%
% of customers satisfied that their views are being taken into account	75.0%	75.4%
% of all Customer Service Promises met	100%	97.0%

We're committed to providing a good, value for money service to all our customers. Feedback helps shape this service so if you have experienced anything you want us to know about – good or bad – please let us know. We understand that occasionally things do go wrong and we need to learn from these experiences. Our formal complaints procedure allows us to investigate in a fair and honest way and change things so we do better next time. You can get in touch with us using the details at the top of the page.

Our lucky winners this month are...

Winter 2015 wordsearch competition

Mrs Gillian Eardley from Saxilby

Thanks to everyone who took part in the competition and check out the back page for this issues.

Repairs satisfaction survey

Miss Carol Curtis from Market Rasen

Their voucher prizes are on the way to them.

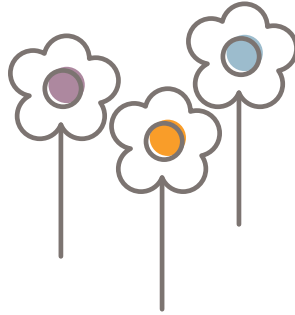


Spring wordsearch



Find and circle all of the hidden words.

- | | |
|----------|-----------|
| BLOSSOM | GREEN |
| MELTING | RAINBOW |
| SEEDS | TULIPS |
| DAFFODIL | GROWTH |
| PUDDLE | RAINDROPS |
| SUNSHINE | UMBRELLA |



Q W N M S T J G D O B I
 H V E L D D U P C E L R
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 E K S R D E R Z D W W P
 E W B B G N L T O S C S
 N G R O W T H L A Q C O
 T C L I D O F F A D M F

Please complete your details below for a chance of winning a £20 voucher. Send your completed Wordsearch to:
Marketing and Communications, Freepost RTSH-THEK-SRRJ,
Acis, Acis House, Bridge Street, Gainsborough DN21 1GG.
 Closing date: 6 June 2016

Name:.....

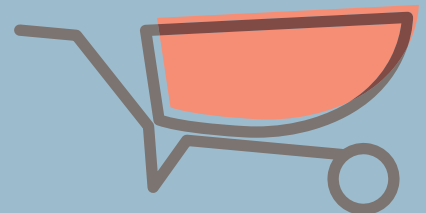
Address:.....

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.....Telephone:.....

Just for fun! Gardening quiz

- 1 Who was the presenter of Gardeners' World from 1969 to 1976?
- 2 What name is given to the Japanese art of flower arranging?
- 3 Helianthus is another name for which flower?
- 4 Which television presenter and gardener owns a garden in Herefordshire called Longmeadow?
- 5 Often used in salads, what has the botanical name nasturtium officinale?
- 6 Vanilla flavouring is derived from which flower?
- 7 What has varieties beefsteak, plum and cherry?
- 8 Which tree was traditionally planted in graveyards and is associated with eternity?
- 9 What word is used to describe plants that like acid soil and will not grow in alkaline soils?
- 10 Which fruit was cultivated from crossing a blackberry and a raspberry?



Answers in the next issue!