

APRIL 2021

# Illinois Country Living

## wild about mushrooms

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Electric Cooperatives

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FEATURE  
**Grow your own**

PRAIRIE TABLE  
**A brown bag lunch**

GREAT OUTDOORS  
**The search for  
woodland delights**

  
CO-OP  
NEWS



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# Illinois Country Living

APRIL 2021  
VOLUME 78 • NO. 12



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With a little know-how and a sunny place, you can enjoy the tasty bounty of your labors.

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Cooperative family fills a niche with Flyway Family Farm.

*Cover photo courtesy of Katherine Accettura*

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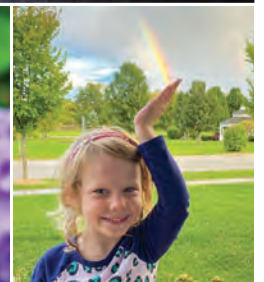
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# Spring into action and save

Spring has sprung, and it is a good time to think about landscaping. Strategically placed landscaping can improve your home's appearance and reduce heating and cooling costs.

In winter, windbreaks block frigid winds. In summer, shading south and west windows and walls can reduce excessive heat.

For more information about energy-saving landscape planning, contact your local electric co-op, or visit <https://www.energy.gov/energysaver/design/landscaping>

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# Invested in you

Helping people help themselves

**WHEN YOU GROW UP** in rural Illinois, among your first lessons are to work hard, respect your elders and help when needed.

At least it was for me.

I grew up in Gifford, which has a population of about 800 people and is in the middle of



great farmland in the northeast corner of Champaign County. My father was a truck driver, and my mother was a secretary at the U of I. There is no doubt the lessons I learned in that small town and at St. Paul's Lutheran Church, which led me to where I am today – the elected treasurer of the state of Illinois and the

only state official who does not live in Chicago.

Traditionally, the Illinois State Treasurer's Office has a simple function – invest money on behalf of the state. What started in 1818 as small personal loans evolved into today's \$37 billion investment portfolio.

However, I know we can do more than monitor interest rates and balance sheets. When I was elected state treasurer in 2014, I had two primary goals. First, to be a vocal defender of downstate Illinois, and second, to help people help themselves.

We help people help themselves by investing in people.

## College savings

Since World War II, an investment in higher education or a skilled trade paved the way to the middle class. This route still exists today, despite the enormous challenge of tuition. However, like investing, the solution is to plan for the long-term. Our college savings plans, Bright Start and Bright Directions, are tools to help pay for college or trade school.

Today, a record-shattering \$15 billion is invested in these programs. In the short five years I have been in office, we have more than

doubled the amount saved for college and saved families \$100 million by demanding the reduction or elimination of certain fees charged by Wall Street.

If helping your family includes college or trade school, we can help you.

## Secure Choice

There is dignity in work. Yet, each of us knows someone who worked hard their entire life only to struggle in retirement. Social Security helps, but it never was intended to be the sole source of retirement income.

We created Secure Choice to combat the retirement crisis in America so people can use their own money to enjoy their latter years with dignity. Traditionally, a worker's retirement savings program is tied to an employer. Secure Choice is available when an employer doesn't offer retirement benefits.

In less than four years, we have enrolled 83,000 workers who have set aside \$53 million. If helping yourself includes retirement savings, we can help you.

## Other programs

Ag Invest helps family farmers secure below-market loans from local bankers for everything from seed to buildings. We successfully expanded it to fill new markets such as specialized crops and wineries.

We are a national leader in the ABLE program that helps those with a disability save money without jeopardizing their federal benefits.

Finally, we partner with the private sector to provide ePay, an easy, safe and convenient electronic payment solution for units of local government such as city councils, library districts and park districts.

I am still proud to call downstate my home, and each day I try to pass along to my daughter the same lessons my parents taught me.

Advocating for downstate residents is especially rewarding knowing that we share the same values of hard work, respect for your elders and help when needed.

After all, at the Illinois Treasurer's Office, we are invested in you. 



Illinois State Treasurer **Michael Frerichs**, elected in 2014, is the only state official who lives outside of Chicago.

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 191,000, the magazine informs cooperative consumer-members about issues affecting their electric cooperative and the quality of life in rural Illinois.

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## APRIL CHECKLIST

### April showers.

It's time to plant perennial herbs, salad greens, peas, carrots, radishes and beets.



### Be prepared.

Take time to practice your family fire evacuation plan today.



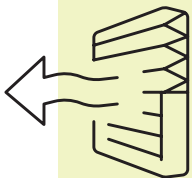
### Hey batter, batter!

No fooling, Major League Baseball opening day is April 1.



### Reminder!

Change your air filter to extend furnace life, reduce energy bills and improve indoor air quality.




## There's still time to apply

If interested in pursuing a career as an electrical lineworker, there's still time to apply for the **LaVern and Nola McEntire Lineworker's Scholarship** for 2021. The \$2,000 scholarship helps pay for the costs to attend lineworker's school conducted by the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives (AIEC) in conjunction with Lincoln Land Community College in Springfield. The scholarship is open to the son/daughter of an Illinois cooperative employee or director; an individual who has served or is serving in the U.S. armed forces or National Guard; or an individual enrolled in the Lincoln Land lineworker's school. The application deadline is April 30, 2021. More information and an online application can be found at [aiec.coop/lavern-and-nola-lineworkers-scholarship/](http://aiec.coop/lavern-and-nola-lineworkers-scholarship/).




If you are a former participant in the NRECA's Youth to Washington Tour, you are eligible to apply for the **Glenn English National Cooperative Leadership Foundation (NCLF) Scholarship**. Five annual scholarships are available – one \$10,000 scholarship and four \$1,000 scholarships. To see eligibility requirements, visit [aiec.coop/youth-programs/glenn-english-scholarship/](http://aiec.coop/youth-programs/glenn-english-scholarship/). The deadline to apply is April 5, 2021.

A \$2,000 **Engineers of the Future scholarship** is also available through the Glenn English NCLF to individuals pursuing a career in engineering. The scholarship supports future engineers with an interest and passion for defining and solving the electric utility challenges of the future, specifically in rural parts of America. Eligibility requirements and an application link are available at [electric.coop/engineers-future-scholarship](http://electric.coop/engineers-future-scholarship). The deadline to apply is May 14, 2021. 

## Goetsch named to advisory group



Warren Goetsch, director from Menard Electric Cooperative, Petersburg, has been appointed to the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) Director Advisory Group. Goetsch is one of 20 directors appointed to a 2-year term and will provide NRECA with guidance and feedback about director education programs, conferences, communications and resources.

Goetsch is vice president of the Menard Electric Cooperative board and recently served a 2-year term as Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives board president. 

## Carter joins AIEC



Brenda Carter has joined the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives (AIEC) as vice president of regulatory compliance. Carter was previously a member of the Illinois Pollution Control Board,

which writes the environmental rules for the state of Illinois and adjudicates alleged violations of the Environmental Protection Act. For 15 years prior, she worked for the Illinois Environmental Regulatory Group, which is the environmental affiliate of the Illinois Chamber of Commerce. Carter also served in the Illinois Air National Guard. She holds a master's degree from the University of Illinois Springfield in

*(Continued on page 8)*

**Sudoku**

by Myles Mellor and Susan Flanagan

Complete the grid so every row, column and 3x3 cube contains every digit from 1 to 9 inclusive with no repetition. Solution on page 37.

Level: Medium

		8		5		1		
	2	1				7		3
5							8	4
			4				6	
9	3		5		6		7	1
	1				2			
1	5							7
8		9				5	4	
		2		7		6		



**Carter joins AIEC** (Continued from page 7)

environmental policy and sustainable development and a bachelor's degree from Southern Illinois University Carbondale in English and paralegal studies.

The AIEC is the service organization for member electric and telephone cooperatives for the state of Illinois and their associate organizations.

**It's not the heat, it's the humidity**

Home energy efficiency is often dominated by discussions about cooling and heating, which account for about 48 percent of energy costs in the average home. However, when your air has too much moisture, your home may feel warmer than the actual temperature. Any discussion of energy efficiency, especially in a humid climate, must take moisture control into account.

Did you ever hear someone say the air in your house feels “close?” They’re likely talking about the “feels-like” temperature of the air because the indoor environment is holding a high amount of water vapor, and there’s less evaporation. These factors combine to create a sensation that the room is too warm and there’s less breathable air, despite the temperature reading on the thermostat.

A house with too much humid air in the building envelope can have issues with mold and mildew. Moist air can also provide a good environment for bacteria. All are known to adversely affect human health. Excess moisture in the air can take a toll on people, furniture, appliances, hardwood floors, carpeting and the energy bill. Chances are, you are setting your thermostat lower to maintain comfort as you offset the higher amount of humidity you feel in the air.

One solution to moisture control could be a whole-house or portable ENERGY STAR-rated dehumidifier that “wrings” moisture from the air. This is a big commitment that might not be right for everyone. Luckily there are other steps you can take to reduce the amount of moisture in your home.

**Check your clothes dryer.** An improperly vented clothes dryer can dump some or all that water from wet clothes into the air. Make sure your venting system is sealed all the way from the back of the dryer to the exhaust port on your home’s exterior. Be sure to clean the vent regularly, according to the manufacturer’s recommendations.

**Vent your stove and bathroom fans outside.** Exhaust fans from cooking surfaces or the bathroom that are vented into your attic only redistribute humidity within your home. All such fans should be vented to the outside, with the system checked for leakage.

**Seal air leaks.** Finding the places and sealing where outside air is leaking in, and conditioned air is leaking out is a cost-effective way to improve air comfort and cut energy costs. Check your doors and windows for the effectiveness of air seals and caulk or weatherstrip as needed.

**Insulate water pipes.** Condensation can occur when there is a difference between the temperature of your water pipes and the humid air in your home. Insulating water pipes keeps condensation from occurring on cold water pipes. This condensation contributes to humidity problems in the home. Insulating hot water pipes eliminates heat loss between the hot water heater and the tap, which means heating and using less water over time. Both will help keep your energy bill in line.

**Monitor drainage around your home.** Rainwater and runoff from gutters and downspouts can easily flow toward your foundation and leak or leech into the structure. Directing the water away with landscaping and sealing your foundation can have a big impact on the humidity level in your home, and your energy bill.

We all know the saying, “It’s not the heat, it’s the humidity.” Well, now you know a few new ways to keep the air in your home a little drier, and hopefully a bit more comfortable.

Source: [energy.gov](http://energy.gov)



# Bad to the Bone

Full tang stainless steel blade with natural bone handle —now **ONLY \$79!**

The very best hunting knives possess a perfect balance of form and function. They're carefully constructed from fine materials, but also have that little something extra to connect the owner with nature.

If you're on the hunt for a knife that combines impeccable craftsmanship with a sense of wonder, the **\$79 Huntsman Blade** is the trophy you're looking for.

The blade is full tang, meaning it doesn't stop at the handle but extends to the length of the grip for the ultimate in strength. The blade is made from 420 surgical steel, famed for its sharpness and its resistance to corrosion.

The handle is made from genuine natural bone, and features decorative wood spacers and a hand-carved motif of two overlapping feathers—a reminder for you to respect and connect with the natural world.

This fusion of substance and style can garner a high price tag out in the marketplace. In fact, we found full tang, stainless steel blades with bone handles in excess of \$2,000. Well, that won't cut it around here. We have mastered the hunt for the best deal, and in turn pass the spoils on to our customers.

**But we don't stop there.** While supplies last, we'll include a pair of \$99 8x21 power compact binoculars *and* a genuine leather sheath **FREE** when you purchase the **Huntsman Blade**.

**Your satisfaction is 100% guaranteed.** Feel the knife in your hands, wear it on your hip, inspect the impeccable craftsmanship. If you don't feel like we cut you a fair deal, send it back within 30 days for a complete refund of the item price.

**Limited Reserves.** A deal like this won't last long. We have only 1120 **Huntsman Blades** for this ad only. Don't let this beauty slip through your fingers. Call today!



**BONUS!** Call today and you'll also receive this genuine leather sheath!

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— J., La Crescent, MN

★★★★★

*"The feel of this knife  
is unbelievable...this  
is an incredibly fine  
instrument."*

— H., Arvada, CO

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## Wax on, wax off

After the onslaught of ice, snow, salt and road sludge, now is the time to give your car a thorough cleaning, inside and out. Salt is also hard on windshield wiper blades, so spring is a good time to check them and replace if cracked or worn.

Due to the pandemic, your vehicle may have spent most of its time sitting in your garage. Take it in to have the oil changed. If you use a full-service location, they will likely check the fluids and tire pressure. Ask them to inspect your belts, hoses and battery.

With a little maintenance, your car will be ready to hit the road. 💡



## Be prepared

We never know when a disaster may strike but being prepared is smart. If you already have a personal or family disaster kit, now is the time to check it to be sure any food, medication or other supplies have not expired.

In addition, since April 2020, the CDC recommends adding the following items to your kit to help prevent the spread of coronavirus and other viruses and flu.

- Masks (for everyone 2 and above), soap, hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes
- Prescription medications and non-prescription medications such as pain relievers, anti-diarrhea medication, antacids or laxatives
- Prescription eyeglasses and contact lens solution
- Infant formula, bottles, diapers, wipes and diaper rash cream
- Pet food and extra water for pet
- Cash or traveler's checks
- Important family documents saved electronically or in waterproof container
- Sleeping bag or warm blanket for each person
- Complete change of clothing appropriate for the climate and sturdy shoes
- Fire extinguisher
- Matches in a waterproof container
- Feminine supplies and personal hygiene items



- Mess kits, paper cups, plates, towels and plastic utensils
  - Paper and pencil
  - Books, games, puzzles or other activities for children
- Keep the kit in a designated area that can be quickly accessed. 💡

Source: ready.gov

## PLEASE MOVE OVER FOR ROADSIDE CREWS

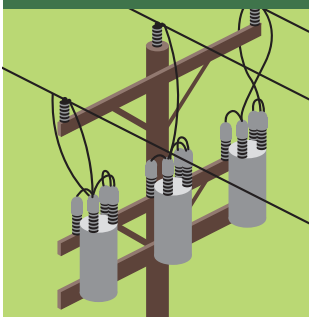
If you see police, firefighters, utility crews or other emergency personnel on the side of the road, please slow down and move over when possible.

*Together, we can keep our crews safe.*



## The Pros and Cons of OVERHEAD AND UNDERGROUND POWER LINES

### OVERHEAD



#### PROS:

- Less expensive to build and repair
- Easier to spot faults/damage
- Can be built on any terrain

#### CONS:

- Susceptible to wind, ice and snow
- More vulnerable to damage from trees and vegetation
- More vulnerable to blinks caused by animals
- Susceptible to damage from vehicle collisions

### UNDERGROUND



#### PROS:

- Less susceptible to vehicle collisions
- Not impacted by trees, wind, ice and snow
- Less vulnerable to blinks caused by animals


#### CONS:

- More expensive to build and repair
- Susceptible to flooding
- Difficult to locate faults/damage
- Vulnerable to damage from digging

## Apply for Medicare online

Did you know you can apply for Medicare online even if you are not ready to retire? Applying online can take less than 10 minutes. There are no forms to sign and usually no required documentation. Social Security will process your application and contact you if more information is needed.

Visit [ssa.gov/benefits/medicare](http://ssa.gov/benefits/medicare) to begin. There, you can apply for Medicare and find other important information. People are usually eligible for Medicare at age 65. If you want to start receiving it at this time, your initial enrollment period begins three months before your 65th birthday and ends three months after that birthday.

Some Medicare beneficiaries may qualify for Extra Help to pay for monthly premiums, annual deductibles and co-payments related to the Medicare Prescription Drug program. You must be receiving Medicare, have limited resources and income, and reside in one of the 50 states or the District of Columbia to qualify for Extra Help. 

Source: Social Security Administration




## ILLINOIS RENTAL PAYMENT PROGRAM

Preserving Housing Stability during the COVID-19 Pandemic



### COVID-19 rental assistance grants

Help is on the way for qualified households in Illinois who are behind on rent due to the COVID-19 pandemic! Starting this month, landlords will be able to initiate an application for a grant of up to \$20,000 per household (covering May 2020 - July 2021), through the State of Illinois' new Rental Payment Program. If approved, the tenant's grant will be paid directly to their landlord.

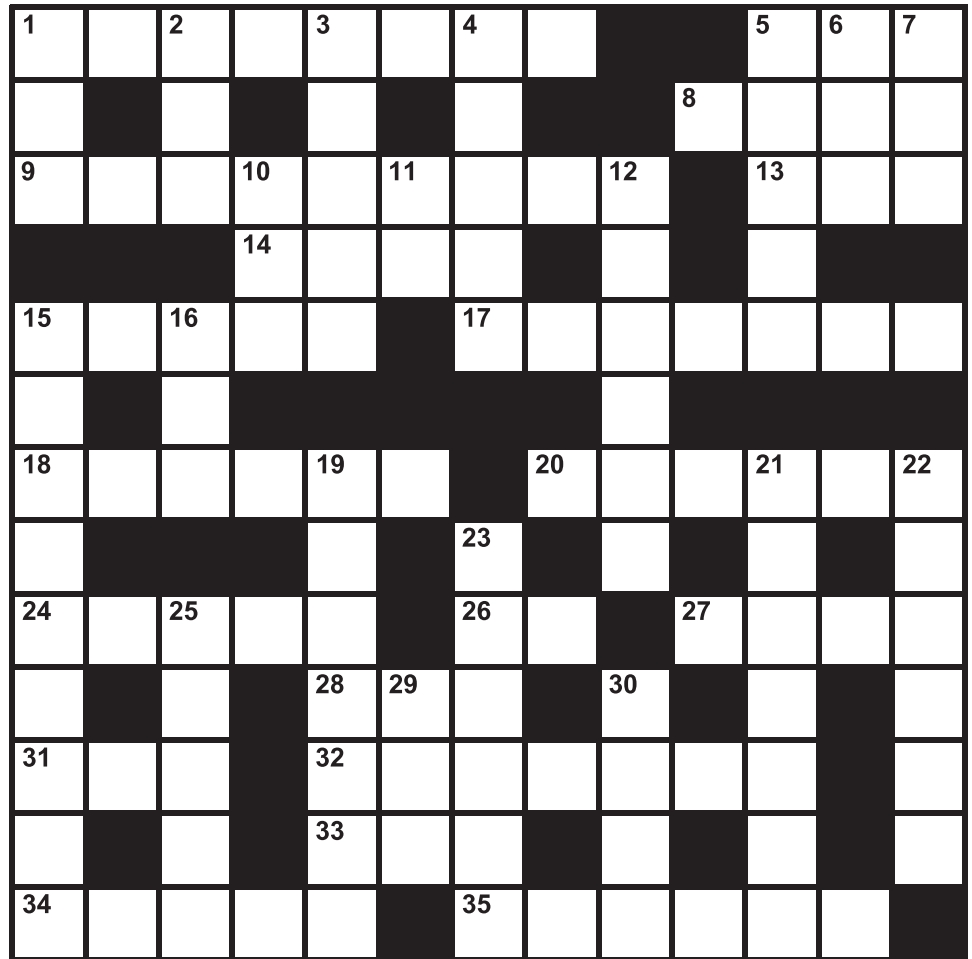
For more information and to apply for the Illinois Rental Payment Program, visit [ilrpp.ihda.org](http://ilrpp.ihda.org). 

## Illinois Country Living



*Datebook is being temporarily suspended until it is safe for everyone to attend events. In its place, we are putting a spring crossword puzzle to help you fight boredom. We hope you enjoy it.*

**ANSWER KEY CAN BE FOUND ON PAGE 37.**



### ACROSS

- 1 Produces new flowers
- 5 Lamb sound
- 8 Tranquil
- 9 King Alfred is a famous variety of these yellow flowers
- 13 Spring month
- 14 Bowls over
- 15 Clear day descriptor
- 17 Melting as ice on a spring day
- 18 Come alive again after hibernation
- 20 Early spring bloomer
- 24 Prepare to propose
- 26 Scale note

- 27 "In spring a young man's fancy turns to thoughts of \_\_\_\_\_" Tennyson
- 28 Nuptials words
- 31 Going public letters
- 32 Lush as vegetation
- 33 Renaissance for one
- 34 Chartreuse, for example
- 35 Spring foliage

### DOWN

- 1 Flower starter
- 2 On vacation
- 3 Ostentatious
- 4 Wet, like dew in the morning
- 5 Disney deer

- 6 \_\_\_\_\_ carte
- 7 Youngest of Alcott's March sisters
- 10 Ardent devotee
- 11 \_\_\_\_\_ Lorean car
- 12 Like a clear night sky
- 15 Shining like sun hitting a river's surface
- 16 Bulls' org.
- 19 Put more zest into
- 21 Chuckle softly
- 22 Pleasant odors
- 23 Flowery
- 25 Stir memories of
- 29 The in German
- 30 Many a charity event

# Tips for planting an efficient, no-till garden

**Pat and Brad:** It's almost time to plant our garden, and we're wondering if there are ways to save energy when planting. How can we make our home garden more efficient? - Leandra

**DEAR LEANDRA:** WE'RE GLAD you asked! One approach to gardening is no-till, also known as no-dig. No-till gardens have been gaining ground with farmers in recent years, partly because of the energy savings. The principles behind no-till gardening work well for large farms, as well as smaller home gardens.

No-till can be done without chemicals. Research shows this approach can produce more fruits and vegetables within a few years, and they get better over the long term. Best of all, this approach to gardening takes less time and effort—and you won't have to fire up the rototiller!

## Don't break up the soil

We usually think breaking up the soil and mixing it up keeps weeds from growing, but tilling can bring weed seeds deep in the soil to the top where they can germinate and grow. Tilling also destroys microbes in the soil that bring nutrients to the plants.

## Use plenty of compost

Spread thick layers of compost and other mulch on top of the soil. This will feed the soil from above, the same way leaves in a forest fall to the ground, decompose and turn into rich soil over time. When you

build up the soil by spreading layers of compost and mulch on top, the weed seeds are kept dormant. Mulch keeps the soil moist, so less water is used to irrigate, which means less electricity use for pumping water from your well or community water system.

compacted or clay, you may have to till in some compost or healthy soil before laying down the cardboard and give it a year for the new mix to get looser.

In the fall, cut the dead plants at ground level and leave the roots in the ground to decompose over the winter. You may want to plant a



## Starting your garden

Your no-till garden can be planted at ground-level or in raised beds. Start by laying weed-blocking material on top of the old dirt. Sheets of cardboard are often used because they will decompose over time. Then spread at least 4 inches of weed-free soil or compost on top.

If the soil under the cardboard is reasonably loose, start planting right away. Your garden may be less productive the first year but will grow healthier and have less weeds every season after. If the ground is heavily

cover crop, like peas, fava beans or barley late in the growing season. Setting up a no-till garden takes a bit of work, but it will require less maintenance in the future and get healthier every year.

If you're ready to try your hand at planting a no-till garden, utilize your local extension office as a resource. We hope these tips will help you prepare for a more energy efficient garden this season. Happy planting—and eating! 💡

**In most no-till gardens, paths covered in wood chips provide easy access to planting beds that are covered in compost.** Photo Credit: Jackie Caserta

This column was co-written by **Pat Keegan** and **Brad Thiessen** of Collaborative Efficiency. For more information, please visit: [collaborativeefficiency.com/energytips](http://collaborativeefficiency.com/energytips).

# Iowa: Home of Hidden Gems

In Iowa, there are hidden surprises around every corner: world-class attractions in small towns, picture-perfect scenery along rivers, unique shopping destinations on Main Streets and endless recreation opportunities in county and state parks.




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[amanacolonies.com](http://amanacolonies.com)

## AMANA COLONIES

Offering an abundance of family fun, this authentic German community is home to a unique culture comprised of seven historical villages that are together recognized as a National Historic Landmark. Amana's unique food shops, restaurants, trails, boutiques selling handcrafted goods, Iowa's oldest microbrewery and an abundance of historical sites offer an ambiance unlike anywhere else.



## DECORAH

Nestled in the heart of the Driftless region, an area of the country missed by glaciers, Decorah is surrounded by rolling hills, scenic rivers, and dramatic limestone bluffs. This landscape offers year-round fishing, kayaking, bald eagle watching, and off-road and paved trail hiking and biking including the 11-mile Trout Run Trail. Decorah is also home to a vibrant main street and the Vesterheim Museum.

## GLADBROOK

A step through Matchstick Marvel's doors will leave visitors of all ages in awe. Known as the best matchstick model maker in the world, this museum shares Iowan Pat Acton's incredible made-to-scale models such as the United States Capitol, a bald eagle and a brontosaurus. Other works of his can be found in Ripley's Believe It or Not museums around the world.

## CEDAR RAPIDS

Discover the beauty of history in Cedar Rapids, a hub for art and culture. From shopping at the NewBo City Market, sipping award-winning local brews, exploring the Czech Village New Bohemia Main Street District or hunting for Grant Wood works throughout the city, this city offers an abundance of surprises. Get outside with Cedar Rapids' 100 miles of trails, parks and waterways.



## CLEAR LAKE & MASON CITY

Experience rare Frank Lloyd Wright architecture, magnificent art, sprawling gardens and extraordinary events in North Iowa. Clear Lake and Mason City offer one truly unique destination. After a relaxing day on the lake, explore The Music Man Square and the Surf Ballroom – sites that bring music and history together like nowhere else.



## THIS IS IOWA

## DYERSVILLE

Sometimes confused with heaven, Dyersville is a small but exciting community. Home to the Field of Dreams Movie Site, new If You Build It Museum, National Farm Toy Museum and Dyer-Botsford House and Doll Museum, this community boasts some memorable attractions. Find more fun at the various wineries, bed and breakfast inns and Plaza Antique Mall.





## GREATER BURLINGTON

Create memories with the family during an adventure in Greater Burlington. Experience delectable restaurants or venture down Snake Alley, named “Unbelievably Crooked” by Ripley’s Believe It or Not!. Visitors can also experience a myriad of outdoor recreation opportunities. Explore the Mississippi River and the surrounding area’s lakes, trails and parks on foot, bike, kayak or canoe.

## JACKSON COUNTY

Home to Maquoketa Caves and Bellevue State Parks, 38 county parks and the Mississippi and Maquoketa Rivers, this county was made for outdoor exploration. Untouched by glaciers, the landscape features picturesque rolling hills and overlooks. Reconnect with nature by hiking through the caves or along the rivers, camping in tents or cabins or exploring the waterways on kayaks and canoes.



## LE CLAIRE

Located on the legendary Great River Road, Le Claire provides visitors the opportunity to enjoy its Libation Lane, quaint boutique shops and entertainment spots while soaking in the beauty of the Mississippi River. Experience the flavors of world-class eateries and unique attractions such as Antique Archaeology, home of the American Pickers TV show and their grand antiques collection.

## MARION COUNTY

Savor sweet Dutch pastries in Pella, hear the engines roar at sprint car races in Knoxville or see nature’s beauty in every season at Lake Red Rock. Invent your adventure at Red Rock Area’s cozy places, relaxing pubs, specialty shops, and exhilarating recreational activities.



## MUSCATINE

Start your trip to Muscatine off with the perfect spot for art lovers by visiting the Muscatine Art Center. Enjoy 12 rooms of beautifully curated art exhibits set inside a restored mansion from the early 20th century. Make your next stop the National Pearl Button Museum to learn about when Muscatine was once known as the “Pearl Button Capital of the World.” From there, you don’t want to miss a trip to explore the natural beauty of Wildcat Den State Park.



[traveliowa.com](http://traveliowa.com)



## QUAD CITIES

With an arts and culture scene that flows throughout the region like the Mississippi River, the Quad Cities are home to hundreds of talented artists, musicians, actors, dancers and Broadway productions. Experience their creative genius on music stages, galleries and theaters, while also enjoying fine dining offered by local chefs and craft breweries. The area also boasts more than 20 museums.



## RIVERBOAT TWILIGHT CRUISES

For a truly unique water experience, book a tour with Riverboat Twilight to witness Iowa’s magnificent Mississippi River Flyway. Historic towns, towering bluffs and islands are filled with bald eagles, pelicans, egrets, herons and more. Be sure to bring a camera to capture the diverse wildlife and the river’s beautiful valley landscapes.



**Home to great people, unique attractions, tasty food, and magnificent landscapes, Iowa offers exciting surprises around every corner that keep visitors coming back for more. Plan your visit to Iowa today.**



## Beautifying your yard? Don't just dig in

**BEFORE GETTING READY TO** beautify your yard, stay safe and prevent accidents by calling 811, the national digging hotline. Even if the project seems small, the impact of digging into an underground utility line could be huge. To help stay safe and prevent accidents, call before digging to get underground utilities marked.

### **There's a lot going on below the soil's surface**

Common Ground Alliance (CGA) estimates there are 200 million miles, or 100 billion feet, of underground utilities in the U.S.; some just inches below the ground.

"It doesn't have to be a major project to require underground service marking. Even putting in a flowerbed or mailbox post requires knowing where utilities are located," explains Erin Hollinshead, executive director of the Energy Education Council/Safe Electricity program. "The key to safe digging is planning ahead."

### **Call ahead to get your utilities marked**

Call 811 at least two to three business days before your planned digging date even if an area has previously been located and marked. Erosion, ground shifting and settling can move underground lines.

Once you have reported where you plan to dig and what type of work you will complete, the area will be surveyed and marked. This service is free of charge.

If you have any private utilities, you will need to hire a private utility locator. Examples of private utilities include an underground sprinkler system, invisible fences, data communication systems and private water systems.

Once all utilities are marked, respect the boundaries and dig carefully. Keep at least 2 feet away from the utility line markings.

### **What to do if you hit a line**

Stop working immediately if contact is made with an underground line, and evacuate the area

for safety. Call 911 to notify emergency personnel and the affected utility. Any contact with underground lines must be reported. Even if it appears undamaged, small dents and nicks can lead to major utility problems.

If you believe an electrical line was damaged, warn others that the ground and any nearby equipment may be energized. To evacuate, keep your feet together and hop to safety as you leave the area. Do not resume work until the area has been confirmed safe by your electric cooperative.

### **Consider all utility equipment and anything touching it energized**

Always treat exposed or damaged cables as if they are live and never go near them or remove anything in contact with the cable; it could be energized.

For more information about digging safety visit [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org) and [illinois1call.com](http://illinois1call.com). 💡

# Understanding computer operating systems

**THE OPTIONS FOR COMPUTER** operating systems haven't changed much over the years. The operating system installed on a computer allows a user to interface with the computer and manages all other installed software.

Without an operating system, all other programs wouldn't know what to do.

Today's operating systems have multiple programs running simultaneously. It oversees all software and manages the hardware resources such as memory, processor and drive space.

The most common operating systems include Microsoft Windows, Mac OS, Linux and Google Chrome OS. Released in 2011, Chrome OS is the newest main-stream operating system.

While you can perform similar functions on all, each one is unique and caters to a specific use.

**Microsoft Windows** is used on most computers today and is the go-to operating system for general business and home use. However, it is the primary target for malware and viruses. Over the past 10 years, Windows has come a long way regarding security and stability. It will likely continue to be the operating system of choice for years to come.

**Chrome OS** has recently overtaken Mac OS for the second spot in usage statistics; likely due to new work-from-home schedules and remote learning. Chromebooks have gained traction in schools due to their low price point and cloud-based functionality. Chrome

OS has limitations, but if most of your tasks can be done on a web browser, it might be for you. Chrome OS does web browsing, social media and document manipulation well. Using the cloud, a

other Apple products work together seamlessly creating a hassle-free end user experience.

**Linux** is the Wild West of operating systems. It is an open-source platform meaning that anyone can



PHOTO CREDIT: MONTICELLILLO - STOCK.ADOBE.COM

computer running Chrome doesn't require much storage space. Instead, files are saved to Google Drive or other cloud-based storage.

**Mac OS** runs on Apple's proprietary hardware and is exclusive to Mac computers and excels in a few areas. Many believe Macs are immune to computer viruses and malware. That is not true. Less than 10 percent of users have adopted Mac OS, making it a smaller target. It may be more secure than Windows but is not immune to malicious software. Mac OS shines in the graphic design industry due to high performance and stability. Consider Mac OS if you do photo and video editing. Apple has created a seamless ecosystem within its products, tying everything together. The iPhone, Mac, AirPods and

edit or change the operating system code. Linux is free and runs on any hardware Windows can run on. This is useful for developers who need to "look under the hood" and make adjustments to operating system code. Similar to Mac OS, Linux tends to be more secure because it is not a primary target but far from immune. Because of its versatility, there is a steep learning curve associated with switching to it. Customization is one of its strongest traits along with performance. Often, old computers can get a second life by removing Windows and installing a more efficient version of Linux.

Consider how you plan to use it and choose the appropriate operating system to fit your needs. 💡



**Comment on this column**  
Visit [icl.coop](http://icl.coop) and click on Powered Up to respond. Your response might even be included in a future column.



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



## The hydrangea challenge

**HYDRANGEAS HAVE LONG HELD** the eyes of gardeners and landscapers for their bigger-than-life ornamental appeal. Hydrangeas have what most horticulturists call multi-season appeal. If you are a gardener who has experienced fading daffodil and tulip foliage, or the yellowing foliage of daylilies at the end of the season, then you know what I am talking about.

This growing season, I challenge homeowners to try their hand at growing one of these three favorite hydrangea species and their cultivars that populate central Illinois gardens.

### **Hydrangea paniculata**

Also known as panicle hydrangea, this industry favorite comes in many varieties including Limelight, Pinky Winky, Quick Fire and Tardiva. These winter-hardy hydrangeas are tolerant of urban conditions like pollution. The shrubs grow 6- to 10-feet high, depending on cultivar, and bloom early to mid-summer.

They bloom on new wood and should be pruned in late winter or early spring. Gardeners can rejuvenate by cutting them to the ground

every few years. In other years, larger flower panicles can be produced by thinning the plant to five or 10 primary canes.

Limelight is known for its copious number of flowers and foliage that turns shades of red during the fall. Pinky Winky blooms begin white and turn pink with age, creating a two-tone effect. Its flower display is impressive because its strong stems keep the flowers upright. Quick Fire is a compact plant which produces smaller, less full but prolific white flowers that turn reddish purple. It tends to bloom a month earlier than other panicle hydrangea.

### **Hydrangea arborescens**

The Annabelle is the most commonly known plant in this group of smooth hydrangea. It usually has large heart-shaped leaves and massive summer flowers. The colors transition from green to white to brown. In nature, this plant is loose and wild-looking, but in a cultivated setting where additional water and fertilizers are provided, it makes a nice clump-forming shrub.

It flowers in June and again in August if spent flowers are removed.

These plants respond well to rejuvenation. In other years, remove the outer canes in late winter.

Annabelle grows 3- to 5-feet tall with large, round, white flowers that are 6 inches across. It puts on a show for six to eight weeks. Annabelle will not tolerate full sun unless supplemental watering is provided.

### **Hydrangea quercifolia**

Known as oak leaf hydrangea, this is one of my all-time favorite shrubs. It grows about 6 feet tall and wide in a “roundy mounding” shape. The shrub has large cone-shaped blooms that add color starting in May. The blooms last to the end of summer and transform from white, to purplish pink, to brown.

It is adaptable and can be grown in full sun and boasts large dark green leaves that turn rusty red in the fall, reminiscent of oak leaves. This plant blooms on old wood, and pruning must be done after flowering in late summer. As with most hydrangeas, supplemental watering during drought will keep it happy.

Are you up for the challenge? 🍷



Kelly Allsup is a horticulture educator with the University of Illinois Extension serving Livingston, McLean and Woodford counties. She is a Master Gardener, Master Naturalist and has a passion for ecological gardening.

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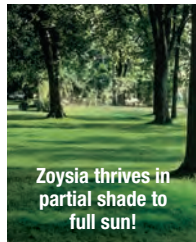
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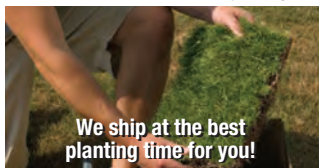
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750	+150	6	\$66.00	\$22.00	36%
1100	+400	10	\$95.00	\$33.00	44%
2000	+1000	20	\$165.00	\$54.00	52%

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60	+15	5	\$90.00	\$24.00	35%
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180	+45	15	\$180.00	\$54.00	56%

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# GROW

# YOUR

# OWN



*The fun of food gardening*



*By Pamela A. Keene*

Whether you have a multiple-acre plot or a patio, you can grow your own vegetables. With a little bit of know-how and a sunny place, enjoying the bounty of your own labors can be fun, rewarding and tasty.

“There are so many reasons to grow your own vegetables and the flavors are ever so much better than store-bought,” says Joe Lamp’l, founder of joegardener.com and host of the nationally syndicated “Growing a Greener World,” which airs on public television in all 50 states. “Money can’t buy the kind of taste you get fresh from the garden or the satisfaction of knowing you’re eating what you’ve grown.”

### **Sunlight, soil and water**

Three components are vital to successful vegetable gardening: sunlight, soil and water.

“Choose your spot carefully to have plenty of sunlight, at least 6 hours a day,” Lamp’l says. “Look for a place that’s not obstructed by trees or other buildings. Sunlight is one of the three basic components to successful gardening. The other two are good soil and having access to a reliable water source.”

Many gardeners build raised beds. By elevating the growing area off the ground, it’s easier to plant, tend and harvest with less bending or squatting.

“Most people choose wood to construct raised beds, but be sure to consider the size,” Lamp’l says. “Use 2- by 12-inch boards to build a bed that your space can accommodate. Be sure to make it about 3 feet wide to give good access from all sides. This will make weeding and harvesting easier and you can more closely inspect your plants for signs of disease or insects as they grow.”

Leave enough space between beds for a wheelbarrow to pass to bring soil and mulch into the garden area.

The soil in your garden is crucial for good production and with raised beds you have more control over the composition of the soil, nutrients and quality.

“Packaged garden soil is a good choice because it’s disease and weed free, but be mindful of the quality. Cheaper is not better,” Lamp’l says. “The soil provides the main support for your plants, so it needs to have the right nutrients and the right texture. If the soil compacts too easily, it will be difficult for plant roots to thrive. Amend it with organic matter, also available at your box retailer or local nursery, to promote good growth.”

soil feels dry before watering again. Your plants will be healthier and produce better results.”

### Seeds or seedlings

Summer vegetables, such as tomatoes, eggplant and peppers, are generally easier to grow from seedlings, which can be purchased at a local nursery or box retailer. Look for healthy plants with several sets of leaves. They can be planted in the garden after the date of the last frost in your area.

“If you want to start from seeds, back up your indoor starting time to have nice-sized seedlings by the ideal planting time for your region,” Lamp’l says. “I’m a big proponent of starting vegetable seeds indoors about six to eight weeks before planting, but you will need the proper light set-up and the commitment to manage the process from seeds to moving the seedlings into the garden.”

Once the soil warms up, beans, squash and cucumbers are easy to plant directly in the garden. Their germination time is fairly quick. Be sure to purchase seeds packaged for the current year by finding the date stamp on the package and follow planting instructions.



Make sure a good water source is nearby to avoid constantly moving hoses back and forth throughout the growing season. “In an ideal world, drip irrigation is best, but it can be costly to install into each bed,” he says. “Consider hand watering if you have a smaller garden plot. Apply the water directly to the base of the plant to prevent wetting the foliage. Prolonged periods of wet foliage can increase the potential for plant disease.”

Watering can be tricky. “Don’t water just because it’s a certain day of the week, because you run the risk of overwatering,” he says. “Check the moisture level of the soil, and water accordingly, allowing enough flow to soak the ground. Then wait until the top inch or so of the

“Vegetable plants are heavy feeders,” he says. “It’s important to fertilize them as they start to produce. A slow-release organic fertilizer is a nice way to deliver the nutrients on a continuous basis. Be sure to follow the application instructions for best results.”

Top-dressing vegetables with compost during the growing season provides additional nutrients and improves the soil.

### Patio and deck

Some vegetables are well suited for planting in containers, as long as they have ample sunlight. Again, at least six hours a day applies.

Tomatoes are available in patio and bush forms that are more compact and better suited



for containers. Growers have also introduced a wide variety of peppers, from sweet to hot, plus colorful bell peppers, that grow nicely on a patio.

“The key is to provide a container that’s large enough for the roots to grow and support production,” he says. “Containers also tend to dry out more often, so it’s important to keep them properly watered. Feeding regularly is important as well.”

Lamp’l suggests avoiding clay or terra cotta pots that lose moisture more quickly.

extension office,” he says. “They can help solve pest and disease issues, answer your gardening questions and connect you with other gardeners. And best of all it’s free.”

### Gardening help

Access to fact-based gardening information is merely a click or phone call away. The Cooperative Extension System, housed at land-grant universities across the nation, provides research-based hyperlocal advice about every-



“Lighter-colored plastic pots work better, but make sure they have drainage holes in the bottom,” he says. “Adding a layer of mulch will help retain moisture and keep the roots a little cooler.”

### Patience pays off

Gardening is a lifelong learning experience and Lamp’l says no one gets it 100 percent right all the time.

“Don’t get frustrated if you’re not successful in your first year of growing vegetables,” Lamp’l says. “Much of gardening is trial and error. The number of resources – YouTube, websites, blogs and more – is infinite and can be overwhelming, so learn to filter the sound advice from the not-so-good.

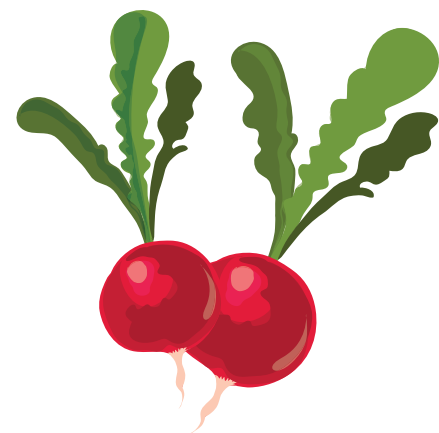
“You also have an excellent local resource just a phone call or web click away, with your local

thing from how to solve blossom-end rot on tomatoes to keeping garden pests, such as deer or insects, at bay.

“Best of all, it costs nothing to contact your local extension office where trained and educated experts can help the public solve their gardening challenges,” says Doug Steele, Ph.D., vice president for Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources of the Association of Public Land Grant Universities, based in Washington, D.C. “Extension is designed to educate Americans on food, agriculture and national resources. It’s research-based and continuously updated and revised based on the latest knowledge.”

### Reliable information

Can I grow blueberries in my backyard? Why aren’t my daylilies blooming? When is the best





time to prune my holly shrubs? My maple tree is dropping leaves in the summer; what's wrong? These and countless other questions can be answered by local extension office staff or on your state's extension website.

"When you have questions about your landscape or your garden, that's the time to reach out to your local extension office," Steele says. "Many typical problems that occur when growing plants, garden and landscape can be prevented by planning before planting.

Statewide extension websites maintain detailed publications on hundreds of topics, written in easy-to-understand language and plenty of diagrams. They are free to download.

"Information from extension is far-reaching and freely available to the public," Steele says. "With the resources of your local extension office, you have a pipeline to gardening success. If you're perplexed about an issue or simply want to know the best way to start a home garden, just ask your local extension office. They're here to help."



"We call our local extension agents 'curators of information on the front lines' for farmers, ranchers, gardeners and communities," Steele says. "Through our national network, these on-the-ground agents are among the first to learn of new technologies and techniques and bring them to their local areas."

Local extension agents generally hold degrees in agriculture, horticulture or a related field. While they may specialize in crop management, turf grasses or animal science, they are trained to educate the public and provide reliable and understandable knowledge.

"The internet is filled with all kinds of gardening and plant advice, but when people call their local extension, they're assured of getting the latest information from a tested, peer-reviewed and reliable source," he says.

### Master gardeners

Many local extension offices offer formalized community education taught by experts through Extension Master Gardener programs. These courses are open to private citizens interested in garden education, volunteerism and community service.

"While formal programs vary in duration and number of classes from state to state, the objective is the same," Steele says. "The focus is to train community members to assist the local extension office with horticulture education and to provide a strong volunteer resource in the area."

Master gardener groups conduct youth programs in schools, create educational community gardens and sponsor annual plant sales. They offer public seminars and speakers for garden clubs and church groups.

Joe Lamp'1 in his garden. Photo credit: joegardener.com

## RESOURCES

### UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS EXTENSION

extension.illinois.edu

### ASSOCIATION OF PUBLIC & LAND-GRANT UNIVERSITIES

apl.u.org

### NATIONAL EXTENSION

nifa.usda.gov/extension

### NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

nifa.usda.gov



Photo credit: Pamela A. Keene

Candidates must apply for the annual course; most states have online applications. There is a nominal cost to participate, which includes class materials. Once they complete their studies and pass exams, they become certified Extension Master Gardeners. To maintain their active status, they are required to volunteer a proscribed number of hours in the community.

“The Master Gardener program is a critical link to the work of the extension,” he says.

“It helps us reach even further into the community and extend the educational mission of extension.”

Since the pandemic, the interest in home gardening has surged. People are interested in growing their own fruits and vegetables, partly to know where their food comes from but also as a safe outdoor activity that can be enjoyed by all members of the family. 💡

## First things first:

## test soil

**ARE YOUR PLANTS GETTING** the right diet to be the best they can be? Maybe it's time for a soil test from your local extension office. You'll end up with a wealth of knowledge about what fertilizers to use, how to amend your soil and whether your plants are getting the nutrients they need to be healthy and prolific.

### Here's how it works.

- Pick areas that you'd like to test, say for vegetable plantings, fruit trees, annuals or shrubs.
- Take a sample from the area by scraping off any mulch, grass or weeds, then digging your shovel straight down about four inches into the ground. Put the soil into a bucket.
- Repeat this vertical sample process four to six times in the same general area.
- Mix the samples in the bucket well, then remove approximately 1 cup of soil, placing it in a clean plastic bag. Label each bag with the type of plants you plan to grow. This is important.
- Repeat in other planting areas, such as lawns, flower beds or vegetable gardens, keeping the

samples separate. Different plants require different nutrients and soil acidity to flourish, so it's important to know how to prepare your soil before you plant.

- Take your bagged samples to your local county extension office. The office has official brown-paper sample bags you can transfer your samples into to be sent to the university for testing. There's a place for your name, address and the type of planting for the area.

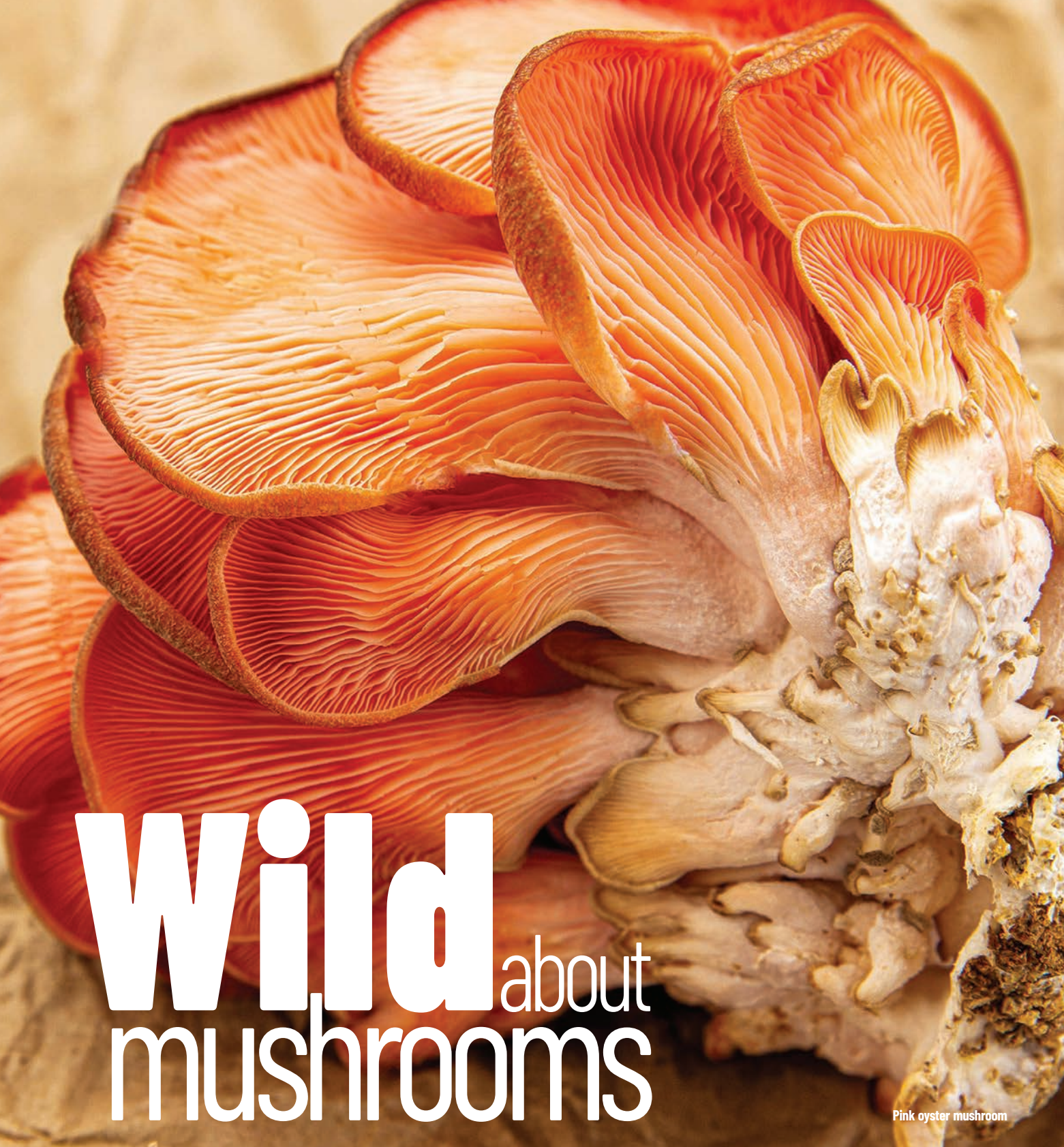
By testing your soil before you plant and amending it according to the recommendations, you're setting the stage for long years of successful gardening. If the soil is right, you have a much better chance of getting your garden to grow.

The tests typically cost less than \$10. The samples are sent to the state university's agriculture department for testing. Within two to three weeks, you'll get back a detailed report that tells you the current condition of your soil and exactly what you need to do to amend it for your plants.

For more information, contact your local extension office. 💡



Photo credit: Don Linke



Pink oyster mushroom

# Wild about mushrooms

By Valerie Cheatham

**MICHAEL HATFIELD NEVER THOUGHT** he liked mushrooms, but after a foraging trip with his college friends and future wife Jessica, that all changed. Hunting for the elusive morel, and tasting the buttery fried treats for the first time, opened his eyes to an experience that would transform his future.

While attending Southern Illinois University-Carbondale to pursue a forestry degree, Michael met others interested in foraging for morels and other southern Illinois varieties.

“Growing up, I didn’t think I liked mushrooms because it was always button mushrooms from the store,” Michael says. “I realized I liked



**The Hatfields sell a variety of mushrooms at farmers' markets.**

morels. That piqued my interest and got me reading about other types of mushrooms that grow throughout the year down here [southern Illinois] – including oyster mushrooms and Lion's Mane.”

Twelve years ago, after he and Jessica purchased their Makanda farm in Egyptian Electric Cooperative Association territory, they started putting in gardens, planting orchards and raising a variety of animals for their use. They named it Flyway Family Farm as a nod to the Crab Orchard Wildlife Refuge which borders the farm on two sides. The refuge is a large stopping ground for migrating waterfowl along the Mississippi Flyway.

They forage for mushrooms on their land, and Michael met a fellow student who had a small farm and grew shiitake mushrooms on logs (mushrooms thrive off dead wood). He learned

about the process and started experimenting with drilling and inoculating logs with shiitake plugs in wooded areas of their farm.

They initially began with a couple hundred logs, which increased to 500 and eventually 1,000. “At one time, we had several thousand inoculated logs and started trying to sell the shiitakes,” Michael explains. “We quickly realized it was difficult because so much was dependent on the climate and seasons. We either had an abundance of mushrooms or next to none. We were trying to get into farmers’ markets and stores but realized we needed a steady supply.”

The only way to guarantee a consistent quantity was growing mushrooms indoors. They researched indoor growing, began exploring options, established their first grow space and had enough success to keep them interested.

They built another space that lasted a couple of years, and in 2017, when they “finally felt they had the hang of it,” converted a farm outbuilding into their main growing facility.

They now harvest between 400-500 pounds of mushrooms each week while working on an expansion.

Most weeks, Flyway Family Farm grows seven to 10 varieties, and over the course of a year, harvests almost 20 varieties. Top sellers include oyster, shiitake and chestnut.

According to Michael, they grow

several varieties of oyster mushrooms in a wide range of colors. There is a blue-gray one and a white one but occasionally also grow brown, blue, golden yellow and pink. There is also the Black King, which has a marbled black and white cap.

Most people think mushrooms taste alike, but different varieties possess unique qualities. Some are meaty or have an earthy flavor, while others, like the oyster mushrooms, have a mild, buttery, sweet flavor to them. The Lion's Mane, a white almost furry looking variety, has a seafood quality to it.

“There's such a diversity of textures and flavors. After folks try them, they get hooked,” he says.



**Lion's Mane**

Michael explains that business started slowly due to the unfamiliar varieties they grow. People weren't used to seeing them and didn't know what to do with them. Now, the farm is seeing steady, consistent growth for their products – most years increasing 25-30 percent.



He attributes the growth to education. They do a lot of community outreach and visit garden clubs, do interviews and podcasts. Over the last several years, the internet has played a big part in that. “Groups from all over the world are teaching people how to grow mushrooms and showing them how to cook and eat them.”

Flyway Family Farm's products are available in farmers' markets in southern Illinois and the Champaign-Urbana area. They initially looked at going into St. Louis, but there were already several growers there. “If that niche is filled, it doesn't make sense to go there,” says Michael. “We discovered Champaign has a large farmers market, and no one was selling mushrooms. It really became a stepping stone for us into that region. Being at the market led to working with chefs and stores and how we came to know the other farms.”

The farm provides mushrooms as add-ons to community-supported agriculture (CSA) shares offered by other farms. Farmers pool together their resources; one providing the bulk of vegetables and others providing eggs, meat, etc. It's a win for everyone and gets their products known.

Flyway Family Farm products are also available at Neighborhood Co-op and Fresh Foods in the Carbondale area, Common Ground Co-op, Urbana, and several chefs use them in their restaurants.

One product that has gained popularity is their mushroom jerky. “It's basically like a beef jerky but we make it with oyster mushrooms, providing a vegan or vegetarian option to typical jerky,” says Michael. “It's become very popular and is hard to tell it's not beef.”

A dream of Jessica's is to host a mushroom festival. There are mushroom festivals around

the country with demonstrations on preparing, growing, cooking and learning about the medicinal qualities. Experts lead foraging hikes to help participants collect and identify mushrooms – some are edible while others are poisonous or benign.

Last spring was supposed to mark the first Makanda Mushroom Fest, but after months of planning, it all fell apart due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This year, she plans to hold the event Oct. 1-3. She envisions a family-friendly event where attendees learn about mushrooms, go foraging with experts, and a variety of educational fun along with art and music.

For a list of places to find Flyway Family Farm products, information about mushroom CSAs and to stay updated on the Makanda Mushroom Fest, visit [flywayfamilyfarm.com](http://flywayfamilyfarm.com). For mushroom recipes, nutrition information and more visit The Mushroom Council at [mushroomcouncil.com](http://mushroomcouncil.com). 



PHOTOS COURTESY OF KATHERINE ACCETTURA.



Honey Berry Rollup



Mary Greene



Veggie

## The Brown Bag

By Colten Bradford

**IN 1976, A DELI** opened its doors in downtown Monticello. Forty-five years later, The Brown Bag is still going strong, serving sandwiches, soups and salads to locals and tourists alike.

“I think it was always a given that I would take over at some point,” says Leslie Glickman, who grew up in the deli and took the reins at managing the restaurant last year. She co-owns it with her mother, Harlean Swing, who originally opened it.

“She decided the town needed a deli. It already had fast food, pizza and diners ... so she and my stepfather, who was an architect, bought the building,” Leslie says. The rest is history.

Since taking over, Leslie has started much needed renovations to the building. “I wanted to take over the mantle and honor her, the way the restaurant started, and her vision, but I also want to get my vision too.”

The facade has been redone, complete with new lettering on the windows, and the original iron posts have been sanded and repainted. New flooring has been put in throughout as well as updated booths and seating.

“We wanted to go back to what it looked like when the building was built in the 1800s,” Leslie explains. There are many future projects planned, including wheelchair accessible bathrooms.

“I feel like The Brown Bag is an integral part of the town,” Leslie says. “People have had their pregnancy cravings here, gotten engaged here, had bridal showers and baby

showers. We’ve been a big part of the town. These buildings are some of the oldest in town, so it is tough. There’s a lot of things that need to be fixed. I wanted to honor the historical feel of it.”

While the building may look different, patrons can continue to rely on menu favorites with a multitude of options, all made fresh and homemade from scratch.

“We’re the perfect restaurant for a fussy eater,” Leslie says. “You can come and make whatever you want. You can create your own sandwich, or you can take one of our sandwiches and tweak it.”

Every sandwich is made to order. You can even watch it being made as the kitchen is in the open. “We bake our own turkey, make our own salad dressings, and make our soups and salads from scratch,” Leslie says. “We pride ourselves on that and also that the menu is so vast.”

Leslie says for years the most popular item on the menu was her mom’s signature sandwich, the Veggie, which consists of melted swiss cheese stuffed into a pita pocket with cucumber, tomato, creamy coleslaw, grated Colby-Jack cheese and lettuce.

“For years, it was ‘the thing,’ but the Honey Berry Rollup has surpassed that,” Leslie says. “It’s the thing everybody wants.” This signature dish consists of a flour tortilla spread with cranberry sauce and rolled around sliced honey turkey, crisp bacon, grated Colby-Jack cheese and lettuce.

The hot, homemade soups and fresh salads are made daily. The cheesy broccoli soup and Buzz's Salad are customer favorites. The salad is made with chopped chicken breast, fresh mixed fruit, parmesan cheese, and toasted pecans on a bed of lettuce and topped with homemade poppyseed dressing.

"My mom named some sandwiches after people who have worked here and people who have consistently ordered something she thought was cool, and put it on the menu. One sandwich that comes to mind is the Mary Greene," Leslie says.

This turkey and swiss on a bagel with cream cheese on one side and butter on the other was a favorite of a local woman named Mary Greene who would eat it on her lunch break. After she passed away in a car accident, the deli commemorated her by naming the sandwich after her and putting it on the regular menu.

The Brown Bag is also known for its daily specials. The deli has so many, Leslie says they could almost do a different special every day and not repeat for a month.

"I've noticed people really like Reubens and whenever we do a special with cranberry sauce or a jalapeno berry compote," Leslie explains. "They love our Yankee pot roast and Brown Bag Philly. Then we have some specials customers come up with."

A local teacher had a dream about a sandwich and gave it to them. Called the Not So Little Wonder, it

was turned into a special. It's a variation of a French dip with cheddar cheese, French fried onions, crisp bacon and roast beef with au jus on the side for dipping.

The Brown Bag posts daily specials on its website and Facebook page, and you can join the deli's texting club by scanning the QR code on its website to stay updated.

While there, grab a slice of pie. Desserts, also including cakes, cookies, brownies and more, are baked by Tracy Bodine, owner of Pies by Inge. This bakery, located inside the deli, has called The Brown Bag home since the original owner Inge Parker started the business.

Pies are made from scratch using a secret crust recipe passed from owner to owner. Baked goods can be purchased by the piece at the deli's counter, but if you want a whole pie, you'll have to contact the bakery to order.

Like other restaurants across the state, The Brown Bag was forced to make changes when the COVID-19 pandemic hit. For the first time, curbside pickup and delivery were available, and when outdoor dining was allowed, workers had to learn to be servers as the deli has always been a counter service restaurant.

"My mother started this restaurant and put her all into it. I was able to take it over, and I really care. Someday, my kid is going to take it over," Leslie says. "I have a group of people here who really care and are like family." 🍷



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## Make room for mushrooms

**MUSHROOMS ARE ALWAYS IN** season, versatile and come in a multitude of varieties. It is best to purchase commercially grown mushrooms or take a mushroom expert with you when foraging for these delights. Morel hunting is a popular spring activity, but poisonous mushrooms may resemble non-poisonous ones so never eat one unless you know exactly what you have. 💡

ALL PHOTOS ARE COURTESY OF THE MUSHROOM COUNCIL



**LASAGNA STUFFED PORTABELLA MUSHROOMS**

### WE NEED RECIPES!

#### Upcoming monthly topics

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Recipes prepared, tasted and photographed by Illinois Country Living staff. For more recipes and photos go to [www.icl.coop](http://www.icl.coop). Questions? Email [finestcooking@aiec.coop](mailto:finestcooking@aiec.coop).

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**SHRIMP COBB SALAD WITH SMASHED POTATOES AND MUSHROOMS**

## Shrimp Cobb Salad with Smashed Potatoes and Mushrooms

Recipe by: Mushroom Council

Servings: 4

- 1 package steamable red potatoes, cooked according to package instructions and cooled slightly
- 4 eggs
- 12 shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 4 cups baby spinach

- 2 cups baby arugula
- 8 ounces cremini mushrooms, diced
- 1 cup cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1 avocado, peeled and sliced

#### Dressing:

- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 1/2 cup crumbled blue cheese
- 1/4 cup white wine vinegar

Smash potatoes using a potato masher and set aside. In a small pot, pour in about 3 inches of cold water. Gently place 4 eggs in the water and turn heat on to medium. When the water starts to boil, turn heat off, cover and set a timer for 6 minutes. When timer rings, drain off boiling water, fill the pot with ice and add water. Allow the eggs to completely cool, crack the shell carefully, peel, cut in half lengthwise and set aside. In a non-stick skillet over medium high heat, add oil and heat until rippling. Place shrimp in skillet and cook for 30 to 45 seconds on each side. The shrimp are cooked when they turn red. Remove from the skillet and allow to cool. Make the dressing by combining all ingredients in a medium size bowl. Assemble the salad. In four bowls, arrange 1 cup of baby spinach on one side and 1/2 cup of arugula on the other side. Drizzle dressing on top of greens. Top each bowl with a generous portion of smashed potatoes, 1 egg, 3 shrimp, a handful of diced mushrooms, cherry tomatoes and avocado slices. Serve. Nutrition information: 484 calories; 28g fat; 590mg sodium; 32.1g carbohydrates; 28.1g protein.

## Lasagna Stuffed Portabella Mushrooms

Recipe by: Jenn Labonte

Servings: 4

- 4 large portabella mushrooms
- 1-2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 cup marinara sauce

- 1-1/2 cups light ricotta
- 1 egg
- 1-1/2 cups chopped spinach

- 1/2 cup fresh basil, chopped
- 1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese

Preheat oven to 400 F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Remove the stem and scoop out the gills of the mushrooms. Wash gently and pat dry with a paper towel. Brush tops and insides of mushrooms with olive oil. Spoon 1/4 cup marinara sauce into each mushroom. In medium bowl, mix together the ricotta, egg, spinach and basil. Divide evenly into the four mushrooms. Sprinkle each mushroom with 1/4 cup of mozzarella. Bake for 20 minutes or until mushrooms are baked through. Enjoy immediately or store in fridge or freezer to enjoy later. For freezer storage, allow each mushroom to cool completely, wrap in foil then place in larger storage container. Nutrition information: 221 calories; 13g fat; 193mg sodium; 9.4g carbohydrates; 16.5g protein.



## Chinese Chicken Salad with Golden Potatoes and Shiitake Mushrooms

Recipe by: Mushroom Council

Servings: 4

- 1 package steamable golden potatoes, cooked according to package directions
- 6 to 8 shiitake mushrooms, stems removed and thinly sliced into strips
- 4 tablespoons canola oil, divided  
Pinch of salt and pepper
- 2 large chicken breasts or 4 small chicken breasts
- 4 cups Napa cabbage, shredded
- 2 cups baby arugula
- 1/2 cup green onions, minced
- 4 tablespoons sesame seeds  
Store-bought Asian-style dressing  
Cilantro and sesame seeds for garnish

Cut cooled potatoes into quarters and set aside. In a non-stick skillet over medium heat, add 2 tablespoons oil and sliced shiitakes. Season with pinch of salt and pepper and cook, stirring often, until mushrooms are golden brown, about 5 minutes. Remove skillet from heat and allow mushrooms to cool completely. In a large non-stick skillet over medium-high heat, add remaining oil and heat until rippling. Add chicken breasts and cook for 5 minutes, turn over and cook another 5 minutes, or until internal temperature reaches 165 F as measured with a food thermometer. Remove chicken from skillet, allow to cool slightly, cut into strips. In a large mixing bowl, toss all ingredients together except dressing. Dress to taste. Divide portions evenly onto four plates and garnish with cilantro and sesame seeds. Nutrition information: 719 calories; 38.4g fat; 749mg sodium; 43.5g carbohydrates; 49.7g protein.



CHINESE CHICKEN SALAD WITH GOLDEN POTATOES AND SHIITAKE MUSHROOMS

## ONE-PAN MARSALA-INSPIRED CHICKEN AND VEGGIES



## One-Pan Marsala-Inspired Chicken and Veggies

Recipe by: Chelsey Amer, MS, RDN

Servings: 3

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 pound boneless, skinless chicken thighs | <b>Sauce:</b>                                 |
| 1/2 teaspoon oregano                      | 1 tablespoon olive oil                        |
| 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder                | 1/2 cup onion, diced                          |
| 1/4 teaspoon smoked paprika               | 16 ounces cremini or button mushrooms, sliced |
| 1/4 teaspoon salt                         | 1 cup Marsala or Port wine                    |
| 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper          | 1 cup chicken stock                           |
| 2 tablespoons olive oil                   | 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour                |
|   | 1 tablespoon parsley, chopped                 |

Season both sides of chicken with seasonings. Heat oil over medium to medium-high heat in cast iron skillet. Brown chicken thighs about 4 minutes on each side and remove from pan. Add tablespoon olive oil to pan and saute onions and mushrooms until browned, about 5 minutes. Add wine to pan and bring to boil reducing by half. Mix together stock and flour and add to pan. Return chicken to pan and bring back to boil. Cook an additional 5 minutes until sauce is thickened and chicken is cooked through. Garnish with parsley and serve. Nutrition information: 538 calories; 25.7g fat; 592mg sodium; 12.8g carbohydrates; 48.4g protein.

## In search of woodland delights

**AS APRIL BEGINS, SO** does the hunt for the prized morel as they start to peek through the leaf litter on the forest floor in southern Illinois. As spring weather spreads, mushrooms

guy the ropes. Getting a willing volunteer may take some begging, pleading or bribing as most mushroom hunters are usually reluctant to show or share their hunting spots.

more than you can eat, save them for future use. Simply split the mushrooms from top to bottom and soak in a salt water solution (2 tablespoons of salt to 1 quart of water) in the refrigerator overnight. Rinse, pat dry and spread the pieces in a single layer on wax paper on a cookie sheet, and place in the freezer. Once frozen, stack in layers separated by wax paper in a storage container and keep frozen.

To use them, preheat cooking oil and prepare a thin, wet batter. Quickly take a frozen mushroom, dip in the batter and drop into the hot oil. Work quickly, and put the remaining frozen mushrooms back in the freezer. I have successfully kept mushrooms up to 4 years using this method with little loss of quality.

While Illinois doesn't require a license for mushroom hunting, collectors always need landowner permission and, on public sites, must adhere to approved collecting regulations and hours. Collecting is allowed in many Illinois state parks and recreation areas, but is prohibited in any area designated as a dedicated nature preserve. Areas under the jurisdiction of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources offering spring turkey hunting are closed to mushroom collecting until after 1 p.m. daily to ensure the safety of all hunters/collectors. Restrictions apply until the close of wild turkey hunting season on May 9 in the southern zone and May 16 in the northern zone.

Mushroom hunters are urged to call ahead to learn of any site-specific regulations regarding mushroom collecting. State Parks website: [www2.illinois.gov/dnr/Parks/Pages/default.aspx](http://www2.illinois.gov/dnr/Parks/Pages/default.aspx)

Public Lands website: [www2.illinois.gov/dnr/hunting/Pages/PublicHuntingAreas.aspx](http://www2.illinois.gov/dnr/hunting/Pages/PublicHuntingAreas.aspx)



Morels look easy to spot, but their subtle camouflage can elude even the sharpest of eyes.

will progressively pop up farther north. By the 15th or 20th, foraging starts in central Illinois and spreads northward. As a rule, morels can be found through most of the state until Mother's Day.

For the novice forager looking to learn more, many helpful YouTube videos give insight on harvesting mushrooms, and the local library hosts a wealth of information with guidebooks specifically for mushroom hunters. However, there is no better way to learn than the hands-on approach.

I suggest finding a veteran mushroom hunter willing to show a new

Biologists recommend mushroom foragers use a fine open-mesh bag to carry their mushrooms. An open weave bag allows mushroom spores to escape as the forager walks through the woods, helping ensure future reproduction.

Morels are one of the easiest mushrooms to identify. They are bulbous with honeycomb-like ridges and have pits in the cap. Stem attachment is at the base of the cap and completely attached along the bottom ridge. Morels are always hollow from the bottom of the stem to the tip of the cap.

Should you encounter the proverbial mother lode and have



Jack Spaulding is an outdoors writer. Readers can contact the author by writing to this publication or email [jackspaulding@hughes.net](mailto:jackspaulding@hughes.net). "The Best of Spaulding Outdoors," a compilation of 74 of Spaulding's best articles written over the past 30 years is available on Amazon.com.



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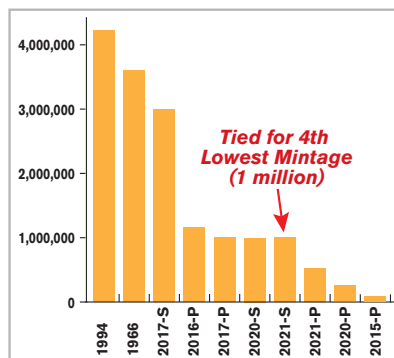
Due to the pandemic, the West Point Mint—the U.S. Mint branch that normally strikes Brilliant Uncirculated (BU) Silver Eagles—temporarily locked down. Demand was skyrocketing, and so the U.S. Mint turned to its other branches, ordering them to strike special “Emergency Production” runs of Silver Eagles. It was great news for silver buyers, and even *better* news for collectors. Here’s why:

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5. **DANA BURNS**  
*Corn Belt Energy Corporation*
6. **CHARLIE STEINACHER**  
*Illinois Electric Cooperative*

**UPCOMING THEMES**

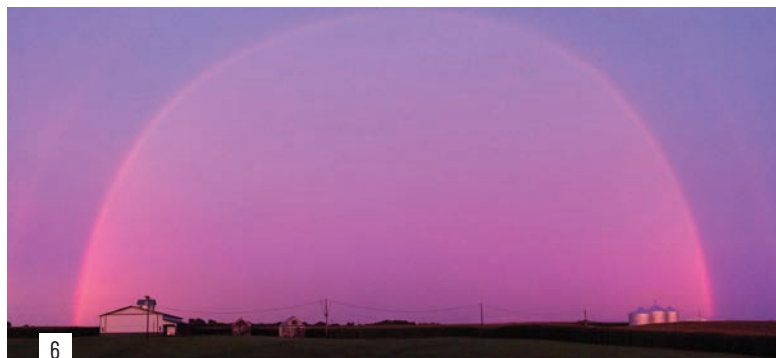
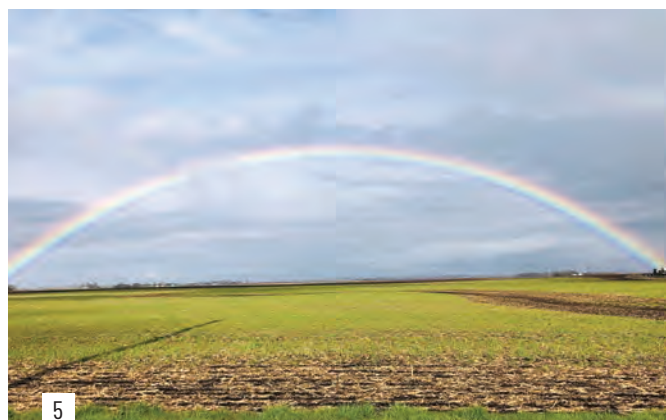
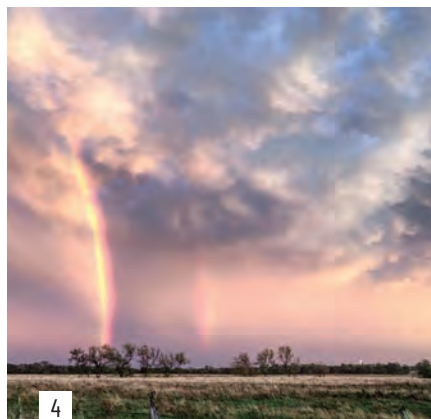
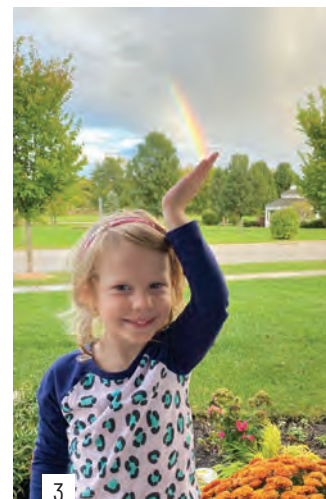
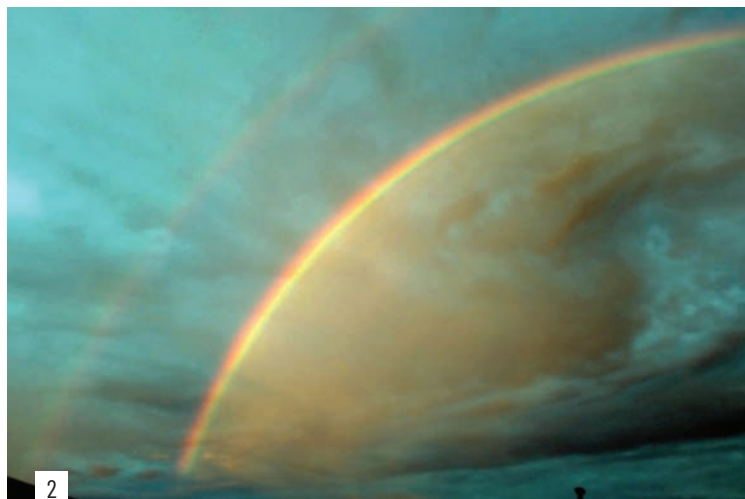
- June - Yellow
- July - Trees
- August - Abandoned/old buildings
- September - Fire

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# Eye Doctor Helps Illinois Legally Blind To See

*High Technology For Low Vision Patients Allows Many To Drive Again*



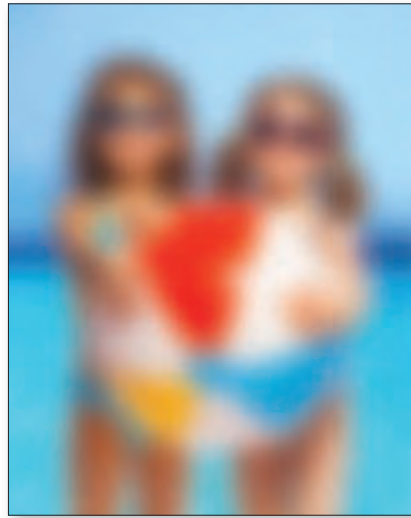
**F**or many patients with macular degeneration and other vision-related conditions, the loss of central visual detail also signals the end to one of the last bastions of independence: driving. A Mascoutah optometrist, Dr. Marianne McDaniel, is using miniaturized telescopes that are mounted in glasses 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.mascoutahyecare.com](http://www.mascoutahyecare.com)

**1-618-566-8899**

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

[www.FoxValleyLowVision.com](http://www.FoxValleyLowVision.com)

**1-800-341-8498**

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

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