

LOCAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE EDITION

APRIL 2015

Santa Anna

Dinner for Two

Rockin' Out in Llano

TEXAS CO-OP POWER

IT'S WILD
OUT THERE

Introducing the Natives
and Taming the Invasives

We are pioneers.

Our mornings, our nights and the waking hours in between —
this is when we discover what we can achieve.

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the life of our dreams. Because this is our ground.

Our opportunity. Our responsibility.

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SPECIAL FEATURES

8 It's Wild Out There Despite the exuberant show they put on every spring, wildflowers don't have it all that easy. Plus, find best-bet drives for wildflower watching and tips on how to make your own meadow.

By Helen Thompson



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LARKSPUR: WILL VAN OVERBEEK. BOY: © DARYL MARQUARDT | DOLLAR PHOTO CLUB

ON THE COVER *Sunflowers and Indian blanket wildflowers in early dawn light.* Photo © Dean Fikar | TDF Photography

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Life Jackets

The article about the University of Texas Marine Science Institute ["Immersed in Learning," January 2015] covers a great learning program for middle students, but something is missing in one of the photographs: It looks like someone missed the importance of wearing a life jacket on the boat. It appears that three adults are not wearing them, just the students. Safety first starts with the instructors!

JERRY AND TISH SWIGGART | CANTON TRINITY VALLEY EC

Response from the University of Texas Marine Science Institute: Safety is our top priority. Our education programs on the research vessel Katy require all persons under the age of 13 to wear life jackets while on board. We also strongly encourage older youths, adults and chaperones to wear life jackets, but by law this is not required on vessels as large as Katy, and we respect personal preferences.



Iguana in New York

While visiting a friend in New York in October of 1998, I took this picture of this giant iguana. It looks like the same one in the February issue of Texas Co-op Power ["The Curious Creations of Daddy-O Wade"].

PETE LARRIEU | SCHERTZ GUADALUPE VALLEY EC

Remembering the Uprising

The article about the San Diego uprising ["Plan of San Diego Uprising," January 2015] certainly caught

Flying With Lindy

Thank you for the story about "Unlucky Lindy" in your February 2015 issue.



It was especially interesting for me because my dad, Homer Fitzgerald, was a teen when Lindbergh stayed in their family hotel/home for a number of days until the plane was repaired.

Lindbergh even gave my dad a short plane ride that was more scary than fun for my dad at the time, but the experience provided a great story for many years to come.

JO ANN FITZGERALD EASTMAN | KINGSLAND | CENTRAL TEXAS EC

my attention. This uprising was probably the reason my grandparents, John and Eula Black Harding, and their three sons, Otis, Dixie and Travis, left almost everything behind except the old family Bible and evacuated from Sinton by train in 1915 to Inez, where they lived on the Baldwin property south of Inez. My dad and grandmother always told stories of how they had to hide in the fields because of the raids going on.

JEANNETTE MULLENIX | HOUSTON VICTORIA EC

Fashion Sense on the Farm

I enjoyed "Feeding Their Fashion Sense" [February 2015]. It reminded me of one time in the early '50s that my sister and I went to the store with Mama for something special. Would it be an ice-cold Grapette from the box by the door or maybe a Baby Ruth candy bar? No, Mama had something else in mind.

We entered the store, and she steered us toward the back corner, where there was a mound of flour-filled cloth sacks on pallets. Mama wanted each of us to choose one

for a flour sack dress. How hard it was to choose just one from all of the pretty printed sacks!

We finally made our choices and hurried home ready to wear our new dresses. It seemed an eternity before all of that flour had been used and we could actually wear our special dresses.

ANN BOST | ELKHART HOUSTON COUNTY EC

I was one who wore feed sack dresses and underwear. I was always so happy to see the new prints and loved them. After I married, my first maternity dress was feed sack material. That was the good old days. If you never had that privilege, you don't know what you missed.

NELL LARREMORE | VIA FACEBOOK

Bitten by Memory

"Gone But Not Forgotten" [February 2015] really brought back memories from long ago during my childhood on my grandparents' farm in Brenham (served by Bluebonnet EC). There were many horny toads that I played with, and I can-

not remember how many times those big red ants bit me. My father or grandpa would put tobacco juice on the bite to help with the pain.

That was back in the 1940s. I still have a recollection of when electric power came to our farmhouse. Thank you for the memories.

CHARLES SKWERES | MAGNOLIA SAN BERNARD EC

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Please include your town and electric co-op. Letters may be edited for clarity and length.



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HAPPENINGS

Poteet Salutes the Strawberry

For 67 years, Poteet has held a festival to celebrate strawberries and their growers on Atascosa County farms. The Rotary Club organized the first Poteet Strawberry Festival in 1948 as a way to encourage World War II veterans to return to area farms. That party drew about 5,000 visitors.

Since then, Poteet has become synonymous with strawberries, and the festival lures more than 100,000 people to town for a weekend of contests, strawberry dishes, children's entertainment, dancing, and a carnival and rodeo. Country singer Kevin Fowler and *norteño* and *conjunto* star Ramón Ayala, the "Accordion King," headline the musical lineup for this year's festival, April 10–12.

Many strawberry growers who partake in the Poteet festival are members of Karnes Electric Cooperative. The co-op contributes \$1,000 to the scholarship fund for the festival's Taste of Texas Food Show and Auction.

INFO: (830) 742-8144, strawberryfestival.com

Find more
happenings all
across the state at
TexasCoopPower.com



Honeybees must visit **2 million flowers** and travel over **55,000 miles** to produce **1 pound of honey**.

—According to the National Honey Board

KIDS CORNER

Five Rules for Kids and Electrical Safety

Touchstone Energy and Kids EnergyZone.com offer five important lessons to share with youngsters to help them stay safe around electricity.

"Teaching electrical safety from the very earliest of ages ensures a healthy respect of this resource to help prevent accidents and injuries," says Debbie Robinson, CEO and general manager of Wood County Electric Cooperative. "Resources like Kids Energy Zone make learning fun and drive home lifesaving points."

- 1.** Always ask a grown-up for help when you need to use something that uses electricity.
- 2.** Don't yank or pull electric cords from a wall. Pulling cords can damage the outlet, appliances or plug.
- 3.** Never overload outlets with too many plugs.
- 4.** Keep electrical stuff away from water. Water and electricity don't mix. Most electrical accidents in the home happen when people use electricity near water.
- 5.** Watch out for power lines. Never touch a power line, especially if there is one that has fallen down.





CO-OP PEOPLE

Grow Your Own Tall Tale

After reading “Tall Tales” [October 2014], Jim Kolkhorst alerted Texas Co-op Power to another special tree—La Bahia Pecan at Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historic Site. The tree overlooks the historic ferry crossing where the Navasota and Brazos rivers meet, and it witnessed the beginning of Texas as Texas. Seedlings from La Bahia Pecan are available for purchase.

Tests confirmed the tree stood when delegates drafted and adopted the Texas Declaration of Independence in 1836, says Kolkhorst, president of the Washington-on-the-Brazos State Park Association and a member of Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative.

Jim Ellison, a Bluebonnet member who owned Ellison’s Greenhouses for 44 years, came up with the idea to sell La Bahia seedlings to raise money for the park association. With help from Texas A&M University, pecans were propagated. Almost 2,000 seedlings have been sold, and another 2,000 are available this spring.

Bluebonnet EC has sent bucket trucks and crews to harvest the pecans (shown above). “For us at Bluebonnet, that’s an easy request,” says Wesley Brinkmeyer, the co-op’s manager of energy programs. “We’re a co-op, and nothing beats helping out our members.”

The seedlings sell for \$100, and the proceeds go to the park association and A&M. To purchase a seedling, contact Ellison at (979) 451-9187.

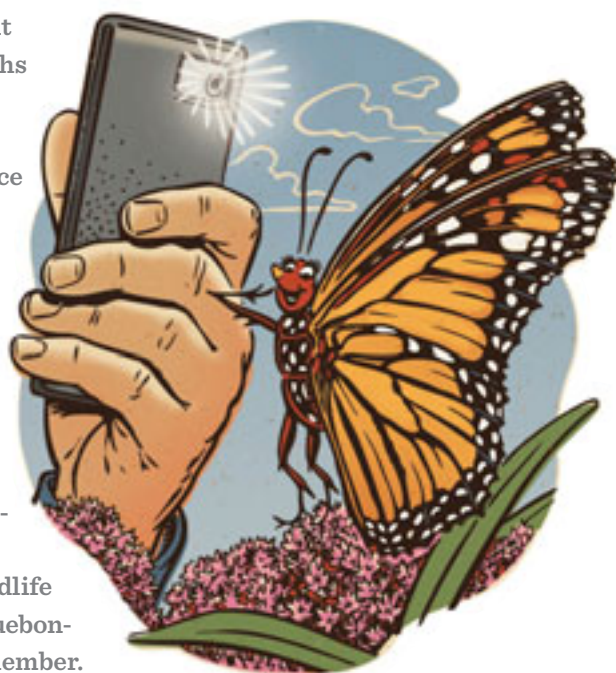
FOLLOWING UP

Texans Can Help Track Milkweed

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department encourages citizen scientists to help monitor milkweed, the only plant that monarch butterflies eat. The project was prompted by a significant decline in the monarch population, attributed in part to widespread decline of milkweed in the United States.

Volunteers can join the “Texas Milkweeds and Monarchs” project at iNaturalist.org and download the app to their mobile device. When they see milkweed, they can get a picture of it, post it and provide information on the app. This will help biologists from TPWD’s Wildlife Diversity Program learn where milkweed is growing, how much is out there and whether monarchs are using it.

Millions of monarchs migrate through Texas twice a year (“Trouble in the Kingdom,” September 2014). A decline in milkweed in Texas could threaten that migration. “We do not feel that the loss of this species is realistic; however, we are concerned about the potential loss of the migration,” says Mark Klym of the Wildlife Diversity Program and a Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative member.



Lineman Appreciation Day



On National Lineman Appreciation Day, April 13, co-ops and their members recognize the men and women who keep the lights on. In December, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association designated the second Monday of April each year for this purpose.

“It gives us a rallying point for our linemen,” says Kerry Kelton, the NRECA’s Texas director and Mid-South Synergy CEO.

The text of the resolution, which the board adopted unanimously, includes: “Whereas linemen leave their families and put their lives on the line every day to keep the power on; whereas linemen work 365 days a year under dangerous conditions to build, maintain and repair the electric infrastructure; whereas linemen are the first responders of the electric cooperative family, getting power back on and making things safe for all after storms and accidents; and whereas there would be no electric cooperatives without the brave men and women who comprise our corps of linemen; therefore be it resolved that NRECA recognize the second Monday of April of each year as National Lineman Appreciation Day.”



IT'S WILD OUT THERE

BY HELEN THOMPSON

Every spring, pastures, rights-of-way, easements and meadows along Texas roadways erupt into Technicolor splendor. Viewing wildflowers preoccupies enthusiasts all over the state. Searching out, ogling and photographing lavish fields of yellow black-eyed Susans, red-and-yellow Indian blanket, luminous-purple winecups and deep red Drummond phlox becomes a spectator sport. Two hotlines (one from the Texas Department of Transportation, the other at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center) keep callers apprised of new flower sightings from March 1 through the middle of April.

The holy grail of wildflowers is, of course, the bluebonnet, which is the Texas state flower. So popular is the prolific lupine, whose blue petals resemble the shape of a bonnet worn by pioneer women, that it has generated artistic genres unique to Texas: the bluebonnet painting and the family photograph featuring a child nestled into billowing swaths of the flowers.

Don't, however, leap to the conclusion that all is well in the wildflower world. "The robustness of the spring bloom is not an indicator of the general health of their environment," notes Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center Senior Botanist Damon Waitt. The fact that the flowers bloom at all is a barometer of the gracious cooperation of temperature, rain, sunshine and the plants' genetic hardiness. It is also a testament to the determination of a small battalion of people who work endlessly to improve the ever-shaky odds that winecups, Indian paintbrush, bluebonnets and other native flowering plants will survive.

This task is challenging. Despite the show of vigor these wildflowers muster once a year, the threat to their well-being is constant, and it's right in their midst. "People assume that all wildflowers are native to Texas," Waitt says, "but the flowers have become less native over the last 20 years." The reason? The relentless influx of invasives—plants



Despite the exuberant show they put on every spring,
wildflowers don't have it all that easy.

THE FACT

that the flowers bloom at all is a barometer of the gracious cooperation of temperature, rain, sunshine and the plants' genetic hardiness.



Native American Seed's
crop of standing cypress



"People assume that all wildflowers are native to Texas," says Damon Waitt, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center senior botanist.

like the aptly named bastard cabbage, which appears in clusters with pretty little yellow flowers. The plant flourishes from Port Aransas to Fort Worth and is hell-bent on pushing westward to El Paso.

"Bastard cabbage is opportunistic," says Waitt. "It loves roadsides and disturbed areas." There's plenty wrong with that scenario. "It's pre-empting the native wildflowers and taking up space where they would ordinarily grow."

If bastard cabbage were just an isolated offender, there might be less cause for alarm. But the influx of invasives has become so cataclysmic that in 2005, the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

partnered with the Texas A&M Forest Service, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Texas Master Naturalists, Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, and other environmental groups to create texasinvasives.org. Coordinated at the Wildflower Center, the website partnership allows government agencies, nonprofits, academia and conservation organizations to share best practices and information with the public. "This is a problem that demands the public's help," says director Justin Bush, emphasizing the immensity of scope. "It affects every section of land and every waterway in the state."



Invasives such as bastard cabbage, above, pre-empt native wildflowers.

Citizen scientist Mark Staerkel pulls down invasive Japanese climbing fern at Jesse James Park in Spring, Texas.



Texas depends on grassroots support to fight this fight. And that's where texasinvasives.org's Citizen Scientists program comes in. About 2,400 volunteers have completed the training necessary to seek out and report outbreaks of the 79 environmentally harmful invasive plant species targeted. Citizen scientists contribute important data to local and national resource managers who, in turn, coordinate appropriate responses to control the spread of unwanted invaders. "The premise is simple: To move all of us beyond awareness and into action," Bush says.

One such citizen scientist taking action is Mark Staerkel of Spring. The semiretired plumbing and hardware manufacturer's representative joined Citizen Scientists as part of the 40 hours of service time required for master naturalist certification. Scouting for invasives had a familiar ring: "It

reminded me of what I did as an assistant Boy Scout master for 30 years.” Although Staerkel has always been outdoorsy, he isn’t a gardener.

You can spot Staerkel at one of his favorite haunts, Jesse James Park in Spring. He’s the one carrying a big plastic bag and pulling up the vine-like Japanese climbing fern, which, if left uncontrolled, will smother entire trees. The fern also produces a thick groundcover that thwarts native seed germination. “I’d never even heard of it,” says Staerkel, “but it was easy to identify and is everywhere in Houston.”

The program has changed Staerkel’s view of what he sees in the landscape. “I used to enjoy looking at some of these plants, like the crepe myrtle or the Japanese mimosa,” says the citizen scientist. “But now that I know that they prevent natives from growing, and birds and insects can’t eat them, I don’t think the way I used to.”

Neither does Bill Neiman. Throughout the 1970s to the mid-1980s, Neiman ran a successful landscaping business that addressed the needs of urban Dallas as well as the burgeoning suburbs that were scraping flat the plains north of Dallas. Neiman and his crew of 45 built hardscapes, planted big trees and installed vast irrigation systems. But then the drought of 1980 hit, and Neiman noticed something: “Those intensive landscapes I’d installed in Highland Park were failing.”

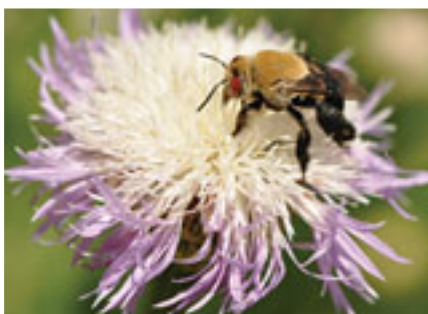
At the time, no one thought of Asian jasmine, Japanese boxwood, Pakistani crape myrtle and African Bermuda grass as nonnative, much less as invasive. On the road home one day, Neiman saw the light. “I pulled over on the side of the road to stare at flowers that were blooming despite no rain and temperatures over 100 degrees,” he recalls. “I realized that these plants

Wildflowers have a symbiotic relationship with other wildlife.

were all natives. They’d evolved here without fertilizer, herbicides, pesticides and irrigation systems.” That realization changed everything Neiman had lived for. “I realized I was part of the problem.”

Neiman went home and shifted everything

Bill Neiman built his business, Native American Seed, around Texas wildflowers.



in his nursery to native plants. He sowed his first seed farm and had his first harvest in 1988. In the summer of 1995, Neiman and his family moved to the Hill Country, on the Llano River just outside of Junction, and founded Native American Seed. The company harvests native seeds there and at other farms on the Coastal Prairies and in the Piney Woods for a range of seeds to suit all areas of Texas. Apache Plateau, Bee Happy, Hummers & Singers, Deer Resistant and other mixes offer options to suit personal tastes and geography. Some, such as Lady Bird’s Legacy Wildflower mix, are rebranded in packets by civic, nonprofit, academic and business groups (including Texas Electric Cooperatives), with profits going to the Wildflower Center. TxDOT also is a customer, seeding state roadways with the mixes when Neiman is the low bidder on the contract. “What we are doing,” says Neiman, “is providing our customers with an ecosystem in a bag. It’s a way to save the legendary DNA of these flowers.”

The battle to save Texas’ wildflowers has become more urgent in the past two decades, as Wildflower Center botanist Waitt noted. But people have responded to the call for action. There are more than 2,000 other volunteers like Staerkel chopping down, pulling up and ripping out invasives all over the state. And there are gardeners, inspired by Neiman’s unrelenting message urging awareness, who are replacing their boxwood-lined gardens with Texas native meadows. Neiman is optimistic. “It’s all in the dialogue,” he says. “It’s the only way we are going to do it. And that’s something one person can do.”

There are plenty of ways a person can continue the dialogue. In fact, there’s a license plate that helps: The horned lizard plate funds texasinvasives.org and conservation efforts in the state. And, new this year, a wildflower license plate delivers 100 percent of its profits to the Wildflower Center. Affixing one of these plates to your car or trailer lets your vehicle do the talking—and it’s just in time for wildflower season, when what’s blooming is the season’s hottest topic.

Read more of author **Helen Thompson**’s work at seeninhouse.com



BEST-BET DRIVES FOR

FOR UP-TO-THE-MINUTE INFORMATION, the Texas Department of Transportation has a wildflower hotline at 1-800-452-9292.

These routes are longtime favorites confirmed by multiple sources, including wildflowersightings.org.

WILDFLOWER CORRIDORS

- I-35 between Dallas-Fort Worth and South Texas
- I-10 between San Antonio and Brookshire

CENTRAL TEXAS

BLANCO AND BURNET COUNTIES ► U.S. 281 between Johnson City and Marble Falls **BLANCO, COMAL AND BEXAR COUNTIES** ► U.S. 281 between Blanco and San Antonio **GILLESPIE COUNTY** ► Willow City Loop (near TX 16 off FM 1323) ► Lyndon B. Johnson State Park & Historic Site, U.S. 290 east of Stonewall **LLANO COUNTY** ► Around Lake Buchanan and Inks Lake, along FM 1431 **MASON COUNTY** ► Mason County Loop (from U.S. 87 southeast of Mason, take RR 783 south to Threadgill Creek Road, turn left, and go back to U.S. 87) **TRAVIS AND BASTROP COUNTIES** ► U.S. 290 between Manor and Paige ► TX 71 between Austin and Bastrop **WILLIAMSON AND BURNET COUNTIES** ► TX 29 between Georgetown and Burnet

EAST TEXAS

ANGELINA AND NACOGDOCHES COUNTIES ► U.S. 59 between Lufkin and Nacogdoches **BOWIE, MORRIS AND TITUS COUNTIES** ► I-30 between Texarkana and Mount Pleasant **HOUSTON, TRINITY AND POLK COUNTIES** ► U.S. 287 between Crockett and Corrigan **MARION, CASS AND MORRIS COUNTIES** ► TX 49 between Jefferson and Daingerfield **MONTGOMERY COUNTY** ► I-45 and TX 105 near Lake Conroe **NACOGDOCHES AND CROCKETT COUNTIES** ► TX 7 between Nacogdoches and Crockett **TYLER COUNTY** ► Around Woodville

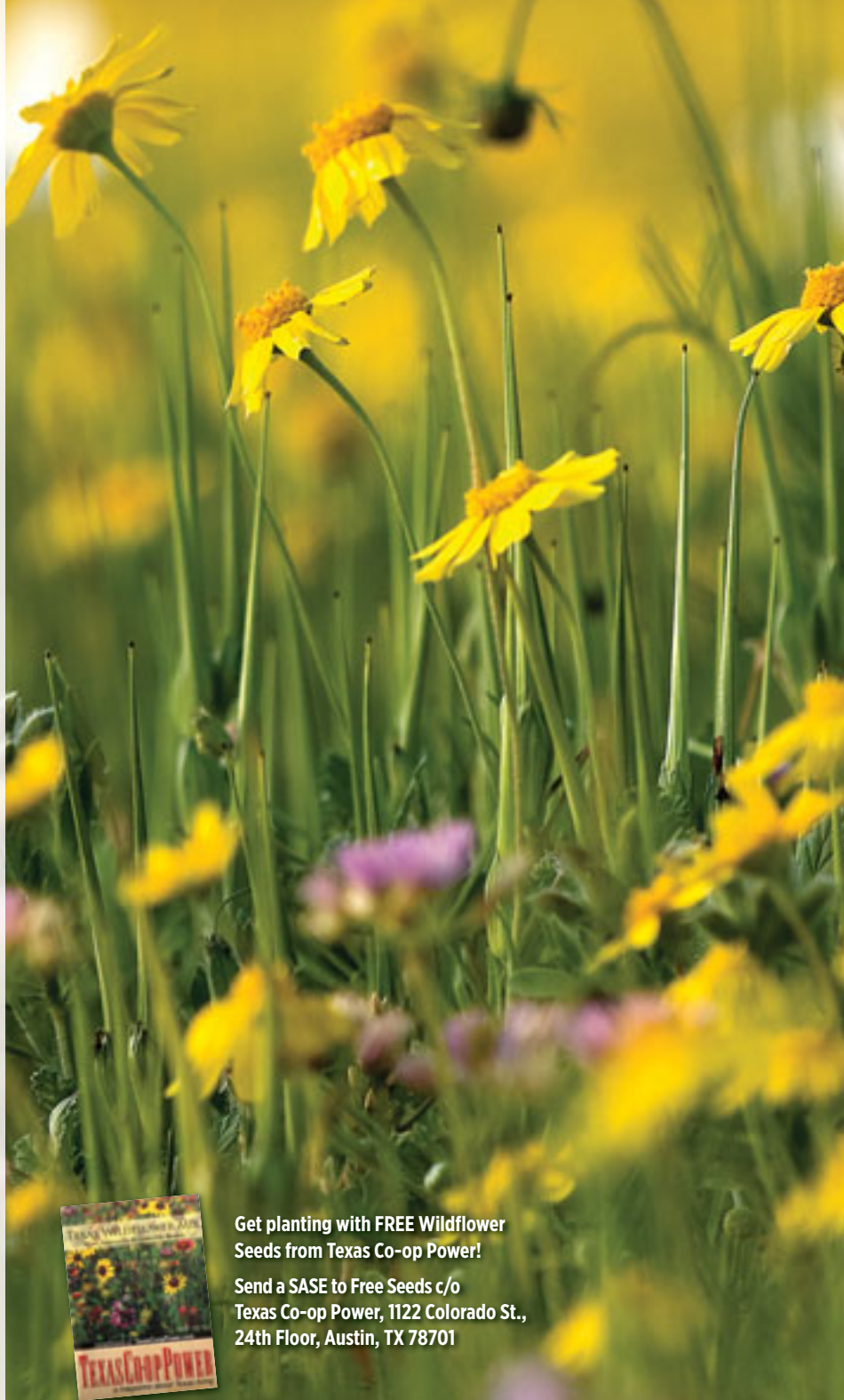
NORTH CENTRAL TEXAS

BASTROP, LEE AND BURLESON COUNTIES ► TX 21 between Paige and Caldwell **DALLAS COUNTY** ► I-45 just south of Dallas, near Hutchins **FAYETTE COUNTY** ► I-10 between Schulenburg and Flatonia **FAYETTE AND AUSTIN COUNTIES** ► TX 159 between La Grange and Bellville **WALLER AND WASHINGTON COUNTIES** ► U.S. 290 between Hempstead and Brenham **WASHINGTON COUNTY** ► Most anywhere in Washington County

WEST TEXAS

BREWSTER COUNTY ► Big Bend National Park, around Study Butte and Panther Junction

WILD FLOWERS



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Will-flow-ers

Make Your Own Meadow: A wildflower project you can do at home

By Helen Thompson | Photos By Will van Overbeek

Even if you love to drive around the state looking at wildflowers in the spring, it's easy to grow your own meadow where you can see the array of blooms at any time. That's what photographer Will van Overbeek did on an irregular swath of ground that runs a couple of hundred feet along the curb in front of his house in South Austin. It was for both sentimental reasons as well as environmental. "I love wildflowers," says van Overbeek, who grew up in California where his father, an amateur botanist, taught biology at California Institute of Technology. "We used to drive into the Sierra Nevada foothills east of Modesto to see the flowers and to take photos of them."

It was only natural that van Overbeek decided to plant a meadow when he and his family moved to a new house in 1997. "There was no lawn in front," he says. The soil was also very poor, which isn't necessarily a bad thing.

"I have always heard that wildflowers do well in bad soil," he says, "but even so I had a truckload of dirt brought in for the fall seeding."

When planting your own wildflower garden you can also refer to the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center website,

wildflower.org, which is encyclopedic in scope. The database includes "how to" articles on large-scale wildflower planting, recreating a prairie, planting a meadow garden, how to grow bluebonnets and a lot more. Plus, as van Overbeek notes, "Every bag of seed has directions on the back. They are easy to follow and all you have to do afterwards is pray for rain." That's a factor beyond our control. "You are at the mercy of Mother Nature," he says. "But the reward is wonderful."

Will insists he is not an expert, but here's how he plants his wildflowers:

1. **Pick** a good site with full sun.
2. **Sow** seeds to bare, loose dirt. "That means preparing the ground," he says, "either by covering it with clear plastic for a couple of months to kill the weeds or by using a broad-spectrum herbicide that doesn't run off and is not harmful to plants or animals."
3. **Broadcast** the seeds by hand—don't bury them.
4. **Plant** in the fall.

SHARE your own experience of growing wildflowers in Texas on our Facebook page.

Will's wildflowers: "I shot them in a way that reminded me of the old framed botanical samples you see," he says.



Oenothera speciosa, pink evening primrose



Engelmannia peristenia, Engelmann's daisy



Gaillardia pulchella, Indian blanket or firewheel



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From Plugs

To A Fabulous Lawn

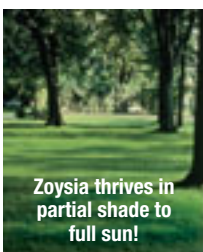


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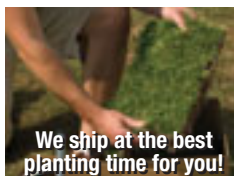
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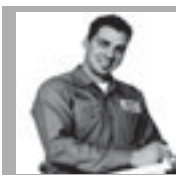
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Clogged, Backed—up Septic System...Can anything Restore It?

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 – Houston, TX

DEAR CLOGGED AND SMELLY: As a reader of my column, I am sure you are aware that I have a great deal of experience in this particular field. You will be glad to know that there IS a septic solution that will solve your back-up and effectively restore your entire system from interior piping throughout the septic system and even unclog the drain field as well. **SeptiCleanse® Shock and Maintenance Programs** deliver your system the fast active bacteria and enzymes needed to liquefy solid waste and free the clogs causing your back-up.

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SeptiCleanse® Shock and Maintenance Programs are designed to work on any septic system regardless of design or age. From modern day systems to sand mounds, and systems installed generations ago, I have personally seen SeptiCleanse unclog and restore these systems in a matter of weeks. I highly recommend that you try it before spending any money on repairs. SeptiCleanse products are available online at www.septiccleanse.com or you can order or learn more by calling **toll free at 1-888-899-8345**. If you use the promo code **"DARTX13"**, you can get a free shock treatment, added to your order, which normally costs \$169. So, make sure you use that code when you call or buy online.

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"I started using Retinol's Ultra Skin Care Crème and within a week my husband said 'What are you doing - your skin looks beautiful!' He never noticed anything before! I love the way I look and so does he."

Pam B. Sioux City

"My sister told me about this 'crème'. She has used this product for years and her skin is beautiful. Not a wrinkle, her skin is flawless. She will be 56 yrs. old in a month, and looks like a woman ready to celebrate her 40th Birthday."

Actually I can't believe that she is now just sharing this wonderful secret with me. All this time I thought she must have gotten an overload on the 'good genes.'"

Kathleen E. San Antonio

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Chicago Doctor Invents Affordable Hearing Aid

Outperforms Many Expensive Hearing Aids

Reported by J. Page

CHICAGO: A local board-certified Ear, Nose, Throat (ENT) physician, Dr. S. Cherukuri, has just shaken up the hearing aid industry with the invention of a medical-grade, affordable hearing aid. **This revolutionary hearing aid is designed to help millions of people with hearing loss who cannot afford—or do not wish to pay—the much higher cost of traditional hearing aids.**

DOCTORS AND PATIENTS AGREE: "BEST QUALITY SOUND" "LOWEST AFFORDABLE PRICE"

"I have been wearing hearing aids for over 25 years and these are the best behind-the-ear aids I have tried. Their sound quality rivals that of my \$3,000 custom pair of Phonak Xtra digital ITE." —Gerald Levy

"Perhaps the best quality-to-price ratio in the hearing aid industry."

—Dr. S. Babu Board-Certified ENT Physician, National Authority on Hearing Loss

"I have a \$2,000 Resound Live hearing aid in my left ear and the MDHearingAid® in the right ear. I am not able to notice a significant difference in sound quality between the two hearing aids."

—Dr. May, ENT Physician

"Perhaps the best quality-to-price ratio in the hearing aid industry" —Dr. Babu, M.D. Board-Certified ENT Physician

Dr. Cherukuri knew that untreated hearing loss could lead to depression, social isolation, anxiety, and symptoms consistent with Alzheimer's dementia. **He could not understand why the cost for hearing aids was so high when the prices on so many consumer electronics like TVs, DVD players, cell phones and digital cameras had fallen.**

Since Medicare and most private insurance do not cover the costs of hearing aids, which traditionally run between \$2,000-\$6,000 for a pair, many of the doctor's patients could not afford the expense. Dr. Cherukuri's goal was to find a reasonable solution that would help with the most common types of hearing loss at an affordable price, not unlike the **"one-size-fits-most" reading glasses** available at drug stores.

He evaluated numerous hearing devices and sound amplifiers, including those seen on television. Without fail, almost all of these were found to amplify bass/low frequencies (below 1000 Hz) and not useful in amplifying the frequencies related to the human voice.

Inspiration From a Surprising Source

The doctor's inspiration to defeat the powers-that-be that kept inexpensive hearing aids out of the hands of the public actually came from a new cell phone he had just purchased. **"I felt that if someone could devise an affordable device like an iPhone® for about \$200 that could do all sorts of things, I could create a hearing aid at a similar price."**

Affordable Hearing Aid With Superb Performance

The high cost of hearing aids is a result of layers of middlemen and expensive unnecessary features. Dr. Cherukuri concluded that it would be possible to develop a medical grade hearing aid without sacrificing the quality of components. The result is the **MDHearingAid® PRO**, well under \$200 each when buying a pair. **It has been declared to be the best low-cost hearing aid that amplifies the range of sounds associated with the human voice without overly amplifying background noise.**

Tested By Leading Doctors and Audiologists

The **MDHearingAid® PRO** has been rigorously tested by leading ENT physicians and audiologists who have unanimously agreed that the **sound quality and output in many cases exceeds more expensive hearing aids.**

- **Designed By A Board-Certified Ear, Nose, and Throat (ENT) Doctor**
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Efficiency in the Air

Replace air filters regularly for efficient HVAC performance

CLOGGED AIR FILTERS COULD ADD up to \$82 to your electric bill every year. Checking, changing or cleaning your filter once a month saves money and extends the life of your home's heating, ventilation and air-conditioning system.

Although air filters prevent pesky dust and annoying allergens from clogging your HVAC system, dirt still builds up in ducts and filters over time, like plaque in aging arteries. If left unchecked, a dirty filter strains a home's "heart" and forces the HVAC system to work harder to push conditioned air through tight spaces. This results in higher energy bills—and, potentially, system failure.

Filter Facts

Air filters protect HVAC systems and perform double-duty by collecting loose dirt from the air. These handy sieves live in duct-system slots or in return grilles of central air conditioners, furnaces and heat pumps.

Successful filters have a short life span—the better a filter catches dirt, the faster it gets clogged and must be cleaned or replaced. Leaving a dirty air filter in place cuts a home's air quality and reduces HVAC system airflow.

Although removing a clogged filter altogether relieves pressure on the system, the system can't perform well without one. Unfiltered dust and grime accumulate on critical parts, such as the evaporator coil, causing unnecessary wear and tear.

Monthly Checkup

The U.S. Department of Energy advises checking an air filter once a month and replacing it at least every three months. It's critical to inspect and replace filters before heavy use in summer and winter.

If you have pets or smokers in the home, filters clog more quickly. Remodeling projects or furniture sanding adds more dust than normal; a filter working under these conditions may need to be changed before the average three-month life span expires.

How To ...

Turn your heating and cooling system off before checking your filter. Slide the filter out of your ductwork and look for layers of hair and dirt. Run a finger across the filter. If the finger comes away dirty or there's a line left on the filter, it's time for a change.

When replacing the filter, make sure the arrow on the filter—which indicates the direction of the airflow—points toward the blower motor. To help schedule monthly checkups, write the date on the side of the filter so you know when it needs to be checked again. Once you've made the change, turn your system back on.



When shopping for replacement filters, you should consider more than just buying the right size.

Filtering Choices

Shopping for a new filter? Before you leave home, write down the size printed on the side of your current filter. If you get a filter that's too small, dirt will get around the barrier and invade your system. There are several different types of filters and levels of efficiency. Filters are either flat or pleated; pleated filters offer extra surface area to hold dirt, making them more efficient.

Air filters are rated by a Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value. Ranging from 1 to 20, this scale gauges a filter's effectiveness at

blocking debris. Low MERV-rated filters offer high airflow into a cooling or heating system, but only catch large air particles. A higher rating isn't always better—those filters block more dirt, but they also reduce system airflow. Most experts recommend filters with a MERV of 6 or higher. If a family member suffers from allergies, a high-MERV filter keeps out excess dander, smoke and other allergens.

Once you find a filter that works well in your home, it's a good idea to keep spare filters on hand. Basic filters cost anywhere from \$2 to \$10 each; electrostatic filters may range from \$18 to \$25 each. Ask an HVAC professional what type of filter works best for your home and your family's needs.

Whatever filter you choose, be diligent about replacing it regularly. A clogged filter wastes energy and can damage your HVAC system.



On the second Monday of April, co-ops across the nation recognize the sacrifices made by their electric linemen.

National Lineman Appreciation Day

AMERICA'S ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES DESIGNATED the second Monday of April each year as National Lineman Appreciation Day.

On April 13, your electric cooperative honors the hardworking people who often work in challenging conditions to keep the lights on.

To mark the occasion, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association unanimously adopted this resolution:

"Whereas linemen leave their families and put their lives on the line every day to keep the power on; whereas linemen work 365 days a year under dangerous conditions to build, maintain and repair the electric infrastructure; whereas linemen are the first responders of the electric cooperative family, getting power back on and making things safe for all after storms and accidents, and; whereas there would be no electric cooperatives without the brave men and women who comprise our corps of linemen;

"Therefore be it resolved that the NRECA recognizes the second Monday of April of each year as National Lineman Appreciation Day ... to recognize the contributions of these valuable men and women to America's electric cooperatives."

Co-ops everywhere proudly acknowledge all electric lineworkers for the services they perform around the clock in dangerous conditions to keep power flowing and protect the public's safety.

Electric lineworkers do not often receive the recognition they deserve. They work all hours of the day, often in hazardous conditions far from their families, going above and beyond to restore power to their communities. Texas linemen, as well as linemen from across the nation, truly deserve this special day of recognition.

We invite our members to take a moment and thank a lineman for the work they do. If you use Twitter, you can use #ThankALineman to show your support. Or you can simply tell the next lineman you see how grateful you are for the men and women who power our lives.

Start Easter Egg Hunt With Safety

FEW THINGS ARE MORE FUN on Easter morning than a hunt for those colorful eggs you dyed the night before. But don't let an avoidable mishap spoil your fun.

Here are some tips for a safe Easter egg hunt:

To prepare the eggs safely:

- ▶ Buy eggs no longer than a few days before Easter.
- ▶ Keep eggs refrigerated until you're ready to boil them, and cool cooked eggs in the refrigerator before dyeing.
- ▶ Don't dye cracked eggs.
- ▶ Hide eggs no more than an hour before the hunt begins. Eggs should not go unrefrigerated for more than two hours. Longer could invite bacteria and food poisoning.

If your hunt will be outdoors:

- ▶ Choose hiding places far from power lines, pad-mount transformers or other equipment.
- ▶ Don't hide eggs in tool sheds or garages, where you might also store power tools.
- ▶ Steer clear of outdoor air-conditioning equipment or electric water pumps.

If the fun will be inside the house:

- ▶ Don't hide eggs in the kitchen near stoves or toasters, or inside any appliance.
- ▶ Choose hiding places at table height or below to discourage climbing.
- ▶ Never place eggs where seekers might come into contact with outlets, trip over extension cords or knock over lamps or other appliances.

A final smart move: To avoid dealing with rotten-egg smell a few days later, make a list of hiding places so you won't forget where to retrieve the eggs your little ones couldn't find.



Owl Wisdom

Baylor scientist's study of eastern screech owls makes discoveries about these ready suburbanites

BY MARTHA DEERING

WEARING A BASEBALL CAP AND GLASSES and carrying a brown paper shopping bag, Fred Gehlbach climbs a ladder 12 feet from the ground into a gnarled oak tree near his home in Woodway. The object of his ascent is a weathered nest box that houses a family of eastern screech owls, common throughout Texas and most of the eastern U.S. The owlets have been peering out of the box for a couple of days, and this is a sure sign that they will soon fledge. It's time to band them before they fly.

Gehlbach, a world-renowned authority on eastern screech owls, has spent more than 40 years studying the petite, 7-inch owls and their remarkable adjustment to the urbanization of their habitat. His laboratory near Waco, a 15-acre nature preserve along a ravine that begins at his patio, provided material for two books as well as countless papers and articles. Each publication fills in some of the gaps in knowledge about these small raptors, which have adapted to life in suburbia in the blink of a round, yellow eye.

Even before "Harry Potter" took American bookshelves by storm and brought dramatic attention to owls, these birds enjoyed widespread popularity. Who doesn't love the deep-voiced hoot of a great horned owl calling to its mate in the navy-blue moments of evening? Owls populate myths and legends worldwide, symbolizing wisdom and knowledge for some cultures and heralding death and dread for others.

Gehlbach, a professor emeritus at Baylor University, and his wife, Nancy, design and build nest boxes, about the size of shoeboxes, to replace nesting locations

cleared by suburban homeowners who rarely realize they are leaving owl families homeless as they haul away hollow limbs and trunks. The Gehlbachs have followed bird migrations across the Americas, studied colonies of owls for the National Geographic Society and contributed research to a project that is mapping the DNA of birds worldwide.

Gehlbach's banding project occurs an hour before dusk when the owls are still asleep. The male, his gray streaked feathers blending into a nearby tree trunk, seems unperturbed. He and his mate have been through this before. "The owls in my study come to know me," Gehlbach explains, "but they are still wild birds." He's had a few stitches in his scalp to remind him of this.

Gently opening the hinged top of the nest box, he reaches inside and removes four puffy, gray owlets, which he places in the paper bag. The chicks are calm and silent except for a clicking noise they make with their beaks. Descending with his precious cargo, Gehlbach carefully removes one chick at a time, offering each a pencil to hold in its sharp little talons. "It makes them feel more secure," he explains, "and they are not so likely to grip my fingers." He applies a lightweight aluminum band to the left leg of each chick, its number registered with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Before returning them to the nest, he weighs each chick and plucks a single feather for DNA testing.

Gehlbach's screech owl research has turned up interesting information gleaned from the inhabitants of the 20 or so owl



Homeowners might not know a screech owl is nesting in their yards unless they hear its single-note trill.

boxes scattered throughout his neighborhood and in nearby woodlands. Of the 1,453 eastern screech owls that have participated in the study, more birds nest in wooded suburbs than in rural areas. This trend is partly because of abundant bird-baths, available food and fewer predators. Homeowners may not know there is a screech owl nesting in their yards unless they hear the single-note trill that is the screech owl's most frequent call. Screech owls only screech in times of extreme distress. During the day, the birds snooze near the trunk of a tree, all but invisible against the mottled bark.

Eastern screech owls are messy house-

keepers. Debris carpets the floor of the nest cavity as the female and chicks drop bits of food. Flies and ants feed on the detritus and lay their eggs on the scraps from the owls' meals. During his research, Gehlbach discovered a strange and previously unknown "mutualism" in which Texas blind snakes occupy active screech owl nests, benefitting both the owls and the snake.

Blind snakes spend most of their time below ground, inside ant colonies or hidden in the leaf litter of the forest floor. With their pinkish color, smooth scales and length of 5 to 10 inches, they are often mistaken for earthworms. Dropped into an

owl's nest alive by the parent owls, the snake retreats beneath the debris on the floor, where it feeds on larvae that accumulate on the owls' leftovers, keeping the nest cleaner.

"Consumption of larvae may reduce larval parasitism on owl nestlings or larval competition with nestlings for food stored in the nest. Nestlings with live-in blind snakes grow faster and experience lower mortality than same-season broods lacking snakes," Gehlbach says.

Gehlbach's research also shows that his owls are nesting nearly a month earlier in the spring than they did even a few years ago, and he believes this is a response to climate change. Early nesting usually means more chicks, but it is also a sign that change is underway. Despite the suburban amenities these petite owls enjoy in tree-filled yards, there are hazards involved with human proximity. Fledglings killed by traffic verify what any parent knows instinctively: that the juvenile period when the young strike out on their own is the most dangerous time of an animal's life.

Recent research shows that owls, along with crows and jays, are among nature's most intelligent birds. Eastern screech owls readily move into nest boxes mounted at least 10 feet up in a large tree in deep shade and repay their landlords by patrolling for rodents, snakes and large insects while serenading the neighborhood with melodious whistles and trills.

Martha Deeringer, a member of Heart of Texas EC, lives near McGregor.

WEB EXTRAS at TexasCoopPower.com

Listen to the songs of eastern screech owls.

Breakdown on the Tahoka Circle

There wasn't a whole lot to love about my first car

BY CLAY COPPEDGE

MY FIRST CAR WAS A GREEN 1958 FORD Custom, which meant it was customized to my father's own frugal specifications. It came complete with a steering wheel, a gearshift lever, turn signal indicator, accelerator, brake, clutch, door handles inside and out, cigarette lighter and ashtray. No radio. No air conditioner. And until we suffered through an epic blue norther one winter, it had no heater, either.

This was the car that took us on vacation every year, when the lack of air conditioning was mourned, but only by me. Dad said an air conditioner only made you feel that much hotter when you got out of the car. Though I have come to realize that he was right about most of the things we disagreed on back then, he was dead wrong about that.

Dad coached our Little League team for a few years, and this project evolved to entail picking up any number of players and taking them to practice on any given day. It was surprising how many people were unable to take their kids to Little League practice or games once they found out the coach would do it. My teammates (and even kids from other teams) had two things in common: We loved baseball, and we found it satisfying to stomp and grind the Ford floorboard with our cleats.

Beneath that onslaught, it didn't take long for a small but expanding hole to appear. On the other side of the hole, just a few inches away, was the pavement rushing by in a blur. That was exciting for a kid because it looked like a good way get hurt.

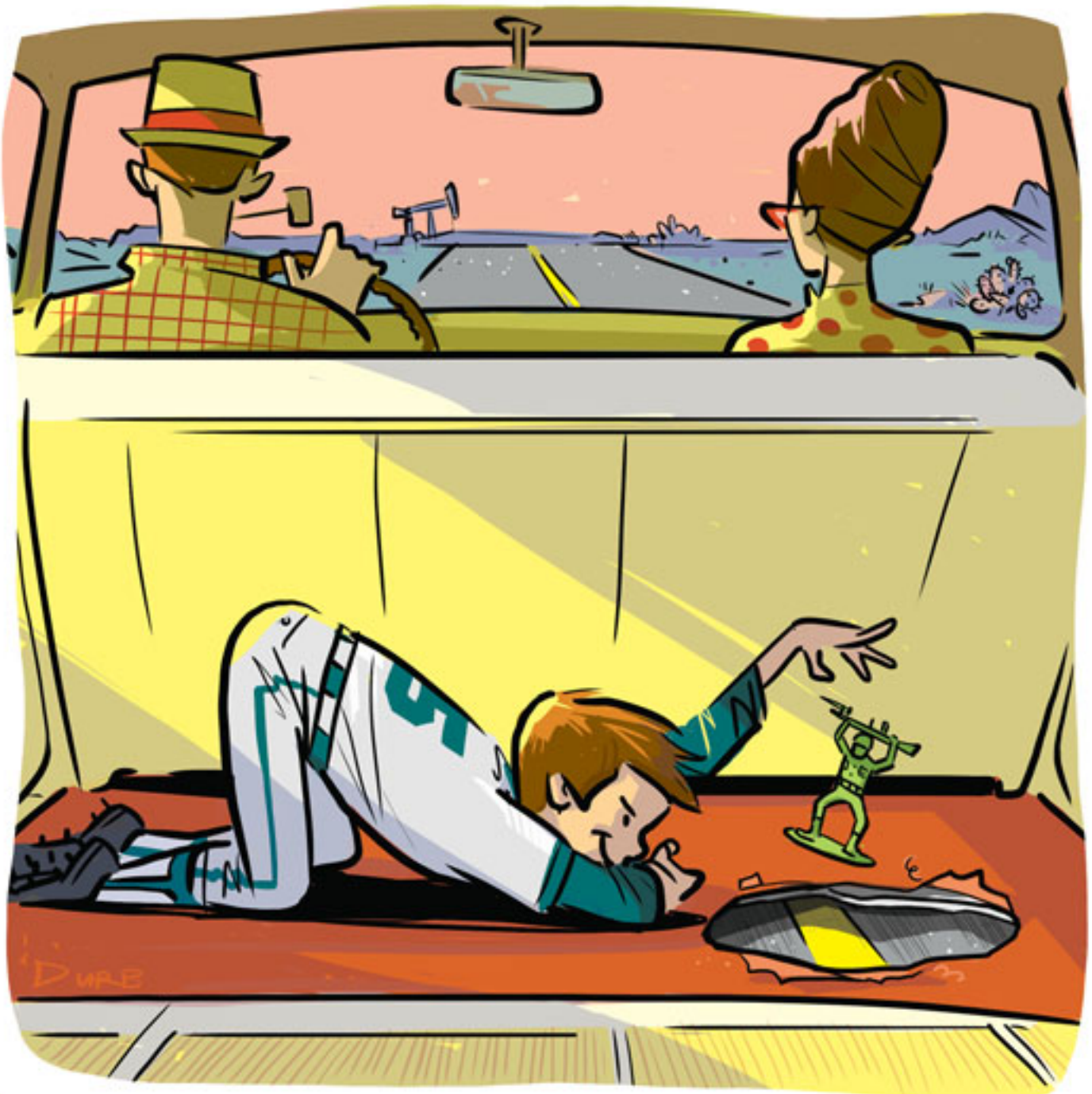
Because I spent most trips in the backseat, I had plenty of time to transform my

idle brain into the devil's workshop. I pretended I was Robert Mitchum in "Thunder Road," dropping random objects through the hole in the floor so they would slow down any enemy following. Or I might be James Bond, dispensing ingenious gadgetry that blew up the bad guys chasing my Aston Martin. I fantasized about how cool it would be to lay my hands on some firecrackers.

If I was quiet, Mom and Dad didn't pay much attention to me. But when I made explosion sounds, they turned around to see what I was doing. In this case, they had some questions. They wanted to know how long this had been going on and exactly what kind of objects had been dispersed onto the highways and byways. Dad was right about litter. That episode marked the last time I ever littered a street, road or highway. Ever.

My parents eventually upgraded to a snazzy Chevrolet Bel Air, complete with a radio, heater and air conditioning. The Ford was passed down to me. My dream was to leave Lubbock, but I couldn't see doing it in that car. No radio.

Less than a month after I got my driver's license, I found myself negotiating a devilish piece of road in Lubbock known as the Tahoka Traffic Circle. There, traffic merged and exited from all directions. It's been gone for more than 20 years, but back in the day you'd find yourself either slamming on your brakes because someone darted in front of you or getting honked at because you darted in front of someone else. The worst thing you could do on Tahoka Circle was stop. It was raining that



day and, fortunately, windshield wipers hadn't cost extra when dad bought the car.

Just when I thought I had my exit from the circle plotted—I'd been driving the circle for a while—a dust storm rolled in. All of a sudden, with no warning, I was driving blindly around the Tahoka Traffic Circle in a raging mud storm. The nightmare lasted maybe two minutes, but it seemed like an hour before I navigated my way clear of the circle.

When it was over and the Ford and I were off the road, I had a little breakdown there on the side of the road. I vowed

loudly and with great emotion that I would leave Lubbock as soon as I could, possibly that very afternoon.

Three years later I did that very thing, but not in the Ford Custom. My dad gave it to our favorite mechanic, who kept it running far longer than logically possible.

I know you're supposed to feel loyal and sentimental about your first car, but the only thing I missed about my old Ford Custom was the hole in the back floor-board. That made it a one of a kind.

Clay Coppedge, a member of Bartlett EC, lives near Walburg.

"To you, it's the perfect lift chair. To me, it's the best sleep chair I've ever had."

— J. Fitzgerald, VA

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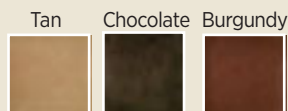
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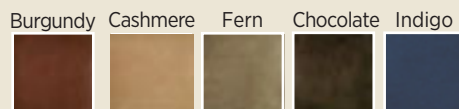


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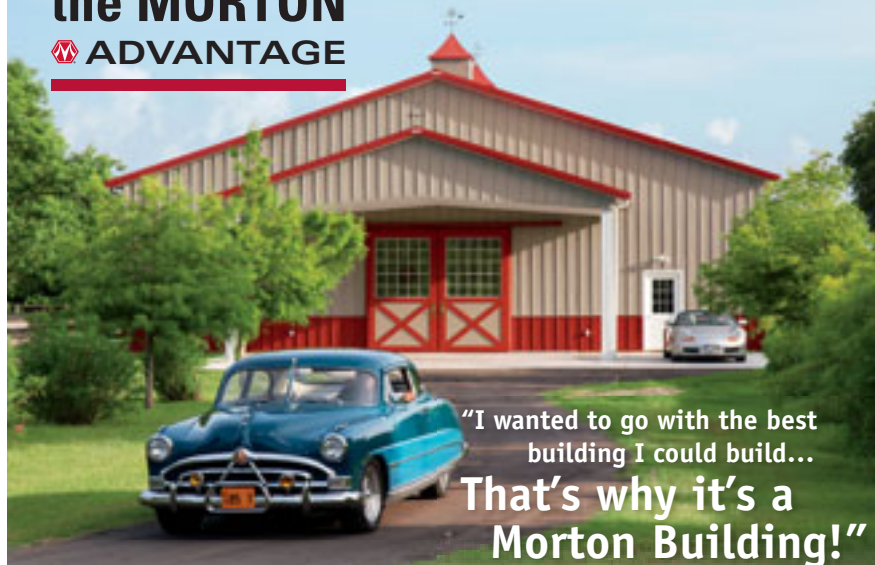
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Santa Anna's Complex Character

The Mexican general occasionally contradicted his well-documented brutality

BY MARTHA DEERING

GEN. ANTONIO LÓPEZ DE SANTA ANNA, president of Mexico, dictator, tyrant, self-styled Napoleon of the West, waged a vicious war against rebellious Texans during the Texas Revolution of 1836. He ordered a take-no-prisoners policy at the Alamo and directed the execution of all Texian soldiers captured at Goliad. Glimpses into the dictator's well-hidden personal life only surfaced occasionally.

In the aftermath of the Alamo, Santa Anna sent for Susanna Dickinson, wife of artilleryman Almeron Dickinson, and offered to take her and her 15-month-old daughter, Angelina, with him to Mexico. There, he promised they would live in the palace, and baby Angelina would be reared as his daughter with aristocratic privileges.

Susanna refused. Santa Anna sent her with a military escort toward Gonzalez and gave her a handwritten ultimatum for Sam Houston that detailed the Texian defeat at the Alamo and warned of further reprisals.

A few weeks later, on April 21, 1836, the Texian army overwhelmed Santa Anna's forces at San Jacinto. When he perceived that defeat was inevitable, the general attempted escape but was taken prisoner. After negotiating the Treaty of Velasco, a wounded Sam Houston, aware that many loyal Texans wanted the Mexican dictator executed, decided to move him to a safe place. Houston chose Orozimbo, a secluded plantation owned by James Aeneas E. Phelps, a doctor.

From July through November of 1836, Santa Anna remained at the Phelps plantation under heavy guard. The Phelps family treated their notorious guest with respect. When a rescue attempt by a bold Mexican officer failed, Santa Anna sank into depression and drank poison, but Phelps nursed him back to health. Phelps' wife was said to have saved the general's life a second time by begging for his life when a Texian soldier broke in and attempted to execute him.

Santa Anna would repay the Phelps'



kindness. During the ill-fated Mier Expedition in December 1842, their son, Orlando Phelps, was captured. When Santa Anna confirmed the young man was the son of his former host, the general ordered him released. He sent the youth into the city with an escort. The younger Phelps was then outfitted with new clothes and moved into the palace.

Santa Anna said he felt fortunate to have it in his power to return, in some measure, the kindness Phelps had shown him when he was a prisoner in Texas. Santa Anna gave the younger Phelps money and sent him back to Texas by stagecoach. For many years, the Mexican dictator regularly sent Christmas presents to the Phelps family.

In about 1900, school principal Sarah S. King of the Bowie School invited John Christopher Columbus Hill, another survivor of the Mier Expedition, to speak to her students about his experiences. King recorded the talk as Hill told his story. He had set off for Mexico at age 13 with his father and older brother as part of a volunteer Texian force to fight Mexican troops.

After their capture at Mier, the captives attempted to escape. An infuriated Santa Anna ordered every 10th prisoner shot. By then Mexican Gen. Pedro de Ampudia had taken Hill, the youngest of the captives, under his wing and sent him to Mexico City, where he reported directly to Santa Anna. Young Hill's courage won the admiration of the general, who offered to adopt, educate and provide for the boy. Santa Anna also released Hill's father and brother.

Santa Anna treated Hill as a son, sending him to mining school in 1850. Although he occasionally returned to Texas to visit his family, Hill spent the rest of his life designing mines and railroads in Mexico. This was one more example of how, in spite of Santa Anna's disastrous leadership and dictatorial behavior, some reported that the Mexican general had an engaging personality.

Martha Deering, a member of Heart of Texas EC, lives near McGregor.

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If you're interested in further research regarding Santa Anna, see our list of resources.

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Dinner for Two

FOR SOME, DINNER FOR TWO MEANS flowers, candles and romance; for others, it's TV trays and dinner on the couch. Whatever the case, the average household size is shrinking, and dinner for two is more common than ever. Still, most recipes are designed to feed four to six, leaving singles, empty-nesters and small families with leftovers that may last up to a week. Given the scenario, we asked our readers to share recipes that serve two.

Our featured dish is a scaled-back recipe from "Dairylicious! Cooking with Dairy" by Kitchen Kimberly and the Southwest Dairy Farmers, available at southwestdairyfarmers.com and Amazon.com.

ANNA GINSBERG, FOOD EDITOR

Caprese Toast Bites for Two

- $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon unsalted butter
- 1 small clove garlic, minced
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup canned petite diced tomatoes (drained), or chopped fresh tomatoes
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh basil
- $\frac{1}{4}$ pound sourdough bread (2-4 slices), thickly sliced
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons cream cheese
- 1 tablespoon Parmesan cheese
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup shredded mozzarella cheese

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Melt butter in a skillet over medium-high heat. Add garlic and cook, stirring constantly, until fragrant, about 1 minute. Mix in tomatoes and fresh basil. Reduce heat to medium and cook about 1 minute. Remove from heat.
3. Toast bread slices on a baking sheet

about 5 minutes or until lightly toasted. In a small mixing bowl, combine the cream cheese with the Parmesan cheese.

4. Spread warm bread slices with softened cream cheese mixture, and then spoon warm tomato mixture over the cream cheese. Sprinkle evenly with shredded mozzarella.

5. Return bread to oven and bake until cheese is melted, about 5 minutes.

COOK'S TIP from Kitchen Kimberly: Another way to prepare this recipe is to slice the loaf of bread in half horizontally, and then spread the mixtures as directed over each half. Slice the halves into the desired serving size and enjoy!

Servings: 4. Serving size: 1 slice toast. Per serving: 174 calories, 8.57 g protein, 6.51 g fat, 19.02 g carbohydrates, 1.09 g dietary fiber, 394 mg sodium, 1.84 g sugars, 20 mg cholesterol

Recipes

Dinner for Two



THIS MONTH'S RECIPE CONTEST WINNER

CARLY TERRELL | UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES

When you're not feeding a crowd, you can enjoy the freedom to splurge a little, either with ingredients or attention to detail—or both. From chicken and steak to crab, dessert and beyond, our readers showed us that dinner for two may be a small affair, but it can turn out to be a big hit.

Chicken Cordon Bleu en Croute

- 2 large boneless, skinless chicken breasts

Salt and pepper to taste

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 1 sheet puff pastry dough
- 4 slices Swiss cheese
- 4 thin slices ham

EGG WASH

- 1 large egg, beaten with a splash of water

SAUCE

- 2 tablespoons butter (¼ stick)
- 1 small shallot, minced
- 2 tablespoons flour
- ½ cup dry white wine
- 1 cup chicken broth

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper.

2. **CHICKEN:** Cut each breast horizontally through the center to create a total of four pieces. Place pieces between two sheets of plastic wrap, pound gently to an even thickness, then season with salt and pepper.

3. Heat olive oil and butter in a skillet or sauté pan over medium-high heat. Place two chicken breast pieces in pan at a time and cook 2–3 minutes on each side to brown. Repeat with remaining chicken, then set aside to cool (no need to fully cook the chicken). Keep the skillet handy for further use; do not clean.

4. Cut the sheet of puff pastry dough into four squares. On a floured surface using a floured rolling pin, roll each square until doubled in size. Layer a slice of Swiss cheese, a slice of ham

and piece of seared chicken on the dough diagonally and fold the dough ends over the stack to form a pocket.

Turn seam side down and place on parchment-lined baking sheets. Repeat with remaining pieces of cheese, ham, chicken and pastry dough. Place two *croutes* on each baking sheet.

5. Brush tops with egg wash. Place both baking sheets in oven and bake 25–30 minutes or until golden brown. Let cool about 5 minutes.

6. **SAUCE:** About 15 minutes before the chicken is done, start the sauce. On medium-high, heat butter in the same pan used to sear the chicken. Add the minced shallot. When shallot starts to soften and brown, add the flour, stirring constantly to make a golden roux. Pour in the wine to deglaze the pan, then add the broth. Stir continuously until reduced by about half.

7. Spoon sauce onto plates and set two chicken *croutes* on each plate.

COOK'S TIP If you don't have a shallot, you can use ¼ of a red onion.

Servings: 2. Serving size: 1 breast. Per serving: 1,076 calories, 89.70 g protein, 57.20 g fat, 24.58 g carbohydrates, 1.30 g dietary fiber, 1,674 mg sodium, 1.88 g sugars, 395 mg cholesterol

\$100 Recipe Contest

September's recipe contest topic is **Five Ingredients or Fewer**. Sometimes if you can't get to the store, you have to make do with what's on hand ... and the results can be terrific. Send us your favorite recipes with five ingredients or fewer. Oil, water, salt and pepper don't count. The deadline is **April 10**.

There are three ways to enter: **ONLINE** at TexasCoopPower.com/contests; **MAIL** to 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701; **FAX** to (512) 763-3401. Include your name, address and phone number, plus your co-op and the name of the contest you are entering.

Steak for Two

DENA ZIZZO | BLUEBONNET EC

- 1 ½-inch-thick rib-eye steak
- Salt and pepper
- ¼ cup butter (½ stick), divided use
- 4 sprigs fresh thyme, tied in a bundle with cooking twine
- 2 ounces blue cheese, crumbled
- 4 ounces sliced mushrooms
- 1 small onion, thinly sliced
- ½ cup dry red wine, plus more as needed

1. Season the steak on both sides with salt and pepper. Melt half the butter in a cast iron skillet over medium heat. Place steak in pan and cook on one side for 4 minutes.

2. Add the remaining butter and the bundle of thyme. Turn the steak over and cook another 4 minutes, spooning the melted butter on top of the steak as it cooks. Turn the steak again and spoon the butter on top for one more minute.

3. Remove steak from pan and set on serving platter. Sprinkle the blue cheese on top of the steak.

4. Remove the thyme bundle from the pan and add the mushrooms and onion. Cook 3–4 minutes until soft. Add the wine and cook another 2 minutes.

5. Slice the steak. Pour the mushroom mixture over the steak and serve.

Servings: 2. Serving size: ½ steak. Per serving: 402 calories, 9.24 g protein, 29.53 g fat, 12.98 g carbohydrates, 3.58 g dietary fiber, 552 mg sodium, 4.18 g sugars, 82 mg cholesterol



Classic Lump Crab Cakes for Two

ELVIS & GINGER MCQUINN | BARTLETT EC

- 1 large egg, beaten
- ½ teaspoon yellow mustard
- 2 tablespoons mayonnaise
- 3 teaspoons parsley flakes
- 2 teaspoons seafood seasoning (such as Old Bay)
- 2 slices white bread, crumbled
- 1 pound lump crab meat
- 2 tablespoons cooking oil
- 2 lemon wedges

1. Mix the egg, mustard, mayonnaise, parsley, seafood seasoning and crumbled bread until well blended.
2. Gently stir in crab meat and shape into 4 patties.
3. In a skillet, heat the oil over medium heat and cook the crab cakes, turning carefully, until golden brown on both sides. Serve 2 to a plate and garnish each plate with a lemon wedge.

Servings: 2. Serving size: 2 patties. Per serving: 519 calories, 46.40 g protein, 28.40 g fat, 13.13 g carbohydrates, 0.82 g dietary fiber, 1,432 mg sodium, 1.28 g sugars, 269 mg cholesterol

Lamb Chops for Two

SUSAN LAVERY | FARMERS EC

- 2 lamb chops
- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 clove crushed garlic, or more to taste
- 1 teaspoon *herbes de Provence*

1. Rub lamb chops with oil and season both sides with salt, pepper, crushed garlic and *herbes de Provence*. Let sit about 15 minutes.
2. Grill chops about 6 minutes on each side or until center reaches 145 degrees for medium doneness.

Servings: 2. Serving size: 1 chop. Per serving: 462 calories, 16.52 g protein, 40.66 g fat, 0.39 g carbohydrates, 0.23 g dietary fiber, 136 mg sodium, 0.02 g sugars, 86 mg cholesterol

Chocolate Mint Pudding

NANCY PUMPHREY | BIG COUNTRY EC

- 6 ounces firm silken tofu
- ½ cup sugar
- ¾ cup baking cocoa
- 1 tablespoon vanilla soy milk
- 1 tablespoon butter or margarine, melted
- ⅓ teaspoon mint extract
- Dash salt

1. Combine all ingredients in a food processor. Cover and process until smooth.
2. Divide mixture between dessert dishes and refrigerate until serving.

Servings: 2. Serving size: 4 ounces. Per serving: 320 calories, 6.56 g protein, 9.59 g fat, 68.96 g carbohydrates, 10.74 g dietary fiber, 155 mg

WEB EXTRAS at TexasCoopPower.com

You'll find a couple more menu options for Dinner for Two online.



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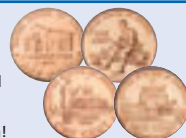
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In Bloom

Just living is not enough ... one must have sunshine, freedom, and a little flower.
—Hans Christian Andersen

IN THE WILD AND IN THE GARDEN, spring flowers are in full bloom. Texas Co-op Power readers sent in photos of some real beauties.

WEB EXTRAS at TexasCoopPower.com Brighten up your day with more blossoms online.

► **PAT DUNNUCK**, Sam Houston EC: Raindrops adorn this rose.

▼ **SHARON REGAN**, Magic Valley EC: You have to get up early to capture this night-blooming cactus.

► **NIKKI DICKERSON**, Pedernales EC: This American white water lily was photographed at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin.



▼ **PAUL GARCIA**, Medina EC: When the flowers come in spring, so do the butterflies.



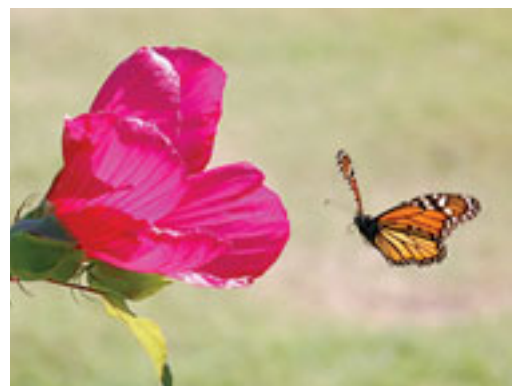
UPCOMING CONTESTS

JULY	MY FIRST CAR	DUE APR 10
AUGUST	AROUND THE FARM	DUE APR 10
SEPTEMBER	MY FAVORITE TEACHER	DUE MAY 10

All entries must include name, address, daytime phone and co-op affiliation, plus the contest topic and a brief description of your photo.

ONLINE: Submit highest-resolution digital images at TexasCoopPower.com/contests. **MAIL:** Focus on Texas, 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701. 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 do not accept entries via email. We regret that Texas Co-op Power cannot be responsible for photos that are lost in the mail or not received by the deadline.

▼ **REBEKAH BONGATO**, Sam Houston EC: Purple thistle attracts a butterfly.



▲ **DAVID COHEN**, Guadalupe Valley EC: Taken at the San Antonio Botanical Gardens, this hibiscus is a favorite of monarch butterflies.



▼ **MARIA HERNANDEZ, SHELBY GORDON**, Bluebonnet EC: This passion flower's bold bloom speaks for itself.



▼ **CANDY LOVINS**, Nueces EC: Candy shares her coral vines in full bloom.



▲ **CHARLES ASCHENBECK**, Jackson EC: Bluebonnets cover the ground on either side of this bridge in La Grange that spans the Colorado River.

▼ **CAMMY HATZENBUEHLER**, Grayson-Collin EC: A purple iris stands tall in the sun.





Pick of the Month Caddo Culture Day

Alto [April 11]

(936) 858-3218, visitcaddomounds.com

Experience the real life and story of the Caddo Indians from the Caddo Nation of Oklahoma through a live performance of their cultural music. Take part in clay bowl making, corn-husk dolls and natural dyes, flint knapping, *atlatl* throwing and guided tours of the Caddo Mounds State Historic Site.

CADDO: THE TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION. GIRL: © ACIK | DOLLAR PHOTO CLUB

April

8

Canton [8-11] Van Zandt County Fair and Rodeo, (214) 732-9811

9

Brenham Art in Blossom Flower and Art Show, (979) 277-4023, bluebonnetgardenclub.com

Marble Falls [9-11] **Paint the Town**, (877) 638-3927, paintthetownmftx.org

10

Blanco [10-12] **Wild Woman Weekend**, (512) 750-6362, wildwomanweekend.org

11

Decatur Glitzy Girls Trailer Park, (940) 210-9169

Kemp Wildflower Festival, (903) 498-3191, cityofkemp.org

Lampasas Hillacious Bike Tour, (210) 326-8892, lampasashillaciousbiketour.com

Palacios Patchwork of Life Christian Women's Conference, (361) 972-6068, patchworkoflife.com

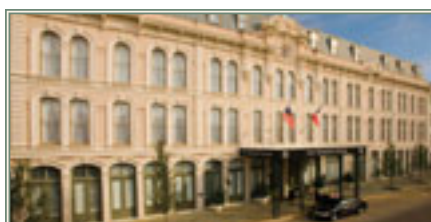
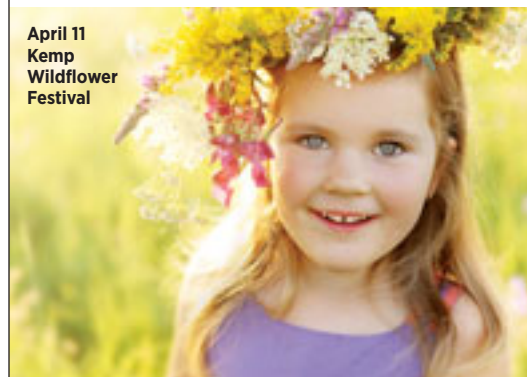
Rockdale Relay For Life of Milam County, (512) 760-7194, relayforlife.org/milamcotx

Texarkana Ark-La-Tex Challenge: One Ride, Three States, (903) 276-6267, arklatexchallenge.com

Utopia Community Auction, (830) 966-2435, utopiaeams@gmail.com

Possum Kingdom Lake [11-18] **Arte de los Brazos**, (940) 779-2424, artedelosbrazos.com

**April 11
Kemp
Wildflower
Festival**



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17

Grandview [17-19] Antique Alley Texas and 30+ Miles of Shopping, (817) 240-4948, AntiqueAlleyTexas.com

18

Bryan Downtown Street and Art Fair, (979) 822-4920, downtownstreetandartfair.com
Denison Big Texas Breakfast Open House, (903) 465-8908, visiteisenhowerbirthplace.com

Huntsville Margaret Lea Houston Birthday Celebration, (936) 294-1832, samhoustonmemorialmuseum.com

Brazoria [18-19] Migration Celebration, (866) 403-5829, migrationcelebration.com

19

New Braunfels [19-24] Texas Woodcarvers Guild Spring Seminars, (940) 484-9395, texaswoodcarversguild.com

24

Kirbyville Kirbyville Public Library Local Author Event, (409) 423-4653, kirbyvillelibrary.org

April 19-24
New Braunfels
Texas Woodcarvers Guild
Spring Seminars



Lamesa [24-26] Chicken-Fried Steak Festival/Balloon Rally, (806) 777-1171, ci.lamesa.tx.us

25

Canadian Block Party and Canadian's Got Talent, (806) 323-6234, canadiantx.com

Granbury Annual Acton Nature Run, (817) 326-6005, actonnaturecenter.org

New Ulm Art Festival, (713) 446-6348, newulmartfestival.org

26

Lake Jackson Taste of the Town, (979) 285-2501, visitbrazosport.com

30

Helotes [30-May 3] Cornyval and PRCA Rodeo, (210) 695-2103, cornyval.org

May

2

Boerne Heal the Soul 5K/10K Trail Run, (830) 331-8950, kcwstexas.org

Stephenville Cowboy Capital MS Trail Ride, (254) 592-1895, mstrailride.com

Victoria Cinco de Mayo Celebration, (361) 573-5277, visitvictoriatexas.com

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!

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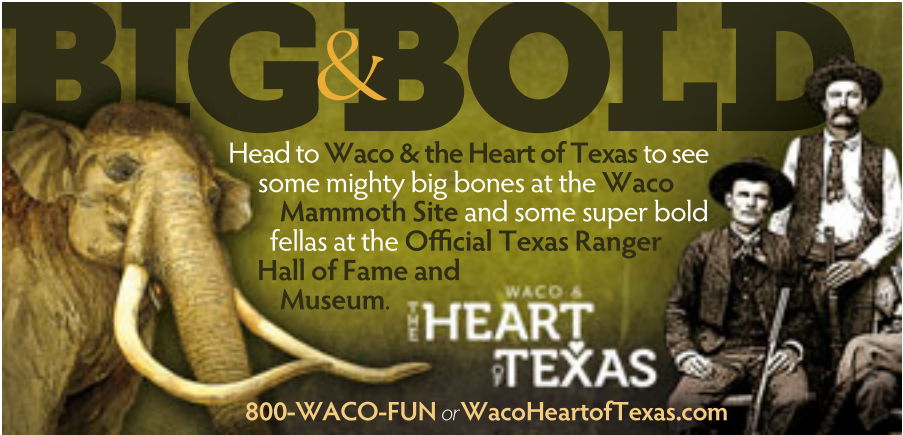
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Llano: Between a Rock and a Hard Place

This Hill Country town comes by its many assets naturally

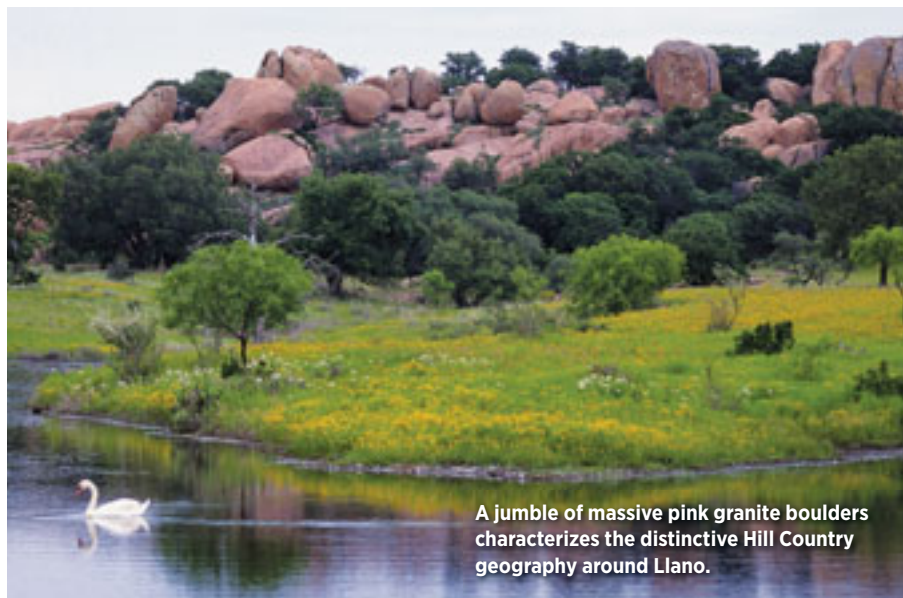
BY HELEN THOMPSON

"YOU COULD BE BLINDFOLDED AND DRIVEN around for hours," says Terry "Tex" Toler, "but you'll know exactly where you are the minute you take the blindfold off." Toler refers to his adopted hometown of Llano, where he manages **Llano's Main Street Program**. He attributes the area's rock-solid unique identity to geology, which is quintessential Hill Country with a mighty dose of moonscape thrown in.

The city of Llano sits amid modestly mountainous terrain. Round Mountain, Packsaddle Mountain and Dancer Peak are high points on the Llano Uplift. The uplift is an island of granite that got superheated about 2.5 billion years ago and then cooled, leaving giant bubbles of granite now exposed by millions of years of erosion. **Enchanted Rock**, the massive pink granite dome just 15 miles south of Llano, is a conspicuous upshot. Enclosed in a state park, Enchanted Rock is a mecca for rock climbers who revere the dome's diverse climbs, with names such as Raw Meat, Fear of Flying and Stranger Than Friction that evoke a sense of what's involved in ascending the 425-foot tall batholith.

The igneous excitement is reflected everywhere in this town of 3,232 people that's anchored in its historic square, presided over by the two-story sandstone, marble and granite Victorian-style county courthouse. The courthouse faces Ford Street on the east (which becomes Bessemer Avenue north of downtown) and Sandstone Street on the south. The street names are reminders that Llano had an iron-mining boom in the 1890s and still enjoys something of a rock boom.

From its vantage point at the top of the uplift, Llano is front and center for all sorts of precious stones and minerals (including gold) that were kicked up over the volatile Precambrian years. That includes one-of-a-kind llanite, a type of granite sparked with blue quartz crystals that is found only in Llano County. You can see a dike of llan-



A jumble of massive pink granite boulders characterizes the distinctive Hill Country geography around Llano.

ite on a road cut on Texas Highway 16 about 9 miles north of town.

You also can buy llanite at **Enchanted Rocks & Jewelry**, owned by Frank Rowell and his wife, Patricia Felts, who is a jeweler. Rowell knows all the best places to look for rocks, but one of his favorites is the Llano River, not far from the courthouse. Wade into the stream downhill from the intersection of East Sandstone and Ash streets, where swimming also is allowed.

You can't miss the river: It flows through the heart of Llano, underneath the beautiful Roy Inks Bridge, a four-span, steel, 1930s-era truss bridge that connects downtown proper to the rest of the city. That's where you'll find the other half of Llano, including the outdoor music venue behind the historic **Badu House** bed-and-breakfast. It features two decks and a patio with two fireplaces for heating up chilly winter nights. This is a soulful place that would inspire a bit of jealousy in many an Austin hangout. For more live music, Fuel Coffee House (just off the square) perks nightly with music ranging from the Ukulele Club to the Lake Bottom Jazz Band.

No visit to Llano would be complete without experiencing the fine barbecue. **Laird's** and **Inman's Kitchen** and **Brother's Bar-**

B-Que are contenders, but **Cooper's BBQ** reigns supreme. Whiff the aroma of brisket, pork chops, ribs, chicken and sausage cooking in the huge pit in front of the restaurant. Some connoisseurs go so far as to insist that Llano is the real barbecue capital of Texas, but you can decide for yourself.

Deer season is big in Llano, which also calls itself the deer capital of Texas. But the city is a year-round happy hunting ground for more diverse events, including the Llano Art Studio Tour, Fiddle Fest, Crawfish Open, Blue Bell & Bluegrass Festival, Open Pro Rodeo & Parade, Rock'n River Fest and Starry Starry Nights. There's also Llano Heritage Weekend, where Toler is planning to add a national rock-stacking contest to the other events such as the chuck wagon meal, shoot-out, author extravaganza and team roping. Rock stacking is similar to sand castle building, but practitioners use bigger elements and get taller results.

They are coming to the right place: Llano, it turns out, was made to rock.

Read more of author **Helen Thompson's** work at seeninhouse.com.

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You'll find details about lodging, dining, historic sites and maps.



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