

# TEXAS CO-OP POWER



## BUTTERFLY & CATERPILLAR GARDENING

**PLUS:**

Home Canning

Onion Festival

Houston Tropical Garden

# SEVERE WEATHER! ARE YOU READY?

## Lightning

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


### Lightning Safety Rules:

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

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



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# TEXAS CO-OP POWER

A MAGAZINE ABOUT TEXAS LIVING

## Gardening Issue

### 2006 Gardening Issue

**W**e hope you will be inspired by the earthly delights in our 2006 Gardening Issue!

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

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

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

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

Enjoy!

Peg Champion  
VP, Communications/Publisher



LARRY DITTO

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



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

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By Elaine Robbins

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

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By Aletha St. Romain

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

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By Joanna Davenport Athey

Nearer God's Heart in a Houston Garden

# TEXAS CO-OP POWER

# TEXAS CO-OP POWER

VOLUME 62 MARCH 2006 NUMBER 9

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

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## SHARE THE POWER!

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

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

For just \$15 a subscription, you can share *Texas Co-op Power* with friends and family members who live far away or in big cities!

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LAST CHANCE to Enter!

# Best of Co-op Country Contest 2006

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



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

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

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

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

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



### Best of Co-op Country General Contest Entry Form

Enchilada: \_\_\_\_\_

Water Tower: \_\_\_\_\_

Fourth of July Parade: \_\_\_\_\_



Lake: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Public Mural: \_\_\_\_\_

Co-op: \_\_\_\_\_

Riding Trail: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Spa: \_\_\_\_\_

City/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Texas Musician: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

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

**Magazine Provides a Taste of Home**

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

**MIKE BASQUETTE**

Trinity Valley Electric Cooperative

**Co-op Connection**

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

**FREDDA BUCKNER**, General Manager  
Big Country Electric Cooperative

**Dance Hall Book Endorsed**

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

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

**GILBERTO S. TREVIÑO**, San Antonio

**The First Americans**

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

**DOROTHY POOLE**

Farmers Electric Cooperative

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

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

**Remember the Alamo—1835**

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

**DANIEL E. FOX**

Pedernales Electric Cooperative

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

**Pasture Golf in South Dakota**

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

**JANINE KLINKER**

Grayson-Collin Electric Cooperative

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**WE WANT TO HEAR FROM OUR READERS.**

Send letters to:

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

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

## Go Fly a Kite— Safely!

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

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

### Always emphasize these important safety rules while kite flying:

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

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

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

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

# BUTTERFLY & CATERPILLAR GARDENING



Attracting butterflies to your garden is as easy as

1 2 3

BY ELAINE ROBBINS

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

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

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

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

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



## PLAN YOUR GARDEN

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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



# B U T T E R F L I E S

FIG 1: SPICEBUSH SWALLOWTAIL Host Plant: *Spicebush*

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

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

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

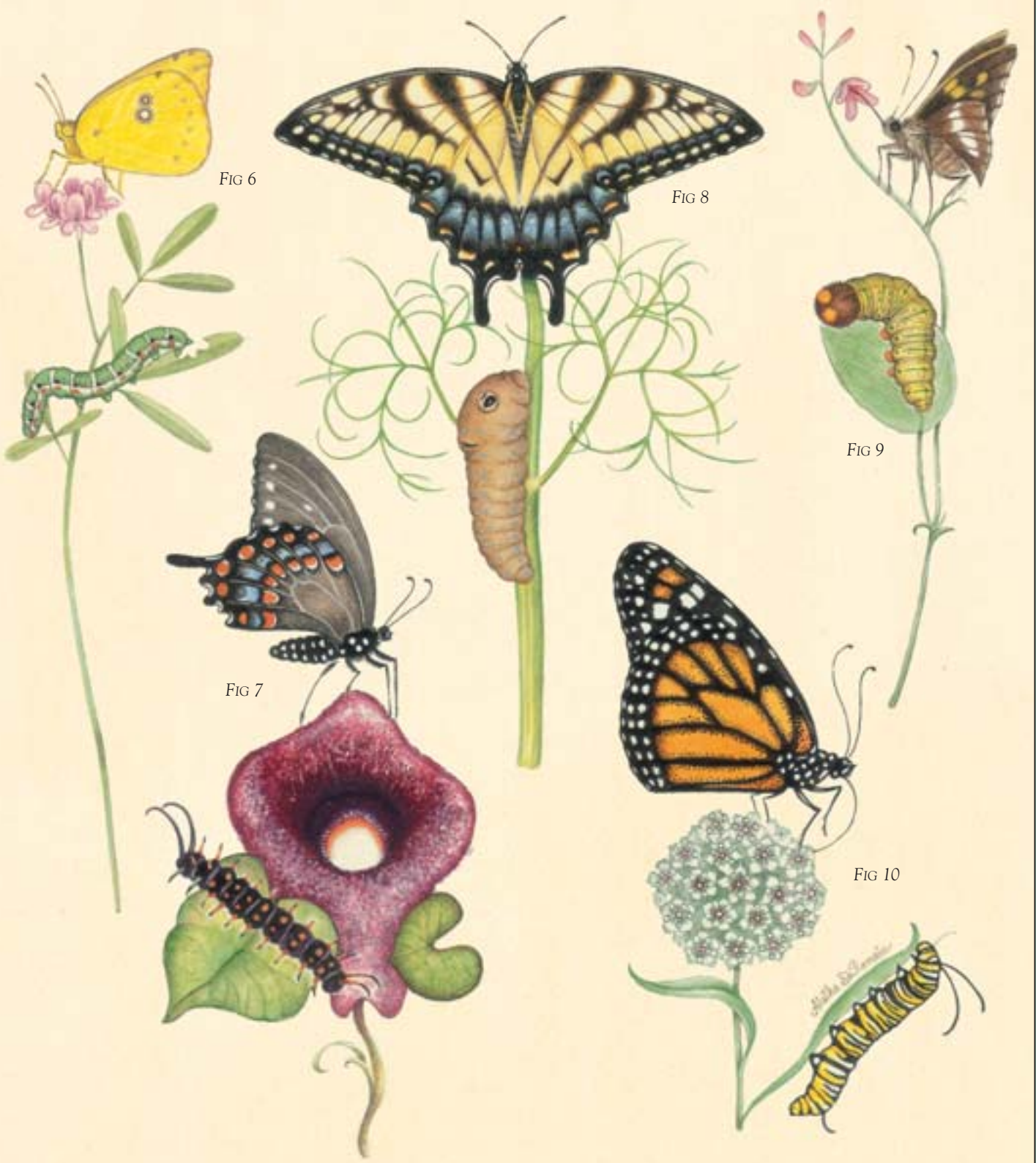


FIG 6

FIG 8

FIG 9

FIG 7

FIG 10

of T E X A S 2 0 0 6

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

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

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

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

# 2

## CHOOSE NECTAR PLANTS

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

If you want to provide nectar all

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

flies a convenient place to perch.

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

### FAVORITE NECTAR PLANTS



Aster



Autumn Sage



Butterfly Bush



Butterfly Weed



Coral Honeysuckle



Indian Blanket



Lantana



Mexican Sunflower



Milkweed



Mistflower



Purple Coneflower



Salvia



Turk's Cap



Verbena



Zinnia

# 3

## ADD CATERPILLAR FOOD PLANTS

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

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

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

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

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

### FAVORITE HOST PLANTS

**American Snout:** Hackberry

**Black Swallowtail:** Parsley, carrot, fennel, dill

**Gulf Fritillary, Zebra:** Passionvine

**Monarch, Queen:** Milkweed

**Mourning Cloak:** Cottonwood

**Painted Lady:** Thistle

**Pipevine Swallowtail:** Pipevine

**Red Admiral:** Nettles


**Skippers, Satyrs:** Grasses

**Spicebush Swallowtail:** Spicebush

**Sulphurs:** Senna, various legumes

**Viceroy:** Willow

## A CATERPILLAR CAUTIONARY TALE



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

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

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

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

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





## DOs & DON'Ts OF BUTTERFLY GARDEN CARE

**D**o use mulch to provide winter cover and help the soil retain moisture.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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





## WHERE THE BUTTERFLIES ARE

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

### Texas Butterfly Festival

Late October  
Mission; 1-800-580-2700  
[www.texasbutterfly.com](http://www.texasbutterfly.com)

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

### Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park

Mission; (956) 585-1107  
[www.worldbirdingcenter.org](http://www.worldbirdingcenter.org)

See an abundance of butterflies

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

### Edinburg Scenic Wetlands

Edinburg; (956) 381-9922  
[www.worldbirdingcenter.org](http://www.worldbirdingcenter.org)

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

### Frontera Audubon Center

Weslaco; (956) 968-3275  
[www.fronteraaudubon.org](http://www.fronteraaudubon.org)

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

### Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge

Rio Hondo; (956) 748-3607

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

### NABA International Butterfly Park

Mission; (956) 583-9009  
[www.naba.org](http://www.naba.org)

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



### Quinta Matatlan

McAllen; (956) 688-3333

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

### Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge

Alamo; (956) 784-7500

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

### Valley Nature Center

Weslaco; (956) 969-2475  
[www.valleynaturecenter.org](http://www.valleynaturecenter.org)

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

## BUTTERFLY FIELD GUIDES

**D**etailed butterfly plant and species lists for some Texas regions are available from the North American Butterfly Association’s website: [www.naba.org](http://www.naba.org).

### Butterflies Through Binoculars, The East

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

### Butterflies Through Binoculars, The West

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

### Butterflies of Houston and Southeast Texas

John Tveten and Gloria Tveten  
University of Texas Press, 1996

### Focus Guide to Butterflies of North America

Jim P. Brock & Kenn Kaufman  
Houghton Mifflin, 2003

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

David L. Wagner  
Princeton University Press, 2005



# The Power to Pick:

## Options for Paying Your Electric Bill



**A**t Bluebonnet, we are dedicated to providing the best possible bill payment services to our members through convenience, courtesy, and personal choice. From those members on the go, to those members who enjoy handling their payment transactions in person, Bluebonnet has established numerous bill payment options to suit different needs.

Currently, Bluebonnet provides our members four options to pay their electric bill: at one of our Customer Service Centers by cash, check, or credit card (Mastercard or Visa), by mail, by telephone with a credit card, or through automatic bank draft. Also, by the end of the first quarter, Bluebonnet will implement another option, online bill pay and presentment, to offer maximum flexibility regarding member payment choices. Giving our members a variety of personal, flexible choices to pay their electric bills efficiently and conveniently is a primary, important aspect and function of our customer service.

If you wish to pay in person with cash, check, or credit card (Mastercard or Visa), please visit any of our locations in Bastrop, Brenham, Giddings, Lockhart, or Manor. A customer service representative will gladly help to answer your questions and process your payment. For further convenience, feel free to make payments after-hours in our night deposit boxes located at each of our Customer Service Centers. As always, please do not place cash into the night deposit box.

If you wish to pay via mail, please be sure to include your account number on your check and send your payment to:

Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative, Inc.  
PO Box 240, Giddings, TX 78942

If you wish to pay your electric bill by telephone, you will need your account number as well as your credit card.

To pay your electric bill by automated bank draft:

- Complete a Bank Draft Authorization form available through our Customer Service Centers, or visit our web site: [www.bluebonnetelectric.coop](http://www.bluebonnetelectric.coop); and
- Return the completed form to your nearest Customer Service Center, along with a voided check from your checking account.

Even if you choose to pay your electric bill with our automated bank draft service, you will continue to receive a monthly bill that shows the amount of the bank draft as well as the processing date.

If for some reason your payment is delinquent (16 days beyond the date of issuance), Bluebonnet will send out a delinquency notice outlining the previous charges, additional late payment fees, and instructions for paying the delinquent bill. If your electric service is discontinued for bill non-payment, the full amount, plus all applicable fees and deposit, must be paid in full at a Bluebonnet Customer Service Center or by phone using your Mastercard or Visa to settle the account. As always, if you have questions or concerns about your billing account, feel free to contact a Bluebonnet Customer Service representative. We look forward to your business.

Visit a  
Customer  
Service  
Center.



Pay by  
phone.



Mail  
your  
payment.

# THE MORNINGS OF SEEDS

**I**n the Seed Lab of the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) located in Giddings, they're working with a single mission in mind: to protect Texans against the Bad Seed.

The Giddings lab is a Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative member, and it is one of three seed laboratories — strategically located around the state in Giddings, Lubbock and Stephenville — working to make sure producers, farmers and home gardeners alike are getting the best seeds available.

Texas produces new, higher quality and quantity seed in order to meet U.S. market demands, as well as the import needs of Mexico and Europe. TDA is responsible for regulating one of the largest seed industries in the U.S., and continues to be a leader in seed regulation.

The Texas Seed Law requires truth in labeling, and that's what the state seed labs help enforce. The Giddings laboratory conducts purity and germination tests on seed samples, including samples submitted by producers, TDA inspectors or anyone requesting a quality test (yes, they will sample seeds for individuals for a small fee). Inspectors regularly go out into stores and return with random seeds for testing, making sure tags reflect accurate germination dates. The lab also checks to ensure the seeds



aren't contaminated with noxious weed seed.

Texas seed labs support interstate and international marketing of seed by providing accurate test results

necessary for seed sales and shipments. And the labs work in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and other state departments of agriculture to

**LEFT:** Corn seeds planted in roll towels sit in a walk-in germinator. This photo was taken seven days after seeds were placed in the germinator.

**TOP:** Seed analyst Judy Keaghey uses a vacuum plate to plant cotton seed.

**ABOVE:** A seed analyst makes a final germination count of a corn sample.



promote uniformity and proper implementation of seed laws across the country.

According to TDA, the primary purpose of its seed labs is tri-fold:

- to make it possible for farmers to use seed tags or labels to invest in planting seed which will provide positive returns for them;
- to increase income for farm families through careful seeding and seed production; and
- to eliminate the peddling of inferior seed with large weed-seed content by dealers or truckers.

In other words, they're protecting Texans against the Bad Seed.

For more information about the Texas Department of Agriculture Seed Laboratory at Giddings, please call (979)542-3691.

**TOP LEFT:** An analyst records cotton seed grades for quality assurance.

**TOP RIGHT:** A mechanical divider helps the lab break down a sample of seed to their required working weights without any bias.

**RIGHT:** Lab coordinator Jeff Claxton stands in front of a walk-in germinator displaying corn seed with different colored treatment.

**BOTTOM LEFT:** Peanut sprouts after 8 days in a germinator.  
**BOTTOM RIGHT:** Treated corn seed.



# Pleasant Hill Winery

**Y**ou don't need to visit Pleasant Hill Winery too terribly long before it becomes quite clear how they came up with the name. Situated upon a scenic hill overlooking the fields just south of Brenham, one can hardly help but think, or even utter the words aloud: "My, this is pleasant."

And it is. Friendly, comfortable, owned and operated by the close-knit Cottle family, Pleasant Hill Winery

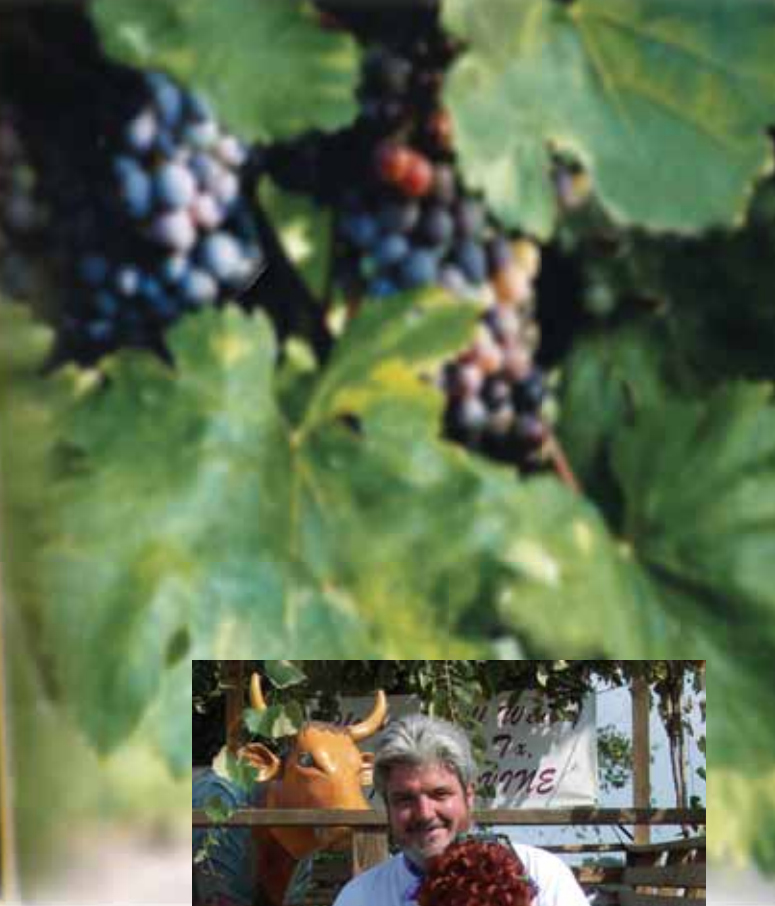


lives up to its label (pun intended). Celebrating its ninth anniversary this spring, the winery began as a part-family legacy, and a part-party pastime for owner Bob Cottle and his wife, Jeanne. Both of their Italian grandfathers were winemakers, but the couple began their winemaking endeavor a little more humbly—by concocting homemade cherry wine as part of a college project in Wisconsin in the early 1970s. The late '70s delivered them to Spring, Texas, where they continued making their own homebrew for friends while Bob worked as a mechanical engineer and Jeanne taught high school Spanish. Eventually, they decided to give commercial winemaking a try, and Pleasant Hill Winery was born.

Today, the winery produces several types of red and white wines, processing about 25 tons of fruit annually—some of it their own grapes, much of it from a dozen or so vineyards within the surrounding 150-mile area. The Cottles grow Cabernet Sauvignon and Sauvignon Blanc grapes out in Fort Davis. Among their popular award-winning offerings are Rosso Forte, Blanc du Bois and Collina Bianca.



A refurbished barn serves as a two-story European-style wine shop with a lovely view of the winery's three acres of vines, as well as the picturesque countryside beyond. The cellar serves as a sort of congested wine laboratory, crowded with tanks, barrels and other appa-



ratutes, while the upstairs hosts the tasting room with a view and Gina's Great Grape Gift Shop. The gift shop itself is something to see — a fascinating mixture of merchandise and museum. Along with the items available for sale is a sizable, albeit borrowed, collection of corkscrews, as well as Bob's own collection of antique radios.

The tours are relaxing, interesting and free, as is the wine-tasting —with the exception of a nominal fee for higher-end bottles. Conducted by Bob, the tour can be as brief or as detailed as you like, but be prepared to succumb to the urge to take home at least one bottle of

the Winery's fine product.

Come summer, Pleasant Hill Winery will host its grape-harvest-time "Crush for Fun" event. For \$25, adults can kick off their shoes and crush grapes the Lucy Ricardo way, then walk away with a commemorative tee and a Polaroid of their foot-stomping exploits. Children can participate for \$15, which includes fresh-pressed grape juice (no foot-y grapes, no worries), a tee-shirt and a snapshot. Food and craft booths are also part of the activities. Save the date for this year's Crush: four consecutive weekends beginning July 22-23 through August 12-13.

Pleasant Hill Winery is located at 1441 Salem Road in Brenham. The winery is open Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Sundays from noon to 5 p.m.; tours begin every hour on the half-hour. The winery is available for booking private parties and weddings.



**PHOTOS, LEFT TO RIGHT:** Bob Cottle has a small laboratory at the winery where he is able to examine samples of wine before bottling.

Bob hands Jeanne a glass of one of the 2003 reds from a barrel in the wine cellar.

The winery utilizes both stainless steel and the more traditional wooden barrels for ageing their wines.

The Cottles proudly display grape-stained feet during their annual "Crush for Fun" event.

For more information, please call (979)830-VINE (8463), or visit [www.pleasanthillwinery.com](http://www.pleasanthillwinery.com).



# Why We Encourage You to Conserve Energy

**Y**ou may wonder why we encourage you to use your electricity more effectively through energy conservation. After all, we're in the business of selling kilowatt-hours. Why would we encourage our customers to use less electricity?


Bluebonnet isn't in business to make a profit; we're in business to serve you in the most efficient, reliable and cost-effective way possible. Each co-op is collectively owned by the people it serves and shares its members' interest in keeping costs down.

We strongly encourage energy conservation for a number of reasons. First, it's good common sense. Although fossil fuels are still relatively abundant, they are a fixed quantity. Depleting these natural resources means there will be less fuel for future generations.

Conserving energy saves you money in two ways: (1) Your lowered

usage saves on your monthly electric bill, and (2) when many consumers lower their usage, it saves Bluebonnet money as well. Electric co-ops must keep enough power (capacity) on hand to supply all members' highest usage (demand). If that demand can be managed effectively, new power sources may not have to be tapped as soon as they would be otherwise, and the construction of costly new generating plants can be postponed. As our electric system continues to grow, we must maintain an adequate supply of power; your conservation efforts, when combined with others', can ensure that the cooperative's growth remains stable.

Here at Bluebonnet, we are trying to keep your electricity affordable by automating operations where possible and by setting reasonable budgets that do not sacrifice reliability and service. We have no control, however, over the



market price of fuels needed to generate electricity. The cost of fuels such as natural gas and coal is increasing steadily, and many factors affect those prices. Do we need to conserve electricity? Of course. Will that alone solve the energy crunch? Absolutely not. Conservation of electricity is just one avenue for managing energy costs. We must all conserve energy in other ways.

Many types of fuel make up our nation's energy picture and affect our pocketbooks. You can help us keep costs affordable by looking for ways to conserve all types of energy, not just electricity.

## Proxies are Paramount to a Successful Annual Meeting

**T**he 2006 Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting is scheduled for the afternoon of Tuesday, May 9, at the Sons of Hermann Hall in Giddings.

Naturally, we look forward to seeing the many Bluebonnet members who will attend this important event. But with over 56,000 members, we surely understand it's impossible for everyone to show up personally in order to vote for the directors who will lead the cooperative during the coming year. And that's exactly why we offer proxy voting.

Proxy voting gives Bluebonnet members who can't be at the Annual Meeting a way to still be counted, and members within all our service areas an equal opportunity to participate. With proxy voting, if you can't come to the Annual Meeting, then you can authorize either the Bluebonnet Proxy Committee or another person to cast your vote for you.

Here's how to sign up for proxy voting:

- Get your proxy form from the cover of the March Texas Co-op Power magazine, through your mail (watch for it mid-March), or at any Bluebonnet Electric office.
- If you want the Bluebonnet Proxy Committee to vote for you, just sign and date the form.
- If you want another person to vote for you, write his or her name where indicated on the form, then sign and date it.
- Once it's completed, just return your form to us no later than 5 pm, Tuesday, May 2, 2006.

Once your form is submitted, you'll automatically be entered into our cash prize drawing. Your proxy will be used only for the Annual Meeting. And, if your plans change and you show up at the meeting, then your proxy will be

Look for your Proxy card on the cover of this magazine. Return the completed card to Bluebonnet no later than, May 2.

revoked once you register at the event, and you can cast your ballot personally.

Last year, Bluebonnet had a record-breaking 7,000+ members vote by proxy. We hope even more of you will participate through this convenient and effective way of making sure your voice — as a cooperative member and co-owner — is heard.

### Bluebonnet PROXY 2006

THIS POSTAGE-PAID FORM MUST BE RECEIVED BY BLUEBONNET FOR CERTIFICATION ON OR BEFORE MAY 2, 2006.

I, the undersigned, being a member in good standing of Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative, Inc., do hereby appoint and constitute the Proxy Committee of Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative, Inc., with full power of substitution, as my proxy and agent for the annual meeting of the Cooperative to be held on Tuesday, May 9, 2006, in Giddings, Texas, at 2:30 pm unless specified otherwise in the appropriate place on this form. This proxy will remain in effect on any subsequent date, time, and place to which said annual meeting may be recessed or postponed, giving full authority to said appointed proxy to vote for me in my name and stead, as if I were present in person, on all matters to come before such meeting, including without limitation, election of directors and passing upon reports as well as the transaction of such other business as may come before the meeting.

Your Signature	Date	Phone No.
_____		
Account Name	Account Number	DC
_____		

This section is to be filled out only if you want to assign your proxy to a person who will be attending the meeting. Leave blank if you want your proxy assigned to the Proxy Committee.

My proxy is assigned to: \_\_\_\_\_

Please print name

# IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Take a shot at winning a unique prize by participating in Bluebonnet's new "In The Neighborhood" photo ID contest. Each month we will publish a new photograph of something within the Bluebonnet service area and ask members to identify the particular item or place. All correct entries will be entered into a monthly drawing for a prize. The winner's name, along with the information about the photo, will be printed two months following the submission deadline.

To qualify, entries must be made by Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative members and should include: the item and location of the subject in the photo, the member's name, mailing address, phone number/email address and Bluebonnet account number. Entries must be received by Bluebonnet no later than the 25th of each month to be included in the drawing.

Send entries to:

magazine@bluebonnetelectric.coop or  
"In The Neighborhood"

Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative,  
P.O. Box 240, Giddings, Texas 78942.

Correctly identify the subject/location of this photo and enter to win a gift certificate to Pleasant Hill Winery's gift shop.



Bluebonnet member Mrs. Jane Davis of McDade is the winner of the January "In the Neighborhood" contest drawing. Her name was drawn from entries correctly identifying an old-time advertisement painted on the side of the McDade Historical Society building in downtown McDade. Mrs. Davis won two tickets to a Saturday night dance at Club 21. Check out the "History Revealed" story below for more on January's "In the Neighborhood" photo subject.

## History Revealed

In response to our "In the Neighborhood" photo ID contest, Ms. Audrey Rother, curator of the McDade Historical Museum, sent in an email explaining the history behind the subject of our January contest. Thanks to Ms. Rother for the great tid-bit of history and for allowing us to reprint her email.

Sometime before 1936, Mr. Quinton Allen opened ALLEN'S CAFE in the OLD ROCK SALOON building in downtown McDade, Texas. He was a single man just starting out in the world, so he did everything himself. He cooked, served, washed the dishes and cleaned up all by himself. The menu was simple, one day he cooked chili, the next day he cooked stew, then he started over with chili. His customers sat at the counter on stools. He did not have tables and chairs in this cafe. We know he served Coca-Cola in the bottles and he may have had coffee to go with the deli-

cious pineapple and coconut pies made and delivered daily by Mrs. Gladys Freeman of McDade. Quinton paid 25 cents for a pie and sold a slice for 10 cents. Quinton married Miss Margaret Banks, a 3rd grade school teacher at McDade. She taught school and he ran the cafe until he closed the doors to work for Texas Power and Light in Bastrop. Quinton had the sign painted during the operation of the cafe.

The sign became so faded that many local folks did not know it existed. It only showed when it rained and the concrete got wet. The thought of losing this piece

of history was painful to members of the McDade Historical Society who still meet in this building and maintain the museum. Volunteers Audrey Rother and the late Ernestine Schulz took on the challenge to restore the sign one color at a time.

Photos were taken after a rain when the design & colors were at their best. The sign was fully restored in June of 1996.

Thanks for choosing our sign to feature in your magazine contest.

Audrey Rother  
Curator, McDade Historical Museum

# Bluebonnet Market Square

## AREA EVENTS

**Circle-D VFD, Rabies Clinic**, March 4, 1-4 pm. Circle-D Fire House, 926 FM 1441 (between Hwy 71 & Hwy 95 in Bastrop. For information, call Ann at (512)321-2315.

**Tolbert Terlingua Qualifier**, Saturday, March 25, Leon's Country Store in Rockne. Tolbert chili, cowboy chili, stew, beans, ribs, and brisket. Silent auction. Benefits Bastrop HS NJROTC, Band, & Girls' Softball. Call Debbi at (512)303-1888 or Carol at (512)321-7346.

**La Bahia Antique Show and Sale**, April 1-8, 8 am at La Bahia Hall. 290 W/TX 237

**Live Music Every Tuesday**, Country-western and golden oldies by the "Kitchen Pickers," 6:30-8:30 pm at the Bastrop Senior Center, all ages welcome, open to the public. Come dance or just listen, no admission fee. For more information, call (512)321-2315.

**"Country Music Monday,"** 1st Monday of every month, 7:30 pm, Sons of Hermann Hall, Giddings, Rotary Club of Giddings. Tickets: \$3.

**McDade Jamboree**, 2nd Monday of every month, 7 pm, VFW Hall, Hwy 290 one mile east of McDade. Tickets: \$2. Guest musicians play all the good oldies! 273-2307.

**Lone Star Country Music Jamboree**, music show and dance. 2nd Monday of every month, 7 pm. Seguin Coliseum, 810 Guadalupe St. (512)392-1545.

**"Country Music Jamboree,"** Third Tuesday of each month, 7 pm at Historic Baker Theater, 216 S. Main St. Lockhart. Just south of the Court House. Sponsored by Lockhart Breakfast Lions Club. (512)376-3430.



**"Karaoke,"** 2nd & 4th Saturday each month, 7-10 pm at Chriesman Citizen Center. "Quit singing in the shower - sing with us." For more information visit [www.chriesmancc.org](http://www.chriesmancc.org) or call (979)567-0573.

**Friends of Bluebonnet Opry**, 3rd Thursday of each month, 7:30 pm. Silver Wings Ballroom, 4100 Hwy 105, Brenham. (979)830-1961.

**Country Music**, 3rd Friday of every month, 7 pm, at the Blue Volunteer Fire Department located on the corner of CR 309 and FM 696.

**"Country Music Saturday,"** 3rd Saturday of each month, Rimshot plays, 7-9:30 pm at Chriesman Citizen Center. For more information, call (979)567-0573 or visit [www.chriesmancc.org](http://www.chriesmancc.org).

**2-Day Singing Celebration**, April 29 & 30, 10 am - ? Come hear Christian soloists and groups from all over Texas and beyond! Free event, fun for the whole family. Those interested in singing should call immediately to get on the schedule. Penning for Jesus Cowboy Church, 1252 FM 20, between Bastrop and Lockhart. For more information, call (512)940-5885.

## FOR SALE

**Full-bred Miniture Schnauzer Puppies.** 4 females, 1 male, tails docked, dewclaws removed, wormed and first shots. Females \$275, Male \$225. For more information, call (512)581-9050.

**3/2 Mobile Home**, 1,742 sq. ft. on 4.59 fenced acres in Cedar Creek. Fireplace, CA/CH, clean and maintained. 1,500 sq. ft. shop w/ electricity and tank, secluded, scenery. \$77,500. (512)321-9876 or [jade61605@hotmail.com](mailto:jade61605@hotmail.com).

**Hayward H-200 Pool/Spa Heater**, Gas. \$200.00. (512)398-9192.

**Honey Bees.** Bring your box, best brood and honey: \$60.00 or Box and All: \$80.00 to \$125.00. Also a Small Country Home on lake. La Grange, TX. (979)968-5520.

**John Deer 620 Tractor**, good condition. \$3,500. (361)293-7712.

**Chihuahua Puppies**, beautiful, adorable and very loveable. Make wonderful companions. Born February. Call to see at (512)601-1877.

**1650 Oliver Diesel** with a 7ft. Shedder. \$3,000. Also, 74 Acres in LaCava Co. Moulton. \$325 an acre. (979)793-6534.

**Hoveround Electric Wheelchair**, like new, excellent condition. \$500 or best offer. Call Frances at (512)253-6267.

**Private Duty Home Care** for Elderly Errands and Housekeeping. Can also serve as a Live-In Caretaker. Available all hours. (512)253-6267.

**Seven Piece Diner Set.** Set includes: smoked color glass table top 36"x60" and six chairs. All in excellent condition. (512)376-8291.

**2/2 House Plus Office.** Bastrop County, very secluded. All applicances included. Owner financed-\$1,000 down, with a total payment of \$732. No credit check. (512)601-2498.

**Audio and Video Repair Course.** Includes multimeter, etc., lots of paraphernalia to tinker with. (979)357-2889.

**Oldie Goldies! Golden Oldies!** Convert your treasured LP's and cassettes to CD's. Satisfaction guaranteed. [www.vinyl2disc.com](http://www.vinyl2disc.com) (866)706-2866

**2002 Integrity Trailer.** 3-horse w/5 ft. SW living qtrs.; AC/heat, shower, toilet, fridge, microwave, sink, TV; walk-through door, escape door, hay rack, stud divider; drops on head, slats on rump; screen door, white skin, stainless nose. Exceptionally clean. \$19,900 neg (512)237-3182.

## BLUEBONNET MARKET SQUARE ADVERTISING SCHEDULE

All Market Square ads should be sent to Bluebonnet at least two months in advance. Information can be emailed to: [magazine@bluebonnetelectric.coop](mailto:magazine@bluebonnetelectric.coop) or sent in writing to: Market Square c/o Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative P.O. Box 240, Giddings, Texas 78942

**Area Events and ad information for the May 2006 issue are due by March 15.**

We reserve the right to refuse any ads due to space limitations or questionable content. Ads must be resubmitted each month in order to run more than one month. Please indicate "For Sale," "Free," or "Wanted."

## BUILDING GOOD CITIZENS FOR TEXAS

**Self-Reliance —**  
Believing in one's own self-worth;  
learning to rely on personal strengths;  
demonstrating knowledge of personal skills, abilities, and impressions on others.



P.O. Box 240  
Giddings, Texas 78942

[www.bluebonnetelectric.coop](http://www.bluebonnetelectric.coop)  
800-842-7708  
Outages: 800-949-4414



THE LOST ART  
*of*  
CANNING

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

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

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



©CORBIS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Blake Vines' Ripe Cucumber Pickles

### Step 1

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

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

### Step 2

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

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

### Step 3

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

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

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

# CANNING IN WORLD WAR II



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

## JUNE RECIPE CONTEST



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

AROUND TEXAS

March

- 2. General Sam Houston's Birthday & Texas Independence Celebration, **Huntsville**, 1-800-289-0389 or www.huntsvilletexas.com
- 2-5. BorderFest, **Hidalgo**, (956) 843-2734 or www.borderfest.org
- 2-5. Old Mill Marketplace, **Canton**, (903) 567-5445 or www.oldmillmarketplace.com
- 3. Fish Fry, **Dripping Springs**, (512) 894-4470
- 3-4. Quilt Show, **Lampasas**, (512) 556-2224
- 3-5. Old Mill Trade Days, **Post**, 1-866-433-6683 or www.oldmilltradedays.com
- 3-5. Antiques Show, **Longview**, (830) 426-7015
- 3-5. Highway 290 Trade Days, **Burton**, (979) 357-2552
- 4. Citywide Market, **Sinton**, (361) 364-2307
- 4. Ole Time Music, **Pearl**, (254) 865-6013 or www.pearlbluegrass.com
- 4. Market Days, **Elgin**, (512) 376-6115
- 4. Symphony Concert, **Waxahachie**, (972) 938-0404

- 4. Sounds of Texas Music Series, **Conroe**, (936) 441-7469 or www.theoundsoftexas.com
- 4. Riverbend Rendezvous, **Marble Falls**, (830) 693-6632 or www.riverbendfineart.com
- 4. Kid Fish-O-Rama, **Grand Prairie**, (972) 237-8100
- 4. Friends Back Room Book Sale, **Austin**, (512) 440-1241
- 4. Globe Oprea, **Odessa**, www.globesw.com
- 4. Benefit Mexican Supper, **Sisterdale**, (830) 324-6623
- 9-10. Community Garage Sale, **Kirbyville**, (409) 423-5827
- 9-12. LaSalle County Fair and Wild Hog Cook-Off, **Cotulla**, (830) 879-2852
- 10-11. Quilt Show, **Kemp**, (903) 498-5083
- 10-19. Rio Grande Valley Livestock Show, **Mercedes**, (956) 565-2456 or www.rgvlivestockshow.com
- 11. Texas German Convention, **Yoakum**, (361) 575-0560
- 11. Williamson County Genealogy Seminar, **Round Rock**, (512) 335-6904

- 11. Redbud Festival, **Buna**, (409) 994-5586
- 11-12. Ceramic Show, **West**, (210) 497-8348
- 11-12, 25-26. Chicken House Flea Market, **Stephenville**, (254) 968-0888
- 12-15. Vietnam Veterans Memorial Highway Motorcycle Run, **Perryton**, (806) 435-6575 or www.perryton.org
- 13. McDade Jamboree, **McDade**, (512) 273-2307
- 17-19. Trade Days, **Livingston**, (936) 327-3656 or www.cityoflivingston-tx.com/tradedays
- 18. Possum Kingdom Relays, **Graham**, (940) 549-0370
- 18. Corvette and Chevy Show, **Killeen**, (254) 534-0809 or www.midtexcorvette.com
- 18. Lawn & Garden Expo, **Waxahachie**, (972) 825-5175 or www.ecmga.com
- 18. Jim Reeves Jamboree, **Carthage**, (281) 852-8308
- 18. Market, **Marlin**, (254) 803-3331
- 18-April 1. Azalea Trails, **Nacogdoches**, 1-888-653-3788
- 19. Bach Birthday Celebration, **Kerrville**, (830) 792-7262

FESTIVAL OF THE MONTH BY JIM GRAMON

Texas Rio Grande Valley Onion Festival: Weslaco, April 1



WESLACO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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

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

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

The Texas 1015 onion was cre-

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Magic Valley EC serves the Weslaco area.*

Jim Gramon is the author of FUN Texas Festivals & Events. [Jim@JimGramon.com](mailto:Jim@JimGramon.com), [www.JimGramon.com](http://www.JimGramon.com).

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

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

## April

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

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

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



# TEXAS CO-OP POWER

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

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

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

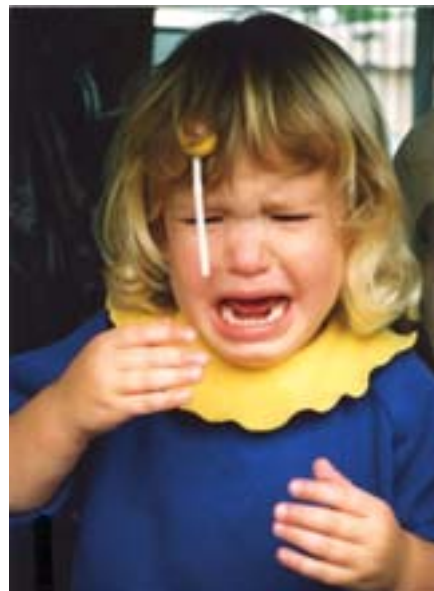
For just \$15 a subscription, you can share *Texas Co-op Power* with friends and family members who live far away or in big cities! See page 4 for an order form.

# Oops!

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

**School Projects** is the topic for our May issue. Send your photos—along with your name, address, daytime phone, co-op affiliation and a brief description—to School Projects, Focus on Texas, 2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704, before March 10. A stamped, self-addressed envelope should be included if you want your entry returned (approximately six weeks). Please do not submit irreplaceable photographs—send a copy or duplicate. We regret that Texas Co-op Power cannot be responsible for photos that are lost in the mail or not received by the deadline. If you use a digital camera, e-mail your highest-resolution images to focus@texas-ec.org. (If you have questions about your camera's capabilities, please check the operating manual.)

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



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



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

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



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

### UPCOMING in Focus on Texas

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



## Nearer God's Heart in a Houston Garden

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

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

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

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

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

purebreds Sister, Brunehilda and Rufus—protected the borders.

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

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

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

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

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



Frank and Jean Davenport in their Houston garden.

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

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

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

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

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

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