

TEXAS CO-OP POWER

BEST *of* CO-OP COUNTRY 2007

PLUS

Fort St. Louis

Peanut Butter Prodigy

Hit the Road:

Mercedes to Brownsville

Getting to School

SCHOOL SAFETY ABCs

The school buses are rolling and excited children are on their way to and from classes. It's time to start thinking about back-to-school safety!

Safety Comes First:

- Look left, right, then left again before crossing the street.
- Take directions from crossing guards.
- Cross in front of the bus only after the driver signals it's OK to do so.

Riding the school bus:


- Find a safe place for your child to wait for the bus, away from traffic and the street.
- Teach your child to stay away from the bus until it comes to a complete stop and the driver signals that it's safe to enter.
- When your child is dropped off, make sure he/she knows to exit the bus and walk 10 giant steps away from the bus and to be aware of the street traffic in the area.

Riding a bike:

- Mind traffic signals and the crossing guard.
- Always wear a bike helmet.
- Walk the bike through intersections.
- Ride with a buddy.
- Wear light-colored or reflective material.



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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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THE LITTLE BOOK

No bigger than a postcard and no thicker than a dinner plate, *Texas Landmark Cafes* by June Naylor (who writes our Hit the Road column) is one of 16 tiny titles published by Great Texas Line Press. These diminutive digests make accessible everything from *Cordon Bubba: Texas Cuisine* to *Texas Wineries*. They fit easily into a handbag, back pocket or glove compartment for handy travel reference. The recipe versions, such as *Tex Mex 101*, won't hog all the space on your kitchen shelves.

You'll want to keep the *Texas Speak: Advanced Course* handy in certain parts of the state where folks say things like, "Kinnihpeyyew," "Heighty," and "How'syamomandthem."

Great Texas Line is the brainchild of *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* journalist Barry Shlachter, who says his venture into the book business was born of a midlife crisis 10 years ago. In the past three years, Shlachter's little publishing house has grown more than 54 percent and now sells more than 48,000 books a year.

Shlachter said, "We haven't raised our prices [\$5.95 a copy] in 10 years by finding new ways to keep costs down, and printing right here in Texas."

Great Texas Line titles are available at Barnes & Noble bookstores, online at Amazon.com and through the nonprofit Sid Richardson Collection of Western Art at www.sidrmuseum.org.

POWER TALK



USE CARE WHEN DISPOSING OF CFLs

The rise in popularity of energy-saving compact fluorescent light bulbs has brought with it concern about the mercury that is an essential part of bulb manufacture. However, the level of the toxic metal in a CFL's tubing is relatively small, about 5 milligrams. By comparison, a mercury thermometer contains about 500 mg of the substance and an old-style thermostat has about 5,000 mg.

That's not to say that a CFL should be treated carelessly. If one happens to break, it's important to follow these procedures:

1. Open windows nearby; **2.** Sweep up bulb fragments (don't use your hands or a vacuum cleaner); **3.** Wipe the area with a damp paper towel to ensure cleanup of all fragments; **4.** Seal the fragments and the paper towel in a plastic bag and place in an outside trash bin.

When disposing of a burned-out CFL, the best choice is to recycle it or take it to a Household Hazardous Waste Collection Site, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. However, if neither of those options is available, seal the bulb in a plastic bag and place it in your regular trash.

The use of a CFL, which consumes 75 percent less electricity than a conventional bulb, actually prevents mercury pollution. The electricity used by one CFL is responsible for 2.4 mg of mercury emissions from a coal-burning generation plant over five years of use. Powering a conventional bulb over that span releases 10 mg of mercury, the EPA says. Plus, a CFL lasts up to six times longer than a conventional bulb and adds less waste heat to your home.



A SIMPLE WAY TO SAVE

When it comes to energy efficiency, **Geneva C. Rodgers**, a member of Fort Belknap Electric Cooperative, employs a simple tool—a wooden clothes-drying rack. "I try to dry everything I can on it," she writes. "Sheets go onto deck rails and over chairs ... knits on hangers on a rod in my utility room—a shower curtain rod is a great tool for this!"

If clothes need additional drying or fluffing in an electric dryer, it's done at the off-peak hours of 6 a.m. or 9:30 p.m. Thanks, Geneva, for the reminder about the efficiencies a back-to-basics approach can offer.



JOHN MARGESON



H A P P E N I N G S

The **45TH ANNUAL NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP INDIAN POW WOW** takes place September 7-9 at Traders Village in Grand Prairie. Hundreds of Native Americans representing dozens of tribes from across the nation will compete in several dance categories wearing full ceremonial regalia. Participants from toddlers to seniors will dance to the drumbeats that have survived centuries of cultural and geographic change.

Artists, craftsmen and traders from around the United States will showcase their work and talents in the Indian Arts and Crafts Show, featuring jewelry, pottery, baskets, rugs and clothing. A teepee exhibit and samples of American Indian food will give visitors a first-hand experience with traditional shelter and authentic dishes such as fry bread, Indian tacos and corn soup.

For more information, call (972) 647-2331, or go to www.tradersvillage.com.

HISTORIC COURTHOUSE SHINES IN THE HEART OF PARKER COUNTY

After fires destroyed three previous structures, the current Parker County Courthouse was built in 1886. Architects Dodson and Dudley of Waco designed the structure and constructed it of locally quarried limestone at a cost of \$55,555. The courthouse in Weatherford boasts a seal that marks the exact center of Parker County. Recent renovations have restored the building's brilliance, including expanding the district courtroom back to its original size,



making it once again one of the largest in the state. The courtroom's decorative wall and ceiling paintings, small, wooden balconies and patterned floor coverings were also reconstructed. Future plans include re-creating the courthouse square, which has been lost to roads and parking lots. Tri-County Electric Cooperative serves most of Parker County.

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

FRESH EYES ON WASHINGTON

Every year, a select group of high school students spends a week in the nation's capital, compliments of their electric cooperatives. This year, 99 Texas students were among 1,497 participants from 45 states visiting Washington, D.C., June 9-15.

The Government-in-Action Youth Tour, sponsored by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, provides a window into governance for some of tomorrow's leaders.

"The two things that amazed me the most were the Vietnam War Memorial and getting to meet Congressman Mac Thornberry and Congresswoman Kay Granger," writes Haley Sprague in the North Plains Electric Co-op edition of *Texas Co-op Power*. "We had about 30 minutes with each of them to ask questions about their daily routines and some about political controversies."

"All the participants seemed to

have a special interest in seeing exactly how the government process works," said Janet Blomquist, support services director of Texas Electric Cooperatives, the statewide association. "The level of education and knowledge these youth have is just amazing, and for them to have the ability to actually see it in action feeds that desire for knowledge. I truly believe we had many of our leaders of the future on the tour."



Amanda Melinda Rackel, a Government-in-Action Youth Tour participant from Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative, traces the name of a fallen soldier on the Vietnam War Memorial.

WHO KNEW?



MORE TASTY TOWNS

Here are some additions to your "tasty" Texas towns (Who Knew? July 2007):

CEREAL

Floyd County

CRABAPPLE

Gillespie County

OKRA

Eastland County

PANCAKE

Coryell County

PLUM

Fayette County

QUAIL

Collingsworth County

WILD PEACH

Brazoria County


— From B.J. Hale Sr., Sanger

Texas Co-op Power (USPS 540-560) is published monthly by Texas Electric Cooperatives (TEC). Periodical Postage Paid at Austin, TX and at additional offices. TEC is the statewide association representing 74 electric cooperatives. *Texas Co-op Power's* website is www.texascoopower.com. Call (512) 454-0311 or e-mail nkorthcott@texas-ec.org.

Subscription price is \$3.84 per year for individual members of subscribing cooperatives. If you are not a member of a subscribing cooperative, you can purchase an annual subscription at the nonmember rate of \$7.50. Individual copies and back issues are available for \$3 each.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Texas Co-op Power* (USPS 540-560), 2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704. Please enclose label from this copy of *Texas Co-op Power* showing old address and key numbers.

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CO-OP PEOPLE

letters

HOW OUR NEEDS HAVE GROWN

Just wanted you to know how much I appreciate Lamar County Co-op in Paris, Texas. We were members when it was REA back in the '40s.



A typical pre-electricity kitchen.

Back then, there were no meters. Everyone just paid \$1 a month. It was just the light bill.

We soon got an iron, which I appreciated very much. I was using the black smoothing iron, which you heated on the cook stove or on coals from outside around the wash pot, where we heated water for the wash.

We bought a refrigerator next, which was great to have all the ice you needed and a place to put food.

Back then, we had an ice man who delivered every other day and placed ice in our ice box, which needed a pan under it to catch water as it melted. What a mess if you forgot to empty it. Believe me we looked for the ice man.

We have so many luxuries today that my parents didn't have. I consider my electricity a bargain even though my bill was \$370 once this year. I paid my bill today—\$209. We don't think how much we really use electricity until it is out.

Here are the many things I now use and enjoy:

Washer	Air conditioner
Dryer	Water heater
Cook stove	Freezer
Microwave	Fans (3)
Blender	Knife
Coffeepot	Crock-Pots (3)
Toaster	Hairdryers (2)
Can opener	Lamps (7)
Food chopper	VCR
TVs (3)	Vacuum cleaner
Refrigerator	Carpet cleaner
Grill	Paper shredder
Iron	George Foreman grill
Skillets (3)	Snackster
Munsey (toaster) oven	Waffle iron
Ice cream freezer	Standing mixer
Telephones (3)	Radio
Garage door opener	Tape player
Hand mixer	Welder
Fry Daddy	Compressor
Hedge clippers	Outside lights (2)
Sewing machine	Doorbell

I could turn some of these off, but I don't know which ones.

I am a widow on a very fixed income but I still use most of the above items. I am 84 years old but like to cook for kids, grandchildren and friends. Thanks for listening.

MATTIE HERVEY
Lamar County Electric Cooperative



NECTAR OF THE BIRDS

Really enjoyed your article about the hummingbirds ("Those Magnificent Flying Machines," March 2007). We usually have only one kind, but imagine our surprise when we discovered this woodpecker (above) who thinks he's a hummingbird! We've been feeding about 1/2 gallon of "bird soup" a day. I wonder how much he drinks?

TED AND SHARON NEWSOM
Hamilton Electric Cooperative

TASTY TEXAS TOWNS

Just for your info (Who Knew? July 2007):

Bacon, Texas, is in Wichita County, north of Wichita Falls, off of Interstate 44.

The only Trout is Trout Creek in Newton County, along the Texas/Louisiana border, directly north of Orange.

Good eating!

RANDOLPH SOUKUP
Point Blank

REST STOP WANDERERS

Rest stops in Texas are places we are thrilled to see ("Highway Havens," July 2007). We are living in East Texas now, but on our trips back to the Panhandle (Pampa) we have stopped at the Hardeman County and Donley

County rest stops on U.S. 287. We have stopped at the rest stop in East Texas north of Jacksonville on U.S. 69. In the future, we plan to visit the Gray County rest stop east near Amarillo on Interstate 40, where the red, white and blue lights shine against the pitch-black night. After living 60 years in the Panhandle, I enjoy reading about that part of the country.

SHIRLEY STAFFORD
Trinity Valley Electric Cooperative

THANKS FROM AN ESCAPEE

Thank you, Spike Gillespie and Sam Houston Electric Co-op, for the nice article you wrote about our Escapees RV Club in your July issue ("Escape to Rainbow's End").

We enjoyed it, as we enjoy the annual meeting at the Indian reservation. Thank you, too, for your quick service, as shown after Hurricane Rita, other out-ages, and etc.

GEORGE OVERTON, SKP #52952
Sam Houston Electric Cooperative

Editor's note: *The article referred to in this letter did not appear in all local editions of Texas Co-op Power. Read these and other articles you might have missed on our website, www.texascoop.power.com.*

We want to hear from our readers. Send letters to: Editor, *Texas Co-op Power*, 2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704, or e-mail us at letters@texas-ec.org. 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. Read additional letters at www.texascooppower.com.

SEVERE WEATHER? TUNE IN!

NOAA Weather Radio

Do you have a battery-operated NOAA weather radio at your home or workplace?

If the NOAA broadcasts reach your area, the radios can be invaluable. Here's why:

- NOAA provides continuous broadcasts of the latest weather information directly from the National Weather Service offices. When severe weather threatens your area, the broadcast activates an alarm and turns on the radio so you can hear critical, potentially life-saving messages.
- NOAA weather radios can take advantage of an even greater tool: the "all hazards" radio network. These broadcasts provide warning and post-event information for a host of other threats including natural and technological hazards.
- NOAA weather radios can also receive broadcasted AMBER alerts for missing children.
- The NOAA weather radio network is expanding in coverage and capability, making it an invaluable tool. For as little as \$20, anyone can have access to potentially life-saving emergency messages.

We think your family's safety is worth the investment. Call your local electric cooperative or visit www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr/index.html for more weather radio information.



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This public service message is brought to you by your local electric cooperative. For more information, visit your local co-op.



For the first time since we began our annual Best of Co-op Country tradition, the *Texas Co-op Power* staff chose the “bests.” In the past, we have chosen the topics and published ballots in the magazine for readers to return. Sometimes, this gave an advantage to cooperatives with huge memberships. To cast a broader net, we have eliminated the member survey.

Our goal is to highlight a greater diversity of interesting places you might like to know about. Since staff members travel to the farthest reaches of co-op country to attend co-op annual meetings and conduct other co-op business, our “best” quest can stretch from one end of the state to the other.

As usual, not all the designated “bests” are in rural areas. Co-ops surround several major metropolitan areas. The sculpture garden we designated as best is on the northern cusp of Dallas in an office park. The Texas Sculpture Garden, nonetheless, is on co-op lines. Some “bests,” such as the International Quilt Festival in Houston, have no co-op link whatsoever but we hope it will be of interest to our readers. Quilts certainly have rural roots.

We still need your suggestions. If you have a favorite place, let us know. It might become a Best, get a mention in *PowerTalk* or be worthy of a full article. With your help, we will continue to find great treasures. Send them to Kaye Northcott, *Texas Co-op Power*, 2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704, or e-mail them to knorthcott@texas-ec.org.

★ BEST JERKY ★

TAYLOR MEAT COMPANY
Taylor

AS ONE OF THE OLDEST-KNOWN FORMS of preserved foodstuffs, jerky may be the original road food. It's even traveled on the space shuttle—now THERE'S a road trip. Smoking, salting or marinating meat, then drying it, makes it much longer lasting, compact and lighter (refrigeration is required with some products, particularly natural or organic jerky containing less salt and fewer preservatives). These days, jerky is made from an assortment of meats: turkey, pork, venison, elk, buffalo, even salmon. Avoid “jerky products” that are actually chopped and formed meat; the good stuff is made from whole muscle.

Though jerky is now widely available in supermarkets, its natural habitat has always been on the roadside, whether it's a convenience store, a small-town butcher shop or a highway stand. Can any road trip truly be complete without snacking on a chewy chunk of this salty, meaty treat?

The *Texas Co-op Power* staff gathered samples of basic peppered beef jerky during our travels across the state. While our testing revealed that what makes a good beef jerky can be subjective, there was a clear winner.

That superior stuff comes from Taylor Meat Company, a downtown Taylor butcher shop that opened in 1947. It's a thick, beefy product, with a higher moisture content than what some might consider traditional jerky. Some of us are fans of all things jerky, but this softer, easier-to-chew version even appealed to those less enamored of jerky in general. It has a nice, meaty texture and is full of smoky, peppery flavor. The shop offers a variety of fresh and smoked meats, also sold in local stores under the Tip Top brand.

For more information, call (512) 352-6357 or visit www.taylormeat.com.

OTHER FAVORITES:

- For fans of more traditional hard-dried jerky, we liked the stuff from **Woody's Smokehouse** in Centerville. It requires a little more chewing effort, but rewards the work with good hickory-smoked flavor. (903) 536-2434, www.woodys-smokehouse.com
- **Cooper's Bar-B-Que**, Llano, 1-877-533-5553, www.coopersbbq.com
- **Robertson's Hams**, Salado, 1-800-458-4267, www.robertsonshams.com

Andy Doughty, Production Designer

Andrew Nejtek, son of Production Manager Karen Nejtek, gnaws on a tasty strip of Choppin' Block jerky from Robertson's, his favorite.

WYATT MCSPADDEN



★ BEST PLACE TO TAKE THE KIDS ★

FOSSIL RIM WILDLIFE CENTER

Glen Rose

“UNCLE MARTIN, THE GIRAFFE JUST stuck his head in the car, and he’s eating food out of my hand!”

That’s not typically a sentence you’d hear from your 10-year-old nephew, unless, of course, you’re driving through Fossil Rim Wildlife Center outside Glen Rose. In early July, my wife and I loaded up our three children, two of their cousins and their grandmother and drove to the best place to take the kids in Texas.

There, 50 species of animals from all over the world—including endangered ones such as white and black rhinos, cheetahs and Attwater prairie chickens—live in a near-natural environment and interact with smiling sightseers driving 5 miles per hour. The at-risk animals, as well as some of the predators in the park such as wolves, are contained in secured areas, but the self-guided tour allows cars to drive within feet of many of these enclosures to get an up-close look.

We spent more than three hours driving slowly with the windows down among the beasts. The children tempted the animals with feed we bought at the park office. Soon we had gathered an entourage of wildebeest, kudu, bongo and sable antelope, and ostriches.

It was hard to find a face in the car without a grin. By the end of the tour, our smiling muscles were sore. Any time we approached a new herd of wildebeest, a resting zebra or a lone antelope, animal feed flew from five pairs of little hands out the open windows. It was hard to tell who was happier, the hungry animals or the giggly kids.

Fossil Rim is 55 miles southwest of Fort Worth just outside Glen Rose off U.S. Highway 67 on County Road 2008. Call (254) 897-2960 for information or visit www.fossilrim.org.

The park is served by United Cooperative Services.

Martin Bevins, Advertising Director



© FOSSIL RIM

★ BEST QUILT SHOW ★

INTERNATIONAL QUILT FESTIVAL *Houston*

EVERY FALL, THEY COME FROM AROUND the world, tens of thousands of quilt fanatics, to the George R. Brown Convention Center in Houston, for the International Quilt Festival. The festival, the largest of its kind in the world, has been around since 1974, and, if such a thing is possible, the buzz and passion just keep growing exponentially every year.

In fact, the 2006 Quilting in America survey reports there were 27 million quilters in the United States. These folks take the craft seriously, spending \$3.3 billion annually on everything quilt related. And that doesn't even take into account the people from other countries—the Japanese, Australians and Britons are especially fond of quilting. They flock to Houston in droves, bringing along an empty suitcase or two to fill with new quilting supplies they cannot resist buying at the event.

Even those who've been attending for years can hardly grasp the magnificence of color, creativity and crowds that result when more than 2,000

quilts, dolls and pieces of wearable art are brought together with 1,000-plus vendors selling notions, fabrics, batting, books and more, from the tiniest button to a frame for making a king-size quilt.

It's a good idea, early on, to go to the second floor of the ship-shaped convention center and look down through one of the porthole windows to take in a bird's-eye view of the joyful busyness below. This gives a little perspective to the breathless massiveness of all displayed.

Still, no matter how you try to take it in or map it out, even the staunchest must-stick-to-a-plan types can't help but find themselves wandering as they are pulled from one gorgeous quilt to another. It is simply impossible to set a course of navigation and stick with it in a room packed with so much fabric eye candy.

There are quilts for all tastes and budgets—big quilts, small quilts, hand-sewn, machine-sewn. Traditional quilts abound, as do contemporary quilts, many challenging the notion that a

quilt is something Grandmother makes to place horizontally upon a bed for purposes of warmth and comfort.

In fact, all of the quilts, traditional and contemporary, are actually works of art. Some are whole cloth, painted on the front, with the quilting threads adding texture and depth. Some include high-tech embellishments, including photos printed directly onto fabric. Some are humorous, made of pieces you might not necessarily associate with quilting, such as old brassieres.

Of special interest is the collection of journal quilts, presented by artists in series of four mini-quilts, each the size of a sheet of paper and each completed within a month's time. Some of these series focus on technique—the artist wanted to try something new. Others use the miniature medium to explore life experiences.

Superstars of the quilting world abound, teaching classes ranging from beginning to advanced and spending time in front of their quilts answering questions from eager fans. Ricky Tims, Hollis Chatelain and Inge Mardal and Steen Hougs (a married couple who collaborates) are just some of the many quilting luminaries who show up annually, often collecting many of the numerous awards.

Even if you've never picked up a needle and thread, even if you've never considered the idea that a quilt might equal art, it is impossible not to be moved, astounded and inspired by the stunning array.

This year's festival will be November 1–4. The International Quilt Market, a trade show, will be October 27–29. For more information, visit www.quilts.com.

Spike Gillespie, guest writer

*Gillespie's newest book, *Quilty as Charged: Undercover in a Material World*, is being published by the University of Texas Press in October.*

Quilting mavens flock to the International Quilt Festival in Houston.



PHOTO BY KIM COFFMAN, COURTESY OF QUILTS, INC.



© BLUE BELL

★ BEST ICE CREAM ★

BLUE BELL HOMEMADE VANILLA *Brenham*

WHEN YOU HEAR THE WORDS, “ICE cream,” are you remembering those hot summer afternoons when you were a kid, racing to the curb with a nickel in your sweating hand, waiting for the plunky, melodeon sounds of the ice cream truck to get closer and closer?

Or are you going back to a church side yard, long wooden tables laden with cakes, cookies and homemade ice cream spread under the shade of a live oak tree?

Maybe you're in a small-town ice cream parlor sharing a banana split with a special friend or a high school sweetheart.

Whatever your reveries, it's a pretty safe bet that the words “ice cream” tap into the feel-good recesses of your brain. It's been tagged America's favorite dessert, and despite a mile-long roster of flavors from bubblegum to triple fudge chipotle mango, we keep going back for more vanilla.

In Texas, it's practically a given that

vanilla means Blue Bell Homemade Vanilla. The little creamery in Brenham is 100 this year. But it wasn't until more than 60 years into the business that manager Howard Kruse experimented his way into finding just the right recipe for duplicating the distinctive flavor of hand-cranked vanilla ice cream. The initial production of 5,000 cartons disappeared almost immediately from grocery store freezers in Central Texas and Houston. A star was born.

Homemade Vanilla quickly became—and still is—Blue Bell's best-selling flavor, and its most closely guarded recipe. Cookies 'n' Cream holds second place, with Dutch Chocolate coming in third. Flavor missteps along the way include Dill Pickle 'n' Cream (green ice cream with small pickle chips) and Licorice, which turned people's mouths black.

Before 1989, when the first Blue Bell distribution branch was opened

outside Texas, aficionados from other states and ex-pats would have Texan friends or family members ship cartons of the confection to them. These days, Blue Bell has three plants: the original one in Brenham; one in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma; and one in Sylacauga, Alabama. These plants deliver to branches, which in turn serve all or part of 16 states. (If you know someone unlucky enough to live in one of the other 34 states, direct them to Blue Bell's website, where they can order online.)

Blue Bell has had a number of slogans over the years, like “Blue Bell's better by a country smile” and “We eat all we can and sell the rest,” but the one that's stuck is the one we heartily agree with: “Blue Bell's the best ice cream in the country.” Co-op country, that is.

To order online, visit www.bluebell.com.

Carol Moczygemba, Managing Editor

★ BEST HIKE ★

GUADALUPE MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK

Near Dell City



LISA BURCHETT-HARGIS

Kevin on his favorite hike in the Guadalupe Mountains.

MANY CORNERS OF TEXAS JUST BEG TO be explored on foot. For the avid hiker, nowhere offers more variety and scenic beauty than the remote Guadalupe Mountains on the Texas-New Mexico border.

Although Guadalupe Mountains National Park is on the edge of the Chihuahuan Desert, the weather isn't always dry, as my wife, Lisa, and I discovered firsthand during a visit in October.

Weary after a long drive, we pitched our tent in the Pine Springs Campground, which lies in the shadow of Guadalupe Peak, Texas' highest at 8,749 feet. We decided the next day to explore the nearby McKittrick Canyon trail and visit The Grotto, a shallow cave about 3 1/2 miles from the main trailhead.

We set out into the warm morning air, walking down a scrubby ridge, blissfully alone with one another and our thoughts.

The rocky terrain of the ridge dropped off as the trail paralleled a

dry creek bed, and after more than an hour's hike, we found water, though not for drinking. A small stream flowed through stands of maple, walnut, oak and juniper that were starting to glow with red, orange and yellow fall colors.

Water attracts life, and birdsong filled the air, providing a soundtrack to the antics of rock squirrels. We scanned the canyon walls towering above, up to the edge of the evergreen forest in the bowls of the mountains, hoping we would see a black bear or even a mountain lion, but those fantasies were not fulfilled.

Eventually, we reached the Pratt Cabin, a structure built in 1932 as a vacation retreat for the Wallace Pratt family, who later donated the surrounding land to the National Park Service. The wide porches of the stone and wood structure, which is often open and staffed by park personnel, provided cooling shade. After a short rest and lunch, we resumed our hike, becoming aware of increasing cloud cover and the

growing rumble of thunder.

We hiked about a quarter of a mile or so farther before, becoming truly concerned by the increasing frequency and volume of thunderclaps, deciding to turn around—less than a mile short of The Grotto.

The storm grew with typical mountain speed, adding urgency to our pace. Instead of heading back to the Pratt Cabin and possible shelter, we made the tactical mistake of continuing toward the distant trailhead in the hope we could get to the car before the storm hit.

Watching the curtain of rain and hail approach from across the valley was oddly hypnotic. When the storm hit, we sought shelter under a good-sized alligator juniper with a trio of fellow hikers to wait it out. Lisa hunkered down and I bent over her, my backpack absorbing most of the stinging blows from the marble-sized hail. A few hailstones snuck through the limbs of the sheltering tree and bonked off my skull.

As quickly as the storm blew in, it departed, leaving the trail ankle-deep with icy runoff. We slogged back to the trailhead, skirting the deeper puddles of water and crunching down a few freshly fallen pieces of hail, which decorated the surrounding agave plants.

Although our hike was a washout, it provided scenes of great beauty and some adventure as well.

Call park headquarters at (915) 828-3251 for information or visit the National Park Service website, www.nps.gov/gumo.

OTHER FAVORITES:

- **Chisos Mountains** in Big Bend National Park
- **Beachcombing** on the **Gulf seashore**
- **Reaching the top of Enchanted Rock** outside Fredericksburg
- **Clambering through a national forest** in East Texas
- **Visiting the alligators** at **Brazos Bend State Park** south of Houston

Kevin Hargis, Copy Editor

Because many pieces of farm equipment reach heights of 14 feet or higher, always remember to look up when entering fields and barn lots to make sure there is enough room to pass beneath electric lines. Electric contact accidents can result in loss of limbs or even death.

Farm Safety Rules:

- The number one electrical farm hazard is the potential contact from a grain auger to a power line. Always look up before raising or moving an auger.
- The same is true of metal irrigation pipe, often stored along fence lines under an electric line. Never raise or move irrigation pipe without looking up. A few seconds of caution can mean the difference between life and death.
- Be sure hand tools are in good working order and use them according to manufacturers' instructions.
- Ensure that the wiring in your workshop is adequate to handle your tools. And never operate any electric tools near water.
- Read labels and handling instructions carefully and follow them when using chemicals and herbicides. Never leave chemicals where children or animals can get into them; store them in a locked cabinet if possible. Safely dispose of containers.

CULTIVATE FARM SAFETY



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★ BEST OUTDOOR MUSIC FESTIVAL ★

KERRVILLE FOLK FESTIVAL

Quiet Valley Ranch, 9 miles south of Kerrville

ONCE A YEAR, BEGINNING THE THURSDAY before Memorial Day, the Quiet Valley Ranch outside Kerrville is, well, not so quiet. The Kerrville Folk Festival settles in for an 18-day stay, during which musicians, fans, vendors and volunteers commune with the Hill Country, music and each other.

Those devoted to the festival go to extremes to make sure they attend at least a few days of it. Michelle Moore and her husband, Richard Floyd, who reside just north of Denton, are two such devotees. They even went when she was seven months' pregnant, then took 9-month-old Sam with them the next year, and this year the now-almost-2 Sam had a ball.

"It's so family friendly. It has a lot of great stuff for kids, from roving performers to kids' activities to the music itself," says Moore. There's not another festival that they look forward to like this one. They enjoy revisiting the

"tie-dye lady," shopping at their favorite booths and making new finds, and eating some really great food.

Of course, music is the big draw. There are sundown concerts every weekday, and on the weekends there's music throughout the afternoon and evening, plus impromptu jams anytime. It's possible to hear music for almost all of your waking—and, if you camp, possibly some of your sleeping—hours.

Over its 36 years, the festival has hosted some of music's brightest stars, such as Willie Nelson, Nancy Griffith, Lyle Lovett, Robert Earl Keen, Lucinda Williams and Judy Collins. But festival-goers are also delighted by the up-and-comers who are featured in the emerging songwriters' competition. This year, the Grassy Hill New Folk Competition featured 32 finalists from 800 entries, many of whom you might be hearing on the radio soon. A

few of the names to listen for are Diana Jones, Eric Schwartz, Jonathan Byrd, Jason Spooner, Cosy Sheridan, Colin Brooks and Amy Speace.

The Kerrville Folk Festival is also a real musicians' festival. From the famous campsite jams to the Songwriters School, musicians come there to learn, share and play together.

"There's something magical about the atmosphere there," says Moore. "It's peaceful, unified, serene." She plans to keep on taking Sam, so he can grow up being a part of the good feeling, great music and fine company that she finds there year after year. Maybe one day he'll be a musician.

The 2008 festival will be May 22–June 8. For information, visit www.kerrville-music.com.

Bandera Electric Cooperative serves Quiet Valley Ranch.

Shannon Oelrich, Food Editor

Impromptu jams with fellow Kerrville attendees are a highlight of the festival.

© BOB DAEMMRICH



★ BEST SCULPTURE GARDEN ★

TEXAS SCULPTURE GARDEN

Frisco

MANY PEOPLE MAKE SPECIAL TRIPS TO see the Nasher Sculpture Center in downtown Dallas, but who goes to nearby Frisco for an artistic experience? Well, people should. The Hall Office Park in Frisco has an admirable collection of works from Texas and international sculptors displayed in a park-like setting.

As office environments go, this is idyllic. Space for outdoor sculpture and lush landscaping was set aside in the design phase of the complex. In addition to the outdoor sculptures, art is displayed in several building lobbies, where visitors are welcome. As the office park develops, more art will be added.

Craig Hall, a Texas real estate developer, owns the entire collection, including the Texas Sculpture Garden, which is said to be the largest private collection of contemporary Texas sculpture ever assembled and made available to the public. This may be the only office park in Texas with its own art curator. He hired Patricia B. Meadows specifically to scout and acquire works of 41 well-known Texas artists. The Texans get the prime 4 acres at the entrance of the office park. International works are also represented—a total of 165 works at last count. The Australian and African sculptures seem particularly at home in the Texas environment.

Hall, who is not your conventional developer, says he never even considered making more lucrative use of the area devoted to art. He'd rather share his passion for collecting with the public. So there, at the intersection of Gaylord Parkway and the Dallas North Tollway, adjacent to huge malls, various corporate campuses and the practice center for the Dallas Stars, are lovely and whimsical sculptures.

Visitors can even drive through the office park, gazing at large pieces of art without ever stepping out of their cars. The outdoor sculptures can be viewed daily from dawn to dusk. Stop by the reception desk at 6801 Gaylord



La Mujer Roja by Michelle O'Michael

PEG CHAMPION



H.O.P. Rabbits by David Iles

PEG CHAMPION

Parkway to pick up maps and identifications of the sculptures. The lobby of that building, headquarters for the office park, contains the indoor section of the Texas Sculpture Garden. This reception area and those in several other buildings are open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays and 9 a.m.

until noon on Saturdays.

Call (972) 377-1100 or go to www.texassculpturegarden.org for more information.

CoServ Electric provides power to the Texas Sculpture Garden.

Kaye Northcott, Editor

★ BEST OUT-OF-THE-WAY GOURMET ★

ROUGH CREEK LODGE
Near Glen Rose



Executive Chef Gerard Thompson displays dinner.

FEW PEOPLE ARE GOING TO HAPPEN upon Rough Creek Lodge and Resort by chance. Two staffers returning from a business trip to Dallas made a westward detour on Highway 67 some 10 miles west of Glen Rose on County Road 2013 to have brunch at this hunting venue, executive center and spa resort. But a surprising number of chefs are being lured to such out-of-the way places with the promise of untrammled creativity, on-site greenhouses for micro vegetables and small-town life.

Executive Chef Gerard Thompson, named a rising star chef of the 21st century by the prestigious James Beard Foundation, traded Santa Barbara, California, for Glen Rose and Rough Creek Lodge in 1988. We loved the restaurant's affinity for rustic favorites such as grilled quail, pan-roasted Gulf snapper and iron skillet-seared beef. Texas traditionalists will be happy to hear that approximately half the main courses served include

beef. More adventuresome eaters can find some surprises on the menu.

The menu changes daily, but there's always something special. The homemade breads and the fresh fruit sorbet were superb. Our waiter wrapped up a variety of breads for us to take back to Austin.

For the first course we shared roasted poblano soup and a risotto highlighted by fresh pea sprouts and morel mushrooms. For the second course, we had Poached Eggs Angelin with Lump Crab on a toasted English muffin. The ham was from Virginia and the Hollandaise was made with blood oranges. The Crisp Skinned Duck Leg with curly endive and spinach, Foie Gras Roasted Potatoes and Roasted Shallot Vinaigrette were all superb. For dessert, we had Spring Strawberry Soup with Champagne and Sorbet and Angel Food Cake with Mango Sorbet.

We loved the alchemy of extraordinary food served in a beautiful, relaxed rural setting by a cordial, attentive

waitstaff. Rough Creek Lodge is worth a special trip either for lunch or dinner when you want to treat yourself to a unique experience.

For more information, call 1-800-864-4705 or go to <http://roughcreek.com>.

The lodge is served by United Cooperative Services.

ANOTHER FAVORITE

AUSTIN'S, THE RESTAURANT
AT ROSE HILL MANOR
Stonewall

You might find Austin's while searching for a comely bed and breakfast in the Hill Country, but you'll keep coming back for the combination of fine food, hospitality and first-class lodging. Located in Stonewall, famous for the LBJ Ranch and many a roadside peach stand, this charming B&B offers sweeping views of the Pedernales River Valley from its verandas.

Inside, the white tablecloths, sparkling glasses, candles and flowers on every table make for a romantic, sophisticated atmosphere. The service is fine, but not stuffy. Our server exuded a refreshing blend of down-home familiarity and gourmet food and wine knowledge.

The food was excellent. Chef Seth Bateman offers a five-course prix fixe dinner, the menu for which changes weekly, every evening the restaurant is open (Wednesday through Sunday, prix fixe seating at 7 p.m.). We can also recommend the Jumbo Lump Crab Cakes with Citrus Risotto, Haricot Vert and Lemon Cream Sauce from the limited a la carte menu. Reservations are required.

For more information, call 1-877-ROSEHIL (767-3445) or visit www.rose-hill.com

Central Texas Electric Cooperative serves Stonewall.

Kaye Northcott, Editor, Shannon Oelrich, Food Editor

Hurricanes

Any time a hurricane approaches the Texas coast, you're likely to be reminded to take precautions. But the time for planning should begin well before hurricane season arrives.


Follow these tips to prepare yourself and your home for hurricanes:

- Develop a plan for installing covers for windows.
- Don't waste time taping windows. When a 100 mph wind blows an object at your window, tape won't stop it.
- Remove weak and dead trees and tree limbs on your property.
- Know whether your home is in a zone that could be flooded.
- Have a "grab and run" bag ready with important papers (like your homeowner's insurance policy) and prescription medicines in the event you have to evacuate.
- Have a plan in place for where you will go if you evacuate, the route you will take, and how others can contact you.
- Have a survival kit ready with nonperishable food, water, a first-aid kit and other things you may need.
- Keep a battery-powered radio handy. And don't forget the extra batteries.
- Don't hesitate to evacuate, especially if you are living in a manufactured home or a house that may not be sturdy enough to stand up to the wind.

DON'T BLOW OFF HURRICANES



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★ BEST NURSERIES ★

ANTIQUÉ ROSE EMPORIUM • NATIVE AMERICAN SEED
Independence, Brenham, San Antonio • Junction

OK, I CONFESS. I AM A GARDEN JUNKIE. If I had all the time, energy and money in the world, I would have gardens and garden rooms each with a different purpose. I would have a beautiful vegetable garden. Maybe a mysterious night garden filled with scents and white flowers. A shade garden ... you get the idea.

So, I cannot name a single nursery the best. No way!

Instead, I asked gardeners across the state to tell us what nurseries they like and why. Here are some of the favorites. If you get a chance, stop by the ones in your area, or visit these online for more information about what makes each nursery a standout.

THE ANTIQUE ROSE EMPORIUM
This nursery outside Brenham is the source for antique and old garden roses that are fragrant, long-lived and easy to grow. The roses from the Antique Rose Emporium can take the Texas heat. Some even survived for years untended and abandoned before being collected and propagated, once again enjoying popularity among gardeners.

Mail-order these beauties and enjoy roses from 100 or more years ago.

Call 1-800-441-0002 or visit www.antiqueroseemporium.com.

Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative serves the Antique Rose Emporium.

NATIVE AMERICAN SEED

I have a dream: I want to stay at the Native American Seed Cool River Cabin (available for rental) during the hot summer months. Imagine poking around looking at acres and acres of wildflowers, then retreating to a quiet cabin on the Llano River for swimming and fishing.

Tucked away in Junction, Native American Seed offers only native plants and grasses, all available by mail order. In addition, Native American Seed provides large landowners and

developers consultation on erosion or invasive species.

Call 1-800-728-4043 or visit www.seedsourcesource.com.

Pedernales Electric Cooperative serves Native American Seed.

OTHER FAVORITES:

• **Jordan's Plant Farm**, Henderson. Big, extravagant, over the top. Visit at Christmas and enjoy

displays of tens of thousands of poinsettias. 1-800-635-1147, www.jordansplantfarm.com

• **Yucca Do**, Hempstead. Countless varieties of yuccas, agaves, aloes. Cacti and succulents a speciality. (979) 826-4580, www.yuccado.com

• **Wildseed Farms**, Fredericksburg. The largest working wildflower farm in the United States. Pick your own bouquets straight from the fields. 1-800-848-0078, www.wildseedfarms.com

Suzi Sands, Art Director

The Antique Rose Emporium is a great place to get landscaping ideas.



COURTESY ANTIQUE ROSE EMPORIUM

TAME YOUR TREES

Tree Trimming


We love our trees, but when branches are too close to power lines, they can cause power outages, fire hazards and safety concerns.

Here are some rules to follow:

- If a tree or a large branch is touching or falls on an electric line, call your electric cooperative immediately. Tree sap is an excellent conductor of electricity, so a downed branch on a line is an electrocution hazard as well as a fire hazard.
- Never trim trees that grow close to power lines; that is a job for professionals. Call your electric co-op for assistance and guidance.
- Don't allow children to climb trees or build tree houses close to power lines.
- When planting a tree, plan ahead. A tiny tree may eventually grow large enough to damage power lines and possibly interrupt power during storms. At maturity, your trees should not be within 10 feet of a power line.
- Plant appropriate distances from all power lines—those along the street or right-of-way, as well as those running to your home and outbuildings.



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For a Brighter Tomorrow

Improve Back-to-School Homework Habits

Your homework habits might be affecting your grades. Are you feeling tired, achy or bored when it comes to homework time? You can change your grades by practicing these healthy homework habits. Change the way you feel by taking better care of your mind and body.

Get the Sleep You Need

Studies show that teens' natural sleep patterns are different than those of adults. This often causes sleep deprivation among teens, since they tend to have trouble going to sleep at night and waking in the morning. You can avoid some of the problems that come



with sleep deprivation by changing some of your nighttime habits.

- Turn off the TV at night. Some teens fall asleep with the TV on, and some are so used to the noise they think they can't sleep without it. Not true! The TV noises and flashing lights will only keep you from getting a sound sleep. If you can remember things you heard during your sleep, you're not sleeping well.

- Try caffeine-free drinks. Reduce caffeine intake by switching to something healthier, such as water. OK, OK ... if that's too much to ask, at least try a caffeine-free version of your favorite drink.

- Limit nighttime video games. Video games may cause your brain to enter overdrive. If you play them, don't do it just before you go to bed.

- Turn off the cell phone. What's so

important that it can't wait until morning? Unless you have a really good reason—like your parent works at night and might need to reach you, turn it off and get some rest.

- Play music if you want, but not too loud. Many people play music at night. If it doesn't bother you, go ahead. Keep the volume down, though, or it will disrupt your sleep.

Fight the Urge To Procrastinate

Do you get the sudden urge to feed the dog at homework time? Don't fall for it! Procrastination is like a little white lie we tell ourselves. We often think we'll feel better about studying later if we do something else now, like playing with a pet, watching a TV show or even cleaning our room. It's not true.

Avoiding Procrastination

How can you battle the urge to put things off? Try the following tips.

- Recognize that a feisty little voice lives inside every one of us, telling us it would be rewarding to play a game, eat or watch TV when we know better. Don't listen to it.

- Think about the rewards of accomplishment and put reminders around your study room. Is there a specific college you want to attend? Put its poster right over your desk.

- Work out a reward system with your parents. There might be a concert you're dying to go to. Make a deal way ahead of time—you can go, but only if you reach your goals. And stick with the deal!

- Start with small goals if you're facing a big assignment. Don't get overwhelmed by the big picture. Accomplishment feels great, so set small goals first, and take it day by day. Set new goals as you go.

- Finally, give yourself time to play! Set aside a special time to do whatever you want. Afterward, you'll be ready to get to work!

IS YOUR WATER HEATER A HIDDEN ENERGY WASTER?

One of the biggest energy guzzlers in your home is the water heater. Even if yours seems to work fine, it might be worth your while to replace it with a model built after 2004, when the federal government released new efficiency standards for water heaters.



To get the most energy-efficient performance out of your water heater:

- Drain a bucket of water out of the bottom of the heater twice a year. The bottom can fill with sediment, which separates water from the heating element.

- Invest in an inexpensive water heater blanket or insulation kit, especially for older heaters. Do not insulate over doors or vents.

- Before buying a new water heater, estimate your family's needs. A family of up to four should buy a 30- to 50-gallon tank, while up to seven people might require 50 to 80 gallons. Consider appliances such as hot tubs when calculating how much hot water you use, and consult a plumber for help.

- If your house has more than two levels or if the bathrooms, kitchen and laundry room are spaced far apart, it might be more efficient to invest in a smaller water heater for each level.

- Set the water heater's temperature at 120 degrees or lower. This prevents scalding and standby heat loss, and can lower your water-heating bill by 10 percent.

- Insulate hot water supply pipes to reduce heat loss.

Be on the Lookout for Phantom Loads

We all know to turn our thermostats up and our lights off to conserve energy, but many of us forget about all those household devices that quietly draw energy all day long, even when turned off. Electric co-ops refer to this electricity loss as phantom load, and the average home is full of it.

By themselves, these devices don't use much energy, but when combined, they can make up a significant amount of a home's electricity usage. The U.S. Department of Energy estimates that in an average home, 75 percent of the

electricity used to power electronics is consumed while the units are switched off.

The most common offenders include any appliances that have digital clocks that remain on constantly, such as microwaves or coffeemakers. Devices that can be powered up by remote controls must constantly draw power to be ready for remote signals. Electronics that use square plug transformers, such as DVD players and video game consoles, also contribute to electricity loss.

The best way to rid your home of these phantom freeloaders is to be aware of them. If you're not sure which devices qualify, try turning off all lights in your house at night and looking for any LED lights or other glowing appliances. Unplug, rather than switch off, any of these devices when you aren't using them. Or use power strips with on/off switches to combine multiple plugs from household items and switch the entire power strip off when you are done with those items for the day.

You can find a list of popular home electronics and how much phantom load they create on the Federal Energy Management Program's website at <http://oahu.lbl.gov>.

How many of these electricity-wasting phantoms are haunting your home?

Laptop plug	Dryer
Power-tool charger	Printer
Stereo	Cordless phone
Xbox	VCR
Cell phone charger	TV
Some thermostats	Computer
Some hairdryers	Monitor
Computer speakers	Garage-door opener
Microwave	Doorbell
DVD player	Electric toothbrush
Motion detector	charger
Lighting dimmers	Coffeemaker
Washer	Electric razor

LOOK UP! WATCH FOR OVERHEAD POWER LINES

When using ladders around the house to clean windows and gutters or paint, or when trimming trees, be mindful of overhead power lines.

- Never touch or allow anything you are holding to touch any power line. Power lines are not insulated to protect people from injury. Birds on wires aren't in danger because they don't provide a path to the ground. You and a ladder, pole or kite string do.

- You don't need to be in contact with a power line to get hurt. Electricity can jump and often does when a potential conductor such as a ladder comes within a certain proximity. Be safe and keep well away—at least 10 feet—from overhead power lines.

- Any ladder—not just a metal one—is dangerous around power lines. No matter what the ladder is made of, it represents a potential hazard.

- Call your electric cooperative to report power lines that pass through tree limbs.

ELECTRICITY HAZARDS AFTER STORMS



Hurricane season is back. Storms not only damage property, they can also cause health and safety hazards. Your reaction when a storm blows your way can head off a disaster. Some tips:

UNPLUG ALL MAJOR ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES as soon as the power goes out. This could prevent an electrical surge from damaging the motors of those appliances when the power is restored.

IF PARTS OF THE HOUSE ARE FLOODED, turn off electricity to those areas before going near. Stepping in water—even shallow water—that is touching plugged-in appliances can cause electrocution.

HAVE AN ELECTRICIAN INSPECT FLOODED APPLIANCES before turning them back on.

KEEP THE REFRIGERATOR DOOR CLOSED during power outages. Food will stay good for four to six hours in an unopened refrigerator.

KEEP A REFRIGERATOR THERMOMETER on hand to check the temperature when power is restored. If food is below 40 degrees, it's safe to eat.

KNOW WHERE YOU CAN GET DRY ICE if the power is off for more than four hours. Keep ready-to-eat, nonperishable food on hand.

IF SOMEONE IN THE HOUSE IS ON LIFE-SUPPORT or relies on any electric medical device, make a plan for where to take the person in case of a power outage. Your local hospital can help you with the plan.

Container Gardens

Containers filled with exotic looking plants can add zing to your garden.

BY DAN JOHNSON

I never used to think much about gardening in containers. I lived for many years in the rural Northeast, where it was just as easy to drop plants right in the ground and watch them thrive. Sure, a few houseplants would spend the summer out on the east side of the house, sheltered by a sprawling wisteria under the high canopy of an ancient black walnut tree. But I lived in the country and had plenty of space to garden and good garden soil and compost—but few spare resources to spend on “unnecessary flowerpots.”

Time and experience have changed that. I am aware of far more opportunities in the garden than I would have imagined in my earlier years. Sometimes even simple additions can create complexity and excitement in the garden. Gardening in containers can have a big impact and add a sophisticated, artsy feel to an otherwise average landscape.

The possibilities are vast. Small, well-kept terra-cotta pots can hold a collection of favorite succulents such as *sempervivum* (hens and chicks) and *sedum* (stonecrop). Robust glazed Asian containers in rich colors can stand alone as sculptural elements or focal points, act as garden-room dividers, or bring elements of your home’s design out into the garden.

Fill them with exotic looking plants such as *cannas*, *papyrus* or *brugmansias* (angel’s trumpet), and you create an oasis that leaps into view. Most containers are portable enough to easily change the scene to suit an occasion, or divert the focus when part of the garden is past its prime. Plantings can change each year, creating different moods and combinations without landscaping the entire garden again.

So where do you begin? Your yard may have a range of spaces—areas that you gravitate to when you want to relax, sections you enjoy working in most, and forgotten corners that coast through the seasons with little notice. Container gardens can add height and dimension where there was only empty space.

Consider the view from indoors as well. A lushly planted urn or bowl framed in your favorite window can bring the garden indoors and create a feeling of connection with the outside. If you aren’t content with your container garden, changing or relocating plants is easy.

With that in mind, consider your passions next and look at the style of your garden. In your landscape, are you a collector of many small plants, or do you lean toward simple, big and bold? That may be your preference in your containers as

well, but before you get started, whichever one describes you, consider doing the opposite in your containers. This is an opportunity to try something new to you.

For most of us, the range of plants has never been easier to explore. Traditional and colorful annuals will blaze in containers all summer and are standard fare for many gardeners, but there are other options. Fast-growing tropicals are often available at quite reasonable prices.

A young majesty palm (*Ravena rivularis*) may cost no more than a few six-packs of petunias, but it can have several times the impact. Bold, swaying grasses can create motion and energy in a static space. Cannas, colocasia (elephant ear), eucomis (pineapple lily) and other tender summer bulbs grow quickly, and their large leaves can be an exotic contrast to the finer textures of many hardy perennials.

Cacti and succulents have a sculptural quality that is shown to great advantage when raised above garden level, and they thrive in well-drained containers. In much of the United States, many hardy cacti can remain in their containers in the garden all year as living works of art. This lifts their prickly pads and stems up out of surrounding vegetation and makes caring for them much easier.

Hardy conifers can lend stability and texture to a container grouping. Many dwarf types can remain for several seasons for a more permanent effect on a balcony or terrace. Larger sorts may be planted directly into the garden when their increasing size no longer suits the container. Either way, colorful and unique cultivars can be absolute treasures and stand apart all year as living sculptures.

There are few limits to your creativity when planting container gardens. Experiment with leaf shape, movement, color and texture in combinations that you may not have tried before.

Potted gardens can be flexible and colorful additions to a garden that needs that elusive “something extra.” You may find, as I did, that those “unnecessary flowerpots” have become essential elements of a rich and dynamic garden design.

Dan Johnson has been gardening for as long as he can remember and has worked in the green industry for more than 25 years.

CONTAINER BASICS

CONTAINERS: With the exception of aquatic gardens, all containers must have drainage holes in the bottom. This is imperative.

PLANT SELECTION: Sun or shade will influence your choices. Books abound on this topic, and personal preference may be your only limit. Consider aesthetics as well as lighting. The warm jewel-tones of coleus and impatiens will be dazzling in the soft shade of high deciduous trees. In full sun, the steely shades of a silver shield plant (*Plectranthus argenteus*) or artemisia (sagebrush) can cool any planting.

SOIL MIX: Soil for tropicals and annuals should be rich in organic material, retaining moisture but draining freely. For succulents and cacti, a coarser mix with excellent drainage is best.

WATERING: Check new containers daily for water but allow slight drying between watering. As plants mature and summer temperatures warm, they may need water nearly every day. Keep in mind also that the soil inside a glazed container will get very warm and dry out quickly in full sun. Check these daily for water during the heat of summer.



ALPINE

Home on the Rhyming Range

The Cowboy Poetry Gathering is the place to find the lost art of oral poetry and storytelling.

By Charles Boisseau



Out in far West Texas, where the horizon seems to melt into the heavens and the ranches measure in the tens of thousands of acres, I moseyed to my first cowboy roundup.

I was one of more than 1,000 people attending the 21st annual Texas Cowboy Poetry Gathering, a record for the three-day event held each February in Alpine, about 60 miles north of Big Bend National Park.

We rubbed shoulders with real Texas cowboys, and heard their poems, songs and tales of taming horses, roping cows and riding the open range.

The gathering is part of a quiet cultural phenomenon that has been taking place mostly in rural areas of the West since the mid-1980s when the first National Cowboy Poetry Gathering was held in Elko, Nevada, site of the Western Folklife Center. Since then, an estimated 200 annual cowboy poetry gatherings have sprouted up in the United States. The Alpine event is the largest and oldest gathering in Texas.

These events are designed to highlight and preserve the cowboy tradition of creating verse and songs, much like the ones Western cattle drivers composed and performed to entertain themselves on the range more than a century ago.

Although derided by most of the literary world and intellectuals as corny, some serious poets and students of literature have embraced the cowboy poetry trend.

“I think it’s terrific,” said poet Dana Gioia, chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts. Gioia has received much attention for his controversial book, *Can Poetry Matter?* He contends that cowboy poetry—along with hip hop and poetry slams—is a healthy development in an era when poetry has been marginalized to a subculture of mostly academicians.

What exactly is cowboy poetry? Quite simply, it is usually rhymed, metered verse written by someone who has lived a significant portion of his or her life in the Western North American cattle culture. It remains essentially a spoken art form (though there are printed volumes of cowboy poetry).

“The Western tradition is a storytelling tradition,” said Randy Rieman, a cowboy and horse trainer from Lamy, New Mexico, who has committed 125 works to memory. When the sun set on a traditional cow camp, there wasn’t enough light to read; cowboys could only recite what they had memorized.

Can only cowboys write cowboy poetry? While some purists insist you have to be a cowboy or have worked as one, others scoff at such rigidity.

With a few exceptions, organizers of the Alpine event invite only poets and musicians who work or previously worked as cowboys—or who, like ranch women, have strong connections to cattle culture.

“We don’t have Hollywood cowboys,” said Mike Stevens, president of the volunteer committee that organizes the event. “They’re the real deal,” said Betty Tanksley, another committee member.

Some delivered original work, and others recited classic poems or played cowboy music on acoustic guitars. Some performers, including Apache Adams, a 69-year-old rancher from Fort Stockton, simply told stories about life on the range. (Among Adams' claims to fame: He once lassoed a mountain lion.)

Yvonne Hollenbeck, a ranch wife and poet from South Dakota, told the audience: "This is the last time I will wear a dress and curl my hair" until mid-May. That's because it is harvest and calving time on her and her husband's ranch, and she will be busy with ranch duties.

A lot of the poetry was humorous. Hollenbeck read a poem entitled "What Would Martha Do?" in which she imagines Martha Stewart as a ranch wife.

Stephanie Davis, who lives on a ranch in southern Montana, came up with cowboy haiku. This Japanese-style verse usually contemplates inner peace or a lotus flower. "But of course I cowboied them up," she said. Here's one:

*One can of pinto beans
One tub of steaming hot water
Cowboy Jacuzzi*

And yet, it was impossible to come away without some sense of the seriousness of the gathering. After all, this is an event designed to preserve a Western way of life that many participants believe is threatened by modern society.

Red Steagall, the cowboy poet, musician and radio personality and former Texas poet laureate, described the cowboy way of life in his opening remarks as master of ceremonies: "Honesty, integrity, loyalty and work ethic, dedication to family, conviction in a belief in God, practicing common decency and respect for other people every day we live—those are the things we learned from an agrarian society."

These days, scores of poets make a substantial part of their income from performing at events on the cowboy poetry circuit. Among them is Joel Nelson, who lives in a converted barn on 14 acres just south of town.

Nelson, 61, could be from another era, with his droopy gray mustache, wire-rimmed eyeglasses, cowboy hat and boots. He has spent most of his career as a full-time working ranch cowboy, mostly on the 140,000-acre O6 Ranch near Alpine. He makes his living as a horse trainer, a part-time welder and a performer at cowboy poetry events. His poetry CD "Breaker in the Pen" was nominated for a Grammy award in the spoken word category in 2000.

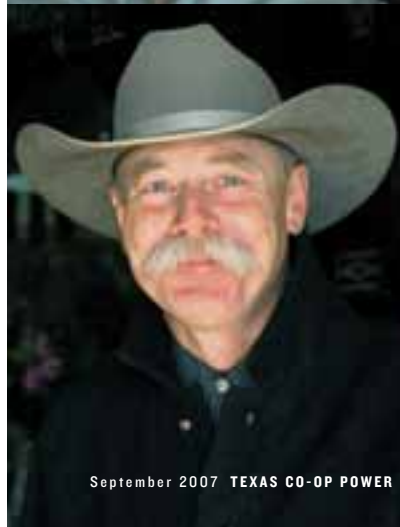
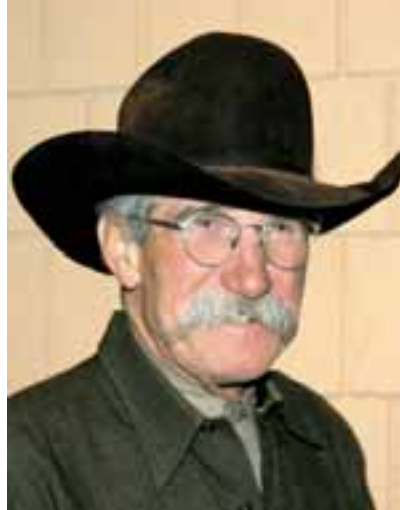
The day after the poetry gathering, Nelson was shoeing a client's horse. Gone were the cowboy hat and boots; he wore a ball cap and street shoes.

Nelson said "cowboying" is completely compatible with poetry—more so than most other professions. That's because cowboys live and work in solitude, and they have a lot of time for self-reflection. Cowboy work such as riding horses also is rhythmic, which lends itself to verse, he said.

One of the poems Nelson recited at the poetry gathering was "Equus Caballus," a work about the cowboy's favorite mode of transportation. But this isn't about Old Paint. It traces the horse's evolution from the early Stone Age (the Eolithic period), when horse ancestors were the size of terriers and had four toes on each foot.

*I have made knights of lowly tribesmen and kings from ranks of peons.
I have given pride and arrogance to riding men for eons.
I have grazed among the lodges and the tepees and the yurts.
I have felt the sting of driving whips and lashes, spurs and quirts.
I am roguish—I am flighty—I am inbred—I am lowly.
I'm a nightmare—I am wild—I am the horse. ...*

Charles Boisseau, a former newspaper reporter and editor, is Web editor/senior corporate communications specialist for the Lower Colorado River Authority, a freelance writer and a frequent traveler to the Big Bend region. He lives in Austin.



A Failed French Foothold

GENE FOWLER



Cover detail, *From a Watery Grave: The Discovery and Excavation of La Salle's Shipwreck, La Belle*.

Sometimes, it's the accidents of history that have the most far-reaching influence. When the fabled French explorer René-Robert Cavalier, Sieur de La Salle, landed 200 colonists at Matagorda Bay in early 1685, he was actually seeking the Mississippi River. Three years earlier, La Salle had become the first European to descend the big river to its mouth, where he claimed all the lands in its drainage for the King of France and named them La Louisiane.

Returning to France, the explorer obtained a commission from Louis XIV to establish a fort in the Mississippi Delta and to gather an army of Native Americans to attack Spanish silver mines south of the Rio Grande.

Inaccurate maps, however, and insufficient knowledge of longitude lured the expedition some 400 miles farther west. Though La Salle's coastal settlement ended in tragedy in late 1688, historians regard it as the first European colony in Texas and credit its brief life with inspiring New Spain to begin "civilizing" its neglected northern frontier.

Fate betrayed the French colonists as soon as they reached

the New World. Of the four ships in the expedition, the unarmed ketch *Saint François* was captured by pirates near present-day Haiti; *Joly*, a 34-gun warship, returned to France; and a 10-gun merchant vessel, *Aimable*, broke up and sank in Pass Cavallo, at the entrance to Matagorda Bay.

Coastal-dwelling Karankawas killed many colonists. Others succumbed to rattlesnake bites or from eating prickly pear tunas without removing the needles. Some died of exhaustion while constructing the crude Fort St. Louis on Garcitas Creek north of Matagorda Bay. After his lone remaining ship, the six-gun frigate *La Belle*, sank in 1686, La Salle and 17 others set out in 1687, marching toward French settlements in Canada to summon help. The domineering explorer himself was assassinated by mutineers near present-day Navasota, and only five Frenchmen survived to reach New France.

By the time a Spanish search party found Fort St. Louis in 1689, Karankawas had killed all the French who had remained at the fort, except for a few children saved by Indian women. Spaniards burned the ruined buildings and buried eight iron cannons found at the site. Later, Spanish officials, fearing another French invasion, built a presidio and mission at the site (both of which later moved to Victoria and then to Goliad), and also established missions in San Antonio and East Texas.

In time, evidence of both the French and Spanish presence at the site receded into the earth. People began searching for the "first European colony" ruins again as early as the 1880s, when a local duo, directed to the spot by a fortune-teller, reportedly unearthed a copper kettle. Historian Herbert Bolton correctly identified the location in 1914, as did ranchers' maps of the 1930s. Interviewed in 1997, Calhoun County Judge George Fred Rhodes, who fished in Garcitas Creek as a boy, recalled, "Everybody always called it 'that old French fort.'" Still, cautious historians debated the exact whereabouts of the brief-lived French settlement until a metal detector-wielding ranch hand discovered the eight iron cannons buried on a Garcitas Creek bluff in 1996.

La Salle's tragic Texas trek was already in the headlines at the time, due to the 1996 discovery and stunning recovery of the *La Belle* shipwreck by the Texas Historical Commission (THC). Archeologists constructed a steel-walled cofferdam around the wreck, pumped the water out, and effectively excavated the ship and its contents on "dry land." Some 40 percent of the hull was still intact, protected by muddy sand that blocked destructive microorganisms. The 300-year-old ship yielded an amazing bounty of trade goods, domestic articles, tools, armaments, medicines, sailing gear and other materials for a 17th century New World colony. Three ornate bronze cannons recovered from *La Belle* feature the royal crest of Louis XIV and handles in the shape of dolphins. The crossed anchors and banner on the handsome guns refer to



PHOTOS: FROM A WATERY GRAVE: THE DISCOVERY AND EXCAVATION OF LA SALLE'S SHIPWRECK, LA BELLE

La Belle's hull was pulled from Matagorda Bay, as were these remains.

the king's illegitimate young son, the count of Vermandois, admiral of the French navy.

Dr. James Bruseth, the THC's La Salle project director, says the 1999–2002 excavation of the Fort St. Louis site was the longest continuous archeological dig ever conducted in Texas. It yielded glass and pottery shards, musket balls and gunflints, religious ornaments, coins, and other evidence of both French and Spanish occupation. Human bones unearthed (and reburied) are believed to have been those of French colonists interred by Spanish soldiers. Little could

the colonists have known their pivotal role in Texas history.

As Bruseth puts it, "Much of Texas' Hispanic heritage can be traced to Spain's reaction to the French incursion." It's an unfathomable notion, but imagine Texas history if the French settlement had succeeded. We might not have an Alamo to remember. Heck, we might even be Canadians!

Victoria Electric Cooperative serves the area where Fort St. Louis once stood.

Gene Fowler is co-author of Border Radio.

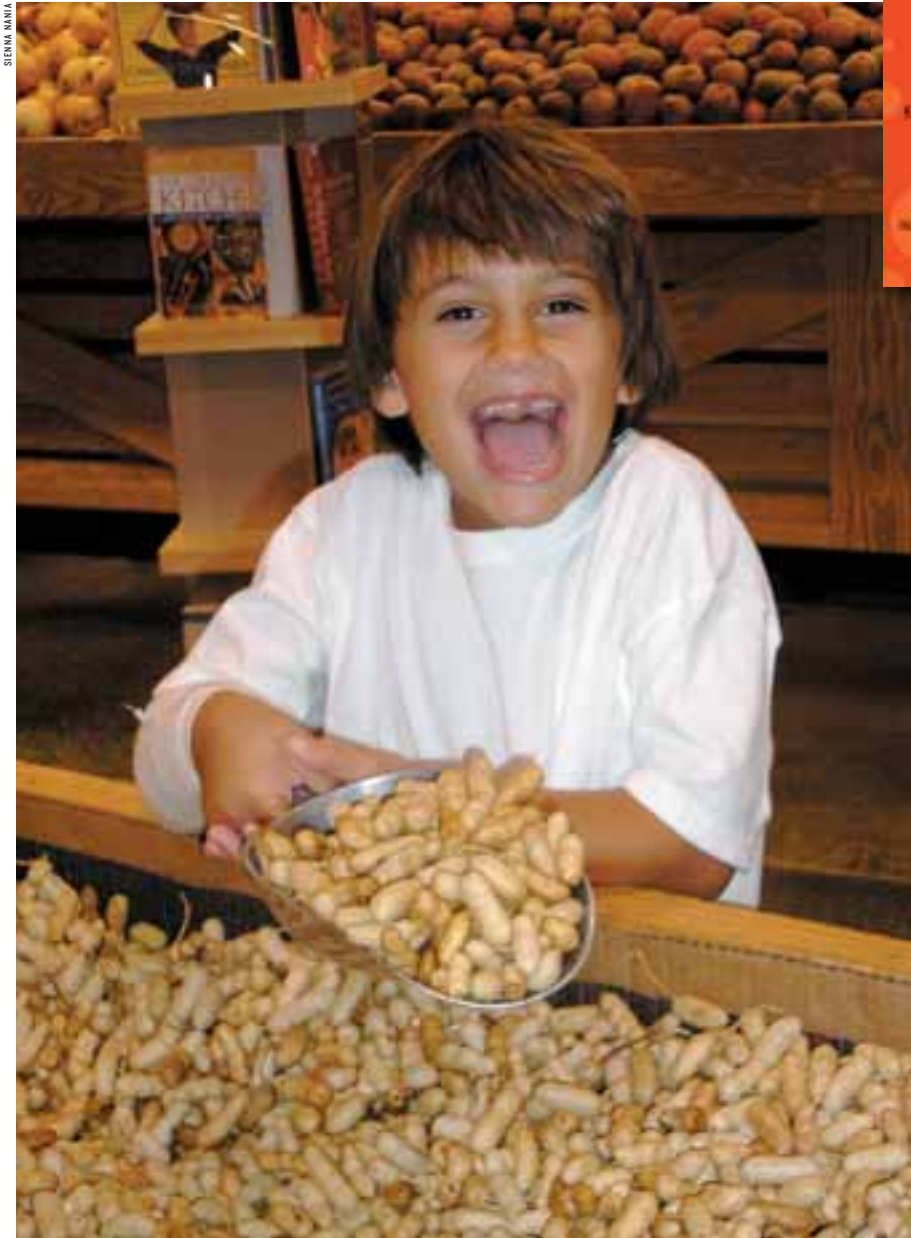
BE THERE

The "La Salle Odyssey," a trail of seven South Texas museums, exhibits artifacts from both excavations:

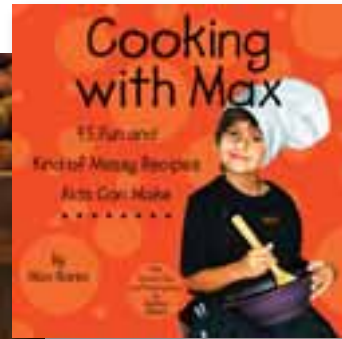
- Corpus Christi Museum of Science and History, (361) 826-4650, www.ccmuseum.com
- Texas Maritime Museum, Rockport, (361) 729-1271, www.texasmaritimemuseum.org
- Calhoun County Museum, Port Lavaca, (361) 553-4689, www.calhouncountymuseum.org
- Palacios Area Historical Association Museum, (361) 972-3960, www.citybytheseamuseum.org
- Museum of the Coastal Bend, Victoria, (361) 582-2511, www.museumofthecoastalbend.org
- Texana Museum, Edna, (361) 782-5431
- Matagorda County Museum, Bay City, (979) 245-7502, www.matagordacountymuseum.org
- After treatment to stabilize the wood, the hull of La Belle will join other La Salle artifacts at the **Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum**, Austin, (512) 936-8746

READ MORE

- *From a Watery Grave* by James E. Bruseth and Toni S. Turner (Texas A&M University Press, 2005)
- *The Wreck of the Belle, the Ruin of La Salle* by Robert S. Weddle (Texas A&M University Press, 2001)
- *The La Salle Expedition to Texas: The Journal of Henri Joutel, 1684–1687*, edited by William C. Foster (Texas State Historical Association, 1998)



SIENNA NANIA



MAX'S BEST PEANUT BUTTER

- 1 cup honey roasted peanuts
- 1/2 cup dry roasted peanuts
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/2 cup milk chocolate chips
- Blender
- 1 wooden spoon
- 1 airtight container

Place all the ingredients in the blender that your grown-up helper has set up for you. Now make sure the lid is on. Have your grown-up helper press the blender's "chop" button (your grown-up helper might let you if you're old enough—but you have to ask first!). When the nuts all go to the side, stop the blender and use the wooden spoon to push the mixture back to the middle. Once you're sure the lid is back on tightly, press the "chop" button—or try the other buttons. Repeat this whole process as many times as necessary until it looks like peanut butter. It takes a while!

Warning: Never put your hand in the blender and always let your grown-up helper clean it up for you. The blades on the bottom are way sharp and can really hurt, so always have some help.

Serving size: 2 tablespoons. Per serving: 204 calories, 6 g protein, 17 g fat, 11 g carbohydrates, 122 mg sodium, 2 mg cholesterol

Peanut Butter Prodigy

BY SHANNON OELRICH Max Nania began "inventing" different kinds of snacks when he was 3. By the time he was 7, he published his first cookbook, *Cooking with Max: 45 Fun and Kind of Messy Recipes Kids Can Make* by Max Nania with special tips and photography by Sienna Nania (Little Five Star, 2007). Max's mother, Sienna, says she always encouraged Max: "The only agreement we had was that he could invent if he would help clean up afterward."

Who better than a kid to come up with recipes that kids will like? Max uses wholesome household ingredients to come up with new combinations that are very well-suited to a kid's tastes. Below are recipes for Max's homemade peanut butter and a dip for carrots and apples.

Note: Max lists ingredients and utensils at the beginning of each recipe, so you can make sure you have everything you need to get started.

PEANUT BUTTER DIP

- 1/2 cup peanut butter
- 1/2 cup cream cheese
- Several carrot sticks
- 1 apple (sliced)
- 1 large mixing bowl
- 1 large plate

In a mixing bowl, combine the two ingredients and stir until they're blended together. Plop the whole mixture in the center of the plate, and place carrot sticks and apple slices all around it like the sun.

Serving size: 2 tablespoons. Per serving: 146 calories, 5 g protein, 13 g fat, 3 g carbohydrates, 118 mg sodium, 16 mg cholesterol



SANDRA MCCORMICK *Comanche Electric Cooperative*

Prize-winning recipe: **Peanut Butter Paté**

I know, I know, you are shaking your head and wondering how on earth this could be any good. But, friends, it is. The peanut butter just gives a nutty flavor that works with the other ingredients. Try it ... come on, just try it. You'll be glad you did.

PEANUT BUTTER PATÉ

- 1/2 cup chopped fresh mushrooms
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, softened
- 2 tablespoons creamy peanut butter
- 2 slices bacon
- 3 green onions, finely chopped
- Assorted crackers

In skillet, sauté mushrooms in butter for 5 minutes over medium heat. Remove from heat; stir in lemon juice.

In mixing bowl, beat cream cheese and peanut butter until fluffy. Stir in mushrooms and shape into a ball. Set ball in bottom of mixing bowl. Cover bowl and refrigerate 1 hour.

Fry bacon until crisp; drain and crumble. Combine bacon and onions on a plate. Take ball out of fridge and roll in bacon and onions. Cover and refrigerate until serving time. Serve with crackers.

Serving size: 2 tablespoons. Per serving: 64 calories, 2 g protein, 6 g fat, 1 g carbohydrates, 63 mg sodium, 16 mg cholesterol

PEANUT BUTTER FUDGE BROWNIES

- 2 1/3 cups sugar (divided)
- 1 1/3 cups butter or margarine, softened (divided)
- 2 3/4 teaspoons vanilla (divided)
- 6 eggs (divided)
- 1 1/2 cups plus 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour (divided)
- 3/4 cup cocoa
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup peanut butter chips
- 3/4 cup peanut butter

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease 13x9-inch pan. In large bowl, cream 2 cups sugar and 1 cup butter until light and fluffy. Add 2 teaspoons vanilla and 4 eggs, one at a time, beating well after each. Lightly spoon flour into measuring cup and level off, measuring 1 1/2 cups flour into small bowl. Add cocoa, baking powder and salt to this bowl; mix lightly. Gradually add these dry ingredients to creamed mixture; mix well. Stir in peanut butter chips.

In small bowl, cream peanut butter and 1/3 cup butter. Add 1/3 cup sugar and 2 tablespoons flour; blend well. Add 2 eggs and 3/4 teaspoon vanilla; beat until smooth.

Spread half of chocolate mixture into prepared pan. Spread peanut butter mixture over chocolate mixture. Spread remaining chocolate mixture over peanut butter mixture. Gently cut through the layers to create a marbling effect. Place small strip of aluminum foil over all four sides of pan to prevent edges from baking too quickly.

Bake 40–50 minutes or until brownies begin to pull away from sides of pan. Cool completely before icing. Makes 20–24 brownies.



PEANUT BUTTER FUDGE BROWNIES

GANACHE ICING

- 12 ounces semisweet chocolate chips
- 8 ounces heavy cream

Place chocolate in large metal or glass bowl. In saucepan, heat cream just to the boiling point. Pour cream over chocolate, making sure all of the chocolate is covered. Cover bowl and let stand 5–10 minutes.

Whisk chocolate and cream until dark and shiny, then cool to room temperature. To thicken, beat cooled icing with a hand mixer for a few minutes. You may spread this over the brownies now, or leave out to thicken overnight.

Serving size: 1 brownie. Per serving: 406 calories, 7 g protein, 26 g fat, 42 g carbohydrates, 244 mg sodium, 88 mg cholesterol

JILL NOACK

Pedernales Electric Cooperative

AUNT MARIE'S PEANUT BUTTER PIE

- 3/4 cup powdered sugar
- 1/2 cup creamy peanut butter
- 3/4 cup sugar (divided)
- 3 tablespoons cornstarch
- 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 3 large eggs (separated)
- 3 cups milk
- 2 teaspoons butter
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 deep dish 9-inch pie shell, baked
- 1/4 teaspoon cream of tartar

HOLIDAY RECIPE CONTEST



The December issue will feature the winners of our **HOLIDAY RECIPE CONTEST**, sponsored by Pioneer Brand products. The deadline to enter the contest is September 10, so send in your original holiday recipes today! (See page 41 for more information.)

In small bowl, with your fingers or a fork, combine powdered sugar and peanut butter to make coarse crumbs. Set aside.

In a 2-quart saucepan, stir together $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar, cornstarch, flour and salt.

Separate eggs. Place whites in a medium-sized bowl and set aside to

warm to room temperature. Add yolks to sugar mixture in saucepan along with the milk. Stir constantly with wire whisk over medium heat until mixture is boiling. Boil for 2 minutes longer, continuing to stir. Remove pudding from heat; stir in butter and vanilla.

Heat oven to 375 degrees. Sprinkle a third of the peanut butter crumbs over bottom of baked pie shell. Spoon half of the pudding over the peanut butter crumbs. Sprinkle another third of the peanut butter crumbs over pudding, then top with the remaining pudding.

Add cream of tartar to egg whites in medium bowl. With electric mixer at high speed, beat whites until soft peaks form. Gradually sprinkle remaining $\frac{1}{4}$ cup sugar over whites, beating until meringue is stiff.

Spread meringue over pudding, touching edge of shell to seal. Sprinkle remaining third of the peanut butter crumbs around edge of pie to form a border. Bake 8–10 minutes or until meringue is golden. Cool before cutting. Store in refrigerator. Serves 12.

Serving size: 1 slice. Per serving: 279 calories, 7 g protein, 13 g fat, 34 g carbohydrates, 220 mg sodium, 34 mg cholesterol

PRISCILLA MORELAND

Wise Electric Cooperative

MOVE OVER, PB&J

Many readers sent in new twists on that old standard, the peanut butter sandwich:

Peanut Butter-Cinnamon Toast: Cover slice of bread with peanut butter. Sprinkle with cinnamon-sugar. Toast in toaster oven or under broiler.

Granny Sandwich: Using whole wheat or potato bread, spread 1 tablespoon peanut butter on a slice of bread, top with a couple of slices of Granny Smith apple, and top that with a slice of sharp Cheddar cheese. Put another slice of bread on top.

Fried Peanut Butter Sandwich: Spread peanut butter between 2 pieces of bread; spread outside of sandwich with butter. Cook in skillet over medium heat, flipping until both sides are brown. Serve with maple syrup on top.

PB&B on Toast: Mash 1 banana with a fork. Add $\frac{1}{4}$ cup creamy peanut butter and mix until smooth. Spread on toast.

Peanut Butter and Pickle Sandwich: Make a peanut butter sandwich and put crisp dill pickle spears on it. Or, spread peanut butter on a butter cracker and top with a crisp dill pickle slice.

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Once again, we're looking for the best original recipes from your holiday celebrations. All recipes must include a Pioneer product such as Pioneer Brand Flour, Pioneer Brand Gravy Mixes or the new Pioneer Brand Microwaveable Gravies, Pioneer Brand Biscuit & Baking Mixes, or Pioneer Brand Pancake Mixes. Winners will be announced in our December issue.

Up to three entries are allowed per person. Each should be submitted on a separate piece of paper. Entries MUST include your name, address and phone number, plus the name of your electric cooperative, or they will be disqualified. All entries must be postmarked by September 10, 2007. Send entries to: Holiday Recipe Contest, 2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704, or fax to (512) 486-6254. To enter by e-mail (recipes@texas-coop.org), you must include "Holiday Recipe Contest" in the subject line and submit one recipe per e-mail (no attachments). For official rules, visit www.texascoopower.com or send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to the address above.

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- Damage to electrical equipment is very expensive to repair. Lines may be cut or weakened from a shot, and they may sag or break, becoming a severe hazard for anyone who comes in contact with the line.
- Broken insulators can cause power outages that are hard—and expensive—to find. An insulator cracked by a bullet can remain on line for a long time before it finally fails.

Enjoy your sport, but be a responsible hunter. Teach your children to respect power lines, electrical equipment and guns so that they, too, will be responsible hunters.



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BIRDHOUSES

Texas bird lovers sent in flocks of photos this month, proudly displaying their unique collections of homes for their feathered friends. Many Texans' yards are home to several birdhouses, which run the gamut from handmade homes of recycled materials to the most impromptu avian abodes. **DACIA RIVERS**



▲ Using his brother-in-law's old boot and a license plate, Pedernales Electric Cooperative member **Gustave "Buzz" Heye** built this unique birdhouse by hand. "It hangs from a live oak in my front yard in Bulverde and occasionally even has occupants," Heye said.



▲ **Ron Werchan**, Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative member, snapped this colorful photo on a recent trip to Boerne. He took the picture at a store called Buy-Buy-Birdie while his wife was inside buying a purple birdhouse.



▲ Pedernales Electric Cooperative member **Carey Collier** grew, dried and decorated this gourd and made it into a birdhouse to give to a friend. While the house was hanging outside to dry, a bird moved in and Collier decided to keep it. "My reward was watching baby birdies emerge and fly away some weeks later," she said.

▼ **Dorrett Townsend**, a member of Central Texas Electric Cooperative, sent in this photo of a cactus wren's nest. The prickly pear grew in a fencerow on his property to a height of more than 6 feet tall, making this birdhouse a safe one. Townsend has used this scene as a subject in several of his paintings over the years.



Upcoming in Focus on Texas

ISSUE	SUBJECT	DEADLINE
Nov	Hunting w/a Camera	Sep 10
Dec	Holiday Decorations	Oct 10
Jan	Little Helpers	Nov 10
Feb	Landscapes	Dec 10
Mar	Typically Texan	Jan 10
Apr	Smiles	Feb 10

HUNTING WITH A CAMERA is the topic for our **NOVEMBER 2007** issue. Send your photo—along with your name, address, daytime phone, co-op affiliation and a brief description—to *Hunting with a Camera*, Focus on Texas, 2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704, before September 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. (If you have questions about your camera's capabilities and settings, please refer to the operating manual.)

AROUND TEXAS AROUND TEXAS

SEPTEMBER

01 GAINESVILLE
Antique Tractor & Farm Machinery Show, 1-800-689-7861

MT VERNON [1-2]
Franklin County Sheriff's Posse Labor Day Weekend Rodeo, (903) 632-0122

PLAINS
Watermelon Roundup, (806) 456-3566

SARGENT
Bam Bam Jamboree, (979) 234-9876

THROCKMORTON
Dove Festival, (940) 849-0222

VIGO PARK
100-Year Celebration, (806) 633-4467

01 WINTERS Dove Fest, (325) 754-5210, www.winters-texas.us

02 NEW BERLIN Sausage Festival, (830) 420-3185

06 DECATUR [6-8] Wise County Sheriff's Posse Rodeo, (940) 626-4537

07 LUBBOCK [7-9] National Cowboy Symposium & Celebration, (806) 798-7825, www.cowboy.org

SHERMAN [7-9, 13-15]
Arts Festival, (903) 957-0310

08 CALDWELL Kolache Krunch 5K Run/Walk & Children's 1 Mile Race, (979) 535-4740, www.burlesoncountytx.com

GORMAN Peanut Festival, (254) 734-4572

IDALOU [8-9]
Apple Butter Festival, (806) 892-2961

08 MORGAN MILL
Arts & Craft Fair, (254) 968-4983

QUANAH Fall Festival, (940) 663-2222

SULPHUR SPRINGS [8-15] Fall Festival, (903) 885-8071

WOLFFORTH [8-9]
Harvest Festival & Hot Air Balloon Roundup, (806) 866-4215

13 COLUMBUS [13-16]
Quilt Extravaganza, (979) 732-7277

GRAPEVINE [13-16]
GrapeFest, 1-800-457-6338, www.grapevine-texasusa.com

ROCKPORT [13-16]
Hummer/Bird Celebration, (361) 729-6445

TERLINGUA [13-15]
Big Bend Nature Festival, (432) 371-2427

14 LA GRANGE [14-15]
Texas Heroes Day, (979) 968-5658

SEGUIN [14-15]
Roundup Cowboy Gathering, (830) 401-7375, www.roundupcowboy-gathering.com

15 CLEBURNE
Dachshund Days & Craft Fair, (817) 645-8274, www.campfireusatesuya-council.org

FORT CONCHO
Lily Fest Celebration, (325) 657-4279

MCGREGOR
Founders Day Festival, (254) 840-0123

16 BANDERA
Music Hall of Fame Induction, (830) 796-4213, www.banderallibrary.org

COLLEGE STATION
Fall Bridal Show & Benefit, (979) 209-2167, www.ido-ido.org

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AROUND TEXAS AROUND TEXAS

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21 KARNES CITY [21-22]
Lonesome Dove Fest,
(830) 780-2471

JEFFERSON [21-23]
MusicFest,
(903) 665-3733,
www.jefferson-texas.com

22 BIGFOOT "Bigfoot"
Wallace Museum
Barbecue Celebration,
(830) 665-9706,
www.bigfoottx.com

COMANCHE
Freedom Street Dance,
(325) 356-2235

KYLE Log House
Chicken Dinner,
(512) 268-9981

MANSFIELD
Pecan Festival, (817)
473-0507, www.mansfield
chamber.org

22 MEDINA LAKE Cajun
Festival, (830) 751-3130,
www.cajunfestival-medina
lake.com

MERIDIAN [22-23]
Rededication of the
Bosque County
Courthouse,
(254) 435-6182

23 SERBIN Wendish Fest,
(979) 366-2441

28 ABILENE [28-30]
Hot Air Balloon Festival,
(325) 795-0995

ANDERSON [28-30]
Gary Schroeder
Memorial Trail Ride,
(936) 873-2257

CORPUS CHRISTI [28-30]
Bayfest, (361) 887-0868,
www.bayfesttexas.com

FREDERICKSBURG
[28-30] Renewable Energy
Roundup & Green Living
Fair, (512) 627-3782

29 BERTRAM Texas
Amateur Rodeo
Association Play Day,
(512) 868-0001,
www.rodeotexas.org

BLANCO [29-30]
Heritage Days Chuck
Wagon Cook-Off,
(830) 833-2207

DRIFTWOOD Heritage
Day, (512) 858-4443,
www.driftwoodtx.org

GEORGETOWN
Up the Chisholm Trail
Event & Chuckwagon
Cook-Off, (512) 943-1670,
www.wchm-tx.org

SAN MARCOS Pet Fest
Benefit, (512) 754-7257,
www.preventalitter.com

30 CREEDMOOR
Oktoberfest, (512) 243-
3117, www.creedmoor
communitycfa.org

OCTOBER

04 CENTER [4-6] East Texas
Poultry Festival, (936)
598-3682, www.shelby
countychamber.com

06 CANYON Folklife
Festival, (806) 651-2235

MASON Old Yeller Day,
(325) 475-3200,
www.masontxcoc.com

SCOTLAND [6-7]
Centennial & Oktoberfest,
(940) 541-2285

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. Please submit events for November by September 10.

Events are listed according to space available; see the full listing at www.texascooppower.com.



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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.

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Winter Texans and other snowbirds have devoted themselves to keeping a big secret as best as they can, but the word's definitely out: South Texas is the promised land for anyone interested in birds, butterflies and botany. You can add another "b" to the list, too, if you're headed to Mercedes. Not only is this Rio Grande Valley town headquarters for Magic Valley Electric Cooperative, it's also a dandy place to order up a custom-made pair of Western boots. So pack your binoculars and camera, jot down your list of footwear needs and head out on this road trip, taking you on a 40-mile journey from Mercedes east and south along U.S. Highway 83/U.S. Highway 77 to Harlingen and Brownsville.

MERCEDES

Known as *La Reina del Valle*, or Queen City of the Valley, this town of about 14,000 in southern Hidalgo County lies about 10 miles north of the Rio Grande. Make your first stop at boot-makers **CAVAZOS** or **CAMARGO'S**, two homegrown companies that will craft belts and wallets to match your boots, too. Driving in and around town, you can't help but note the impressive yet unassuming proliferation of lush tropical botanics and citrus farms. Just 5 miles west near Weslaco, see the 176-acre **ESTERO LLANO GRANDE STATE PARK**, part of the magnificent **WORLD BIRDING CENTER**. The wetlands here include a shallow woodlands lake, ringed by marsh cane, offering a fantastic population of waders and shorebirds.

Estero Llano Grande State Park, 3301 S. International Blvd. (FM 101) near Weslaco, (956) 565-3919; www.worldbirdingcenter.org
Cavazos Boots, 302 Second St., (956) 565-0753; www.cavazosboots.com
Camargo's Boots, 710 U.S. Hwy. 83, (956) 565-6457; www.camargoboots.com
Mercedes Chamber of Commerce, 316 S. Ohio St., (956) 565-2221

MERCEDES to BROWNSVILLE

This journey is a natural choice in the Rio Grande Valley.

BY JUNE NAYLOR



HARLINGEN

Indulge yearnings for nature and history in this city of 67,000, long known as a gateway to South Padre Island. The local World Birding Center sites here include **HUGH RAMSEY NATURE PARK** and the **HARLINGEN THICKET BIRD SANCTUARY**, the latter a 40-acre brushy destination in the middle of the city that attracts feathered friends. Possibly more impressive are some 40 species of butterflies found at a special garden by the **HARLINGEN MUNICIPAL AUDITORIUM**; pick up guides for these at the Chamber of Commerce and at the local Texas Travel Information Center. Check out **HARLINGEN'S JACKSON STREET DISTRICT**, the historic downtown quarter that's now the Valley's destination for antiques, local art galleries, vintage clothing and jewelry, furniture and glassware, tucked into assorted 1930s-1940s buildings. At **HARLINGEN'S MARINE MILITARY ACADEMY**, see the original working model for the famous **IWO JIMA MEMORIAL BRONZE** at

Arlington National Cemetery. Donated to the academy by sculptor Felix de Weldon in 1981, the sculpture's figures include Weslaco's Cpl. Harlon Block, the Marine placing the flagpole in the ground who was killed in battle just days after helping plant the flag on Mount Suribachi.

Harlingen Area Chamber of Commerce, 311 E. Tyler St., (956) 423-5440; 1-800-531-7346; www.harlingen.com/visitors

BROWNSVILLE

Make your way to this city of some 167,000 by detouring to **LOS EBANOS PRESERVE**, a private refuge on Texas Highway 100 between Harlingen and Brownsville at San Benito. Wander the nature trails coursing through the 82-acre haven for such bird species as the green jay, buff-bellied hummingbird and the loud-chattering chachalaca. Still wild for winged beauties? Head to **RESACA DE LA PALMA STATE PARK**, another tract in the World Birding

Center network, a 1,700-acre spread just west of the city where you can add colorful finds to your birding life list. Back in town, admire the towering palms and walls covered with brilliant bougainvillea. The ultimate destination on any trip to this southernmost city in Texas is the lauded **GLADYS PORTER ZOO**, an extraordinary sanctuary for more than 1,391 animals of 360 species—all living in gorgeous subtropical environments with no bars or cages.

Los Ebanos Nature Preserve, 27715 Texas Hwy. 100 at San Benito, (956) 399-9097; www.losebanospreserve.com

Resaca de la Palma State Park, U.S. Hwy. 281, (956) 565-3919; www.worldbirdingcenter.org
Gladys Porter Zoo, Ringgold at Sixth St., (956) 546-2177; www.gpz.org

Brownsville Convention & Visitors Bureau, 650 FM 802, (956) 546-3721 or 1-800-626-2639; www.brownsville.org

June Naylor is the author of Texas: Off the Beaten Path (Globe Pequot Press).