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Travel Illinois from A to Z

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FEATURE
The cicadas are coming

PRAIRIE TABLE
Dinner with a view

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Illinois Country Living

MAY 2024

VOLUME 82, NO. 1

20 Travel Illinois from A to Z

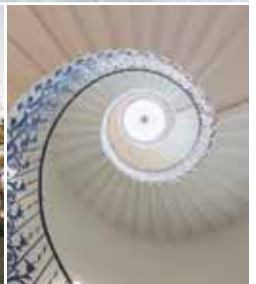
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On the cover: A digital art rendering of the Garden of the Gods Recreation Area in the Shawnee National Forest.



Electric is our business, cooperative is our identity

LET'S BE UPFRONT ABOUT the fact that there are a lot of challenges in the energy industry, challenges in the economy and challenges in our politics. They all intersect in your community and at your electric cooperative. ...

When I think about how co-ops keep the lights on, it's not just about service to the members at the end of the line. It's not just about electricity. It's about the co-op part of keeping the lights on. It's about a stable, trusted, member-

owned, community-based, responsive electric cooperative that people count on to do its job well and to keep doing it, long into the future.

Written into that objective are seven cooperative principles: open membership, strong governance, autonomy and independence, local control, member participation, cooperation and community. These principles are the foundation of every electric cooperative.

Electric is our business, but cooperative is our identity. It's who we are, and how we do this important job for our community. The word cooperative sets a standard, and it sets an expectation.

We live these principles in our co-ops. They're a powerful guide for the work we do. They matter in the conversations we have about how we [provide] electricity, but more importantly, how we serve others.

Being cooperatives makes us instantly accountable. That word makes us public servants; it binds our reputations together. It calls on all of us to do the right thing. ...

In this moment, there are plenty of reasons to be optimistic for the future. Leaders are listening to us. We've got the attention of people who trust us with the reliability of the grid and the future of our communities.

We're investing in innovation. When we get opportunities to move the ball — on broadband, on new technology, on storage, on demand response and energy efficiency — electric cooperatives step up and deliver.

If you let us do our job, we will. Don't paint us, or regulate us, with one broad brush. Flexibility and local control are key to our success. It's how we get the solutions a co-op needs when members need it. And it's how we make progress. ...

Across the country, co-ops are showing there's a better path; there are answers. We serve the people in our communities by listening to them and finding the best solutions for them — solutions that work — cooperatively. It's the best thing about who we are, what we do and who we work for. 💡

These are excerpts from Jim Matheson's keynote address to the nation's electric cooperatives during the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's PowerXchange annual meeting on March 4 in San Antonio, Texas. To read the full address, go to icl.coop.



Jim Matheson is CEO of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, a service organization based in Arlington, Va., representing the interests of the nation's more than 900 not-for-profit, consumer-owned utilities and the 42 million Americans they serve.

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 more than 192,000, the magazine informs cooperative consumer-members about issues affecting their electric cooperative and the quality of life in rural Illinois.

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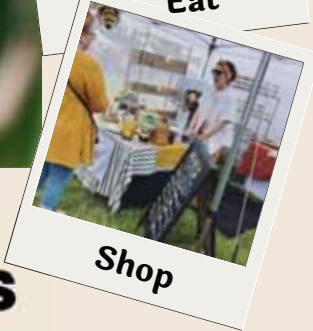
If you are a farmer or a farm family in need of support, reach out to the Farm Family Resource Initiative or visit siumed.org/farm to learn more.



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Williamson
County
Illinois



MEMORIAL DAY

MAY 27, 2024



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MAY CHECKLIST

Do a quick test. Every year, more than 358,000 home fires occur in the U.S. Conduct monthly tests to ensure your smoke and CO alarms are working properly.



Check your outlets.



Electrical outlets should never be overloaded, and be sure ground-fault circuit interrupters are installed in bathrooms, kitchens and other areas where a water source is present.

Know the difference.

A tornado or severe storm watch means conditions are favorable for those weather conditions.



A warning means dangerous weather conditions are developing and imminent.

Tip of the month. May is National BBQ Month — the perfect time to make dinner outdoors and save energy. Cooking outside keeps your home cooler and the air conditioner from working overtime.



Egyptian Electric Cooperative Association employees watch the solar eclipse on April 8 at the co-op's headquarters in Murphysboro.

Eclipsing expectations

Co-op families join for a celestial spectacle

Southern Illinois proved to be a prime spot to watch a solar eclipse, at least in recent history. For the second time in seven years, southern Illinois experienced a total eclipse on April 8. The path of totality cut through the territories of 12 electric cooperatives in Illinois, with half of those covered 100% by the moon's shadow.

At the center of the two eclipses (the last one in 2017) is the service territory of Egyptian Electric Cooperative Association (EECA). Headquartered in Murphysboro, the co-op witnessed a 4-minute, 7-second eclipse totality this year.

"Southern Illinois was more prepared than in 2017," said Brooke Guthman, member services manager at EECA. "The amount of outgoing traffic last time was underestimated. So, we wanted to make sure we were ready for this year's eclipse."

To prepare, EECA decided to close the office for the afternoon for an all-employee training about co-op policies and procedures, followed by a viewing of the eclipse with their families. Employees were then sent home to try and avoid outgoing traffic

congestion. Any phone calls were sent to the Cooperative Response Center, and the co-op's maintenance lineworkers are always equipped with take-home trucks to help quickly handle issues or outages if needed.

EECA headquarters is located nearly 14 miles away from Carbondale, which was considered the crossroads location between the 2017 and 2024 eclipses. Heavy traffic was anticipated all day. Shortly after 8 p.m., six hours after the eclipse totality, the Illinois Department of Transportation reported on its Facebook page that traffic began to improve throughout the state.

Other Illinois electric cooperative employees viewed the natural phenomenon together as well. For 3 minutes, 32 seconds, employees of Clay Electric Co-operative experienced complete totality at its headquarters in Flora.

"Clay Electric provided solar eclipse viewing glasses to all staff and had a 'shop day' for the lineworkers," said Adam McKnight, member services manager for the co-op. Meaning, the lineworkers were not performing routine line maintenance as they normally would.

Continued on page 8

Sudoku

by Myles Mellor and Susan Flanagan

Each Sudoku puzzle consists of a 9X9 grid that has been subdivided into nine smaller grids of 3X3 squares. To solve the puzzle, each row, column and box must contain each of the numbers 1 to 9. Level: Medium

Solution on page 33.

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

"Eclipse" continued from page 7



Employees of Clay Electric Co-operative in Flora gather to watch the solar eclipse.

IL ENTERTAINMENT CORNER



One hundred years ago, Doubleday published a novel set in Illinois that would become the first work of fiction to be named both the bestselling book and Pulitzer Prize winner in its category in a single year. Edna Ferber's

"So Big" takes place in the 1880s in High Prairie, Ill., and shares the story of orphan Selina Peake DeJong's irrepressible spirit in her roles as dreamer, schoolteacher, mother and farmer, even as she faces the challenges of her times. "So Big" inspired three film adaptations and has remained in print since it was first published.

The author, who lived in Illinois for a period of time, also penned "Show Boat" (which later became a Broadway musical) in 1926 and "Cimarron" in 1929 (the film version would go on to win the Academy Award for Best Picture), among other titles. Ferber's catalogue of novels and short stories are oftentimes set in the Midwest. 💡

"We expected a lot of people out and about. No need to try to drive line trucks around [in all the traffic]."

Similarly, Wayne-White Counties Electric Cooperative, which experienced totality for 4 minutes, 4 seconds at its headquarters in Fairfield, also had an office day so employees wouldn't have to navigate eclipse traffic. The lineworkers were stationed at the office and at outposts with trucks and equipment ready to go in case of any emergencies.

"Otherwise, our office was open as usual and fully staffed," said Alyssa Parrott, the co-op's communications specialist. "We had a great day here and definitely enjoyed totality. It was pretty amazing. ... Everything went very smoothly, and everyone here got to enjoy the eclipse."

Other electric co-ops that experienced eclipse totality within their service territories included SouthEastern Illinois Electric, Tri-County Electric, Southern Illinois Electric, Norris Electric, EnerStar Electric, Clinton County Electric, Monroe County Electric, Southwestern Electric and Coles-Moultrie Electric. From Texas to Maine, a total of 115 distribution electric cooperatives experienced totality.

Despite some concern from industry analysts regarding solar power production dropping to zero during totality, no electric cooperative in Illinois reported a loss of electric service because of the eclipse. The next solar eclipse in Illinois will occur in the Chicago area in 2099. 💡

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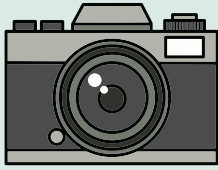


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Where is it?

The winners of the March hidden object contest were Pam Lloyd of Monroe County Electric Cooperative and Linda Dennis of Illinois Electric Cooperative. Congratulations! Your ICL campfire mugs have been sent.

April's pretzel was hidden on a phone in the PoweredUp section on page 18. Winners' names will be drawn, and they will be notified. Visit Illinois Country Living on Facebook after each month's deadline for a closeup of the object's location and winners' names.

It's time for a new hidden object search. May is National Photo Month, so be on the hunt for a camera. The symbol can vary in size and will never be on this page, a lettered page or in an ad.

Entries must include your name, address, name of your electric co-op (nonmembers are also eligible), and the page number and location of the symbol. Visit icl.coop/hiddenobject and fill out the entry form (also found under Contact Us on the website) or mail a postcard or letter to Illinois Country Living, Hidden Objects, 6460 S. 6th St. Frontage Road East, Springfield, IL 62712. We will NOT accept entries via phone call or email. All entries for that month must be postmarked or received digitally by the 15th. Winners' names and the symbol's location will be published in each month's issue of Illinois Country Living. 



Lieutenant Governor Juliana Stratton took time to talk with a large group of students attending Youth Day.



Students representing Shelby Electric Cooperative spoke with Senator Doris Turner (D-48), among other elected officials, during Youth Day.



Youth Day rewind

For more than 60 years, the electric and telephone cooperatives of Illinois have given high school students within their service territory the opportunity to learn from today's public officials. On March 20, more than 200 students from rural Illinois represented 25 co-ops during Youth Day in Springfield.



Students Cole Buchanan and Hunter Gunderson, representing SouthEastern Illinois Electric Cooperative, met with Representative Patrick Windhorst (R-117) during Youth Day. The two will also represent their co-op during Youth Tour in June, a weeklong trip to Washington, D.C.



State Representative Dan Swanson (R-71) met with students from McDonough Power and McDonough Telephone cooperatives on the floor of the House of Representatives.

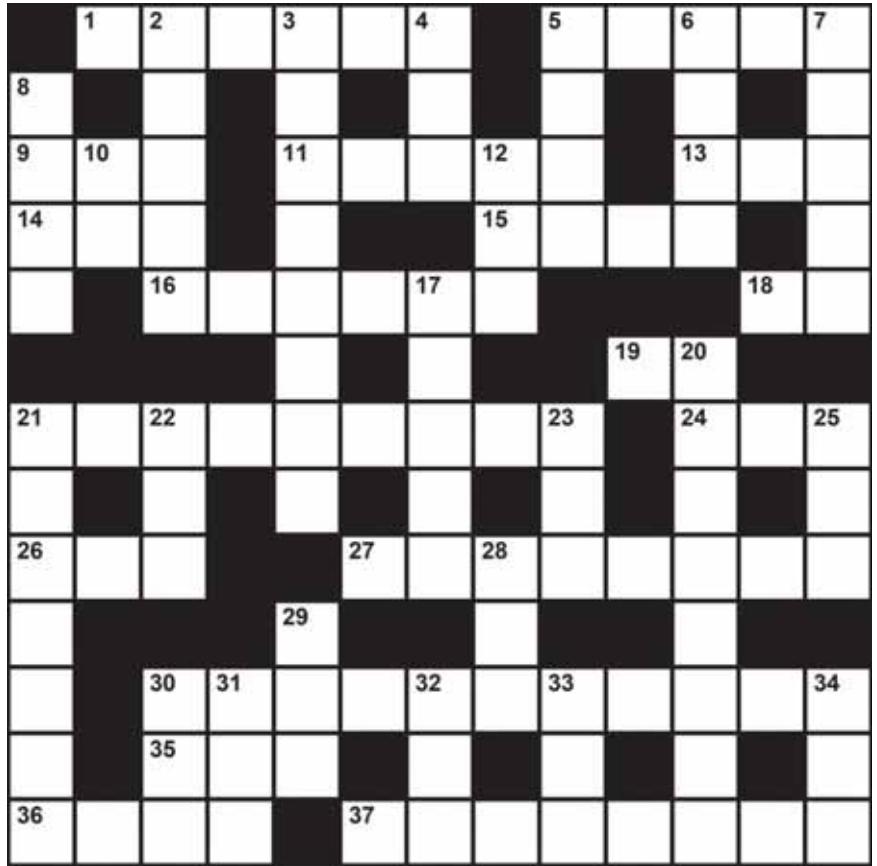
Across

- 1 Small town destination for honeymooners and the site of the former home of President Grant
- 5 Daily fruit that keeps the doctor away
- 9 One Horse ____, Shawnee National Forest
- 11 ____ Carroll, town known as “The New England of the Midwest”
- 13 Bro’s relative
- 14 Time before an event
- 15 Very long periods of time
- 16 Home to the Mormon Church in the 1840s
- 18 Acidity factor
- 19 Blues singer, ____ King
- 21 Filming location for movies “Groundhog Day” and “Planes, Trains and Automobiles”
- 24 Eureka!
- 26 Large deer
- 27 Pleasing in appearance
- 30 Lincoln Home National Historic Site city
- 35 Consume
- 36 Require
- 37 Park in Monticello with hiking trails, a mansion and formal gardens

Down

- 2 Poplar tree
- 3 Carl Sandberg lived here
- 4 ____ Dhabi, United Arab Emirates
- 5 Town with wineries and peach and apple orchards near the Shawnee National Forest, goes with 6 down
- 6 See 5 down
- 7 Tiny Illinois town nestled between the limestone bluffs along the Great River Road
- 8 Decorative curved molding
- 10 Audio visual, briefly
- 12 Modern, prefix
- 17 Double reeded instruments
- 20 Small Illinois town known for its Little League Baseball program
- 21 Seat of DuPage County
- 22 Illinois suburb where Frank Lloyd Wright lived, ____ Park
- 23 Kilometers per hour, for short
- 25 Rainbow’s shape
- 28 Shirt label
- 29 Sculptures and paintings
- 30 Go visit
- 31 Cushion
- 32 Common soccer score
- 33 Price of admission
- 34 Armchair quarterback’s room, perhaps

Solution on page 33.



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4 Finders Spring Market DECATUR

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4-5 Shawnee Hills Pottery Trail CARBONDALE

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5 Gym Bob's Jamboree Show BIBLE GROVE

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19-27 HerrinFesta Italiana HERRIN

Celebrate this community's rich Italian heritage

For more information, a complete listing of events or to submit an event, visit icl.coop/datebook.



Gearheads in Golconda

MAY

4

The Golconda Masonic Lodge #131 will host its annual Gathering of the Gearheads in southern Illinois. Bring your classic, your rat, your baby or your project to show what you have. During the annual vehicle show and motorcycle cruise-in, there will be music, games and awards that include Best of Show, Crowd Favorite, Masters Choice and Loudest Pipes. Donations are welcome.

May 4, 2024: all day

- Historic Downtown Golconda, 222 S. Columbus Ave., Golconda
Admission: free
618-499-5408

Kentucky Derby Viewing Party

MAY

4

What better place to view the Kentucky Derby than at Shenandoah Riding Center in Galena? Wear your best derby attire and watch the most exciting race of the year. Indulge in complimentary appetizers, sip on refreshing mint juleps from the cash bar, and delight in the pageantry of the event's "Parade of Horses," courtesy of the Shenandoah boarding and trail community.

May 4, 2024: Doors open at 4 p.m., and the race begins at 5:30 p.m.

- Shenandoah Riding Center, 200 N. Brodrecht Road, Galena
Admission: \$20 online, \$25 at the door
815-777-9550 or shenandoahridingcenter.com



P & C Little Rascals Open Farm Day

MAY

11

P & C Little Rascals is a traveling petting zoo headquartered in northwestern Illinois. The farm will be open for guests to take self-guided tours during this annual event. Visitors will be able to pet and feed the animals and play with the spring babies. A food vendor, various craft/product vendors, wagon rides, barrel train rides for kids and other activities will be available throughout the day. Donations appreciated.

May 11, 2024: 9 a.m.-2 p.m.

- P & C Little Rascals LLC, 22351 Thomson Road, Chadwick
Admission: free
815-631-7203 or pclittlerascals.com

Litchfield Pickers Market

MAY

12

The annual open-air market is filled with antique and vintage collectibles, live music and lots of food. All items sold at this market were produced prior to 1985, including antique, collectible, vintage, upcycled and refurbished items.

May 12, 2024: 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

- Downtown Litchfield, 400 N. State St., Litchfield
Admission: free
217-324-8147 or visitlitchfield.com

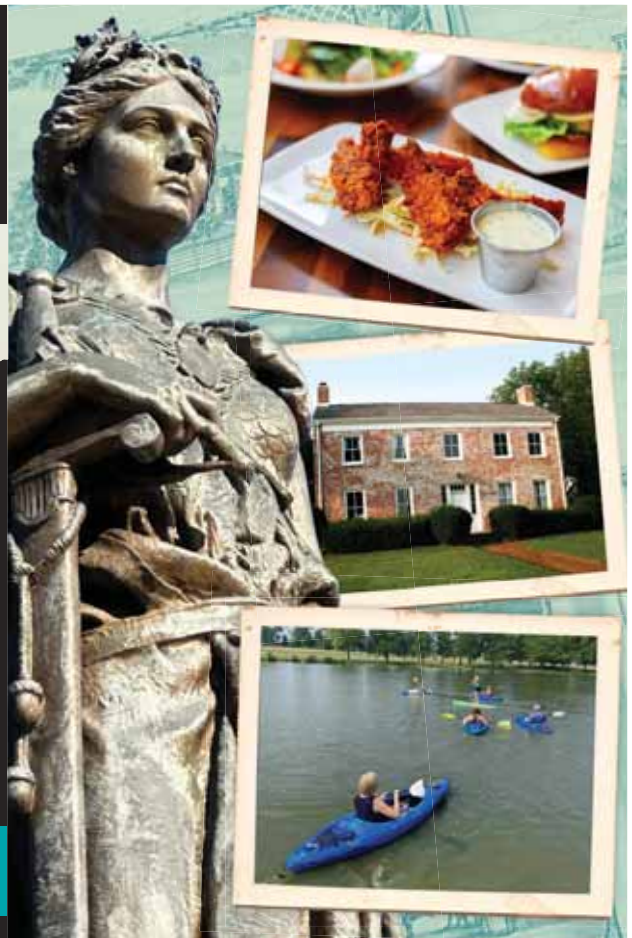




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Backup power

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noisy, and nearly all produce smelly exhaust containing deadly carbon monoxide gas, so they can't be operated indoors. Large standby generators are typically installed outdoors on a concrete pad.

Most home battery backups are smaller than comparable generators.

Because they don't use combustion to generate electricity, there's no danger of carbon monoxide exposure. That makes them safer and more environmentally friendly. Most can be installed in a small space indoors. Battery backups are also significantly quieter.

When a power outage occurs, battery backups start instantaneously, unlike generators, which may take a few moments to reach operating speed. Battery backups also don't need regular

maintenance like oil changes or spark plug replacement, and there's no need to store fuel.

Of course, battery-powered generators do present some disadvantages. The amount of power they deliver is limited by the capacity of the batteries. When they're out of electricity, they may take several hours to recharge, so they're not as well-suited for lengthy outages. Energy-hungry appliances, such as air conditioners, may drain battery capacity more quickly, so you may have to disconnect them during an outage.

Fortunately, some battery backups are modular, allowing you to add capacity as needed. If you only need a few devices powered during

an outage, consider a portable battery-powered system. These small, quiet backups can be used indoors to power smaller appliances, like a laptop, TV or microwave.

Generally, batteries require long charging times, so if an initial outage is quickly followed by another, they may not be able to respond. There are fast-charging systems on the market, but they carry substantially higher price tags. The upfront cost of a battery backup is more than a standby generator, sometimes twice as much, for comparable performance.

Like the one in your mobile phone, batteries in these systems can degrade over time. In five or 10 years, they may need to be swapped out with new batteries, adding to the overall cost.

Whether you're considering a battery system or a traditional standby generator, start by calculating the amount of power you need to keep your home's systems and conveniences operating efficiently.

Once you know that, you can determine which models are up to the task and calculate how long the device you're considering can power your home. If you have a family member whose health depends upon devices such as a CPAP machine or supplemental oxygen, be sure to factor that into your decision.

Finally, whether you choose a battery backup or a traditional standby generator, make sure it's designed to protect your home and all your electronics from power surges and other issues that may damage your TVs, computers and other sensitive electronics. That way, you won't have to worry about remaining without them long after an outage has ended. 💡



PHOTO COURTESY OF TESLA, INC.

Many homeowners are taking a closer look at the latest battery-powered systems for backup power when the lights go out.



Business writer **Scott Flood** has worked with electric co-ops for more than four decades to build knowledge of energy-related issues. He writes on a variety of energy-related topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

Battery technology has advanced significantly in recent years, with batteries able to hold more electricity even as they shrink in size and cost. As their name implies, battery backup systems are essentially high-capacity batteries that store a set amount of electricity, which you can use to power your home during an outage. Some are constantly charged by the electric grid, while others rely on solar panels.

Traditional standby generators use small internal combustion engines fueled by natural gas, propane or diesel. They can be connected to your home's electrical panel and kick on automatically during a power outage. However, some standby generators can be

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Solar is not free

Weigh the costs and benefits of renewable power

I OFTEN HEAR CLAIMS that you'll never pay an electric bill again if you go solar, but that's not true. The concept of free energy from the sun is appealing, but solar power isn't

electric bill rate structure and cost, available incentives and tax credits, and your budget. If you are considering solar, there are three steps to take before making the investment.

improvements before installing a solar system, make sure the solar contractor accounts for those energy savings.

Talk with your electric co-op

Check with your electric co-op about the requirements to install solar and how it will impact your bill. If you decide to install solar panels, working with your utility will be essential, as you will need to take important steps, such as signing an interconnection agreement to ensure the system is properly connected to the electric grid.

Consider your options

Get at least three quotes to compare each contractor's recommended system design, equipment and cost. It's a significant investment, so you want to know your options. In addition, there are several ways to pay for a solar system. It can be bought outright with cash or financed by a loan. State and federal tax incentives can help offset the costs.

There is also the option to install solar through a lease or power purchase agreement. In this structure, a third party (usually the solar installer) owns the system. They install the system on your property and then sell you the energy produced at a predetermined rate. They are responsible for maintaining the system and own it at the end of the agreement term.

Loans, leases and power purchase agreements can impact the sale of a home. Although a solar system may increase the value of your home, some buyers and lenders are not interested in taking on leases or power purchase agreements.

Before you make the leap to invest in solar, improve your home's energy efficiency and empower yourself by thoroughly weighing the costs and benefits. 💡



Installing a residential solar system doesn't necessarily equate to \$0 energy bills. You will need to rely on your electric co-op for electricity when your system is not producing power.

actually free. There are costs associated with capturing that energy for use in your home.

Installing a residential solar system doesn't equate to \$0 energy bills. Prices for the solar system and installation vary, but adding solar typically comes with a five-figure price tag. Solar systems only provide power when the sun is shining. You will still rely on your electric co-op for power at night and on overcast days. Most electric utility rate structures include a set monthly service fee. Unless you plan to disconnect from electric service completely, you will still have a monthly electric bill.

Solar may or may not be a good investment for you. Several factors impact how well the investment pencils out, including where you live, home orientation and shading,

Boost your home's efficiency

It wouldn't make sense to put a new motor on a boat with holes in it, so why would you put a solar system on an energy-wasting home? Make sure your home is as energy efficient as possible. Invest in reducing wasted energy before investing in creating new energy.

The efficiency updates I recommend before installing solar include insulating and air sealing your home and upgrading to efficient appliances, especially the HVAC system. Energy efficiency upgrades might have a better return on investment than installing solar.

A more efficient home means a smaller and lower-cost solar energy system. Solar systems are typically designed to produce the amount of energy a home uses in a year, so if you complete energy efficiency



Miranda Boutelle is the director of operations and customer engagement at Efficiency Services Group in Oregon, a cooperatively owned energy efficiency company.



FEELING REJUVINATED

Everyone feels the hurt as you age, but CBD can help you deal with it.

BY BETH GILES

Life really does fly by. Before I knew it, my 60s had arrived, and with them came some new gifts from dear ol' Mother Nature—frequent knee pain, stress, low energy and sleeplessness. Now, I'm a realist about these things, I knew I wasn't going to be young and springy forever. But still, with "golden years" nearly on my doorstep, I couldn't help but feel a little cheated. It is until I found my own secret weapon. Another gift from Mother Nature.

It began a few months back when I was complaining about my aches and pains to my marathon-running granddaughter, Jen. She casually mentioned how she uses CBD oil to help with her joint pain. She said that CBD gave her more focus and clarity throughout the day and that her lingering muscle and joint discomfort no longer bothered her. She even felt comfortable signing up for back-to-back marathons two weekends in a row this year. That made even this self-proclaimed skeptic take notice.

But I still had some concerns. According to one study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 70% of CBD products didn't contain the amount of CBD stated on their labels. And, as a consumer, that's terrifying!

If I was going to try CBD, I needed to trust the source through and through. My two-fold research process naturally led me to Zebra CBD.

First, I started calling my family and friends. Call me old fashioned but I wanted to know if there were people whom I trusted (more than anonymous testimonials) who've had success using CBD besides my granddaughter.

Secondly, I wanted cold hard facts. Diving deep into the world of CBD research and clinical studies, I came across Emily Gray M.D., a physician at the University of California at San Diego (UCSD) Medical School and medical advisor to Zebra CBD who is researching the effects of CBD. Dr. Gray wrote "early results with CBD have been promising and we have a lot of research underway now. I've had several patients using CBD with good success. It's important that you know your source of CBD and how to use it properly."

After hearing it from the doctor's mouth, I returned to my research, asking more people and was amazed by the number of close friends and family who were already on the CBD train. Apparently, I was the only one without a clue! And funny enough, a couple of friends who commented were using the same brand as my granddaughter—Zebra CBD. There was no consensus as to why they were using CBD, but the top reasons given were for muscle & joint discomfort, mood support, sleep support, stress and headaches, as well as supporting overall health & wellness.

Eventually, even the most skeptical of the bunch can be won over. With a trusted CBD source in mind, I decided to give it a go.

When I viewed Zebra CBD's selection online, I was impressed by its array of products, including CBD oils called tinctures, topicals, chewable tablets, mints and gummies. After reading on their website that all their products are made with organically-grown hemp, I ordered... and it arrived within 2 days!

The first product I tried was the Rub.

Now this stuff was strong. Immediately after rubbing it on my knee, the soothing effects kicked in. It had that familiar menthol cooling effect, which I personally find very relieving. And the best part is, after two weeks of using it, my knee pain no longer affected my daily mobility.

The Zebra Mint Oil, on the other hand, had a different but equally positive effect on my body. To take it, the instructions suggest holding the oil in your mouth for about 30 seconds. This was simple enough, and the mint taste was, well, minty. After about 15 minutes, a sense of calm came over my body. It's hard to describe exactly. It's more like an overall sense of relaxation—as if I just walked out of a spa, and now I'm ready to seize the day. Needless to say, I've really enjoyed the oil.

While it hasn't been a catch-all fix to every one of my health issues, it has eased the level and frequency of my aches. And it sure doesn't seem like a coincidence how much calmer and more focused I am.

All-in-all, CBD is one of those things that you have to try for yourself. Although I was skeptical at first, I can safely say that I'm now a Zebra CBD fan and that I highly recommend their products.

Also, I managed to speak with a Zebra CBD spokesperson willing to provide an exclusive offer. If you order this month, you'll receive \$10 off your first order by using promo code "IL10" at checkout. Plus, the company offers a 100% No-Hassle, Money-Back Guarantee. You can try it yourself and order Zebra CBD at ZebraCBD.com/Illinois or at 1-888-762-2699.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF SPRAGUE'S KINDERHOOK LODGE

Getting away from it all

Experience the tranquility of Sprague's Kinderhook Lodge

By Lisa Cherry

HUNTING ENTHUSIASTS OFTEN STAY at Sprague's Kinderhook Lodge in Pike County, an area well known for its whitetail deer population. However, they aren't its only guests. The lodge, established in 2001 by Illinois Electric Cooperative member Andy Sprague, hosts a myriad of visitors for quilt and craft retreats, church and corporate retreats, and family reunions.

The Homestead is one of three lodging options on the 100-acre property. "I took an antebellum brick farmhouse that needed six months of TLC or a bulldozer," says Andy. "That was the first chapter of the lodge." The farmhouse has seven bedrooms, a certified kitchen and a 36-seat dining room that can accommodate meetings and other activities.

"I tried to have a vision of what it could be beyond the three months of hunters," he says. "Thankfully, that went over very well, and we were turning groups away." As a result, another 1,000-square-foot building was constructed. The Haven has nine bedrooms and suites, an events room and a rec room.

In 2008, a five-bedroom cabin was added, which allowed the Spragues to accommodate groups on a smaller scale. "That provided a space popular for family reunions ... [with] the privacy that it allows," says Andy.

These days, he and his wife Karen run the operation together. "I came in the fall of '19 and just love what we do," says Karen. "The funny thing is, when I started college, I was in hotel/restaurant management. That's what I wanted to do."

Now, she finds that staff development is more her niche, particularly with the lodge's younger part-time staff members. "I enjoy helping these teenagers because I used to be a teacher," she says. "Coming from a small town, and now living in an

even smaller place, it's important to me that we develop professional skills for these kids."

"I think she's got a deeper skillset in developing those young folks. ... For most of them, it's their first job, and we want to provide that," adds Andy. "It's been a pleasure to have her knowledge ... to make this a learning environment."

Lately, five R's have been the focus of Kinderhook Lodge's branding: retreat, relax, restore, renew and revive. The physical surroundings provide an appropriate setting for each. "We have two big water features, one to the north and one to the south, and windows all around," says Karen. "It's such a beautiful location, and there are deer [and other wildlife] meandering around the buildings."

Located 15 minutes east of Hannibal, Mo., an hour-and-a-half drive from Springfield, and a little over an hour south of Nauvoo, the geographic location has also worked out well for the business, and some visitors have been coming for years.

"We're able to love on a lot of people just in our day-to-day operations," says Karen. Andy adds that over the course of a year, they see anywhere from 3,000 to 4,000 guests, between overnight guests, luncheons and parties. "No day looks the same, that's for sure," says Andy. 📍



SHOW SUPPORT

Small business owners can request to be featured in the Support Local section of Illinois Country Living magazine by submitting the form at icl.coop/local.

Sprague's Kinderhook Lodge

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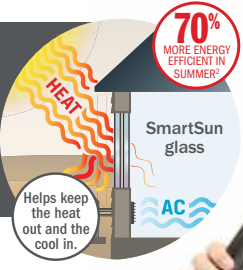
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Travel Illinois from A to Z

By Lisa Cherry

WHETHER FOR A DAY trip or a weekend getaway, Illinois is full of places to see, things to do and people to meet. From the iconic skyline of Chicago to the charm of the small towns scattered throughout the state, there's something for every traveler to enjoy. Illinois offers rich history, outdoor adventures and unique stops along the way. The opportunities are endless, so here's a guide to explore the state. Finding a place to go in Illinois is as easy as ABC.





Abraham Lincoln — The Land of Lincoln offers travelers a myriad of opportunities to learn more about our 16th President, including New Salem in Petersburg, where he lived as a young man, and the Lincoln

Home National Historic Site and Lincoln Tomb in Springfield. For a deeper understanding of the trials Lincoln faced during his presidency and in his personal life, visitors can tour the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, also in Springfield. Many other Lincoln sites can be found throughout the state.



Barbecue — For barbecue lovers, the small city of Murphysboro is a top destination. Named the Barbecue Capital of Illinois by the state legislature in 2014, the small town hosts an annual barbecue

cookoff and has been home to two Barbecue Hall of Fame inductees — the late Mike Mills of 17th Street Barbecue and Pat Burke, owner of Pat's BBQ. Those aren't the only reasons for that distinction, however. There's a delicious history of this favorite food in southern Illinois just waiting to be tasted.



Chicago — Founded in 1837, Illinois' most famous city is known for many things — architecture, music and food are just a few. From Wrigley Field to Navy Pier and Tribune Tower, there is no

limit to what its guests can do and see. Take in Cloud Gate (perhaps better known as The Bean, the iconic statue in Millennium Park), try a classic Chicago hot dog or deep-dish pizza and explore the Museum of Science and Industry, for good measure.



Drive-in theaters — A popular outing for residents and travelers alike is taking in a show on the big screen under an even bigger summer sky. Experience the nostalgia and share it with the younger generation at a

number of drive-in theaters located throughout the state, like Harvest Moon Twin Drive-in in Gibson City or the Midway Drive-In in Sterling. Just check to make sure theaters are open before hitting the road.



Eagle watching — It may be surprising to learn that every winter, our state sees more than 3,000 bald eagles — second in number only to Alaska. As a result, December, January and February are great months to

do a little eagle-watching. Check out Pere Marquette State Park Bald Eagle Days in Grafton, Quad Cities Bald Eagle Days in Rock Island or the Audubon Eagle Ice Festival in Alton, all of which offer a variety of viewing opportunities.



Frank Lloyd Wright — Architect Frank Lloyd Wright is well-known in these parts, and beyond. Considered by many to be the greatest American architect of all time, Wright designed innovative spaces that can be

toured to this day. Some of his earlier work can be found in northern Illinois, including the Robie House in Chicago and his own home in Oak Park. Later downstate designs exhibit his signature “prairie-style,” like the Harley Bradley House in Kankakee and the Dana-Thomas House in Springfield.



Great River Road — The Great River Road in Illinois has been named a National Scenic Byway and All-American Road, which means it is considered a “destination unto itself.” History and culture are just two reasons to

give this scenic drive a go. Explore the many communities it passes through and visit the wealth of parks, museums and vineyards along the way. A few ideas: Fort Defiance Park in Cairo, Lincoln and Douglas Square in Alton and Fergedaboudit Vineyard and Winery in Hanover.



Historic communities — Many Illinois communities are rich in history, with places like Bishop Hill, founded by Swedish immigrants and now an open-air museum called “Utopia on the Prairie,” and Kampsville, the

base of operations for the Center for American Archeology. Galena, founded in 1826, was once home to Ulysses S. Grant; Nauvoo is known for historical sites related to the Mormon settlement period; and Arthur is the home of Illinois’ oldest Amish community. These are just a few examples.



Independent bookstores —

There’s a reason independent bookstores have endured. These indie shops are a part of their communities, offering both a place to convene and find carefully curated content. Stores like

Books on First in Dixon, Afterwords Books in Edwardsville, Boxcar Books & Vinyl in Hoopston and Prairie Fox Books in Ottawa — along with so many others — create spaces for conversation and surprise readers with unique atmospheres and unexpected literary discoveries in cities and small towns across Illinois.



Jam sessions — From country and blues to folk and rock, local music scenes are a favorite source of entertainment to both residents of the prairie state and those who are passing through. Many musicians, like Wolf

Crick Boys in Riverton and Tom Irwin in Springfield, have large followings in their communities, and their shows are far more intimate than big-stage concert events. Experience how music can provide a layer of rich context to places traveled.



Kids’ museums — Illinois has a plethora of places for children to learn about the world they live in. Kids’ museums can play a vital role in nurturing young minds by providing a safe and engaging environment where

they can explore and discover the world around them. Hands-on experiences await kids at the Children’s Museum of Illinois in Decatur, The Science Center of Southern Illinois in Carbondale and the Discovery Center Museum in Rockford.



Lakes — Yes, Illinois is the Land of Lincoln, but it is also the land of lakes: Kinkaid Lake in Jackson County, Lake Shelbyville in Shelby and Moultrie counties and Lake Michigan in the north-east region of the state, to name

a few. These scenic bodies of water provide respite from busy lives, and some, depending on location, terrain and season, offer great camping, hiking, fishing, boating and swimming. Whether on the shore or on the water, the state’s lakes are perfect places to relax and enjoy the outdoors.



Murals — Big art is big fun in the Midwest, and Illinois is no exception. Mural trails can be found throughout the state, including the Silo Pathways Countryside Art Tour in the north-central region, the Route

66 Mural Trail and 30-plus interpretive murals along the Illinois Lincoln Highway. Outdoor art pieces like these depict the history and culture of the area in creative, colorful ways along the state's highways and byways and in the small towns and cities dotting the landscape.



Native American sites — Illinois is home to some well-known Native American sites. Although its interpretive center is currently undergoing renovations, visitors of Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site can still

explore the 100-foot-tall Monks Mound. Dickson Mounds is a Native American settlement site and burial mound in Fulton County. The museum onsite at the latter, a branch of the Illinois State Museum, offers a look at the site's archaeology and a series of walking trails.



Old state capitols — Of the state's six Capitol buildings, only three remain. Kaskaskia was home to the first, a 2-story brick building no longer standing. Vandalia became home to the second (lost to fire), third and

fourth. The fifth State Capitol building, now the Old State Capitol State Historic Site in Springfield, served as the statehouse from 1840 to 1876; however, it is temporarily closed. Currently, visitors can tour the Vandalia State House (the fourth location) and the current State Capitol in Springfield.



Parks and recreation — Giant City, Ferne Clyffe, Cave-in-Rock, Eagle Creek, Pere Marquette, Starved Rock . . . the state's multiple state parks have a lot to offer. Rappel in Giant City, hike Pontiac Canyon at Starved

Rock, picnic in Eagle Creek — travelers could spend an entire season taking advantage of the outdoor activities Illinois state parks provide. Fishing, boating and biking are common, but at some parks hobbyists can also enjoy skiing, geocaching, metal detecting, horseback riding and archery.



Quad Cities — For travelers to the Quad Cities, there's a wealth of things to do and see. Explore the Butterworth Center and Deere-Wiman House and the John Deere Pavilion in Moline as well as the Rock

Island Arsenal Museum. Take a twilight riverboat cruise, kayak or view bald eagles. Try out the QC Coffee Trail, Ale Trail or Public Art Trail. Enjoy a theatrical production at the historic Circa 21 Dinner Playhouse in Rock Island or The Spotlight Theatre in downtown Moline — the list is endless.



Route 66 — Stop at any number of roadside attractions while traversing the Mother Road in Illinois, which offers numerous photo opportunities along the way, like Bunyon's Statue in Atlanta, the Railsplitter Covered

Wagon in Lincoln, the Pink Elephant Antique Mall in Livingston and Brooks Catsup Bottle in Collinsville. Some other must-sees on the historic roadway are the Two-Cell Jail in Gardner, the Standard Oil Gasoline Station in Odell and Henry's Rabbit Ranch in Staunton.



Shawnee National Forest — The Shawnee National Forest in southern Illinois is comprised of 289,000 acres of flora and fauna. Its camping, horseback riding, hiking, nature viewing, water activities and outdoor

learning opportunities attract nearly a million visitors annually. Some highlights: Crow Knob and Sand Cave (a lookout point and place of shelter, respectively) on the Underground Railroad, the Illinois Iron Furnace Historic Site, the Garden of the Gods and the Rim Rock National Recreation Trail.



Theater — While Chicago is an obvious destination for theater lovers, downstate Illinois has options as well. Among them are Hoogland Center for the Arts in Springfield, Kirkland Fine Arts Center in Decatur and

Rialto Square Theatre in Joliet. Three stages at the Hoogland are graced by resident performing arts groups regularly. The Kirkland Fine Arts Center showcases professional touring groups as well as student events, and the historic Rialto hosts a multitude of theatrical events throughout the year.



Underground Railroad — African Americans seeking freedom from slavery found their way to it through the Underground Railroad, which included safe houses in several Illinois locations. Perhaps the most famous

of these is the Owen Lovejoy Homestead in Princeton. Lovejoy was an abolitionist preacher whose brother was murdered after the preacher shared his views publicly. Other stops include Dr. Richard Eell's House in Quincy, and Beecher Hall and Woodlawn Farm in Jacksonville, as well as homes and churches in Alton.



Vineyards — Wine trails in Illinois have become popular travel destinations. Carlyle Lake Wine Trail visits five off-the-beaten-path wineries. The Heart of Illinois Wine Trail is comprised of nine stops in or near

Peoria, Bloomington-Normal, Springfield, Canton and Galesburg. In western Illinois, the Mississippi Valley Wine Trail promises a scenic tasting trip, as does the Shawnee Hill Wine Trail in southern Illinois. And, don't forget the five wineries featured on the Wabash Valley Wine Trail. Taste the flavors of Illinois wine.



Waterfalls — The tranquil beauty of waterfalls draws visitors from far and wide, and Illinois has its share of them. Take a hike and enjoy Waterfall Glen, a forest preserve in DuPage County and home to Rocky Glen Waterfall,

or Jackson Falls Waterfall, located in the Shawnee National Forest. Another to keep in mind is Cascade Falls in Matthiessen State Park. When planning a visit to these or others in the state, please note that weather and the time of year are key factors in the size of Midwest waterfalls.



eXtreme sports — The opportunity to participate in sports that some people may consider extreme is a draw for many travelers. Snowboarding at Chestnut Mountain in Galena, spelunking in Illinois Caverns in

Waterloo or ziplining at one of the state's many locations may fit the bill for that select group of people. Looking for an even more adrenaline-thumping option? The Illinois Skydiving Center is a drop zone located in Paxton.



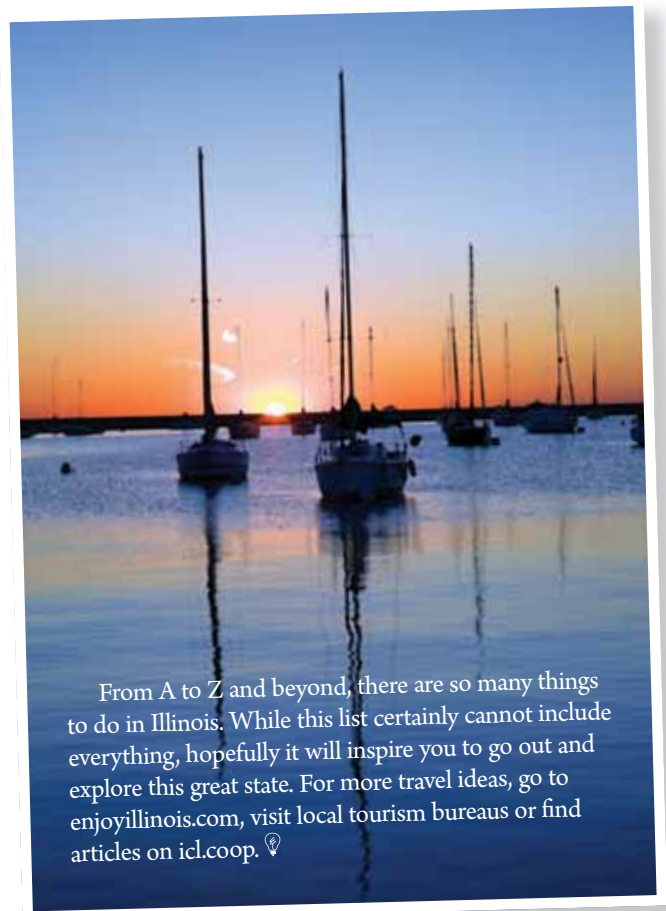
Yum — Supporting local is all the rage these days — make sure to also practice it when choosing restaurants on your travels. Illinois has an abundance of locally owned eateries that feature regional flavors and

unique twists on favorites. Experiencing local dishes is just one more way to truly experience the places you visit — and keep small Illinois communities thriving.



Zoos — Who doesn't love animals? The Scovill Zoo in Decatur features hundreds of animals from multiple continents, from cheetahs to wallabies to crocodiles and cuckoos. Miller Park Zoo in

Bloomington opened in the late 1800s and is the only zoo in the state that features the endangered Sumatran tiger. Brown's Oakridge Zoo in Smithfield is family-owned and operated, and hosts Siberian tigers, black bears and lions. Hit the road and make a few furry friends.



From A to Z and beyond, there are so many things to do in Illinois. While this list certainly cannot include everything, hopefully it will inspire you to go out and explore this great state. For more travel ideas, go to enjoyillinois.com, visit local tourism bureaus or find articles on icl.coop.



Americans can finally grow thick, lustrous hair

“This will help your thinning hair and receding hairline in just 30 days” says top US Doctor

Clinical trials show a new hair loss breakthrough can help both men and women naturally regrow a thick, full head of hair – without drugs, surgery, or side effects

Thousands are rushing to get a new hair restoration method based on surprising new studies from the University of California.

It is the world's first and only hair loss solution that revives dead hair follicles. And studies confirm it helps men and women regrow a thick, full head of hair, even after years of balding.

Now, with news of this breakthrough spreading like wildfire — the manufacturers are struggling to keep up with overwhelming demand.

That's because, unlike other methods, it is prescription-free, drug-free, and has no side effects. And while hair transplants can cost \$4,000 or more, this new approach costs pennies on the dollar and doesn't involve going to the doctor's office.

Instead, it leverages cutting-edge technology to prevent hair loss, fills in embarrassing bald spots, and **Re-Nourishes** thinning hair — with results you can see and feel in 30 days or less.

As Jeanne F. from San Diego, CA reports: “When my husband began to use this product, all he had on top of his head was fuzz. His hair began to grow after 30 days and now it is about 2 to 3 inches long!”

Surprising Truth About Hair Loss

It is commonly believed that hair loss is hereditary.

Unfortunately, most people think there is nothing they can do to stop it. However, while many doctors will tell you that thinning hair, a receding hairline, and bald spots are due to your genetics, this is not the whole story.

“While genetics play a role, it's not the main reason you lose hair,” says Dr. Al Sears, the nation's top anti-aging doctor. “And surprisingly it's not just your age, thyroid, hormones, stress, or a vitamin deficiency, either.”

The latest scientific research reveals that hair loss is primarily

caused by the stem cells in your hair follicles dying.

“This discovery is a true breakthrough because by reviving these stem cells on your scalp, you can stop hair loss dead in its tracks and trigger new hair growth, even in areas that have been thinning for years,” explains Dr. Sears.

Now, at his world-famous clinic, the Sears Institute for Anti-Aging Medicine in Palm Beach, FL, Dr. Sears and his team have used this game-changing discovery to develop a brand-new hair restoration formula that is taking the country by storm.

Sold under the name **Re-Nourish**, it is flying off the shelves with men and women of all ages raving about the results it delivers.

Breakthrough research proves this discovery helps fill in bald spots, re-nourishes thinning hair, and leads to noticeable growth in as little as 30 days.

“I have seen a significant improvement in hair growth. Previously, you could see thinning areas at the back of my head and now hair has grown over it,” says Peter W. from Ontario, Canada.

And Susan D. from Fort Pierce, Florida reports, “My hair was thinning. So, I began to use **Re-Nourish** every day on the front part of my scalp. Now I have thicker hair.”

Regrows Hair In Just 30 Days

Scientists now know that stem cells are the lifeblood of your hair follicles.

Research from the University of California shows they're the reason you're able to grow hair. However, these stem cells aren't always active. In fact, studies reveal they're only active during certain phases of the hair growth

cycle.

“Your hair grows in three phases,” explains Dr. Sears. “First, you have the anagen phase, the hair growing phase. Then the catagen phase, when hair gets ready to shed. And finally, the telogen phase, where your hair is pushed from the follicle and falls out.”

As you get older it becomes harder for your hair follicles to complete this three-phase cycle. The results? Your hairs get stuck in the telogen phase. This is when they start falling out and stop regrowing, no matter what you try.

This process doesn't happen overnight, says Dr. Sears.

“At first, your hair dries out, becoming brittle, thin, and harder to style. Then, you start finding hairs on your pillow and down the drain. Finally, you're left with bald spots that age you prematurely.”

Fortunately, **Re-Nourish** puts a stop to this. It revives the dead stem cells in your hair follicles and reactivates your hair's three-phase cycle, triggering new growth in as little as 30 days — even in areas that've been balding for years.

Reawakens Dead Hair Follicles

For years, scientists couldn't figure out why hair follicle stem cells died.

However, a study from the University of California finally found the answer.

It has to do with T-cells — an important immune cell in your body. The researchers discovered these T-cells are the only way to command hair follicles to grow new hair.

More importantly, they showed that T-cells helped revive the stem cells in your hair follicles — spurring new growth, filling in bald spots and natural hairline.

Re-Nourish uses a unique blend of all-natural ingredients. By spraying it on your hair once per day, scientific studies show you

can revive dead stem cells and improve the appearance of thicker, fuller hair.

For example, the key nutrient of **Re-Nourish** was tested on a group of severely balding women.

After 6 months, nearly 70% of the women saw significant improvement in hair growth. Their hair was noticeably fuller, thicker, and healthier looking. Most exciting of all, they grew new hair on parts of their scalp that had been bald for years.

In another study, Italian researchers gathered a group of both men and women with thinning hair and applied the core ingredient of **Re-Nourish**. After 12 weeks, they reported a staggering 74% increase in hair growth.

“It's really mind-boggling that my hair started growing back,” says Zan R., another **Re-Nourish** customer.

With results like this, it's no surprise that demand for **Re-Nourish** is soaring. Thousands of men and women are scrambling to get their hands on the limited supply available.

Re-Nourish is not currently available in any store at any price. But we've secured a small batch for our readers.

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To secure the hot, new **Re-Nourish** formula, buyers should contact the Sears Health Hotline at 1-800-927-7938 TODAY. “It's not available in retail stores yet,” says Dr. Sears. “The Hotline allows us to ship directly to the customer.” Dr. Sears feels so strongly about **Re-Nourish**, all orders are backed by a 100% money-back guarantee. “Just send me back the bottle and any unused product within 90 days from purchase date, and I'll send you all your money back.”

Call NOW at 1-800-927-7938 to secure your supply of **Re-Nourish**. Use Promo Code ICLRN524 when you call. Lines are frequently busy, but all calls will be answered!



COMING SOON

TO TREES NEAR YOU

A cicada event two centuries in the making

By Colten Bradford

MEASURING IN AT 1 1/2 inches long, with lacy burnt orange wings and red eyes contrasting their black bodies, periodical cicadas will soon emerge from the ground by the millions across Illinois and the Midwest.

While the idea of millions of giant bugs crawling from the ground may seem like the start of a horror movie for some, Ken Johnson looks forward to this phenomenon.

“I’m kind of an insect person to begin with,” Johnson explains. “As a kid, I’d collect insects, and in college, I took an entomology (study of insects) class that rekindled that interest. That made me want to pursue [it] as a career.”

He went on to an entomology internship at Walt Disney World Resort in Florida, where he maintained insect colonies and assisted with pest monitoring. Today, Johnson is a horticulture educator with the University of Illinois Extension office based in Jacksonville, where he helps people

better understand fruit and vegetable production, pest management and beneficial insects.

This year marks the first time in 221 years that two broods of periodical cicadas will emerge from the ground simultaneously in Illinois, which will cover the state. While there are cicadas that come out annually, Brood XIII, found in the northern half of the state, emerges every 17 years, and Brood XIX, in the southern half, emerges every 13.

“In Illinois, we’ve got both those broods coming out at the same time, which hasn’t happened since 1803,” Johnson explains. “They’ll all just have this mass emergence. There’s something cool about that.”

According to Johnson, once the ground warms up to 64 degrees Fahrenheit at about 8 inches deep, that’s when the cicadas will begin to emerge, particularly if it rains around that time, too. This is expected to occur in May and June.



While the two broods are predicted to come out at the same time, they won't necessarily come out in the same place. "They're not expected to overlap to any great extent," Johnson explains. "Maybe some around the Springfield area, but not any significant amount."

The number of cicadas will depend on the area. If there are fewer trees, the fewer the cicadas. "The more trees you have, you'll have more cicadas coming out," Johnson says. "And [there] could be really high quantity areas ... tens of thousands of cicadas, if not hundreds of thousands."

While you shouldn't expect to see swarms of cicadas, you should expect to hear them. "The males will sing to attract females, beginning a couple of days after they emerge," Johnson says. "Depending on the number of cicadas you have, it could get rather loud."

According to the National Institutes of Health, the "singing" could reach more than 90 decibels, which compares to the same noise level as a lawnmower, tractor or motorcycle.

Once they mate, the females will begin laying eggs in woody plants. "If you've got newly planted trees, small trees and shrubs, [cicadas]

can cause significant damage to those plants while laying eggs," Johnson explains. "Large, mature, healthy and established trees are not a concern."

To protect these plants, Johnson recommends covering them with netting. Openings in the netting shouldn't be larger than a 1/4 inch so the cicadas cannot lay their eggs. These nets can be found online and in most garden centers. Johnson says to be sure to secure the netting to the base of the tree so they cannot crawl up the trunk.

If you were planning to plant a new tree this spring, Johnson suggests that you wait. Although it isn't an ideal time, new trees are more likely to survive this year if planted at the end of June or the beginning of July, after all the cicadas are gone.

In addition, Johnson warns against using insecticides. Doing so will run the risk of affecting other insects you're not trying to control, like much-needed pollinators. "Netting is going to be the best way to protect your plants," he says.

Once the cicadas emerge, they will be around for about six weeks, and then they will begin dying off. "When they die, it's not going to be particularly pleasant-smelling," Johnson warns.

While considering the noise, potential plant damage and the ensuing odor of rotting bugs, Johnson hopes people will focus on the positives that these periodical cicadas will also bring.

"They've been in the ground for [years]. When they climb to the surface, they will open holes in the soil, making it easy for rain [to nourish plants]," Johnson says. "While emerged, they're going to be food for a lot of wildlife ... for all kinds of birds and mammals. And when they're dying, they may smell, but those bodies will break down and return nutrients to the soil ... and will promote a new flush of growth the following year."

While Johnson looks forward to the mass emergence of cicadas for the experience itself, he also looks forward to eating them for the first time. Yes, you read that correctly. On his Good Growing podcast with Chris Enroth, a fellow

U of I Extension horticulture educator who also writes columns for the GardenWise section in this magazine, the two plan to release an episode in late May featuring cicada taste testing. Go to go.illinois.edu/goodgrowingpodcast or your preferred podcast platform to access the episode.

Johnson has found cicada cookbooks featuring a variety of recipes. The insects will emerge from the ground in the evening and are best harvested while still milky white (teneral) before their exoskeletons harden. However, he says people should avoid eating cicadas if they have a shellfish allergy, if the insects emerge from an area where pesticides have been used or if heavy metals in the soil are a concern.

If you want to experience the cicada song, Johnson recommends going to areas with large, mature trees, such as parks and forest districts. While you will certainly hear them, you can also catch a glimpse of them flying around the treetops.

"Enjoy it; they're not going to be around long, and it'll be another 13 or 17 years before we see them again," Johnson says. "They're not anything you need to kill or get rid of. Just enjoy them while they last." 🦗



"They're not anything you need to kill or get rid of. Just enjoy them while they last."



DINNER with a view

Benson's on the Mississippi offers a riverside dining experience

By Colten Bradford

WHEN BUD AND STEPHANIE Benson purchased their 150-plus-year-old building along the Mississippi River in Albany during the fall of 2019 for their new restaurant, they did not anticipate a global pandemic to begin just months later.

"With the great idea that we would do some cosmetic work in the restaurant and then open in the spring of 2020, we did not know that little thing called COVID was going to happen," Stephanie says. "Everything was delayed, and we had our problems, as everybody did."

The Bensons, who are consumer-members of JCE Co-op, decided to gut the place, and they used the building to its best advantage. The building formerly housed another restaurant, with the main dining room in the front and the kitchen in the back; the Bensons

reconfigured the space to move the dining room to the back of the building to put the mighty Mississippi on display.

"The view is the selling point," Stephanie says. The dining room itself is in a Quonset hut (a structure characterized by its semi-cylindrical shape) that was added to the building sometime over the years. On the back wall, five large windows were installed for views of the Mississippi River. "It's fun to watch boats coming up and down the river," she continues. "There's wildlife. We capture a lot of beautiful sunsets."

"There's really no bad seat," Stephanie explains to anyone requesting a table with a view of the river. "You can even see the river from the bar-room." That bar, located in the front of the building, is made from old beams that used to hold up the structure.



Opposite page: (left) smoked prime rib, served medium rare, comes with a side salad, grilled asparagus and mashed potatoes; (top) fish plate with hushpuppies, fries, sweet pepper slaw, and homemade tartar and cocktail sauces; (middle) pan-seared scallops; (bottom) homemade vanilla cheesecake with strawberry sauce. This page: (left) dining room with views of the Mississippi River; (right) owners Stephanie and Bud Benson.

A carpenter by trade, Bud did much of the renovation himself. However, his passion is cooking, and he's the head chef of the operation. His culinary journey began in the state of Mississippi, where he worked in restaurants on the side for a decade. He learned how to cook on the job.

"In some ways, he's self-taught," Stephanie says. "He didn't go to culinary school. He just had this passion for cooking. He started working in restaurants and learned [along the way]. He is passionate about it. . . . And if you look at our menu, there's a southern flair to it."

This menu includes a lot of hickory-smoked meats and freshwater fish, and one of the more popular dishes is only served on Thursdays. That dish, the low country shrimp boil, includes shrimp, corn on the cob, red potatoes and andouille sausage, which can be tossed in Bud's homemade garlic sauce.

Another favorite dish is also a regular special, only served on Fridays and Saturdays. The smoked prime rib, tender and served medium rare, comes with a side salad, grilled asparagus and mashed potatoes. All specials are available while supplies last. Other occasional specials include gumbo, Cajun pasta and pan-seared scallops.

On the regular menu, other frequent picks include the brisket plate (thick strips of hickory-smoked brisket), the loaded smoked gouda mac and cheese topped with pulled pork, and a variety of freshwater fish, sourced as fresh as possible in North America. "When we started, we were focused on [food] Bud likes — hickory-smoked meats — and then we kept adding fish. People love bluegill around here, and walleye isn't on everybody's menu anymore."

While each type of fish served is featured in dishes of their own, customers can try them all with the fish plate. This includes walleye, catfish, bluegill and shrimp, all lightly beer-battered and fried crisp, served with hushpuppies, fries, sweet pepper slaw, and homemade tartar and cocktail sauces.

While Bud may be the head chef, don't leave without a slice of Stephanie's cheesecake. The generous slice of homemade vanilla cheesecake can be topped with strawberry or caramel sauce. Other flavors are also occasionally featured, such as cinnamon roll and peanut butter cup.

"Food made fresh will have the best flavor," Stephanie says. "That's what we want to offer to our customers, because that's what we're passionate about. . . . We just want to take care of people and do the best we can." 💡

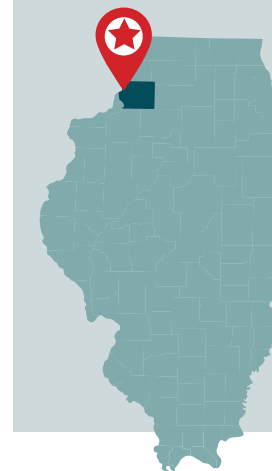
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Just casse- roll with it

“IT LOOKS LIKE THE dickens, but it tastes pretty good,” was a phrase my great grandma would often use when serving a meal. I think of that same phrase whenever I make casseroles, which have a reputation for not always looking particularly appetizing or photogenic. Regardless, this very Midwestern staple can frequently be found at church gatherings, reunions and at the dinner table. Needless to say, casseroles are easy, feed many, and they do taste pretty good. 💡

WE NEED RECIPES!

Upcoming recipes

World foods

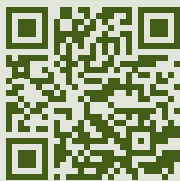
Salads

Microwave recipes

Egg dishes

Keto recipes

Please email recipe submissions or questions to finestcooking@icl.coop or mail them to Finest Cooking c/o Illinois Country Living, 6460 S. 6th St. Frontage Road East, Springfield, IL 62712. Please include your name, address, phone number (for questions), and the name of your electric cooperative. Additional recipes can be found on our website at finestcooking.com.



Recipes are prepared, tasted and photographed by **Colten Bradford**, Illinois Country Living editor.



Zucchini Casserole

Zucchini Casserole

Submitted by *Sherry Reuter, Egyptian Electric Cooperative Association*

Servings: 12

- 1 can cream of chicken soup
- 1 cup shredded cheese, any kind
- 1 cup sour cream
- 4 zucchinis, peeled and sliced
- 4 cups seasoned croutons
- 1/4 cup onions, chopped
- 3/4 cup carrots, peeled and chopped

Preheat oven to 350 F. Mix ingredients together and pour into a greased 9X13-inch casserole dish. Bake for 35 to 40 minutes.

Asparagus Casserole

Submitted by *Joan D. Teal, Southern Illinois Electric Cooperative*

Servings: 8

- 2 cups fresh asparagus (or 2 cans), cut into pieces
- 4 eggs, hardboiled and chopped
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- 1/4 can milk (using soup can)
- 1 cup American or Velveeta cheese, cubed
- 3/4 cup buttery crackers, crushed

Preheat oven to 350 F. If using fresh asparagus, bring a pot of water to a boil and blanch the asparagus by adding them to the water for 10 minutes and then placing them into an ice bath. Drain well. In a microwave safe bowl, add soup, milk (measured up to 1/4 of the soup can) and cheese, and microwave until cheese is melted. Fold in the asparagus and eggs. Pour into a buttered 8X8-inch baking dish. Top with cracker crumbs. Bake for 25-35 minutes.

Sweet Potato Casserole

Submitted by Patricia Pilcher, Clay Electric Co-operative

Servings: 12

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 3 cups mashed sweet potatoes | Topping: |
| 3 eggs | 1 cup light brown sugar |
| 1-1/4 teaspoons vanilla | 1/3 cup flour |
| 1/2 cup granulated sugar | 1 cup pecans, chopped |
| 3/4 cup butter, melted | 1/3 cup butter, melted |
| 1/3 cup whole milk | |

Preheat oven to 350 F. Combine first six ingredients and mix well. Put in a buttered 9X13-inch casserole dish. Mix together topping ingredients and crumble on top of sweet potato mixture. Bake for 25-30 minutes. **Note:** Tastes like dessert rather than a vegetable side dish.

Cabbage Hot Dish

Submitted by Rosemary Wiley, Southern Illinois Electric Cooperative

Servings: 12

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1 pound hamburger | 1 can chicken with rice soup |
| 1 onion, chopped | 1 can mushroom soup |
| 2 tablespoons butter | Salt and pepper, to taste |
| 4 cups cabbage, chopped | |
| 1/2 cup rice, uncooked | |

Preheat oven to 350 F. Brown hamburger and onion in skillet over medium heat on stovetop, about 7-10 minutes. Salt and pepper to taste. Add to the bottom of a 9X13-inch casserole dish. Melt butter in the skillet over medium heat and brown the chopped cabbage slightly, just so edges are lightly brown. Add cabbage to casserole dish. Mix together the remaining ingredients and pour over the top of the cabbage. Cover and bake 1 hour, until rice is cooked through.

Summer Squash Casserole

Submitted by Janice McNeely, Illinois Electric Cooperative

Servings: 12

- | | |
|---|--|
| 2 pounds yellow summer squash, sliced thin with peel | 1 6-ounce package chicken-flavored stuffing mix |
| 1/4 cup onion, chopped | 1/2 cup butter, melted |
| 1 can cream of chicken soup | 1 small can sliced water chestnuts, drained |
| 1 cup sour cream | 3/4 cup cheddar cheese, grated |

Preheat oven to 350 F. Cook squash in boiling water for 10 minutes. Drain. Combine soup, sour cream, onion and water chestnuts with the squash. Melt butter and mix in dry stuffing mix and seasoning packet. Mix all the ingredients together and place in a 9X13-inch casserole dish. Sprinkle grated cheese on top. Cover casserole dish and bake for 40 minutes.



Summer Squash Casserole



Wild geraniums are native Illinois plants that tolerate light shade and offer bright purple blooms.

The secret to shade gardening

Choose the right plants for low-light spaces

SHADE GARDENING CAN BE challenging, but don't let it disappoint you this summer. Few plants grow their best in low-light conditions, and the plants that do often lack gorgeous blooms. If a garden of large-leaved hostas is too monochromatic for your liking, try planting uniquely textured foliage and distinct blossoms offered by shade-loving plants. Instead of a dark, drab space, you will look forward to a shady retreat this summer, thanks to the additions in your new shade garden.

When planting your shade garden, consider the type of shade (morning vs. afternoon) and the duration of shade. Partially shaded areas get 4 to 6 hours of sunlight per day; full shade areas get less than 4 hours and sometimes no direct sunlight at all. Full shade areas are usually under dense tree canopies or covered patios on the north side of the house. To understand your shade conditions, spend time in your garden observing when the plants have direct sunlight and its duration.

Not all shade is equal; even moisture levels vary in shade. Moist shade caused by cool temperatures is ideal

for some shade plants but leads to root rot in others. Moss creeping in your garden bed may indicate high moisture levels. Shade gardens under trees or shrubs may experience dry shade conditions, causing competition for water and nutrients. And all shade is a favorite spot for slugs to explore and snack.

To ensure a healthy plant, it's important to remember to choose the right plant for the right place. A plant grown in undesirable conditions will be stressed, unhealthy and stunted. As a result, foliage color may be dull, and disease or pest problems may occur. Although beautiful blooms are a garden highlight, most plants showcase fewer flowers and briefer bloom times in the shade.

With less focus on blooms, the strength of a shade garden is foliage. Texture, color and shape all add dimension and interest. Try mixing large coarse leaves like pig-squeak and lady's mantle with finely divided leaves of Japanese painted fern. Or, add plants with white and green variegated foliage like Solomon's-seal or liriopse.

Perennial plants provide permanence and structure in shade beds,

even if bloom time is short, so focus on stunning, dependable and distinct perennials. Some to consider planting are bigleaf ligularia, large glossy leaves with 3-foot-tall daisy-like flowers; false spirea, lacy foliage with large plume-like flowers; lungwort, rough, spotted leaves with pink or purple blooms; and bugloss, green to silver heart-shaped leaves with delicate blue flowers in the spring.

Several Illinois native plants also tolerate light shade, including wild geranium, a mounding perennial with purple flowers; Northern maidenhair fern, with dark green, feathery foliage; and bugbane, white flower spikes atop black, wiry stems.

Ageratum



For a pop of color all summer long, add shade-loving annual bedding plants such as ageratum, wax begonia, impatiens and torenia to the garden. Then fill in with shade-tolerant groundcovers, including wild ginger, sweet woodruff and bugleweed. 🌱



Brittnay Haag is a Horticulture Educator for the University of Illinois Extension serving Livingston, McLean and Woodford counties. Her work focuses on youth horticulture education through school gardens and Jr. Master Gardener programs.

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Point of view

1. **FRANZ STRACK**
JCE Co-op
2. **ALICE DODSON**
Illinois Electric Cooperative
3. **MARY JANE DODGE**
Clay Electric Co-operative
4. **KAREN PRANGE**
Monroe County Electric Cooperative
5. **SHARON SCHERER**
Norris Electric Cooperative
6. **BARB HORSCH**
Corn Belt Energy Corporation

UPCOMING THEMES
 July - Sky
 August - Vintage cars or trucks
 September - Outdoor adventures
 October - Fall foliage



1



2



3



4



5



6

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