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MARCH 2009

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March 2009

VOLUME 65 NUMBER 9



FEATURES

8 Great Gardens

FORT WORTH JAPANESE GARDEN
LADY BIRD JOHNSON
WILDFLOWER CENTER, *Austin*
BAYOU BEND GARDENS, *Houston*
TYLER MUNICIPAL ROSE GARDEN

14 A Full Plate

By Ellen Sweets
Photo by Will van Overbeek

Hoover Alexander dishes up simple, savory food that tastes like home.

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TEXAS CO-OP POWER

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

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POWER TALK



LET THE GRASS GROW OVER YOU

There's an old saying about not letting the grass grow under your feet. To do so is to lack initiative. But on the roof—that's something else. The Waco Chamber of Commerce has the city's first "living roof" on its new energy-efficient structure at 101 S. Third St. The 1,750-square-foot roof is planted with a variety of sedum. Such green roofs reduce the urban heat island—a metropolitan area that is warmer than surrounding rural areas because vegetation is replaced by heat-absorbing asphalt, concrete and buildings. Roof plants also collect airborne pollutants and add an extra layer of insulation, reducing heating and cooling costs. Rainwater irrigates the low-maintenance plants, and excess water is retained in a cistern. Then a solar-powered pump returns water to the roof during dry periods.



See a Web? Caulk a Hole.

House spiders are nature's own energy auditors. They instinctively build their webs near air currents to draw insects into their gossamer dinner tables. So the next time you spot a spiderweb in the house, check nearby for air leaks.

letters



WELL, OF COURSE IT IS

The photo submitted by Linda Brannen in the January 2009 issue (page 35, "Focus on Texas") is a spring-tooth harrow. This piece of farm equipment was used to break up clods of dirt in a plowed field and to smooth out the surface.

CHARLES FOSTER SR.
Jackson Electric Cooperative

Editor's note: A gratifying number of readers wrote or called us to explain the use of the spring-tooth harrow. Thanks for taking the time.

INDUSTRIAL-AGE THRESHING

Elise Westfall's photo on page 35 of the January 2009 issue is of a (steam) traction engine, probably about 80 years old. These were used for



heavy hauling and as a stationary power source. I worked on farms in England in the 1940s, and these engines were used to power threshing machines, prior to the advent of combine harvesters, with a long, wide belt going from the flywheel to the threshing machine. This one appears to be wood-fired, while in England coal was used. My son-in-law owned one until

recently—they are highly valued by collectors.

DON STEVENSON

Pedernales Electric Cooperative

PASS IT FORWARD

I enjoyed the story in your January 2009 issue ("Memory's Sweet Scent") about a cedar chest. I have some of the same memories of my childhood as did your writer. We had few means. Sometimes we used an old apple box or an old suitcase, but the point is to pass some of the little things we are proud of onto our descendants.



I have four granddaughters and one great-granddaughter, and I have built two chests and have two more almost done. I have also built a smaller box for my great-granddaughter to keep some of her first possessions safe. I have enclosed a photo of the last chest I made. This is what I like to do as I slip into retirement.

JOE SUDDERTH

Fannin County Electric Cooperative

FAMILY FEUD OVER MAGAZINE

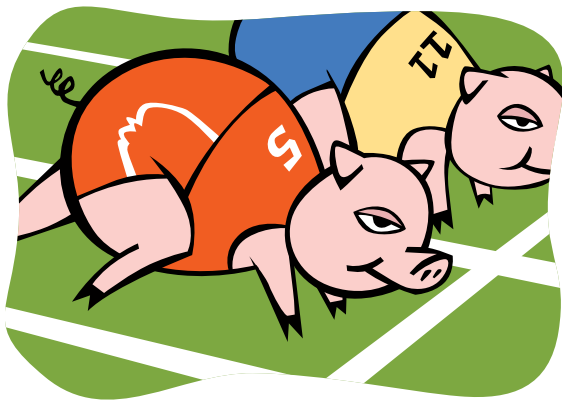
I wanted to let everyone know this is a great magazine. My husband and I fight over reading it every month. I always enjoy the articles, calendar of events and the theme pictures in the back each month. Keep up the good work.

LAURA LANDES

Howe

We want to hear from our readers. Send letters to: Editor, *Texas Co-op Power*, 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701, e-mail us at letters@texas-ec.org, or submit online at www.texascooppower.com. Please include the name of your town and electric co-op. Letters may be edited for clarity and length and are printed as space allows. Read additional letters at www.texascooppower.com.

H A P P E N I N G S



Ever wanted to chase and capture a wild hog, shove it in a burlap sack and cross the finish line with the fastest time? Well, here's your chance at the 18th annual **WILD HOG FESTIVAL**, set for March 28-29 in Sabinal.

Two-person teams will compete for belt buckles outlined with hog hoofprints as they chase hogs through a corral on the 50-yard line at Yellowjacket Stadium.

But don't worry, contestants—when it comes to the hogs, it's not one size fits all. There's even a spot for the little ones in the

pen: Children aged 3 to 9 will scamper after 5-pound piglets, trying to grab one and hand it to an official. Every contestant receives a blue ribbon.

All other activities will be held at Sabinal's Live Oak Park. The festivities feature arts and crafts and food booths, rides, a children's train, a barbecue, live entertainment and mechanical bull riding.

For more information, call (830) 988-2709, between 3 and 9 p.m.

WHO KNEW?



The Texas Chainsaw Massacre (1974) is an enduring cult film, but in fact it was based on two grisly murders committed in Wisconsin. Two years later, another low-budget movie related a crime saga that was true—and truly Texan.

The Town That Dared Sundown relays the story of the 1946 "Texarkana Moonlight Murders," five unsolved shootings. The director? A Texarkana advertising executive, Charles Pierce—who also cast himself as a small-town cop.

COLORADO BEND STATE PARK

At the top of the Highland Lakes chain north of Lake Buchanan is relatively undeveloped **Colorado Bend State Park**. On weekends, there are guided tours of the 65-foot **Gorman Falls** (photo, right). Participants scramble down from the rocky bluffs above the Colorado River to a beautiful river canyon and then back up again for a 1.5-mile hike. Or, take along good hiking shoes, drinking water and a light source for a 3-mile round trip to Gorman Cave, which is open by permit only. Undeveloped campgrounds offer water taps, picnic tables, fire rings and composting toilets. A boat ramp offers access to the Colorado River, which feeds into Lake Buchanan. The lake teems with white bass between February and April. For more information, go to the park's site at www.tpwd.state.tx.us.




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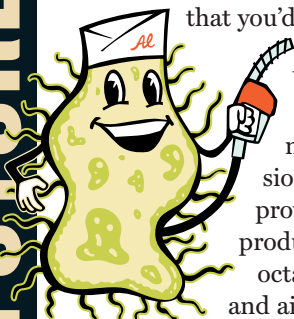
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FUTURE TALK

GROWING GAS BY THE TANKFUL

A tiny organism might soon play a large role in filling the world's fuel supply. With concerns in some corners about biofuels made from food crops, the idea of algae as a fuel source has blossomed. The algae that produce fuel are not the same that you'd find floating in a pond, but rather they are genetically modified versions that have proved capable of producing high-octane gasoline and airplane fuel.



Fuel algae, which can be grown with wastewater in locations inhospitable to food crops or near coal-fired electricity plants, which could supply carbon dioxide as plant food, could one day supplant petroleum as a fuel source, boosters hope.

The industry is still young, although investment is growing. Researchers at the University of Texas have the largest collection of algae specimens in the world and are competing for a piece of a U.S. Defense Department research grant. One company, Russell Industries, has proposed building an algae biodiesel plant near the Houston Ship Channel.

Sun Shines on Texas Schools

Seizing the light of day

By Carol Moczygemba

School districts in Texas got a big assignment in 2007 from state legislators. Alongside state agencies and institutions of higher learning, they were charged with reducing their respective district's annual electricity consumption by 5 percent each year through 2013.

The new law, sponsored by now-Speaker of the House Joe Straus, calls for school districts to use energy-efficient lightbulbs, implement energy-efficiency programs and apply available funds to install solar panels where feasible.

Several schools in co-op service areas have already signed on to solar projects with the State Energy Conservation Office's (SECO) "Texas Solar for Schools"

program, initiated in 2001. Participating schools receive a 1- to 3-kilowatt solar panel system, a Web-based monitoring system and additional hands-on learning tools to support education and staff training. During installation of the solar panels, students are encouraged to lend a hand and find out for themselves what makes the system work.

After the system is installed, SECO provides teacher training with lesson plans corresponding to renewable energy fact sheets and ideas for student projects. In all, 53 elementary, middle and high schools in Texas are saving and producing energy through SECO's Texas Solar for Schools. Many are served by electric cooperatives.

Marion Middle School, served by

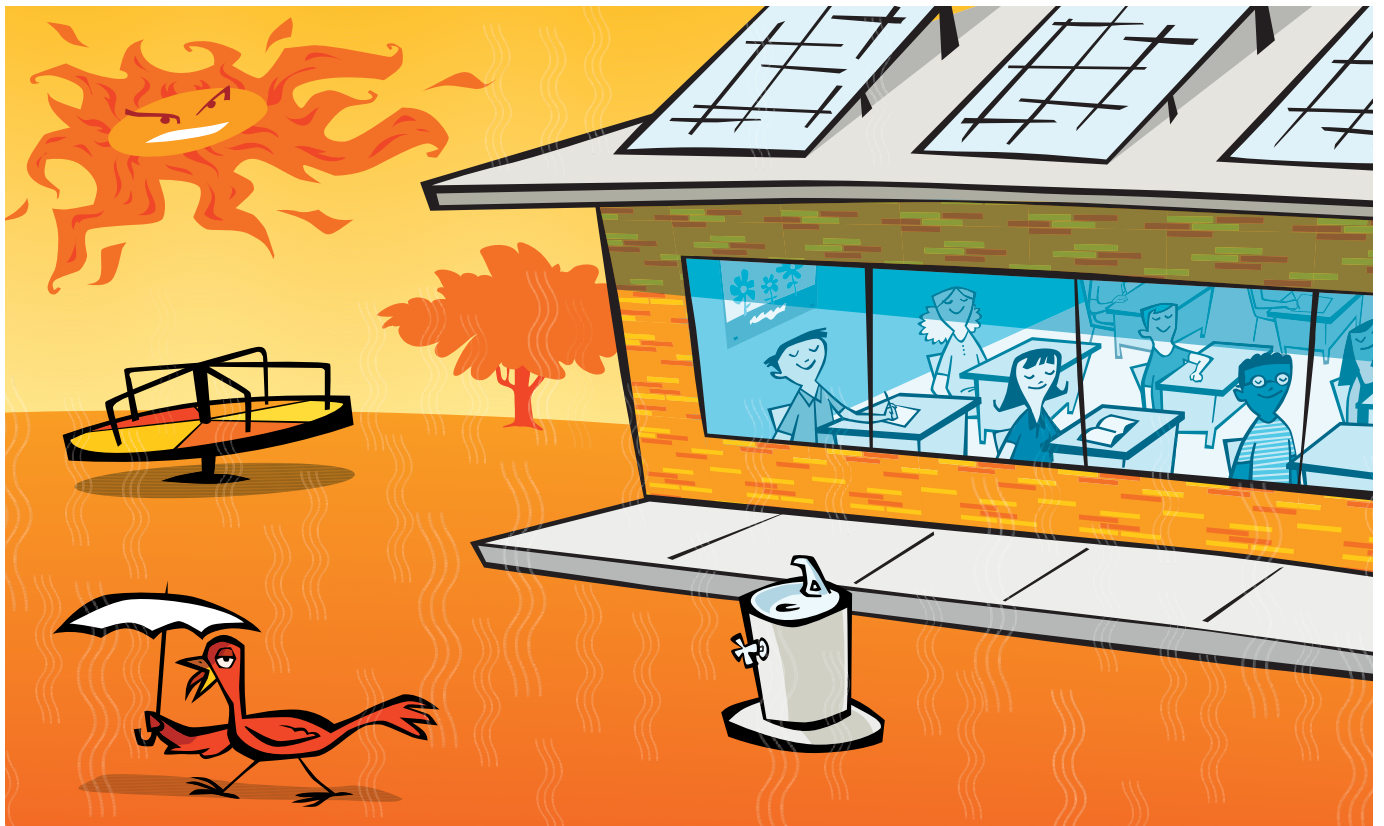
Guadalupe Valley Electric Cooperative (GVEC), has been reaping the rewards of a solar panel system that GVEC helped finance and install in 2005. Marion Middle School Principal Daryl Wendel said, "I think the idea of working in a more green direction in schools is a terrific concept, one we can model for our students."

The Web-based monitoring system tracks data on the performance of the school's photovoltaic system as well as those of schools across the nation.

The students studied cumulative data from May 2005 to November 2008 that showed that Marion Middle School had produced 4,168 kilowatt-hours of electrical energy. Students learned that's enough electricity to power 320,615 hours of light from a compact fluorescent lightbulb, offset 5,804 pounds of carbon dioxide emissions or generate enough electricity to talk nonstop on a mobile phone for 252,605,939 minutes—more than 480 years!

Renewable energy fact sheets and lesson plans are available to all Texas schools from the Infinite Power of Texas website, www.infinitepower.org.

Carol Moczygemba is executive editor of Texas Co-op Power.





Tour Texas' Largest Azalea Garden

Nacogdoches welcomes visitors to explore the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden, which boasts one of the most diverse azalea collections in the United States. It is the centerpiece of the Annual Nacogdoches Azalea Trail, March 14-31, 2009 and just one stop along more than 20 miles of Azalea Trails that bloom throughout the beautifully manicured and historic residential districts.

Check out bloom reports and details about weekend events planned throughout the Azalea Trail at www.NacogdochesAzaleas.com.

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www.NacogdochesAzaleas.com





BEYOND BEAUTY: GREAT TEXAS PUBLIC GARDENS

Each of the gardens highlighted here has set a unique course. Climatic considerations are key to all, of course. But so is vision. Looking beyond beauty, the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin and the Tyler Municipal Rose Garden are heavy hitters when it comes to research. Bayou Bend Gardens in Houston exudes a sense of the prosperous Old South, while the Fort Worth Japanese Garden introduces visitors to the ultimate sophisticated sensibility where water, rocks, trees, structures and bridges are revealed in a series of stunning landscape perspectives. None of our stories lays out a road map for achieving a specialized garden. But even the backyard enthusiast can take away some basic options and approaches for a modest garden.

FORT WORTH JAPANESE GARDEN

Lose yourself in serene simplicity at this 7-acre sanctuary.

BY THOMAS KOROSEC

IN JAPAN, GARDENS ARE AN OUTGROWTH of the idea that the good life is lived within the beauty of nature. Scott Brooks, senior gardener at the Fort Worth Japanese Garden, is not sure that included the great blue heron that has taken to hunting the shiny orange and white koi in his garden's terraced ponds. "He's a paradox for us," Brooks says of the wily bird, which waits for visitors to toss fish food then spears its lunch from the thrashing school. "He's a showstopper, but he's eating a lot of our fish."

Built in the early 1970s in a valley that was once a quarry and later a hobo camp, the 7-acre public garden is modeled after stroll gardens built in the Japanese hill-sides by samurai lords. Fort Worth's dis-

play comprises several Japanese garden styles, all enclosed by well-defined cedar walls and a castle-like entry gate. The so-called "hill and pond" style, which fills most of the valley, features an intricate network of paths, decks, verandas and viewpoints set among a series of serene ponds and waterfalls.

Plants in the garden are deliberately understated. "We don't use a lot of flower color. You have mostly foliage color, a variety of textures, greens and grays," Brooks says. The aesthetic sense flows from the Japanese concept of *wabi-sabi*, a sort of rustic simplicity.

Much of the Japanese garden involves the subtle mixing of conifers such as Austrian pine with broadleaf trees and shrubs and fine ground covers such as mondo grass. The cedar structures—bridges, teahouses and so forth—are left to weather to gray to emphasize the ideal of beauty in rustic simplicity or poverty. Here and there,

the look is broken by a few well-placed Japanese maples, which blaze yellow and red in the fall. Cherry blossoms do similar work in the spring.

Even more spare is the dry landscape style, usually referred to in the United States as a Zen garden, or meditation garden. Of the four dry gardens in Fort Worth, the best known is patterned after one in the abbot's quarters of the Ryoanji temple in historic Kyoto. Fifteen boulders are arrayed in a flat bed of fine gravel, which has been raked into furrows. "The rocks may be islands, and raked gravel suggests waves in the open ocean," Brooks says. "The concentric circles around the rocks raked in the gravel suggest surf breaking on the rocky shore of these bare islands."

In Kyoto, doors leading to the dry garden open wide, integrating the inside of the abbot's rooms with the meditative outside space. "To the Japanese, there is this blending," Brooks explains. "The interior space is so integrated with the garden they are one in the same."


Thomas Korosec lives in Dallas.

TAKEAWAY TIPS

- Although the untrained gardener might not be able to create a true Japanese retreat, small elements from the Japanese sensibility can be adapted anywhere. Consider a dry rock garden with ornamental gravel and stones representing a river. Or use an element with running water. Embrace simplicity and subtle colors.

FORT WORTH JAPANESE GARDEN

Where: 3220 Botanic Garden Blvd., Fort Worth
Contact: (817) 871-7686,
www.fwbg.org/japanese.htm

 A great blue heron stands among Japanese maple leaves at the Fort Worth Japanese Garden.



PETE VOLLENWEIDER

LADY BIRD JOHNSON WILDFLOWER CENTER, *Austin*

Sow your wild oats with Central Texas native plants.

BY SHERYL SMITH-RODGERS

FORGET LUSH CARPET GRASS, STATELY rose bushes and neatly trimmed pitosporums. Only Texas native plants and wildflowers inhabit the 279-acre Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, located southwest of downtown Austin. From formal designs to prickly cacti beds, 16 gardens exhibit some 650 species of primarily Central Texas natives that require less water and work, stand up to diseases and pests and provide wildlife habitat.

“That’s our mission here,” says Deryn Davidson, a resident horticulturist, “to show why it makes sense to plant natives instead of exotics.”


As a bonus, the handsome facilities are architecturally innovative. Overland Partners of San Antonio labored mightily to follow Lady Bird’s instructions to make the center “look like God put it here.” The architecture firm combined design that invoked the Spanish, German and ranchland heritage of the Hill Country with innovative “green building” features, such as rainwater harvesting, recycled materials and careful site preparation that preserved trees and natural features.

A tramp through the garden and 2 miles of walking trails gives visitors an understanding of why Lady Bird Johnson fully embraced the subtle delights of her husband’s beloved Hill Country. It’s a matter of appreciating what nature, rather than chain-store plant buyers, intended for arid Texas.

Here you can see what to plant in the broiling sun and what to plant in deep shade. For shade solutions, walk through the Woodland Garden, where such Texas natives as Turk’s cap, pigeonberry and inland sea oats thrive beneath the dense canopy of a red oak, Osage orange and live oak. Along a slow-moving creek, river ferns and water clover spill over limestone.

After the Woodland Garden, check out three Homeowner Inspiration Gardens, where you’ll see that even lawn grass can go native. Limestone, grape arbors and water features bring a



 Water and stone enhance the landscaping at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center.

regional resonance to many of the gardens, reminding us that the harsh, rocky Hill Country can be transformed into an oasis by shade or the sound of moving water.

Love butterflies? The Butterfly Garden abounds with some 350 species of nectar and larval host plants, grouped in various habitats (such as a marshy pond and a woodland edge). Here you’ll find butterfly weed, passionflower, black dalea, flame acanthus, hackberry and more, not to mention a host of colorful butterflies.

In the Theme Gardens, 23 beds show more ways to incorporate natives in your yard. Here you’ll see how to attract hummingbirds, use water features, design succulent gardens and protect plants from hungry deer.

Have your own native gardening question? “We always encourage folks to ask questions,” Davidson says. “We’re

the ones in the gardens with dirty hands and shovels!”

Sheryl Smith-Rodgers has written about wildscape gardening for Texas Co-op Power.

TAKEAWAY TIPS

- Acknowledge that Central Texas will never be as verdant as England. Find beauty in native plants that thrive in semi-arid conditions.
- No matter where you live in the state, ask your local nursery to stock natives and use them religiously.
- Opt for native perennials rather than flashy non-native nursery plants that are here today, pooped out tomorrow.



LADY BIRD JOHNSON WILDFLOWER CENTER

Where: 4801 La Crosse Ave., Austin
Contact: (512) 232-0100, www.wildflower.org

BAYOU BEND GARDENS, *Houston*

From camellias to azaleas, beauty is the name of the game at Ima Hogg's southern oasis.

BY KAYE NORTHCOTT

LADY BIRD JOHNSON, WHO GREW UP IN the luxuriant vegetation of deep East Texas, could easily have chosen to sponsor a neo-antebellum garden somewhere in the Piney Woods, rather than lend her name to an arid Hill Country garden. But even if a southern-style garden had suited her fancy, Texas already had one, conceived and overseen by another great Texas lady, Miss Ima Hogg, daughter of Gov. James Stephen Hogg. The garden creations and American decorative arts

acquisitions for her Bayou Bend estate in Houston are of such renown that her unfortunate name has become a hallmark of good taste.

In 1926, Miss Ima, as she's always been called, began building a grand estate for herself and her brothers, Will and Mike, who previously had resided in Houston hotels. The garden and Southern-colonial-style home were nestled into an oxbow of Buffalo Bayou. Once she got into landscaping the 14 acres of gardens, she never stopped dreaming and improving.

She gave her home and gardens to the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, in 1957. Both are open to the public. The River Oaks Garden Club oversees the gardens, which are the state's only formal, organic public gardens. Steamy, subtropical Houston is the perfect

location for this full-blown southern extravaganza with arcing fountains and marble statuary. The optimum time to visit Bayou Bend is in spring when the azaleas and dogwoods are in bloom. But the grounds and the home are open year-round, and there's always something to enjoy such as camellias in fall and pink Japanese magnolias in winter.

Amid the heavily wooded acreage are eight unique gardens. Three are named after classical goddesses—Clio, Diana and Euterpe. The most whimsical of the eight gardens is the small Butterfly Garden with low shrubs and blossoming plants that form a colorful butterfly.

Everywhere, fragrant, easily bruised gardenias beckon as do antique roses and seasonal plantings. Relatively untamed areas afford traditional nature walks descending toward the bayou. There's also the Topiary Garden, the White Garden and others named after mythical figures.

More than 50 years after Miss Ima deeded her home and grounds to the public, the gardens maintain their grandeur, inspiring generations with her philosophy: "A love affair with nature is a rewarding experience. It gladdens the eye and replenishes the spirit."

If you can't make a visit to Bayou Bend, order the picture book, *Bayou Bend Gardens: A Southern Oasis*, by David B. Warren (Scala Publishers Ltd. 2006).


Kaye Northcott is editor of Texas Co-op Power.

TAKEAWAY TIPS

- You may not have 14 lush acres and a crew of gardeners at your disposal, but the concept of separate gardens can be applied to separate niches—or areas—in your yard. Rather than embracing the concept of a big open yard, go for specialized areas. Set aside a common area for adults and a play area for children.
- A cast-iron bench next to a small pool in a secluded elbow of your property can afford privacy. So can arbors, plant screens and hedges.

BAYOU BEND GARDENS

Where: 1 Westcott St., Houston
Contact: (713) 639-7750,
www.mfah.org/bayoubend

 The statuary, azaleas and arcing fountains lure visitors to Bayou Bend Gardens. This particular garden is named after Diana, goddess of the hunt.



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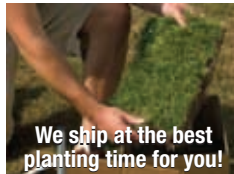
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Treat your nose to the nation's largest public collection of roses.

BY KAYE NORTHCOTT

TRAVEL TO TYLER FOR THE SWEETEST smelling industrial display you'll ever encounter. In addition to oil, Tyler has been a major producer of roses for more than a century. To honor the rose biz and provide a location for rose research, the city opened a municipal rose garden in 1952. The largest public collection of roses in the United States is on 14 acres in the middle of town next to the Harvey Convention Center.

From late April until frost, visitors can enjoy blooms produced by nearly 40,000 rose bushes representing approximately 500 varieties. The garden attracts more than 100,000 visitors a year from around the world. Rosarians come to check out the All-America Rose Selection test garden, one of 24 across the country. The national winners for 2009 are Carefree Spirit, Cinco de Mayo

and Pink Promise. They have risen to the top of the list after a two-year trial for vigor, flower characteristics and disease resistance.

One can stroll through the formally laid out gardens and just enjoy the splendid blossoms or take notes on what you might want to plant at home. Check out the quaint Heritage Rose and Sensory Garden created by the Gertrude Windsor Garden Club with more than 30 varieties of 19th-century garden roses. A selection of David Austin bush roses is reminiscent of traditional English garden roses. There's also a less formal IDEA Garden with many native perennials. It's sponsored by the Smith County Master Gardeners. There's also a daylily collection, a camellia garden and a meditation garden. The Tyler Rose Museum on the premises is a great place to get grounded in rose history and to see beautiful gowns from past Texas Rose Festivals.

Well before the municipal garden was built—in fact, 75 years ago—Tyler

founded the Texas Rose Festival, which consumes the town for four days each October. Unless you want to plunge into the festival mania, avoid visiting the garden during the extravaganza. One of the most popular events, the Queen's Tea, an elaborate garden party, is held at the gardens. It's a time to pay homage to the rose queen and her court.

TAKEAWAY TIPS

- Pay attention to what grows well in your part of the state before choosing roses to cultivate.
- Since fancy roses require serious cultivation, consider planting them in raised beds with special soil.
- Consider hardy old-fashioned rose varieties. (A great source is the Antique Rose Emporium, www.antiqueroseemporium.com). Most other roses need coddling.




TYLER MUNICIPAL ROSE GARDEN

Where: 420 Rose Park Drive, Tyler

Contact: (903) 531-1212, www.texasrosefestival.com/museum/garden.htm

RANDY MALLORY

 The Tyler Municipal Rose Garden ranks as a test garden for the All-America Rose Selection.



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TEXAS' LARGEST RURAL LENDER



A Full PLATE

Always-in-demand Hoover Alexander dishes up simple, savory food that tastes like home

BY ELLEN SWEETS

HOOVER ALEXANDER IS THE KIND OF home-grown treasure who keeps Southern food real by offering unpretentious dishes that Mom served to start or end the day: vittles that are simple, tasty, fresh, filling and plentiful. And the ground rules don't change much, whether he's cooking food at one of his two Austin restaurants, catering a church picnic, feeding dancers at the Governor's Ball, appearing at the Texas Food & Wine Festival, doing a cooking demonstration for the Food Network or serving up his signature smothered pork chops in the nation's capital. Here or there, his food still tastes like home.

Last year, Alexander took his cooking beyond Texas when he accepted an invitation to strut his stuff at the Smithsonian Institution's annual Folklife Festival. The midsummer 10-day festival in Washington, D.C., spotlighted Texas in 2008.

For the festival, instead of dishing out smoked ribs, catfish, greens and cobbler, Alexander introduced festivalgoers to those smothered pork chops; his ever-popular banana pudding cheesecake; and a special creation, his tribute to author Harper Lee's classic novel, *To Kill A Mockingbird*. Alexander called his oven-roasted chicken marinated in tequila and Shiner Bock beer "Tequila Bock 'n' Bird." All three were hits.

"I did a series of cooking demonstrations that also featured breakfast foods from my days growing up on the family ranch in Pilot Knob, mainly old-fashioned (cornmeal) hoecakes with my mother's tomato preserves," he says.

"When people worked farms or

ranches, they had to have a hearty breakfast at the start of the day to sustain them through lunch. They didn't have time to go back to the house for lunch, so they brought food that would tide them over to supper."

The 42-year-old festival keeps America's heritage alive through historical presentations, from music, arts and food. Alexander made his case through what he characterizes as "po' folks' food"—the multiethnic, multinational evolution of now-popular dishes that originated from a need to make every bit of everything stretch, from

green chilies and salsa to making full use of the whole pig. They call it "home cooking" and "soul food" now, but it all evolved from a need to avoid wasting anything edible.

"I talked about how I serve Elgin sausages in my restaurant, which descended from German traditions; chicken smothered in green chile sauces came from Mexican culture," Alexander says. "People seemed really interested to know what we take for granted. Then there were the people from Texas who stopped by and were really excited to taste food from home."

HOOVER'S TEQUILA BOCK 'N' BIRD

INGREDIENTS

2 cups bottled Italian salad dressing	2-3 cloves garlic, finely chopped or minced
1 cup Shiner Bock beer	1/4 cup chopped onion
3 tablespoons tequila	1/4 cup sugar
1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce	1 1/2 teaspoons ground black pepper
1/4 cup pineapple juice	1 cup chicken stock
1/2 teaspoon curry powder (optional)	8 chicken thighs
1 tablespoon ground ginger	

DIRECTIONS

Whisk together salad dressing, beer, tequila, Worcestershire sauce, pineapple juice, curry powder, if desired, ginger, garlic, onion, sugar, black pepper and chicken stock. Set aside 3/4 cup marinade in a separate container and store, covered, in refrigerator for later use.

In a container large enough to hold all eight pieces, marinate chicken for 24 hours, covered. Turn two or three times. Remove from refrigerator 30 minutes before removing from marinade. Discard marinade and remove reserved marinade from the refrigerator.

Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Spray a shallow casserole dish with vegetable oil. Reduce heat to 400 degrees. Place chicken in a single layer and bake for 20 to 25 minutes, or until juices run clear when pierced with a knife.

Meanwhile, heat reserved marinade, but don't boil. When chicken is done, brush with reserved marinade and serve.



When Alexander catered the Greater Mount Zion Baptist Church's annual picnic last summer, members chowed down on:

- 350 pounds of smoked beef shoulder
- 300 chickens
- 300 pounds of smoked sausage
- 38 gallons of barbecued beans
- 150 pounds of cole slaw
- 300 pounds of potato salad
- 500 ears of roasted corn on the cob

ZIGZAG TO A CAREER

A fifth-generation Texan, Alexander entered the University of Texas as a communications major, then zigzagged through a series of disciplines before realizing that what he really wanted to do was cook.

An equally circuitous route brought him to where he is. "At one point I even worked three jobs, waiting tables at Steak and Ale, working banquets and bartending at the old Sheraton (hotel) and cooking at the Night Hawk," Alexander says. "That's when I realized I might as well admit the fact that I wanted a career in food."

The career choice tested him severely. Moving through a series of stops at Austin restaurants—including the New Orleans-themed Toulouse in 1982, through Chez Fred and, more recently, Good Eats—Alexander had his share of missteps and bad decisions, but each, good and bad, provided the kind of education not

available through classroom lectures.

The combination of practical and academic experience has paid off in his Austin restaurants, Hoover's Cooking. Alexander is a blur moving around the outer edges of the room, then heading for his office to do inventory, sign paychecks, check e-mail, return calls. Then he's sweeping through the room, clearing tables, pouring more iced tea and, oh, wait, new arrivals need a table; the hostess is already seating a party of six. Alexander slips into "host" mode, meeting and greeting, stopping from time to time to chat with regulars or wish someone a happy birthday.

When the place is packed, he appreciates the importance of tending to details. Folks who own successful restaurants know that attention to detail is the heart of their success. It's also the sort of thing that attracts the attention of, oh, say, a major mention on the Food Network's "Best Of" series featuring those smothered pork chops.

On any given day at Alexander's restaurants, servers sweep through the kitchen bearing trays laden with plates of fried catfish, greens, smoked ribs and sausage, and peach, cherry or mango cobbler. Such specials as short ribs, brisket or baked chicken are posted on a blackboard for those wanting to go off-menu. Mostly, though, his followers want what's on the menu.

When Alexander catered the Greater Mount Zion Baptist Church's annual picnic last summer, members chowed down on 350 pounds of smoked beef shoulder; 300 chickens; 300 pounds of smoked sausage; 38 gallons of barbecued beans; 150 pounds of cole slaw; 300 pounds of potato salad; and 500 ears of roasted corn on the cob.

The iced tea held out. The lemonade didn't.

This feeding of 1,200 hungry souls was accomplished with the help of nine staffers instead of the scheduled 11. For an event like this, the absence of four hands made a difference. Alexander did what good chefs do in situations that call for an instant management decision: Do now, freak out later.

SMOTHERED PORK CHOPS

INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups flour
- 3 teaspoons salt, divided
- 3 teaspoons black pepper, divided
- 1 teaspoon cayenne (red) pepper
- 2 teaspoons garlic powder
- 1 cup milk
- 2 eggs beaten well
- 4 center cut, bone-in pork chops, 1/2 inch thick
- 4 tablespoons vegetable oil

DIRECTIONS

Create seasoned flour by thoroughly combining flour, 1 teaspoon salt, 2 teaspoons black pepper, red pepper and garlic powder. Create an egg wash by whisking together milk, eggs, and remaining salt and pepper. Dip pork chops in egg wash, letting excess liquid drip off, then quickly dredge in seasoned flour, lightly coating pork chops. Fry in heated oil until golden brown, using a cast-iron skillet if available; otherwise, use a heavy frying pan. Drain on paper towels to remove excess oil.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Place pork chops in a single layer in a shallow casserole dish at least 2 inches deep, cover with Onion Gravy and bake for 25 minutes.

ONION GRAVY

- 1 1/2 quarts beef broth
- 1 1/2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tablespoon beef base (for making soup) or 1 cube beef bullion
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 tablespoon black pepper
- 1/2 cup vegetable oil
- 1/2 cup flour
- 1 1/4 cups minced onion
- 1 1/2 teaspoons minced garlic (or 1 teaspoon garlic powder)

In a large saucepan or stockpot, heat broth, Worcestershire sauce, beef base, garlic powder and black pepper. Bring to a simmer, cover over low heat and set aside.

In a sauté pan (or the same cast-iron skillet that pork chops were cooked in, rinsed and dried), combine oil and flour over medium heat and stir until the mixture (roux) is browned. Stir in onion and garlic and cook 2 to 3 minutes. Whisk roux into stockpot. Continue whisking until gravy is slightly thickened. Add additional beef broth or water if gravy is too thick.

ALWAYS GOOD FOOD

"I've always been around good food and loved it," Alexander says in his unmistakable resonant bass voice. "Both of my grandfathers were excellent cooks, as were my mother and my father. He was an over-the-road truck driver, but he loved being in the kitchen."

His mother, Dorothy, was a dietitian at Holy Cross Hospital in Austin, while his father, the late Hoover Sr., cooked for various University of Texas fraternity houses between driving gigs.

All of life's fits and starts prepared Hoover Jr. for a deeper understanding of how not to run a business, as well as how to run one. Alexander's career has been risk-taking tempered by rewards. His second restaurant in North Austin is taking off, but the one in San Antonio lasted only 2 1/2 years.

Asked whether he has plans for any more restaurants, Alexander shakes his head and answers wearily.

Then, after a brief hesitation, he adds, "But you never know."

Ellen Sweets recently retired from the Denver Post.

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Keep Backyard Gardening Safe and Fun

According to the National Gardening Association, two out of three American households take part in some gardening activity each year. Chores vary but often include: raking leaves, transplanting trees and shrubs, planting spring-flowering bulbs and perennials, pruning trees, controlling weeds and mowing lawns. Whether you're a master gardener or budding amateur, keep these safety tips in mind.

AVOID OVEREXPOSURE TO SUN. Limit the time you spend working in direct sunlight by gardening during early



morning or late-afternoon hours. This way, you'll avoid the 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. time period when the sun's rays are strongest. Protect your skin by wearing long-sleeved shirts, pants instead of shorts and a wide-brimmed hat. When skin is exposed, apply sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15. Heat stress can also be a risk. Keep water by your side and drink often to remain hydrated. Remember to take frequent breaks by going indoors and relaxing in front of a fan.

WARM UP. Injuries often occur when people overextend themselves on a job they tackle only once or twice a year. Stretch your muscles, especially those in your back, before heading outside. For large tasks, enlist help from friends or family, take frequent breaks, spread the job across several days or hire helpers. To prevent strains and sprains, consider the following:

- Keep your back erect when working at ground level and when using long-handled tools.
- Bend at your knees and hips to lift objects.
- Alternate or use both arms whenever possible.
- Keep your elbows bent.
- Don't rest your body weight on your elbows.
- Grip hand tools lightly.
- Work below shoulder level whenever possible. If you must work above shoulder level, perform the task for five minutes or less.

BE CAREFUL WITH POWER EQUIPMENT.

According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, 400,000 people are treated in emergency rooms each year for injuries from lawn and garden tools. Consider the following when operating power tools:

- Know how to operate equipment. Read the manual and follow all instructions.
- Wear long pants, close-fitting clothes, sturdy shoes and safety glasses. Don't wear anything that could get caught in moving parts, such as loose jewelry. Tie back long hair.
- Handle fuel carefully. Fill up only when the engine is cold.
- If you use electrically powered equipment, check all cords and plugs for wear or cracked insulation. Avoid use in the rain or on wet grass.
- Clear the area of rocks, twigs, toys and anything else that could be thrown by mowing equipment.
- Keep children and pets away from the area. Never carry a child as a passenger on a riding mower.
- Keep your hands and feet away from moving parts. Never work on equipment when it's running.
- Don't point the blower nozzle of a leaf blower toward people or pets. Wear a dust mask, especially if you are kicking up clouds of dirt.
- Wear earplugs when using noisy equipment, such as leaf blowers or wood chippers.

IS YOUR AC READY?

Spring is near. That means that air-conditioning season in Texas cannot be far away. Are you ready? Here are some maintenance tips that will help keep your system in top shape.

■ Change your air filter regularly. Clogged, dirty filters block normal air flow and reduce a system's efficiency significantly. Keeping the filter clean can lower your air conditioner's energy consumption by 5 to 15 percent.

You should change the filter at least monthly during heavy use. You might want to check it more often if you have furry pets or if your house is dusty.

■ The air conditioner's evaporator coil and condenser coil collect dirt over the months, reducing efficiency. Check your evaporator coil and clean it as necessary.

■ Outdoor condenser coils can also become very dirty. You should minimize dirt and debris near the condenser unit. Your dryer vent, falling leaves and lawn mowing are all potential sources of dirt and debris. Cleaning the area around the coil, removing any debris, and trimming foliage back at least 2 feet allow for adequate air flow around the condenser.

■ The aluminum fins on evaporator and condenser coils are easily bent and can block air flow through the coil. Air conditioning wholesalers sell a tool called a "fin comb" that will put these fins back into nearly original condition.

■ Occasionally pass a stiff wire through the unit's condensate drain channels. Clogged drain channels prevent a unit from reducing humidity, and the resulting excess moisture may discolor walls or carpet.

GET A CLEAN START THIS SPRING

With a new season rolling around, it's time to think about that dreaded chore: spring cleaning. Or is it?

Many chores that end up on spring cleaning lists could instead be tackled any time of the year. This splits up the work, and can make your home more efficient and healthier, too.

Outside Maintenance

One of your annual tasks should be an inspection of your home to check paint for cracking and peeling and looking for other signs of wear. In addition, look at the roof for leaks and clean out gutters and drains.

You should also use this time to inspect weatherstripping and caulk on your windows and doors. By checking the seals, you will ensure that there aren't any spaces that may allow cool air to escape in hotter months, making your air system work harder and wasting energy dollars. Worse yet, gaps could let in the rain, which could lead to damage and costly repair bills.

One easy way to check the seals in your home is to look at door edges from the inside during the day. If you can see any daylight, it means your seals need replacing or upgrading. Where there is daylight, air is able to infiltrate or escape.

Also, on a windy day, listen for whistling or feel for drafts. An investment in proper seals will net you more money in energy savings.



Before you start scrubbing the floors, tackle energy-saving spring cleaning chores first.

Inside Maintenance

Besides cleaning out closets, pantries and kitchen drawers, you should replace air-conditioner filters; clean dryer vents, stove hoods and room fans; check faucets for leaks; and maintain your water heater.

Cleaning your air filters will ensure that they last longer; this is another money saver, as is cleaning the stove hood and room fans. Dust collects in room fans, causing allergies for some people, so these may need to be cleaned more often than yearly or seasonally.

Attach a length of garden hose to the drain on your water heater, run it outside and open the drain. You'll likely see a pile of sediment collect at the end of the hose. It's important to accomplish this task more than once a year, because if you allow sediment to build up in the bottom of the tank, where the heating element is located, it will decrease the efficiency of the heater and even shorten its life.

While you're giving your kitchen a once-over, use your vacuum cleaner to clean the refrigerator coils. Dust and dirt on the coils insulate them, interfering with heat exchange and making the fridge work harder to stay cold.

If you have a self-cleaning oven, use that feature. Keeping the oven clean not only prevents bad smells from filling your kitchen when you bake and unpleasant flavors from infiltrating into your food, but it also improves efficiency. A dirty oven has to work harder to cook your food.

You might want to schedule this chore when you can leave the house, because sometimes it can be too odiferous. Even if you don't have a self-cleaning oven, it still needs to be cleaned for the same reasons.

Completing these chores annually (or more often) helps ensure your home is in the best shape possible. You'll not only keep things running at peak efficiency, you'll feel better about your surroundings.



Farm Safety Around Power Lines

Every year, an average of 62 farm workers are electrocuted in the United States. You don't want to be one of them.

Imagine that you are driving a piece of farm equipment to the field through a back gate when things come to a screeching halt. You look back to see what's stopping you only to discover that you're tangled in an overhead power line! What do you do?

First, here's what you DON'T do: Don't climb out. Unless you're in immediate danger, stay where you are and call for help.

Most utility lines are uninsulated, bare wires. Do not let your body become a direct link between the power line and the ground. If you must leave the equipment, jump as far away as you can, making sure that no part of your body touches the machine and the ground at the same time.

Once you're off the machine, do not go back until your local electric co-op disconnects the power line.

A Hard Row To Hoe

*Lessons I learned in
the summer cotton
fields back home.*

BY CAMILLE WHEELER

T

ears streamed down my reddened face. As a scorching July sun beat down on the cotton field, I dug my boot heels into the dirt, clenched the wooden handle of my hoe and screamed at my sister Jenny, “Don’t hoe my weeds!”

Jenny just ignored me, hotheaded little 6-year-old that I was. She had, after all, a job to do. And at the moment, that job included hoeing the weeds that I had missed. She marched into my row, raised her sharpened hoe, and carefully attacked the milkweeds interwoven with the cotton stalks.

Nobody—NOBODY—was going to hoe my weeds for me, I fumed. Yes, I was young. I was slow. I daydreamed and talked to myself and walked past big, obvious weeds. I sometimes mistook tall weeds for cotton and hoed up the wrong plant (to the untrained eye, cockleburs and cotton stalks could be twins). My brow furrowed under the brim of my cap, I cried and stamped my feet, and at 9 o’clock on a sizzling summer morning, I would ask if we EVER were going home for lunch. While my older siblings—Amanda, Jenny and Nathan—toiled up and down half-mile-long rows, making round after round, I was allowed to sit in the pickup on the caliche turn row (called a turn row because that’s where tractors turn around to start another round in the field) and drink red Kool-Aid from a big green jug.

I hated hoeing. I hated weeds. White weeds. Ironweeds. Blue weeds. Lake weeds. Careless weeds. And I hated that helpless feeling when my siblings, much faster than I, were already starting another round while I was still 200 yards from the end of the field.

But I loved growing up on a farm southeast of Lubbock on the South Plains. I loved driving the little Ford tractor—it went real fast in fourth gear and bounced over turn-row mud holes amazingly well—and plowing weeds in the blank rows (a safe area of the field where an inexperienced farmhand can’t possibly plow up precious cotton). I loved driving the old green Chevrolet pickup while Daddy loaded irrigation pipe onto its pipe racks and, ducking his head to avoid the swaying racks, yelled at me to stop popping the slippery clutch. I loved hauling aluminum pipe by hand across muddy fields because I could hold my own with my siblings.

On especially hot days in the field, I loved chasing the languidly moving patch of shade cast by a solitary cloud. And when the cloud had moved on, we’d sit on irrigation pipe carrying cold well water and cool our bottoms for a while.

I loved driving the pickup behind my dad’s tractor while he moved to another

field. I loved listening to the radio in the pickup and singing along with Otis Redding (“*I’m sittin’ on the dock of the bay, watching the tide roll away ...*”) at the top of my lungs.

As much as I detested hoeing, I loved its rituals: In the morning, en route to the field, we’d pile into the back of the pickup, lining up our hoes in the bed. In the late afternoon, when the last round had been hoed for the day, we’d mark our place in the rows with a mound of dirt.

Daddy even had a ritual: After lunch, he’d open the curtains and lie down on the sun-splashed family-room floor, pull the newspaper over his face and listen to comedian Jerry Clower records until he fell asleep. The longer he napped, the less time we had to spend in the field in the afternoon. I stayed real quiet during those naps.

I loved anything that got us out of hoeing. Vacation Bible School. Swimming lessons. Thunderstorms. But rain didn’t always guarantee freedom—just when I thought the fields were too soggy to enter, my dad would announce that it was a perfect time to buckle up our mud boots and pull cockleburs out of the softened ground.

Sometimes, sinking up to my shins in the mud, I’d wonder how my young life had come to this.

But truthfully, I was proud of getting dirty. I knew I had arrived when I, too, was rolling around in the field, kicking, wrestling and yelping in a melee started by one of my siblings during a long, hot round of temper-producing hoeing. (I, of course, was young and innocent and would *never* start a fight. I just liked to pile on.) I learned two lessons from our fights: 1) Run like heck when someone’s swinging a hoe at your head; and 2) the greener the cotton boll, the harder it hits upon impact.

Those were the good old days. Sometimes, though, my parents hoed with us, and we had to behave.

Little philosopher that I was, I often wondered aloud, “Why do we have to hoe?” It seemed to me that the cotton could fend for itself. Instead of swinging a hoe, I wanted to be riding horses, tearing through the mesquite under the Caprock on my granddaddy’s ranch where my dad and his siblings also ran cattle.

I always fancied myself more rancher than farmer.

But something happened through the years. The more I hoed, the more I grew to love it. I imagined that wind-blown cotton leaves were cheering me on as I stalked the rows. I got tan and muscular. I was proud to work, knowing I was doing my family good.

Through years of hoeing, I learned that this, too, shall pass, that bad times don’t last and that steady work brings rewards. I learned to hoe up weeds by their roots so they wouldn’t grow back. I learned to look innocent when asked who started the ruckus.

And, Jenny, if we had it to do all over again, I’d gladly let you hoe my weeds.

Camille Wheeler is staff writer for Texas Co-op Power.



MENARD

Make the Most of Rainy Days

Rain barrels can tide you over during especially dry times.

By Clay Coppedge



When Billy Kniffen and his wife built their home near Menard six years ago, he knew that water would be a concern because wells dug on the property had never been productive, and the house was beyond access to city water. So Kniffen installed a rainwater harvesting system at his place, and he has not been without water since.

Rainwater harvesting is a system of capturing, diverting and storing rainwater for later use. The most common method employs a roof made of a smooth material, usually tin, to divert the rainfall into storage tanks. Rainwater gutters, connecting pipes and filters complete the most common system. A basic, “no-frills” 50-gallon home rainwater harvesting system generally costs about \$50 in materials. More elaborate systems with pumps and pressure tanks, along with more advanced filtration systems and a chlorinator, can cost several thousand dollars. The expense depends on roof size, landscape area, amount of water storage desired, whether the water will be for potable or nonpotable purposes and other factors.

Kniffen has 15,000 gallons of storage for home use and another 1,500 gallons dedicated to his three raised-bed gardens. He collects rainwater from about 5,000 square feet of surface area and stores about 3,000 gallons of water for every inch of rainfall.

“I catch enough rainfall to take care of all my water needs,” Kniffen says. “I use it for everything—including my garden and landscaping. I use it as a water source and as a way to attract wildlife.”

Kniffen, previously the Texas AgriLife Extension Service agent for agriculture and natural resources in Menard County, now serves as the extension’s first water resource specialist dedicated solely to educating Texans about rainwater harvesting. Kniffen said that as far as he can tell, he is the first person in the country from any agency to deal with nothing but rainwater harvesting.

The job comes at a time when the state’s growing population is expected to exceed current projected water supplies. Kniffen believes that rainwater harvesting is part of the solution to the looming problem.

“Rainwater harvesting is one of the things we’re looking at,” he said. “We’ve put in demonstration models at several school districts and worked with extension agents, Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists all over the state to let them know that this is a good alternative.”

Some landowners use a rainwater harvesting system to provide an additional water source for wildlife and to supplement watering of livestock. Rainwater can be used to water livestock but only up to a point, Kniffen said.

“Livestock producers can’t rely on it too much because of how much water the animals need. If you’re on small acreage with just a horse or a couple of goats or something like that, it’s different,” he said. Cattle require from 7 to 18 gallons of water per day, horses need 8 to 18 gallons, and sheep and goats require 1 to 4 gal-

lons. As a general rule, you should provide 2 gallons of water per 100 pounds of body weight, Kniffen said.

The Kniffen home uses about 70 gallons per day, and he estimates that he could still maintain enough water even if a drought dropped the yearly rainfall total to 9 inches.

“We haven’t had any problems,” he said.

Kniffen said rainwater harvesting systems have traditionally been used in West Texas, where average annual rainfall can amount to 10 inches or less. That is changing, he said. There is interest now in Central Texas, especially from Austin to Dallas, because of the region’s rapid population growth. One of the largest rainwater harvesting systems in America is at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin, where a 17,000-square-foot roof collects about 10,600 gallons for every inch of rain.

Kniffen delivered a talk to the 2007 Home Landscape and Garden Conference in Tyler on the benefits of rainwater harvesting in that area.

“East Texas gets a lot of rain, but it doesn’t come all at the same time,” he said. “There are periods of drought. Lakes get low. Even Lake Palestine has gone dry. When you look at how to conserve water and keep water there for your use in the home as well as outside, rainwater harvesting is one way to go.”

Rainwater harvesting has also been done in some of the most remote areas of the Trans-Pecos region of West Texas.

“They began using it (rainwater harvesting) a few years ago at a number of places down around Big Bend as part of an effort to reintroduce bighorn sheep into the area,” Kniffen said. “I saw the first of that, and now I see that same idea being applied all over the state.”

The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality developed guidelines for in-home rainwater use last year, and the Texas Legislature has endorsed rainwater use in state buildings. The Texas Water Development Board estimates that 38 billion gallons of water could be saved annually if only 10 percent of the roof area in Texas were used for rainfall harvest.

More information on rainwater harvesting in Texas can be found at <http://rainwaterharvesting.tamu.edu>.

Clay Coppedge is the state writer for Country World newspaper.



Billy Kniffen shows off his rainwater storage system.

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Flights of Fancy

BY K.A. YOUNG

In a 40-foot-square room of the Depot Museum in Pittsburg, Texas, the replica of a craft hovers overhead like something out of a Jules Verne novel. A cross between a Conestoga wagon and Sally Field's headdress in "The Flying Nun," the Ezekiel Airship—the original was built by the Rev. Burrell Cannon—is a tangible reminder that Texans may have invented heavier-than-air flight before the Wright brothers' 1903 takeoff landed in the pages of history.

But any discussion about early flights must start with Jacob Brodbeck, who might have been the first man to fly in an airplane.

Brodbeck moved to Texas from Germany, arriving in Fredericksburg in 1847. While the Civil War raged, he fashioned a functioning model with a rudder, wings resembling those of a modern aircraft and a propeller powered by coiled springs.

After he solicited investors to build a version that could carry a person, Brodbeck became an aeronaut. As curious onlookers watched, Brodbeck climbed into the craft's enclosed cockpit, equipped with only a compass, barometer and boat propeller (in case he landed in water). His craft reportedly rose 12 feet, twice the height of those gawking below. It stayed aloft 100 feet—only 20 feet less than the Wrights' later flight. Then his springs uncoiled, and he reportedly crashed into a chicken coop.

No newspaper, photographer or artist recorded the event. One popular account claims he flew September 20, 1865, in a field three miles east of Luckenbach. Some insist the site was San Antonio's San Pedro Park. Others say it was 1868, not 1865. Brodbeck suffered no serious injuries, but the ignominious landing severely dented his public relations.

Abandoned by his investors, he toured the United States to raise money for another attempt. With Reconstruction boiling on front pages, Brodbeck got back-burner attention. Disgruntled by lack of interest in his invention, his notes and diagrams stolen, he returned to Texas. He dismantled and buried the craft on his property near Luckenbach, where he lived until his death in 1910.

Cannon, meanwhile, was inspired by biblical prophet Ezekiel's vision of four winged creatures, each flying by a wheel within a wheel. Around 1900, the 52-year-old Cannon designed an airship that had wheels within wheels. A respected minister-machinist-mechanic with several patented wind-driven machines, he sold \$20,000 worth of stock in his Ezekiel Airship Manufacturing Company at \$25 per share to build a prototype at P.W. Thorsell's foundry and machine shop in Pittsburg.

The airship's semi-circular fabric top wing stretched 26 feet—the length of today's travel trailers—over a frame of lightweight tubing with a secondary wing below. An outer pair of wooden wheels, 8 feet across, taxied the plane. A



smaller, faster, inner pair of wheels contained pivoted paddles, retracted in the upper stroke to mimic the out-of-water turn of steamboat paddles. Seated between the wheels, the pilot controlled the craft with levers that maneuvered the paddles, varying speed and direction. These and four brass hydraulic cylinders allowed vertical takeoffs and landings. A custom-made 80-horsepower, four-cylinder gas engine turned the wheels and paddles, propelling this precursor of the helicopter.

Only one known photograph exists of the machine. Cannon kept it a secret, and he probably never flew his invention. But it may have gotten off the ground. Four witnesses later came forward to confess that one Sunday morning in November 1902, while Cannon preached nearby, Gus Stamps, a worker in the foundry, decided to see what the contraption could do. He reportedly flew more than 10 feet in the air across a pasture, some say for 167 feet, before the craft began to vibrate violently and drift toward a fence. He killed the engine and brought the ship to a safe landing. Concerned about his job, Stamps and his buddies kept the amazing feat a secret for some time.

Presuming the engine too heavy for the craft to become airborne, Cannon decided to transport it on a flatbed railcar to St. Louis for possible exhibition in the World's Fair. Near Texarkana, a storm blew it off the flatbed, wrecking it and his hope to be first at controlled flight.

Texans eventually acknowledged these men's accomplishments. Busts of Brodbeck stand in Fredericksburg's Marktplatz and San Antonio's San Pedro Park. A Texas historic marker commemorates the Ezekiel Airship's flight. In 1987, Bob Loughery and the Pittsburg Optimist Club built the full-size replica from the photograph.

K.A. Young is a freelance writer and member of Wood County Electric Cooperative.

From Loathing to Loving

BY KEVIN HARGIS Did you hate your veggies when you were a kid? You are not alone.

I was always a good eater—and still am. But some things were just hard for me to stomach. Peas and lima beans often found themselves being pushed around my plate as if I could make them disappear by keeping them in constant motion. I would resort to swallowing them whole like pills so I could have dessert. (My folks were clean-your-plate kinds of parents.)

My dad dearly loved calf's liver and onions and chicken livers and gizzards—which seemed disgusting then and still make me a little squeamish, although I enjoy liver sausage now.

Many of our tastes evolve as we mature, so foods we loathed as 5-year-olds might actually seem delicious to us as adults. For me, it wasn't always the taste of a vegetable that turned me off, but it was the texture that often did me in. Sweet potatoes seemed too soft and stringy, and squash, especially when it was overcooked, was way too slimy.

I've gotten more tolerant of those vegetables, and now I even like sweet potatoes (in oven-fry form), and I love squash (especially cooked tender-crisp).

Add enough spices and sauces to your veggies, and you can mask offending flavors. Drop on a little cheese sauce, for instance, and broccoli or cauliflower might

disappear from a child's plate. But such sauces add possibly undesirable fat and calories to an otherwise perfectly healthful dish. Use them judiciously.

I've grown to where I savor broccoli without the cheese—just a sprinkling of lemon pepper and a squeeze of lime, thanks. I enjoy peas, although my brother, at age 56, still can't stand them.

But I still hate lima beans.

Here's a dish I first had at Austin's Magnolia Cafe that features many of the most-hated food items in one place, but manages, with the help of a little butter and cheese, to make it all delicious.

LOVE THOSE VEGGIES

- 1 large red onion
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1 head broccoli
- 1 medium zucchini
- 2 medium yellow squash
- 1 large bell pepper, green or red
- 8 ounces mushrooms
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 1 teaspoon red pepper (or more to taste)
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 cup shredded Monterey jack or mozzarella cheese, divided
- ½ pound raw spinach
- Salt and black pepper to taste
- Cooked brown rice to serve

Wash and prepare vegetables before starting to cook. Peel onion, stem and seed bell pepper and cut both into bite-size strips. Mince garlic. Chop broccoli into small pieces. Trim and slice zucchini and yellow squash into quarter-inch rounds. Slice mushrooms thinly. In a wok or large sauté pan, melt butter over medium-high heat. Add onion, garlic, red pepper and garlic powder and sauté until fragrant. Be careful not to allow garlic to brown. Add broccoli and bell pepper and stir-fry until broccoli just begins to soften. Add zucchini, yellow squash and mushrooms and stir-fry another couple of minutes.

Top with half of cheese. Add spinach in one layer, top with remaining cheese, cover and cook until spinach wilts. Serve over brown rice.

Serving size: 4 cups. Per serving: 344 calories, 23.1 g protein, 14.7 g fat, 37.3 g carbohydrates, 372 mg sodium, 40 mg cholesterol.





ROSALIE A. PETERS *Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative*

Prize-winning recipe: **Cream Cheese Spinach Quiche**

There are a bunch of reformed spinach-haters out there. Broccoli and sauerkraut also apparently ranked low on your lists when you were youngsters. At least, that's the message we got from readers who sent ideas for this month's recipe contest: Foods You've Grown To Love. The main occupants of your culinary doghouses were a variety of veggies, which we've all grown up to *love* now, right?

I wonder whether it was not the veggies we all hated, but the way they were prepared. These recipes just might make once-hated foods a must-have in your house.

Our taste testers loved Rosalie A. Peters' rich quiche that would be appropriate for breakfast, lunch or dinner. The spinach is just an added bonus.

CREAM CHEESE SPINACH QUICHE

- 1 pie crust, unbaked
- 5 extra large eggs
- 1 cup whipping cream
- 12 ounces cream cheese
- 2 cups grated Swiss cheese, divided
- 1/2 cup grated jalapeño jack cheese
- 2 tablespoons grated Parmesan
- 2 cups fresh spinach, stems removed
- 1/4 cup toasted slivered almonds
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon dried dill weed
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon sugar
- 3 tablespoons chopped green onion, white portion only
- 1 small Roma tomato, seeded and thinly sliced

Generous sprinkling of paprika

Put pie crust in a 10-inch deep-dish glass or ceramic pie dish. Cover tightly with plastic wrap and freeze. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Prick bottom of crust with fork and bake, unfilled, for 10 minutes. Remove crust and reduce oven to 325 degrees.

In a large bowl, combine all ingredients except tomato, 1 cup Swiss cheese and paprika and mix well. Pour into pie shell and return to oven. Bake 35 to 45 minutes. In the meantime, dry tomato slices on paper towel. Remove partially baked quiche from oven and top with tomato slices, then remaining Swiss cheese, then paprika and return to oven. Bake another 10 minutes or until knife inserted in center of quiche comes out clean. Serve immediately. Serves eight.

Serving size: 1 slice. Per serving: 510 calories, 20.7 g protein, 39.5 g fat, 13.8 g carbohydrates, 1 g fiber, 587 mg sodium, 247 mg cholesterol.

CARROT SOUFFLÉ

- 1 pound boiled, peeled carrots
- 1/2 cup melted butter
- 3 eggs
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- Dash pepper
- 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon vanilla

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Put carrots in blender and purée until smooth. Place remaining ingredients with carrots and blend well. Spoon mixture into a lightly greased 1-quart casserole or soufflé dish. Bake 45 minutes. Serve immediately.

Serves six.

Serving size: 1 cup. Per serving: 325 calories, 6.2 g protein, 17 g fat, 38 g carbohydrates, 6.6 g fiber, 371 mg sodium, 146 mg cholesterol.

MARSHA MAYFIELD LOCKETT

Hamilton County Electric Cooperative

BROCCOLI SALAD

- 8 cups chopped broccoli (flowers only)
- 1 cup golden raisins
- 1 cup sunflower seeds
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 8 slices bacon, fried and crumbled
- 4 tablespoons chopped red bell pepper
- 1 cup sugar

- 1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar or white wine vinegar

1 cup regular or fat-free mayonnaise
Mix broccoli, raisins, sunflower seeds, onion, bacon crumbles and pepper in large bowl. In a small bowl, mix sugar, vinegar and mayonnaise then pour over broccoli mixture and blend well. Serves 10 to 12.

Serving size: 1 cup. Per serving: 234 calories, 5.9 g protein, 8.7 g fat (with fat-free mayonnaise), 35.5 g carbohydrates, 2.4 g fiber, 306 mg sodium, 7 mg cholesterol.

SARAH HENSZ

Bryan Texas Utilities

SAUERKRAUT POTATO SALAD

- 4 medium potatoes, cut into 1/2-inch slices
- 1/3 cup apple cider vinegar
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 1 cup diced tart apples
- 1 pound smoked sausage, cut into 1/2-inch slices
- 1 can (10 ounces) sauerkraut, drained and rinsed
- 1/4 cup sliced green onions
- 1/4 cup chopped parsley
- Salt to taste

Boil potatoes until tender. Drain and allow to cool. In large bowl, combine vinegar, oil, pepper, sugar and 2 tablespoons water. Blend in apples. Brown sausage in skillet over medium heat about 10 minutes. Drain on paper towel.

Add potatoes, sauerkraut, onions, parsley and sausage to apple mixture and toss gently. Season with salt. Serves 12.

Serving size: 1 cup. Per serving: 226 calories, 6.3 g protein, 11.4 g fat, 21.2 g carbohydrates, 1.5 g fiber, 353 mg sodium, 23 mg cholesterol.

B.J. WILLIS

Bowie-Cass Electric Cooperative

RECIPE CONTEST

July's recipe contest topic is **PIE**. Sweet ones, savory ones, one crust or two—there is much variety in pie. Do you have a favorite you'd like to share? Send 'em in. The deadline is March 10.

Send recipes to Home Cooking, 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701. You may also fax them to (512) 763-3408, e-mail them to recipes@texas-ec.org, or submit online at www.texascoop.power.com. Please include your name, address and phone number, as well as the name of your electric co-op. The top winner will receive a copy of *60 Years of Home Cooking* and a Texas-shaped trivet. Runners-up will also receive a prize.

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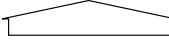
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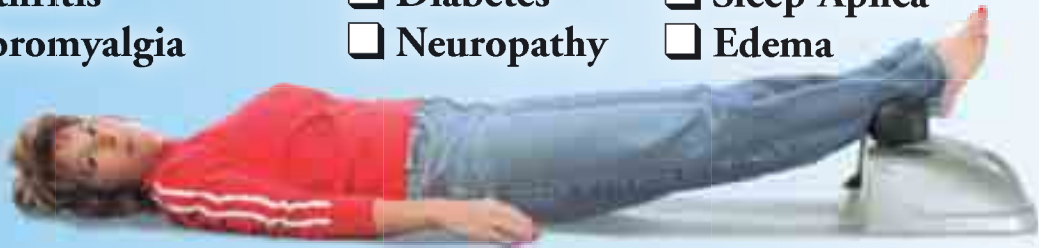




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I have had pain in both of my knees since I had them replaced in 2000, 6 months apart. My husband purchased one of your Exerciser 2000 Elite™ machines. I use it when I first get up in the morning and the last thing at night before I go to bed. I put two pillows under my knees for support and use the lowest speed for a few minutes. After a couple of days I worked up to a full 16 minute session. What a blessing! I have no pain, can walk better, keep my balance better and am so grateful, at 77, to lead a normal life again. I thank you so much. —Gwen S.

I want to tell you and everyone how much I like the Exerciser 2000 Elite™. I had such lower back pain that I could not stand it. I saw your ad in the American Legion magazine two years ago. At that time, I thought it wouldn't help. But, I ordered one anyway. Up to the time I received the Exerciser 2000 Elite™, I still had doubts if it would work. I was wrong. I have used it for four months now. Now I have very little back pain, am more regular, and I sleep much better thanks to the Exerciser 2000 Elite™. I would not ever part with it. It is the greatest thing I ever bought. —Clifford C.

I had been spending my days just waiting when I saw your ad in Guideposts for the Exerciser 2000 Elite™. I had edema of my left foot and leg, two bad falls and a fear of falling which made me inactive. I'm 97 years old. Could it really help me? My daughter encouraged me to try it. I did. It's working! I feel alive again and have a new zest for life, thanks to you. —Grace R. P.S. My daughter loves it too!

This is just a note to thank you for the rebate check. I am more grateful to you than ever – and I was already grateful because I am getting so much good out of my Exerciser 2000 Elite™, far more than I expected. I am 76 years old, heavy, stiff with arthritis and a leukemic for the past nine years. Using your machine twice a day has made me feel ten years younger. I am far less stiff and my thinking is clearer. I also have a great deal more energy. When you say that your company is in the business of “helping people feel better”, it is no fib! —Kate B.

Little did I know when I ordered the Exerciser 2000 Elite™ that it would prove valuable to my wife of 62 years. I got it for the stiffness in my legs and it works perfectly to get me loosened up after playing tennis in the morning. When I come home I immediately get on the Exerciser 2000 Elite™ for ten minutes and I feel great! My wife suffers from restless leg syndrome at night. Instead of walking the floor for a long period of time, she just gets on the Exerciser for ten minutes and the syndrome subsides. After wrestling with restless legs for a long time she is all smiles in the morning. Happy days are here again! Just thought you would like to know. —Dick P.



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▲ “Is there a problem, officer?” **Jaden Waldrip**, in the driver’s seat, and his cousin **Levi Victor** thought they were just going on a quick joyride about town in the tiny motorized pickup that Jaden received for his second birthday. They didn’t know **Uncle Buddy**, a New Mexico state police officer, had his radar gun handy that day. The boys are grandsons of **Glen** and **Freda Neie**, Deaf Smith Electric Cooperative members.



▲ Talk about a tight squeeze. This little guy was trying to escape a sprinkler control lid in the front lawn of Pedernales Electric Cooperative member **Lara Pumphret**. The froggie was eventually cut free with wire cutters.

▼ “Ahem ... a little help, please?” San Bernard Electric Cooperative member **Anna Etzler** of Hallettsville sent us this photo of a cow in quite a predicament, taken by her friend’s daughter.



▼ “Hey, mind if we play?” the cows seem to be asking. **Wil Herbst** sure didn’t know what to think about that. Thanks to **Denise Herbst** of Bandera Electric Cooperative for sending in this photo.



Upcoming in **Focus on Texas**

ISSUE	SUBJECT	DEADLINE
May	At the (Texas) Beach	Mar 10
June	Stained Glass Windows	Apr 10
July	Vacation Photos	May 10
Aug	Sisters	Jun 10
Sep	Texas Skyscapes	Jul 10
Oct	Cowgirls	Aug 10

AT THE (TEXAS) BEACH is the topic for our MAY 2009 issue. Send your photo—along with your name, address, daytime phone, co-op affiliation and a brief description—to At the (Texas) Beach, Focus on Texas, 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701, before March 10. A stamped, self-addressed envelope must be included if you want your entry returned (approximately six weeks). Please do not submit irreplaceable photographs—send a copy or duplicate. We regret that Texas Co-op Power cannot be responsible for photos that are lost in the mail or not received by the deadline. Please note that we cannot provide individual critiques of submitted photos. If you use a digital camera, e-mail your highest-resolution images to focus@texas-ec.org, or submit them on our website at www.texascooppower.com.

CAUGHT IN THE ACT

Getting caught with a hand in the cookie jar has never been this much fun. Thank you, readers, for all of your hilarious entries—over 100 of them! Whittling down the dozens of fantastic shots to only five finalists was a very difficult job—that is, if you define difficult as laughing to the point of tears. Enjoy!

—ASHLEY CLARY



▲ **Rebecca Griffith** was having a great time pushing her little bear around in its stroller. That is, until her cousin **Olivia Harris** came along and snatched it away. The girls and their grandparents, **Robin** and **Burnice Whitmire**, are Jasper-Newton Electric Cooperative members.

AROUND TEXAS AROUND TEXAS

MARCH

02 DRIFTWOOD
An Evening in the Vineyard, (512) 858-1506, www.theburkecenter.org

02 HUNTSVILLE
Gen. Sam Houston's Birthday & Texas Independence Day Celebration, (936) 294-1832, www.samhouston.memorial.museum



7 GONZALES
Texas Independence Relay

07 GONZALES
Texas Independence Relay, (830) 672-6532, www.texasindependencerelay.com

KEMPNER
Barbecue & Auction, (512) 932-3993

DECATUR [7-8]
Wise County Home & Lawn Show, (940) 627-6070

10 NEDERLAND [10-15]
Heritage Festival, (409) 724-2269

12 COTULLA [12-15]
LaSalle County Fair & Wild Hog Cook-Off, (830) 879-2852, www.wildhogcookoff.com

13 BUNA [13-14]
Redbud Festival, (409) 994-5586

14 CAT SPRING [14-15]
Antiques Show, (979) 865-5618

14 LA GRANGE [14-15]
Best Little Cowboy Gathering in Texas, (979) 968-5756, www.bestlittlecowboygathering.org

15 JEFFERSON
Saint Patrick's Irish Stew Cook-Off, (903) 665-2672, www.jefferson-texas.com

20 GATESVILLE
Jamboree, (254) 547-6834

MAGNOLIA [20-22]
Magnolia Music Festival, (281) 356-2266, www.magnoliamusicfest.com

PLANO [20-22]
Heart of Texas Arts & Craft Show, (903) 217-8081

27

WOODVILLE
Western Weekend

20 SMITHVILLE [20-22]
Thunder on the Colorado Biker Rally, (512) 237-2313, www.thunderonthecolorado.com

21 LAKEHILLS
United Methodist Church Annual Fish Fry & Auction, (830) 751-2404

PORT ARTHUR
Taste of Gumbo, (409) 984-6292

CYPRESS MILL [21-22]
Bunkhouse Gallery Fine Art & Jewelry Show, (830) 825-3465, www.wenmohsranch.com



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October 22-25 - Belton, TX
Bell County Expo Center
13th Annual Wild Horse & Burro Expo

November 5-7 - Odessa, TX
Ector County Coliseum

WWW.MUSTANGS - wildhorseadoption.hlm.gov

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Wild Horse and Burro Program

AROUND TEXAS AROUND TEXAS

27 WOODVILLE [27-28]
Western Weekend,
(409) 283-2632,
www.tylercountydogwood
festival.org

TOMBALL [27-29]
German Heritage Festival,
(281) 379-6844

28 PEARSALL
Pioneer Day,
(830) 334-4181

PORT ARTHUR
Multi-Cultural Exposition,
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DENISON [28-29]
Spring Fine Art Tour,
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www.smalltownbigart.com

WASHINGTON [28-29]
True Texas Women,
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www.birthplaceoftexas.com

29 LULING
Celebration of Life
& Music, (830) 875-3214,
ext. 4,
www.celebratetom.com

30 HAMILTON
Spring Fling,
(254) 386-3919

APRIL

01 ROUND TOP [1-4]
Spring Antiques Fair,
(512) 237-4747,
www.roundtop texas
antiques.com

04 LULING
Roughneck Chili &
Barbecue Cook-Off and Oil
City Car Show,
(830) 875-3214, ext.4

17 BURTON [17-19]
Cotton Gin Festival,
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18 CHAPPELL HILL [18-19]
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Historic San Augustine and Nacogdoches, connected by State Highway 21—also known as El Camino Real and The King's Highway—share far more than this time-honored, evergreen corridor. Each community offers small-town charm, friendliness and a peaceful pace of life that instill a sense of comfort welcomed by those who stop, visit and stay awhile.

Indian wars were fought in these lush East Texas thickets. Spanish friars and French traders found ample reason to visit this area, and so should you.

Both towns claim to be the oldest in Texas, and each has a case to make.

SAN AUGUSTINE

San Augustine, home of Deep East Texas Electric Cooperative, lays claim to being the oldest Anglo town in Texas. This town of 2,500 people probably was visited by Spanish explorers as early as the 1540s. French traders also spent time in the area, which was permanently settled by Anglos in 1779. It is also called the Cradle of Texas Independence for its role in the Texas Revolution.

In the heart of town, you'll find the old San Augustine County courthouse, surrounded by a variety of quaint shops and venerable historic buildings and churches. Visitors can browse antique stores such as **BOGARD'S ON BROADWAY EMPORIUM** for old lamps, collectible glassware and furniture, or mosey over to the **SAN AUGUSTINE DRUG STORE** for the locally popular, very tart, grapefruit highball.

Tempting visitors with delicious treats a few blocks away is the **PINTO PONY COOKIE FACTORY**, where you can sample decadence on a cookie sheet like their oatmeal raisin with nuts or melt-in-your-mouth chocolate chip. Just south of town, the **MISSION DOLORES VISITORS CENTER** commemorates the site of the famous Spanish mission built in 1717.

San Augustine County Chamber of Commerce, (936) 275-3610, www.sanagustinetx.com

SAN AUGUSTINE to NACOGDOCHES

*Travel one of Texas' oldest roads
to visit two of its oldest settlements.*

BY STEPHAN MYERS



NACOGDOCHES

Driving about 30 miles west on State Highway 21, fringed by towering spires of loblolly pine, you'll encounter Nacogdoches, which claims to be the first town in Texas to establish an official government. Settled in the early 1700s by the Spanish for the purpose of building missions, the site was eventually abandoned due to conflicts with nearby French settlements. But in 1779, settlers returned with their leader, Antonio Gil Ibarvo, to set up a local government in a building now known as the **OLD STONE FORT**.

Today, Nacogdoches, with a population of 30,000, projects an energetic, youthful ambiance, thanks to the presence of **STEPHEN F. AUSTIN STATE UNIVERSITY**. Like San Augustine, the downtown district offers the greatest appeal for visitors. The streets, constructed almost entirely of red brick, are a sight to behold, attractively set off by ornate, metal light posts and old-fashioned, storefront windows. Here,

antique, collectible and specialty shops abide in refurbished, turn-of-the-century buildings.

As folks migrate from one fascinating little shop to the next, treasure hunting for old-time memorabilia can reach a feverish pace. Be sure to visit **GREER'S INC.**, which yields a number of unexpected delights. On the first floor, quality antiques and reproductions,

made of oak, walnut and mahogany, provide an elegant setting for a gorgeous collection of high-quality fabrics. Upstairs, you'll find gallery walls laden with evocative, original black and white photos of yesteryear. **GLASS CASTLES**, located right across the street, offers a luscious collection of stained-glass eye candy.

For overnight visits, you can choose from almost a dozen delightful bed-and-breakfasts, some within a few blocks of the main square. Don't miss the two-story, Victorian-style, **JONES HOUSE BED & BREAKFAST**, built in

1897, or the beautiful, nine-room, **BROOKS CYPRESS HOUSE BED & BREAKFAST**, located on 22 forested acres near downtown.

Other points of interest include the historic village of **MILLARD'S CROSSING**, the **RUBY M. MIZE AZALEA GARDEN** (blooming in March), the **NACOGDOCHES CRAPE MYRTLE TRAIL** (best in July and August) and the **PINEYWOODS NATIVE PLANT CENTER**.

Because it's a college town, Nacogdoches offers diverse and well-prepared cuisine. For zesty Italian food, try **AUNTIE PASTAS**. Friday nights sizzle with live jazz on the patio at **CAFÉ FREDONIA**, accompanied by a delectable seafood buffet.

Nacogdoches County Chamber of Commerce, (936) 560-5533, www.gonac.info

Nacogdoches Convention and Visitors Bureau, 1-888-653-3788, www.visitnacogdoches.org

Stephan Myers is a writer and photographer who lives near the Sam Rayburn Reservoir in East Texas.



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