

MAY 2019

Illinois Country Living

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WHAT
IN ILLINOIS?



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MOTHER OF THE YEAR

**Role model,
survivor, friend**

PRAIRIE TABLE

**Authentic
Mexican fare**

GREAT OUTDOORS

**Enjoying
hummingbirds**



**CO-OP
NEWS**

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Illinois Country Living

MAY 2019
VOLUME 77 • NO. 1

22 They grow WHAT in Illinois?

The Land of Lincoln grows a variety of agricultural products and it's not all corn and soybeans.

28 Role model, survivor, friend

Cathie Smith named 2019 Mother of the Year.

30 Authentic Mexican fare surrounded by vineyards

This month **PRAIRIE TABLE** visits Tacqueria Pequena (Little House of Tacos) in Cobden.



DEPARTMENTS

4 FIRST THOUGHTS

Rural America – a small town family

Community comes first.

6 CURRENTS

This month's highlights

News/Legislation/Trends/Tips

14 ENERGY SOLUTIONS

Keeping your cool

Heating system upgrades have a big effect on comfort and your pocketbook for years to come.

16 POWERED UP

New technology in 2019

Major developments in smart technology and what to keep an eye on.

18 SAFETY CHECK

Life-saving safety tips

Important tips we hope you never need to use.

20 GARDENWISE

Beyond impatiens

Colorful alternatives for your yard's shady spots.

32 FINEST COOKING

Shrimp and rice

A great combo with never-ending preparation alternatives.

34 GREAT OUTDOORS

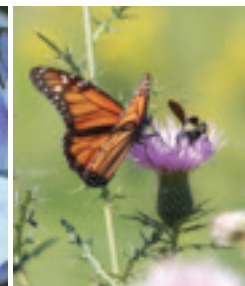
Enjoying hummingbirds

Ways to entice these tiny, inquisitive birds.

38 SNAPSHOTS

Flowers of the sky

Photos flew in when readers were asked for their best shots of butterflies and flowers.



Rural America - a small town family

The following are excerpts from comments made by Phil Carson, NRECA board president and director at Tri-County Electric Cooperative, Inc., Mt. Vernon, as he addressed attendees of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) annual meeting on March 12.

I COME FROM A small town. I don't know if you remember the lyrics of the John Cougar Mellencamp song, Small Town, but I liked that song. I'm a small-town guy. In fact, I even live outside of a small town. I don't live in a small town, but outside of a small town in rural Illinois. It's a town of a hundred people. I'm rural. I'm country. And I suspect most of you can relate to that. I love it. I know you love it. That's where we live and where we serve.



I asked myself what three things I wanted to reinforce in your minds.

They're not new, but I think they're important and apply to all of us.

Number one, we are family. The NRECA is a family from 47 different states, 900 cooperatives, 42 million Americans served, and we're family. We agree on many things, but we don't agree on everything. Our diversity almost guarantees there are going to be challenges. We have never agreed on everything. We don't today, and we won't in the future, but we'd better figure a way through it.

Because of our diversity, different views, past debates, and past compromises, we've always been able to come to an understanding. The issues of energy and the environment, and greenhouse gas emissions are on the table again, and I suspect they will be for the foreseeable future.

How do we get through this? The same way we've always done it. We speak honestly to each other, listen carefully and debate respectfully. Then we find common ground and move forward. That's the way we get through it and remain family.


Secondly, we are facilitators. Our communities do not exist for the sake of our cooperatives. Our cooperatives exist for the sake of our

communities. Our communities come first. That's why we're here.

As electric cooperatives, we facilitate the quality of life in our communities. It's not electricity first. That happened to be the way we did it, but we facilitate the quality of life in our communities in rural America where we live, serve and love. That's why we were formed and exist, for homes, schools and businesses, to bring electricity and make good things happen. We are facilitators.

If someone asked the question, do our communities need broadband? My answer is yes. I think the electric cooperative at a minimum is to be a cheerleader encouraging it because we know our communities need it. It may be as a minor partner or perhaps an equity owner, but our communities need broadband. We are facilitators of the quality of life in our rural areas.

The last thing that I want to leave with you is please tend to the fundamentals. Fundamentals are our governance. It's how we behave, conduct and discipline ourselves. Electric cooperatives are so important to our communities that we must not stumble over the fundamentals. We must not get tripped up over governance issues. We must not destroy the trust that our member-owners have placed in us.

In the last stanza of the John Cougar Mellencamp song Small Town the lyrics say: "Well, I was born in a small town, and I can breathe in a small town. I'm going to die in this small town. And that's probably where they'll bury me." That's probably going to be true for me. Small town America, rural America, countryside America. We all love it. I love it. You love it. 



Illinois Country Living is a monthly publication serving the communications needs of the locally-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives of Illinois. With a circulation of almost 189,000, the magazine informs cooperative consumer-members about issues affecting their electric cooperative and the quality of life in rural Illinois.

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Illinois Country Living (ISSN number 1086-8062) is published monthly by the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives, 6460 S. Sixth Street Frontage Road East, Springfield, IL 62712. The cost is \$2.88 plus postage per year for members of subscribing cooperatives and \$12 per year for all others. Periodical postage paid at Springfield, Illinois, and additional mailing offices.

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COOPERATIVE MEMBERS: For address changes contact your local electric cooperative.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Illinois Country Living, P.O. Box 3787, Springfield, IL 62708.

ADVERTISING: Acceptance of advertising by the magazine does not imply endorsement by the publisher or the electric cooperatives of Illinois of the product or service advertised. Illinois Country Living is not responsible for the performance of the product or service advertised and reserves the right to refuse any advertising.

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MAY CHECKLIST

Childproof your home.

A study by Temple University found that 100 percent of 2- to 4-year-olds were able to remove one type of plastic outlet cap within 10 seconds. Childproof your home by installing tamper resistant receptacles. **Source: ESFi**



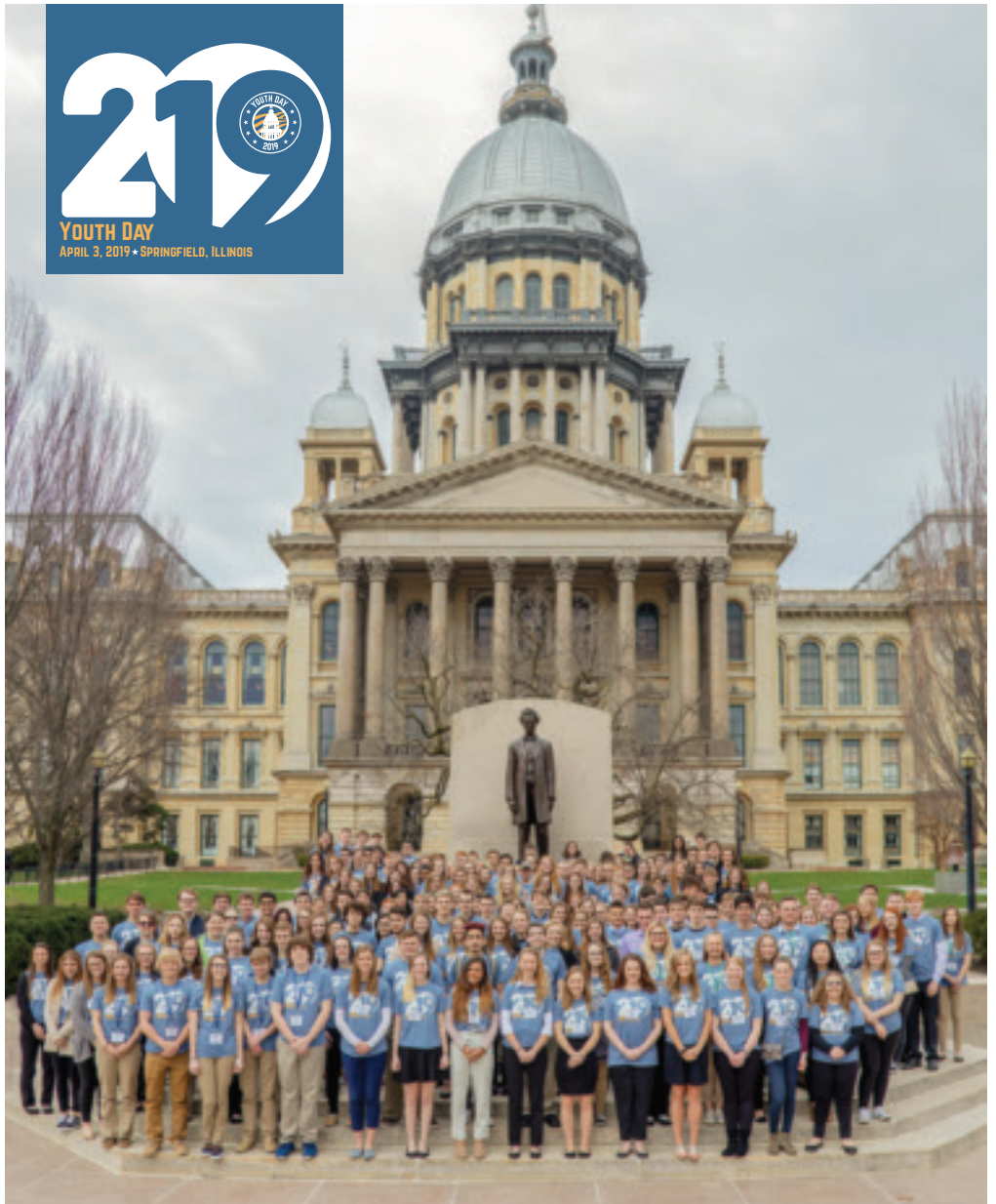
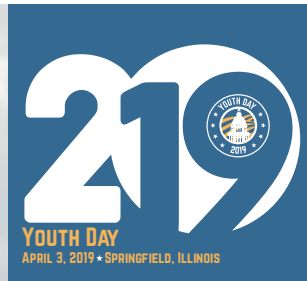
Be sun safe. With warmer weather, don't forget to wear sunscreen with at least SPF 15, a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses that block both UVA and UVB rays. **Source: cdc.gov**



Storing your snowblower. Put a fuel stabilizer in the gas tank of your snowblower and fill with gas until nearly full. Run to get it into the engine and fuel system.


Tip of the month:

Use less energy by setting your programmable thermostat as high as is comfortable in warm weather and raise the setpoint when you're sleeping or away from home. **Source: energy.gov**



Cooperative youth visit state capitol

For 60 years, the electric and telephone cooperatives of Illinois have given tomorrow's leaders the opportunity to learn from today's public officials. Each year, nearly 250 outstanding students get an up-close and first-hand look at democracy in action when they visit the capitol and meet their elected senators and representatives during Illinois Electric

and Telephone Cooperatives Youth Day. Over the years, thousands of students have learned how government works and why it's important for every citizen to get involved. State senators and representatives had the opportunity to inspire and encourage leaders of tomorrow during this annual event held Wednesday, April 3 in Springfield. 

For the latest currents news go to www.icl.coop

Illinois YLC Collin Moseley represents state at annual meeting

Each year Illinois electric cooperative students attending the Youth to Washington Tour elect one of their peers to represent the state on the Youth Leadership Council (YLC). Collin Moseley, Clay Electric Co-operative, Inc., represented Illinois at the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association annual meeting held in Orlando, Fla., March 9-13.



Moseley says, "The annual meeting was nothing but awe inspiring. I could not get over the extensive number of people who all came together in support of the cooperative cause. I was fortunate to help with the Co-ops Vote booth and assist in the annual business meeting. When our chaperone said we would be like celebrities, she wasn't kidding. I was pleasantly surprised at the number of people that took an interest in me just because I was wearing a red YLC shirt.

"All of us left that conference with tears in our eyes, new lifetime friends and a belief in our ability to enact change. For that, I am forever grateful."💡

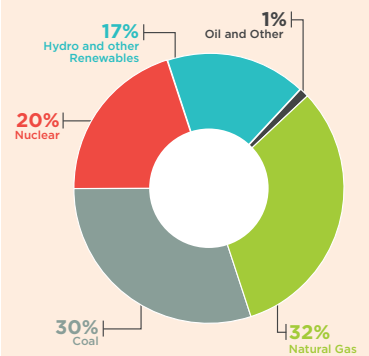
Social Security Administration alert

The Social Security Administration (SSA) and its Office of the Inspector General (OIG) are alerting the public to a nationwide telephone impersonation scheme. Reports from across the country are being received about fraudulent phone calls from people falsely claiming to be SSA employees. The calls can even "spoof" the SSA national customer service number on caller ID.

"We urge you to always be cautious and avoid providing sensitive information such as your social security number or bank account information to unknown people over the phone or internet," says Nancy A. Berryhill, acting commissioner of Social Security. "If you receive a call and are not expecting one, you must be extra careful – you can always get the caller's information, hang up, and contact the official phone number of the business or agency the caller claims to represent. Do not reveal personal data to a stranger who calls you."

Social Security employees occasionally contact people – generally those who have ongoing business with the agency. However, SSA employees will NEVER threaten a person or promise a benefit approval, or increase, in exchange for information. In those cases, do not engage the caller. If you or someone you know receive a questionable call claiming to be from the SSA or the OIG, just hang up.

Report the call to the OIG Fraud Hotline at 800-269-0271 or online at <https://oig.ssa.gov/report>.💡



Just flip the switch

Ever wonder why they call it electricity?

It's named after those little pieces of atoms called electrons, and that is the place to start in understanding how power plants make something that reliably lights your home.


Almost all your electricity starts with the scientific phenomenon that spinning a magnet inside a coil of wires will generate electricity. Large turbines at the power plant turn in different ways: falling water at a hydroelectric dam; burning coal or natural gas at a fossil fuel stations; atomic energy at a nuclear power plant; or the rotating blades of a wind turbine. One exception is solar energy, which produces electricity when materials are activated by sunlight.

Most large electric generating plants need large banks of transformers to boost the voltage for the cross-country trip through wires held up by tall transmission lines and towers. As it nears your neighborhood, the voltage is reduced at the substation. Lower voltage makes the electricity safer for home energy use. As the electricity gets closer to your home or business, voltage is reduced again by smaller transformers – the ones mounted on utility poles or in green boxes in your yard.

Beyond those basics, all that flowing electricity has to be coordinated so it gets to the right house when needed and organized by line crews. Safety is always top priority.

That's a lot of power in the simple flip of a switch!💡

Source: Paul Wesslund, NRECA




- ▲ Slow down.
- ▲ Watch for hand signals.
- ▲ Watch for flashing amber lights.
- ▲ Do not speed past farm equipment.
- ▲ Don't expect them to drive on the road shoulder.
- ▲ Do not pull out in front of them and then slow suddenly.

Start seeing motorcycles

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), motorcyclist deaths occurred 28 times more frequently than fatalities in other vehicles, based on 2016 fatal crash data. To keep motorcyclists safe, the NHTSA urges everyone to share the road and be alert.

It is especially important for motorists to understand the safety challenges faced by motorcyclists such as size and visibility, and motorcycle riding practices like downshifting and weaving to know how to anticipate and respond to them.

“When motorcycles and other vehicles collide, it is usually the other (non-motorcycle) driver who violates the motorcyclist’s right of way,” according to the NHTSA. “There is a continuing need to help other motorists ‘think’ motorcyclists and to educate motorcyclists to be aware of this problem.”

Motorcycles are relatively small and often drivers don’t see them because their view is obstructed by vehicle blind spots or other vehicles. Stay alert to traffic and be aware of your surroundings. Start seeing motorcycles. 

Source: NHTSA




Ninety Illinois electric cooperative directors, managers and staff visited the Illinois State Capitol on Wednesday, March 20 to fly the co-op flag and build important relationships with their local legislators. They spoke with state senators and representatives whose districts include their co-op territory regarding issues of importance to cooperative member-owners. They also invited legislators to attend their upcoming annual meetings and visit their cooperatives to tour the facilities and meet employees.

Co-ops fuel economy

Electric cooperatives have a broad financial impact on the United States, directly or indirectly supporting nearly 612,000 jobs each year and contributing hundreds of billions of dollars to the economy over a five-year period, according to a new analysis.

Between 2013 and 2017, co-ops employed an average of 67,800 people a year, hired about 106,000 contractors, and by extension helped provide jobs for about 170,300 people who supplied equipment and services, the report states. Another 273,000 jobs were supported through consumer spending by co-op employees, contractors and suppliers.

“This report quantifies what many rural American families and businesses know well – electric cooperatives are powerful engines of economic development in their local communities,” says NRECA CEO Jim Matheson.

The analysis also found that, from 2013 to 2017, co-ops contributed \$440 billion to the gross domestic product (GDP), \$881 billion to U.S. sales output and \$200 billion to the nation’s labor income.  Source: NRECA





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CURRENTS

86% of reported home electrical injuries happen to **children** between the ages of **1 and 4**.



Safe Electricity.org

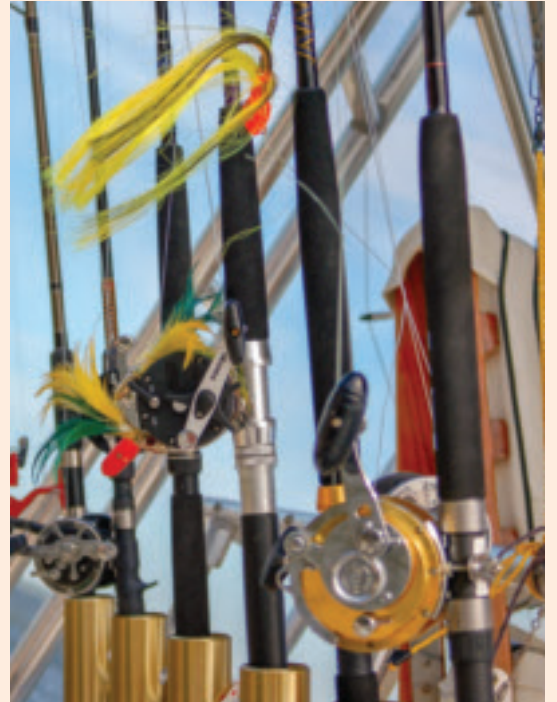
research collected from the American Academy of Pediatrics

Did you know?

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources has an “Access to Fishing” fishing pole loaner program. It’s a unique way for those wanting to try fishing without having to buy equipment. Fishing poles are available at locations such as libraries and bait stores across the state.

The equipment is available to be borrowed at no cost and is handled much like checking out a library book. Tackle packets with hooks, sinkers, etc. and instructional fishing information is also available at no cost.

To find a location in your area, go to www.ifishillinois.org and click on fishing programs.



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Eye Doctor Helps Illinois Legally Blind To See

High Technology For Low Vision Patients Allows Many To Drive Again



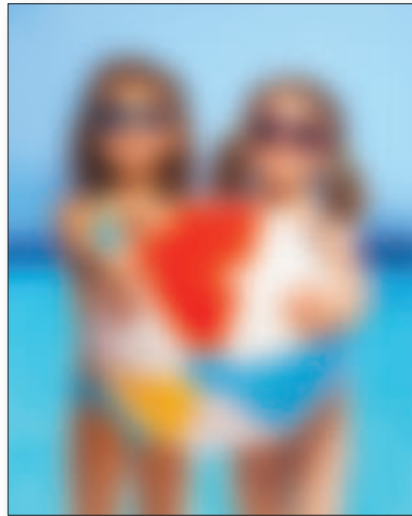
For many patients with macular degeneration and other vision-related conditions, the loss of central visual detail also signals the end to one of the last bastions of independence: driving. A Mascoutah optometrist, Dr. Marianne McDaniel, is using miniaturized telescopes that are mounted in glasses to help people who have lost vision from macular degeneration and other eye conditions.

"Some of my patients consider me the last stop for people who have vision loss," said Dr. Weingart, one of only a few doctors in the world who specialize in fitting bioptic telescopes to help those who have lost vision due to macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy, and other debilitating eye diseases.

Imagine a pair of glasses that can improve your vision enough to change your life. If you're a low vision patient, you've probably not only imagined them, but have been searching for them. Bioptic telescopes may be the breakthrough in optical technology that

will give you the independence you've been looking for. Patients with vision in the 20/200 range can many times be improved to 20/50 or better.

Macular degeneration is the leading cause of blindness and vision loss in people over 50. Despite this, most adults are not familiar with the condition. As many as 25% of those over the age of 50 have some degree of macular degeneration. The macula



A scene as it might be viewed by a person with age-related macular degeneration.

is only one small part of the retina; however, it is the most sensitive and gives us sharp central vision. When it degenerates, macular degeneration leaves a blind spot right in the center of vision, making it difficult or impossible to recognize faces, read a book, or pass the driver's vision test.

Nine out of 10 people who have macular degeneration have the dry form. New research suggests vitamins can help. The British medical journal BMC Ophthalmology recently reported

that 56% of patients treated with a high-dose combination of vitamins experienced improved vision after six months.

While age is the most significant risk factor for developing the disease, heredity, smoking, cardiovascular disease, and high blood pressure have also been identified as risk factors.

Macular degeneration accounts for 90% of new legal blindness in the U.S. While there is currently no cure, promising research is being done on many fronts. "My job is to figure out everything and anything possible to keep a person functioning, especially driving," says Dr. McDaniel.

"Bioptic telescopes can cost over \$2,000," said Dr. McDaniel, "especially if we build them with an automatic sunglass."

"The major benefit of the bioptic telescope is that the lens automatically focuses on whatever you're looking at," said Dr. Weingart. "It's like a self-focusing camera, but much more precise."

To learn more about bioptic telescopes or to schedule a consultation, give Dr. McDaniel or Dr. Weingart a call. You can also visit our websites.

www.lowvisionofsouthil.com

1-802-350-6599

Office located in Mascoutah, Illinois
Marianne McDaniel, O.D.

www.FoxValleyLowVision.com

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Located in Oswego, IL
Ronald Weingart, O.D.

LET'S GO!

Would you like to see your event in the magazine?

Go to www.icl.coop/datebook, click the green box "post your event" and fill out your information. Don't forget to click submit. Datebook events are chosen from those on the website calendar.

Benton Rend Lake Water Festival

MAY 1-4 This festival offers 4 days of excitement and family fun. Bring lawn chairs to watch the parade and enjoy free live entertainment each evening. Try out the food, vendors, games and rides on the midway. Check the website for a schedule of activities and entertainment. Free self-parking on the west side of the square.

May 1 - 4, 2019; all day
 ● Benton Public Square, 211 N. Main St., Benton
<https://www.bentonwestcitychamber.com/>



Mushroom Festival at Pere Marquette

MAY 5 Come listen to live music, browse vendors, grab lunch, taste local wines and learn all there is to know about mushrooms. The Great Morel Hunt will be held at 1 p.m. (weather and morels permitting). Join fellow hunters as they scan the ground for these delicious delicacies. Bring your finds back to the lodge and possibly win a great prize. Find the smallest morel, the largest or the most morels and you might go home with a free night's stay.

May 5, 2019; 11 a.m. - 3 p.m.
 ● Pere Marquette Lodge, 13653 Lodge Blvd., Grafton
 Admission is free
<http://www.pmlodge.net/2017/01/mushroom-festival-3/>



Finders Spring Market

MAY 18 Get inspired with seasonal room designs that will wow you and enjoy treasure shopping at its best. Talented vendors from around the Midwest will fill more than 100 indoor and outdoor spaces with freshly flipped, picked, painted and handmade goods, vintage, upcycled, industrial and salvaged treasures, boutique clothing, jewelry, children's goods and much more. Live music, food, drinks and giveaways are included.

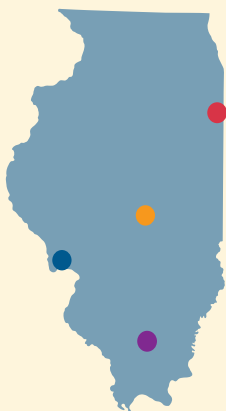
May 18, 2019; 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.
 ● Decatur Conference Center & Hotel, 4191 U.S. 36, Decatur
 Admission: \$5 adults, kids 12 and under are free
<https://www.jumpjiveproductions.com/>



29th Annual Rhubarb Festival

MAY 19 Join us as we celebrate the pie plant. There will be vendors, rhubarb and strawberry-rhubarb pies for sale, a baking contest, dime toss, tours of the Taylor One-Room Schoolhouse and historic Doctor Small Home and more.

May 19, 2019; 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.
 ● Kankakee County Museum, 801 S. 8th Ave., Kankakee
 Admission is free
www.kankakeecountymuseum.com



Spend a little to save a lot

Energy efficiency measures don't have to break the bank. A small investment in caulk and weather stripping (and of course actually using them) can save 10-20 percent on your electric bill.

For more energy-saving tips and "how-to" videos, visit togetherwesave.com, or contact your local Touchstone Energy cooperative.



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TOGETHERWESAVE.COM

Keep cool for less

Dear Pat: We moved into our home last spring. It's pretty new and seems well-insulated in winter. But it was hot last summer, so we had to run the A/C a lot, and the electric bills were a killer. Do you have any tips on how we can cool our home this summer without going broke? - **BRANDON**

DEAR BRANDON: WE'VE DISCUSSED some of the easiest ways to make your home more efficient, like reducing solar gains, insulating and

ventilating the attic, and sealing air leaks. You may need to focus on inefficiencies in your home's cooling system. But before we address that, let's look at some other potential problems:

- Do you have freezer or second refrigerator in the garage? This can be a major energy hog, especially if it's old and you live in a warmer climate.
- Do you have a well? Your pump may be draining your energy use as you rely on it more during the

summer. Start by looking for leaks in the system and, if necessary, reduce irrigation.

- How about a swimming pool? It may be time to overhaul or replace the pool pump. If the pump is in good shape, try putting it on a timer.

If you have central air conditioning (A/C) or a heat pump, make sure your filter has been changed or recently cleaned. The next step is to call an HVAC contractor for a tune-up and a complete assessment of the system. A tune-up can

improve the efficiency and extend the life of the unit. The tune-up includes cleaning the condenser coil, a check of the refrigerant levels and a good look at the pump and electrical contacts. Talk to the contractor about the efficiency of the A/C unit. If it's old, it may be cost-effective to replace it, even if it's still functional.

Ductwork is equally important as the A/C unit, so make sure the contractor you choose is capable and willing to provide an expert assessment. A real pro will know how to measure the air flow at each supply and return register. If you're not getting cool air to the rooms that need it, the contractor may be able to make modifications to the ductwork.

Leaky ductwork could be your problem. If the ducts are in unconditioned areas like a crawl space or attic, it's especially important to make sure they're sealed and insulated. It will also help to seal ducts that are in conditioned spaces.

Some HVAC contractors can do a duct-blaster test to measure duct leakage. Discuss whether you should ever close any supply registers. Most experts recommend that supply registers are always open.

If you cool your home with window A/C units, there are a few things you can do to maximize your cooling while keeping costs as low as possible.

- Use window A/C units in rooms that can be closed off with a door, to make the cooling as effective as possible.
- Make sure you have the right sized unit for the size of the room. A unit that's too big will cool the room before the humidity has been lowered, which will



Make sure your window A/C unit is installed flat or according to manufacturer's directions, so that it drains properly. Photo credit: Your Best Digs

make it feel less cool, while a unit that's too small will have to work harder, causing a shorter life span—and it may not do the job.

- Use an electric fan or ceiling fan to help distribute the cold air throughout the area you are cooling.
- Turn off the A/C unit when no one is in the room.
- If your window A/C unit isn't cooling properly, it may need to be replaced. Look for an ENERGY STAR®-certified unit to make the most of your cooling dollars.

Of course, the simplest way to save money on your A/C is to not use it. As much as possible, keep your activities limited to rooms that are easily cooled. Try to spend more time cooking and eating outside. If you have a basement, think about setting up a second bedroom down there where it's cooler. Think of it as your new summer hideaway! 💡

For more information on getting the most from your a/c, please visit:
www.collaborativeefficiency.com/energytips.



That old fridge or freezer in your garage could be taking a bite out of your wallet. Photo credit: Alex Weimer

This column was co-written by Pat Keegan and Brad Thiessen of Collaborative Efficiency.

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Technology to keep your eye on in 2019

THE ADVANCEMENT OF TECHNOLOGY grows leaps and bounds with every passing year, and 2019 is no different. With major developments with drones, artificial intelligence becoming part of our everyday


technology, so don't be surprised if you hear or see them being used more in search and rescue operations. The agriculture industry has arguably been one of the driving forces behind drone technol-

I believe the biggest impact on our everyday lives regarding machine learning will be in predictive technology. You may be familiar with this technology from the suggestions that Netflix offers, based on your viewing history, or product suggestions that fill the screen when browsing Amazon. This technology will continue to get better. Amazon would like to ship you the item you need before you ever knew you wanted it.

Internet of things

The internet of things (IoT) epidemic is here to stay. It was predicted five years ago there would be an explosion of internet-connected devices. This trend has rocketed with no end in sight. Coffee makers, washing machines, water heaters, doorbells and more probably has a version that can be connected to the internet. This brings challenges as well as benefits.

Cyber security on these devices has traditionally been non-existent or severely lacking. We will continue to see more devices accessible via the internet, connecting our physical world to our digital identity. With the cost of computing chips and materials falling, wireless connectivity and availability growing, and the drive from consumers to have all their devices talk to each other, it's inevitable we will see more developers taking advantage of this new world of connected devices.

I believe it is still very much in the infancy stages. There are many devices that can be connected, but they don't always play well together. If you have started to implement "smart" technologies in your home, you probably have figured this out. Once we have a standard that prevails, the interoperability between devices will unlock new potentials. 



lives and the increase of smart technologies, it's quite an age we live in. Here are a few things to keep an eye on in the coming year.

Drones

With drone technology becoming more advanced, more commercial applications are being identified for them. In 2019, the expectation for advancements in drone technology and capabilities should continue. Not only will they be more user-friendly but should also be more reliable by incorporating 360-degree sensors for obstacle avoidance. That technology exists today but isn't available on all of them.

I think we will see more drones with the capability for safer autonomous flight. Emergency services are starting to adopt this new

ogy and their use will continue in many ways across the farming community.

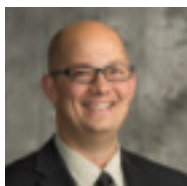
AI/machine learning

Artificial intelligence (AI) has been creeping into many conversations over the past few years. Some believe that eventually all jobs will be replaced by robots. While there may be some validity to these ideas, I think we are a long way from that.

With today's super computers and quantum computing capabilities, AI and machine learning are taking off. In the past few years, AI has defeated top human players in video games such as Go and StarCraft II. There are even vehicles on the road, such as a Tesla, that can intelligently avoid obstacles and keep the car in the proper lane without any steering wheel input.



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Dan Gerard, CISSP, is the Chief Technology Officer for the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives in Springfield.

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Located halfway between Chicago and St. Louis, Peoria is the largest city on the Illinois River and oldest European settlement in the state.

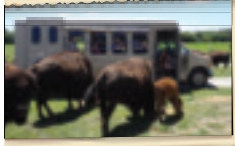
Enjoy concerts and festivals in the area, including Tailgate N' Tallboys Music Festival on the Riverfront! See big names like Alabama, Jamey Johnson, Aaron Lewis and Kane Brown!

Peoria, once known as the Whiskey City, is home to several breweries and unique night life including a modern day speakeasy and historic railway station transformed into a cocktail bar with live music.

Take an open air safari bus through Wildlife Prairie Park to see amazing animals, like bison, in a natural habitat. Let the kids burn energy at the Peoria Playhouse Children's Museum or Elevate Trampoline Park. Race the whole family on go-karts at Kartville or, if you are in the mood to test your skills, try an Escape Room at Gone in 60 Escape Games, Escapetown Peoria or Escape 60!

Cool down at DragonLand Water Park in Pekin. While you're there, hit up West Dublin Pub for one of the best burgers in the area! Take a leisurly paddleboat ride followed by miniature golf at the Pekin Park.

There truly is something for everyone in the Peoria area. Visit our website to plan your next weekend escape!



Safety tips that can save your life

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES' TOP PRIORITY is always to provide safe, reliable, affordable energy to their members. Your well-being and that of the larger communities we serve are of paramount concern.

May not only means spring storms and potentially severe weather, it also heralds the begin-

I'd like to share a few safety tips that I hope you never have to use. But if you do, they could save your life or that of loved ones.

Life-saving tips

If a car collides with a utility pole, the vehicle may be charged with electricity. Anyone exiting

moving away until you are at least 40 feet from the vehicle.

If you come upon a car accident involving a utility pole and downed power lines, keep your distance. A downed power line can energize the ground up to 35 feet away. While your natural instinct may be to rush to the car to help, instead pause. Do not approach the car or scene of the accident. Tell others to stay away. The best action you can take is to alert emergency officials, who will in turn coordinate with the power provider.

Never drive over a downed power line or through water that is touching one. If you have a downed power line on your property as a result of a falling tree, storm or other circumstance, do not go near it. Always assume the downed line is energized and dangerous. Never try to move the power line even if you think it's not energized. Wait until an electric co-op crew or emergency officials have confirmed it is safe to do so.

May is Electrical Safety Month

According to the Electrical Safety Foundation International, thousands of people in the U.S. are critically injured and electrocuted as a result of electrical fires, accidents and electrocution in their own homes. Many of these accidents are preventable.

We know first-hand how dangerous electricity is because Illinois' electric cooperatives work with it all day, every day. To me, safety is more than a catch phrase. I view it as my duty and responsibility to keep co-op employees safe and to help keep our communities safe.

Contact your local electric co-op for additional electrical safety tips. It is no accident that safety is our top priority. 💡

ning of the celebration season for many high school students, especially seniors. Proms, graduation parties and other social gatherings are often associated with this time of year.

While we naturally focus on the sunny aspects this season brings, we also sometimes hear about preventable tragedies involving young people and car accidents. This brings me to the topic at hand: safety.

Does your teen or loved one know what to do in the event of a collision with a utility pole resulting in a downed power line? Do your loved ones know what to do if they come upon an accident with a downed power line? This month,

the car could come in contact with thousands of volts of electricity from the downed line. In essence, when you step out of the car, you become part of the electricity's path to the ground and could be electrocuted. It's critical to stay in the vehicle and tell others to do the same until emergency crews have told you it's safe to exit the car.

If the vehicle is on fire, or you must exit for other safety reasons, jump clear of the vehicle. Do not let any part of your body or clothing touch the vehicle and ground at the same time. Land with your feet together and shuffle away (in small steps with your feet still together) to avoid electric shock. Keep

**SAFETY
FIRST,
SAFETY
ALWAYS**

**MAY IS ELECTRICAL
SAFETY MONTH**



Anne Prince writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives.



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Going beyond impatiens for shade

IN RECENT YEARS, GARDENERS have probably noticed less garden impatiens (*Impatiens walleriana*), being sold in local garden centers. This is due to a disease outbreak in impatiens called downy mildew of impatiens (*Plasmopara obducens*).

In 2011, the University of Illinois Plant Clinic began receiving reports that downy mildew was a problem in landscapes in the Chicago area, and the disease continued to spread to other areas of Illinois.

This particular downy mildew affects all varieties of *Impatiens walleriana*, the traditional garden impatiens, that many rely on for color in shady areas. With downy mildew, gardeners notice leaves curling downward on newer growth. Soon, white to light-gray fuzz may show on leaf undersides. New leaves may appear as stunted or discolored (yellow or pale green). Unfortunately, this disease can infect quickly and cause complete leaf defoliation or plant collapse to occur.

The U of I Plant Clinic recommends that gardeners who find downy mildew remove all diseased plant material to avoid further infection in the garden or neighbors' gardens. It may be difficult to rid the planting area of this disease because the pathogen can remain in the soil.


What should a gardener do?

This doesn't mean impatiens can never be planted again. Look at this as an opportunity to diversify the garden and plant some alternative shade annuals.

There is much research and breeding work ongoing to bring to market a disease resistant garden impatiens. According to industry sources, a new disease resistant impatiens series is expected to be launched commercially by PanAmerican Seed in 2020, with many trials taking place between now and then.

For this season, consider a few of these great shade annual alternatives to try in your garden:

- **Begonias:** Rex begonia (*Begonia rex-cultorum*), wax begonia (*Begonia x semperflorens*), tuberose begonia (*Begonia tuberhybrida*) and angel wing begonia (*Begonia coccinea*) are all great foliage or flowering plants for part shade to shade.
- **Fuchsia** (*Fuchsia x hybrid*): Nice blooms of reds, pinks and lavenders for part shade. Great in hanging baskets.
- **Bloodleaf** (*Iresine herbstii*): Shiny foliage plants with bright pink or lime green accents for part shade to shade.
- **New Guinea impatiens** (*Impatiens hawkeri*): This species of impatiens is resistant to downy mildew. It features large flowers on vigorous plants in many colors for part shade to shade.
- **Coleus** (*Solenostemon scutellarioides*): Great, vigorous foliage plants for shade to part shade with lots of colors and patterns. Some varieties available for sun as well.
- **Heliotrope** (*Heliotropium arborescens*): Beautiful, fragrant, purple flowers best used in partial shade with moist, but not wet soils.
- **Sweet potato vine** (*Ipomea batatas*): Vining plant with various colors and shapes great for part shade.
- **Salvia** (*Salvia splendens*): Various colored flowers best for part shade.
- **Browallia** (*Browallia speciosa*): Older, reliable annual for abundant flowering. Best in part shade.

Check out the University of Illinois Extension website, Beyond Impatiens and Petunias, for more information on shade alternatives: <http://urbanext.illinois.edu/beyond/> 



Candice Hart is a Horticulture Educator with University of Illinois Extension serving DeWitt, Macon and Piatt counties. She is also a Certified Floral Designer, Illinois Certified Professional Florist and is an award winning floral designer.

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Three unexpected Illinois products



By Valerie Cheatham





ILLINOIS IS KNOWN FOR many things – the Land of Lincoln, City of Big Shoulders, home to Superman, the Chicago Bears, Cubs and White Sox, and the list goes on. Agriculture is a major economic driver and 85 percent of the Prairie State is covered in fields, most which grow corn. However, there are some agriculture producers that have branched out in new and interesting ways.



Cahokia Rice

What do you do with fertile soil in the wet Mississippi River bottoms of southern Illinois?



In the early 1900s, the Gerard family farmed on an island near Cairo in far southern Illinois. They grew wheat and alfalfa, but as the levee system increased in size, so did the flooding. When the river is high, water literally comes up out of the ground.



It is said that “necessity is the mother of invention” and Blake Gerard, a Southern Illinois Electric Cooperative member, knew he had to come up with a way to make a living from the land other than corn, which needs drainage. “We wondered what in the world we would do. We didn’t have crop insurance back then. I thought, this is absurd, I have to find something that will grow in water,” says Gerard. “I thought about growing fish, but it doesn’t work here. Then, the

river showed me how to take something that was my nemesis and turn it into my friend.”

That is how Gerard discovered the perfect grain to grow in soggy conditions – rice.

About 20 years ago, he and partner Jim Crain began by growing seed rice and started their own seed company, River Bend Rice, located in Cairo. They are the northernmost growers in the Midwest on the fringe of how far north rice can be grown due to seasons and temperatures.

They transformed around 1,000-1,500 acres of fertile farmland into a rice levee system, which are water control structures. The fields are slightly sloped to hold water about 4 inches deep on one side and 2 inches on the other. The agronomic principles are similar to other crops. They converted farm machinery to run on tracks due to the wet ground, and the growing season starts around April 1 or whenever the ground reaches 50 degrees.

Harvesting rice is similar to that of corn or soybeans. Once the grains are harvested, it goes to the facility in Cairo to be dried, cleaned, packaged and shipped down the river.

Gerard always wanted to have his own brand. Bob Butcher, a friend, discovered a high-protein rice being developed at Louisiana State University (LSU) which is not genetically-modified. The grain was developed through traditional breeding with no foreign genes or DNA inserted.

The university discovered a heritage strain of rice that had naturally-occurring higher protein and crossed it with a traditional variety with good cooking characteristics and milling properties, similar to a Cypress variety that was in high demand in Latin America. Gerard, Crain and Butcher bought the marketing rice from LSU and have been growing it on 150 acres for the past few years.

They named the new product Cahokia Rice because of the history of the Cahokia tribe of Native Americans who farmed in the area generations ago.

Gerard says the high protein rice has been popular. Typical table rice has 33 grams of carbohydrates and 3 grams of protein; an 11-1 ratio. It's starchy and causes a blood sugar response, so you need to eat meat with it to reduce the glycemic response. Cahokia Rice still has 33

grams of carbs, but with its 6 grams of protein, it changes the ratio to 6-1, which reduces the blood sugar response. That's a big deal for diabetics.

Cahokia Rice was first sold in January 2018. They have one employee who markets the brand and are actively seeking a distributor in order to have it in grocery stores. Word has gotten out among restaurants and the university school system. "Illinois State University and others have picked us up," Gerard explains. "Universities tend to like the protein content because many students are self-conscious about what they eat, and many eat vegetarian or vegan. Chefs told me Cahokia Rice is a good fit for them because they are always looking for ways to add protein to things they are already serving. There are others selling high protein rice, but it's an additive, not part of the kernel itself, like ours."

The rice is being used in dishes at several Illinois eateries including American Harvest, Springfield; Epiphany Farms, Bloomington;

Firefly Grill, Effingham; and Blue Sky Vineyard, Makanda. It can currently be purchased at some County Market stores, Dierbergs, Arnold's Market or online at www.cahokiarice.com.

Check out the Finest Cooking pages to find recipes made with Cahokia Rice.



Blake Gerard





Tanglefoot Ranch

In 2000, Grover Webb, a SouthEastern Illinois Electric Cooperative member and native Pope County farmer with a taste for innovation, started the first freshwater shrimp (also known as prawns) farm in Illinois. Webb, wife Shirley, and brother, Richard, are partners in Tanglefoot Ranch which consists of 950 acres of corn, soybeans, sheep, beef cattle, hi-tunnels that house tomatoes and raspberries, peaches, pumpkins and freshwater shrimp.

“We were looking for a different type of ag enterprise and discovered that as far as temperature, we have a good location,” says Webb. “We also have a clay soil here that holds water, so it was easy to build the ponds we needed. We first looked at raising catfish, but we didn’t have enough warm days, the necessary water supply and it was going to be a large expense to feed them.”

The State of Illinois Alternative Agricultural loan program, administered by the Illinois Treasurer’s office, enabled them to start the prawn enterprise.

Each spring, the Webbs prepare two 5,000-gallon heated water tanks in Richard’s basement. It is about a three-week process to fill the tanks, get the water pH right and aerate to remove chlorine. They travel to Texas to pick up around 60,000 post-larval shrimp, each about the size of a gnat. “That’s the joke,” says Grover. “You’ve got to trust people

in this business because they deliver about 60,000 of them in a bag that probably weighs about a pound and a half. You can barely see them.”

They have less than 24 hours to get them home and introduced into the tanks. The Webbs also operate a regional prawn nursery that helps supply six to 10 other growers from surrounding states with juveniles for their ponds.

What juveniles remain are divided among the farm’s three ponds once the water has reached 70 degrees. The prawns are placed in the clean aerated ponds, which are closely monitored for water quality. Using a four-wheeler, they blow pelleted cattle feed across the ponds with a leaf blower.

“Shrimp are bottom-feeders and eat what rots and sinks to the bottom,” he explains. “By feeding them the cattle feed, which sinks, they have a cleaner flavor. Before harvest, we stop feeding for a couple of days to help reduce the size of the mud vein, which gives them a fresher taste.”

Prawns grow by molting, as many as 40 times, before reaching full size at around 120 days. They closely watch the water temperature as September rolls around because they need to begin harvest before the water drops below 60 degrees. When harvest begins, the ponds



are drained and the shrimp are caught as they exit through a pipe in fresh water. They are processed by removing the heads and “within an hour and a half of swimming in the pond, they are being frozen,” says Webb.

In an average year, they produce between 1,500-2,000 pounds of prawns. There are approximately 10-12 per pound and are sold frozen in 2-pound bags. The shrimp are available from Tanglefoot Farm, year-round, and can also be found at the Golconda Shrimp Festival, held the third Saturday of September.

For more information about visiting the farm or buying products, visit Tanglefoot Ranch on Facebook, call 618-695-2640 or visit tanglefootranch.com.





Lieb Farm

Along a country road just a hop, skip and a jump from Monticello stands Lieb Farm. As you approach, you may see livestock looming in a pack in the distance. As you get closer, you discover these large, shaggy giants are not cattle but bison.

Lieb Farm has around 3,000 acres of corn and soybeans in both Eastern Illini Electric and Coles-Moultrie Electric Cooperative territories. However, for the past 20 years, its most interesting “crop” has been its herd of bison.

It was the late Terry Lieb’s desire to raise bison, and his sons, Jake and Josh, continue that tradition to pay homage to their father.

According to Jake, it was his father’s passion for history and the old West that fueled his interest in the animals. He wanted to return bison to the land they roamed 200 years ago. The wild gene has not been bred out of their bison.

“As a bison producer, we take pride in keeping the herd as pure as we can. It’s the bison producers’ creed to let them breed naturally,” says Jake. “We don’t select the winners and losers. It’s Mother Nature that does that. Basically, the biggest, baddest, strongest bulls do the breeding. That results in the tough ones passing on their genetics.”

As far as the differences between raising cattle and bison, infrastructure must be stronger. “Everything is heavier, taller, stronger,” says Jake. “You can’t force them to do anything. If you approach a cow in a corral, nine times out of 10 it will feel that pressure and turn away from you. A bison will



square off and paw the ground as if to say, ‘go ahead, bring it on.’ If its tail goes up in the air, you’d better get out of there fast.”

Josh says the bison are usually fine in the 60-acre pasture and can often be found running laps. “We are always mindful of them when entering the pasture; they are wild animals and we’re in their home. They are inquisitive and will often find us, even when we are working on the other side of the pasture. It’s when we have them in a corral, and they don’t have any room to escape, that their ‘fight or flight’ instinct kicks in. That’s when it gets dangerous. The corral is made of power poles and highway guardrail, and they make every attempt to get out.”

“Just a couple of weeks ago, I had to jump the fence to get away from one,” says Jake. “Our goal is to not hurt them or ourselves in the process, and so far, we’ve been successful.”

The bison are grass-fed, and the Liebs bale the grass in the summer to feed them in the winter. Everything they consume comes from the land. There is a creek where the bison usually water, but when it freezes, there is a heated tank that provides water for the herd.

Bison are naturally healthy animals and rarely sick. They calve in May without any additional help usually necessary with cattle. In winter, they have a heavy coat which they shed in warmer weather. At full size, bison may weigh 1,300-1,400 pounds. Josh

says they are quick on their feet and could easily jump the fence, if desired, but if content they stay. The Liebs have never had a problem with them leaving the pasture.

Currently, the Liebs have 42 bison but expect another 18 in May. The animals are processed in a USDA-inspected facility in Eureka, which is certified to handle wild game. Selling the meat is a secondary source of income. Bison is healthier than beef with less fat and cholesterol and higher in protein. Josh says the meat doesn’t have the gamey flavor of most wild animals.

The Liebs provide the meat to local restaurants and a food cooperative in Champaign. Otherwise, all meat is sold from their farm. They don’t ship it due to the added expense and their prices are reasonable, around \$8.50 per pound, compared to most stores. Visitors from surrounding states come purchase their meat and the Liebs have no desire to increase the size of their herd.

“Raising bison isn’t for everyone,” says Jake. “But the rewards are worth it. We take pride in seeing these animals back in their natural environment. It’s pretty cool to see them in the pasture when the grass is tall and the wind is blowing. I think dad would be proud.”

For more information about Lieb Farms go to www.liebfarms.com. For bison meat, call 217-762-9277. 📍

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Role model, survivor, friend

*Cathie Smith named
Mother of the Year*

By Colten Bradford

WHILE THE FIRST DAY of spring brought hope of warmer weather for many, Cathie Smith spent it a little differently. She sat next to a bright blue birthday cake in a busy Mexican restaurant surrounded by some of the people she loves most.

Her grandchildren presented her with a birthday present she will never forget – a poem. “We want to take a moment in our own special way / To give you a birthday message on your special day,” they began. “... So happy birthday, grandma, one surprise is left to be seen /

You’ve been named Mother of the Year by Illinois Country Living magazine.”

Needless to say, this close-knit family is proud of their matriarch. While they have faced their share of trials, they are one of those families who love to laugh, be with each other and, most of all, have fun.

Cathie, who is a Menard Electric Cooperative member, was raised on a rural Petersburg farm and has spent her life teaching. She worked 34 years in the PORTA school district as a teacher, guidance counselor and principal. She

raised two sons, Jeff and Jake, and a daughter, Megan, who is serving in the Navy overseas. Cathie plays an active role with her six grandchildren and is a role model for her two daughters-in-law, Tracy and Mary Kate.

In fact, Mary Kate nominated her for this honor. “Cathie has become more than just a mom to me,” she wrote. “As a transplant from the big city, Cathie has guided me through what it means to raise three children in a rural county. Our cattle farm children have known the life of growing up on and around

the farm because Cathie has taken their hands, and mine, and led us through it.”

Mary Kate grew up outside of Philadelphia and is no country girl. “Cathie has trained me on how to be part of a farm family, and I felt I needed to nominate her,” she says.

Her first memory of Cathie was when she was invited to the Smith farm shortly after she started dating her husband Jake. “I felt like I was being hazed... like it was some sort of weird Smith induction ceremony,” Mary Kate remembers with a laugh. On that day, the calves were getting castrated.

Larry, Cathie’s husband, put Mary Kate to work and told her all she had to do was stand by a gate and not let the cattle through. “Oh, that’s all I have to do?” Mary Kate states. “I had never been that close to cattle in my life.”

Not knowing what she was doing, she watched Cathie, who had the same job. With her arms outstretched, Cathie yelled “hey” over and over. Mary Kate learned her first country lesson from Cathie and did the same. “Every time I’m out there, I just see what Cathie’s doing and pretend I’m comfortable doing it,” Mary Kate explains. “I left that day hoping I passed.”

According to Cathie, she did, and both women have something in common. They are teachers. “I’m the new Mrs. Smith,” Mary Kate says.

“And that’s the truth,” Cathie responds. “When we go places, people will say, ‘Hey, Mrs. Smith!’ and I think they’re talking to me.”

While Cathie is known as mom to her three kids, she was Mrs. Smith to them too. In fact, she taught Jeff junior high English, and he firmly denies that she took it easy on him. When he moved on to high school, so did she as guidance counselor. “I was fortunate enough to have her at every school dance we ever had,” Jeff says with some sarcasm.

While Cathie has retired from education, she is far from retirement. She works on the farm, provides daycare for some of her grandkids and continues to be a role model and teacher for her family.

Tradition plays a big role in the Smith family. Growing up, 4-H was

important to Cathie, and she continued that tradition by involving her kids and grandkids. The family always makes sure to get together for holidays and birthdays, and there are several farm traditions.

The family’s annual sweet corn party is one with mixed reviews. “The grandkids have gotten wise to when we say, ‘corn party,’ they know to take the party out of the scenario,” Larry laughs. “It’s a great time for everyone to get together.”

A sweet corn party starts with a pickup truck load of sweet corn, and everyone has a job. The corn gets shucked, cut, cooked, bagged and frozen. Not only does this provide food for the future, it is also valuable family time.

“And it is usually about 900 degrees outside,” Mary Kate jokes.

“Heat and bugs... what else would you want?” Larry adds.

“We always have a lot of fun and make lots of good memories,” Cathie says with a smile.

However, not all memories are good. On New Year’s Eve in 2010, a tornado struck the Lake Petersburg area. While many homes were damaged, one person was injured. Cathie.

She was waiting in the car while her sister, Jan Costello, went in her house on an errand. “We didn’t see the storm coming,” Cathie says. “I don’t remember anything.”

A tree fell on the car, and Cathie suffered a traumatic brain injury.

“It was a terrible deal,” Larry says. “Totally unbelievable.” It was touch and go for a bit, but Cathie showed what a force of nature she truly is and slowly made a full recovery, regaining her memory and mobility.

“For a while, she thought it was 1972,” Jan jokes, making light of the situation.

“But there was no laughing when the helicopter left with her in it,” Larry says.

“It was a pretty involved recovery,” Jake explains. “She was in the hospital for a while... They would work on physical therapy and memory, and she had to wear a neck brace for a time.”

While she disliked the neck brace, Cathie made the best out of the situation. “What was nice, every time we went to a doctor appointment, we would go celebrate afterward,” she says. “I was

lucky. I’ve had a lot of luck in my life.”

The Smith family feels blessed with how everything turned out, and all are grateful for the mom, grandmother and friend they have in Cathie.

“It’s amazing to see how Cathie’s kids stay in touch with her,” says Jan. “It’s like a great friendship that they’ve developed over the years. She’s not just a mom. She’s their best friend.”

Upon finding out she was named Mother of the Year, Cathie was at a loss for words. “I’m flabbergasted... humbled... surprised,” she says. The rest of her family, however, were not surprised at all.

Go to ICL.coop to read the Mother of the Year nomination letters. 

ON CATHIE SMITH’S BIRTHDAY,

her grandchildren surprised her with this poem.

*We want to take a moment in our own special way,
To give you a birthday message on your special day.
This year has had some good times and hard times too,
But no matter what happens, we are so lucky to have you.
You take care of everybody, and that’s no easy feat,
We can count on you for sleepovers or a weekly DQ treat.
You’re always there for papa, especially when he’s stressed,
We know he loves you like we do. He thinks you are the best.
You help Tracy and Munchkin and the cattle on the farm,
And in all of your downtime, you even paint the barn.
You give advice to daddy and come to all of mommy’s shows,
How they would live without you, we will never know!
You are the world’s best grandma, sister, wife and friend,
If we had to list our thank-yous, this poem would never end!
So happy birthday, grandma, one surprise is left to be seen,
You’ve been named Mother of the Year by Illinois Country Living magazine!*



Little House of Tacos is hard to miss on Appleknocker Drive in Cobden, with its colorful papel picado flags and picnic tables. Umbrellas and all kinds of flowers pop up in the spring.



Maria Bartolo stands in the door of La Tacqueria Pequena. Her daughter, Margarita, is in the window.

Tacqueria Pequena “Little House of Tacos”

By Karen Binder

NESTLED IN THE MIDDLE of peach and apple orchards and vineyards in southern Illinois is La Tacqueria Pequena. Like the perfection of a just-picked ripe peach, Little House of Tacos is also about perfection, but in terms of simple, authentic Mexican food.

Pequena co-owner Maria Bartolo calls her food “indigenous cooking,” which comes from recipes handed down by her mother and grandmother.

It would be one thing to call this tiny eatery a taco stand, but from within this small, efficient kitchen in a converted portable shed, pure Mexican magic has enchanted new and loyal customers since it first opened in 2004.

Pequena offers typical Mexican fare, but Maria’s 50-plus years of experience make it like no other in the Midwest. About 17 miles south of Carbondale, the restaurant is one of the few easy to find along the Shawnee Hills Wine Trail. It’s a short drive to Flamm’s or Rendleman Orchards for desserts, sweets and fresh fruit.

Roots in the orchards

Maria is the boss of this house, but Pequena is a family affair. She and husband Fidel have lived more than 40 years in Cobden. They settled there from Cheran Michoacan, the Mexican state from where a majority of Union County migrant and immigrant workers come to work in the area’s orchards and vineyards. The Bartolos settled in Cobden because Fidel’s mother was already there.

Maria opened Pequena because she enjoys cooking. Fidel helped convert the shed into a working kitchen and conceived the name. Over the years, daughter Margarita was Maria’s right hand. Today son Esteban fills that role.

Esteban is a Cobden native and grew up in the restaurant, which opened when he was 7 years old. He and his mom typically work with one or two other family members or close family friends – after all, only so many people can fit in the kitchen.

Because the Bartolos’ roots run as deep as grapevines, Pequena is often a first stop whenever someone new from Mexico comes to the area to work.



Son Esteban has now teamed up with Maria, with other family members filling out the rest of the staff.



Homemade salsas perfectly complement the steak tacos.



The quesadillas, gooey with melted Mexican cheese, are best eaten as soon as possible.



The trio of tacos includes chorizo, chicken and pork.



All of the handmade tamales are pork.

Always to go

All Pequena orders are served to go, with items neatly folded into foil packets like gifts. There are tacos, burritos, chili rellenos, tortas, and red and green salsa.

And then there are the tamales. Maria and her family handcraft each one, filling a handful of soft masa with a seasoned, slow-cooked pork filling, patting it with practiced hands into corn husks and then rolling it into shape for gentle steaming.

When the restaurant first opened, Maria used to go home, and after dinner, sit in front of the TV and make tamales. “We do it all here now,” Esteban says. “We don’t have any more energy once we get home.”

Many customers don’t realize how much work goes into making tamales. There is a standing request that anyone wanting a dozen or more should call ahead and place an order at least one day in advance.

There’s just enough room in the kitchen for her grill, counter space, refrigerators, a soft drink cooler, washing line and cash register. To the side of the kitchen is an air-conditioned dining area with six or so tables and a pass-through window from the kitchen to pick up orders.

On nice days, all picnic tables tend to fill up, as do the sidewalk ledges and pavilion tables in the park across the street. The line can also snake down the sidewalk.

If there is no line, one could stand at the order window and easily watch Maria prepare the items, which are carefully made one order at a time.

Esteban recommends first-time visitors “keep an open mind and remember things here are a bit more traditional than at other Mexican establishments. We don’t serve queso dip on everything, put cheese on every item or add sour cream. Everything’s more traditional.”

They do try to appeal to a broader customer base with such Tex-Mex items as taco salad and nachos.

As for bestsellers, Esteban mentions the tacos and tamales, “because that’s what most people know. I’d have to say that everything is our bestseller at this point.”

His favorite? “I cannot choose a favorite – I love them all.”

LET’S EAT!

La Tacqueria Pequena

105 S. Appleknocker Drive, Cobden, Illinois

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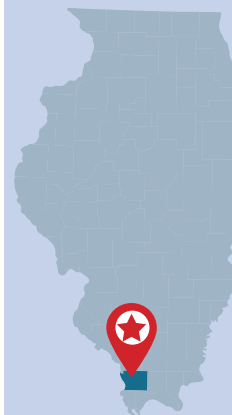
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618-893-1353

Watch their Facebook page for special announcements.

Also of interest:
ShawneeWineTrail.com



Shrimp and rice

IN THE MOVIE FORREST Gump, Forrest's friend Bubba gives a seemingly never-ending list of all the ways shrimp can be prepared – “you can barbecue it, boil it, broil it, bake it, saute it,” and the list continues. We don't have room for that many preparations, but we think you'll like the ones submitted.

Rice makes a nice accompaniment to shrimp and is often found in shrimp recipes. The Cahokia Rice mentioned in some of the rice recipes is grown in southern Illinois and is high in protein. Be sure to read the feature to learn more about it. 📍

WE NEED RECIPES!

Upcoming monthly topics

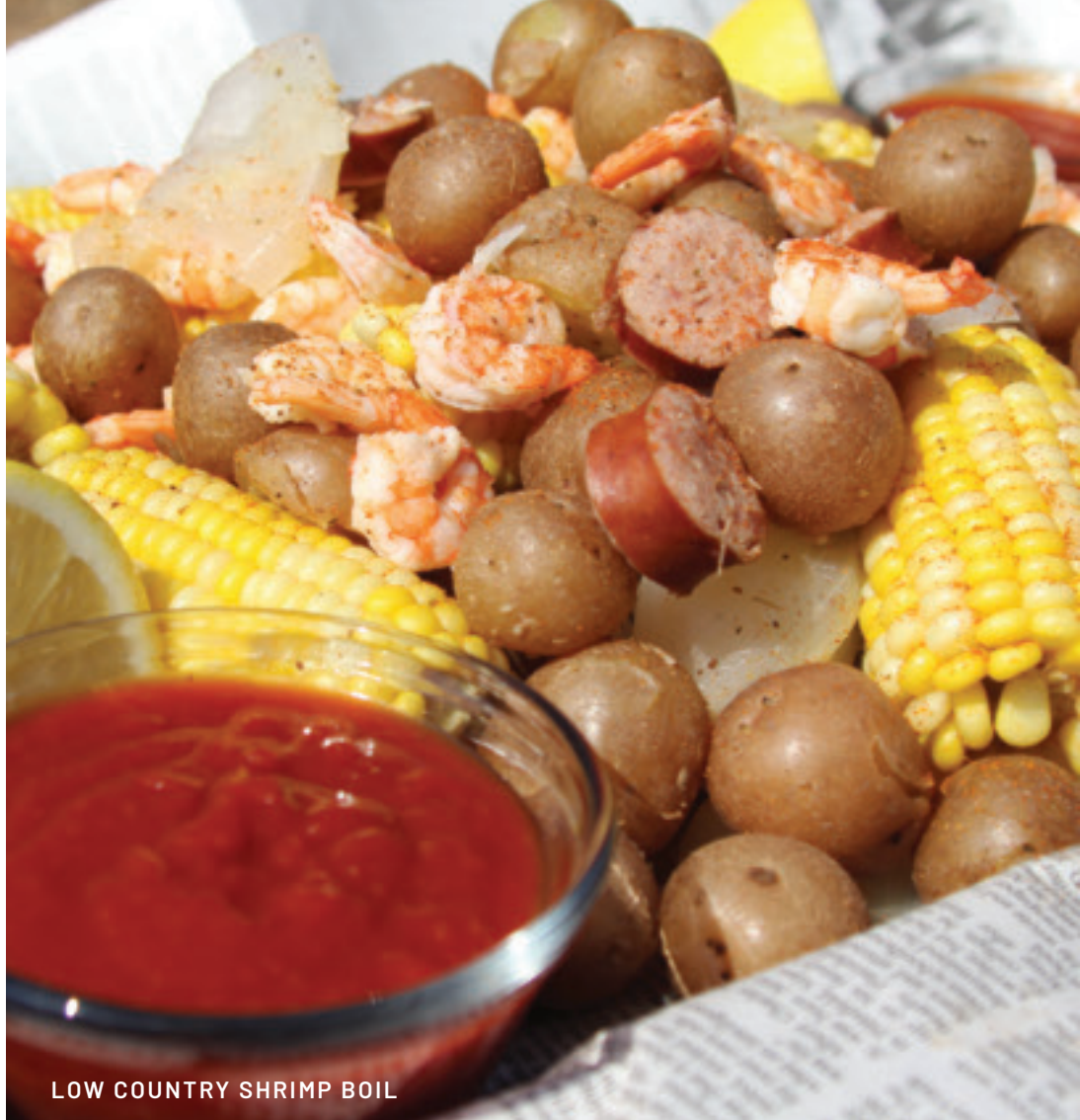
- Barbeque
- Sandwiches
- Tomatoes
- Apples

Please email submissions to finestcooking@icl.coop or mail them to Finest Cooking c/o Illinois Country Living, P.O. Box 3787, Springfield, IL 62708. Please include your name, address, phone number (for questions), and the name of your electric cooperative. Recipes not included in the magazine can be found on our website at icl.coop/finestcooking.



Recipes prepared, tasted and photographed by Illinois Country Living staff. For more recipes and photos go to www.icl.coop. Questions? Email finestcooking@aiec.coop.

Visit www.icl.coop to see more Illinois Country Living recipes.



LOW COUNTRY SHRIMP BOIL

Low Country Shrimp Boil

Submitted by Marcia Blackledge, McDonough Power Cooperative

Servings: 8

- 14 ounce package smoked sausage, cut in 1/2-inch pieces
- 2-1/2 pounds small red potatoes
- 6 ears fresh sweet corn, cut in half
- 2 sweet onions, quartered
- 2 tablespoons Old Bay seasoning
- 4 bay leaves
- 2 pounds unpeeled raw shrimp
- 1 11.5-ounce jar cocktail sauce

Combine sausage, potatoes, corn, onion and 8 cups water in a large Dutch oven. Stir in Old Bay seasoning and bay leaves. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer 10-15 minutes or until vegetables are tender. Add shrimp; cook 2-3 minutes or until shrimp are pink and firm. Drain. Pour out onto newspaper-lined sheet pans and pretend you're at the beach! Serve with cocktail sauce.

Nutrition information: 512 calories; 17.6g fat; 675mg sodium; 48.6g carbohydrates; 42.2g protein.

Mediterranean Rice Salad

Courtesy of Cahokia Rice

Servings: 12

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1-1/2 teaspoons salt | 2 cups chopped spinach leaves |
| 1-1/2 cups Cahokia High Protein white rice | 1 red bell pepper, finely chopped |
| 1/4 cup fresh lemon juice | 1 small cucumber, peeled, seeded and finely chopped |
| 1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil | 1/2 cup green onions, chopped |
| 1 clove garlic, minced | 1/2 cup kalamata olives, chopped |
| 1 teaspoon fresh oregano, minced | 1 cup crumbled feta cheese |
| 1/4 teaspoon fresh ground black pepper | |
| 1/8 to 1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes | |

In a medium saucepan, bring 2-1/2 cups water to boil. Add 1/2 teaspoon salt and rice. Turn heat to low, cover and allow to simmer for 15 minutes. Remove from heat and let sit for 5 minutes. Uncover and fluff with fork. In a large bowl, whisk the lemon juice, olive oil, garlic, oregano, pepper, pepper flakes and remaining teaspoon of salt. Add rice to dressing and toss mixture to combine. Add spinach, toss and let sit until it is no longer steaming. Add remaining ingredients and toss again. Serve at room temperature or cold.

Nutrition information: 155 calories; 9.1g fat; 387mg sodium; 15.6g carbohydrates; 5.9g protein.

Veggie Burgers

Courtesy of Ohio Cooperative Living

Servings: 8

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 tablespoon olive oil | 2 cups cooked brown rice |
| 1 medium yellow onion, diced fine | 1 15-ounce can shoestring chopped beets, drained and chopped small |
| 4 cloves garlic, minced | 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard |
| 3 tablespoons cider vinegar | 1 tablespoon molasses |
| 2 tablespoons water | 1/2 cup rolled oats, finely ground |
| 2 15.25-ounce cans black beans (no salt added) | 1 tablespoon olive oil |
| 2 teaspoons smoked paprika | 8 hamburger buns |
| 1 teaspoon cumin | |
| 1/2 teaspoon coriander | Your favorite hamburger toppings (Dijon mustard, lettuce, onion and tomato shown) |
| 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme | |
| 1/2 teaspoon cayenne | |
| 2 teaspoons salt | |
| 1 teaspoon pepper | |

Heat oil in skillet over medium-high heat. Add onions, cooking until slightly charred, 7 minutes. Add garlic, vinegar and water. Cook 3 minutes, or until vinegar smells sweet. Transfer mixture to a large mixing bowl. Drain and rinse black beans. Add half the beans to onions and mash. Add the other half of beans and leave whole. In small bowl, combine dry spices. Add remaining ingredients (except oil, buns and toppings) to black bean mixture, stirring well to combine. Shape into 8 patties. In large skillet over medium heat, add oil. Cook patties 2 minutes, then flip (if they don't lift easily with a spatula, cook a little longer). Cook another 6 minutes until warmed through. Place burgers on buns and top with your favorite hamburger toppings.

Nutrition information: 628 calories; 7g fat, 115g carbohydrates; 20g fiber; 28 grams protein.

VEGGIE BURGERS



Shrimp Dip

Submitted by Madelyn Hill, Egyptian Electric Cooperative Association

Servings: 4

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 4 ounces cream cheese, softened | 1/2 cup celery, finely chopped |
| 1/2 cup mayonnaise | 2 tablespoons lemon juice |
| 1/2 cup green onion, chopped | 1 can medium shrimp, drained |

In a medium bowl with mixer, cream together cream cheese, mayonnaise and lemon juice. Add onion, celery and shrimp. Mix. Chill for at least 1 hour. Serve with Fritos Scoops.

Nutrition information: 271 calories; 20.3g fat; 706mg sodium; 10.3g carbohydrates, 12.8g protein.

MEDITERRANEAN RICE SALAD



California Shrimp Salad

Submitted by Dixie Riley, Shelby Electric Cooperative

Servings: 12

Dressing:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| 1 cup mayonnaise or Miracle Whip | 6 ounces sliced black ripe olives |
| 1/2 cup cider vinegar | 1/2 cucumber, sliced thin or diced |
| Sugar to taste | 1 pound cooked, peeled and deveined shrimp, chopped |
| 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder | Red onion, finely sliced, optional |
| 1/4 teaspoon onion powder | Pimentos, diced, optional |

Salad:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1/2 head cabbage, shredded | 1/2 head iceberg lettuce, shredded |
| 1/2 green pepper, finely sliced | |
| 2 ribs celery, sliced thin | |

Mix together dressing ingredients and set aside. In large bowl, combine cabbage, green pepper, celery, olives, cucumber, shrimp and onion and/or pimentos, if using. Add most of the dressing and mix. Refrigerate for 3 hours. Add shredded lettuce and mix, adding more dressing if desired. Serve.

Nutrition information: 152 calories; 8.8g fat; 320mg sodium; 8.8g carbohydrates; 8.7g protein.

Enjoying hummingbirds all summer long

'TIS THE SEASON FOR the return of hummingbirds. These tiny birds migrate from their winter homes of Central America and southern Mexico in April and May and will return south again in September. Hummingbirds are creatures of habit and often return to the same feeder within days of when they did in previous years.

There are many sizes and styles of hummingbird feeders on the market. Some might be more appealing to the birds than others. Through trial and error, you will find what the birds prefer.

Tap water is fine to use; it is not necessary to boil the water. A common myth is that boiling will reduce fermentation, but fermentation is not caused by anything in the water. Boiling will reduce the levels of chlorination and fluoridation if you are using a system in which these are present. Sugar does dissolve better in warm water, but even that is not required if care is taken to stir until all the sugar is dissolved. You can prepare more nectar than your feeder will hold. It will safely store in the refrigerator for up to three weeks.

find the feeders. You can aid their ability to find the feeders by hanging a red ribbon near it.

If you have ever watched hummingbirds, you know they are very territorial, especially the male hummingbirds that like to chase off other birds. It might be necessary to put a second feeder to allow the other birds the opportunity to eat. When choosing where to hang a feeder for the first time, you need to know that just any old place will not produce good results. New feeders are best hung near a flower garden, flower pot or window box as that is one of the first places a hummingbird will check for food.

Besides having plenty of feeders for the birds, there are a few other things you can do that will help keep birds on your property all summer long.

Like many birds, hummingbirds love to bathe. Add a mister attachment to your hose so they have access to a regular water supply. Hummingbirds can't seem to resist fine, moving water. They will love flying through it to soak their feathers before heading off to preen.

Even though you may not be a fan of spider webs and other insects, hummingbirds are. Besides nectar, hummingbirds also rely on the protein that comes with insects. Choose flowers that are attractive to insects so hummingbirds have plenty of food to suit all their needs.

Spider webs serve two purposes for hummingbirds. First, they are one of the common features of hummingbird nests. They use the webs to hold their nests together for sturdiness. The webs are also a great source of protein-rich insects for hummingbirds.

Hummingbirds are here just a few months out of the year. Be ready when they begin to arrive and take the necessary measures needed to enjoy these tiny birds all summer long. 💡

PHOTO COURTESY OF SANDRA COOPER



One thing you will notice with all the feeders is they are often red in color. Hummingbirds have heightened sensitivity to the yellow and red end of the color spectrum, with blues appearing duller to them. Therefore, the bright, warm colors stand out more.

In order to enjoy the sight of hummingbirds, you must have the proper food the birds need to survive. The nectar recipe I use is one-part ordinary white cane granulated sugar and four parts water. The addition of red coloring is not advised as it can be harmful to the birds.

This mixture is about the same sweetness as natural nectar and will not attract nearly as many insects as a syrupier mixture. The 1:4 mix has been proven to be harmless and will provide the needed energy. Commercial hummingbird food is also not necessary and may be undesirable. It is also certainly more expensive and inconvenient than readily available home ingredients of water and sugar.

Hummingbirds are not naturally drawn to feeders. By watching other hummingbirds and by their natural curiosity, they eventually

Jason Houser is a full-time outdoor writer and enthusiast from central Illinois who has won numerous awards in the outdoor communication field.

Leading Acid Reflux Pill Becomes an Anti-Aging Phenomenon

Clinical studies show breakthrough acid reflux treatment also helps maintain vital health and helps protect users from the serious conditions that accompany aging such as fatigue and poor cardiovascular health

by David Waxman
Seattle Washington:

A clinical study on a leading acid reflux pill shows that its key ingredient relieves digestive symptoms while suppressing the inflammation that contributes to premature aging in men and women.

And, if consumer sales are any indication of a product's effectiveness, this 'acid reflux pill turned anti-aging phenomenon' is nothing short of a miracle.

Sold under the brand name AloeCure, it was already backed by clinical data documenting its ability to provide all day and night relief from heartburn, acid reflux, constipation, irritable bowel, gas, bloating, and more.

But soon doctors started reporting some incredible results...

"With AloeCure, my patients started reporting less joint pain, more energy, better sleep, stronger immune systems... even less stress and better skin, hair, and nails" explains Dr. Liza Leal; a leading integrative health specialist and company spokesperson.

AloeCure contains an active ingredient that helps improve digestion by acting as a natural acid-buffer that improves the pH balance of your stomach.

Scientists now believe that this acid imbalance is what contributes to painful inflammation throughout the rest of the body.

The daily allowance of AloeCure has shown to calm this inflammation which is why AloeCure is so effective.

Relieving other stressful symptoms related to GI health like pain, bloating, fatigue, cramping, constipation, diarrhea, heartburn, and nausea.

Now, backed with new clinical studies, AloeCure is being recommended by doctors everywhere to help improve digestion, calm painful inflammation, soothe joint pain, and even reduce the appearance of wrinkles – helping patients to look and feel decades younger.

FIX YOUR GUT & FIGHT INFLAMMATION

Since hitting the market, sales for AloeCure have taken off and there are some very good reasons why.

To start, the clinical studies have been impressive. Participants taking the active ingredient in AloeCure saw a stunning 100% improvement in digestive symptoms, which includes fast and lasting relief from reflux.

Users also experienced higher energy levels and endurance, relief from chronic discomfort and better sleep. Some even reported healthier looking skin, hair, and nails.

A healthy gut is the key to a reducing swell-

ing and inflammation that can wreak havoc on the human body. Doctors say this is why AloeCure works on so many aspects of your health.

AloeCure's active ingredient is made from the healing compound found in Aloe vera. It is both safe and healthy. There are also no known side effects.

Scientists believe that it helps improve digestive and immune health by acting as a natural acid-buffer that improves the pH balance of your stomach.

Research has shown that this acid imbalance contributes to painful inflammation throughout your entire body and is why AloeCure seems to be so effective.

EXCITING RESULTS FROM PATIENTS

To date over 5 million bottles of AloeCure have been sold, and the community seeking non-pharma therapy for their GI health continues to grow.

According to Dr. Leal, her patients are absolutely thrilled with their results and are often shocked by how fast it works.

"For the first time in years, they are free from concerns about their digestion and almost every other aspect of their health," says Dr. Leal, "and I recommend it to everyone who wants to improve GI health without resorting to drugs, surgery, or OTC medications."

"I was always in 'indigestion hell.' Doctors put me on all sorts of antacid remedies. Nothing worked. Dr. Leal recommended I try AloeCure. And something remarkable happened... Not only were all the issues I had with my stomach gone - completely gone - but I felt less joint pain and I was able to actually sleep through the night."

With so much positive feedback, it's easy to see why the community of believers is growing and sales for the new pill are soaring.

THE SCIENCE BEHIND ALOECURE

AloeCure is a pill that's taken just once daily. The pill is small. Easy to swallow. There are no harmful side effects and it does not require a prescription.

The active ingredient is a rare Aloe Vera component known as acemannan.

Made from 100% organic Aloe Vera, AloeCure uses a proprietary process that results in the highest quality, most bio-available levels of acemannan known to exist.

According to Dr. Leal and several of her colleagues, improving the pH balance of your stomach and restoring gut health is the key to revitalizing your entire body.

When your digestive system isn't healthy, it causes unwanted stress on your immune sys-



tem, which results in inflammation in the rest of the body.

The recommended daily allowance of acemannan in AloeCure has been proven to support digestive health, and calm painful inflammation without side effects or drugs.

This would explain why so many users are experiencing impressive results so quickly.

REVITALIZE YOUR ENTIRE BODY

With daily use, AloeCure helps users look and feel decades younger and defend against some of the painful inflammation that accompanies aging and can make life hard.

By buffering stomach acid and restoring gut health, AloeCure calms painful inflammation and will help improve digestion... soothe aching joints... reduce the appearance of wrinkles and help restore hair and nails ... manage cholesterol and oxidative stress... and improve sleep and brain function... without side effects or expense.

Readers can now reclaim their energy, vitality, and youth regardless of age or current level of health.

One AloeCure Capsule Daily

- Helps End Digestion Nightmares
- Helps Calm Painful Inflammation
- Soothes Stiff & Aching Joints
- Reduces appearance of Wrinkles & Increases Elasticity
- Manages Cholesterol & Oxidative Stress
- Supports Healthy Immune System
- Improves Sleep & Brain Function

HOW TO GET ALOECURE

Due to the enormous interest consumers have shown in AloeCure, the company has decided to extend their nationwide savings event for a little while longer. Here's how it works...

Call the AloeCure number and speak to a live person in the US. Callers will be greeted by a knowledgeable and friendly person approved to offer up to 3 FREE bottles of AloeCure with your order. AloeCure's Toll-Free number is 1-800-746-2801. Only a limited discounted supply of AloeCure is currently available.

Consumers who miss out on the current product inventory will have to wait until more becomes available and that could take weeks. They will also not be guaranteed any additional savings. The company advises not to wait. Call 1-800-746-2801 today.

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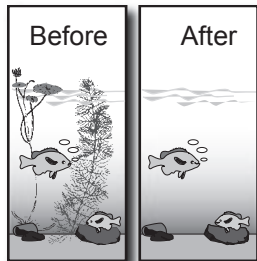
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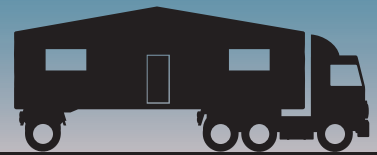


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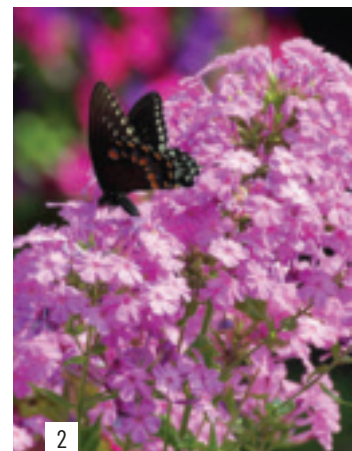
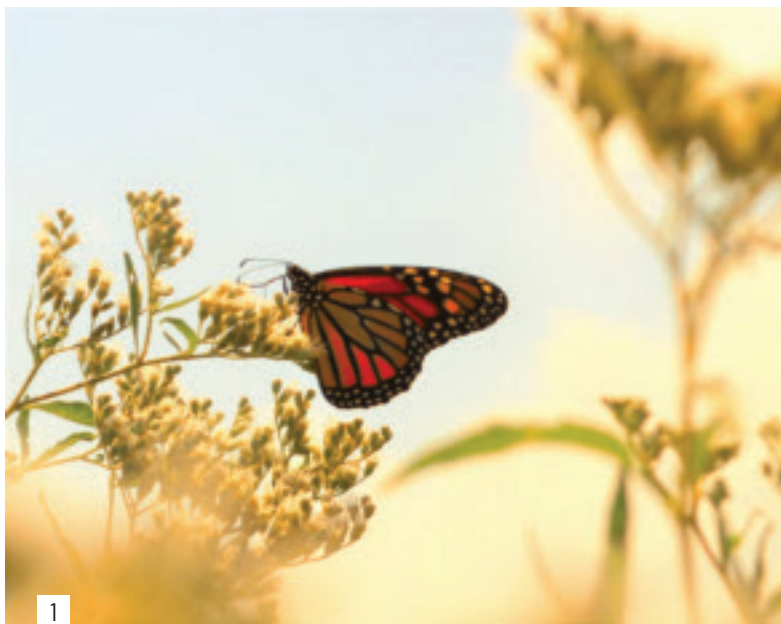
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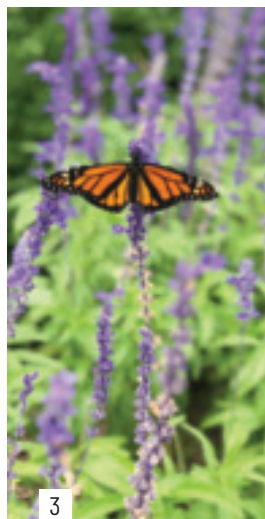
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- July - Stars and stripes*
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- October - Silhouettes and shadows*



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