

JAMMUP

published by Southern Illinois Electric Cooperative, Dongola, Illinois

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

More than electricity: The cooperative advantage



David A. Johnston
General Manager

Now that spring has arrived, our focus at the cooperative has shifted into high gear. While the return of warmer weather is always welcome, we

know that in southern Illinois, this season brings heavy rains and unpredictable storms. For our team, this is a time when our commitment to reliability and financial stewardship is put to the test. *Nettyna Johnson*

Why reliability is our best investment

If you've seen our trucks out on the roads lately, you're seeing the cooperative model in action. We are currently in the midst of several key projects designed to keep your service as stable as possible. We prioritize this work because outages are expensive for everyone.

Beyond the inconvenience to your home, farm or business, an outage is a "double hit" to the cooperative's finances: It creates high costs for emergency repairs, and it stops the flow of revenue because meters aren't turning. By investing in the grid now, we protect both the cooperative's bottom line and your service:

- **Right-of-way clearing:** Spring growth is rapid. Forestry crews are working hard to manage

vegetation near our lines to prevent "nuisance outages" that occur during spring wind and rain.

- **Infrastructure reinvestment:** We are continually replacing older poles and upgrading various pieces of equipment across our system. These are strategic investments to ensure our infrastructure can handle the season's demands before a storm forces an expensive emergency repair.

The financial shield: Your member equity

In an economy where the cost of materials and power is rising, being a member-owned cooperative provides a unique financial shield: member equity. Because we are a not-for-profit company, we operate at cost, and any funds remaining at the end of the year stay right here to benefit you.

- **Your participation:** Because we are a not-for-profit, we operate at cost. Any funds remaining at the end of the year are allocated to your member account based on your overall financial participation.
- **Reducing the need to borrow:** We use this member equity to help fund maintenance and equipment. While we still utilize outside lenders for large-scale projects, having strong member equity reduces our need to borrow as much from the outside. This significantly lowers our interest expense, a vital tool that helps us manage rates.

- **The benefit of ownership:** This equity represents your "stake" in the cooperative. Over the last 10 years alone, we have retired nearly \$8.8 million in capital credits back to our members. This is money that stays in our local economy.

The local difference: Accountability you can count on

When the storms roll through this spring, you won't be waiting on a corporate office in another state. Our employees live in the same neighborhoods as you do. That local accountability ensures that our priorities are always aligned with yours: getting the power back on safely and keeping the system running efficiently for all of us here in southern Illinois.

The cooperative model was built on the idea that we are **stronger when we work together.**

Thank you for being a member and for your role in making this cooperative a success.

Safety Tip

Do not use electric yard tools when the ground is damp or wet. If you have cordless yard tools that run on battery power, charge the batteries safely and follow all manufacturer's instructions. Store yard tools out of children's reach.

Safe Electricity.org



Grow your savings: Landscaping that cuts energy costs

At a glance:

- The right trees — in the right places — provide shade, reduce heat absorption and even block winter winds.
- Smart landscaping can cut cooling costs by up to 25% and often pays for itself within eight years.
- Climate zone, tree type and mature height all matter when planning an energy-saving yard.

When most people think about saving energy, they picture insulation upgrades, efficient windows and appliance swaps. But your yard can play a major role, too. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, a well-planned landscape can reduce air-conditioning costs by up to 25% and pays for itself in less than eight years.

Because landscaping results vary by region, keep in mind that the United States has four main climate zones: temperate, hot-arid, hot-humid and cool. Plant strategically for your zone.

Choose the right trees: deciduous or evergreen

- Deciduous trees (those that lose their leaves in the winter) block sunlight in the summer and allow light in during the colder months, helping to regulate indoor temperatures year-round.
- Evergreen trees provide consistent shade and can serve as windbreaks, which is especially helpful in cool climates.

Tip: In hot climates, choose native or drought-tolerant

species. They require less water and are typically more resilient.

Placement matters

- West and northwest sides: Plant trees to block strong mid- to late-afternoon sun.
- East and west windows: Use deciduous trees to block summer sun but still allow winter light.
- South side: Tall trees planted at a distance equal to two to five times their mature height can shade your home without blocking winter sun.
- West side: Shorter trees and shrubs help shield against intense, low-angle afternoon sun.
- Patios and driveways: Shade these areas to reduce reflected heat.
- Home perimeter: Bushes can absorb sunlight and reduce heat transfer, but avoid dense

plantings in humid climates, where airflow is important to prevent excess moisture.

Tip: Be mindful near solar panels. Avoid planting tall trees on the south side of panels to prevent shade during peak sun hours. **Kalyssa Spurlock**

Plan for a tree's mature height

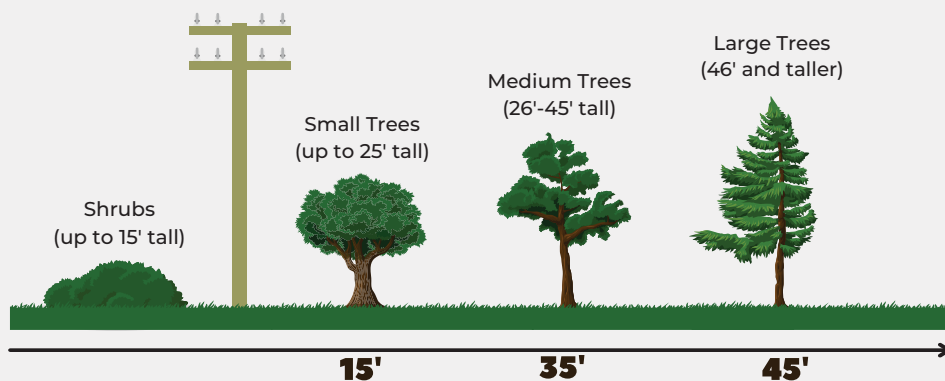
- Avoid planting trees that will grow taller than 15 feet near power lines.
- For taller species, plant at least 20 feet away — 45 feet is even better — to prevent safety hazards and avoid future pruning.

Call before you dig!

Before you plant anything, call 811 to check for underground utilities. This free service marks public lines, like electricity, water and gas, so you avoid costly and dangerous mistakes. Call several business days before you plan to dig.

Plant the RIGHT TREE in the RIGHT PLACE

The larger the tree, the farther it should be from a power line. Avoid planting beneath power lines, near poles or close to electrical equipment.



Remember, know what's below by calling 8-1-1 before you dig.

Learn more at: [SafeElectricity.org](https://www.SafeElectricity.org)



SPRING SAVINGS WORD SEARCH



Are you ready to *spring* into energy savings? When we actively try to reduce our energy use at home, we save on bills and help our community. Read the efficiency tips below, then search for (and circle) the **bolded** words in the puzzle.

Spring Energy Tips:

Unplug chargers, gaming systems and other devices. Electronics can consume **energy** when they're plugged in, even if you're not using them.

Open curtains and blinds during the day to use **natural light** instead of lamps and other home lighting.

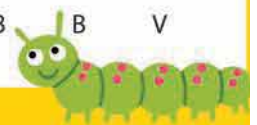
Dress for the weather. When it's chilly, grab a **jacket** instead of turning up the **thermostat**.

When it's warm, instead of turning on the A/C, open **windows** or turn on fans to circulate air.

Turn off **lights** when you're leaving the room for more than five minutes. *Angela Collins*



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Member prize

In this issue of the JAMUP, we printed the names of three SIEC members who are eligible to receive a \$10 credit toward their utility bill. If you find your name printed in this center section and it's not part of the story, call Brent with your account number at **800-762-1400** to claim your prize.

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Youth to Washington Winners



Haydyn Williamson

Haydyn is a junior at Anna-Jonesboro High School. She enjoys the outdoors and has a passion for wrestling. Haydyn states, “My family and faith mean everything to me. I applied for YTW for the opportunity to learn and experience new things. After graduation, I plan on continuing my education and coaching wrestling.” Congratulations on being selected to represent SIEC, Haydyn!



JR Wright

JR is also a junior at Anna-Jonesboro High School. He also enjoys spending time outdoors. JR states, “I thought it would be a great experience for me to learn about how our government runs. After high school, I want to either go to college or enter an apprenticeship to become a diesel mechanic.” Congratulations on being selected to represent SIEC, JR!



You can't AVOID what you CAN'T SEE

Starting a job — big or small — without first getting utilities marked could result in serious injury, service disruptions for you and your neighbors, and a hefty fine.

Call 8-1-1 before you dig.

Learn more at: SafeElectricity.org