

LOCAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE EDITION

MARCH 2008

# TEXAS CO-OP POWER

*Texas Backyards Gone*

**WILD**



**P L U S**

**Bamboo**

**Cooking with Soda Pop**

**Hit the Road:  
Fort Davis to Alpine**



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# March 2008

VOLUME 64 NUMBER 9



## FEATURES

### 6 Texas Backyards Gone Wild

By Sheryl Smith-Rodgers

*A wildscape garden is full of nature's mini-dramas. Birds make nests and raise fledglings. The caterpillars that munch on your plants turn into beautiful butterflies. Pull up a garden chair and enjoy.*

### 14 Bamboo: The Good, the Bad, the Ugly

By Clay Coppedge

*Can you say, "clumping"? That's what you want: clumping bamboo. Never, ever ask for running bamboo.*

## FAVORITES

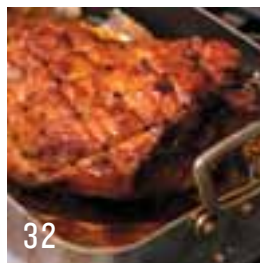
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## TEXAS CO-OP POWER

*Texas Co-op Power* is published by your electric cooperative to enhance the quality of life of its member-customers in an educational and entertaining format.

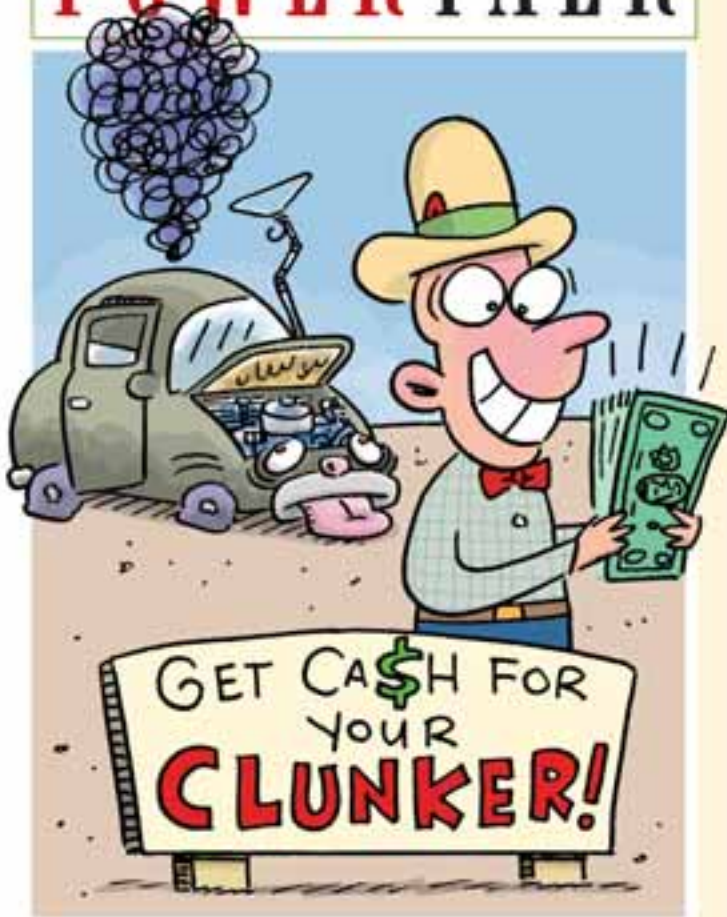
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# POWER TALK



## TRADE YOUR CLUNKER FOR BIG BUCKS

The State of Texas has \$90 million to spend getting older vehicles off the road in 16 counties that have pollution problems. The Drive a Clean Machine program will provide qualifying owners of older, high-polluting vehicles with vouchers worth up to \$3,500 toward the purchase of qualifying newer, cleaner vehicles. The owners must surrender their old vehicles to buy new ones.

The old vehicles must be 10 years old or older, or have failed state emissions tests. To qualify, a participating family must earn no more than 300 percent of the federal poverty level. For example, a family of four with an annual net income of less than \$61,950 would be eligible.

The counties included in the program are Collin, Dallas, Denton, Ellis, Johnson, Kaufman, Parker, Rockwall and Tarrant in North Texas; Brazoria, Fort Bend, Galveston, Harris and Montgomery in the Houston area; and Travis and Williamson in the Austin area.

For all the details, go to [www.driveacleanmachine.org](http://www.driveacleanmachine.org).

# letters

(512) 468-7379, <http://lonestarwildlife.com> or e-mail [jamie@lonestarcwildlife.com](mailto:jamie@lonestarcwildlife.com).

## NO BOOK BURNINGS IN SWEETWATER

Carlton Stowers in the December 2007 Footnotes in History, mentions the book burning alleged to have occurred in Sweetwater in 1925 as the result of Dorothy Scarborough's book, *The Wind*. No trace of factual evidence [of a book burning] was ever uncovered. The book did create a furor in Sweetwater. The public library was unable to keep a copy on the shelves. The frustrated librarian finally chained the book to the circulation desk to prevent it from being stolen. She also retyped the book, with a carbon copy, which she had bound and put into circulation.

*Texas Co-op Power* readers might be more interested in Scarborough's book *In the Land of Cotton*, which chronicles the creation of rural cooperatives in East Texas.

JENA MOFFITT, *Sweetwater*



## SISTERS CARING

I must share my excitement and joy over the "Cinematic Cats" story! I applaud this kind of story as well as applaud the twin sisters who love the cats/animals and the work they do on Lone Star Wildlife Ranch.

CINDY LEWIS, *Blue Ridge Fannin County Electric Co-op*

**Editor's note:** Sisters Jamie Ruscigno and Jewels Satterfield asked that we publish contact information for them at the Lone Star Wildlife Ranch:

## LEAVE WILDCATS WILD

Regarding the "Cinematic Cats" feature in your January issue, there can be no doubt that the ladies have a deep care for the four mountain lions and two tigers in the story. Humans are fascinated by and drawn to wild animals.

The problem with articles such as "Cinematic Cats" is that they convey the idea that having wild animals as pets is exciting and harmless. I can assure your readers that it is not harmless to the animals. Purring Kasey and the playful cubs lead lives that are deeply diminished compared to wild lives. Wild animals belong in the wild.

CRAIG BRESTRUP, PH.D.

*Wildlife Rescue & Rehabilitation*  
Kendalia

## TIME OUT FOR TEXAS CO-OP POWER

What my *Texas Co-op Power* lacks in size, it more than makes up for in variety and interest of articles.

I take them with me for the doctor or dentist, where the newest magazine is at least three months old. I keep one in the car for the times in the Wal-Mart parking lot when my wife says, "Wait for me, I'll be right back." Translated, that means at least 30 minutes.

Keep up the good work.

TOMMY FLUKER, *Livingston Sam Houston Electric Co-op*

**Correction:** Due to an editing error, the January article on "Brenham in the '20s," mentioned a Ku Klux Klan torching that actually took place in the 1890s.

We want to hear from our readers. Send letters to: Editor, *Texas Co-op Power*, 2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704, e-mail us at [letters@texas-ec.org](mailto:letters@texas-ec.org), or submit online at [www.texascooppower.com](http://www.texascooppower.com). Please include the name of your town and electric co-op. Letters may be edited for clarity and length and are printed as space allows. Read additional letters at [www.texascooppower.com](http://www.texascooppower.com).

# H A P P E N I N G S

The abundantly flowering azalea is a perfect harbinger of spring flowers to come. In Nacogdoches, the first "Azalea City of America," the bushes burst forth around mid-March. The **NACOGDOCHES AZALEA TRAIL** is open March 15–31 in honor of the prolific bloom.

The 20 miles of self-guided driving tours include a stop at the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden at Stephen F. Austin State University, the largest azalea garden in the state. There you'll find one of the most diverse collections of the flowering shrub in the U.S., with brilliant purple, orange, yellow, red, pink and white blossoms. The trails also guide you to residential gardens and public spaces thick with blooming azaleas. Each trail starts at the Visitor's Center, located on the downtown square at 200 E. Main St. Color-coded signs provide directional assistance along the trails.



For more information or to schedule a group tour, call the Convention and Visitors Bureau at 1-888-OLDEST-TOWN (653-3788) or go to [www.visitnacogdoches.org](http://www.visitnacogdoches.org).

## ONCE TREACHEROUS COURTHOUSE BROUGHT UP TO DATE

The Shackelford County Courthouse, which sits in the center of Albany, was vacant for many years due to dangerous conditions that made it unsafe. A malfunctioning electrical system and gas space heaters put the structure at great risk for a fire. Water leaks from the downspout and plumbing systems also caused the courthouse interior to flood, damaging the antique finishes and historical documents the building housed. Thanks to the Historic Courthouse Preservation Plan, this courthouse, originally built in 1884, was renovated in 2001, restoring the building's safety and beauty.



—From *The Courthouses of Texas*, Texas A&M University Press, second edition, 2007

## WHO KNEW?



### CULINARY CAPITALS

Continuing our spotlight on unique town titles, here are some state "capitals" officially designated by the Legislature that focus on a few of Texans' favorite foods.

- CALDWELL**—Kolache
- ELGIN**—Sausage
- FRIONA**—Cheeseburger
- HAWKINS**—Pancake
- LOCKHART**—Barbecue
- MADISONVILLE**—Mushroom
- WESLACO**—Citrus

## CHECK IT OUT

### LIVE IN THE ALAMO

Texas musician K.R. Wood made history with his new album, "Davy Crockett's Fiddle Plays On: Live in the Alamo." Wood and his band, The Fathers of Texas, were the first musical group granted permission from the Daughters of the Republic of Texas to record live inside the Shrine of the Alamo. But the historical significance of this album doesn't stop there. The Witte Museum allowed Wood to use a fiddle from its collection that reportedly belonged to Davy Crockett.

The album was recorded during the 171st anniversary of the siege of the Alamo and features several guest artists including the Alamo choir



and descendents of Crockett himself. Songs range from traditional fiddle tunes to new originals.


You can listen to sample songs or purchase the album for \$20 plus tax at [www.texannarecords.com](http://www.texannarecords.com).

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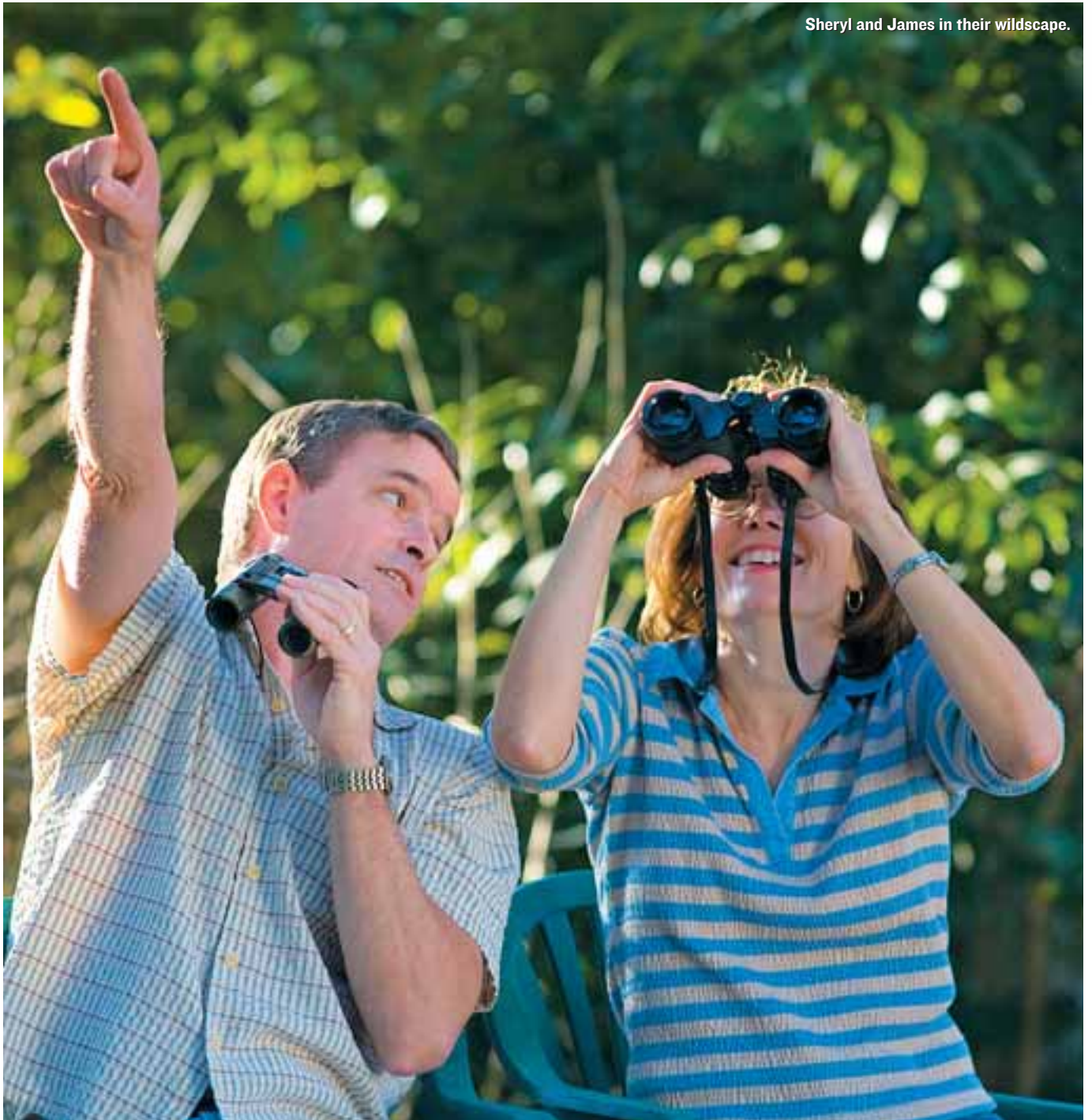
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Texas Backyards Gone

# WILD

BY SHERYL SMITH-RODGERS



Sheryl and James in their wildscape.

WILL VAN OVERBEEK

# Anyone driving by one evening last August probably thought we were nuts. Seated in plastic lawn chairs, binoculars at eye level, my husband and I both had our heads craned upward at a huge live oak in our front yard.

A few weeks before, a pair of golden-fronted woodpeckers had drilled a hole high in a thick branch. Now we knew why. A little head kept popping out of the cavity, eager to devour whatever the exhausted parents brought to eat.

Throughout summer, James and I enjoyed other mini-dramas in our yard: Three black-bellied whistling ducks roosted in the same oak. Amid a thicket of lantana, a yellow garden spider caught grasshoppers on her large orb web. Black-chinned hummingbirds battled over sugar-water feeders. Delicate queen butterflies swarmed a thick patch of mistflowers. On a nearby butterfly weed, tiny queen caterpillars chomped through green leaves, quickly growing chubby and long.

The more we planted, the more fun we had watching nature respond. So we added more natives, including Texas betony, rock rose and several varieties of salvia. We bought more birdbaths and hung more hummingbird feeders. For toads, we set out shallow water bowls and halves of a broken pot for shelter.

Our efforts to create a wildlife habitat earned our yard certification as a Texas Wildscape through the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. The program encourages landowners to create pockets of habitat for the benefit of birds, small mammals, reptiles and butterflies. (Habitats must comply with local and county ordinances.) Since 1994, Texas Wildscapes has certified approximately 3,500 residential yards, school grounds and corporate parks across the state.

To qualify, a landscape must be planted with at least 50 percent native vegetation, provide year-round food and water for wildlife, and offer shelter, such as rock piles, nest boxes and toad houses. (Bonus: Native plants generally

require less care and water.)

The program targets two major objectives: offset habitat loss due to increasing urban sprawl and encourage Texans—especially children—to get outside and interact with nature.

“Three years ago, I had a butterfly on my finger, and a girl in junior high was scared to touch it!” recalled Mark Klym, Texas Wildscapes coordinator. “A reaction like that means we’ve got to get our young people more involved with nature.”

## NORTHSIDE ELEMENTARY

As a prime example, Klym points to Northside Elementary School in Angleton, where students, staff and parents tend a half-acre Texas Wildscape. The fenced area features separate ponds for koi (non-native) and turtles plus herb, vegetable and butterfly gardens. Bird and hummingbird feeders as well as a purple martin house attract scores of birds. At one pond, youngsters love visiting Rosie, an American red-bellied turtle (also a non-native) who “rules the roost.”

“Some of our students don’t have a backyard of their own, so our habitat is very exciting to them,” said instructor Pam Williams. “Teachers utilize the habitat tremendously in their science curriculums and as rewards for students who make high grades and have perfect attendance.”

Benches and picnic tables provide places to sit and watch whatever happens to be unfolding that day in the habitat: Tadpoles wiggling in the pond, dragonflies sunning on rocks, plump tomatoes reddening by the dozens.

“We’re within the monarch coastal flyway,” Williams added. “The kids have held butterflies still wet from their chrysalises and watched as they flew



away. Our students are well versed in all aspects of nature, thanks to our wildscape.”

## STAR OF TEXAS B&B

Near Brownwood, Debbie and Don Morelock tend a certified garden around their home and complex of guest cottages, called Star of Texas Bed and Breakfast. Wildflowers, bird feeders, birdbaths, a small pond and a variety of native plants—such as Texas sage, salvias and American beautyberry—create a lush habitat that’s frequented by birds, butterflies and other critters.

The couple especially enjoys watching a pair of eastern screech owls that raise their young each year in a constructed nest box hung on a dead tree. “They’re such cute creatures,” Debbie said. “They’ve brought me the most joy.”

In the future, the Morelocks hope to entice an endangered species to their garden. “Horned lizards have been seen on a nearby ranch,” she said. “On our

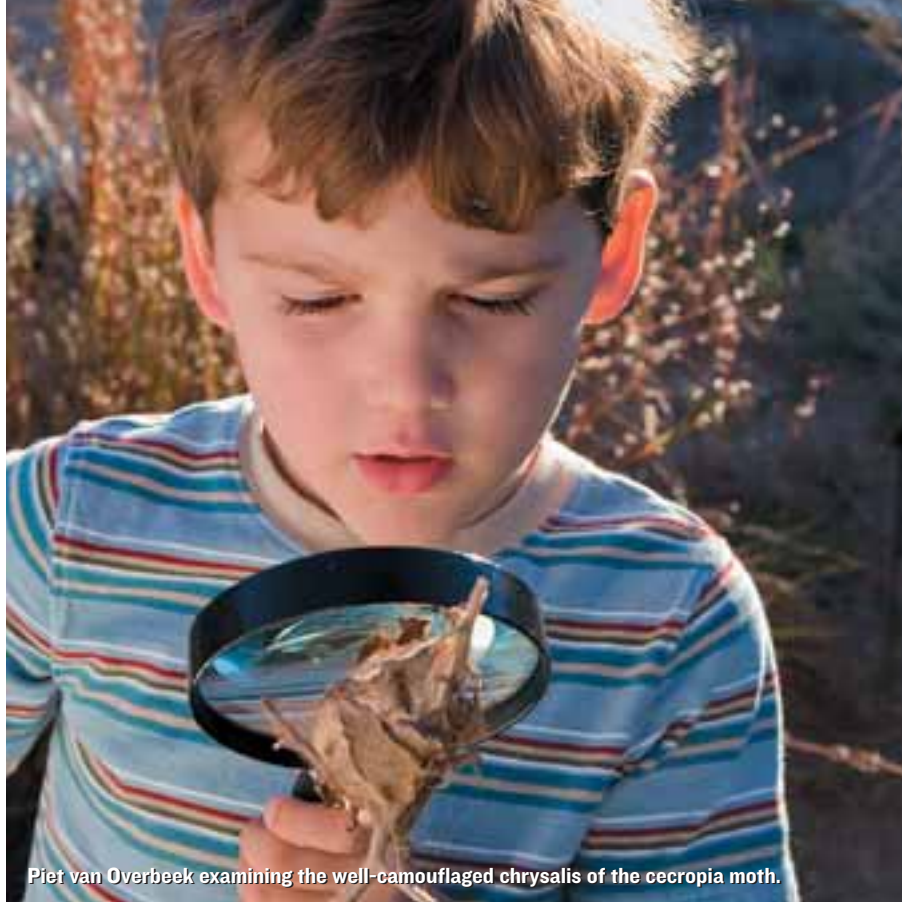
property, we have several beds of red ants, which they eat.”

**EL PASOANS  
JOHN & KATHY KISED A**

In El Paso, Kathy and John Kiseda last year glimpsed a greater earless lizard and red-spotted toad in their yard, a certified Texas Wildscape. A number of other birds and animals have visited, too. Hermit thrushes dined on turk’s cap and yaupon holly. Gambel’s quail fed on and roosted in junipers. Fresh scat marked recent stopovers by gray foxes.

“A giant hesperaloe sent out its first-ever flower stalk this past year,” John said. “It attracted verdins and various hummers, who vied for the copious nectar from its waxy flowers.” Within their yard, the couple has identified 120-plus species of birds, 11 mammal species, 10 herptile species and 30 species of butterflies and moths.

“We love our wildscape because we think it’s the right thing to do, and we also use it as a learning (continued on page 12)



Piet van Overbeek examining the well-camouflaged chrysalis of the cecropia moth.

WILL VAN OVERBEEK

**HOW TO GO WILD**

center’s website, [www.wildflower.org](http://www.wildflower.org), to select plants for your backyard habitat no matter where you live.

If you enjoy butterfly gardening, be sure to visit the Butterflies and Moths of North America database by clicking Explore Plants then Recommended Species to find plants that provide resources for butterflies and moths. And if you have questions, you can ask “Mr. Smarty Plants” at the same web address.

**Get Certified**

Texas Wildscapes certification requirements:

- At least 50 percent native plants
- Food for wildlife year-round
- Shelter
- Water
- \$15 certification fee

Those certified may purchase a metal “Texas Wildscape” sign for \$15.

For application information and planting tips, go to [www.tpwd.state.tx.us/wildscapes](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/wildscapes). Or call Mark Klym at (512) 389-4644.

**Books**

- *Texas Native Plants: Landscaping Region by Region*, Sally Wasowski (Gulf Publishing, 2002). Contains more than 400 photos of native plants along with information on how

to plant and care for each one.

- *Texas Wildscapes: Gardening for Wildlife* (soon to be reprinted by Texas A&M Press). This how-to manual helps gardeners create their own backyard habitat. Color photographs illustrate different kinds of gardens and the wildlife species they attract.



The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

BOB DAEMMRICH

**Check Out Lady Bird’s  
Habitat Gardens**

The 279-acre Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in southwest Austin is a great place to see native plant wildlife gardens and a Texas Parks and Wildlife/National Wildlife Federation-certified habitat garden. Visit the



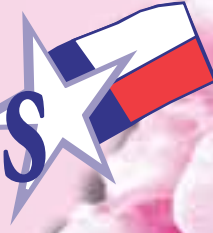
Water is key to a thriving wildscape.

WILL VAN OVERBEEK



# Nacogdoches

*the oldest town in Texas*



## Nacogdoches Azalea Trail March 15 - 31, 2008

Strolling through the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden in Nacogdoches is like walking through a kaleidoscope. Your senses are bombarded by brilliant hues of purple, orange, yellow, red, pink and white blooms.

As the largest azalea garden in Texas, the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden boasts one of the most diverse azalea collections in the United States. It's the centerpiece of the annual Nacogdoches Azalea Trail, March 15 to 31, 2008.

Walking paths weave through the garden and draw attention to more than 7,000 evergreen and native azaleas. At the heart of the garden is the Council Ring, surrounded by deep watermelon pink blooms of the "Judge Solomon" and white accents of "Mrs. B. B. Gerbing."

"The large, yellow fragrant blooms of the 'Aromi Sunrise' azalea are a real attention grabber," said Barbara Stump, the garden's project coordinator. "It is terrifically unusual, and it really stands out in the garden."

During the annual Nacogdoches Azalea Trail, visitors enjoy guided tours of the garden as well as a self-guided driving tour of the town's most beautifully manicured residential gardens.

While the colorful azaleas are the main attraction during the spring, plenty of interesting

sites provide visitors with opportunities to experience the town's character.

Exploring the historic, red-bricked downtown district is a relaxing Saturday afternoon activity. The district dates back to the late 1700s, when Spanish settlers established the town.

A number of artisan shops feature original works of stained glass, wire-wrapped jewelry, pottery and oil paintings. Visitors also can shop in a variety of antique shops and upscale boutiques.

A few blocks from the Main Street District is the Sterne-Hoya House Museum. Built around 1830, the home conjures up images of the great men who lived and died for Texas. The most well known Nacogdoches landmark is the 1936 replica of Don Antonio Gil Y'Barbo's stone house, the Old Stone Fort Museum, located on the Stephen F. Austin State University campus.

A glimpse into life in the 19th Century can be found at Millard's Crossing Historic Village. The collection of historic structures ranges from a simple log cabin to a one room country church, and are furnished with an eclectic collection of antiques. Plan your visit today!

### NACOGDOCHES POINTS OF INTEREST

#### Nacogdoches Azalea Trail March 15-31, 2008

Ruby M. Mize  
Azalea Garden  
*on the SFA campus*

Sterne-Hoya  
House Museum  
*211 S. Lanana St.*  
10 a.m.-4 p.m. Tues.-Sat.

Old Stone Fort Museum  
*on the SFA campus*  
9 a.m.-5 p.m., Tues.-Sat.  
1-5 p.m., Sun.

Millard's Crossing  
Historic Village  
*U.S. Highway 59 N.*  
9 a.m.-4 p.m., Mon.-Sat.  
1-4 p.m., Sun.



# 888-OLDEST-TOWN

[www.nacogdochesazaleas.com](http://www.nacogdochesazaleas.com)

## HOW TO GROW WILD

### Wildscaping Tips

- Letting an area “go wild” will not produce an effective wildscape. Historically, fire, grazing and other controls naturally kept woody and brushy species in check. Allowing an area to “go wild” allows these to overgrow and choke out many of the native species.
- Use native plants that produce seeds, nuts, berries and nectar. Plants of varying sizes and seasons have the greatest effect.
- Water is vital. Shallow pools, birdbaths, planter trays and water troughs work well.
- Rock walls, brick piles and stacked wood make excellent cover and homes for insects, reptiles and small mammals. Place several yards from the house.
- Providing a variety of bird feeders, feed trays and nest boxes will diversify the wildlife attracted to a wildscape.
- Composting provides natural sources of nutrients to a developing wildscape.

*Excerpted from brochure, “Texas Wildscapes: Gardening for Wildlife”*

### Nest Boxes

- Screech owl boxes made of cedar. Handmade in Nacogdoches, \$50 plus tax and shipping. Order forms available at [www.owlshack.com](http://www.owlshack.com) (no orders by phone).
- Bat houses. For vendors of certified models, contact Bat Conservation International (BCI) at (512) 327-9721; [www.batcon.org](http://www.batcon.org). BCI markets several designs ranging in price from \$77 to \$240.



An eastern screech owl in its nest box.



Black-chinned hummingbird

LARRY DITTO

### Hummingbird Feed

Mix 1 part regular household sugar to 4 parts water. Red food coloring is not necessary. **NEVER** use honey in place of sugar. Refrigerate leftover mixture. Change sugar water in feeder every few days to keep it from fermenting. Scrub the feeder at each filling to prevent molds from growing.

*Texas Parks and Wildlife Department*

### Pesticides vs. Repellents

Limited use of pesticides and herbicides is permitted. Remember, though, pesticides never kill just the targeted pest. They often harm other animals as well. The only completely safe way to deal with chemicals is not to use them.

Here is a recipe for a popular homemade repellent spray. The concentrate will keep in the refrigerator for a month or more. When ready to use, put 1 tablespoon into a pint of water in a spray bottle, then add a few drops of liquid soap. Shake gently and spray directly on plants.

#### Cayenne Repellent Spray Concentrate

- 1 unpeeled onion
- 1 unpeeled head of garlic
- 1 tablespoon cayenne pepper
- 3 pints water

Chop onion and garlic. Combine all ingredients in saucepan. Simmer 20 minutes. Cool and store in jar. Refrigerate.



Checkered setwing on a Mexican hat.

LARRY DITTO

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# APPLY NOW for TREWA Scholarships



The Texas Rural Electric Women's Association (TREWA) will award **ten \$1,000 academic scholarships** to college students in 2008.

- Apply by April 1, 2008.
- Applicant must be a current TREWA member or child of a current TREWA member.
- TREWA membership dues are \$6 per year.
- Scholarship applications and TREWA membership forms are available from TREWA, c/o Texas Electric Cooperatives, 2550 S. I-35, Austin, TX 78704.

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TEXAS' LARGEST RURAL LENDER



A sulphur butterfly enjoys a coneflower.

WILL VAN OYEBECK



Grace Burr with her red-eared slider.

WILL VAN OYEBECK

(continued from page 8) tool for visitors," said John, an animal curator at the El Paso Zoo. "Our yard is often a part of local garden tours."

## BENTSEN PALM DEVELOPMENT

Lori Rhodes emphasizes education, too. She and her husband, Mike, own one of the state's largest certified habitats: a 2,000-acre master-planned community under way in the Rio Grande Valley town of Mission. The entire Bentsen Palm Development, which will include single-family residences, a gated adult community and RV park, embraces the Texas Wildscape program.

"Our roadways, parks, common areas, entrances and community centers are all certified," Lori said. "We're teaching the concept of Texas Wildscapes to homeowners and how to



Texas horned toad

LARRY DITTO

plant natives. One way is through our 35-acre Texas Wildscape Demonstration Site, which flourishes with more than 10,000 plants and trees that feed and protect wildlife. We follow a natural organic program and have an abundance of wildlife, especially butterflies.”

In some of the development’s parks, the Rhodes purposely left dirt piles and other “wild” areas where youngsters can dig around, explore and create their own adventures. “We believe that in order for people to want to protect our environment and be a part of the solution, not the problem, they need opportunities as children to experience nature,” Lori explained.

**KIDS AT HEART**

Like children, James and I love finding weird bugs, strange egg cases and critters of all kinds, including toads and an occasional rat snake (they’re harmless). We admire the snakes from a respectable distance and relocate the toads to a tangle of vines, shrubs and dead limbs that’s overtaken a small backyard corner.

“There’s someone in the sanctuary!” I exclaim whenever I spy a toad languishing in one of the shallow water bowls we put there. Then we both dash out to see.

Yes, the neighbors probably think we’re both nuts, but we sure have fun in our wildscape!

*Sheryl Smith-Rodgers is a frequent contributor to Texas Co-op Power. She’s written about everything from Greater Tuna to the Caverns of Sonora for us.*

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BY CLAY COPPEDGE

# B THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY

## BAMBOO IS NOT NATIVE TO TEXAS BUT WAS IMPORTED HERE FROM HADES.

Actually, that's not quite true. One species of bamboo, *Arundinaria*, is native to part of Texas but is usually called "river cane." Caney Creek in Wharton County was originally called Canebrake Creek after the native river cane that banked its sides.

But for all intents and purposes, most of the bamboo you see growing in Texas, especially in urban areas, is not native. And that's where people get the idea that it originally served as windbreak along the River Styx. Stories of bamboo infestations and aggressive invasions of the stuff have given it that reputation in some quarters. It's called "damn-boo" and "the plant that ate the neighborhood" by its detractors.

On the other end of the spectrum, on the banks of Little River in Milam County, Kinder and Mary Len Chambers willingly and happily grow about 60 different kinds of bamboo on their property. They are members of both the Texas and American bamboo societies, and they are bamboo boosters of the first order. But they have heard the horror stories and affirm that some people have had horrendous experiences with bamboo. "There's no doubt that it's a problem in some areas," Kinder readily admits.

The couple won't defend bamboo to people who are overrun with it, but they want people to know that there are hundreds of varieties of bamboo, and not all of them grow up to act like something from "Little Shop of Horrors." They believe that golden bamboo (*Phyllostachys aurea*) has sullied the reputation of other, more benign varieties. This is the plant that people generally talk about when they talk about the plant that ate their neighbor's yard.

It's important to know that there are basically two types of bamboo—running and clumping. The runners are the ones that can take over a landscape if given half a chance. The clumpers grow much more slowly. The bulb-shaped rhizomes (underground stems) on clumping varieties are short, and new shoots, called culms, come up closer to the parent. The long, far-ranging rhizomes on running bamboo can extend for some distance and are jointed with nodes at which a culm or another rhizome can grow. Leave running bamboo alone and it will lift sidewalks and driveways and even come up through the floorboards inside houses in its insatiable desire to become Lord of the Flora. If someone is talking to you about "damn-boo," they are likely talking about a variety of running bamboo.

Kinder and Mary Len don't suggest trying to dig the roots out of already established problem bamboo. Because the roots must have leaves to draw energy from the sun, he suggests divorcing the roots from the sun by killing every shoot that comes up. The shoots will come back, but each time they will be smaller until they don't bother coming back at all.

If the bamboo grove is not already too well established, if it hasn't already devoured the neighborhood or countryside, he suggests pruning the roots. But, he admits, "That's a pretty big chore for an already existing grove."

In urban settings, he suggests using a sharp, narrow shovel and digging in about 6 to 8 inches. Don't expect to find a taproot, because you won't. Farmers, or people with a considerable amount of acreage, can use a tractor and subsoiler to do the job.

The pair first got interested in bamboo as a means of erosion control along the

portion of Little River that runs through their land. They were losing about 2 feet a year to erosion.

Their place is a demonstration farm for growers and prospective growers of bamboo. They have a bamboo treehouse, bamboo furniture and a bamboo stair railing. Members of the Texas Bamboo Society can get cuttings from the Chambers' farm for free. First-timers pay \$40 for their cutting, which is used to make them official members of the society.

"We're available for any kind of information about bamboo that you might want," Kinder says. "If you want to know how to grow it, we'll show you how to grow it. If you want to get rid of it, we'll show you how to do that too."

Bamboo enthusiasts suggest that anybody worried about controlling running bamboo should get a clumping variety. "Some of the clumping types are beautiful," said Danielle Kaplan, office manager for Utility Research Garden in Austin. "The look is different. It grows a little each year and is easier to control. The fear that most people have when they plant bamboo is that it will run and take over the neighbor's yard."

To make sure that doesn't happen she suggests using in-ground root barriers to not only control the spread of the plant but to shape the bamboo stand that you want to grow. The barriers are plastic and flexible, allowing you to grow the bamboo stand in whatever shape you desire. She concedes that sometimes it will jump the barrier.

"When that happens, just hack it off," she suggests.

Container bamboo can be placed outdoors or even indoors by a sunny window. "We're trying to get the word out that bamboo can make really nice indoor or container plants," Kaplan says.

Others are trying to get the word out that bamboo should be avoided as a dangerous invasive. Bamboo showed up on the "Texas' Least Wanted List" at a conference on invasive species at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin last year. Andrea DeLong-Amaya, director of gardens and growing, believes that a little bit of knowledge can go a long way in deciding whether or not bamboo is right for you or your landscape.

"The main thing is to find a species that won't be invasive," she says. "People considering bamboo should ask themselves why they want it and then determine if there is a native species that will suit their purposes just as well.

"For example, if you like a lush look, horsetail might do just as well."

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*The Texas Bamboo Society meets on the third Saturday of the month at Taniguchi Japanese Garden in the Zilker Botanical Gardens in Austin. You can contact Kinder Chambers via e-mail at [txbooguru@aol.com](mailto:txbooguru@aol.com).*

*Clay Coppedge is the state writer for Country World newspaper. He lives and works near Walburg.*



© CORBIS

This photo, circa 1880s, of clumping bamboo was taken in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). For scale, note the man circled.

Bamboo is primarily an import to the United States, and it doesn't grow as tall here as the clumping variety shown above. But if you are going for size, some classic giant bamboo varieties can grow 100 feet tall and 10 inches in diameter in South and even Central Texas.

The smallest bamboo varieties such as *Pleioblastus distichus* grow less than a foot tall. But even they need controlling. An Alabama distributor warns that mowing around his patch didn't stop its advancement. The runners simply grew 3-inch-tall culms (shoots).

Bamboos are either clumping or running grasses. They produce new shoots each growing season—that's usually the spring for running bamboo. A shoot reaches its full height in one growing season, growing a foot or more a day. With ample rain, the next year's shoots will be taller and thicker.

Bamboo is a popular renewable construction material. It's used for flooring, furniture and kitchen utensils. The shoots take three to six years to mature and harden, but they grow much faster than trees and can be harvested without doing damage to the underground root system for the next crop.

For more information on bamboo in Texas, go to [www.texasbamboosociety.net](http://www.texasbamboosociety.net).

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## Are You Up To Speed on Power Cord Safety?

### ARE LAMP, EXTENSION, TELEPHONE AND OTHER CORDS PLACED OUT OF THE FLOW OF TRAFFIC?

Cords stretched across walkways may cause someone to trip—and the wear and tear could expose wires in an electrical cord, creating a dangerous shock hazard. Whenever possible, arrange furniture so that outlets are available for lamps and appliances without the use of extension cords.



Hiding an extension cord under a rug can cause a fire.

Extension cords should not be used as a substitute for permanent wiring. If you must use an extension cord, place it on the floor against a wall where people cannot trip over it.

### ARE CORDS OUT FROM BENEATH FURNITURE AND RUGS OR CARPETING?

Furniture resting on cords can damage them. Electric cords that run

under carpeting can overheat and cause a fire. Remove cords from under furniture or carpeting. Replace damaged or frayed cords.

### ARE CORDS ATTACHED TO WALLS, BASEBOARDS, ETC., WITH NAILS OR STAPLES?

Nails or staples can damage cords, presenting fire and shock hazards. After disconnecting the power, remove nails and staples from cords. Check wiring for damage. Use tape if necessary to attach cords to walls or floors.

### ARE ELECTRICAL CORDS IN GOOD CONDITION, NOT FRAYED OR CRACKED?

Damaged cords may cause a shock or fire. Replace frayed or cracked cords.

### DO EXTENSION CORDS CARRY NO MORE THAN THEIR PROPER LOAD, AS INDICATED BY THE RATINGS LABELED ON THE CORD AND THE APPLIANCE?

Overloaded extension cords may cause fires. Replace No. 18 gauge cords with No. 16 gauge cords. Older extension cords using small (No. 18 gauge) wires can overheat at 15 or 20 amps. Change the cord to a higher-rated one or unplug some appliances if the rating on the cord is exceeded by the power requirements of the appliances plugged into the cord.



## DON'T LET YOUR CLOTHES DRYER SHRINK YOUR WALLET

Give your dryer—and your clothes—a longer life by treating your appliance with care on laundry day. Here's how:

- One simple chore can speed up drying time, cut your dryer's energy use, prevent a fire and prolong the life of your machine: Clean the lint filter after every use. Simply remove the lint. Tip: If soap and fabric softener have built up on the screen, wash it with soap and water. Occasionally vacuum the chute that houses the filter.

- Use rigid, not flexible, duct work to help your dryer vent efficiently and to comply with building codes. Unfasten the duct from the dryer once a year and vacuum it.

- Lubricate the flap of the exhaust vent on the outside of your house once a year. Use a vacuum or lint brush to clear the vent so air can easily pass through it. A clogged vent can cause a fire.

- Cut down on drying time if your clothes constantly come out wrinkled. That means you're overdrying.

- Add dryer sheets before turning on the dryer. Tossing them in after clothes are warm can stain the clothes.

- And don't forget "solar" clothes drying—hang them on a clothesline and let nature do the work.

## SOMETHING FOR NOTHING

### Free Ways To Lower Your Electric Bill

- Place lamps in corners to reflect light from two walls instead of one. Light-colored walls reflect more light than dark walls, so less light is needed. Use task lighting, focused where you need it, rather than lighting an entire room.
- Shiny reflector pans under your stove burners help focus the heat more efficiently. Tight-fitting lids on pots and pans produce results faster by not letting heat escape, allowing you to use less heat and less water. You can turn the heat off earlier and allow food to finish cooking with the residual heat, since the heat is retained longer.

## APPLIANCE TAX HOLIDAY ON HORIZON

If you have an appliance purchase in your future, you might want to hold off until Memorial Day weekend. From 12:01 a.m. on Saturday, May 24, to 11:59 p.m. on Monday, May 26, certain energy-efficient products will be sold without the state sales tax.

You could realize a substantial savings, especially on larger products such as air conditioners or refrigerators—that is, if they qualify under the Energy Star program.

Energy Star is a joint effort of the U.S. Department of Energy and the Environmental Protection Agency. Earning the Energy Star means a product meets strict energy-efficiency guidelines set by the agencies.

The products qualifying for the exemption are:

- Air conditioners priced under \$6,000 (room and central units)
- Clothes washers (but not clothes dryers)
- Ceiling fans
- Dehumidifiers
- Dishwashers
- Light bulbs and fixtures (compact fluorescent)
- Programmable thermostats
- Refrigerators priced under \$2,000

Qualifying products will display the Energy Star logo on the appliance, the packaging or the Energy Guide label. Energy Star does not rate clothes dryers because there is little difference in energy use among all models.

There are no limits on the number of items that may be purchased during this new sales tax holiday, and an exemption certificate is not required.

The tax-free holiday also applies, with certain provisions, to Internet and catalog sales of eligible products. Layaway plans can be used to take advantage of the sales tax holiday, within certain parameters.

You can see lists of products that qualify for the tax holiday at [www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov).

## WHAT TO DO IF THE LIGHTS GO OUT

When severe weather causes power outages, employees of your electric cooperative begin working immediately to restore service as quickly as possible. Primary lines serving hundreds of customers are serviced first, and then the secondary lines serving just a few customers are serviced. Medical facilities and individuals on life-support systems are given top priority.

When your lights go out, look outside and see whether your neighbors are also in the dark. If they're not, check your fuse box or circuit breaker to see if you can locate the problem.

If the outage has affected your neighbors, call your electric cooperative. Don't assume that others have reported the outage.

Outages that occur in severe weather, or that last for an extended period of time, can place a heavy burden on the system at the moment power is restored. To prevent an overload and possibly another outage, take these steps:

- Leave only one inside light on.
- Turn off your thermostat.
- In cold weather, close windows and drapes to save heat. Gather your family in one room on the warm side of the house. Close the doors to the rest



of the house and use blankets to insulate the windows.

- Make sure your kitchen range is off, both the surface and the oven. Never use it for heat.

- Turn off all unnecessary appliances.
- Avoid opening the freezer door. A full, freestanding freezer will keep food at freezing temperatures about two days; a half-full freezer about one day.

- If you see a downed power line, STAY AWAY! And call your electric cooperative at once!

Leave your front porch light switched on so co-op employees will know when your power has been restored.

When power comes back on, slowly switch your appliances and lights back on and gradually return your thermostat to its normal setting.

## THE TRUTH ABOUT YOUR THERMOSTAT

Your home's thermostat controls how long your heating or cooling system operates. You can save energy and money by learning how this simple device operates.

One common myth is that the higher you set your thermostat when you return home, the faster your furnace will heat up your house. This isn't true since most furnaces deliver heat at the same rate no matter how high the thermostat is set. So just set your

thermostat at the temperature you'd like, and your furnace will heat your home as fast as it can.

Another myth regards the efficiency of setting your thermostat down when you don't need heating or cooling, such as at night or when no one is home. This myth states that a furnace works harder than normal to heat your home back to a comfortable temperature after the thermostat has been set back, resulting in little or no savings. This is not true, as has been proven by years of research and field observations. The longer your house stays at a reduced temperature when heating—or at an increased temperature when cooling—the more energy and money you'll save.

# My Little House

*Sitting here in the peace of the morning, the house drapes around me like a cherished shawl.*

BY MARGARET SMITH

At 7 a.m., I sit on my enclosed back porch at my laptop. Through broad windows I can see a gray and pink velvet dawn. In the early light, two pairs of cardinals study the ground in the horse paddock in front of me, looking for breakfast. Scissortails flutter about. Eight errant geese fly high, high overhead. If I move to the door, my garden comes into view. Some pinking tomatoes will need to be picked before the afternoon rains move in.

Sitting here in the peace of the morning, the house drapes around me like a cherished shawl, filled with the things I love: plants, books, framed embroidery, family pictures and a relic or two from the Victorian house where I grew up. My golden cat, Twister, and his sister, Violet, with little white feet and round eyes, sit by me, devoted to my hobbling, aging person. This is my Eden, my Little House. Modest, scarcely 800 square feet, nevertheless palatial for a humble woman who once only dreamed of having a place to escape the roaring freeways of the city.

When I was small, my mother used to sing an old, sentimental song to me. The song concludes: "I'll build a sweet little nest way out in the West/And I'll let the rest of the world go by." There is such tranquility in that line. Yet few of us have the opportunity to "let the rest of the world go by." My days were spent commuting to work, coping with the hubbub of high school English classes, grading papers, single-parenting my children, tending an elderly mother, maintaining a house, yard and automobile, stretching a monthly paycheck that never seemed to be enough for my family's needs—responsibilities ad infinitum.

Then the tumult of my world quieted. The children grew up and built their own worlds. Mother, at 102 years, slipped away in her sleep, and I reached 65 years, retirement time. My friends were creating their getaways, and I craved a summer cottage, a place to call my own. But a scornful secret voice laughed at the lilted one: "Forget it, Maggie. Buy a lawn chair, some earplugs to stifle the roar of I-45, and stop yearning for the impossible."

But the impossible became possible through a fortunate turn of events. I was offered a half-time position, using my English skills, with a modest salary to fortify my retirement income. In the meantime, my son and his wife moved into a home on FM 977 and County Road 408 at Evans Chapel, just west of Leona in Leon County. Knowing of my love for the area, my son offered me a plot behind his home for my dream getaway. Why not? I found a local carpenter who had solid

skills, and a bank that approved a small home loan. At completion, the little house resembled a plain crackerbox: 500 square feet with a bedroom, a bath and a living-dining room-kitchen in one room. I squeezed every penny. I selected the most economical fixtures I could find. I painted the interior myself. Scouting discount stores, my daughter and sister-in-law helped me select and coordinate furnishings. To enhance the plain, flat front of the square house, I affixed window boxes to each of the four windows. I dug, planted, mowed, trimmed. Soon I had a fence to frame the front of the property. My weekends were filled with work—for the love of the little house. And its name became The Little House.

That was 2000. Since, I have added an enclosed porch on the back of the house and an open garage. I have had family and friends here for parties, had holidays here, birthdays, reunions and even a summer workshop for English teachers. But most often, I come alone with the cats, work in the yard, write, read, listen to an Astros game and watch the birds.

My house is the completion of an old woman's dream. Your dream, if you have such a dream, is probably very different. Yet, if you long for a place to come to and feel you can never attain it, do not be daunted. If I can do it, anybody can.

Writer Henry David Thoreau, who had perhaps the world's most famous retreat, a cabin on Walden Pond, advises us about dreams: "If you have built castles in the air, that is where they should be ... Now put the foundations under them ..."

My advice to you in building those foundations: Don't wait—act now, because tomorrows aren't trustworthy; don't be afraid to take risks; sacrifice for what you want; work hard—above all, have fun in what you do. Certainly, my Little House does not house a Thoreau. It is the fulfillment of a dream, a place of peace for one simple woman who longed to escape the city and created that escape on a county road in Texas.

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*Navasota Valley and Houston County Electric Cooperatives serve Leon County.*

*Margaret Smith, a retired schoolteacher, lives in Spring when she's not at her Little House.*



## AROUND THE STATE

# Revival of the Drive-In

*Nostalgia and novelty are driving a resurgence of watching movies with all the comforts of the car.*

By Carol Wissmann



In the 1950s, more than 4,000 drive-ins dotted the American landscape. And Texas, of course, had the most, nearly 400. But times changed. Owners retired. Suburbs encroached, and land once relegated to the outer edges of towns increased in value and was sold to developers.

Happily, there is a minor resurgence of drive-in operators. Some too young to remember drive-ins during their heyday are reconditioning their hometown monoliths. Others are starting from scratch.

These revitalized or newly constructed drive-ins are finding an appreciative audience. People are once again enjoying the freedoms they cannot exercise in the mall cineplex. No need for hushed whispers. Cell phone users can converse without fear of reprisal. Smokers can smoke, and at many venues, animal lovers can bring their pets. RVs, SUVs, 18-wheelers, motorcycles, boats—even buses filled with tourists—all are welcome. Classic cars often congregate around nostalgic movies such as “Grease” or “American Graffiti.”

Unlike in the past, today’s selection of movies is often first-run. Digital stereo sound broadcasts from little local drive-in stations and is played over car radios. And many Texas drive-ins operate year-round—at least on the weekends.

With its two-for-the-price-of-one, double-feature entertainment and reasonably priced food, a night at the drive-in is much less expensive than at the mall cinema. Small, pajama-clad children are often admitted for free and can be tucked in back seats and covered with a blanket when sleepy—eliminating the expense of a baby-sitter. Teenagers can pile into the back of a pickup. Couples can snuggle.

John Earl Morrow is one of the new drive-in entrepreneurs. The owner and operator of Morrow Drilling in the Texas Panhandle used to indulge his childhood memories of movies shared with his family at Clarendon’s long-deserted Sandell Drive-In.

On Labor Day in 2002 he reopened the Sandell—unaware at the time that the original owner had opened on the same holiday in 1955. Today the venue retains the popular pink-and-black color combination from the 1950s. Morrow hopes to someday register the Sandell, which is restored almost to its original condition, on the roster of historic places.

Martin Murray of Albemarle, North Carolina, had a similar dream. In 1986, he began collecting theater equipment. “He was bringing projectors home and setting them on my kitchen table,” his wife, Marsha, laments. “I’d ask, ‘Why?’ and complain that he needed to do something with the mess.”

He did. The Murrays saved their paychecks, and in 2001, the family of seven moved from North Carolina to Ennis. There, from the ground up, they built their four-screen Galaxy Drive-In Theatre.

They opened the Galaxy in 2004 in the middle of the winter, thinking the colder weather would limit attendance and allow them time to perfect the running of the new business. They were wrong. From the beginning, the venture was an



Customers stand in the concession line at Ennis' Galaxy Drive-In.

enormous success, the couple says.

Now on weekends, cars frequently choke the Garrett exit on Interstate 45 before entering the four lanes of ticket booths. Although already capable of accommodating about 1,500 cars with four screens, numbers five, six, and seven are in the works. And since prohibitively high insurance rates make the traditional drive-in playground unfeasible, the Murrays say they are purchasing carnival rides for their own corner amusement park.

They also have plans for an 18-hole golf course.

While owning such an entertainment complex might sound like a life of fun and games, the realities can be sobering. "I get e-mails from people interested in getting into the business," Marsha says. "I tell them we work 365 nights a year—no vacations—no holidays. Hours are unreal. Last night, after making salads and cotton candy, I finally got home at 7 a.m. You give up a lot of personal and family time to make other people happy. Usually, I never hear another word from them again."

Still, many drive-in dreamers remain undaunted. Adam Hulin is a friend of the Murrays. He, too, left North Carolina—Asheboro—to reopen the Tower Drive-In Theatre in Rule, population, 708. Since the 1970s, when the indoor theater closed, the Tower is Haskell County's "last (and only) picture show."

More than just a place to watch a movie, Rule's drive-in is a social gathering spot—especially for teenagers. With the closest multiplex some 60 miles away in Abilene, the Tower pulls from several nearby counties. As testament to the drive-in's importance in the community, area residents raised the money to build the current metal screen replacement when the original wooden one blew down in 1998. Austin's venerable Alamo Drafthouse Cinema, named "the No. 1 theater doing it right" by *Entertainment Weekly*, once bused cinemaphiles 500 miles round trip for a night of nonstop movies at the Tower.

Some area residents come for food and conversation alone, leaving before the movie ever starts. To Hulin's surprise, a snowcone drenched in pickle juice is a favorite treat.

At the Sky-Vue Drive-In Theatre in Lamesa, where Buddy Holly once performed atop the projector room roof, owners Sam and Carolyn Kirkland feature a Pucker Powder machine and the Chihuahua Sandwich—a patented item invented in 1951. The recipe includes chili, grated raw cabbage and homemade pimento cheese, all atop two fried corn tortillas (onions and jalapeño optional).

It's a far cry from the glory days of the 1950s, but there are more than a handful of active theaters. Not only are the venues back in the black, but they're thriving in full Technicolor. Both owners and patrons alike can once again gather under star-studded skies to enjoy family, food, film and fun at the base of the big screens.

*Carol Wissmann is a freelance writer based in Gig Harbor, Washington.*

## GETTING THERE

A partial listing of Texas drive-ins is below. Call for show information and seasonal show times. Some close in the winter.

- Brazos Drive In**  
Granbury, (817) 573-1311 or 573-8086
- The Central Texas Drive-In Theatre**  
Killeen, (254) 616-6400
- Crossroads Drive-In Theatre**  
Shiner, (361) 594-3404
- Galaxy Drive-In Theatre**  
Ennis, (972) 875-5505
- Graham Drive-In Theatre**  
Graham, (817) 549-8478
- The Last Drive-In Picture Show**  
Gatesville, (254) 865-8445
- Midway Drive-In Theater**  
between Quitaque and Turkey,  
(806) 423-1166
- Sandell Drive-In**  
Clarendon, (806) 874-0685
- Showboat Drive-In Theater**  
Hockley, (281) 351-5224
- Sky-Vue Drive-In Theatre**  
Lamesa, (806) 872-7004
- Stars & Stripes Drive-In Theatre**  
Lubbock, (806) 749-7469
- Tascosa Drive-In**  
Amarillo, (806) 383-3882
- Tower Drive-In Theater**  
Rule, (940) 997-0137
- Town and Country Drive-In**  
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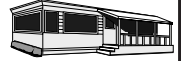
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# When Texas Was Baseball's Spring Kingdom

BY NORMAN L. MACHT

For almost 50 years beginning in 1895, major league baseball teams came to Texas for their spring training. Twenty cities hosted at least one team. In San Antonio, visited by 11 teams between 1895 and 1941, the arrival of the big leaguers and their press corps in March touched off weeks of civic hubbub and celebrations, dances and banquets.

Some towns were tried only once and found wanting.

Baseball's most notorious team, the 1919 White Sox, trailed by rumors (which proved to be true) that they had thrown the World Series to the Cincinnati Reds, did their 1920 spring training in Waco. They became known as the Black Sox after eight players were banned from baseball at the end of the season.

The Oriental Hotel in Dallas hosted one of baseball's most famous fights. In 1917 the Detroit Tigers trained in Waxahachie, the New York Giants in Marlin. The two teams featured the most hot-tempered characters in baseball history—Giants manager John McGraw and Tigers star Ty Cobb. On Saturday, March 31, at Gardner Park the Giants defeated the Tigers, 5-3. In the third inning, Cobb singled and set out to steal second. He slid in spikes high, cutting second baseman Buck Herzog on the left thigh. A battle royal broke out, both teams swinging away at each other. For the rest of the game “uncomplimentary remarks” were flung back and forth between the teams.

That night in the hotel dining room, the sore-legged Herzog challenged Cobb. They agreed to meet in Cobb's room. With players from both teams looking on, Cobb gave Herzog a sound beating, blacking both his eyes, before Detroit trainer Harry Tuttle broke it up.

The next day news of the fight brought out a record crowd of 10,000, who lined the foul lines and ringed the outfield. They saw the Giants stage an exciting five-run rally in the ninth to win, 8-6. But onlookers were disappointed. Neither Cobb nor Herzog played. There were no fights.

When the Philadelphia Athletics arrived in Eagle Pass in March 1922, they were warmly greeted but surprised to be greeted in Spanish. Children played bullfighting in the



streets, not baseball. The Sunday ball-games had to be played early so the fans could cross the border to catch the bullfights in Piedras Negras.

Two teams often traveled together, living in their Pullman rail cars as they jumped from town to town playing practice games. Folks rode long distances in horse-drawn buckboards to see the stars they could only read about the rest of the year. Cowboys sat on horseback around the outfield. Indians sat on blankets along the foul lines.

One year the Pittsburgh Pirates and Chicago White Sox barnstormed through Texas together. They arrived at one of their whistle stops on a bitterly cold day. Pirates manager George Gibson went to the local hotel and told the townspeople the game was off; he refused to risk injury to his players. While he was talking, some ranchers and cowboys came in, their

guns prominently displayed in their holsters.

“You mean we came 150 miles and you ain't gonna play?” one said. Gibson took their point. The game went on.

Once, the Cubs arrived in El Paso only to learn that the ballpark had burned down. They crossed the border and played in Ciudad Juarez, where Cubs infielder Roy Smalley acquired a new nickname when he was introduced by the local announcer as “Señor Smelly.”

Travel restrictions during World War II forced teams to train near home. After the war, strong pushes by civic boosters and developers in Arizona and Florida created the Cactus and Grapefruit Leagues, ending all spring training activities in the Lone Star League.

For most baseball fans west of the Mississippi, spring training and the barnstorming tours had been their only opportunity to see the stars they read about. When television brought big-league baseball into the nation's homes in the late 1950s, the need to ride a hundred miles to see players became less urgent. The Boys of Summer would no longer spend spring in Texas.

*Norman L. Macht is the author of several books on baseball history, including his latest, Connie Mack and the Early Years of Baseball (University of Nebraska Press, 2007).*

# Make It Pop with Soda

**BY SHANNON OELRICH** Soft drinks can add a special flavor to a dish that nothing else can impart. It's that "sparkle" from the carbonation, along with a drink's signature flavor. A lemon-lime soda can add extra punch to a citrus recipe; cola can add a caramel flavor; and root beer can add a mix of tastes that's completely unique.

Chef Martha Hall Foose says, "Root beer is an effervescent blend of infusions and extracts slightly fermented to produce carbon dioxide. Sassafras roots and bark, dandelion, wild cherry, burdock, spruce, wintergreen, ginger, nutmeg, cloves and anise are flavorings found in root beers." Root beer makes a sweet glaze that complements the saltiness of ham in the following recipe from Foose's soon-to-be-published book, *Screen Doors and Sweet Tea: Recipes and Tales from a Southern Cook* (Clarkson Potter, April 2008).

Foose penned this book to share her wealth of knowledge in baking and Southern cooking. The Mississippi native studied pastry in France before beginning her career at a renowned bakery in Los Angeles. She has worked for The Pillsbury Company in Minneapolis and has cooked in restaurants from Austin to Burlington, Vermont. She is now the executive chef of the Viking Cooking School in Greenwood, Mississippi, her home town.



## BARQ'S ROOT BEER GLAZED HAM

- 1 whole or butt end, bone in, "city" cured ham
- 1 can root beer
- 2 cups root beer glaze (recipe follows)
- Whole cloves

Heat oven to 250 degrees. Line a large roasting pan with foil. Place ham in roasting pan fat side up for shank end or whole hams or cut side down for butt end hams. Add 1/2 cup root beer or enough to cover bottom of pan by 3/4 inch. Let sit a while to come to room temperature. Tent ham loosely with foil. Bake undisturbed until thermometer inserted in center reads 110 degrees (1 to 3 hours depending on size and cut of ham.) Meanwhile, prepare glaze. Remove ham from oven. Increase oven temperature to 325 degrees. Pour off accumulated pan juices and reserve for sauce. Cut away excess fat. Score ham in diamond pattern. Spread glaze over scored surface of ham. Insert whole cloves at intersections of cuts.

Bake at 325 degrees until center temperature reaches 120 degrees, approximately 1 hour. Let ham rest for at least 15 minutes before carving.

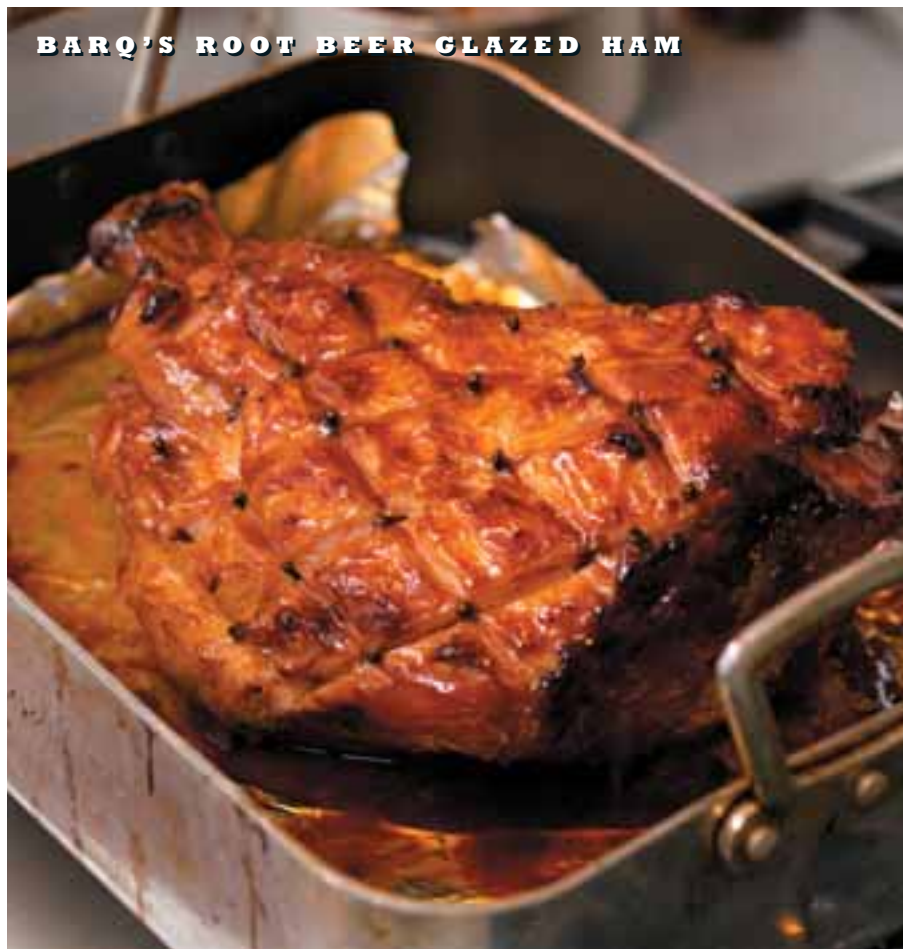
## ROOT BEER GLAZE

- 1 cup root beer
- 1/2 cup ketchup
- 1/2 cup dark brown sugar
- Zest and juice of 1 lemon
- 2 tablespoons prepared mustard

Combine all ingredients in a saucepan. Simmer stirring often over low heat 10 minutes until a thin saucy consistency. Use to glaze ham. Pour accumulated ham juices into saucepan of glaze. Return to a simmer and cook until thickened. Defat and serve as a sauce with ham.

**Note:** A "city" ham is smoked and wet cured. A "country" ham is dry cured and smoked. Steer clear of hams that have been injected with saline or other additives. These are sometimes labeled "water added." Look for a ham that has the majority of its fat cap intact.

## BARQ'S ROOT BEER GLAZED HAM







**Laurie Dopson** *CoServ Electric*

Prize-winning recipe: **Cocoa and Cola Cake**

You can tell a really good recipe by how popular it has become, and the Cola Cake leads the pack! We received more than 25 similar recipes for it. If they differed, it was in the directions, as most of the ingredients were the same. Some people added their baking soda to their buttermilk first; others melted the margarine in the cola. Most of the icings were boiled and then poured over warm cake, but we were able to choose our winner on this point. Laurie Dopson uses a creamed icing, rather than a boiled one, and the testers preferred it.

We also got tons of recipes for Cherry Cola Salad and Apple Dumplings (made with citrus-flavored soda). You can find versions of these online at [www.texascoopower.com](http://www.texascoopower.com). Click on See the Table of Contents, then on Recipes and scroll down.

## COCOA AND COLA CAKE CAKE

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 3 tablespoons cocoa
- 2 sticks margarine, softened
- 1 3/4 cups sugar
- 2 large eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/2 cup buttermilk
- 1 cup cola

1 1/2 cups miniature marshmallows

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease a 13x9x2-inch pan. In medium bowl, mix together flour, baking soda and cocoa and set aside. In large mixing bowl, cream margarine and sugar, then add eggs and vanilla and mix. Add flour mixture, alternating with buttermilk; blend at low speed, then beat 1 minute at medium speed. Add cola and blend well. Stir in marshmallows by hand. Pour into greased pan. Bake 40–45 minutes or until wooden toothpick inserted in center comes out clean. Cool about 30 minutes, then spread with icing. Serves 20.

### ICING

- 1/2 cup margarine, softened
- 4 cups powdered sugar, sifted
- 3 tablespoons cocoa
- 1/2 cup cola
- 1 cup chopped, toasted pecans

Cream margarine with powdered sugar and cocoa; add in cola and beat until smooth. Spread on cooled cake and sprinkle with pecans.

Serving size: 1 piece. Per serving: 430 calories, 3.3 g protein, 20.2 g fat, 59.9 g carbohydrates, 1 g fiber, 189 mg sodium, 21 mg cholesterol

## COLA COOKIES COOKIES

- 1 cup firmly packed brown sugar
- 1/2 cup margarine, softened
- 1/4 cup unsalted butter, softened
- 1 large egg
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 3/4 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2 teaspoons cola

Cream brown sugar with margarine and butter; beat in egg until fluffy. Stir in baking soda, salt, flour, vanilla and cola. The batter will be stiff. Cover and refrigerate 1 hour.

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Cover a baking sheet with parchment paper (or coat with spray release). Drop dough by teaspoons onto prepared sheet. Bake 6–8 minutes. Ice when cooled. Makes about 40 cookies.

### ICING

- 1/3 cup unsalted butter, softened
- 2 cups powdered sugar
- 1 teaspoon cola
- 1–2 tablespoons water

Cream butter and powdered sugar; beat

in cola and water to desired consistency.

Serving size: 1 cookie. Per serving: 111 calories, 0.7 g protein, 4.7 g fat, 16.1 g carbohydrates, trace fiber, 67 mg sodium, 12 mg cholesterol

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**Cook's Tip: Be sure your baking soda is fresh. If you think the box has been sitting in the cupboard for a while, transfer it to the fridge to soak up odors and buy a fresh box for baking.**

## SLOPPY JOE SANDWICHES

- 1 medium onion
- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 1/2 tablespoons flour
- 2/3 cup ketchup
- 3/4 cup cola
- 2 tablespoons vinegar
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 teaspoon honey
- 1 teaspoon dry mustard (or 1 tablespoon prepared mustard)
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 12 hamburger buns

Chop onion and brown with beef in skillet. Drain excess fat. Mix remaining ingredients well, then add to beef, cover and simmer for 40 minutes. Serve on buns. This is best the next day after all the flavors have melded. Makes 12 sandwiches.

Serving size: 1 sandwich. Per serving: 230 calories, 11.6 g protein, 6.7 g fat, 28.6 g carbohydrates, 1 g fiber, 587 mg sodium, 25 mg cholesterol

**SUSAN HEAD**

*Wood County Electric Cooperative*

## RECIPE CONTEST

The July recipe contest topic is **RUBS**. We want your best rubs for ribs, brisket, pork loin or whatever cut of meat you're famous for. The deadline is **MARCH 10**. The top winner will receive a copy of *60 Years of Home Cooking* and a Texas-shaped trivet. Runners-up will also receive prizes.

Send recipes to Home Cooking, 2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704. You may also fax them to (512) 486-6254, e-mail them to [recipes@texas-ec.org](mailto:recipes@texas-ec.org), or submit online at [www.texascoopower.com](http://www.texascoopower.com). Please include your name, address and phone number, as well as the name of your electric co-op.

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▲ South Plains Electric Cooperative member **Laura Bratton** caught this picture of her 5-year-old nephew, **Jack Parks**, showing some love to horse Shorty. Jack is the son of **Jori and Ron Parks** and grandson of **Nancy Bratton**, all of Paducah.



▲ **Sandra Stevens**, a San Bernard Electric Cooperative member, captured two of Texas' most treasured icons in this picture taken near Frelsburg. "After taking a few photos of this fellow, he started scratching his nose with his hind hoof, and I felt that was the picture. Perhaps he's allergic to bluebonnets," Stevens mused.

Upcoming in **Focus on Texas**

ISSUE	SUBJECT	DEADLINE
May	Cowboys	Mar 10
June	Courthouses	Apr 10
July	Underwater	May 10
Aug	Country Roads	Jun 10
Sep	Perfect Pets	Jul 10
Oct	Old Houses	Aug 10

**COWBOYS** is the topic for our **MAY 2008** issue. Send your photo—along with your name, address, daytime phone, co-op affiliation and a brief description—to **Cowboys, Focus on Texas, 2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704**, before **March 10**. A stamped, self-addressed envelope must be included if you want your entry returned (approximately six weeks). Please do not submit irreplaceable photographs—send a copy or duplicate. We regret that *Texas Co-op Power* cannot be responsible for photos that are lost in the mail or not received by the deadline. Please note that we cannot provide individual critiques of submitted photos. If you use a digital camera, e-mail your highest-resolution images to [focus@texas-ec.org](mailto:focus@texas-ec.org), or submit them on our website at [www.texascooppower.com](http://www.texascooppower.com).

**TYPICALLY TEXAN**

The entries for this month's photo contest were especially diverse. Not surprisingly, the term "Typically Texan" means something different to each of us. Still, the photographs below definitely evoke the feeling of being a Texan—no matter what that might mean to you.

—DACIA RIVERS



▲ **Ron Leadbeater** took this photograph of the McNeil High School Majestics Drill Team performing at a Friday night football game. Leadbeater is a member of Pedernales Electric Cooperative.

► Trinity Valley Electric Cooperative member **Dennise Richardson** took this dramatic landscape photo in Galveston.



▼ **Ilene Simerka**, Grayson-Collin Electric Cooperative member, sent in this image she took at Wildseed Farms, outside Fredericksburg. "What is more Texan than the state bird, wildflowers and an old pickup truck?" Simerka asked.



# AROUND TEXAS AROUND TEXAS

## MARCH

**01 ROUND ROCK**  
Daffodil Festival,  
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[www.rrdaffodilcapitaltx.us](http://www.rrdaffodilcapitaltx.us)



Daffodil Festival, Round Rock,  
March 1

**NEWARK**  
VFD Chili Dinner,  
(817) 489-2201

**ROCKDALE**  
Tejas Art & Book Festival,  
(512) 446-2030,  
[www.rockdalechamber.com](http://www.rockdalechamber.com)

**01 BELLVILLE**  
Texas German Society  
State Convention,  
(979) 865-0935,  
[www.texasgermansociety.com](http://www.texasgermansociety.com)

**BOERNE**  
Chuck Wagon Cook-Off &  
Heritage Gathering,  
(830) 249-6007,  
[www.agmuseum.org](http://www.agmuseum.org)

**WASHINGTON [1-2]**  
Texas Independence Day  
Celebration,  
(936) 878-2214,  
[www.birthplaceoftexas.com](http://www.birthplaceoftexas.com)

**02 WINDTHORST**  
VFD German Sausage  
Meal, (940) 423-6444

**HUNTSVILLE**  
General Sam Houston's  
Birthday & Texas  
Independence Celebration,  
1-800-289-0389

**06 ROCKPORT [6-9]**  
Oysterfest,  
(361) 463-9955

**07 BEAUMONT [7-8]**  
National Soul Food  
Cook-Off Competition,  
(409) 838-3435

**SWEETWATER [7-9]**  
50th Annual Rattlesnake  
Round-Up,  
(325) 235-5488

**LONGVIEW [7-9]**  
Zonta Club Antique Show,  
(903) 236-0910

**MERCEDES [7-16]**  
Rio Grande Valley  
Livestock Show,  
(956) 565-2456,  
[www.rgvlivestockshow.com](http://www.rgvlivestockshow.com)

**08 ANDERSON**  
Stagecoach Days,  
(936) 878-2214,  
[www.birthplaceoftexas.com](http://www.birthplaceoftexas.com)

**08 BELTON**  
Texas Western Swing  
Fiddling Showcase,  
(254) 939-8390,  
[www.texaswesternswing.com](http://www.texaswesternswing.com)

**KERRVILLE [8-16]**  
U.S. Shotgun Team  
Olympic Trials,  
(830) 995-4504,  
[www.hillcountryshootingsports.com](http://www.hillcountryshootingsports.com)

**09 LA PORTE**  
25th Annual Old Car  
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**10 NEDERLAND** [10-16]  
Heritage Festival,  
(409) 724-2269,  
[www.nederlandhf.org](http://www.nederlandhf.org)

**14 SAN ANGELO** [14-15]  
Concho Valley  
Bluegrass Festival,  
(325) 653-7030,  
[www.sabinebluegrass.com](http://www.sabinebluegrass.com)

**15 TEXARKANA**  
Easter Gator Egg Hunt,  
(903) 798-3978,  
[www.ci.texarkana.tx.us](http://www.ci.texarkana.tx.us)

**LUCKENBACH**  
Mud Dauber Fest,  
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[www.luckenbachtexas.com](http://www.luckenbachtexas.com)

**MERIDIAN**  
Bosque County Chuck  
Wagon Cook-Off & John  
A. Lomax Music Festival,  
(254) 435-6113

**NACOGDOCHES** [15-31]  
Azalea Trail,  
1-888-OLDEST-TOWN,  
[www.visitnacogdoches.org](http://www.visitnacogdoches.org)

**21 LOCKHART** [21-22]  
Tolbert Texas State  
Chili Championship,  
(512) 398-2818,  
[www.lockhartchamber.com](http://www.lockhartchamber.com)

**WOODVILLE** [21-23]  
Dogwood Festival/Quilt  
Show, 1-800-323-0389

**22 CARMINE**  
Easter in the Park,  
(979) 278-3273

**NEW BRAUNFELS**  
GartenFest,  
(830) 629-2943,  
[www.nbconservation.org](http://www.nbconservation.org)

**PALESTINE** [22-23, 29-30]  
Dogwood Trails  
Celebration,  
1-800-659-3484,  
[www.visitpalestine.com](http://www.visitpalestine.com)

**23 ANDERSON**  
Easter Sunrise Service,  
(936) 878-2214,  
[www.birthplaceoftexas.com](http://www.birthplaceoftexas.com)

**27 MINEOLA** [27-29]  
Square & Round Dancing  
Festival, (254) 625-0509

**28 LOCKHART** [28-29]  
Rites of Spring Festival,  
(512) 398-2818,  
[www.lockhartchamber.com](http://www.lockhartchamber.com)

**ROUND TOP** [28-29]  
Herbal Forum,  
(979) 249-3129

**VICTORIA** [28-29]  
Quilt Guild Show,  
(361) 574-9869

**MARBLE FALLS** [28-30]  
Bluebonnet Blues  
& Fine Arts Festival,  
(830) 798-1041,  
[www.bluebonnetblues.com](http://www.bluebonnetblues.com)

**29 LAKEHILLS**  
Fish Fry & Auction,  
(830) 751-2404

**GRANBURY** [29-30]  
General Granbury's  
Birthday Celebration,  
(817) 573-5299,  
[www.hgma.com](http://www.hgma.com)

**SABINAL** [29-30]  
Wild Hog Festival,  
(830) 988-2709,  
[www.wildhogfestival.com](http://www.wildhogfestival.com)

## APRIL

**01 ROUND TOP** [1-5]  
Antique Show,  
1-800-999-2148,  
[www.roundtop-marburger.com](http://www.roundtop-marburger.com)

**CUERO** [1-30]  
Wildflower Month,  
(361) 275-9942,  
[www.dewittwildflowers.org](http://www.dewittwildflowers.org)

**05 ELDORADO**  
Idiotarod Festival,  
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Events are listed according  
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full listing at [www.texascooppower.com](http://www.texascooppower.com).

Event information can be mailed  
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(512) 486-6254, e-mailed to  
[aroundtx@texas-ec.org](mailto:aroundtx@texas-ec.org), or  
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# FORT DAVIS to ALPINE

*A triangle of desert delights awaits travelers with time to detour off I-10.*

**BY KAYE NORTHCOTT**

You don't have to trek as far south as Big Bend National Park to be seduced by the Texas desert high plains. The towns of Fort Davis, Marfa and Alpine offer a rich diversity of history, science, mystery and, most unlikely, high art.

Exit Interstate Highway 10 at Balmorhea and pick up Texas Highway 17.

Texas Highway 17 delivers visitors from Balmorhea to Fort Davis some 32 miles south. Marfa is just 21 miles farther south on 17. From Marfa east to Alpine on U.S. Highway 67/90 is 26 miles. A return to complete the triangle from Alpine to Fort Davis on Texas Highway 118 is another 26 miles.

## FORT DAVIS

Situated because of the remoteness of the area, the **MCDONALD OBSERVATORY** perches atop Mount Locke and Mount Fowlkes just northwest of Fort Davis. The facility attracts astronomers from across the globe. They do most of their work at night, leaving plenty of opportunities for tours in the daytime. There are also night star parties at the visitor headquarters. Back in town, the restored barracks at the **FORT DAVIS NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE** are a must-see for anyone interested in the Texas frontier era, buffalo soldiers and the Civil War. The camping is great at **DAVIS MOUNTAINS STATE PARK**. Sunset draws locals and sightseers alike to take the 5-mile scenic road, which culminates in a spectacular view of the plains stretching toward Marfa. Those who don't wish to camp have delightful options, from the restored **INDIAN LODGE**, built by the Civilian Conservation Corps, at the state park, to **HOTEL LIMPIA** on the main drag of Fort Davis. Limpia, meaning "clean" in Spanish, refers to a nearby creek. The historic hotel has much more to offer than cleanliness, including a restaurant, gift shop and bookstore.

**McDonald Observatory**, 1-877-984-7827, <http://mcdonaldobservatory.org>

**Davis Mountains State Park**, (432) 426-3224,



[twpd.state.tx.us](http://twpd.state.tx.us); Indian Lodge, (432) 426-3254

**Fort Davis National Historic Site**, (432) 426-3224, [nps.gov/foda](http://nps.gov/foda)

**Fort Davis Chamber of Commerce**, 1-800-524-3015, [www.fortdavis.com](http://www.fortdavis.com)

## MARFA

The two most important modern influences on Marfa have been the filming of the movie "Giant" in 1955 and the fact that renowned minimalist artist Donald Judd chose to live and work here. When "Giant" was in production, actors Elizabeth Taylor, James Dean and Rock Hudson stayed at the **HOTEL PAISANO** in downtown Marfa. The Paisano's restaurant is named after James Dean's character in the film, and there's a continuous loop of "Giant" playing in a leathery lounge area. Then came Judd

from New York City, making Marfa into one of the great world art hangouts. He took warehouses and part of an abandoned fort to establish the **CHINATI FOUNDATION**. Art aficionados can arrange tours of the facility, which includes some of the most important collections of modern art in the world. International visitors are particularly drawn to the yearly Open House, usually held in October. You will also find renowned

poets reading their work at the **MARFA BOOK COMPANY**, art gallery and coffee bar. Lannin Poetry fellows are awarded accommodations and a stipend for quiet work time in Marfa. Then there are the mysterious Marfa lights, most commonly explained as an atmospheric mirage. The scholarly *Handbook of Texas* says, "They move about, split apart, melt together, disappear, and reappear."

**Hotel Paisano**, 1-866-729-3669, [www.hotelpaisano.com](http://www.hotelpaisano.com)

**The Chinati Foundation**, (432) 729-4362, [www.chinati.org](http://www.chinati.org)

**Marfa Book Company**, (432) 729-3906, [www.marfabookco.com](http://www.marfabookco.com)

## ALPINE

Thirty minutes east is Alpine, the most populous of our trio of cities, with more than

6,000 residents. It is home to Sul Ross State University where visitors should check out the **MUSEUM OF THE BIG BEND** on the main campus. The museum has been collecting and exhibiting artifacts of the sprawling Big Bend region for more than 70 years. **THE REATA RESTAURANT**, opened in 1995 and named after the ranch in "Giant," offers gourmet cowboy cuisine such as pan-seared tenderloin in port wine sauce and double pork chops stuffed with roasted pears.

**Museum of the Big Bend**, (432) 837-8143, [www.sulross.edu](http://www.sulross.edu)

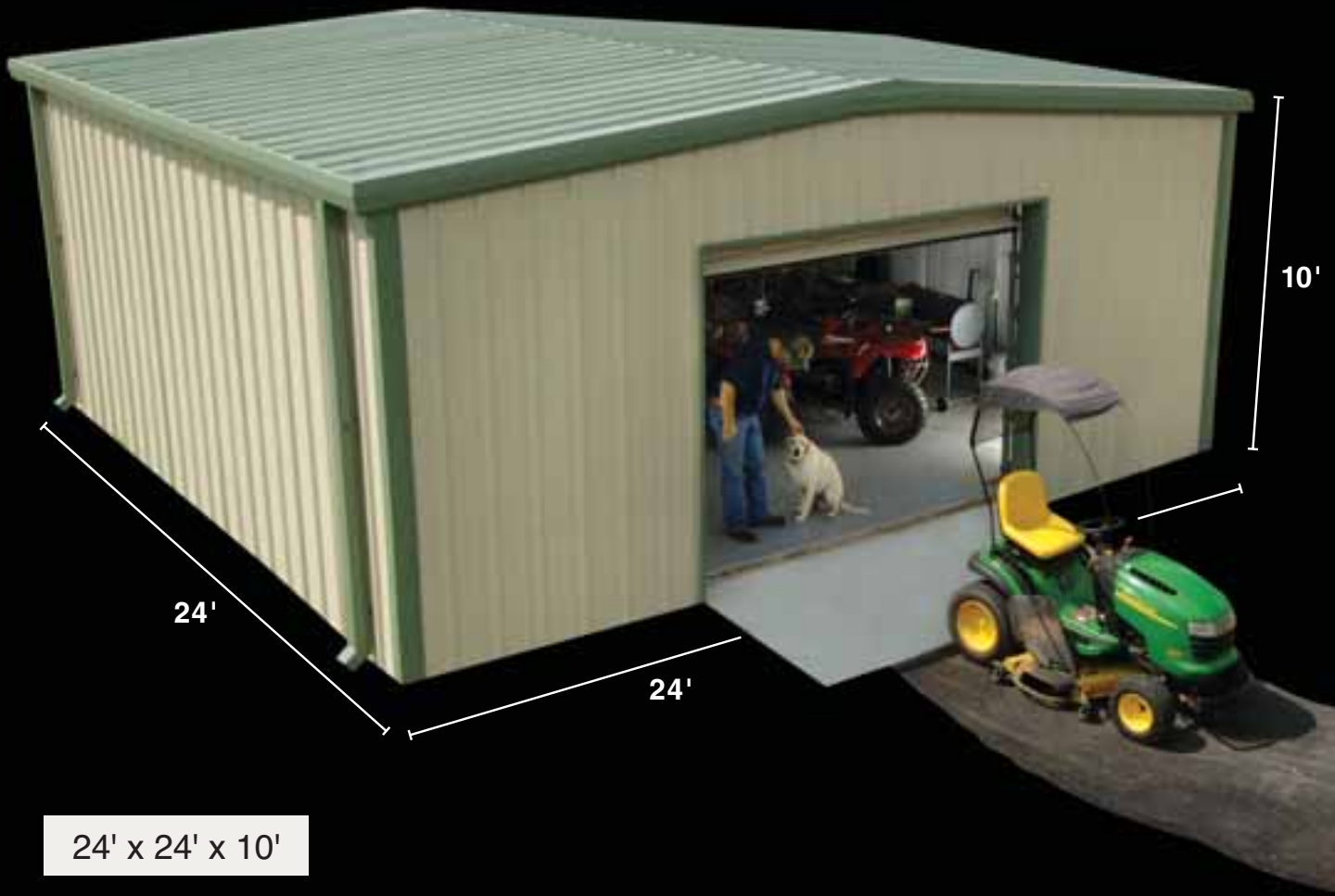
**Reata Restaurant**, (432) 837-9232, [www.reata.net](http://www.reata.net)

*Kaye Northcott is editor of Texas Co-op Power.*

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