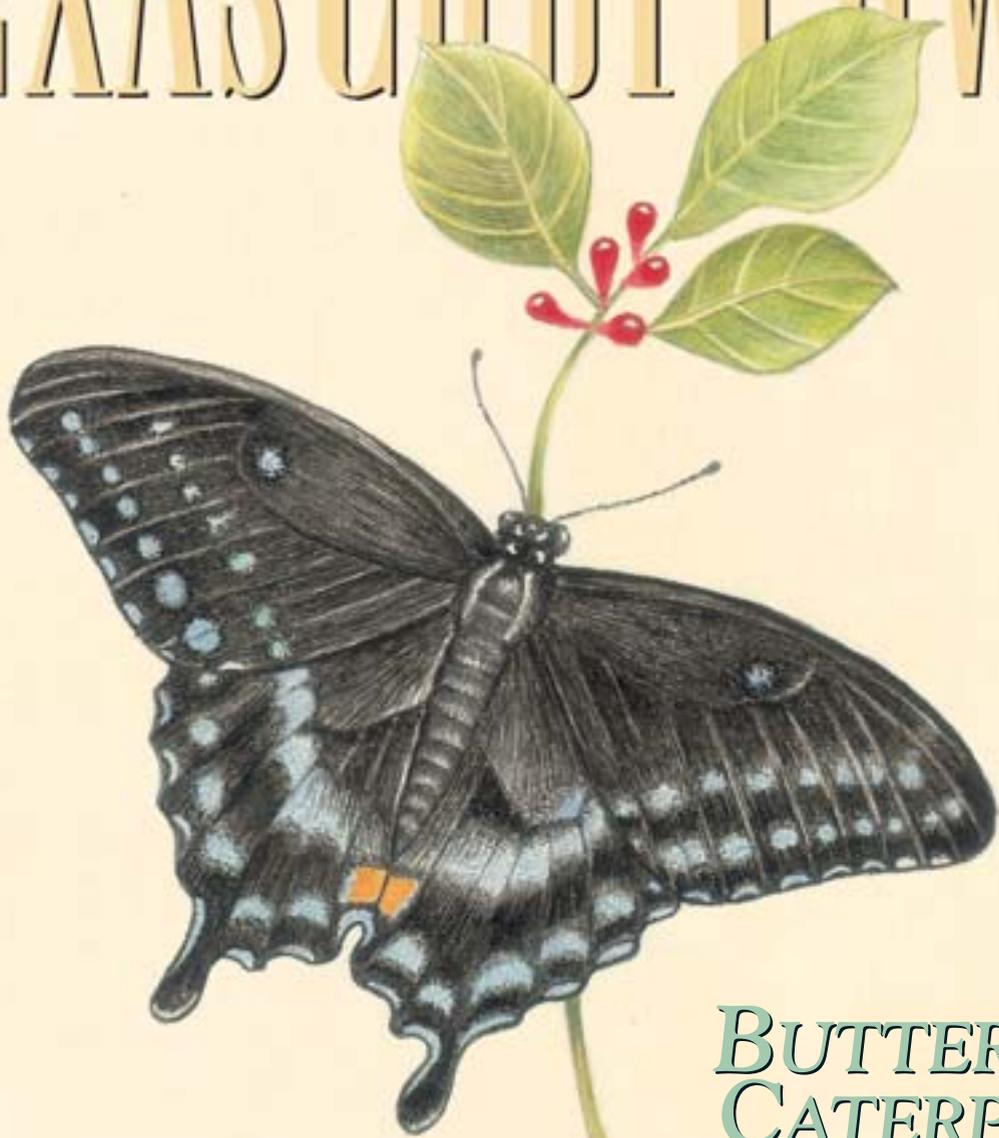


TEXAS CO-OP POWER



BUTTERFLY & CATERPILLAR GARDENING

PLUS:

Home Canning

Onion Festival

Houston Tropical Garden

SEVERE WEATHER! ARE YOU READY?

Lightning

Lightning strikes kill more Americans than tornadoes or hurricanes. Don't take chances with this deadly force of nature.

Lightning Safety Rules:

- Move to low ground.
- Avoid open fields.
- Do not seek shelter under a tree. Trees are easy targets for lightning.
- At the beach, or in a swimming pool, get out of the water immediately.
- Go inside a building and stay away from windows and doors.
- Stay away from metal objects.
- Avoid electric appliances and metal plumbing.
- Get off the phone.
- Do not touch metal objects, such as golf clubs or bicycles.
- Inside a car is relatively safe, but don't touch interior metal.
- If your hair stands on end, you may be a target. Crouch low on the balls of your feet and try not to touch the ground with your knees or hands.

Stay aware and play it safe during thunderstorms. Don't be a lightning rod.



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TEXAS CO-OP POWER

A MAGAZINE ABOUT TEXAS LIVING

Gardening Issue

2006 Gardening Issue

We hope you will be inspired by the earthly delights in our 2006 Gardening Issue!

Our feature this month by Elaine Robbins tells you everything you need to know to prepare now for a beautiful summertime butterfly garden. But, as *Texas Co-op Power* Managing Editor Carol Moczygemba explains, you'll also need to accommodate butterflies' less attractive form—the caterpillar—as a resident!

Aletha St. Romain outdid herself with a detailed identifier, in the botanical print tradition, depicting caterpillars, butterflies and plants. Because of her exceptional rendering, the spread on pages 10-11 is being made into a 16"x20" poster. As a co-op member benefit, those who order will receive 25 percent off the \$20 retail price; just tell us the name of your co-op when ordering. Instructions can be found on the bottom of pages 10-11.

Our recipe section highlights canning. Once a skill that almost every wartime homemaker could manage, it has now become a lost art. Learning to preserve fruits and vegetables will extend the pleasure of your garden throughout the year.

Finally, *Texas, USA* features Joanna Davenport Athey's remembrance of a unique childhood spent in her father's garden kingdom, with all its floral and animal subjects.

Enjoy!



Peg Champion
VP, Communications/Publisher



LARRY DITTO

The zebra heliconian can be spotted in the Rio Grande Valley.



When 3-year-old **KATIE JO PLUMLEE** tried to retrieve a toy from her toy box, she got in over her head! Grandparents **JOHNE** and **GENIE PLUMLEE**, members of Grayson-Collin EC, submitted the photo. For more *Oops!* shots, turn to page 37.

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By Elaine Robbins

Plant a patch of butterflies' favorite flowers—many of them fragrant, easy-to-grow natives with exuberantly colored blooms—and you can enjoy watching butterflies in your own backyard.

Butterfly & Caterpillar Guide.....10

By Aletha St. Romain

A beautiful and useful illustrated guide to Texas butterflies, their caterpillars and host plants.

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TEXAS CO-OP POWER

TEXAS CO-OP POWER

VOLUME 62 MARCH 2006 NUMBER 9

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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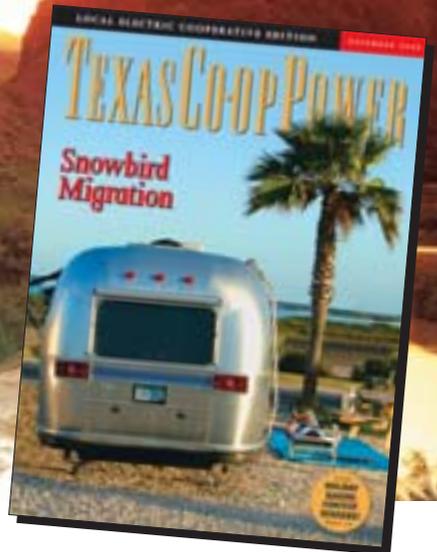


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And, in every issue we feature a personal look at chosen towns in "Texas, USA" along with "Around Texas," featuring selected events around the state.

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LAST CHANCE to Enter!

Best of Co-op Country Contest 2006

Win a weekend for two at Messina Hof Winery, valued at \$1,000!



We invite you to participate in our fourth Best of Co-op Country contest. Print your choices on the form below in whatever categories you wish. Please include the location and a phone number if possible. Provide your name, address, telephone number and co-op. Mail this page or a copy to "Best of Co-op Country," 2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704.

Entries will be judged on the number and legitimacy of nominations received. Co-op members who provide nominations for at least half the categories are eligible for a drawing. The winner of the drawing will receive a free weekend for two at Messina Hof Winery and Resort in Bryan, valued at \$1,000. Messina Hof has a bed and breakfast and a restaurant, The Vintage House, which was the readers' choice for Dining Worth the Drive last year.

Now for the rules: No petitions, each form must be mailed separately, and establishments promoting themselves cannot provide stamps or envelopes for entries.

Tours, Tastings, Gift Shop, Bed and Breakfast, Fine Dining, Picnic and Events

A visit to Messina Hof Winery and Resort is like a romantic journey to the European Wine Country. You'll find the perfect blend of Italian and German cultures, resulting in premium wines made in Texas. One hundred acres of rolling hills and two picturesque lakes help make Messina Hof unforgettable. Our wines have received many accolades, including Best Texas Wine in 2004 and 2005 in the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo's International Wine Competition. Among other destination awards, The Villa, our 10-room luxury country inn, was voted Most Romantic Hideaway in the U.S. by Arrington's *Book of Lists*, and The Vintage House Restaurant was chosen one of Texas' Best Restaurants by the East Texas Tourism Association.



Best of Co-op Country General Contest Entry Form

Enchilada: _____

Water Tower: _____

Fourth of July Parade: _____



Lake: _____

Your Name: _____

Public Mural: _____

Co-op: _____

Riding Trail: _____

Address: _____

Spa: _____

City/Zip: _____

Texas Musician: _____

Phone: _____

The deadline for submitting nominations is March 15, 2006. The results will be published in the September 2006 issue of *Texas Co-op Power*.

Magazine Provides a Taste of Home

I made up a collection of magazines for a young man I know who is stationed in Iraq. These were mailed to him before Christmas. Some were my early editions of the co-op magazine. He appreciates reading about home while on his present assignment.

MIKE BASQUETTE

Trinity Valley Electric Cooperative

Co-op Connection

In the article on dance halls [January 2006], there is a large picture of Lewis Corzine. He is a retired secretary of our board who served during the consolidation process of Midwest and Stamford ECs (into Big Country EC).

FREDDA BUCKNER, General Manager
Big Country Electric Cooperative

Dance Hall Book Endorsed

You and those among your readers who appreciated Gail Folkins' story about "Texas Dance Halls" [January 2006] should have included one of

the best references on the topic. I refer to the book, *Dance Halls and Last Calls*, written by Geronimo Treviño III. Treviño's book is illustrated and presents brief histories and addresses of old dance halls. It also has wonderful pictures of the most famous artists of this industry. The Republic of Texas Press published the book.

GILBERTO S. TREVIÑO, San Antonio

The First Americans

The article [November 2005] and letters on "Captured by Indians" were interesting. The white man came to take the "free land" from the Indians and destroy the Indians. They killed the buffalo, the Indian food supply. If history books are ever rewritten, the story of the Indians, the first Americans, will tell of cruelty to the American Indian.

DOROTHY POOLE

Farmers Electric Cooperative

CORRECTION: In the photo caption of a ranger standing with Herman Lehmann in "Captured by

Indians" [November 2005], the ranger's name should have been James B. Gillett.

Remember the Alamo—1835

I appreciate the article, "The Second Battle of the Alamo," by Bill Crawford in the January 2006 edition. Actually, the article might have been more accurately titled "the third battle" or "another battle," given that the Mexican military under General Martín Perfecto de Cos maintained defensive positions against the Texican army in San Antonio and at the Alamo a few months before the better-known 1836 battle. Cos surrendered to Edward Bureson on December 9, 1835.

DANIEL E. FOX

Pedernales Electric Cooperative

EDITOR'S NOTE: "The Second Battle of the Alamo" did not appear in all editions of Texas Co-op Power. If you missed the article, you may look it up on <http://www.texas-ec.org>. Click on Texas Co-op Power to pull up a PDF of the January issue.

Pasture Golf in South Dakota

I wanted to let you know how much I enjoyed reading "Pasture Golf in Thorndale" in the January 2006 issue of your magazine. My father built his nine-hole golf course in South Dakota in the early '80s. He has flags for every hole. The putting is pretty rough and guests are warned to beware of rattlesnakes and cow patties. He and my mother ride around in their golf cart playing at least nine holes when weather permits. They have even had a local television personality come and play with them to see if he could beat my dad. No such luck.

JANINE KLINKER

Grayson-Collin Electric Cooperative

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Send letters to:

Editor, Texas Co-op Power,
2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704.

Please include the name of your town and electric co-op. Letters may be edited for clarity and length and will be printed as space allows.

Go Fly a Kite— Safely!

When warm spring breezes blow, it's a good time to gather up the kids, go outdoors and fly a kite. This is a great opportunity to teach your young kite fliers the "Three Cs" of kite safety: caution, courtesy and common sense.

Parks, beaches and playgrounds can be crowded, with many different activities competing for space. Stress to your children that it is each kite flier's responsibility to fly safely so that they continue to be welcome at their favorite windy places.

Always emphasize these important safety rules while kite flying:

- Kite lines conduct electricity, so do not fly near overhead power lines.
- For the same reason, do not fly in electrical storms.
- Flying lines on larger kites can hurt your hands. Watch out for line burns. If you fly a large kite, wear gloves.
- Be aware of who or what is behind you as well as in front of you.

Teach your young kite fliers to always be considerate of others:

- Do not fly very close to or over roads where drivers could be distracted.
- Do not fly noisy kites in crowded places.
- Be careful not to scare animals, particularly horses with riders.
- Watch out for other people who are not aware that kites can be dangerous.
- Be careful not to fly where you might scare nesting birds.
- Avoid other kites, kite lines and kite fliers.
- Clean up after yourself. Take all of your materials and trash home with you.

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With 128 pages of mouthwatering recipes, the Texas Co-op Power Cookbook makes a great gift for friends and family.



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Fill your year with lots of tasty treats from your favorite magazine in the *Texas Co-op Power Cookbook*. It's also a great gift for a friend or neighbor, so they can share a year full of fun and flavor!

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Make checks payable to: Texas Electric Cooperatives. Send \$18.75 for each cookbook to: Cookbook, Attn: Tracy Paccone, 2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704.

BUTTERFLY & CATERPILLAR GARDENING



Attracting butterflies to your garden is as easy as

1 2 3

BY ELAINE ROBBINS

Imagine seeing a psychedelic yellow sulphur butterfly feed on a purple coneflower in your own garden, or a black-winged pipevine swallowtail hovering over a cherry sage, opening its wings to reveal an iridescent glimmer of blue.

Fortunately, you don't have to go traipsing off to meadows and tropical forests to see electric blue morphos or migrating clouds of monarchs. Just plant a patch of butterflies' favorite flowers—many of them fragrant, easy-to-grow natives with exuberantly colored blooms—and you can enjoy watching native butterflies in your own backyard. You'll not only have the pleasure of watching these pollinators flit from flower to flower, you'll have the satisfaction of knowing that you're providing food and shelter for species that are losing more of their natural habitat each year.

"To save habitat for the ocelot takes millions of dollars, acts of Congress, tens of thousands of acres, and decades to rehabilitate the land," says Mike Quinn, invertebrate biologist for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. "And then you never see the species because it's nocturnal. But for the butterfly, I've planted gardens, and as I was putting a plant in the ground, I've had a butterfly come and land on the flower. You can't get more immediate gratification than that."

Since Texas is blessed with more butterfly species than any other state—approximately 430, compared with California's 250—your efforts will be rewarded. We have not just one monarch migration but two—one route along the Gulf Coast and another through the central part of the state. Thanks to tropical strays from Mexico, the Rio Grande Valley alone boasts more recorded species than all of eastern North America combined.

So what are you waiting for? Get out and start planting. By fall, you may see a colorful pageant of queens and painted ladies, monarchs and Gulf fritillaries in your own backyard.

IMAGES: LARRY DITTO



PLAN YOUR GARDEN

Plan your butterfly garden in a spot that's in full sun for at least half the day. Butterflies are cold-blooded creatures, so they need to bask in the sun to generate enough heat to fly.

Find a spot that is shielded by a thicket of bushes or tall plants. This buffer will provide protection from the wind and predators while offer-

ing shade during the hottest part of the day. Be sure to leave a corner of your yard wild. Butterflies use nearby trees, native bushes, leaves and weeds for shelter at night and in the winter.

Plant tall plants like sunflowers in back, and shorter ones in the front. Since butterflies are attracted to color first, plant big patches of the same

color together rather than individual plants. If you have room for only a few container plants, a variety like Gregg's mistflower is a good choice.

You may want to place a few flat stones in your garden for basking. Provide a mud puddle or moist patch of sand, which butterflies use to drink the salts that seep to the surface.

The National American Butterfly Association's International Butterfly Park outside Mission offers world-class butterfly viewing.



Below are 10 common butterflies found in Texas, along with their caterpillars and caterpillar host plants for easy identification.



B U T T E R F L I E S

FIG 1: SPICEBUSH SWALLOWTAIL Host Plant: *Spicebush*

FIG 2: RED ADMIRAL Host Plant: *Nettles* FIG 3: MOURNING CLOAK Host Plant: *Cottonwood*

FIG 4: ZEBRA LONGWING Host Plant: *Passionvine* FIG 5: GULF FRITILLARY Host Plant: *Passionvine*

Co-op members may purchase 16"x20" posters for \$15 each. The price for nonmembers is \$20. To order a poster, please mail \$15,

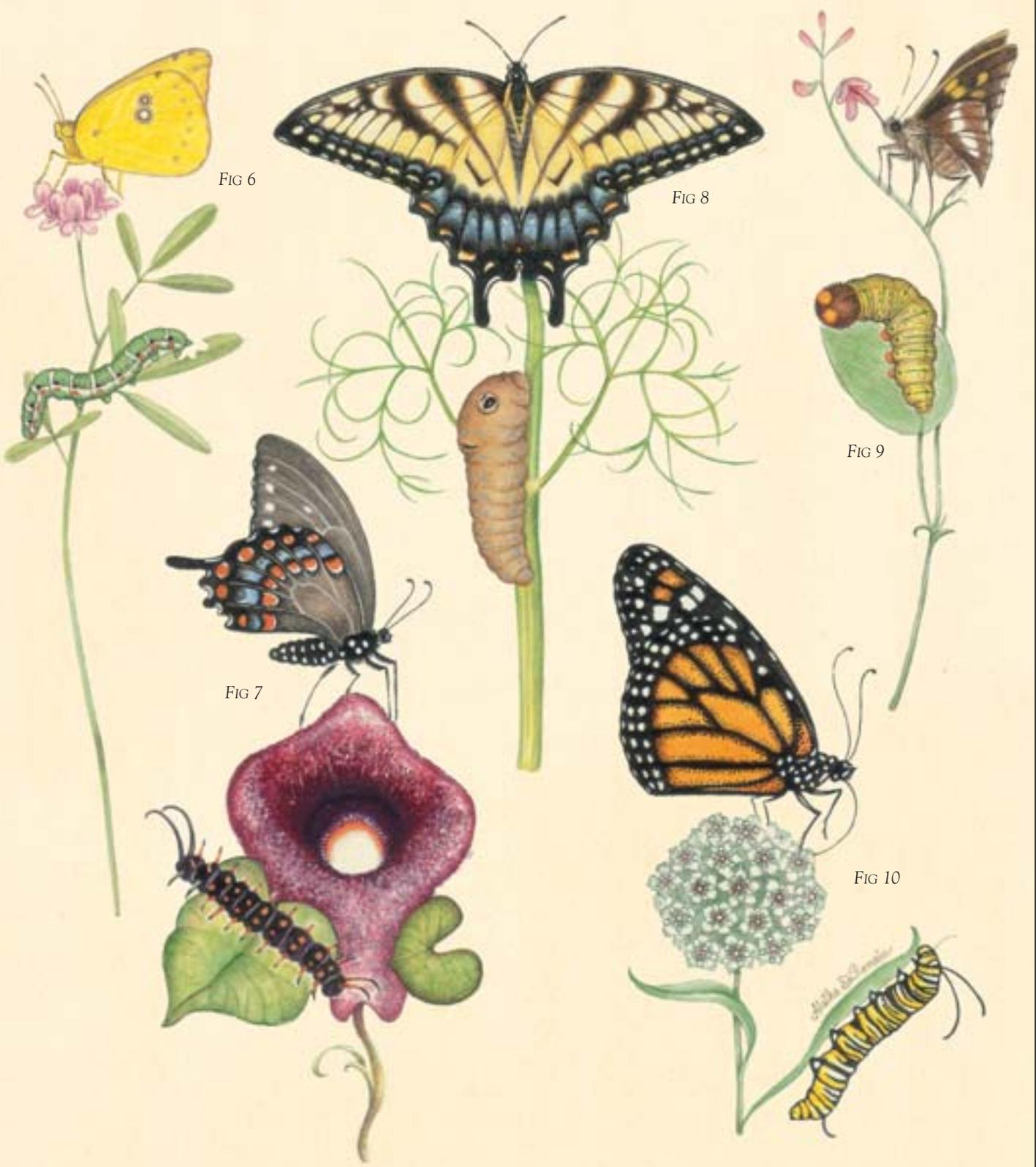


FIG 6

FIG 8

FIG 9

FIG 7

FIG 10

of T E X A S 2 0 0 6

FIG 6: SULPHUR SOUTHERN DOGFACE Host Plant: *Alfalfa*

FIG 7: PIPEVINE SWALLOWTAIL Host Plant: *Pipevine* FIG 8: TIGER SWALLOWTAIL Host Plant: *Dill Weed*

FIG 9: SILVER SPOTTED SKIPPER Host Plant: *Phaesoehus* FIG 10: MONARCH Host Plant: *Milkweed*

the name of your co-op and your name and address to Texas Co-op Power, Butterfly Poster, 2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704.

2

CHOOSE NECTAR PLANTS

The main element of any butterfly garden is the nectar plants. Choose a few of their favorite nectar plants from the following list, and plant a variety of these colorful blooms.

If you want to provide nectar all

year long for species that spend winters in Texas, try rosemary, verbena and mistflower. Lantana, butterfly bush and purple coneflower are deer-resistant Texas varieties. You may also want to think about planting flowers that give butter-

flies a convenient place to perch.

“Butterflies like to have a good platform to sit on while they’re nectaring,” says Robert Michael Pyle, author of *Chasing Monarchs*. “In Texas, asters and sunflowers make a good perch.”

FAVORITE NECTAR PLANTS



Aster



Autumn Sage



Butterfly Bush



Butterfly Weed



Coral Honeysuckle



Indian Blanket



Lantana



Mexican Sunflower



Milkweed



Mistflower



Purple Coneflower



Salvia



Turk's Cap



Verbena



Zinnia

3

ADD CATERPILLAR FOOD PLANTS

If you want to be a good host to butterflies, you should provide host plants for the caterpillars, not just nectar plants for the adult butterflies. Butterflies lay their eggs on these host plants so their caterpillars will have a ready food source when they hatch.

Although butterflies can feed on a variety of nectar plants, most species have just one or two favorite caterpillar plants. The monarch, for example, feeds on lantana, butterfly bush and goldenrod, but if you want to help their caterpillars survive, you'll need to provide a place in your garden for their host plant: milkweed. Other species lay their

eggs on hackberry and redbud trees. Keep in mind that plants that you may consider weeds—milkweed, thistle and grasses—provide food for many species of caterpillars. Although caterpillar food plants need sun to produce enough nectar, most can be grown in shady areas.

Before you decide which host plants to include, consult a butterfly field guide to find out which butterflies are common in your region. Pick a species or two and plant their favorite caterpillar food plants.

In the caterpillar stage of its life cycle, a butterfly's sole purpose is to eat. And it will—voraciously. Your job is to sit back and watch as it chomps

FAVORITE HOST PLANTS

American Snout: Hackberry

Black Swallowtail: Parsley, carrot, fennel, dill

Gulf Fritillary, Zebra: Passionvine

Monarch, Queen: Milkweed

Mourning Cloak: Cottonwood

Painted Lady: Thistle

Pipevine Swallowtail: Pipevine

Red Admiral: Nettles

Skippers, Satyrs: Grasses

Spicebush Swallowtail: Spicebush

Sulphurs: Senna, various legumes

Viceroy: Willow

A CATERPILLAR CAUTIONARY TALE



Last spring I got inspired to bring butterflies into my yard, so I bought two healthy, blooming butterfly plants. I carefully tilled the dirt, dug two big holes, poured in the expensive organic fertilizer, and set the plants in the ground. I was so proud of myself.

Maybe a week later, I was walking past the plants, and was horror-struck. Most of the leaves were stripped off. Then I saw these big, fat black-and-green caterpillars munching away. I felt like somebody had just shot my dog—now there was no way the butterflies would come. I ran down the street to my neighbor's house and found some Sevin dust and furiously scattered it all over the leaves and the greedy caterpillars.

The scales dropped from my eyes in the middle of a white cloud of choking insecticide. I thought, "Oh, my God." It was awful. I felt really bad for about three days. I couldn't stop thinking that those poor caterpillars were trying to become butterflies.

I got on my knees in the dirt and washed all the white powder from every leaf that remained. I could hardly bear to look at the little dried corpses of the caterpillars. I kept hoping my act of contrition would bring some more hungry caterpillars, but none came. So I cut back the plants, hoping to start anew next spring. We'll see. But I bet in the butterfly world, word is out.

— CAROL MOCZYGEMBA, Managing Editor, Texas Co-op Power





DOs & DON'Ts OF BUTTERFLY GARDEN CARE

Do use mulch to provide winter cover and help the soil retain moisture.

Do provide a mud puddle or moist sandy area where butterflies can get moisture and essential nutrients.

Do remove dead flower heads to increase the number of blooms and give butterflies a longer feeding period.

Do put out a plate of rotting fruit to attract more butterflies. Place it away from the house and off the ground, since it can also attract bees and ants.

Don't use insecticides or pesticides. Even organic ones will harm or kill butterflies and caterpillars. Many native plants will come back even after caterpillars eat them to the ground.

Don't water your garden from above or you might wash off the nectar. A soaker hose or drip irrigation system works best. If you already have a sprinkler system set up, set it on the finest mist.

Don't be a neat freak. Some fallen leaves should remain on the ground. Butterflies use these areas to spend the winter in various stages of their life cycle.

your carefully tended plant to the ground. (For a warning about what can happen if you can't resist the impulse to interfere, see "A Caterpillar Cautionary Tale," page 13.)

Some native plants have evolved tricks to protect themselves from over-consumption. The passionvine, for example, can grow tiny white spots that look like butterfly eggs to signal to a female Gulf fritillary: Keep moving—I'm taken. But most

will suffer serious caterpillar damage. Don't worry, though; many native plants will come back, even after caterpillars have eaten them almost to the ground. And next year, when beautiful butterflies enchant your garden, you'll feel the satisfaction of knowing you helped give them sustenance.

Elaine Robbins wrote "UT's Treasure Trove" in the January issue of *Texas Co-op Power*.

Blake Ditto of McAllen, grandson of our butterfly photographer, likes his grandpa's subjects and the Aggies.





WHERE THE BUTTERFLIES ARE

Fall—especially October—is the best time to traipse around the state, close-focus binoculars in hand, to see butterflies in their native habitat. The Rio Grande Valley is the primo spot—the nation’s best hotspot for butterfly biodiversity. Central Texas also has some good butterfly spots in the fall. See Texas Parks and Wildlife Department’s park finder (www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park/finda-park.htm) or order the Heart of Texas Wildlife Trail maps (\$3 each from the Texas Cooperative Extension Bookstore, <http://tce-bookstore.org>, 1-888-900-2577). Or visit your local botanical gardens, many of which now feature butterfly gardens.

Texas Butterfly Festival

Late October
Mission; 1-800-580-2700
www.texasbutterfly.com

Four days of field trips and seminars by the nation’s top experts.

Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park

Mission; (956) 585-1107
www.worldbirdingcenter.org

See an abundance of butterflies

on the hiking trails and the landscaped grounds of the World Birding Center headquarters.

Edinburg Scenic Wetlands

Edinburg; (956) 381-9922
www.worldbirdingcenter.org

Six acres are landscaped to attract rare butterflies like the red-crested scrub-hairstreak.

Frontera Audubon Center

Weslaco; (956) 968-3275
www.fronteraaudubon.org

Rare species like the silver-banded hairstreak can be found in this 12-acre woodland.

Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge

Rio Hondo; (956) 748-3607

Look for theona checkerspots, metalmarks and more in the large garden surrounding the visitors center.

NABA International Butterfly Park

Mission; (956) 583-9009
www.naba.org

One mile east of Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park, this new “butterfly park” is setting all kinds of records for species sightings.



Quinta Matatlan

McAllen; (956) 688-3333

This beautifully restored 1930s Spanish revival adobe hacienda, a World Birding Center facility, has a butterfly garden and 15 acres of natural habitat.

Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge

Alamo; (956) 784-7500

In the extensive butterfly gardens near the visitors center and along wooded trails, you may spot zebras, malachites and Mexican bluewings.

Valley Nature Center

Weslaco; (956) 969-2475
www.valleynaturecenter.org

Zebra heliconians, orange-barred sulphurs and the great purple hairstreak have been spotted in this wonderful 5-acre park.

BUTTERFLY FIELD GUIDES

Detailed butterfly plant and species lists for some Texas regions are available from the North American Butterfly Association’s website: www.naba.org.

Butterflies Through Binoculars, The East

(covers East Texas)
Jeffrey Glassberg
Oxford University Press, 1999

Butterflies Through Binoculars, The West

(covers west of Houston but not all of the Rio Grande Valley)
Jeffrey Glassberg
Oxford University Press, 2001

Butterflies of Houston and Southeast Texas

John Tveten and Gloria Tveten
University of Texas Press, 1996

Focus Guide to Butterflies of North America

Jim P. Brock & Kenn Kaufman
Houghton Mifflin, 2003

Caterpillars of Eastern North America: A Guide to Identification and Natural History

David L. Wagner
Princeton University Press, 2005



STANDARDS RAISED FOR A/C EFFICIENCY

The government significantly raised energy efficiency standards for air conditioners in January. A recent survey indicates that 90 percent of homeowners know nothing about it.

The 2005 Home Air Conditioning Test by Emerson, an air-conditioning manufacturer, suggests only one out of 10 homeowners knows the seasonal energy efficiency ratio (SEER) of the family's air conditioner.

The SEER tells you how energy efficient your air conditioner is. The SEER rating is determined by dividing the air conditioner's total cooling output by the amount of energy it uses. The Department of Energy's new energy-efficiency standards mandate that all air conditioners manufactured after January 23 must



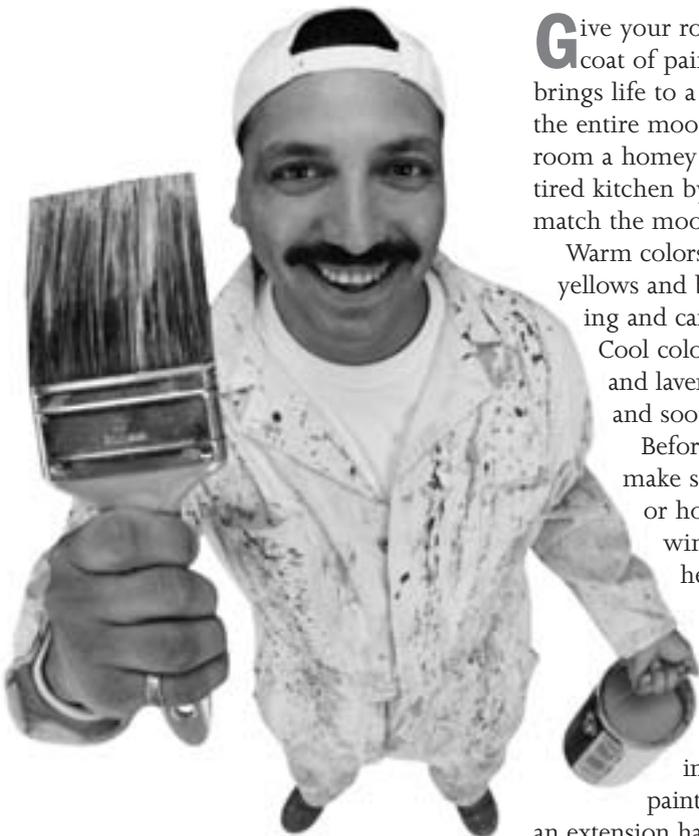
meet a minimum rating of 13 SEER, up 30 percent from the previous 10 SEER standard.

Some manufacturers are targeting the compressor—which pumps refrigerant through the system—when making improvements, resulting in quieter, lighter and smaller systems.

For homeowners, this means that purchasing a new air conditioner this spring could reduce energy bills.

For more information on EnergyGuide ratings and criteria, visit www.energyguide.com. The website offers tips for using energy more efficiently.

LET COLOR BRING LIFE TO YOUR HOUSE



Give your rooms a lift with a new coat of paint. Color not only brings life to a room but can change the entire mood. Give your living room a homey feel or wake up your tired kitchen by choosing a color to match the mood you want.

Warm colors—like reds, oranges, yellows and browns—are stimulating and can add drama to a room. Cool colors—like blue, green and lavender—are calming and soothing.

Before you start painting, make sure you seal any cracks or holes and caulk around windows and doors so heated or air-conditioned air won't leak out.

Keep the job simple, especially if you plan on updating the whole house, and invest in an electric paint roller. Buy one with an extension handle for ceilings and

smaller attachments for trim. Come summer, the paint roller can be used to stain your deck or porch as well.

Tap into your favorite mood with these tips:

- Choose red for kitchens or offices. The color is stimulating and raises your heartbeat for a jump-start in the morning.
- Green is soothing. Use it in your favorite space to relax. It's also a good transition color for hallways and smaller rooms.
- Blue is meditative and restful and will help clear your head. Try it for your bedroom.
- Yellow is energizing and a great mood-lifter. Try it in the bathroom to help you wake up in the morning. But beware: Too much yellow can be agitating and is known to upset babies.
- Light colors are reflective and make a room seem brighter and bigger.
- Pair dark colors with a light trim, as dark colors make a room seem smaller than it is.

PREVENT CO POISONING WITH ALARM, MAINTENANCE

Labeling harmful substances and keeping them away from kids aren't the only ways to observe Poison Prevention Week, March 20-26. The National Capital Poison Center (www.poison.org) says installing a carbon monoxide (CO) alarm could save your family from one of the most common household poisons.

- Carbon monoxide is a clear, odorless gas that is deadly but hard to detect. If you don't have an alarm, install one now. Check it monthly to be sure it's working properly.

- Carbon monoxide doesn't come just from cars. Your gas furnace or stove is a potential source of the gas. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) offers these tips to prevent CO poisoning:

- Keep gas appliances properly

adjusted and calibrated.

- Consider purchasing a vented space heater when replacing an unvented one.

- Rely on electric space heaters, which do not burn gas or create carbon monoxide.

- Use the proper fuel in kerosene space heaters.

- Install an exhaust fan, vented to the outdoors, over gas stoves.

- Open flues when fireplaces are in use.

- Choose properly sized woodstoves that are certified to meet EPA emission standards. Make sure woodstove doors fit tightly.

- Have a trained professional inspect, clean and tune up your cen-



tral heating system—including furnaces, flues and chimneys—annually. Repair leaks promptly.

- Do not idle your car inside the garage or any enclosed space.

KEEP THE DO-IT-YOURSELFER SAFE THIS SPRING



Break out the power tools, Dad—Spring is here. But while the weather may be right for home improvement, your electrical system might not be ready for safe power tool use.

Ground-fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) are fast-acting circuit breakers that cut off power in less than 1/40 of a second—enough time to save you from getting shocked in case of a ground fault. Your home may already have these in its outlets, but if not, GFCIs can be installed inexpensively. There are also portable types that can be connected either to the outlet or the cord of the tool itself.

Here are some other safety tips from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration for an accident-free do-it-yourself season:

- Never carry a tool by the cord or

yank the cord to unplug it.

- Keep cords away from heat, flammable substances and cutting edges.

- Use gloves and safety footwear and eyewear for every project.

- To avoid accidental starting, don't hold your finger on the switch when carrying a tool.

- Wait a few days after it rains to do outside work. Don't use power tools in wet or damp locations.

- Keep work areas well lighted.

- Remove cords from areas where they could be a tripping hazard.

- Tag any damaged electric tools or wires and remove them from the work area.

- Use double-insulated tools designed to prevent electric shock.

- Always read the operating manual to check for additional precautions specific to the tool you are using.

Let's Pop the Cork for Texas Grapes

BY SHERYL SMITH-RODGERS

It's hardly a stretch to say that there's a little bit of Texas in every bottle of French wine. Indeed, virtually all grape rootstock used around the world today can trace its genetics to the disease-resistant hybrids of wild Texas species with European vines achieved in the 1880s.

The story starts with those thick, tangled green masses that blanket tree limbs and drape fence lines across Texas. Many of us probably view wild grapevines as nuisance plants with little or no value. At best, we make jelly. Not Thomas Volney Munson. After seeing the native varieties growing in proliferation along the Red River in 1876, Munson—a transplanted horticulturist from Illinois—proclaimed the area “grape paradise.”

Years later, his extensive research in viticulture (the science of growing grapevines) would make Munson a hero abroad. To this day, horticulturists around the world use *Foundations of American Grape Culture*, Munson's classic book published in 1909, as a reference.

Plants always fascinated Munson. Growing up in the 1850s, he loved working on his family's farm. His mother, an avid gardener, taught him about grafting, budding and pruning. In 1870, he graduated from Kentucky A&M and married Nellie Bell, the daughter of a local horticulturist.

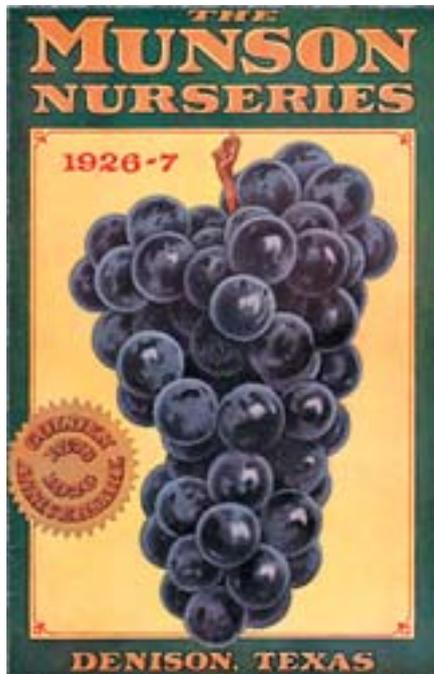
In 1873, Munson moved to Nebraska, taking with him more than 30 varieties of grape clusters. On his new land, Munson planned to develop a new American grape by crossing varieties. That goal perished, though, when hot, dry prairie winds followed by swarms of grasshoppers destroyed his gardens.

Four of Munson's siblings who were in Texas encouraged him to make his home in Denison, where work was assured in local real estate. Soon after the move in 1876, Munson discovered an abundance of wild species growing along the Red River. “This is the place for experimentation with grapes!” he later wrote.

For the next 15 years, Munson

studied grapes. On foot, horseback and railway, he crossed Texas in search of the best native grapes. At home, he crossed vines and kept meticulous records of the results. In all, he would log some 75,000 miles—reaching 40 states, several territories and Mexico—in his quest to observe nearly every American grape species.

At the time, France—known worldwide for its fine wines—was struggling with infestations of phylloxera, an aphid that sucks sap from a



grapevine's roots and kills it. While experts raced to find a cure, the pests rapidly spread to other countries and even California. (Ultimately, phylloxera wiped out two-thirds of Europe's vineyards.)

The French were reluctant to seek help outside their country, but after unsuccessfully testing more than 300 remedies, they grudgingly agreed to graft their prized European vines onto American rootstock, whose thicker-skinned roots were harder to chew through, making them more resistant to phylloxera. (A grapevine can grow on any rootstock; grafting is a technique in which one vine is joined to the roots of another vine.) But to

everyone's dismay, the grafted vines died because they did not adapt well to French soil.

In 1887, the French government sent Pierre Viala, a viticulture professor, to the United States to search for grape stock that would grow in chalky soils like those found in France. His six-month stay included a visit with Munson.

Following a route meticulously laid out by Munson, Viala traveled through Texas and observed native vines growing in poor soils. His final report recommended three Texas species most likely to thrive in France. Soon wagonloads of cuttings were shipped to France for grafting and planting. Successes in vineyards, though, were few, so the French began developing their own rootstock by cross-pollinating the American species with European ones. Finally, success came; many of the hybrids thrived.

Today, practically all rootstock around the world is a descendant of the vines sent by Munson from Texas. In appreciation for his help in saving their country's vineyards, the French government named Munson to the French Legion of Honor in 1888.

Munson's grape legacy regained importance when Texas entered the winemaking industry in the 1970s. Today, one of the state's eight wine trails bears his name; the Munson Trail connects more than 10 wineries—some near Denison—located in northeast Texas.

Grape Man of Texas by Sherrie McLeRoy and Roy Renfro Jr. (Eakin Press, 2004) details the life of T.V. Munson. For more information, visit www.tvmunson.org and www.grapemanoftexas.org.

Visitors may tour the T.V. Munson Viticulture Enology Center and the T.V. Munson Memorial Vineyard at Grayson County College in Denison. (His home, located near the vineyard, is currently being restored.) For an appointment, call (903) 463-8621.

Grayson-Collin Electric Cooperative serves the area around Denison.

Sheryl Smith-Rodgers, who lives in Blanco, is a frequent contributor to Texas Co-op Power.

Another Lame Invention

As usual, Marvin and D-Wayne are a day late and a dollar short with their new scheme. These days there are fleets of electric automobiles operated by cities and state agencies. In addition, there are mechanics who can convert a gas-guzzler into an all-electric vehicle. A conversion can get pretty pricey if a driver needs powerful batteries with a lot of "juice" for traveling longer distances and powering air conditioning. But when you factor in what an electric car saves at the fuel pump, some customers find them competitive.

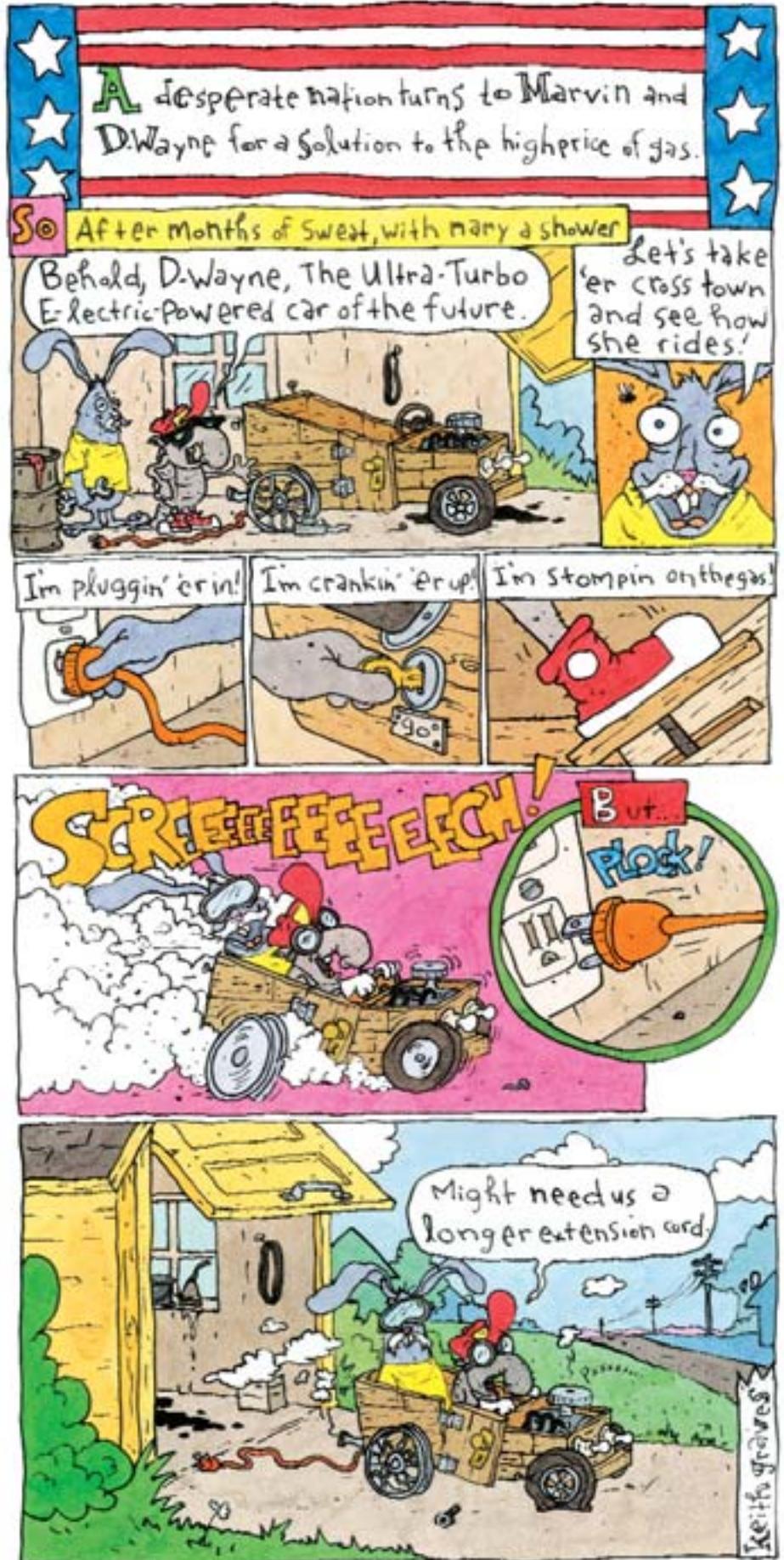
What's really booming is the market for hybrid vehicles. Those work on either electricity or gas. Toyota alone expects to sell 300,000 hybrids worldwide this year, climbing to 2 million worldwide by 2010.

These vehicles have two types of engines working together—a standard gas-powered engine and an electric motor assist powered by a rechargeable electric battery pack.

This combination of gas and electric power provides higher gas mileage and less pollution. Hybrid vehicles are quiet to drive—you can hardly hear the engine. And they have plenty of power for highway driving.

The federal government is giving a limited number of consumers between \$1,700 and \$3,000 credit toward purchase of a hybrid cars this year and next. So, if this new technology excites you, drag your parents some Sunday to a Toyota, Ford, Honda, Lexus or other car dealership to check them out. But don't expect go riding home in a hybrid. Car dealerships usually have a long list of buyers waiting for hybrid vehicles to come off the factory line.

Cartoonist Keith Graves is a popular artist and author of children's books. Among his greatest hits are *Frank Was a Monster Who Wanted to Dance* and *Uncle Blub-bafink's Seriously Ridiculous Stories*. He lives in Austin with his wife, Nancy, and the twins, Max and Emma.



Doctoring Your Dirt



BY SHERYL SMITH-RODGERS AND KAYE NORTHCOTT

ILLUSTRATIONS BY EDD PATTON

WITH SPRING PLANTING TIME NEAR, LET'S get down and dirty. Before you sow those seeds and buy bedding plants, consider this basic green-thumb tenet: All good gardens start with good dirt.

If your dirt isn't black and crumbly, it could use a health-inducing dose of organic amendments, materials that improve such soil qualities as water retention, permeability, drainage and aeration.

There are expensive chemical fertilizers and amendments, of course, but organic fertilizers have several advantages. They support living organisms, buffer soil from chemical imbalances, and maintain a steady supply of plant nutrients. It's also increasingly important to keep organic wastes out of landfills and waterways.

For your gardening pleasure, we've compiled a brief overview of soil amendments and tips, many drawn from extension agencies and colleges.

Some of the best, Texas-specific information comes from *Texas Gardening the Natural Way* (University of Texas Press, 2004), written by "Dirt Doctor" Howard Garrett of Dallas. Garrett also promotes organic gardening through his weekly radio and television shows, a weekly column in *The Dallas Morning News*, and a monthly magazine called *Dirt Doctor's Dirt*. This man is into dirt.

COMPOST

Garrett says there's no reason to lose one's composure over compost. Sure, there are lots of variables to consider, such as the proper ratio of vegetative matter to animal waste. (Garrett prescribes 80 percent vegetative to 20 percent animal.) Decisions must be made about the proper container, watering schedules, and how often to turn the pile to allow the mix to breathe. The heap must reach a tem-

perature of approximately 130 degrees to destroy weed seeds and plant pathogens.

The good news, Garrett says, is that "it's almost impossible to foul up the compost-making process." You pile up your dead leaves and grass clippings, toss in your coffee grounds and potato peels, supplement with animal manure, turn it, water it, and sooner or later you have the perfect fertilizer—high in nutrients, humus, humic acid and microorganisms. The greater the variety of components, the better. You'll be able to feel the heat as the temperature at the center of the pile reaches 130 degrees or higher. When the temperature drops back to 100 degrees or less, the mixture is "cooked."

Work your cooked compost into garden beds or use it as mulch.

Did you know that George Washington was an avid composter? Many types of materials that were available

to him are still standard ingredients. Below are beneficial natural products that can be composted, mixed into the soil, or applied directly to plants. Always thoroughly work in amendments to increase their effectiveness. It's good to start with a general knowledge of your soil's condition and whether it is alkaline or acidic.

MANURES

Bat guano: This potent fertilizer contains major nutrients and trace elements. Apply once or twice during the growing season. An all-purpose ingredient, bat guano is especially good for flowers. Don't use too much or you will stress your plants.



Cattle manure: Use only aged manure (at least six months old) on gardens. Fresh manure should be composted to kill pathogens.

Chicken litter: High in nitrogen, chicken litter should be composted.

Horse manure: Also high in nitrogen, horse manure is excellent for composting, or till fresh manure directly into soil a month before planting.

Rabbit manure: Mix with leaves, sawdust, straw, grass and other vegetation to make a rich compost. Rabbit manure may be worked directly into the soil.

Sheep manure: Similar to horse manure.

Turkey manure: Compost turkey manure. It is too "hot" to use directly in soil unless planting is delayed.

FROM THE KITCHEN

Coffee grounds: This easily accessible low-pH soil amendment is great for alkaline soils. It can be composted with other materials or worked directly into the soil. Many coffee shops are happy to give away their used grounds.

Cornmeal: Who knew cornmeal prevents or cures brown patch in St. Augustine, damping-off disease, fungal leaf spot and other fungal diseases? It's also a mild fertilizer. Use 10-20 pounds per 1,000 square feet.

Epsom salts: This fast-acting source of magnesium and sulfur can be used in liquid sprays or drenches at 1 tablespoon per gallon or dry at 10-20 pounds per 1,000 square feet around ornamental plants and food crops.

Fireplace ashes: Sprinkle ash on each layer of compost. This is especially good if you have oak leaves, pine needles or other acidic materials in your compost heap. Be careful not to overuse them.

Molasses: As a soil amendment, sweet molasses feeds and stimulates microorganisms. Use small amounts sparingly; the effects of molasses are long term.

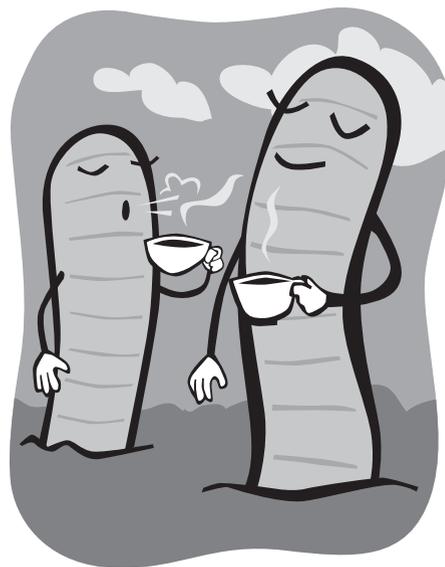
FROM THE FEED STORE, NURSERY OR BY MAIL ORDER

Texas products: Brands of soil amendments include Dillo Dirt in Austin, Erath Earth in Hico, Medina Fertilizer in Hondo, and Garden-Ville Soil Food in San Antonio. Cities have a growing market for processed sewer sludge. What does your area produce? There might be sources for pecan hulls, rice hulls, mushroom compost, alfalfa meal or seaweed, depending on your location.

Diatomaceous earth: In addition to pest control properties, it provides silica, iron and trace elements.

Worms: The great advantage of worm composting is that this can be done indoors and outdoors, thus allowing year-round composting. In a nutshell, worm compost is made in a container filled with moistened bedding and red worms. You can order worm boxes and worms to live in them or you can build your own container. Add food waste, and the worms

and microorganisms will eventually convert the entire contents into rich compost. Earthworm poop, called castings, is a great fertilizer.



TEA TIME

The materials used in soil amendments also can be used as foliar (leaf) sprays.

Compost tea: Just soak compost in water. Let the tea brew for about two weeks, then remove the solids by straining the liquid through a cloth. Dilute the liquid with four to 10 parts water and spray on foliage. In addition to being a fertilizer, compost tea serves as a fungicide.

Alfalfa tea: Put one cup of alfalfa meal in a five-gallon bucket and fill with water. The next day apply it to the root areas of shrubs or flowers or strain and use as a foliar spray on leaves.

GARRETT JUICE

(ready-to-apply foliar food)

- 1 gallon water**
- 1 cup compost tea**
- 1 ounce liquid seaweed**
- 1 ounce apple cider vinegar**
- 1 ounce molasses**

Shake well before spraying on foliage to avoid burning plants.

Now, go out there and get acquainted with your dirt!

Sheryl Smith-Rodgers is a frequent contributor and Kaye Northcott is editor of Texas Co-op Power.



THE LOST ART
of
CANNING

Over Christmas my grandma, Blake Vines, was reminiscing about the rows and rows of canned fruits, vegetables, pickles and preserves that she used to keep in the pantry when they lived on “the farm,” a 40-acre plot in the hills of north central Alabama. It wasn’t a working farm, but the garden yielded enough for their family of three to eat fresh or home-canned vegetables throughout the year.

Most visits, we went home with a selection of pickles and preserves that my mother would dole out judiciously—we almost always ran out before the next visit. My favorite was my grandma’s Ripe Cucumber Pickles, which for years I thought were made from watermelon rinds because of their unique texture. They are actually made from late-summer cucumbers, the bigger, less tender ones left too long in the sun (see recipe, opposite page).

My grandma’s reminiscences coincided with my research for the new cookbook we’re publishing, which will span 1944-2000. While researching the 1940s, I came across some posters produced by the USDA that are emblematic of the domestic role during the years of America’s involve-



©CORBIS

ment in World War II. For some of you, this is a trip down memory lane; for others, a lesson in history.

Canning was immensely important in rural life before electricity—and thus refrigeration and freezing—came to the countryside. How else could you preserve a summer tomato into the winter and still have it taste like something approaching the original?

During World War II, canning was a natural extension of the Victory Garden (see sidebar, opposite page). In the boom years after the war, when most people had electricity, many homemakers still chose to can because they preferred the taste.

By the 1970s, when my generation was growing up, canning was falling by the wayside. Most of my friends were not taught to can when they were young. I know I was in the kitchen when my grandma canned, but I didn’t make a conscious effort to learn how.

Today, there’s a renewed interest in canning, just like there’s a resurgence in knitting, quilt-making and other “home crafts.” There are websites dedicated to sharing canning instructions and recipes (like www.homecanning.com)

and books galore. For the total novice, check out *Canning and Preserving for Dummies* by Karen Ward (Wiley Pub. Inc., 2003). The classic tome on the subject, in print since 1973, is *Putting Food By* by Ruth Hertzberg, Beatrice Vaughan and Janet Greene (Plume, 1992, fourth ed.).

The recipe on this page doesn't include instructions for safe canning. Be sure to use a reliable source if you plan to can, be it a website, a book or your grandma. Canning is a way to bridge the generation gap. If you know how to can, teach someone. If you don't, find someone to learn from. It's a rewarding way to enjoy the fruits (and vegetables) of your garden or local produce stand throughout the year.

Blake Vines' Ripe Cucumber Pickles

Step 1

- 7 pounds cucumbers, peeled, seeded and sliced lengthwise into spears
- 2 cups pickling lime
- 2 gallons water

Dissolve lime in water. Soak cucumbers in solution for 24 hours, then drain and thoroughly rinse three times.

Step 2

- 1 box (2 ounces) powdered ginger
- 2 gallons water

Mix powdered ginger in water. Soak cucumbers in mixture for 6 hours and drain (do not rinse).

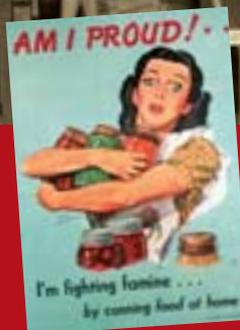
Step 3

- 5 pounds sugar
- 2 quarts vinegar
- 1 teaspoon celery seed
- 1 teaspoon allspice
- 1 teaspoon cloves

In a large pot, dissolve sugar in vinegar; add spices. Put cucumbers in mixture, let stand 1 hour, then bring to a boil. Turn down and cook slowly for 1 hour. Pack and seal.

NOTE: The original recipe had instructions between steps 1 and 2 that called for a "10-cent box" of alum and 2 gallons of water. The FDA no longer recommends pickling with alum. If you want especially crispy pickles, you can either soak cucumbers in ice water for 4 to 5 hours before pickling or use a product called Ball 100% Natural Pickle Crisp, available online at www.canningpantry.com. Use according to directions on box.

CANNING IN WORLD WAR II



As these posters illustrate, canning was a patriotic act—food saved at home meant more for the troops abroad. In suburban areas, women's volunteer groups got together to put up foods for their families and for "casualty stations" that were kept stocked in case of emergency. In rural areas, canning centers were set up for families to use, as reported in a 1944 issue of *Texas Co-op Power*: "Wideawake Gilmer community has built a year-round canning center to combat war food shortages with the aid of the Upshur-Rural Electric Cooperative. During a 38-day season last year, the 212 families using the center canned 14,261 containers of fruits and vegetables, worth 146,710 ration points and \$2,500."

JUNE RECIPE CONTEST



Used to be when I thought of blueberries, I thought of Maine. These days, I think of Texas. Farms in Texas are producing bushels of blueberries. It's a crop that doesn't get a lot of attention, but should. Send in your favorite **Blueberry** recipes for June's contest. You may mail them to Home Cooking, 2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704. You may also fax them to (512) 486-6252 or e-mail them to recipes@texas-ec.org. Be sure to include your name, address and phone number, as well as the name of your electric co-op. The deadline is March 10. The top winner will receive a copy of the *Texas Co-op Power Cookbook* and a selection of spices from Adams. Others whose recipes are published also will receive a selection from Adams.

AROUND TEXAS

March

- 2. General Sam Houston's Birthday & Texas Independence Celebration, **Huntsville**, 1-800-289-0389 or www.huntsvilletexas.com
- 2-5. BorderFest, **Hidalgo**, (956) 843-2734 or www.borderfest.org
- 2-5. Old Mill Marketplace, **Canton**, (903) 567-5445 or www.oldmillmarketplace.com
- 3. Fish Fry, **Dripping Springs**, (512) 894-4470
- 3-4. Quilt Show, **Lampasas**, (512) 556-2224
- 3-5. Old Mill Trade Days, **Post**, 1-866-433-6683 or www.oldmilltradedays.com
- 3-5. Antiques Show, **Longview**, (830) 426-7015
- 3-5. Highway 290 Trade Days, **Burton**, (979) 357-2552
- 4. Citywide Market, **Sinton**, (361) 364-2307
- 4. Ole Time Music, **Pearl**, (254) 865-6013 or www.pearlbluegrass.com
- 4. Market Days, **Elgin**, (512) 376-6115
- 4. Symphony Concert, **Waxahachie**, (972) 938-0404
- 4. Sounds of Texas Music Series, **Conroe**, (936) 441-7469 or www.theoundsoftexas.com
- 4. Riverbend Rendezvous, **Marble Falls**, (830) 693-6632 or www.riverbendfineart.com
- 4. Kid Fish-O-Rama, **Grand Prairie**, (972) 237-8100
- 4. Friends Back Room Book Sale, **Austin**, (512) 440-1241
- 4. Globe Oprea, **Odessa**, www.globesw.com
- 4. Benefit Mexican Supper, **Sisterdale**, (830) 324-6623
- 9-10. Community Garage Sale, **Kirbyville**, (409) 423-5827
- 9-12. LaSalle County Fair and Wild Hog Cook-Off, **Cotulla**, (830) 879-2852
- 10-11. Quilt Show, **Kemp**, (903) 498-5083
- 10-19. Rio Grande Valley Livestock Show, **Mercedes**, (956) 565-2456 or www.rgvlivestockshow.com
- 11. Texas German Convention, **Yoakum**, (361) 575-0560
- 11. Williamson County Genealogy Seminar, **Round Rock**, (512) 335-6904
- 11. Redbud Festival, **Buna**, (409) 994-5586
- 11-12. Ceramic Show, **West**, (210) 497-8348
- 11-12, 25-26. Chicken House Flea Market, **Stephenville**, (254) 968-0888
- 12-15. Vietnam Veterans Memorial Highway Motorcycle Run, **Perryton**, (806) 435-6575 or www.perryton.org
- 13. McDade Jamboree, **McDade**, (512) 273-2307
- 17-19. Trade Days, **Livingston**, (936) 327-3656 or www.cityoflivingston-tx.com/tradedays
- 18. Possum Kingdom Relays, **Graham**, (940) 549-0370
- 18. Corvette and Chevy Show, **Killeen**, (254) 534-0809 or www.midtexcorvette.com
- 18. Lawn & Garden Expo, **Waxahachie**, (972) 825-5175 or www.ecmga.com
- 18. Jim Reeves Jamboree, **Carthage**, (281) 852-8308
- 18. Market, **Marlin**, (254) 803-3331
- 18-April 1. Azalea Trails, **Nacogdoches**, 1-888-653-3788
- 19. Bach Birthday Celebration, **Kerrville**, (830) 792-7262

FESTIVAL OF THE MONTH BY JIM GRAMON

Texas Rio Grande Valley Onion Festival: Weslaco, April 1



WESLACO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Spectators enjoy the horse shows at the Rio Grande Valley Onion Festival.

It might be April Fool's Day, but you won't be fooled (or foolish) if you spend the day at the 17th Annual Rio Grande Valley Onion Festival (Onionfest) in the south Texas town of Weslaco.

It will be a sweeter day than you might expect because Onionfest features the world famous Texas 1015 onions. Weslaco is the birthplace of this rare type of sweet onion that won't make you cry. (I sure could have used some of those when I was pulling KP duty in the Army.)

The Texas 1015 onion was cre-

ated by Dr. Leonard Pike, professor of horticulture at Texas A&M University, in the early 1980s. But why the strange name? The answer is simple: The number "1015" stands for October 15, the recommended planting date.

At this one-day event (10 a.m.-7 p.m.), there will be great food, music and entertainment for the whole family. Some activities, like the beauty pageant and the recipe contest, take place prior to Onionfest, but there is something for everyone April 1. Perhaps the most popular event is the Onion Eating Contest, but there's also Kiddie Land, arts and crafts booths, La Gran Cebolla (Spanish for "onion") Cook-Off, Andalusian and Azteca horse shows, food vendors and entertainment tents

featuring salsa demonstrations, flamenco dancers and live music. Admission is free.

Ever wonder how Weslaco got its name? No, there wasn't a guy named Wes involved, and there weren't any Weslaco Indians roaming the area. Here's the real story: The name is actually an acronym derived from the initials of the W.E. Stewart Land Company. Back in 1919, the company helped build a town in a newly irrigated section of the Rio Grande Valley. Weslaco is located in heart of this citrus, vegetable and cotton country.

Weslaco is just south of U.S. Hwy. 83, between McAllen and Harlingen. Events are held at Weslaco City Park, 300 N. Airport Drive.

You can get more information on Onionfest from the Weslaco Area Chamber of Commerce, www.weslaco.com or 1-888-968-2102.

Magic Valley EC serves the Weslaco area.

Jim Gramon is the author of FUN Texas Festivals & Events. Jim@JimGramon.com, www.JimGramon.com.

23. Country Opry, **Mason**, (325) 597-2119 or www.hillbillyhits.com
- 23-25. Young County Rodeo, **Graham**, 1-866-549-0401
- 24-25. Quilt Show, **Victoria**, (361) 573-5944
- 24-26. Trailhead-Texas Historical Shootists Society, **Gunsmoke**, (979) 732-8385 or www.columbustexas.org
- 24-April 2. Montgomery County Fair & Rodeo, **Conroe**, (936) 760-3631 or www.mcfa.org
25. Texas Indian Hobbyist Association Spring PowWow, **Burnet**, (956) 682-5775
25. Bloomin' Festival, **Grand Saline**, (903) 962-4257
25. Diamondback Jubilee, **Lometa**, (512) 752-3106
25. Tolbert Terlingua Chili Qualifier, **Rockne**, (512) 303-1888
25. Fish Fry & Auction, **Medina Lake**, (830) 751-2404
25. Main Street Trade Days, **Seguin**, (830) 401-2488
25. Texas Music Awards, **Linden**, (903) 756-8944 or www.TexasMusicAwards.org
- 25-26. Wild Hog Festival, **Sabinal**, (830) 988-2709
- 25-26. Festival Under the Oaks Arts & Crafts Fair, **Bryan**, (979) 822-6641, ext. 41
- 25-26. Texas Outdoor Adventure, **Lubbock**,

- (806) 798-7825 or www.texasoutdooradventure.com
- 25-26. Small Engine, Antique Truck & Tractor Show, **Nursery**, (361) 578-8484
27. Spring Fling Home & Garden Show, **Hamilton**, (254) 386-3216
- 27-30. Henderson County Livestock Show, **Athens**, (903) 677-6354
- 30-April 2. Old Mill Marketplace, **Canton**, (903) 567-5445 or www.oldmillmarketplace.com
- 31-April 2. Diamond Don's Vintage Motocross, **Jefferson**, (903) 665-6513 or www.DiamondDon.com
- 31-April 8. Walker County Fair, Rodeo & Barbecue Cook-Off, **Huntsville**, (936) 291-8763 or www.walkercountyfair.com
- 31-April 9. Spring Antiques Extravaganza, **Carmine**, (979) 278-3412
- 31-April 9. Antique Show, **Warrenton**, (979) 249-3141

April

1. Citywide Market, **Sinton**, (361) 364-2307
1. Billy the Kid Day & Classic Car Show, **Hico**, 1-800-361-HICO
1. Hogs Hunt 50K/25K Trail Run, **Huntsville**, www.hillcountrytrailrunners.com
1. Spring Market Day Arts & Crafts Festival,

- Comfort**, (830) 995-3131 or www.comfortchamberofcommerce.com
- 1-2. Elgoatarod, **Eldorado**, (325) 853-2434
2. Children's Chorus, Brenham, **Round Top**, (979) 277-6540 or www.brenhamchildrenschorus.org
8. Vintage USO Show, **Columbus**, (979) 732-8385 or www.columbustexas.org
8. Garden Club Plant Sale, **Medina**, (830) 589-2862
8. Spring Scenic Cycling Tour, **Cuero**, (361) 275-0099 or www.dewittwildflowers.org
8. Easter Parade and Egg Hunt, **Onalaska**, www.cityofonalaska.us
8. Herb Festival, **Huntsville**, (936) 436-1017
- 8-9, 22-23. Chicken House Flea Market, **Stephenville**, (254) 968-0888

Event information can be mailed to Around Texas, 2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704, faxed to (512) 486-6254, or e-mailed to aroundtx@texas-ec.org. It must be submitted by the 10th of the month two months prior to publication. E.g., May submissions must be received prior to March 10. Events are listed according to space available. We appreciate photos with credits but regret that they cannot be returned.



TEXAS CO-OP POWER

EACH MONTH, WE BRING YOU THE VERY BEST TEXAS HAS TO OFFER!

Texas Co-op Power is the Texas living magazine with a rural, suburban and small town focus. Each month you will read entertaining articles about Texas people, Texas history, Texas nature, Texas travel and Texas food.

And, in every issue we feature a personal look at chosen towns in "Texas, USA" along with "Around Texas," featuring selected events around the state.

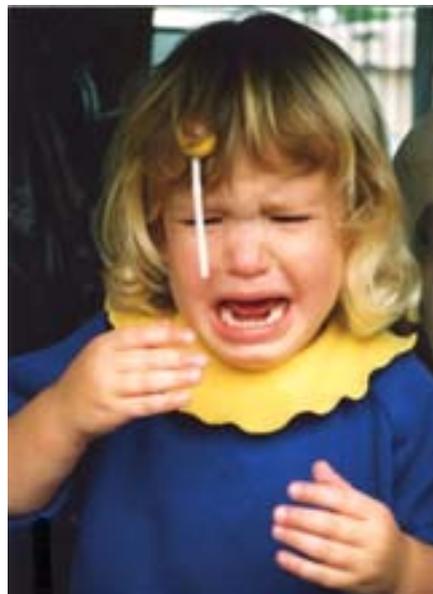
For just \$15 a subscription, you can share *Texas Co-op Power* with friends and family members who live far away or in big cities! See page 4 for an order form.

Oops!

Iwish you could have heard the judges laughing as they reviewed this month's photo entries—there were chuckles, chortles and cackles to spare! As a topic, **Oops!** was a big hit with our readers as well as our judging crew. Apparently mishaps are always funnier when they've happened to someone else.

School Projects is the topic for our May issue. Send your photos—along with your name, address, daytime phone, co-op affiliation and a brief description—to School Projects, Focus on Texas, 2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704, before March 10. A stamped, self-addressed envelope should 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. If you use a digital camera, e-mail your highest-resolution images to focus@texas-ec.org. (If you have questions about your camera's capabilities, please check the operating manual.)

AUDREY DUCOTE was not at all pleased when she realized her lollipop was no longer in her hand but in her hair! Pedernales EC member ELLEN DUCOTE submitted this photo. ▶



Proud grandfather JIM DYSON sent in this photo of his granddaughter, EMILY BROWN. "Her reaction time was just a little late," he says. Just a little! The Dysons are new members of Wood County EC.



Once FRECKLES made it into the trailer, he went for the nearest exit, hooked his horns through the open door, and jumped—almost! Victoria EC member SHAN SKIPPER had to back another trailer under Freckles' legs to give him support so he could wiggle his way through and onto the second trailer.

Curiosity quilled the dog! CIMARRON sniffed a porcupine a little too closely one night. Central Texas EC members BARBARA and BROOKS GEORGE promptly took her to the local vet, who removed the quills. Barbara reports that Cimarron is fine now, but still curious.



ANTHONY GABELMAN got so involved in his swing set, he ended up in a twisted "8" on three different swings, report his grandparents, BARBARA and DONALD LOESCH, Bluebonnet EC members.

UPCOMING in Focus on Texas

ISSUE	SUBJECT	DEADLINE
May	School Projects	March 10
June	Summer Fun	April 10
July	Close Calls	May 10
August	Classic Vehicles	June 10
September	Murals	July 10
October	Scarecrows	August 10



Nearer God's Heart in a Houston Garden

A friend of mine exclaimed, "Where was that taken? Africa?"

Dad, a bath towel wrapped around his waist, and Mom, similarly dressed, were hanging laundry in a sea of banana leaves between baskets of asparagus—not your typical Houston family photo.

We had no air conditioning during the '60s, and Houston was hot in the summer—Africa hot. The humidity levels belonged in a rain forest, not a

their aroma lying on my bed during those humid, sultry nights, and tried to catch a breeze to cool my heated skin.

Potted areca palms waved over clay sculptures crafted by a friend. Our birdbath, a replica of "The Little Mermaid" of Copenhagen Harbor, was perched atop an old English chimney pot. Purple-tinged ajuga and English ivy entwined and wrapped this masterful garden collage. The banana trees actually produced fruit—once. Only

purebreds Sister, Brunehilda and Rufus—protected the borders.

We became the proud recipients of an Easter duck named Dexter. Carlyle, the Easter bunny, was the only animal to undergo a name change. He became Carlotta after delivering six little bunnies!

Oscar, a huge grass spider, spun a magnificent web in a distant corner, and for a couple of weeks we noted his culinary catches of the day. Cardinal Thomas Wolsey, the English statesman, inspired Dad's naming of our redbirds, Mr. and Mrs. Wolsey.

Our night-blooming cereus parties evolved from Dad's ability to predict, after years of observation, the bloom's single night of climax. Friends and family gathered after dark as Dad, with drink in one hand and flashlight in the other, spotlighted the hand-sized, subtly sweet-scented, white blossoms that drooped from the alien-looking, stalky plants.

After my father's death, Mom and I browsed through artisan stalls at a country fair one Sunday afternoon. She asked a woodcarver if he would inscribe a plaque to read:

*The kiss of the sun for pardon
The song of the birds for mirth
One is nearer God's heart in a garden
Than anywhere else on earth.*



Frank and Jean Davenport in their Houston garden.

growing metropolis. But my immigrant parents, who had survived bone-chilling English winters, found Houston their tropical paradise. And over the years, Dad's backyard gardens grew into little kingdoms where I spent the carefree days of my childhood.

Red cannas circled an old, gnarled Chinese tallow tree. Dad's hand-constructed arbor supported the yellow Lady Banksia climbing roses that shaded my bedroom window. The shrimp plant continually threatened to take over the glass door panes adjacent to the garage. Bees drifted from bloom to bloom through the sweet honeysuckle that ran along our back garden fence. I drank in

the huisache thorns hiding in the St. Augustine grass reminded barefoot inhabitants that this wasn't Eden.

The animals who inhabited Dad's gardens over the years surpassed any local production of the "Grand March" in *Aida*. We inherited a baby alligator as a result of a friend's lost football bet. Dad christened him Algae. Algae met a tragic end from our two Siamese cats, Kinker and Mickey. Smokey, a gray Shetland pony won by my brother in a fat stock show coloring contest, was by far the largest animal who came through the revolving garden gate. Over the years, the canines—our "Heinz 57 Variety" dog, T-bone, and

Dad's tender touch with plants and animals allowed me to experience the sacredness of nature. Through the years, my reverence for nature—whether experienced in seeding a plot of dirt outside my door, feeding ducklings in the neighborhood park, or hiking in the West Texas mountains—is what makes me feel connected. It is the simplest things in life, like nuzzling my golden retriever's head, seeing the first tender buds of spring, or introducing the bloom on my night-blooming cereus to a new friend, that give me the greatest joy.

Joanna Davenport Athey lives in Austin with her husband, John, and their golden retriever, Jacob.