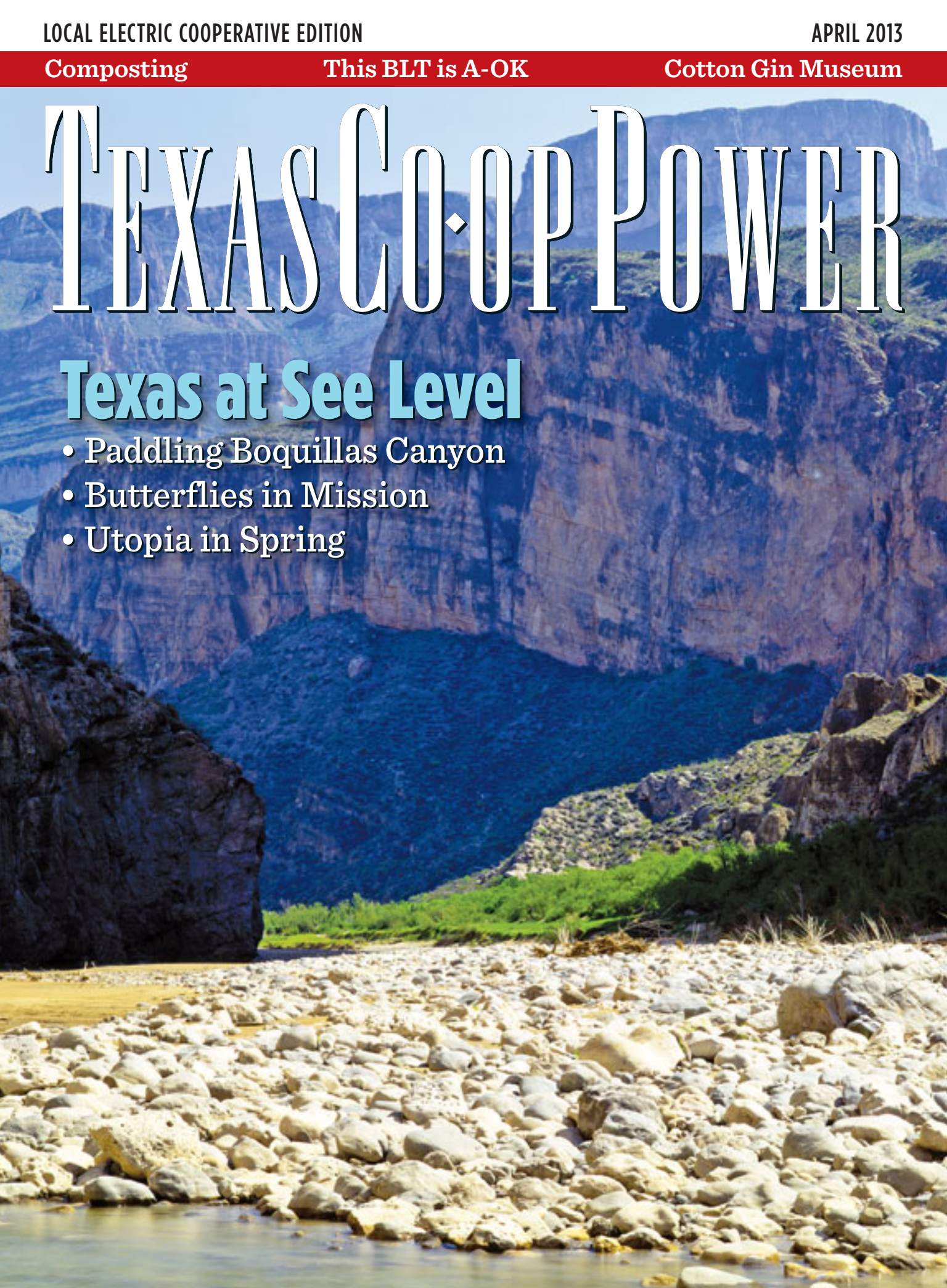


TEXAS CO-OP POWER

Texas at See Level

- Paddling Boquillas Canyon
- Butterflies in Mission
- Utopia in Spring



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T E X A S ' L A R G E S T R U R A L L E N D E R



FEATURES

Change Your Perspective Break out of your cocoon and get close-up looks at other parts of the state, starting with these three destinations By Suzanne Haberman, Ashley Clary-Carpenter and Suzi Sands

8

Backyard Paydirt Composting at home doesn't have to be complicated. Plus, it's great for plants, your wallet and the planet By Melissa Gaskill • Illustrations by Edd Patton

16

Around Texas: If you're gonna play in Llano ... there'll be plenty of fiddles for the band. At least there will be April 5-7 during Fiddle Fest.

FAVORITES

37 Texas History

A Cowboy's Unusual Dental Work

By Lori Grossman

39 Recipes

Give Them a Hand

43 Focus on Texas

Reflections

44 Around Texas

List of Local Events

46 Hit the Road

Texas Cotton Gin Museum

By Suzanne Haberman

ONLINE TexasCoopPower.com

Texas USA

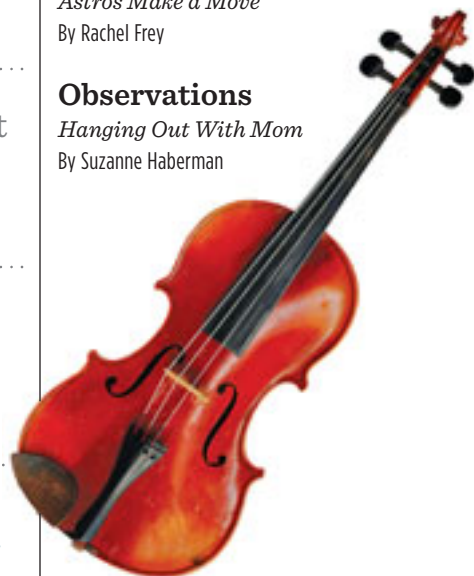
Astros Make a Move

By Rachel Frey

Observations

Hanging Out With Mom

By Suzanne Haberman



16



39



43



46

COVER PHOTO *The Rio Grande meanders through Boquillas Canyon, sometimes not so gently.* By Laurence Parent

TEXAS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES BOARD OF DIRECTORS: Ron Hughes, Chair, Sinton; Darryl Schriver, Vice Chair, Merkel; Jerry Boze, Secretary-Treasurer, Kaufman; Debra Cole, Itasca; Kyle Kuntz, Livingston; Randy Mahannah, Perryton; Bobby Waid, Bandera **PRESIDENT/CEO:** Mike Williams, Austin **COMMUNICATIONS & MEMBER SERVICES COMMITTEE:** Bryan Lightfoot, Bartlett; Billy Marricle, Bellville; Stan McClendon, Wellington; Blaine Warzecha, Victoria; Buff Whitten, Eldorado; Jerry Williams, Paris; Kathy Wood, Marshall **COMMUNICATIONS STAFF:** Martin Bevins, Vice President, Communications & Member Services; Carol Moczygemba, Vice President, Executive Editor; Tom Widlowski, Associate Editor; Suzi Sands, Art Director; Karen Nejtsek, Production Manager; Ashley Clary-Carpenter, Field Editor; Andy Doughty, Production Designer/Web Content Manager; Sandra Forston, Communications Assistant; Suzanne Haberman, Staff Writer; Kevin Hargis, Food Editor; Blake Mitchell, Print Production Specialist; Ellen Stader, Proofreader; Brittany Lamas, Communications Intern

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How Texas Laws Are Made

I applaud Texas Co-op Power for the simplified flowchart explaining the complex process of making laws in the Legislature ["How Texas Laws Are Made," February 2013]. Understanding this process is important to every adult citizen and to every student in school in Texas.

WARREN D. TENNEY | PEDERNALES EC



Recuerdos

As far back as I can remember, my father was a subscriber of La Prensa until it ceased publication in 1963. Thanks for bringing back another good memory from my past.

MICKIE RENTERIA | WOOD COUNTY EC

Hey, Hey Smokey

I just wanted to tell Lori Grossman how much I enjoyed reading "Paul and Paula: Sweethearts of the '60s" [February 2013].

I didn't personally know Ray Hildebrand or Jill Jackson, but I did know Marvin "Smokey" Montgomery very well. Smokey, as most fans and friends called him, was the co-founder of the Dallas Banjo Band, of which I have been a member for almost 23 years. Even though Smokey had many other musical commitments, including the Light Crust Doughboys and the Levee

Her New 'Must-Read'

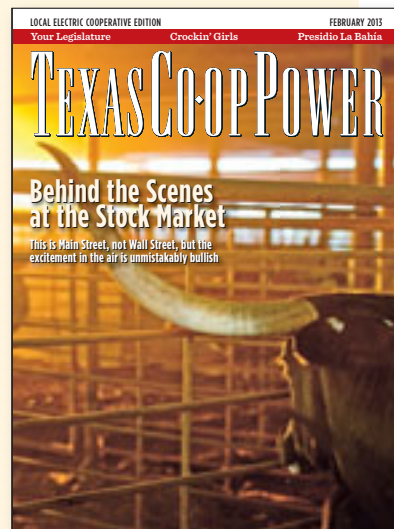
The February issue was the first I've seen, and I enjoyed every article!

La Prensa, the Spanish-language newspaper from San Antonio, was a must in our family back in the 1930s. As the only Mexican family in Chandler, we children born in the U.S. had no contact with Spanish-speaking people, but my father ordered La Prensa by mail and would read it aloud to my grandmother and mother, and we would listen. My sister (94 years old now) learned to read the comics when she was 5. Before the Depression, my father read where banks were closing and quickly withdrew his savings from the bank—all \$600 of it!

"The Cattle Call" reminded me of my dear husband. We both retired to some acreage his father left him and raised cattle as a hobby until he died eight years later. Cattle auctions were fun!

As a former teacher, I say the graphic "How Texas Laws Are Made" should be known by all Texans. I can't wait for your next issue.

CAMINA CHAVEZ | TRINITY VALLEY EC



Singers, he made time to be the Banjo Band's director until his death in 2001.

Smokey would often tell stories about helping write "Hey! Baby" with Bruce Channel and his time in Europe touring with Paul and Paula.

GLENN SNYDER | FANNIN COUNTY EC

Chapels in the Trees

Thank you for the article "Enlightenment at a Brush Arbor Revival" [February 2013]. I've seen brush arbor revivals and wish everybody could.

JIM WILLIAMS | FARMERS EC

Meter Reader

My old electric meter ["Meter Beaters," February 2013] was turned into a functioning lamp. With a three-way bulb, the dial spins faster

as more wattage is being used. Glad I could recycle in another way.

JAN SMITH | UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES

Houston the Slave

Joshua Houston was not an important member of the Sam Houston household due to his quick mind and faithfulness ["The Other Remarkable Houston," January 2013]. He was a slave and was forced to be in the Houston household. Common sense and faithfulness were expected of him.

The article is written as if Joshua Houston had a choice to be or not to be the family's blacksmith, wheelwright, carpenter and driver. He had no choice in his living situation. He simply existed in it until he was emancipated.

VAUGHN YOUNG | BARTLETT EC

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Way Salty

The folks in Grand Saline, between Dallas and Longview near Interstate 20, are about as close to being salt of the earth as you can get. The small town sits atop the largest salt mine in Texas, 3.75 miles wide and 20,000 feet deep.

Owned by Morton Salt and the little girl with an umbrella, it's said that Grand Saline's mine contains enough salt to meet the world's needs for the next 20,000 years. The word saline (pronounced SAY-leen) actually means "containing salt," so Grand Saline (suh-LEEN) is quite fitting. Many homes and businesses in the outlying areas are members of Wood County Electric Cooperative.

The main attraction in the town with a little more than 3,000 people is Salt Palace, a building constructed using salt blocks. Built in 1993, this is the third Salt Palace in the town. The previous two succumbed to the weather. (Everyone knows what happens when you mix salt and water.)



HOUSTON: JOHN MARGESON. RAYBURN: RICHARD BARTHOLOMEW. SALT SHAKER: VIFI | BIGSTOCK



Houston Is Good Career Move

The largest city in Texas is also the best place to look for a career in the United States. According to PayScale.com, a website that analyzes salary data, Houston ranks first among Best Cities for Your Career in 2013.

Houston tied the second-place city, Dallas, in unemployment rate at 6.9 percent but posted a higher wage growth margin at 3.9 percent. Its major oil and gas industry and leadership in the medical field helped solidify the top spot.

PayScale factored wage growth within metro areas and analyzed the oil and gas, technology, and biomedical industries, which all are growing, to determine which cities' workforces would have the most opportunity and financial success.

Katie Bardaro, director of analytics at PayScale said, "All three industries are experiencing increased demand for their products and services, which means they are hiring and paying accordingly."



ON THIS DATE

Sam Rayburn

One hundred years ago April 7, Sam Rayburn of Bonham took his oath of office as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives. In 1940, Rayburn became speaker of the House, a position he held for a record 17 years. At the time of his death in 1961, he was the longest-serving member in House history—48 years. (John Dingell of Michigan, who has been in the House since 1955, now holds the record.) Rayburn served in Washington with eight presidents.

WHO KNEW?

Congrats! It's a Girl

Angelina County, seated in Lufkin, is the only one of the state's 254 counties named after a woman—a girl, really. Each of the other 253 counties is named for a man or a geographical landmark. Angelina was a Hainai Indian girl who welcomed the first Spanish explorers and priests to East Texas in 1690. They called her Angelina—"Little Angel"—and she adopted the name. Angelina National Forest and the Angelina River also bear her name. Houston County, Jasper-Newton and Sam Houston electric cooperatives have members in Angelina County.

HAPPENINGS

Feeling Cooped Up?

Head 50 Miles North of College Station to Marquez

The small town of Marquez boasts many a chicken farmer, and raising chickens isn't easy. You have to think outside the bawks. So the locals at the Chamber of Commerce hatched a plan. And, they've got one question: Ready to have a hensane good time? Head on out April 6 for the inaugural Wing Ding Festival. This free event, from 9 a.m. till midnight, features a wing cook-off, a wing sauce competition and, for a \$20 entry fee, a hot wing eating contest. Work off those wings with a 5K run. There also will be arts and crafts, antiques, and food booths for those looking to spread a little chicken feed. And be sure to shake your tail feathers as the evening wraps up with a street dance.

FOR INFO: (903) 529-1419, MARQUEZTEXAS.COM



Find more happenings all across the state at TexasCoopPower.com

12,500

That's the size, in surface acres, of Sam Rayburn Reservoir, according to the Texas Almanac, making it the largest lake that is contained totally in Texas. Amistad Reservoir along the border with Mexico and Toledo Bend Reservoir along the Louisiana border are the only lakes with shorelines in Texas that are larger than Sam Rayburn. Sam Rayburn was formed by damming the Angelina River in 1965. At the start of construction, the project was known as McGee Bend Dam and Reservoir, but it was renamed for the Texas congressman in 1963.

Change Your Perspective

Break out of your cocoon and get close-up looks at other parts of the state, starting with these three destinations

BOQUILLAS CANYON



BOQUILLAS CANYON

Our Curving, Carving Border

**KAYAKERS VENTURE DOWN
THE RIO GRANDE, WHERE THE WORLD
SHRINKS INTO BOQUILLAS CANYON**

WHEN HERB NORDMEYER GOES ON VACATION, he packs light, depends only on satellite, and then slides off the map. In early autumn, the 71-year-old kayaking guide embarks on a three-day paddling trip through Boquillas Canyon on the Rio Grande, the wild and scenic river that forms the slippery boundary between Texas and Mexico. For his 33-mile journey, Nordmeyer has invited two close friends—experienced kayakers Curt Pearson and Christie Smith. And me.

On the first day, I, in a 14-foot kayak, am first on the water at Rio Grande Village Campground in Big Bend National Park and promptly get stuck on a rock. I get unstuck only to plow into a tangle of giant reeds curving over the river at the first rapid.

The water is flowing a low 75 cubic feet per second, carving an unpredictable course of narrow rapids, slow-moving pools and sandbars through the Chihuahuan Desert. This is our route, and now that we've begun, the only way out is to finish the trip near La Linda, Mexico, at Heath Canyon Ranch, the major take-out point between the river's remote Upper and Lower canyons. Next exit after that: 84 miles downstream.

For most of the first day, we four row under a cloudy sky and into the wind—and into whitecaps. With Texas on our left, Mexico on our right, we alternately walk sandbars—pulling our boats—and run gentle rapids under the wary gaze of stray horses and wild donkeys.

About five miles in, what had looked like a mere mountain from a distance now opens to the Rio Grande—the entrance to Boquillas Canyon. Centuries of strata and sediment of the Sierra del Caballo Muerto,



While the majesty of Boquillas Canyon is indescribable, a waterproof field notebook is a great way to record the sites and sounds encountered during a kayaking trip. On the final day, Herb Nordmeyer, left in the snapshot, and Curt Pearson relished a leisurely morning on the shore of the Rio Grande—until the group saw bear tracks in the mud.

BOQUILLAS CANYON: LAURENCE PARENT, KAYAKS: SUZANNE HABERMAN, NOTEBOOK: RITE IN THE RAIN

a subrange of the desert's sweeping Sierra del Carmen, roll into the river on the Texas side. On the other, a limestone cliff with a teardrop-shaped cave rises from the water.

"Scenes like this," Pearson says. "God knew what he was doing when he created this stuff."

That night, we camp at about mile seven on a sandbar of cracked mud. The wind howls through the canyon with gusts that flatten our tents against our heads as we sleep.

Before launching on the second day, Nordmeyer asks if I'd been cold. "Because I have a tablecloth," he announces, explaining that I should drape the blue plaid vinyl over my lap to keep dry. It's tacky and smells like onion, but I'm warm.

As the morning sun highlights the tops of the canyon walls, some of which reach up nearly a quarter mile, we take in the desert around us—whirlwinds of yellow butterflies, mud nests of swallows on limestone overhangs, tree tobacco, salt cedar, prickly pear.

Around mile 15, the current babbles against the Mexican shore, through thorny brush and under a bluff. Pearson flies beautifully around the curve but grazes a rock, turns sideways and rolls. His head disappears under the sit-inside kayak.

Smith, upstream, blows the shrill whistle attached to her lifejacket, and Nordmeyer prepares for a swift-water rescue. But Pearson surfaces and drifts to shore. "This river keeps you humble," he says.

At about mile 18, we come to another rapid, a series of S-shaped curves. There, I notice donkeys saddled with blankets roaming on the beach to my right, lead ropes dangling. Another curve, and about 20 animals stand saddled and ready. Not a person in sight.

A mile later, we hear dogs barking—and men yelling. Rounding a turn, two dogs burst from the reeds on the shore, nipping at the heels of wild donkeys. Two men follow on foot, cheering aloud at the burros they've herded from the canyon.

That evening, we camp on a sand shelf at mile 20 opposite a sheer cliff over which the full moon rises. Next morning, tracks in the mud suggest a Mexican black bear strolled by our tents during the night.

On the third day, we glide out of the mouth of Boquillas Canyon and sail into open desert—scrubby, sandy, sallow.

Here, the water is wide and reflects the peaks of two of Mexico's distant mountains. The sun is warm, and I tuck away my tablecloth.

Sensing the end of our journey, I brush my fingers against the last low limestone cliff and look back over my shoulder toward the mouth of Boquillas Canyon, now out of sight, as though the mountain closed up behind us.

Suzanne Haberman, *staff writer*

On TexasCoopPower.com

A longer version of this story, tips for making such a trip, plus a video and more photos.

MISSION

Grand Central Station for Butterflies

MIGRATION MOVES HUNDREDS OF SPECIES THROUGH VALLEY TOWN (PLUS CLOSE-UP LOOKS AT CREEPY CRAWLERS CAN AROUSE THE BUTTERFLIES IN YOUR BELLY)

THE RIO GRANDE VALLEY SITS AT AN ECOLOGICAL crossroads where the Gulf Coast, Great Plains, Chihuahuan Desert and a subtropical climate converge. It is a

mecca for birders and butterfly watchers alike. They flock to destinations like the National Butterfly Center and Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park in Mission with hopes of spotting a new species. The two destinations are part of a major bird (and bug) migration corridor. As Max Muñoz, grounds manager for the NBC told me, South Texas is a funnel: They all have to come through here.

I purposely wore a light color in hopes that many butterflies would choose to light on me, but those hopes were dashed when I arrived at the NBC and learned that because of the cool, gray skies, I'd likely see much of nothing.

After seeing only queens and a few monarchs, I made my way up to Muñoz, and voiced my disappointment. After a crash course in lepidopterology, Muñoz urged me to come back on a sunny day. The NBC caters to many of the fluttering creatures including those that like nectar



NATIONAL BUTTERFLY CENTER



The National Butterfly Center in Mission is a part of the gateway into and out of Texas for migrating insects, which gives visitors a great chance to study up close some of the 100 species of butterflies that could be flitting about.

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(with flowering plants), sap (lots of trees) and rotting fruit (logs filled with overripe bananas, imported beer because it isn't pasteurized and brown sugar).

"That's why you'll find so many species here every day, except for today," Muñoz said. "Today, you may see 10 to 15 different species. On a sunny day? Up to 100. They have to have sun to warm and dry their wings before they take flight."

About 210 butterfly species have been recorded at the NBC, and a handful of them were recorded for the first time in Texas. Next trip, I'm checking the weather and won't be excited (like I was this time) when the forecast calls for gray skies.

Just a stone's throw from the butterfly center sits Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park. I visited in the evening for the Creatures of the Night tram ride, where Javier de Leon, park biologist, and park host Bill Winchester took about 20 of us into the depths of the park to look for nocturnal creatures.

The tram took off at sunset, a special time of day, de Leon said, because that's when the crepuscular animals—those

that are active during dawn and dusk—make their appearance. As we pulled into the park, de Leon imitated—perfectly—the screech owl and the common nighthawk, two birds that like to come out at night. Seconds after he did that, several owls voiced their presence. *Whooo! Whooo!* After a brief conversation with the birds, we were on our way.

We came to a quiet stop near the resaca in the center of the park to hunt for bats. The cool night air hummed with the sound of a million crickets. "Good sign," de Leon said. "Insects mean food. And food means animals."

After bat hunting proved to be mildly successful (we heard a few on de Leon's ultrasonic bat detector), we went on a short hike. And then he said it: "I'm going to teach you guys how to hunt for spiders."

Surely at that moment everyone heard my stomach drop to my knees, which buckled. "I can't think of anything that would thrill me less," I managed to whisper.

Throughout the evening, de Leon had been shining his flashlight down the roads and into the trees, looking for "eye

BENTSEN-RIO GRANDE VALLEY STATE PARK



During the day, visitors to Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park can enjoy one of the best bird-watching experiences in the world. Bicycles and binoculars are available for rent. After sundown, park biologists are thrilled to shed some light on the night critters that lurk about.

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shine,” which would signal a nearby critter. You can tell a critter by the color of its eye shine, de Leon said, and spiders had an eye shine, too.

“Here, take my flashlight,” he said, handing me the behemoth beam. “Hold it up to your temple, and shine it over the grass.”

A bit trepidatiously, I obliged. And there they were, dozens of creepy little green diamonds in the weeds. And interestingly enough, I wasn’t scared. I was exhilarated. What else could we find? Well, scorpions love trees, apparently.

“Take a look at this,” de Leon said, directing our attention to the ground with a black light. And there it was, glowing in its venom-tastic glory. (Yep. Scorpions glow an unnatural neon blue under a black light.) Awesome.

While the trek ended up being a “slow evening,” we did catch a few raccoons raiding a bird feeder and a couple of Eastern cottontails hopping along the roadway. We heard a chorus of excited coyotes that sounded like they had a successful hunt. And at the end of the night, I further erased my fear of all things crawly and let a walking stick amble up my arm.

Ashley Clary-Carpenter, *field editor*

IF YOU GO

National Butterfly Center: (956) 583-5400; nationalbutterflycenter.org.

Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park: (956) 584-9156; tpwd.state.tx.us/stateparks/bentsen-rio-grande-valley.

Where to stay: El Rocio Retreat is only three miles from both attractions; (956) 584-7432, elrocio retreat.com

UTOPIA

Rugged, Refined and Totally Texas

PLENTY TO SEE AND DO IN THIS PART OF THE HILL COUNTRY—WHETHER YOU’RE ON FOOT, HORSEBACK OR MOTORCYCLE

LOCATED ABOUT AN HOUR AND A HALF west of San Antonio, Utopia is paradise for those wanting to enjoy the outdoors but not quite wanting to rough it. Let’s leave out the “quite.” Ain’t nothin’ like a gourmet meal and a comfy bed after a day of hiking or kayaking.

Once my friends and I booked a cabin at horse-friendly Farhaven, a B&B (bed and barn—no breakfast!) outside Utopia,

we loaded up food to grill. A feast of veggies awaited us in Farhaven’s garden. Proprietors Mark Hall and Nancy Rinn share seasonal organic produce with their guests. No cellophane here, just veggies straight from the garden. We used the provided grill to prepare a super-fresh, super-easy, super-healthy meal of fish, mounds of fresh asparagus, baby carrots and chard. Superb.

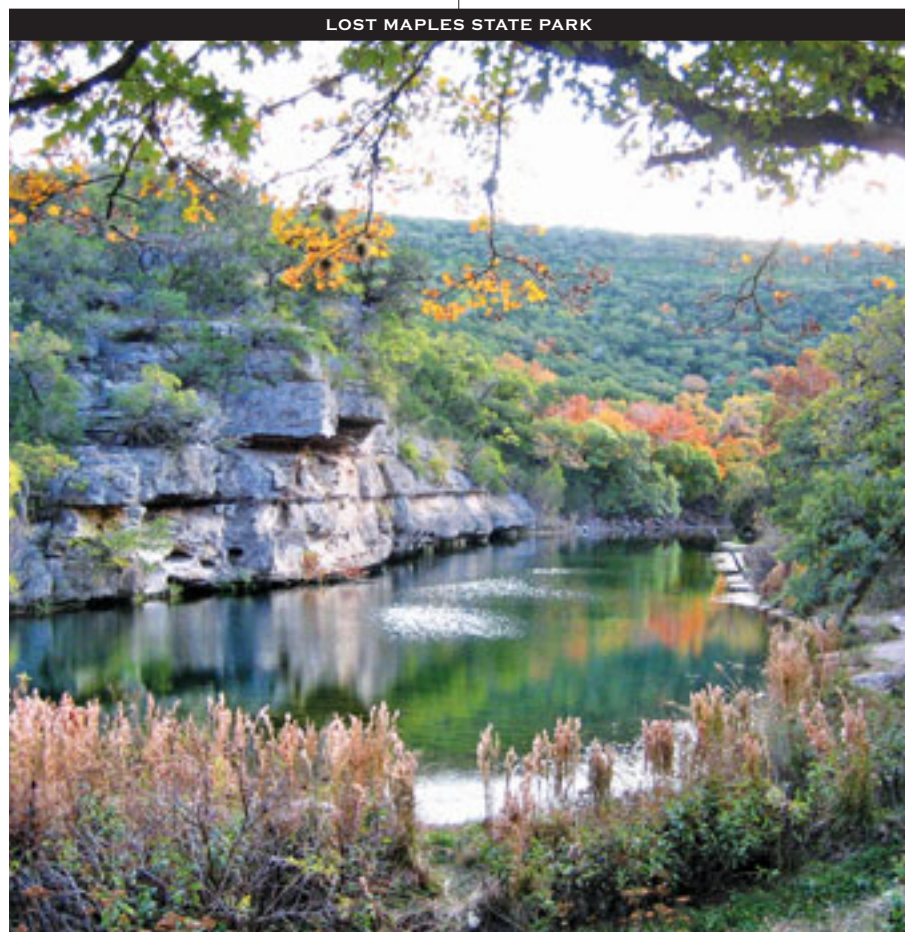
The next morning found us heading out to Lost Maples State Natural Area for a leisurely hike. Please note: We opted for the leisurely hike, but the state park does have hikes for the more adventurous. Camping, picnicking, photography, swimming and bird-watching are enjoyed here by visitors from all over the world. We shared part of our hike with students from Malaysia and two Korean sisters who, by the way, powered on ahead to the rockier, steeper trail and left us in the dust. Pick up a trail map and talk to the park rangers for an idea of what you want to tackle.

The stunning limestone canyons and clear, aqua waters of the Sabinal River

can be enjoyed by everyone, as parts of the park are wheelchair accessible. Keep your eyes open and you might get to see the rare green kingfisher. Easier to spot are the maples, madrones, agaritas, native grasses and the wildflowers, all obligingly posing for their close-ups right along the well-marked trails. Tip: Book early if you want to see fall color.

Our hosts at Farhaven suggested we stop at the Lone Star Motorcycle Museum in Vanderpool to try an Aussie burger at the Ace Café in the museum. Good tip! The large, juicy burgers topped with grilled tomatoes and onions disappeared in the blink of an eye. We barely glanced at the vintage motorcycles as we did not pay the museum fee. Gotta admit, though, I took a couple of peeks. Beautifully restored motorcycles from around the world, dating back to as early as 1910.

A slow and meandering tour of Utopia led us to the picture-perfect, old-fashioned Utopia Park. The cool, clear river lined with ancient cypress trees—even a rope swing—is what a swimming hole should be. Additional classic park accoutrements



The allures of Utopia and the surrounding area are many. Lost Maples State Natural Area is known for its stunning fall colors, but even dressed in green, it’s a sight to behold.

LOST MAPLES: BRUCE LEMONS




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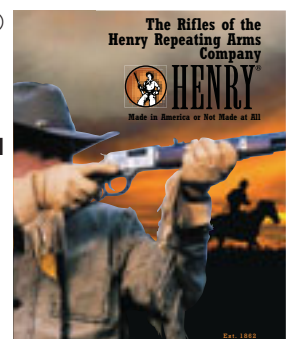
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Fresh asparagus from the garden at Farhaven added to a self-grilled meal. A five-course meal at the Laurel Tree will dazzle your palate much the same way the welcome mat of poppies will your eyes.

include an outdoor dance area (where the dance scene for “Seven Days in Utopia” was filmed) and screened cabanas with grills.

We enjoyed the rugged and rambunctious. Next, for a taste of the refined, we took our hungry selves to the Laurel Tree, where reservations are recommended. Just a couple of miles outside Utopia and set among huge oaks and gardens, the Laurel Tree serves Saturday lunch and dinner using fresh, seasonal herbs and vegetables, many from its own gardens. The five-course meal (\$39), prepared under the supervision of Laurel Waters, was love at the first bite of the goat cheese-stuffed pepper, right on through to a tiramisu with raspberries and strawberries, garnished with mint.

Hiking one of Texas’ premier parks followed by Cordon Bleu-inspired Texas fare. How perfect is that? Or should I say: How Utopian?

Suzi Sands, art director

IF YOU GO

Guide to Utopia: Information on area activities, including bat-watching, kayaking on the Frio River and the big tree tour at utopiatexas.info

LAUREL TREE: HATTIE BARHAM. ASPARAGUS: SUZI SANDS

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Backyard Paydirt



*Composting at home doesn't have to be complicated,
and it's great for plants, your wallet and the planet*

BY MELISSA GASKILL • ILLUSTRATIONS BY EDD PATTON

MADE IN PILE, HOLE, BIN OR BARREL, compost might be the garden ingredient that puts the “beef” in a beefsteak tomato, the green in the collard or the snap in a pea.

And all it takes to make compost—converting food scraps and yard materials into rich, healthy soil—is a small space in the yard or any one of the many types of manufactured composting bins—plus a little effort on your part.

Soil made from composting has many advantages over the soil in your garden or yard that might be depleted of nutrients:

- You'll water less—a nice benefit in the midst of drought—because compost

absorbs and retains moisture.

- You'll use less fertilizer because compost is rich in nutrients.

- Compost improves the structure of heavy clay soils as well as loose sandy soils.

- It makes plants healthier and therefore more resistant to disease and pests, reducing the need for herbicides and pesticides.

- Less watering, fertilizing and treating saves money.

Between 15 and 20 percent of the food supply in this country ends up in the household garbage can, according to Natural Resources Defense Council scientist

Dana Gunders. That adds up to the equivalent of \$2,275 a year for a family of four, plus the cost of energy and water used to produce, transport and prepare that food.

Food waste is the largest component of solid waste in landfills, Gunders says. There, it gets buried and breaks down mostly without oxygen to account for 23 percent of all U.S. emissions of methane, a greenhouse gas about 20 times more potent than carbon dioxide. In a compost pile, by contrast, food decomposes using oxygen, producing far less methane.

Composting reduces household trash volume, which could eventually mean fewer garbage trucks hauling to the land-

fill, lowering fuel use and emissions. A typical trash truck consumes about 9,000 gallons of diesel fuel per year, according to the Solid Waste Association of North America. Suzanne Pundt, a biology instructor at The University of Texas at Tyler who started composting because she loves to garden, cut her household trash volume more than three-quarters.

Texans send 5 million-plus tons of organic yard materials to landfills each year, too, paying roughly \$3 million for



the privilege, according to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality.

Bin or Barrel

ALTHOUGH ALL THAT'S REALLY NEEDED to begin composting is a corner of the

yard where you dispose of kitchen and yard waste in a pile or hole, Pundt chose a rotating barrel-style bin with an aeration system. "I wanted to be able to turn it easily, and I discovered that aeration helps the process go faster, so I wanted a system to do that," she says. Alternately, McAllen resident and composter Nancy Millar makes compost for her lush tropical landscaping in a standing commercial bin because it takes up little space and isn't noticeable.

A kitchen container to hold materials until you're ready to take them outside comes in handy. This can be a jar or bucket, or something made specifically for collecting compost—anything large enough to hold at least a meal's worth of scraps but small enough to keep handy. It should also be easy to clean and have a lid.

The Right Mix

LOU KELLOGG, A MASTER GARDENER AND compost specialist with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in Bexar County, says the proper balance of nitrogen, or "green" units, and carbon, or "brown" ones, is key. This is where most efforts go wrong, he adds.

A good rule of thumb is about one-third green and two-thirds brown by volume. Green, nitrogen-rich items include grass clippings and food scraps. Brown, high-carbon items include dry leaves, newspaper and cardboard. (See sidebar.)

Certain materials don't lend themselves to compost. Meat, fish and dairy products will compost but also, unfortunately, attract critters. Weeds or invasive plants in your compost could spread their undesirable seeds, and most hay contains



a weed killer that passes through horses unscathed, so hay in your compost could kill the plants on which you use it. Cow and chicken manure are OK, but cat and dog waste contain harmful pathogens. Nonbiodegradable materials such as plastic and metal won't break down.

The right amount of moisture is also important: Too much can create odor, so compost that smells probably needs more brown units; too little moisture slows down composting. Pundt fills her bin with dry leaves, adds water to moisten, then regularly adds vegetable matter from the kitchen. "I take the lid off and eyeball it. It needs to be nice and moist, not sloppy wet, but not too dry."

The microorganisms that break down

Recipe for Compost

- **Container:** An open box or closed bin or barrel. It needs to be a minimum 3 and maximum 5 feet across, says Lou Kellogg, a master gardener and compost specialist with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in Bexar County.

- **Ingredients:** A mix of one-third nitrogen, or "green" units, and two-thirds carbon, or "brown" ones. Green items include grass clippings and food scraps such as apple cores, banana peels, spoiled vegetables and fruits, crushed eggshells, bread, pasta, cereal, cookies, and nuts. Brown items include dry leaves,

branches, dead flowers, toothpicks, paper bags and napkins, tea bags, coffee grounds, newspaper, shredded paper, lint, cotton balls, wool, and cardboard, including torn-up pizza boxes.

- **No-nos:** Don't put these things in your bin: meat, fish, dairy products, weeds, invasive plants, horse manure, cat or dog waste, glossy paper or nonbiodegradable materials such as plastic and metal.

- **Microbes:** These can come from a commercial starter or simply a scoop of existing compost or healthy soil.

- **Moisture:** Too much moisture can create

odor; too little slows down the process. If liquid leaks out of your container, mix in dry items such as dead leaves or paper. If scraps are still recognizable after a few weeks, add water. The pile should be moist but not wet.

- **Turning:** Turning isn't necessary but speeds up the process, aerating compost and keeping the pile from compacting. Turn when the compost is at 140 to 160 degrees (as measured by a compost thermometer), or about once a week to make useable compost in about three months, or every other week for compost in four to six months.

materials and create new soil need plenty of surface area, so it helps to cut, break or shred components from the house or the yard before putting them in.



Pests

THOSE NEW TO COMPOSTING OFTEN worry about insects and other pests, but experts say that if you do things right, compost won't attract any more pests

than a typical yard or garden.

Burying food scraps under a layer of brown material (dry leaves or paper) and keeping the pile moist but not wet helps keep undesirable insects out of the bin. Turning the compost to create higher temperatures also kills fly larvae and weed seeds. A bin with a lid and bottom helps cut down on larger pests, such as opossums or raccoons.

Turn on the Heat

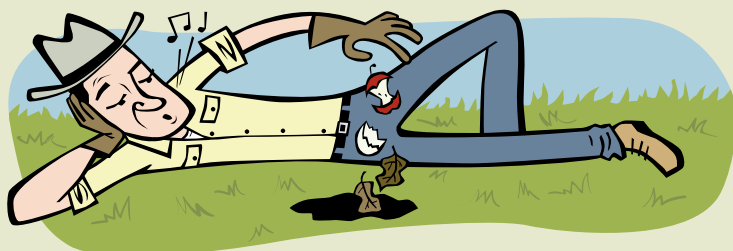
TURNING COMPOST ISN'T NECESSARY, BUT it adds air, breaks up clumps, and redistributes moisture and heat, a natural byproduct of organic decomposition. Methods for turning depend on the type of composting system you're using—a shovel, pitchfork or rake works for a pile, while some manufactured units have built-in mechanisms to rotate the compost.

The best time to turn, Kellogg says, is when the compost is 140 to 160 degrees. You can measure this with a compost thermometer, available at many gardening supply stores. Or you can turn about once a week, says Daniela Ochoa Gonzalez, a planner with Austin's Resource Recovery Department. Turning more than once a week disturbs the microorganisms and disrupts the process. If you

don't turn your compost at all, it will still compost, but it takes longer.

"I know you're supposed to turn your compost, but Mother Earth doesn't, so we just let it do its thing," Millar says.

Finished compost is dark brown or black, has a crumbly texture and smells earthy. Have realistic expectations about how long compost takes and its appearance, says longtime home composter Kim Cook, who owns Exaco, an Austin-based company that sells compost bins and col-



Dig, Drop and Done

Composting doesn't get any easier than this

I would love to have a real compost pile. But, like so many people, I feel pressed for time and am reluctant to take on new projects.

However, I have started doing something really, really simple: I dig a small hole, throw my food scraps in and then fill the hole in with dirt. I call it hole-istic gardening.

After all, how many of us remember the story of the Native American Squanto showing the newly arrived Pilgrims how to plant? Remember him putting the fish in the bottom of the hole dug for the corn? That is it.

Save kitchen scraps such as fruit and vegetable peels, coffee grounds and eggshells, dig a hole about 12 inches deep, dump in the kitchen waste (no meat, grease or cheese, please) and then cover. You are done. All you have to do is wait one to six months for Mother Nature to do her job. Smaller chunks mean faster composting.

It's cheap, easy, fast and fun, especially when one starts eating the results of a fertile garden.

Suzi Sands, art director

lectors. "Don't be disappointed if it doesn't look like the bags of compost you buy, which are manufactured," she says.

Compost is most effective when used within six months, says Kellogg. When planting a garden, mix 1 to 2 inches of compost into the top 6 inches of soil. Sprinkle a one-quarter- to one-half-inch layer of compost on an established lawn or garden, and water. You can also use compost as one-third of a potting soil mix. The organic content of composted soil also provides nutrients for beneficial microbes and worms, which in turn make your garden even healthier.

Compost fans say the practice can take a little getting used to, but the end result—healthier plants and a healthier planet—make it well worth the effort.

Melissa Gaskill, frequent contributor

On TexasCoopPower.com

More composting tips, including:

- Dealing with fruit flies
- Online resources to help you get started

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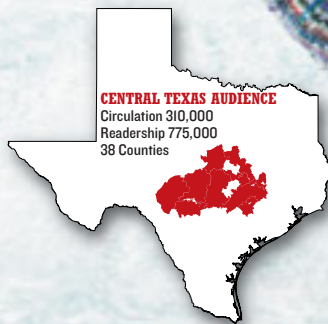
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Pet-Proof Your Home

Keep your household pets safe from the dangers of electricity



Curious kittens may not be very discerning when it comes to mice. Protect them by taking electric safety precautions in your home.

Puppies and kittens are cute and curious. The cute part can sometimes keep them from getting into trouble, like when they start chewing on a shoe.

But cute won't help them if they begin to chew on or play with electrical equipment—doing that can put your pet in serious danger of injury or death and create a shock or fire hazard in the home. Spending a little time pet-proofing your home will help you avoid a pet-related accident.

- ▶ Make sure all plugs are inserted completely into their wall sockets. Small paws, noses and tongues can easily find their way onto the partially exposed prongs. Outlet protectors designed to protect children can also help with curious pets.

- ▶ If your pet demonstrates an interest in electrical cords, check the cords frequently for signs of fraying and replace any damaged cords immediately. If you must leave your pet unsupervised, make sure any loose electrical cords are unplugged or tucked out of sight. If your pet continues to seek them out, coat the cords with bitter-tasting pet deterrent. If that fails, you can wrap the cords in flexible cable or encase them in PVC. Some stores also offer pet-proof cords that serve the same purpose.

- ▶ Appliances near sinks and bathtubs should only be plugged into outlets equipped with ground-fault circuit interrupters in case an electrical appliance is knocked into the water. If your cat enjoys playing in the sink, make sure no electrical appliances (like radios or curling irons) are left

unattended on the bathroom counter.

- ▶ Lamps with exposed bulbs—especially halogens—can reach very high temperatures. Do not allow pets to play near lamps. If the lamp is knocked over, a fire could break out.

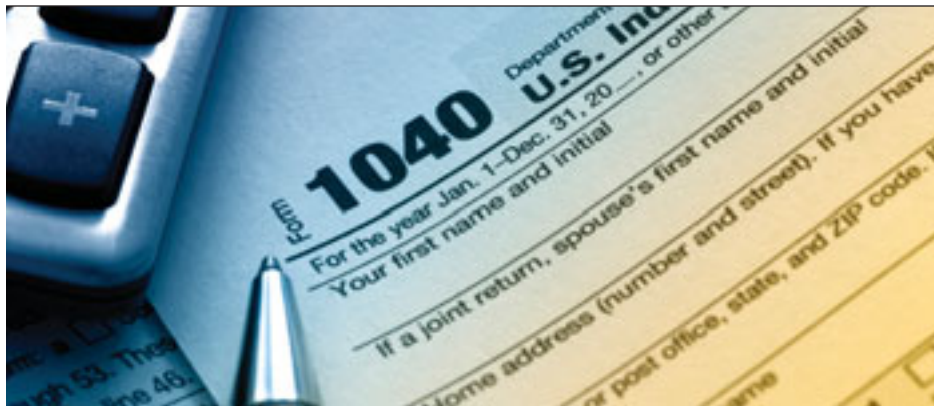
- ▶ Some pets, especially cats, seek out warm, secluded spots in the home. Do not allow your pet to hide or sleep behind your computer or TV where numerous electrical connections are housed.

- ▶ If you have an aquarium, make sure you arrange the cords so they hang down well below the outlet before running back up again to create a drip loop on every electrical cord that enters the tank. This will prevent water from running down the cord and into the electrical outlet. To be sure the cord stays looped, stick a cord clip on the wall just below the outlet and thread the cord into the clip.

- ▶ If you have a fenced, outdoor area for your dog, be mindful of any underground electrical or cable lines running through that area. Make sure the lines are buried at appropriate depths, especially if your dog likes to dig. In the event of an electrical storm, bring all pets indoors immediately.

- ▶ If you think your pet may have suffered an electrical shock, approach it with caution to keep from being injured by the same electrical danger and from being bitten. Inspect the animal for injuries and get your pet to an animal care center as soon as possible.

Source: Safe Electricity



Comeback for Energy Tax Credits

Feds revive incentives for efficient home upgrades

BY MEGAN MCKOY-NOE

Ready to boost your home's energy efficiency without breaking the bank? The American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012 revived energy-efficiency tax credits to the tune of \$500.

The credit offsets the cost of upgrades such as super-efficient water heaters and heat pumps, central air conditioners, building insulation, windows and roofs.

This marks the third extension of the incentive initiated by the federal Energy Policy Act of 2005. The last round expired in 2011; the new legislation covers 2012 upgrades along with projects undertaken in 2013. If you've already received an energy tax credit, you may not qualify as there's a lifetime cap of \$500.

Go to energystar.gov/taxcredits for full details on qualifying upgrades and individual caps. Here are highlights of the tax savings available:

Insulating Factors

Recoup up to 10 percent of the cost of upgrading a home's envelope. Labor costs are not covered. Eligible upgrades are:

- ▶ Insulation materials and exterior doors
- ▶ Systems designed to reduce a home's heat loss/gain
- ▶ Skylights and windows (\$200 maximum for upgrades between 2006-13)
- ▶ Qualifying metal or asphalt roofs

Heating and Cooling

Replacing your home's heating or cooling system? You could qualify for a tax credit ranging from \$50 to \$500 for units put in place between January 1, 2012, and December 31, 2013. Eligible improvements are:

- ▶ Electric heat pump water heaters with an energy factor of at least 2.0 (\$300 cap)
- ▶ Advanced main air circulating fan (\$50 cap)
- ▶ Qualifying central air conditioner (\$300 cap)

Tax Credit Basics

Energy tax credits are nonrefundable—they can increase your refund by reducing the taxes you owe and can be carried forward to reduce taxes in following years.

File for energy tax credits with IRS Form 5695. Be sure to keep a Manufacturer Certification Statement (a signed statement from the manufacturer certifying that the product or component qualifies for the tax credit) for your records. Eligible upgrades must be made to a taxpayer's primary residence by December 31, 2013.

Megan McKay-Noe writes for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

Celebrate Earth Day!

The celebration of Earth Day on April 22 began in the United States in 1970. Here are some ways to mark the occasion:

- 1.** Plant trees. As the date roughly coincides with Arbor Day, over time Earth Day has taken on the role of tree-planting. Just be sure to plant far enough away from overhead power lines.
- 2.** Make nature crafts at home or school, such as a birdhouse or feeder.
- 3.** Learn more about the environment and how you can help protect it. Or learn about a region you've never considered before, such as the poles, deserts or rain forests.
- 4.** Reduce, reuse and recycle all year long. Buy as little as possible and avoid items that come in lots of packaging.



Recycling is a great way to celebrate Earth Day every day of the year.

- 5.** Hold a garage sale or donate or reuse old household items.
- 6.** Clean up litter.
- 7.** Hold an Earth Day fair. Things to do can include demonstrations of environmentally friendly products, children's art-work and healthy or locally grown foods.
- 8.** Buy or make Earth-friendly cleaning products. A simple vinegar and water solution can clean counters, and orange-based cleaners are much less toxic than bleach-based ones.
- 9.** Cook a special Earth Day meal that includes locally produced foods, is healthy and has minimal impact on the environment.
- 10.** Park your car and ride your bike.

Looking Back While Heading West



In the face of a dramatic move to the American League, Astros cling to snippets of the past

BY RACHEL FREY

WHEN THE HOUSTON ASTROS TAKE THE field this month, Texans will hardly be able to recognize anything about the baseball organization. Even their well-established rivalries will cease to exist.

With new coaches, new team colors and redesigned uniforms, there will be changes aplenty for the Astros during Jim Crane's second year of ownership. The most significant, though, is the team's move to the American League, a relatively rare realignment in Major League Baseball that thrusts the Astros into division rivalries with mostly West Coast teams.

Think Texas A&M leaving its state rivals behind to jump to the Southeastern Conference. In Houston's case, it means beating out Oakland, Seattle, the Los Angeles Angels and the Texas Rangers for playoff spots. Longtime rivals Cincinnati, St. Louis, Milwaukee, Pittsburgh and the Chicago Cubs become just occasional opponents.

This all came about during the sale of the Astros from Drayton McLane to Crane and his investor group. The deal, approved in November 2011, had a final price tag of \$610 million and one very important, unexpected provision: The Astros must move to the American League West Division.

"It was not something we had anticipated," Astros President and CEO George Postolos says. "We weren't on the inside yet. We were on the outside, trying to acquire a team, so we weren't privy to the deliberations within baseball about the best plan for realignment."

Crane resisted the move before finally

consenting, Postolos says. His efforts were not completely for naught—he received a \$70 million discount on the original sale price as compensation for the move.

After the sale, and into the 2012 season, the Astros celebrated 50 years of history as a franchise. All the while, the organization was also preparing for its future in a different league. This included rebranding the team. The color scheme returns to the orange and blue worn for much of the team's history, from its days as the Colt .45s (1962-64) until 1994. Many fans, such as Terri Schlather, are excited by this change.

"I never liked when the Astros brought red in, because so many baseball teams have red as part of their color scheme," Schlather says. "We would be at a game, and the Astros fans would be in red, and the Cardinals fans or the Reds fans were in red also, and there was no distinction of color."

The Astros held 30 meetings with season ticket-holders before the 2012 season, and Postolos says it was during those meetings that they realized fans identified more closely with the classic logo and colors.

"There were some consistent themes that came out of those conversations," Postolos says. "One of the themes was that people wanted a fresh start. We knew there were mixed emotions about the league change, so we needed to find a way to say 'We are going to keep as much as we can of the past that you like, but we are also going to turn the page and look forward to a bright future.'"

No matter how pleased fans are about the new look, many are still hesitant about changing leagues. The news felt like they were “punched in the gut,” as Schlather put it.

Pat Richter says his biggest complaint as a fan is the loss of longstanding rivalries and the history between the Astros and the National League teams they have played over the past five decades.

“I’ll watch them and I’ll go to games, because I’m an Astros fan, but I don’t have the calendar circled for the Royals to be in town in July, the way you would for the Cubs or the Dodgers or the Braves or the Mets,” Richter says.

One of the teams with which the Astros will build a new chapter in their history is the Rangers. This is the first time both of Texas’ Major League Baseball teams will compete in the same division. They square off in a three-game series in Houston to start the sea-

son. In all, they will play 19 games against each other instead of six, as in previous years.

“There are so many Texans who up until now have proclaimed themselves to be Astros fans and Rangers fans, and now we find out who their team really is,” Schlather says. “To me, that part is going to be fun. It’s going to draw the dividing line in Texas, which up until now, people have been able to play both sides.”

No matter how many changes occur, there is one big hurdle for the team with back-to-back seasons of 100-plus losses, and that is winning. Fans and team officials agree that getting the team to return to its winning ways is the most important matter at hand.

“We know that most of our fans are really looking forward to the time when we are beating people more often than not, and we are competing for titles and looking forward to a time when we can

win a World Series,” Postolos says. “Every decision we make now is with that goal in mind, and we are trying to lay the best foundation that we possibly can.”

Richter says that not only is winning important, but it also will determine the way future fans perceive this move.

“If they go into some long-term, Pittsburgh Pirates-like run where they are bad for 25 years, I think people, especially Astros fans, will look back and think it is the worst thing that ever happened,” Richter says. “I think the sooner they win, the better, from my attitude.”

Rachel Frey, an MLB.com correspondent, lives in Houston.

On TexasCoopPower.com

Fans have some input as new-look Astros revive old-look colors. Plus, a look back at the many looks Houston uniforms have had, starting with the Colt .45s.



CHANGES AHEAD The Houston MLB franchise entered the National League in 1962 as an expansion team called the Houston Colt .45s. After three seasons, they were renamed the Astros. From 1975-86, they wore their famous ‘rainbow’ uniforms—that’s fireballer Nolan Ryan above—unlike anything baseball had seen before. In 2000 they moved into a new downtown stadium. This season marks the biggest change yet: a move to the American League that will include redesigned uniforms, as modeled by second baseman Jose Altuve, left, and pitcher Lucas Harrell.

Hanging Out With Mom

Driven by wonderful memories of drying clothes the old-fashioned way, stopped by feelings of crossing the line

BY SUZANNE HABERMAN

GROWING UP IN A RURAL COMMUNITY, I thought everyone used clotheslines, as line-dried clothes were the norm for my family and many of our friends. But as an adult living with much closer neighbors who don't use clotheslines, I'm pinched between the practicality and stigma of using this seemingly outmoded practice.

I recently tried to string a retractable clothesline between two posts on my back porch. The weather had been hot and dry, and my memory and conscience told me not to waste power using the automatic dryer; air-drying would be more efficient.

But my attempt to affix the line failed after I discovered the posts weren't far enough apart to make the line taut. The idea of my wet clothes drooping on a loose line made me self-conscious—a feeling that grew when I realized my neighbors would have a direct view of the line from their front yard. I'm not in the jurisdiction of a homeowners association that might prohibit clotheslines, but I dreaded attracting enough dirty looks that I'd have to wash my clothes again.

I gave up on the clothesline and headed inside, scolding myself partly for a defective design but mostly for being embarrassed about using this energy-efficient drying method because of how it looks and what people would think. Worse than that, I felt like not using a clothesline was betraying my roots.

Acting before the contemporary “green” movement, my parents dried clothes on the line because it was sensible and economical—drying power from

the sun was a free and abundant resource. I remember Mom saying she probably saved a quarter for each load she didn't put in the dryer. So nearly every week of my childhood, I'd hang out with Mom while she hauled wet laundry in a hamper—a collapsible metal frame on wheels with a hand-sewn denim basket—out to what I now realize was the mother of all clotheslines.

On the sunny south side of the house, five lines of strong, twisted galvanized wire ran between 5-foot-wide crosspieces welded onto two vertical steel pipes mounted in concrete 18 feet apart. The design provided around 90 feet of clothesline.

For a long time, the clothes washer and dryer (we had one, but I don't remember using it much) occupied a small building separate from the main house and next to the well house, close to the clothesline. Even after moving the machines inside, Mom made the trek outside to hang up clothes.

The task made Mom's arms strong, and when she came in from the line and hugged me, her skin was warm from the sun.

Not even winter daunted her from her mission to dry clothes without an automatic dryer. One frosty day, Mom fetched the jeans from the line to find the wicked wind had frozen them stiff. So she brought them in and draped them over bedroom doors.

In spring, our cottonwood trees pollenated and sent white seed puffs floating through the air like snowflakes. They'd



go up your nose when you inhaled or land in your eyes before you could blink. But that didn't stop Mom. When she went outside, she donned a straw hat swathed with white tulle, beekeeper style.

Besides providing a practical way to dry clothes, the clothesline was, to me, a child's wonderland. Below it, I'd amuse myself by pulling lamb's-quarter greens out of the sandy soil to marvel at their roots and bite the small, spinach-like leaves. I'd tickle the sides of tiny funnel-shaped pits of antlion larvae in the dirt and then try to catch the doodlebugs. The poles were like a jungle gym, and I'd twirl around them until their silver paint rubbed off onto my palms, like the Tin Man's hands.

One time when the sheets were hanging out to dry, I rearranged them to form the vertical sides of a rectangular prism, carefully folding the edges over the line and pinching them with wooden clothespins to secure all four sides around me.

Then I stood in the center and looked

up at my swatch of sky—so indefinite, so indigo. A white flat sheet with pink daisies billowed in the breeze, forming a belly, damp and cold, that pressed on my cheek. The wind filled the sails of my imagination, and I believed I was on the leeward side of a ship, embarking into unknown oceans but certain adventure.

As I got older, I helped hang up clothes and learned the tricks to making line drying more effective. Hang shirts by the tails rather than the shoulders so the pin indentations don't show. Use just three clothespins to hang two shirts by making the center pin do double duty. Drape dried clothes over the edge of the basket—or better yet, fold them on the spot.

Because nearly everything washed in our house went out to the line, I figured scratchy towels, jeans so rigid they could stand up on their own and the occasional mud dauber, wasp or bee that accidentally got folded into clean clothes were just facts of laundry life.

I was pretty surprised when I spent

the night at a new friend's house and discovered that her towels were soft and smelled like dryer sheets instead of being scratchy and smelling like wind and minerals. When I got home, I asked my mom if we could make an exception for how we dried towels, but she just laughed and said to be grateful for the chance to exfoliate.

Remembering Mom's dedication to drying clothes outside—despite the labor, conditions or what anybody thought about scratchy towels—makes me realize it's time for me to give this proven laundry method a respectful effort. This time, I'll use a little more imagination to find the line between practicality and image by creating a sturdier design. And while I have the privilege to have a clothesline on my property, I won't flaunt it in my neighbors' view.

Once it's up, I know I'll think of the money I'm saving with every load I hang on the line. More than that, I'll think of my mom.

Suzanne Haberman, *staff writer*

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Clogged, Backed—up Septic System...Can anything Restore It?

DEAR DARRYL: My home is about 10 years old, and so is my septic system. I have always taken pride in keeping my home and property in top shape. In fact, my neighbors and I are always kidding each other about who keeps their home and yard nicest. Lately, however, I have had a horrible smell in my yard, and also in one of my bathrooms, coming from the shower drain. My grass is muddy and all the drains in my home are very slow.



Dear
Darryl

My wife is on my back to make the bathroom stop smelling and as you can imagine, my neighbors are having a field day, kidding me about the mud pit and sewage stench in my yard. It's humiliating. I called a plumber buddy of mine, who recommended pumping (and maybe even replacing) my septic system. But at the potential cost of thousands of dollars, I hate to explore that option.

I tried the store bought, so called, Septic treatments out there, and they did Nothing to clear up my problem. Is there anything on the market I can pour or flush into my system that will restore it to normal, and keep it maintained?

Clogged and Smelly – San Antonio, TX

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A Cowboy's Unusual Dental Work

The 101 Ranch, near Guthrie, Oklahoma, was a beehive of activity on June 11, 1905. Thousands of excited rodeo fans arrived on foot, in wagons or in smart buggies. Storm clouds threatening the afternoon's performance didn't dampen their enthusiasm. They came to see Bill Pickett—"the Dusky Demon from Texas"—the cowboy who could down a steer using only his hands and teeth.

BY LORI GROSSMAN

PICKETT GOT THIS IDEA WHEN, AS AN 11-year-old, he saw a cattle dog hold a cow motionless by biting down on its upper lip—a maneuver called bulldogging. Strangely enough, Pickett wanted to try it, so he approached a calf, grabbed its ears, chomped on its upper lip, let go of its ears and fell backward. Subdued by the pain, the dogie flopped over.

Richard Zelade's book *Central Texas* (Taylor Trade Publishing, 2011) recounts Pickett's first public bulldogging exhibition in Austin. Pickett, watching some Littlefield Cattle Company cowboys struggling with feisty calves, offered his newfound bite-'em technique. The cowboys stopped laughing when Pickett bit down on a calf's upper lip, immobilizing it while they applied the searing branding iron. The amazed cowboys spread the news across Austin.

It was a watershed moment for a son of former slaves. Willie M. "Bill" Pickett is believed to have been born on December 5, 1870, in Jenks-Branch Community in Williamson County—one of 13 children. He quit school at 15 and became a working cowboy on area ranches. In 1900, Pickett started entertaining at rodeos across the West.

Bulldogging was dangerous, but Pickett loved the applause. He hit the big time in 1903 when glib-tongued promoter Dave McClure billed him as "Bulldog Pickett: the Dusky Demon—the Most Daring Cowboy Alive!" The term "dusky" was intended to disguise Pickett's ethnicity whenever white cowboys shied from appearing on the same program as an African-American man. The spectators, however, didn't seem to mind.

In 1905, Pickett took another step on his path to fame when he met Zack Miller, who, with his brothers, owned the

101 Ranch. Miller hired him to appear in his June show. The extravaganza, described in Cecil Johnson's book *Guts: Legendary Black Rodeo Cowboy Bill Pickett* (Summit Publishing Group, 1994), also featured Geronimo shooting a buffalo from the back of a moving car and a frighteningly realistic attack on a wagon train. An estimated 60,000 spectators gave Pickett's bulldogging a roaring ovation. He was such a sensation that he signed on with the 101 Ranch Wild West Show in 1907.

After performing in Brownsville in 1908, the Millers took the show to Mexico City. Joe Miller started a war of words in the newspapers with some Mexican bullfighters who bragged that they could do whatever Pickett could. Joe Miller challenged them and questioned their bravery—partly to get publicity for the show. This insult to the national sport outraged the locals. Either Miller or the bullfighters (sources differ) bet 5,000 pesos over whether Pickett could stay in contact with a bull for five minutes.

And so in December 1908, Pickett entered the El Toro arena mounted on his beloved horse, Spradley. The bull, Frijoli Chiquita, turned so quickly that the horse couldn't get close enough unless Pickett could keep him from sidestepping. Spradley could not evade one of the bull's charges and was gored. Pickett dismounted and grabbed the bull's horns. He hung on more than five minutes, although the bull repeatedly slammed him against the wall and the crowd began pelting him with all sorts of objects—knives, fruit, rocks. An angry spectator threw a full beer bottle, hitting Pickett in the ribs and causing him to finally lose his grip.

After another cowboy lured Frijoli Chiquita away, Pickett hurried to his



Bill Pickett

badly injured horse. An elderly Mexican offered a strange cure: two red bananas. He peeled them and thrust them into the horse's gaping wounds. Surprisingly, Spradley healed quickly.

After World War I, the glory days of Wild West shows had passed. In 1931, the 101 show closed. Pickett died on April 2, 1932, after a horse kicked him in the head. The inventor of bulldogging was voted into the Rodeo Hall of Fame and, in 1989, was enshrined in the Pro Rodeo Hall of Fame.

Rodeos today feature an event called steer wrestling. A cowboy chases down a steer, jumps off his horse then wrestles the steer to the ground by twisting its horns.

Some call that bulldogging. But it's not the way the Dusky Demon used to do it. He would probably say that calling it bulldogging is just lip service.

Lori Grossman is a Dallas writer.

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I am an unapologetic turophile. For those of you who don't know, that means cheese-lover. I also love bacon. And I am definitely not alone with my enthusiasm for cured pork belly. And combining the two in one sandwich, for me, yields up some pretty tasty eating.

One of my favorite sandwiches, especially in the summer, is the humble BLT, or bacon, lettuce and tomato, the staple of many a diner menu. Just the thought of salty bacon, crunchy lettuce and garden-ripe tomatoes—with just a dab of creamy mayonnaise—is enough to set my salivary glands into overdrive.

But why stop there? I enjoy playing around with old favorites, seeing if I can introduce new flavors to keep things interesting. I made a BLT, substituting blue cheese salad dressing for the mayonnaise. That worked pretty well, but I like my cheese best when it's warm and melted.

So I worked on this recipe, the BBLT (blue cheese, bacon, lettuce and tomato). Now, this recipe is not low-calorie, so I wouldn't eat it every day. But as an occasional lunch or supper, I think it's worthwhile.

KEVIN HARGIS

BBLT Sandwiches

- 1 large, ripe tomato
- Salt
- 8 slices thick-cut bacon
- 2 ounces blue cheese (crumbles or thin slices)
- 4 slices sourdough bread
- 2 tablespoons mayonnaise
- 4 leaves romaine lettuce

- › Remove stem end from tomato and a thin slice off the bottom. Cut tomato into four equal slices and lay them on a paper towel-lined plate. Sprinkle all with a pinch of salt. (This will help flavor the tomato and remove excess water, which can make your sandwich soggy.)
- › Line a rimmed baking sheet with foil. Arrange bacon slices on sheet so they are not overlapping. Place in cold oven and set temperature to 400 degrees. Depending on how fast your oven heats, the bacon should be done about 20 minutes after you turn your oven on. The first time you do this, watch bacon carefully after about 15 minutes.
- › When bacon turns a nice golden brown, carefully remove baking sheet from oven, place bacon on another paper towel-lined plate and allow to cool slightly. Close oven door to preserve heat and turn oven off.
- › Drain grease off baking sheet. Arrange cooked bacon on foil in two groups of four parallel slices, about the same width as the bread. Place 1 ounce of blue cheese on each group and return sheet to hot oven.
- › Meanwhile, toast bread to your desired setting. Spread with about 1 tablespoon or more of mayonnaise and place a lettuce leaf on each slice.
- › When cheese has melted, remove baking sheet from oven. Using a spatula, slide each four-slice group onto a slice of bread. Top bacon with two slices of tomato, two lettuce leaves and the other slice of bread.
- › Slice in half on a diagonal and serve.

Servings: 2. Serving size: 1 sandwich. Per serving: 720 calories, 34.8 g protein, 26 g fat, 82.3 g carbohydrates, 5.3 g dietary fiber, 1,931 mg sodium, 7.4 g sugars, 60 mg cholesterol



Cook's Tip: You can cook a whole pound of bacon at a time with this oven method and save the extra for other uses. To ensure even cooking, make sure bacon slices are separated.

ALI ALLIE | COSERV ELECTRIC

Not all sandwiches come with two slices of bread. Tortillas, for example, can make a perfect platform for a handheld meal. And toasting them on the griddle with cheese in the middle—well, yum! This month's winning recipe brings several flavors together to make a satisfying whole.



Mango, Chicken and Chorizo Quesadillas

- 1 link (4 ounces) Spanish chorizo, diced
- 1¼ cups shredded cooked chicken breast
- 4 8-inch flour tortillas
- ¾ cup shredded reduced-fat Mexican blend cheese
- ½ cup chopped, peeled mango
- 4 teaspoons chopped cilantro, plus additional for garnish (optional)
- Cooking spray or butter
- ½ cup salsa
- ¼ cup sour cream

- Heat a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add sausage and sauté 1 minute. Stir in chicken; sauté 2 minutes longer or until heated through.
- Remove sausage mixture from pan and set aside. Wipe pan with a paper towel.
- Sprinkle half of each tortilla with cheese and top with ¼ cup of sausage mixture, 2 tablespoons mango and 1 teaspoon of cilantro.
- Fold tortillas in half, pressing gently to seal.
- Return pan to medium heat. Coat with cooking spray or butter. Add two filled tortillas to pan and cook for 2 minutes on each side or until lightly browned.
- Repeat with more spray and remaining tortillas.
- Top each with 2 tablespoons of salsa and a tablespoon of sour cream. Garnish with cilantro sprigs, if desired.

Servings: 4. Serving size: 1 quesadilla. Per serving: 414 calories, 27.4 g protein, 17.2 g fat, 31 g carbohydrates, 0.7 g dietary fiber, 973 mg sodium, 3.7 g sugars, 71 mg cholesterol



Cook's Tip: Spanish chorizo is different from its Mexican counterpart in that it's spiced with pimentón, a smoky paprika. You can substitute the Mexican version if desired.

\$100 RECIPE CONTEST

Whether off to work or back to school, what do you like to find in your lunchbox when mealtime rolls around? Send in your best brown bag recipes for August's contest, **Lunchbox Favorites**. The deadline is April 10.

There are three ways to enter: **ONLINE** at TexasCoopPower.com (under the Submit and Share tab); **MAIL** to 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701; **FAX** to (512) 763-3408. Include your name, address and phone number, plus your co-op.

Open-Faced Shaved Ham Sandwiches with Savory Olive-Cheese Sauce

- 1 loaf (approximately 12 inches long) French bread
- 4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 2 pounds shaved cooked ham
- 3 large ripe tomatoes, peeled and sliced
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 tablespoon flour
- 1 cup half-and-half
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon ground mustard
- 1 cup grated sharp cheddar cheese
- ½ cup sliced pimento-stuffed olives
- 1 tablespoon coarse-ground black pepper

- Preheat broiler on high. Cut loaf of bread in half lengthwise, then slice each length into thirds. Arrange bread slices on a baking sheet. Divide olive oil among bread slices, brushing one side of each. Broil 2 minutes, or until toasted.
- Divide ham among toasted bread slices, layering as needed. Place tomato slices on top of ham.
- Melt butter in saucepan over medium-high heat. Whisk flour into melted butter and cook, stirring, 1 minute. Slowly add half-and-half, stirring constantly. Whisk in salt, mustard and cheese. Stir until cheese has melted, then remove from heat.
- Divide cheese sauce among sandwiches on baking sheet, pouring sauce over each. Sprinkle each with olives and pepper.
- Return baking sheet to broiler for 5 minutes, or until cheese sauce bubbles.

Servings: 6. Serving size: 1 sandwich. Per serving: 643 calories, 41.8 g protein, 29.5 g fat, 54.7 g carbohydrates, 3.2 g dietary fiber, 2,298 mg sodium, 4.3 g sugars, 77 mg cholesterol

BETSY KUEBLER | FARMERS EC

Melt-in-Your-Mouth Roast Beef Sandwiches

- ¾ cup dark brown sugar
- ¾ cup light soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 large onion, minced
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1½ teaspoons ground ginger
- 4 pounds beef rump roast or bottom round roast
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- 12 sandwich rolls

- In a gallon-size resealable plastic bag, combine sugar, soy sauce, lemon juice, onion, garlic, ginger and 1 ½ cups of warm water. Seal and shake well to dissolve sugar. Add roast to bag, pushing out as much air as possible, seal and turn to coat.
- Refrigerate 6 hours or overnight, turning occasionally to coat all surfaces. Transfer roast and marinade to a slow

cooker. Cover and cook 6-8 hours or until meat is tender and falling apart.

- Remove beef to a separate container and shred with a fork. Dissolve cornstarch in 1/4 cup water. Add to pan juices and allow to thicken to gravy consistency.
- Fold shredded beef into gravy. Serve on rolls.

Servings: 12. Serving size: 1 sandwich. Per serving: 368 calories, 38.9 g protein, 7.1 g fat, 34.3 g carbohydrates, 1.3 g dietary fiber, 1,196 mg sodium, 12.4 g sugars, 92 mg cholesterol

DENISE CRUMRINE | COSERV ELECTRIC



Melt-in-Your-Mouth Roast Beef Sandwich

Reuben Quesadillas

- 1/2 cup Thousand Island dressing
- 4 burrito-size flour tortillas
- 12 ounces corned beef, sliced thin
- 1 cup shredded Swiss cheese
- 2 cups sauerkraut, drained
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper, optional

- Spread 2 tablespoons of dressing on one side of each tortilla. Divide corned beef equally between two tortillas, then sprinkle each with half of the cheese. Top each with half of the sauerkraut and pepper, if using, then place tortilla on top of each.
- Heat a griddle over medium heat. Use cooking spray if needed, and grill the filled tortillas, one at a time, for 4 minutes on one side, then flip and grill for 4 minutes longer.
- When quesadillas are done, cut each one into six pieces.

Servings: 4. Serving size: 3 pieces. Per serving: 590 calories, 29.8 g protein, 26.4 g fat, 49.9 g carbohydrates, 5.1 g dietary fiber, 1,883 mg sodium, 8.4 g sugars, 109 mg cholesterol

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Of COURSE, They peCAN!

Send us your best original Texas pecan recipes. (These are recipes you develop, not ones copied from a friend or found in a book or magazine.) Show us how you use Texas pecans to create dishes that cover every part of a meal. All recipes must include pecans (Texas pecans are our favorite). Winners will be featured in our December 2013 issue. Enter by August 10, 2013, at TexasCoopPower.com. Go to TexasCoopPower.com for details and official rules.

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Enter online at TexasCoopPower.com. Each entry MUST include your name, address and phone number, plus the name of your Texas electric cooperative, or it will be disqualified. Specify which category you are entering, Appetizer, Main Dish, Side Dish or Dessert, on each recipe. Send entries to: Texas Co-op Power/Holiday Recipe Contest, 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701. You can fax recipes to (512) 763-3408. Up to three entries are allowed per co-op membership. Each should be submitted on a separate piece of paper if mailed or faxed. Mailed entries can all be in one envelope. No email entries will be accepted. For official rules, visit TexasCoopPower.com. **Entry deadline: August 10, 2013.**



Texas pecans make this
Coconut Pecan-Crusted
Chicken main dish even better.

COCONUT PECAN-CRUSTED CHICKEN COURTESY KARISTAKITCHEN.COM

GET BACK IN THE WATER SAFELY: A SAFE STEP TO COMFORT AND INDEPENDENCE



The MOST DANGEROUS room in your home... the bathroom

According to The New York Times, the bathroom can be the most dangerous room in the home. Hundreds of thousands of falls and accidents happen each year.*

FACT: 1 in 3 adults 65+ fall each year, and falls are the leading cause of injury death as well as the most common cause of nonfatal injuries and hospital admissions for trauma.**

*BAKALAR, NICHOLAS. "Watch Your Step While Washing Up." New York Times 16, Aug. 2011, New York Edition ed., Section D sec.: D7. Web **CDC - Center for Disease Control and Prevention



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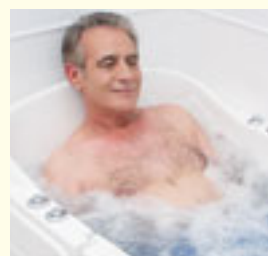
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Reflections

‘Did you ever wonder if the person in the puddle is real, and you’re just a reflection of him?’

— Bill Watterson, creator of the comic strip ‘Calvin and Hobbes’

We received well over 300 entries for this month’s category covering a broad spectrum of reflected images—from many seemingly stacked skies to a dog’s owner reflected in the window to its soul. **ASHLEY CLARY-CARPENTER**

On TexasCoopPower.com

Upon a moment of reflection, we selected many more of our favorites to share online.



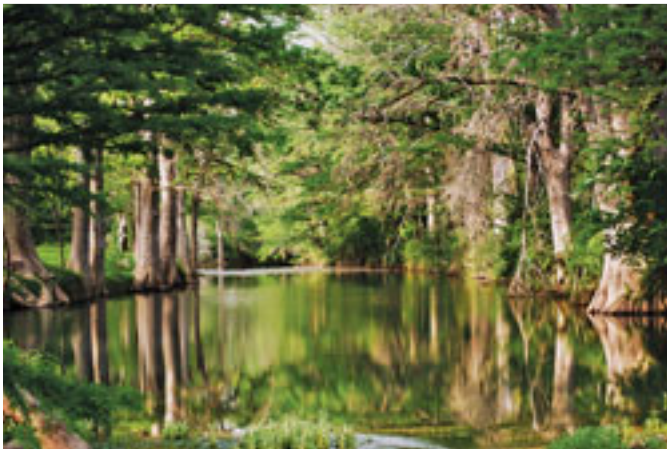
▲ **Christine Heimsoth**, Bluebonnet EC, shot this picture while sitting on a jetty in Port Aransas with her dog, Sasha.

On the nature trail at Rio Grande Village in Big Bend National Park, it appears as if two worlds rest on top of each other in this shot by **David Lund**, Bryan Texas Utilities. ►

Sam Georgeson, Pedernales EC, spotted this pool along Onion Creek between Driftwood and Kyle. ▼



▲ **Rob Bellomy**, Grayson-Collin EC, captured his neighbor’s house in a water droplet using an olloclip lens on his iPhone 4S.



A whitetail buck pauses for some water—and a moment of reflection.

Sharon Draker, Bandera EC, sent this in. ►

Upcoming Contests

June Issue: Underwater Deadline: April 10

July: Vintage **August: Let’s Eat!**

Send your photo for the June contest—along with your name, address, daytime phone, co-op affiliation and a brief description—to Underwater, Focus on Texas, 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701, before **April 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.** If using a digital camera, submit your **highest-resolution images** at TexasCoopPower.com/contests. We regret that Texas Co-op Power cannot be responsible for photos that are lost in the mail or not received by the deadline.



Pick of the Month Frühlingsfest!

Comfort [April 6] (830) 995-3131, comfortchamberofcommerce.com

Comfort celebrates its German heritage and the coming of wildflowers at Frühlingsfest! Enjoy arts and crafts booths, live music from the Polkamatics and the Boerne Village Band, and photo opportunities with comics Heidi Ho Ho and Schnitzel.



ACCORDION PLAYER: JAMES STEIDL | BIGSTOCK.COM. STRAWBERRY: WONG SZFEI | BIGSTOCK.COM

April 05

Blanco [5-6] Wild Woman Weekend, (512) 750-6263, wildwomanweekend.org

Llano [5-7] Llano Fiddle Fest, (325) 247-5354, llanofiddlefest.com

06

Kingsland [6-7] Arts & Crafts Show/ Wildflower Festival, (325) 388-5693, kingslandcrafts.com

Livingston [6-7] Show Us Your Stitches Quilt Show, (936) 329-3660, lpqgtexas.org

12

Jewett [12-13] Flea Festival, (903) 626-4202, jewetttexas.org

Poteet [12-14] Strawberry Festival, (830) 742-8144, strawberryfestival.com

13

Athens Eggfest, (903) 676-2277, athenseggfest.wordpress.com



April 12
Poteet
Strawberry
Festival

13

Burnet Bluebonnet Airshow, (512) 756-2226, bluebonnetairshow.com

Jasper Dam to Dam Bike Ride, (409) 384-2762, jaspercoc.org

New Braunfels Kindermasken Parade, (830) 629-6504, nbheritagevillage.com

Rockdale Milam County Nature Festival, (254) 697-7045, txmn.org/elcamino/naturefest

Spicewood Spaghetti Dinner, (512) 296-6092, spicewoodvfd.com

Chappell Hill [13-14] Official Bluebonnet Festival of Texas, 1-888-273-6426, chappellhillmuseum.org

33rd Annual
Scarbborough Renaissance Festival

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and festivals around Texas. For a complete listing, please visit TexasCoopPower.com/events.

19

Burton [19–20] Cotton Gin Festival,
(979) 289-3378, cottonginmuseum.org

Del Rio [19–20] Battle on the Border BBQ &
Chili Cook-Off and Spring Fling,
(830) 775-3551, drchamber.com

20

Alba Wild Hog Cook-Off, (903) 765-3473.
albawildhog.com

April 27

Morton

Cochran County Cancer
Cake-A-Thon



20

Rocksprings Run/Walk/Bike the Devil's
Sinkhole, (830) 683-2287,
devilsinkhole.org

26

Lamesa [26–28] Chicken-Fried Steak
Festival, (806) 872-4322, ci.lamesa.tx.us

27

Morton Cochran County Cancer
Cake-A-Thon, (806) 543-4988

Tatum Pecan Pie Festival, (706) 325-2348,
tatumpecanpiefestival.com

May

03

Salado [3–4] Gospel Festival,
(254) 634-4658

Brenham [3–5] Maifest, 1-888-273-6426,
maifest.org

Sherman [3–5] BirdFest Texoma,
(903) 786-2826, birdfesttexoma.org

04

Tomball [4–5] Rails & Tails Mudbug Festival,
(281) 222-4775, tomballtx.gov

09

Decatur [9–12] Askey Farm Festival,
(940) 393-3273



May 3
Sherman
BirdFest Texoma

Submit Your Event!

We pick events for the magazine directly from TexasCoopPower.com. Submit your event for June by April 10, and it just might be featured in this calendar!

CAKE: MARIA GRITSAL | BIGSTOCK.COM. HAWK: R R PHOTOGRAPHY | BIGSTOCK.COM

WALK IN SWAGGER OUT



The women who shaped Texas have worn every kind of shoe – and boot. When you learn what they accomplished, you'll have something new to brag about – and – you might just hear a jingle on your shoe.

Discover *Women Shaping Texas*, on exhibit December 8, 2012–May 19, 2013.

Start your visit at TheSTORYofTEXAS.com



**BULLOCK
TEXAS**
STATE HISTORY
MUSEUM

Texas Cotton Gin Museum offers vivid reminders that a life labeled 100 percent cotton was 100 percent hard work for producers of state's major crop

BY SUZANNE HABERMAN

WORKING AS A HIRED HAND ON A TEXAS cotton farm in the 1920s, you'd be lucky to make a few cents a pound to pick cotton; if you were a family member, you worked for your supper. "If you were old enough to walk, you were old enough to pick cotton," says Jerry Moore, curator of the **TEXAS COTTON GIN MUSEUM**.

He's describing work on a turn-of-the-century cotton farm while giving a tour of the Burton Farmers Gin, the oldest operating cotton gin in the United States at the heart of Burton, a town of about 350 snuggled in the rolling hills between Austin and Houston.

Built in 1914 by members of a farmers' cooperative, the gin operated for 60 years and then fell into disuse after the demise of Burton's cotton industry. More than a decade later, the community restored and preserved the historic landmark as a

museum for the "love and honor for the history of cotton," says Linda Russell, museum director.

On a summer afternoon, Moore guides about 10 sightseers, including Karen Preston of Leon County, on a tour of the cypress and corrugated tin complex and describes the labor of cotton baling as though it were 1925.

Preston nods at Moore's description. She grew up on a farm in Northeast Texas, where her great-great-grandfather built the community's first cotton gin. "It brings back a lot of memories of being on the farm, and families," she says. "And their work ethic."

For work it was. Starting in the field, pickers hand-plucked bolls and stuffed cotton into sacks. Moore unfurls a 12-foot-long cotton-picker's sack and says a child would fill a pillowcase or flour sack.

The contents then were emptied into a horse-drawn wooden wagon that, once full at about 1,500 pounds, the farmer drove to the gin to be weighed. The family kept on picking.

Outside the gin, above the weigh station, Moore points to a metal tube—the "grand vacuum cleaner"—that the farmer used to pipe cotton up to the second story. There, five gin stands separated lint from seed—a task Russell compares to "getting a sticker out of a puppy dog's fur."

Inside, Moore introduces the muscle behind the process: a 16-ton, 125-horsepower 1925 Bessemer engine. The "Lady B," which takes up an entire room and smells like burnt diesel, powered the gin between 1925 and 1963 and still runs during the annual **BURTON COTTON GIN FESTIVAL**.

After ginning, the cotton fibers are ready to bale. Russell hands a puff of ginned cotton to Houston resident Alan Nash during the tour. "Handle it like it's a diamond ... or a little baby," she says in a singsong voice. Nash cups it with upturned palms, blinking with amazement. "It's just as soft as a cloud," he says. "It's so soft."

To bale those soft fibers, a bale press compacted the fluff into a 500-pound rectangle sandwiched in jute and secured with six metal straps. Over the gin's lifetime, the managers weighed, tagged and documented every bale produced there.

As the tour concludes, Preston lingers in the museum lobby to chitchat with Russell about the cotton, farms and family. Before Preston leaves, Russell steals a hug and tells her she's precious.

That's the point of the museum and the exhibits, Russell says, "It gets them talking and remembering."

Suzanne Haberman, staff writer

The 2013 Burton Cotton Gin Festival is April 19-20 and features cotton baling using the historic equipment, folk-life demonstrations and family activities; (979) 289-3378, cottonginmuseum.org.

On TexasCoopPower.com

Texas Cotton Gin Museum slideshow



FABRIC OF THE PAST The Burton Farmers Gin, nearly a century old, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is a National Historic Mechanical Engineering Landmark.





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