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IN BANDERA

TEXAS RAISES  
THE AMERICAN FLAG

A NEIGHBORHOOD'S  
SEED SAVER

# Texas Coop Power

FOR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE MEMBERS

APRIL 2024

## Vanishing Act

Conservationists  
work to save  
native plants in decline



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# April 2024



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## Thorny Task 12 Holding Promise

Scientists, landowners and plant lovers work to preserve hundreds of threatened Texas natives.

*By Sheryl Smith-Rodgers*

Bandera's Helping Hand puts relief within reach for neighbors in need.

*Story and photos by Laura Jenkins*

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ON THE COVER

The flower of the rare night-blooming cereus can be seen just one night a year.

*Photo by Dave Shafer*

ABOVE

The Hinckley oak is an evergreen shrub in the Chihuahuan Desert.

*Photo by Keeper Trout | Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center*



# Wiring the American Dream

**ON LINEWORKER** Appreciation Day, April 8, we celebrate the 20 Texas electric cooperative lineworkers who brought electricity to Matasanos, a rural village in Guatemala. They spent two weeks there in November as part of NRECA International, a program that for more than 60 years has delivered electricity to remote places that had none—exactly what co-ops did in rural Texas 85 years ago.

Ten South Texas co-ops sent two crew members each, plus support staff. When they finished, 60 homes had each been wired with four lights, two switches and two outlets. Villagers helped the lineworkers move equipment up the mountain.

“I believe we take the American dream on the road and transplant it to other countries,” says Jim Coleman, general manager at Jackson Electric Cooperative in Edna, who has participated in several international projects. He was joined in Guatemala by GMs from four other Texas co-ops.



## No Fooling

Some historians say April Fools' Day customs have been around since the 16th century, when France's King Charles IX decreed the new year would begin January 1—not on Easter. Those who clung to the old ways were called April fools.

## FINISH THIS SENTENCE

Wow! The eclipse was ...

**TCP** Tell us how you would finish that sentence. Email your short responses to [letters@TexasCoopPower.com](mailto:letters@TexasCoopPower.com) or comment on our Facebook post. Include your co-op and town.

Here are some of the responses to our February prompt: **Campfires remind me of ...**

Telling scary stories as kids.

CATHY ONDREJ  
HILCO EC  
AQUILLA

Me and my dad camping. We would stare at the fire for hours and say, “This is much better than watching TV.”

MIKE EARLY  
VIA FACEBOOK

The time I set our tent on fire!

HOOMALIMALI PAULO  
VIA FACEBOOK

The possibility of a nostalgic gathering and the surety of an asthma attack.

SHELLY REID  
SOUTH PLAINS EC  
BECTON

Fresh air, boiled cowboy coffee, staring at the embers.

DURENA KRILEY  
VIA FACEBOOK

Visit our website to see more responses.

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### RECOMMENDED READING

Ten years ago we looked at the problems caused by the growing population of feral hogs in Texas. See *Here a Pig, There a Pig* from April 2014 on our website.

The Favorite  
 “I pay for some magazines, but my very favorite one is yours. Great publication.”

NONA GARDNER  
 DEEP EAST TEXAS EC  
 GARRISON



R.J. HINKLE PHOTOS

**Pieces of Art**

We became a fan of Puzzles of Color after meeting them at the Texas State Fair and absolutely loved the artwork of the woman playing bass [Puzzling Times, February 2024]. I made a custom frame for it, and it hangs in our guest bedroom.

Peter Hill  
 Pedernales EC  
 Austin

**The Reality of Gators**

We don't always have a resident gator at Magnolia Beach, but most times there's one or two [Later, Gators?, February 2024].

My son and I were fishing when two teens were swimming nearby. I casually asked if they were watching for gators. “What gators?” came back sarcastically. “The one with his nostrils and eyes sticking up under the walking bridge behind you,” I replied.

I swear they walked on water getting to the bank.

Jim Evans  
 Victoria EC  
 Port Lavaca

**The Real Bowie**

Yes, Jim Bowie's knife was quite a sensation, and I'm glad you cast some doubt as to his actions at the Alamo, but it might be worth mentioning a bit more of his biography [A Cut Above, February 2024].

He was a slave owner, slave trader, smuggler and an associate of pirates. He also was a land speculator with a suspicious reputation.

Georgia Xydes  
 Pedernales EC  
 Austin

**Shamrock Memories**

Glenn McCarthy's two daughters were at Lamar High School when I was [The Green Carpet, January 2024]. The Cork Club was opened on Sunday afternoons for teens to come, dance to a small orchestra and have nonalcoholic drinks.

In 1952, my date and I went with another couple. The featured singer for the week came to entertain us—Tony Bennett. Hearing *I Left My Heart in San Francisco* always reminds me of that very special afternoon.

Betty Akin Morris  
 Pedernales EC  
 Canyon Lake



DAVID MOORE

**TCP WRITE TO US**  
 letters@TexasCoopPower.com

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 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor  
 Austin, TX 78701

Please include your electric co-op and town. Letters may be edited for clarity and length.

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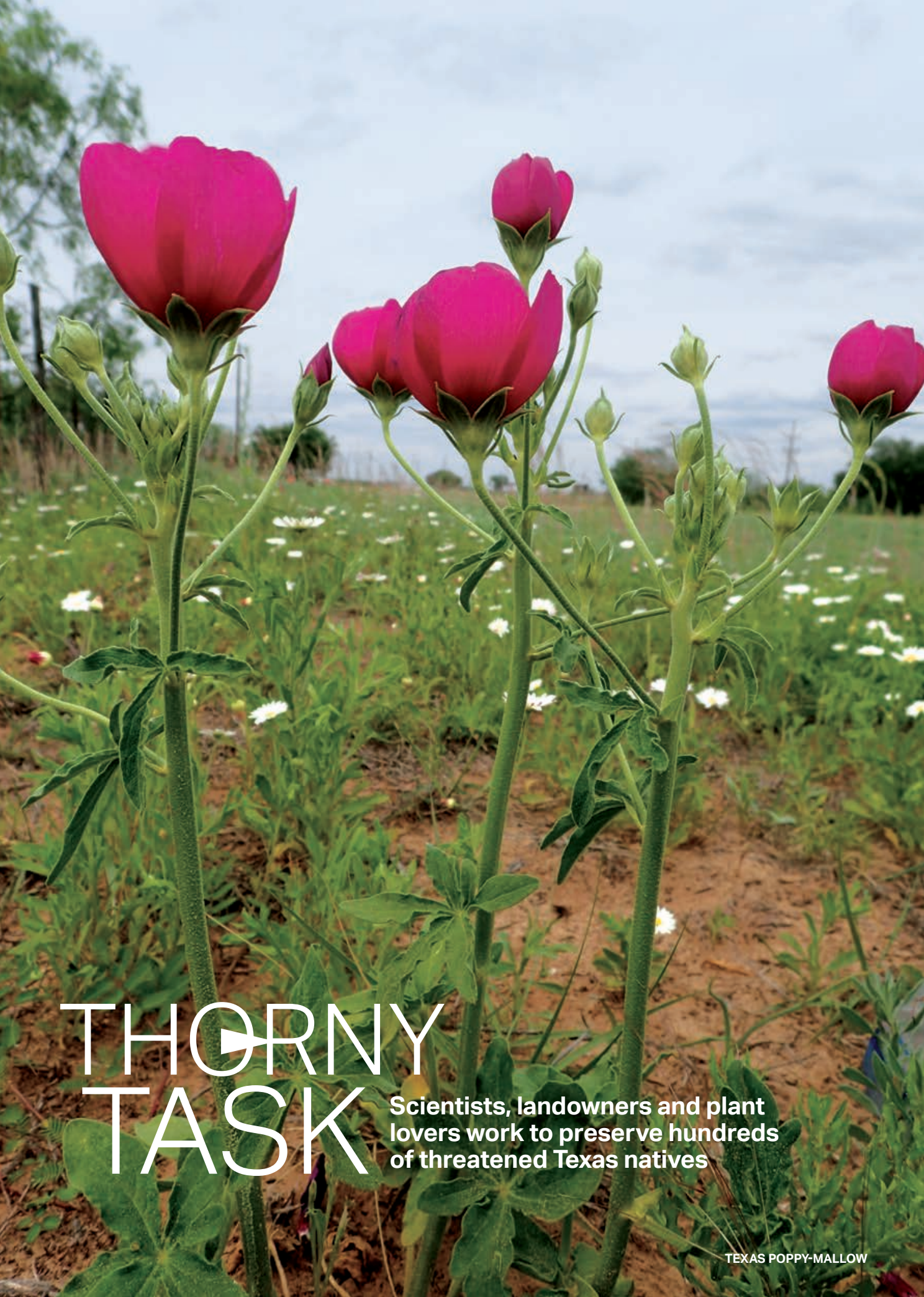
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# THORNY TASK

Scientists, landowners and plant lovers work to preserve hundreds of threatened Texas natives

**R**andy Deming often walks his 10 acres of rural land in Callahan County, near Abilene, always on the lookout for a flower, insect or bird he hasn't spotted before.

Using an app called iNaturalist, he documents the native grasses, yuccas, Ashe junipers, live oaks and other plants that grow there. Thanks to the app, Deming learned in 2021 that one of his flowering species could be one of only a few remaining populations in Texas.

"I took pictures of a pretty flower and forgot about it," recalls Deming, a member of the Texas Master Naturalist Program and Taylor Electric Cooperative. "A few months later, I was skeptical when someone contacted me through iNaturalist and asked to see my large-flower beardtongues.

"When they told me how rare they are, I was excited," Deming says. "I could have mowed them down! Now I'm watching over them."

In the future, large-flower beardtongues—a tall, erect perennial with tubular purple blooms—could be legally protected if researchers collect enough ecological data to substantiate the designation. In the meantime, 437 other Texas plants have already been designated by the state as "species of greatest conservation need," meaning they're in decline and need attention. Some of those species require even more urgent measures. These are further labeled as threatened or endangered.

The two legal terms stem from the Endangered Species Act, a federal law enacted in 1973 to protect and help recover the nation's imperiled plant and animal species and their habitats. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service oversees the federal list and partners with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, which manages the Texas list. A species can be federally and state protected, such as shrubby Texas snowbells in the Hill Country, or just one or the other.

However, the process for federally listing a species can stretch out for years. Consider the bracted twistflower, a tall annual with lavender flowers that has been increasingly lost to urban sprawl and hungry herbivores. Found only within the Edwards Plateau, the wildflower has been marked as imperiled since 1975 and was petitioned for



TURNER'S CLIFF THISTLE

federal listing in 2014. In May 2023—nine years later—the USFWS finally listed the bracted twistflower as threatened. In Coryell County, the imperiled Texabama croton faces similar challenges.

Plants of all kinds in Texas face many pressures. Every year, development scrapes away one natural area after another. Invasive plants, agriculture, poaching, mining, weather, loss of pollinators, and land and water management also negatively impact the state's flora.

But does it really matter if a few of Texas' estimated 5,000-plus native plant species go away? The answer is yes.

"We have biodiversity for a reason," says Anna Strong, a rare species botanist with TPWD. "Each organism interacts with others in specific ways. Regardless of whether it's rare or common, if we take out one organism, we don't know the implications amongst all the organisms. If we take out one flower, we may take a food source away from a specific insect that relies on that species."

At the San Antonio Botanical Garden, botanist Michael Eason works to conserve and propagate rare Texas plants. "We have more than 90 species in our collections," Eason says. "Some are displayed in our gardens, which helps to educate the public. Others are seed collections, which haven't been propagated yet."

One of those species, prostrate milkweed, a low-growing perennial, is endemic only to Starr and Zapata counties and northeastern Mexico. Since at least 1980, invasive



## Glossary

**An endangered species** is defined under the Endangered Species Act as “any species which is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range.”

**A threatened species** is defined under the ESA as “any species which is likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range.”

**Imperiled** is not a legal term. Biologically, it refers to unprotected species that are in decline and may be in danger of extinction.

**Rare plants** have very limited ranges or exist in low numbers.

buffelgrass, road construction and development have drastically reduced its numbers. After several petitions to the USFWS, prostrate milkweed—an important monarch butterfly host plant—was federally listed as endangered in March 2023. The agency also designated 661 acres as critical habitat needed by the species to survive.

For his part, Eason spent five years tracking down the scarce milkweeds and collecting seeds, then having a milkweed specialist grow the plants to maturity. “We ended up with 150 plants,” he says. “We passed some to other botanical gardens. We’ll install some in our rare plant gardens. The remainder will be kept for perhaps reintroductions in South Texas and donations to other institutions with the Center for Plant Conservation.”

Headquartered in Escondido, California, the CPC is a





TEXAS SNOWBELL

TEXAS SNOWBELL: CHASE FOUNTAIN | TPWD. TEXABAMA CROTON: RAY MATHEWS | LADY BIRD JOHNSON WILDFLOWER CENTER

## Grassroots Efforts

**The Texas Department of Transportation** monitors for rare plants prior to road construction and along state highways and rights of way. Edd Paradise, a TxDOT environmental planner in Pharr and a Magic Valley Electric Cooperative member, worked with USFWS to relocate endangered Zapata bladder-pods in Starr County.

**Aaron Lincoln**—a biodiversity manager with Lhoist, a global corporation—oversees a pilot project to restore grasslands and a pocket prairie at a 3,000-acre chemical lime plant and quarry in Bosque County. So far, he’s documented glandular blazing stars, Hall’s prairie clover, lemonscent and other declining species. Lincoln also hopes to set aside 122 acres as a refuge for white troutlilies and morel mushrooms.

**The Friends of the Warren Ferris Cemetery** in Dallas rallied to transform the historic cemetery’s neglected grounds into native habitat. Today, the Constellation of Living Memorials pilot project includes eight old cemeteries and will serve as an example for revitalizing the state’s 5,000-plus historic cemeteries. One project goal is to encourage the recovery of threatened and endangered plant species.



TEXABAMA CROTON

nationwide network of organizations working together to save imperiled native plants. The San Antonio Botanical Garden partners with the CPC, as do the Botanical Research Institute of Texas at the Fort Worth Botanic Garden, Mercer Botanic Gardens in Humble and the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin.

As part of its conservation efforts, the wildflower center stores seeds of 575 Texas plant species for research and sharing with botanical gardens and conservation organizations. The seed bank, housed mostly in freezers, also serves as an insurance policy against the loss of imperiled species.

“We visit wild populations that we have permission to access, either on public land or through contacting land-owners,” explains Jonathan Flickinger, conservation collections manager at the wildflower center. “We harvest seeds



BRACED TWISTFLOWER

from plants, but we don't take too many because our priority is to conserve the plants in their natural habitat."

In some cases, researchers may rescue plants by digging them up. That happened with the Texas poppy-mallow, listed as federally endangered in 1981. The tall perennial with reddish purple flowers grows in deep sandy soils along the Colorado River in four counties.

In 2010, some conservation-minded landowners asked that a population of poppy-mallows be removed from a future construction site on their property. That summer, wildflower center staff and other colleagues extracted 54 plants and fostered them in pots for three years.

"We harvested more than 3,000 seeds from them for our seed bank," Flickinger says. "Then we identified another site where they were reintroduced."

Landowners play a huge role in plant conservation, namely because about 95% of Texas' land is privately owned. When threatened or endangered plants grow on private land, landowners are not legally required to manage them under the Endangered Species Act (the law differs for listed birds and animals).

Botanists and other officials must always ask permission before accessing private land. Typically, they want to survey plant species, perhaps harvest a small amount of seeds and collect plant material for herbarium vouchers.

The Fish and Wildlife Service offers a program that provides property owners with free technical and financial assistance for improving wildlife habitat on their land. "We're always looking for opportunities to work with landowners," says Chris Best, USFWS botanist. "Most of the ones I've met want to protect their land's natural resources."

That aptly describes attorney Liz Rogers, a Medina Electric Cooperative member. For more than two decades, she's welcomed researchers onto her family's 8,000-acre cattle ranch in southeastern Brewster County, along the Mexico border. "They always show me cool things, which has made me appreciate our ranch even more," she says.

Eason has been among many plant conservationists who have botanized the ranch's Trans-Pecos deserts, canyons and mountainsides. "Liz has an assortment of rare plants found along cliff faces and other protected areas," he says. "We've collected plants such as Turner's cliff thistle, rock-daisy and Barton's dalea. She also has a small population of night-blooming cereus."

Whether rare or not, showy or inconspicuous, every native plant matters. "We shouldn't focus conservation merely on species that have declined so far that they're teetering on the brink of extinction," Best says. "We should be working to keep common plants common." ■



## Noah's Arks for Seeds

**Just as the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center** in Austin stores seeds of 575 Texas plant species for research, national and global seed vaults do the same—preserving plant types in case they are wiped out by natural or human-made disasters.

**The National Laboratory for Genetic Resources Preservation** on the campus of Colorado State University is run by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. It houses more than 850,000 plant seeds and materials, as well as DNA samples from about 160 breeds of livestock.

**The Svalbard Global Seed Vault**, located about halfway between the North Pole and the coast of Norway, is more than 300 feet inside a mountain, where the permafrost maintains a stable temperature between 26 and 39 degrees. Three large concrete chambers have the capacity to hold 3.5 million seed samples.



# HOLDING PROMISE

BANDERA'S **HELPING HAND** PUTS RELIEF WITHIN REACH FOR NEIGHBORS IN NEED



**FROM THE ROAD,** it doesn't stand out from any other small office complex you might find in the Hill Country. But once you pass through the towering iron gate, get out of your car and start walking, the landscape becomes much more inviting: winding paths that lead to a peaceful courtyard and a sprawling pergola nestled against a scenic lily pond.

This is what hope looks like. More specifically, the Village of Hope—the cluster of buildings owned by Bandera County Helping Hand, a haven for residents facing a personal crisis. Are you sick? There's a free medical clinic. Is your cupboard bare? Head over to the food pantry. Do you need shoes, clothes or basic household items? The thrift store has what you need.

Since 1984, Bandera Helping Hand has been a steadfast safety net for folks who have hit hard times.

"We're here to help people get on their feet," says Jesse Parks, executive director of Helping Hand. "You never know what tomorrow will bring. Everything's great until all of a sudden there's a car wreck and somebody's gone or there's a flood or a fire and you've lost everything. It's devastating."

Parks speaks from experience. In the late 1990s, she and her husband uprooted their lives in Corpus Christi and moved to Medina, just west of Bandera, where they signed a long-term lease on a piece of land and started working on their dream: building a facility for teens experiencing crisis. Two years later, without warning, the landowner sold it out from under them, including the structures and improvements they'd funded with their own money.

They lost everything. To make ends meet, Parks got a job at the Apple Store in Medina (which actually sells fruit). One day a friend came in and told her that she'd recommended Parks for the director position at Helping Hand. Even though she'd never worked at a nonprofit, Parks accepted the position and has led the organization since 2000.

Helping Hand began 16 years earlier, in 1984, when local churches came together to assist neighbors in need. The aim was to pool resources and provide a central place where people could go for help. In the early days, Helping Hand operated a thrift store and a food pantry and provided school supplies for children. It also helped struggling residents pay their utility bills.

But when the Medina River swept through the town during the devastating South Texas floods of 2002, it demolished Helping Hand's facilities. Quite suddenly they were among those in crisis.

"Our building was completely destroyed," Parks remembers, "so we set up shop in a warehouse and started gathering donations from other food banks. The Salvation Army came in and helped us provide aid for flood victims as well."

Seeing how generously and efficiently Helping Hand had been serving the community, Bandera's city council offered them space so they could continue helping residents while they figured out how to start over themselves. And that's when offers of help started pouring in.

"A retired grant writer by the name of Dan Wise got in touch and offered to help us raise funds to rebuild," says Parks, a member of Bandera Electric Cooperative. "I looked forever for land that was not in a flood plain and finally found this 3.77 acres. We bought it with money we borrowed from Bandera Bank but were able to pay it back within a year using the grants that Mr. Wise helped us get from various foundations."

By early 2004, Helping Hand's crisis intervention center was complete. At the building's dedication, then-board President Comellia Rue announced that the next structure they would build was a free medical clinic to serve the county's uninsured residents. But no one had any idea where the money would come from.

Enter Kerrville businessman Arthur Nagel, who approached the pastor of a local church and told him God had given him a vision to start a medical clinic in Bandera. The pastor introduced Parks to Nagel, who donated \$150,000 to construct the shell of the clinic building on the Village of Hope grounds. Within a year, Helping Hand had raised enough money to complete the clinic and operate it for a year. The clinic formed its own nonprofit and opened its door to patients in 2008.

Today the Arthur Nagel Community Clinic is open three days a week. In addition to primary care, the clinic offers mental health services and teen and elder care programs. Healthy cooking and cardio fitness classes are also available. The clinic provided an estimated \$1.9 million in health services to 443 Bandera County residents in 2023, says clinic director Chuck Lutke.

The food pantry stays stocked thanks to food and cash donations from individuals and contributions from other food banks. As a result, Helping Hand can feed an average of 130 families a month.

At the thrift store, which thrives on steady donations of gently used clothing and household items, residents purchase what they need at affordable prices. Sales cover nearly three-fourths of Helping Hand's annual operating budget.

"Helping Hand is about community," Parks says. "We all work as a team. I see us as a community of 'hands' that resources pass through. Each one of us has been through hard times and knows what a little compassion and love can mean in a crisis situation.

"Helping people get back on their feet and feeling good about themselves as they overcome whatever they're going through is a privilege.

"It's not a *handout*, it's a *hand up*." ■

OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP The Village of Hope welcomes folks who have hit hard times. Angelica Hernandez greets patients at the medical clinic, which is open three days a week. The food pantry can feed 130 families a month.

**TCP** See this story on our website to donate to the Village of Hope.

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**Peace Silver Dollar:** With a beautiful design memorializing peace following the end of World War I, the 90% silver Peace Dollar was intended as a one-year only release struck in 1921—but it proved so popular with the American people, it was struck until 1928, then again in 1934-35. Extremely Fine (XF) condition coin included in set.

**Eisenhower Dollar:** The last circulating U.S. dollar coin, the Eisenhower Dollar, aka the "Ike Dollar," was prized by Americans, with its design featuring war hero President Dwight D. Eisenhower, backed by an image symbolizing the Apollo II moon landing. First struck with silver 1971-1976, the Eisenhower Dollar in this set was struck in 40% silver for collectors, and you will receive a coin in Brilliant Uncirculated (BU) condition.

**Silver Eagle Type 1:** The first-ever U.S. Silver Dollar minted in 99.9% silver, these coins were first minted in 1986 following President Ronald Reagan's signing of the Liberty Coin Act into law on July 9, 1985, which authorized the U.S. Mint to strike America's new silver bullion coin. This gorgeous Silver Dollar features the original, revered Type 1 "Heraldic Eagle" reverse design by John Mercanti, 12th Chief Engraver of the U.S. Mint. Brilliant Uncirculated (BU) condition coin included in set.

**Silver Eagle Type 2:** In honor of the popular 99.9% silver coin's 35th anniversary in 2021, the Silver Eagle received a new, esteemed Type 2 "Eagle Landing" reverse design. This is the current issued coin by the U.S. Mint. Brilliant Uncirculated (BU) condition coin included in set.

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<sup>1</sup>DETAILS OF OFFER: Offer expires 6/30/2024. Not valid with other offers or prior purchases. Buy one (1) window or entry/patio door, get one (1) window or entry/patio door 40% off, and 12 months \$0 money down, \$0 monthly payments, 0% interest when you purchase four (4) or more windows or entry/patio doors between 4/1/2024 and 6/30/2024. 40% off windows and entry/patio doors are less than or equal to lowest cost window or entry/patio door in the order. Additional \$30 off each window or entry/patio door, minimum purchase of four (4) required, taken after initial discount(s), when you purchase by 6/30/2024 Subject to credit approval. Interest is billed during the promotional period, but all interest is waived if the purchase amount is paid before the expiration of the promotional period. Financing for GreenSky® consumer loan programs is provided by federally insured, federal and state chartered financial institutions without regard to age, race, color, religion, national origin, gender, or familial status. Savings comparison based on purchase of a single unit at list price. Available at participating locations and offer applies throughout the service area. See your local Renewal by Andersen location for details. CA License CLSB #1050316. Central CA License #1096271. License #RCE-50303. OR License #198571. WA License #RENEWAP877BM. WA License #RENEWAW856K6. FL #CGC1527613. All other license numbers available upon request. Some Renewal by Andersen locations are independently owned and operated. <sup>2</sup>Based on testing of 10 double-hung units per ASTM E2068 20 years after installation. <sup>1</sup>It is the only warranty among top selling window companies that meets all of the following requirements: easy to understand terms, unrestricted transferability, installation coverage, labor coverage, geographically unrestricted, coverage for exterior color, insect screens and hardware, and no maintenance requirement. Visit renewalbyandersen.com/nationsbest for details. <sup>3</sup>Review aggregator survey of 5-star reviews among leading full service window replacement companies. January 2024 Reputation.com. "Renewal by Andersen" and all other marks where denoted are trademarks of their respective owners. © 2024 Andersen Corporation. All rights reserved. RBA13747

<sup>\*</sup>Using U.S. and imported parts.



CEO  
HERBERT "TREY"  
GREBE III

## Our Linemen Are Out of This World

**LINE WORK IS NOT A** glamorous or easy profession. It takes years of specialized training and ongoing education and, equally important, a sense of service and commitment to your community. How else can you explain the willingness of lineworkers to leave the comfort of their homes to tackle a challenging job in difficult conditions, when most other folks are sheltering safely with their families?

This dedication and service is truly what sets our linemen apart. That's why Medina Electric Cooperative sets aside the second Monday in April—April 8 this year—to celebrate and recognize the men who work around the clock to keep the lights on.

We join other electric cooperatives across our state and nation in celebrating Lineman Appreciation Day to recognize those workers' critical roles in providing our members with the power they depend on.

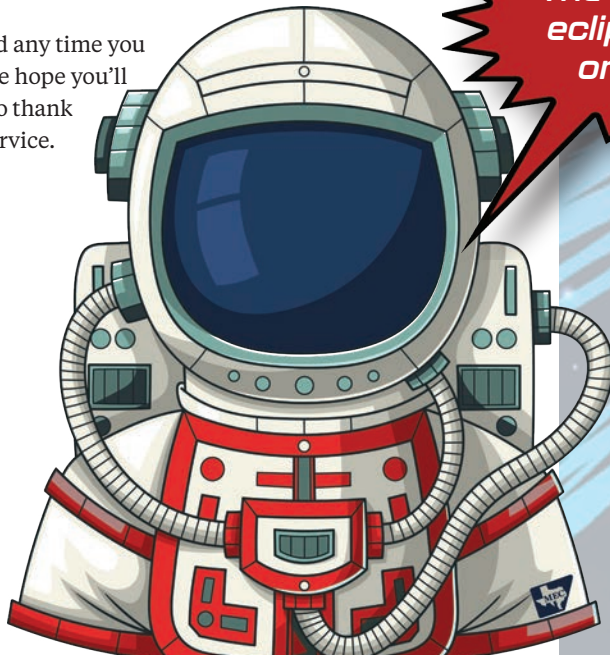
Every day, linemen face immense risks. Carrying heavy gear, they regularly scale 40-foot poles near high-voltage power lines, often in the wake of Mother Nature's worst. It's no wonder their profession is among the most dangerous in the country.

Medina EC's linemen maintain thousands of miles of power lines, keeping the lights on for our members. Our linemen help keep the world spinning for everyone. As the first responders of our workforce, we count on them to get us through some of our darkest hours, day or night. They truly deserve this special day of recognition.

We appreciate our dedicated linemen and are proud of their commitment to our members. They deserve all the appreciation and accolades that come their way.

On April 8, and any time you see a lineman, we hope you'll take a moment to thank them for their service.

Until next time,  
Trey



*The total solar eclipse is also on April 8!*

### BY THE NUMBERS

With their combined 612 years of experience, here is what our linemen manage to ensure that members have the power they need.

Miles driven in 2023:  
831,452

Meters: 34,936 total, or 635.2 per lineman in the field

Hours worked in 2023:  
127,056

Miles of power lines:  
Over 9,900

Weight of climbing gear and tools: 44 pounds

Square miles of service area: 10,750 total, or 195.5 per lineman in the field

### Management Team

These former linemen now oversee crews in all offices.

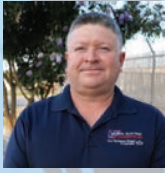
- Oscar Chapa, 35 years
- Norby Salazar, 31 years
- Leonard Geyer, 29 years



# Meet Medina Electric Cooperative's Linemen!



**Ace Gaucin**  
Hondo—39 years



**Seb Suarez Jr.**  
Uvalde—32 years



**Joe Flores**  
Uvalde—31 years



**Scott Schulte**  
Hondo—31 years



**Edward Varnador**  
Dilley—29 years



**Reuben Ayala**  
Dilley—23 years



**Raymond Schawe**  
Hondo—22 years



**Pat Garza**  
RGC—21 years



**Albert Vela**  
Bruni—20 years



**Armando Castillo**  
Bruni—20 years



**Jorge Zapata**  
RGC—17 years



**Mario Lopez**  
Bruni—16 years



**Jason Gomez**  
Uvalde—16 years



**Serapio Guzman**  
Uvalde—13 years



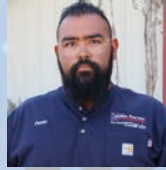
**Ben Garcia**  
Uvalde—13 years



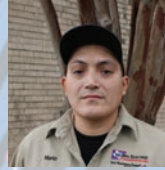
**John Rodriguez**  
RGC—13 years



**Elias Tobias**  
Laredo—12 years



**Josh Perez**  
Bruni—11 years



**Mario Molina**  
Hondo—11 years



**Eric Hinojosa**  
RGC—10 years



**Tony Banda Jr.**  
Dilley—10 years



**Martin Gonzales**  
Dilley—9 years



**Felipe Moreno**  
Laredo—9 years



**Marcus Cortez**  
Dilley—7 years



**David Hernandez**  
Dilley—7 years



**Joe Stone**  
Dilley—6 years



**Mario Factor**  
Laredo—6 years



**Joselito Morales**  
Dilley—6 years



**Justin Cortez**  
Bruni—5 years



**Johnny Rosa**  
RGC—5 years



**Reynold Munoz**  
Hondo—5 years



**Trey Guerra**  
Bruni—5 years



**Johnny Garza**  
Uvalde—5 years



**Benjamin Soto**  
Bruni—4 years



**Marcus De La Cruz**  
Uvalde—3 years



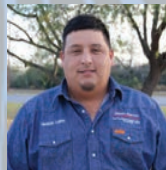
**Jose Olivarez**  
RGC—3 years



**Luis Gutierrez**  
RGC—3 years



**Felipe Negrete**  
Uvalde—2 years



**Gerardo Lopez**  
RGC—2 years



**Wicho Garcia**  
RGC—2 years



**David Perez**  
Bruni—2 years



**Jay Rodriguez**  
Hondo—2 years



**Michael Cardoza**  
Hondo—1 year



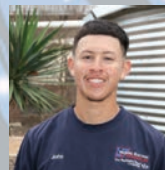
**Justin Lopez**  
Uvalde—1 year



**Wesley Menges**  
Hondo—1 year



**Eddie Lopez**  
Uvalde—1 year



**John Suarez**  
Hondo—1 year



**Gus De Hoyos**  
Hondo—1 year



**Silver Elizondo**  
Hondo—1 year



**Tony Benavidez**  
Hondo—<1 year



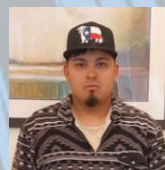
**Jim Aviles**  
Uvalde—<1 year



**Cristian Escobar**  
Hondo—<1 year



**Justin Moncada**  
Hondo—<1 year



**Rene Alvarez**  
Dilley—<1 year



**Victor Garcia**  
RGC—<1 year





**CONTACT US**

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**Email** Info@MedinaEC.org

**Web** MedinaEC.org - Chat Feature Available

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**CEO**

Trey Grebe, 1-866-632-3532, ext. 1045

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**Option 2:** Report an outage

**Option 3:** Pay bill, get account balance

**Option 5:** Speak to a representative

**OFFICE LOCATIONS**

**Bruni** 1300 FM 2050 N., Bruni 78344

**Dilley** 1718 W. FM 117, Dilley 78017

**Hondo** 237 Highway 173 N., Hondo 78861

**Rio Grande City** 601 N. FM 3167,  
Rio Grande City 78582

**Uvalde** 2604 Highway 90 E., Uvalde 78801

**Corporate Office** 2308 18th St., Hondo 78861

**VISIT US ONLINE**

MedinaEC.org



This institution is an equal-opportunity provider and employer.

Información sobre todos los programas y servicios que ofrece Medina Electric Cooperative están disponibles en español al llamarnos al 1-866-632-3532 o visitando una de nuestras oficinas.



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# Operate Your Generator Safely

**THE PRIMARY HAZARDS** to avoid when using a generator are carbon monoxide poisoning from the toxic engine exhaust, electric shock or electrocution, and fire. Here are some tips for safely using a portable generator.

- ▶ Always thoroughly read and follow the directions supplied with the generator. Also understand the requirements for generator installations by your utility.
- ▶ Never try to power the house wiring by plugging the generator into a wall outlet. Known as “backfeeding,” this practice puts utility workers, your neighbors and your household at risk of electrocution.
- ▶ To avoid electrocution, keep the generator dry and do not use in rainy or wet conditions. Operate it on a dry surface, and do not touch the generator with wet hands.
- ▶ Set up and run your generator in a well-ventilated area outside the home. Make sure it’s out and away from your garage, doors, windows and vents. The carbon monoxide generated is deadly.
- ▶ Be sure to turn the generator off and let it cool before refueling. Gasoline spilled on hot engine parts could ignite.
- ▶ Store fuel for the generator in an approved safety can and outside of living areas in a locked shed or other protected area. Use the type of fuel recommended in the instructions or on the label on the generator.
- ▶ Plug appliances directly into the generator, or use a heavy duty, outdoor-rated extension cord that is rated (in watts or amps) at least equal to the sum of the connected appliance loads. Check that the entire cord is free of cuts or tears and that the plug has all three prongs, especially a grounding pin.
- ▶ Remember, even a properly connected portable generator can become overloaded, resulting in overheating or generator failure. Be sure to read the instructions.
- ▶ If necessary, stagger the operating times for various equipment to prevent overloads.
- ▶ Consider a GenerLink device, installed by Medina EC, behind your meter to operate a generator.

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## Consumer Analytics by Bidgely Coming in May



**MEDINA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE** residential members will soon have access to advanced analytics detailing their energy use by appliance.

Consumer Analytics is powered by Bidgely, a utility monitoring software that helps consumers better engage and understand their energy use. As a result, members will receive tips and tricks for maximizing their energy dollars. These analytics will be featured in SmartHub to easily compare energy use, trends and costs.

The program originally was going to be available to Medina EC members in February, but it is now expected in May. Learn more about consumer analytics and other resources to enhance your experience managing your electric account at [MedinaEC.org/SH](https://MedinaEC.org/SH).

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## Medina EC Celebrates Administrative Professionals' Day

**IN HONOR OF** National Administrative Professionals' Day, Medina Electric Cooperative would like to recognize Brittany Meyers, the administrative clerk in the human resources department.

She helps to keep Medina EC's corporate office running smoothly, coordinates both our volunteer time off and lineman testing programs, books all Medina EC-related conferences and travel, and so much more.

Meyers was even recognized as Volunteer of the Year for 2023 by the Hondo Chamber of Commerce in February for all that she does for the Hondo community.



## Don't Wait for Summer To Get Your AC Inspected

**A SPRINGTIME TUNEUP** can prevent your air conditioning system from going on the fritz later, when the weather is so hot that you won't want to be without the AC for even a few hours.

It typically costs around \$100 to have a professional inspection of your system, and it's well worth the money.

Some contractors offer an annual preventive maintenance agreement, which will cost a few hundred dollars a year and typically includes a fall and spring inspection of your HVAC system and discounts on repairs and equipment. A better deal most often is to pay as you go for individual inspections.

Either way, your cooling system will get attention from a qualified, licensed service technician who's trained to spot problems that most homeowners overlook. The tech might even alert you to a small repair now that could prevent an untimely and potentially expensive HVAC breakdown down the road.

When HVAC equipment fails, it's inconvenient and uncomfortable—especially during the dog days of summer. Remember, your HVAC system runs best when it's regularly cleaned and serviced. With a little maintenance along the way, you can add years to your system's life span.

Medina Electric Cooperative offers a \$60 rebate for HVAC tuneups. Learn more about HVAC and other rebates available to members at [MedinaEC.org/Rebates](https://MedinaEC.org/Rebates).





## Get Ready for the Emergency Preparation Supplies Tax Holiday

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR** for the Emergency Preparation Supplies Sales Tax Holiday, April 27–29. Texas shoppers wanting a break on emergency supplies can buy certain preparation supplies in stores, online or by phone, mail, custom order or any other means tax-free, when either: The item is both delivered and paid for during the exemption period or you order and pay for the item and the seller accepts the order during the exemption period for immediate shipment, even if delivery is made after the exemption period ends. If you pay sales tax on qualifying items during the sales tax holiday, you can ask the seller for a refund of the tax paid or a refund form to send directly to the Texas comptroller’s office.

### Qualifying Products

- Portable generators
- Emergency ladders
- Axes and hatchets
- Batteries, single or multipack
- Nonelectric can openers
- Smoke and carbon monoxide detectors
- Coolers, ice chests and ice products
- Fire extinguishers
- First aid kits

### Nonqualifying Products

- Medical face masks
- Cleaning supplies and gloves
- Toilet paper
- Camping supplies and stoves
- Chainsaws
- Plywood
- Batteries for motorized vehicles

**Learn more at [Comptroller.Texas.gov](https://www.comptroller.texas.gov).**

## Small Changes Can Have a Big Impact

**EARTH DAY IS APRIL 22.** Celebrate by making an Earth Day “resolution” to change at least one energy-related bad habit at home.

### Here are some ideas:

If you haven’t already, switch your lamps and overhead light fixtures to LED versions. You can even use LED bulbs in older fixtures.

Turn off the lights when you leave a room and teach your children to do the same. This time-tested advice still applies.

Unplug appliances like the TV and your computer when you’re not using them. Appliances that are turned off but still plugged in draw small amounts of electricity.

Take shorter showers. You’ll save water and energy.

Plant a tree strategically to create shade over southern-facing windows to protect your home from summer heat, reducing the need for air conditioning.

Switch to a smart thermostat to automatically adjust the temperature for when you’re away.



## LARGE TREES

Height/spread of more than 40 feet, such as:

- Maple
- Birch
- Oak
- Sweetgum
- Spruce
- Linden
- Pine

## MEDIUM TREES

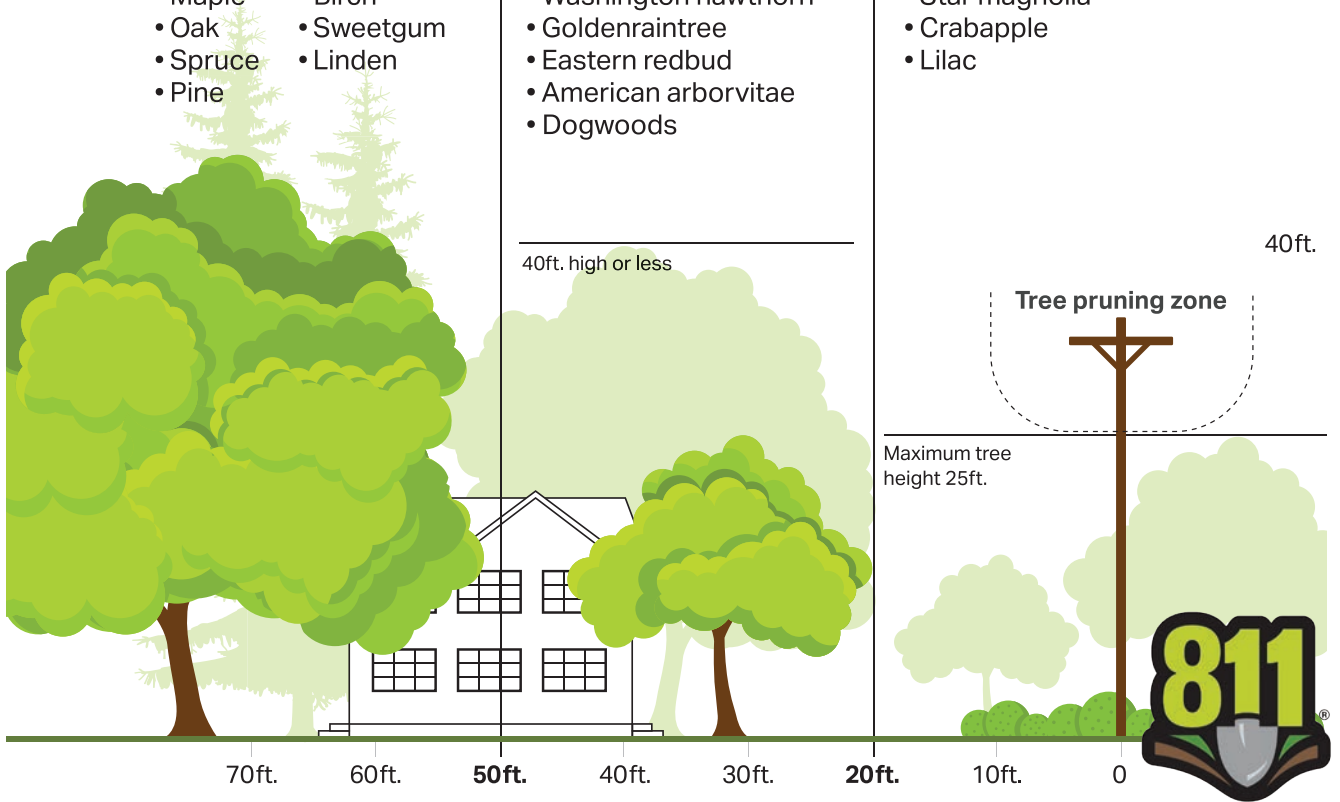
Height/spread of 25 to 40 feet, such as:

- Washington hawthorn
- Goldenraintree
- Eastern redbud
- American arborvitae
- Dogwoods

## SMALL TREES

Height/spread of less than 25 feet such as:

- Star magnolia
- Crabapple
- Lilac



## 5 Reasons To Plant a Tree in Your Yard

**IN HONOR OF** Arbor Day, on April 24, why not start thinking about planting some shade trees in your yard to keep your family cool?

**Here are five benefits of shade trees around a home.**

**1.** Planting shade trees strategically can shield your home from hot sunrays in the summer. The less heat and light that comes through your windows, the cooler your home will be, and that means you can rely less on air conditioning. That can lead to lower electric bills.

**2.** A hedge of trees and plants adds privacy to a backyard patio. But trees don't only prevent others from seeing in; they can block an unsightly view and even diffuse noise from nearby streets and parks.

**3.** Beautiful trees can boost your property value—by up to 15%, according to some nurseries. That makes planting a good investment.

**4.** Trees that flower and those with leaves that change colors beautify your landscape.

**5.** Trees benefit the environment. They absorb carbon dioxide from the air, which slows the buildup of the gas in the atmosphere. The root systems help hold and aerate the soil, filter groundwater and allow the trees to draw in chemical nutrients that otherwise could leach into the environment.

Decaying leaves, needles and other tree debris enrich the soil, providing nutrients for grasses and other vegetation.

**Remember when planting trees to take some safety precautions.**

Always call 811 before you dig to identify underground utilities. You don't want to strike an underground power or gas line or fiber cable. Doing so could injure you or cause widespread outages.

Consider the full-grown size of the tree you're planting, giving it plenty of space away from overhead electric lines. Trees that grow into or near lines pose a hazard; branches can fall into and damage the infrastructure or cause fires. Medina Electric Cooperative's vegetation management team works to clear rights-of-way, or the 40 feet around powerlines through the pruning and spraying of trees and brush.

Place trees far enough away from your home to reduce the risk of falling branches, big roots causing structural damage or the risk of Medina EC crews pruning them to maintain the integrity of our lines and prevent outages.

**Learn more about 811 at [Texas811.org](https://Texas811.org).**

**Learn more about Medina EC's vegetation management program at [MedinaEC.org/ROW](https://MedinaEC.org/ROW).**

# Honoring Dedication

## Holly Gunter retires from Medina Electric Cooperative

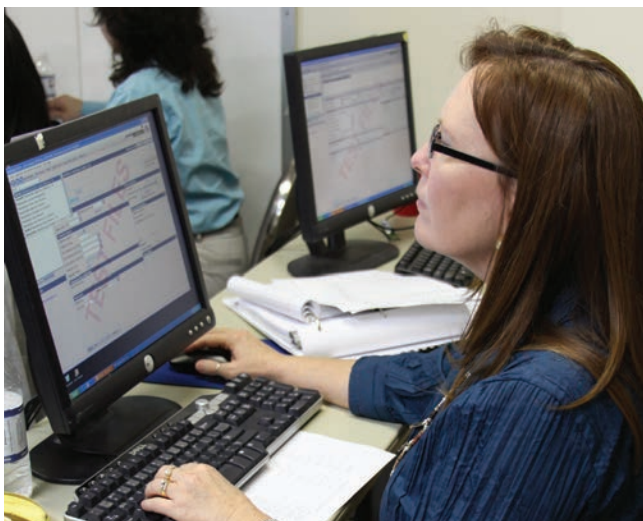
**REFLECTING ON A CAREER** spanning nearly four decades, Holly Gunter reminisces about her journey with Medina Electric Cooperative that began with her role as a utility clerk in October 1985. In those early days, the landscape of work was vastly different—manual processes ruled the day. Payment stubs were meticulously filed numerically, meter data painstakingly recorded by hand and job tickets inscribed on carbon pads. Each task required a laborious manual effort, from retrieving information on billing registers to storing data on the mainframe computer.

“The changes since then are astounding,” Gunter said, reflecting on the seismic shift toward digitalization and automation that has revolutionized the cooperative’s operations. “I never imagined we’d be managing electric accounts digitally, let alone from the palm of our hands!”

Adapting to this technological evolution became critical of Gunter’s career as she transitioned through various roles, concluding in her tenure as manager of member services upon her retirement in March. From her humble beginnings as a utility clerk to her leadership of a 16-person member services department, Gunter attributes her success to years of dedication and the invaluable mentorship of her colleagues.

“I learned a lot from working with the older generation in the beginning of my career—a lot more about life and work from those early mentors than any amount of schooling I could have received,” she said.

Among her proudest achievements is the successful internal conversion of software for cooperative data, workflows and billing—a project that demanded perseverance and collaboration. “It wasn’t an easy transition, but working alongside a team committed to improvement made it truly rewarding,” Gunter said. “I’m proud to have been part of that collective effort.”



Another significant milestone in Gunter’s career was her service on the Texas Rural Electric Women’s Association board, where she represented Medina Electric Cooperative and held the position of president for two years. Through this role, she contributed to TREWA’s mission of educating and fostering interest in the rural electric cooperative systems and issues, among both its members and the broader public. By presenting a unified front for member-owned electric cooperatives, TREWA played a vital role in enhancing the quality of life in rural Texas—an endeavor that Gunter was proud to support and advance during her tenure.

A successful career does not come easy. Gunter credits her success to her self-motivation guided by the principles laid out in Colossians 3:23—“Whatever you do, work at it with your heart as working for the Lord, not for men.”

Looking ahead to retirement, Gunter’s plans are filled with family and adventure: “Spending time with my children and grandchildren and exploring the great outdoors with my husband are high on my list. Whether by a river, lake or coast, I’ll be surrounded by the ones I love.”



**Top photo:** Holly was proud of her member services team, seen photographed here, whom she hopes will continue to remember that at the co-op, “we’re family.”

**Far left bottom:** Holly was proud to work on projects that brought new and innovative technologies to the cooperative, improving services for our members and employees.

**Middle photo:** Holly enjoyed representing Medina EC on TREWA’s board, and was able to present at one of Texas Electric Cooperative’s annual meetings as the sitting president in 2015.

**Bottom:** Holly participated in many annual meetings over her career. Here you can see two photos from earlier in her career in the late 1980s to a more recent annual meeting in 2019.

With Gunter’s transition into retirement, the cooperative will face some transitions as well. Gunter hopes to have instilled a sense of empowerment and knowledge in her colleagues. “I hope I’ve empowered my coworkers to thrive independently and continue growing in their roles,” Gunter said. “Above all, I want them to know how much they mean to me and how invested I am in their success.”

For those following in her footsteps, Gunter offers sage advice: “Stay focused, be self-motivated and seek solutions to challenges. But also, relish in the joy of your work. We’re a family here, and the impact we have on others should bring fulfillment. Approach each day with the goal of brightening someone’s day and lending a helping hand.”

As Gunter bids farewell to her distinguished career, her history of adaptability, resilience and camaraderie will leave a lasting impact upon Medina Electric Cooperative.



## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

**Lineman Appreciation Day**  
Monday, April 8

**Total Solar Eclipse**  
Monday, April 8

**Earth Day**  
Monday, April 22

**Arbor Day**  
Friday, April 26



RAKCHALI / ADOBESTOCK

## OPERATION ROUND UP

If you or someone you know needs financial assistance, apply for an ORU donation. Applicants must live in one of the 17 counties served by Medina EC.

Applications due May 3.  
[MedinaEC.org/ORU](https://www.MedinaEC.org/ORU)



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**The answer:** Although tremendous strides have been made in Hearing Aid Technology, those cost reductions have not been passed on to you. Until now... **MDHearing™** uses the same kind of technology incorporated into hearing aids that cost thousands more at a small fraction of the price.

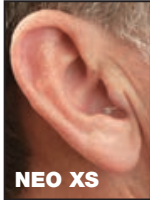
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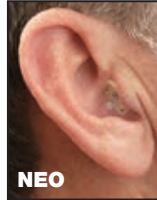
Actual size

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**TCP** Listen as W.F. Strong narrates this story on our website.



What was needed here was what linguists call a speech act, a moment in time where something is made real by virtue of pronouncement.

Jones began with “I, as president of the Republic ... am now present to surrender into the hands of those whom the people have chosen, the power and the authority which we have some time held.”

Noah Smithwick, a blacksmith in attendance, recorded the moment the Texas flag came down. Here is what transpired in that brief ceremony.

“Many a head was bowed, many a broad chest heaved, and many a manly cheek was wet with tears when that broad field of blue in the center of which, like a signal light, glowed the lone star, emblem of the sovereignty of Texas, was furled and laid away among the relics of the dead republic.”

The U.S. flag was raised, and the mood changed dramatically.

“We were most of us natives of the United States, and when the stars and stripes, the flag of our fathers, was run up and catching the breeze unrolled its heaven born colors to the light, cheer after cheer rent the air,” Smithwick recalled.

He tended toward that creature still common in Texas—the exceptionally proud Texan. Smithwick thought the star in the lower left corner of the U.S. flag should have been especially dedicated to Texas.

The exchanging of the flags made one statement. Jones made another: “The Republic of Texas is no more.” He made it politically true but never absolute because the republic lives on in the minds of Texans who still think of it as their country and their nation. ■

# Republic’s End

‘Many a manly cheek was wet with tears’ when the Texian flag was lowered for the last time

BY W.F. STRONG

**IN ABOUT A YEAR** and a half—December 29, 2025—we’ll mark the 180th year of Texas statehood. That’s the day the proudest of Texans would say the U.S. was allowed to join Texas.

The vast majority of Texians—95%—voted for statehood, a level of agreement we haven’t enjoyed since. President James Polk signed the joint resolution making Texas a state December 29, 1845, but there was some confusion as to the official moment that the Republic of Texas passed into history and statehood status began.

Anson Jones, president of the republic at that time, said that February 19, 1846, was the actual day that the republic

ceased to exist. That day, Anson presided over a ceremony in Austin where the flag of the young but venerable republic was lowered for the last time and the U.S. flag was raised in its place.

You see, Texas couldn’t just let President Polk’s signing of a document 1,300 miles away be all there was to the moment. They couldn’t allow the republic that so many had died for to pass into history without properly memorializing the occasion.

So Jones arranged a ceremony in front of the Texas Capitol, really just a wooden house at that time, to mourn the passing of the republic and to celebrate Texas as the newest (and by far the largest) state in the union.

# Perfect Potluck

Dishes so good you'll be tempted to eat them en route

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ, FOOD EDITOR

Iliana de la Vega, esteemed owner of the Austin restaurant El Naranjo, shares her ultimate potluck dish: "*Rajas poblanas* (poblano strips) is a vegetarian dish that goes beautifully with grilled meats or fish but also with rice and pasta. You can make tacos with it or even use the rajas as a filling for quesadillas and omelets."



## Rajas Poblanas

**6 poblano chiles, seeds and veins removed**

**1 tablespoon canola oil**

**1 white onion, julienned**

**1 cup crema Mexicana**

**Salt, to taste**

**Corn tortillas**

**COOK'S TIP** If crema Mexicana is unavailable where you shop, making your own is simple. Combine 1 cup heavy cream, 1 cup sour cream, 1 teaspoon salt and 1 tablespoon lime juice, and stir until smooth.

**1.** Preheat broiler. Place poblanos on a baking sheet. Roast under broiler, carefully flipping with tongs until charred on all sides, about 5 minutes. Place charred poblanos in a bowl and cover with plastic wrap until cooled enough to handle, about 15 minutes.

**2.** Remove skin from chiles. Slice them lengthwise into strips ½ inch thick.

**3.** Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Sauté the onion just until soft; do not brown.

**4.** Add the chile strips (rajas) and the crema Mexicana. Cook the chile mixture until heated through, about 5 minutes. Season with salt.

**5.** Serve immediately with warm corn tortillas.

**SERVES 6**

**TCP** Follow Vianney Rodriguez as she cooks in *Cocina Gris* at [sweetlifebake.com](http://sweetlifebake.com), where she features a recipe for Mexican Corn Salad.



## Perfect Potato Salad

CHERYL LEE  
CENTRAL TEXAS EC

Lee's potato salad is hearty and tangy, with a hint of freshness from the dill. It was so tasty and good that I'd eat plates of it by itself—no need for any of the bris-ket, sausage or hot dogs being served.

- 10 small russet potatoes, unpeeled, rinsed and cubed**
- 1 cup mayonnaise**
- 4 tablespoons mustard**
- 1 large onion, finely diced**
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic**
- 1 tablespoon ground oregano**
- 1 teaspoon onion salt**
- 1 teaspoon garlic salt**
- 8 hard-boiled eggs, cubed**
- 1 tablespoon fresh dill for serving**

- 1.** Place potatoes in a saucepan and cover with water. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer until potatoes are fork tender, about 10 minutes. Drain and allow to cool.
- 2.** In a large bowl, stir together mayonnaise, mustard, onion, garlic, oregano, onion salt and garlic salt. Gently stir in potatoes and eggs.
- 3.** Chill until ready to serve.
- 4.** Sprinkle with dill before serving.

**SERVES 20**

[MORE RECIPES >](#)



\$500 WINNER

## Easy Chicken Spaghetti Casserole

DONNA KENNEDY  
WOOD COUNTY EC



I love this casserole because it's so simple to make. Leftovers heat up great on day two, plus it freezes like a dream! (If there are leftovers of course.) This is serious comfort food.

**SERVES 8**

- 2 chicken breasts**
- 3 chicken thighs**
- 1 box spaghetti (16 ounces)**
- 2 tablespoons (¼ stick) butter**
- ½ bell pepper, stem and seeds removed, diced**
- 1 medium onion, diced**
- 1 can cream of chicken soup (10.5 ounces)**
- 1 can cream of celery soup (10.5 ounces)**
- 1 can chicken broth (14.5 ounces)**
- 2 cups shredded mild cheddar cheese**

- 1.** Place chicken in a large saucepan, cover with water and simmer until fork tender.
- 2.** Prepare spaghetti according to package directions.
- 3.** In a skillet over medium-high heat, melt butter. Sauté bell pepper and onion until the onion is light and translucent.
- 4.** Shred chicken and mix all ingredients except cheese together in a large bowl.
- 5.** Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Spoon mixture into a 10-by-14-inch baking pan. Bake 15 minutes.
- 6.** Sprinkle cheese on top and bake 10 more minutes or until bubbly.

### \$500 Recipe Contest

**FOOTBALL FAVORITES** DUE APRIL 10  
What do the fans of your cooking crave on game day? Send us your recipe by April 10 and you could score big: \$500.





## Cold Broccoli Salad

ALEXANDRA DIBRELL  
CENTRAL TEXAS EC

This is one of the best broccoli salads I've ever had. Why? It's crisp and fresh, with a pop of heat—exactly what I want broccoli salad to be. It's also seriously addictive, thanks to the sweet and tangy combination of fresh lemon juice and rice vinegar.

- 1 pound fresh broccoli**
- ¼ cup olive oil**
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice**

- 2 tablespoons rice vinegar**
- 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard**
- 2 cloves garlic, minced**
- ⅛ teaspoon salt**
- ⅛ teaspoon ground black pepper**
- ⅛ teaspoon red pepper flakes**

- 1.** Cut broccoli into bite-size pieces. Steam until tender. Allow to cool, then place in fridge.
- 2.** In a large bowl, stir together olive oil, lemon juice, rice vinegar, mustard, garlic, salt, pepper and red pepper flakes. Place in fridge to chill.
- 3.** When ready to serve, remove bowl from fridge and add broccoli, stir to coat and serve chilled.

**SERVES 4**

**TCP** Potluck options abound on our website. After trying all these here, see what else has come out of Co-op Country kitchens. Simply search for a dish or key ingredient.

## Don't Leave It All to Luck

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ

Consider whether your contribution will add to high demand for an oven or increase crowding in the kitchen.

If you're not hosting, bring food that travels easily.

Bring the appropriate utensils for your dish: a serving spoon, pair of tongs or ladle. This way dishes won't be double-dipped, and you won't have guests grabbing food with their hands.

Consider the advantages of disposable pans: less mess, no lost casserole dishes and easier cleanup.

Consider the dietary restrictions of other guests.

Remember that beverages will be needed, and this can be your contribution.

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COURTESY CHET GARNER

## Carried Treasure

Canton has hosted the World’s Largest Flea Market since the 1850s

BY CHET GARNER

**THIS DEFINITELY** wasn’t the shopping trip I expected, I thought, as I loaded an 8-foot-tall Bigfoot sculpture into the back of my truck. I had just finished securing my new (to me) cowhide, vintage street signs and antique chair. I should have brought more tow straps.

This is the experience of visiting the World’s Largest Flea Market, which happens every month in the town of Canton, midway between Dallas and Tyler. My legs, wallet and stomach were not prepared.

The tradition goes back to the 1850s when the circuit judge would make his monthly trip to town and the locals would congregate around the courthouse. They started bringing items to swap and sell: a gun for a dog or a cantaloupe for a dozen eggs. Soon a tradition was born that now attracts upwards of 150,000 visitors to First Monday Trade Days (which actually happens the weekend before the first Monday of each month).

As soon as I stepped onto the grounds, I realized that this wasn’t a normal swap meet. The official area boasts more than 5,000 vendors across 400 acres. That doesn’t even include the dozens (if not hundreds) of merchants who fill the streets and buildings of the town.

I walked from booth to booth, chatting with junkers and thrifters who had brought their special wares in search of the perfect buyer. While there was more than enough vintage “junk,” I was surprised at the unique artisans selling incredible handcrafted goods—furniture, décor and even metal tools.

Very soon I had worked up an appetite and stuffed my face with some of the best fair food in Texas, including corny dogs and “upside-down” lemonade. Hey, with all the walking I did, I figured I had earned it. And so I ordered an extra piece of peach pie. ■

ABOVE The finds for sale at First Monday Trade Days in Canton stretch across 400 acres.

**TCP** Join Chet as he wades through acres of stuff. Watch the video on our website and see all his Texplorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.



## Know Before You Go

Call ahead or check an event’s website for scheduling details, and check our website for many more upcoming events.

## APRIL

8

**Kerrville Totality at the Ridge**, (830) 896-0420, shopsattheridge.com

**McKinney Total Eclipse of the Heard**, (972) 562-5566, heardmuseum.org

12

**Poteet [12–14] Strawberry Festival**, 1-888-742-8144, strawberryfestival.com

13

**Sealy Spring Fest**, (832) 492-4244, sealyhistoricalsociety.org

**Waxahachie Cowboy Gathering**, (469) 309-4040, waxahachiecowboy.com

**Chappell Hill [13–14] Bluebonnet Festival**, (979) 836-6033, chappellhillhistoricalsociety.com

**Temple [13–14] Texas State Button Society Spring Show and Sale**, texasstatebuttonssociety.com

19

**Granbury [19–20] North Texas Gourd Festival**, (903) 258-7410, texasgourdsociety.org

**Lakeway [19–21] Art Walk**, (512) 261-1010, lakewayartsdistrict.com

20

**Burton Cotton Gin Festival**, (979) 289-3378, texascottonginmuseum.org

**Channing Panhandle Children’s Foundation Hogs at the Point**, (806) 935-5598, talonpoint.org

26

**Gun Barrel City [26-27] Quilt Show**, (903) 391-3241, gunbarrelquiltersguild.org

**Hallettsville [26-28] Texas State Championship Fiddlers Frolics**, (361) 798-2311, fiddlersfrolics.com

**Ingram [26-27, May 2, 4-5, 10-12] The Explorers' Club**, (830) 367-5121, hcaf.com

27

**Castroville Alsatian Festival of Texas**, castrovilletx.gov

**Corsicana Derrick Days**, (903) 654-4850, derrickdays.com

**Huntsville Gen. Sam Houston Day**, (936) 294-1832, samhoustonmemorialmuseum.com

**Lewisville ColorPalooza**, (972) 219-3401, visitlewisville.com

**Wimberley Pie Social**, info@wimwic.org, wimwic.org

28

**Bellville Fruehling Saengerfest**, (713) 582-2461, bellvilleions.org

MAY

2

**New Braunfels Soul Sessions' Tribute to Tina Turner**, (830) 627-0808, brauntex.org

4

**Brenham [4-5] Maifest**, (979) 337-7580, brenhammaifest.com

**TCP Submit Your Event**

We pick events for the magazine directly from TexasCoopPower.com. Submit your July event by May 1, and it just might be featured in this calendar.

# Thanks a Million

The Nature Conservancy is proud to have protected **one million acres of land in Texas**. This milestone could not have been achieved without the collaborative efforts of landowners, partners and supporters across the Lone Star State. Yet, the urgency to protect and preserve Texas' treasured landscapes, rivers, wildlife and way of life is greater now than ever. Together, we can find a way to achieve even more.



[nature.org/millionacremilestone](https://nature.org/millionacremilestone)



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# Pollinators

All aflutter, we are humming with anticipation. Photos flew in from every corner of the state, and we managed to alight on a few critters that have crawled their way to the top. No sting of disappointment here, just a swarm of entries that leave us buzzing with excitement.

CURATED BY GRACE FULTZ



1 MARK BONAME  
JACKSON EC

"It is a rare sight to see hummingbirds feeding on sunflowers, but the drought this year in Texas made these little guys feed on whatever they could find."

2 CINDY VIGIL  
GVEC

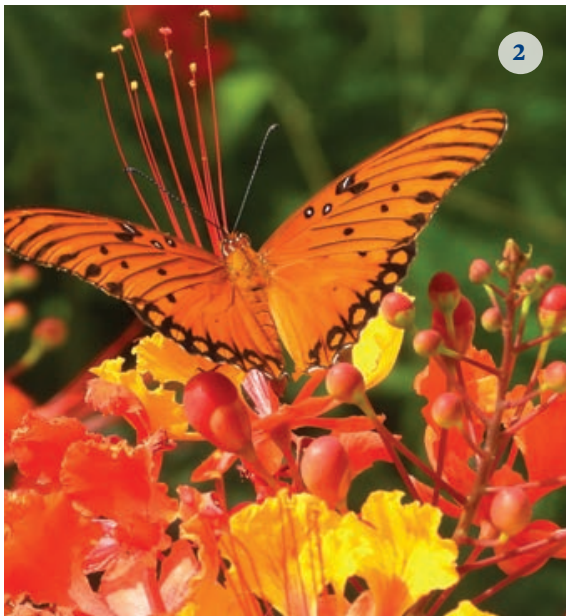
"Gulf fritillary butterflies love this pride of Barbados."

3 SUSAN KNAPP GIBBONS  
UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES

A feeding butterfly.

4 GAIL EINKAUF  
SAN BERNARD EC

"Taken at Sweet Berry Farm in Marble Falls."



## Upcoming Contests

- DUE APR 10 Textures
- DUE MAY 10 Parenthood
- DUE JUN 10 Climbing High



Enter online at [TexasCoopPower.com/contests](https://TexasCoopPower.com/contests).

**TCP** See Focus on Texas on our website for more Pollinators photos from readers.



## Seedy Behavior

Gardening scavengers stoop low to help native species

BY SHERYL SMITH-RODGERS  
ILLUSTRATION BY  
CHANELLE NIBBELINK

**COME MID-MAY**, I turn into a street walker. Not *that* kind, mind you. Instead, I ply my trade with a green plastic cup and sharp eyes.

“Oh, there you are,” hollers James, my husband, who’s strolling along Greenlawn Parkway. “I figured I’d find you over here!”

My gaze is fastened on clumps of lazy daisies growing along the street. Among the white-petaled blooms with orange centers, I scan for dried seed heads. Now and then, I spot one. Happily, I lean down, pinch it off, then drop the itsy-bitsy treasure into my cup.

We walk while I scope out wildflowers that grow along a ditch. Patiently, I’m watching for Texas prairie parsleys, wine-cups and beeblossoms going to seed. I’ll collect some seeds—but not all. I want to admire them again next spring.

I also want to establish them in our yard. Since 2008, we’ve nurtured Texas native plant gardens at our Blanco home and adjoining meadow, a former vacant lot. Since then, I’ve expanded into rescuing, preserving and protecting overlooked native species that grow in our neighborhood. I collect seeds whenever I can.

Sometimes I dig up and relocate plants, too. For instance, a next-door neighbor several years ago gave me permission to transplant a yellow passionflower, Texas lespedeza and hoary false goldenaster that grew on her side of the fence, where they were often mowed down. Now the trio grows, unrestrained and lush, in our backyard.

I’ve also relocated Indian mallow, Texas snoutbean, scarlet pea, narrowleaf blue-eyed grass and Texas frogfruit to our gardens. Roemer’s mimosa, too. I love to show kids how their tiny leaves fold up when touched. Magic!

Two regular walkers once rang our doorbell. “What’s this?” asked Yalene, while daughter Arden held up a slender branch with yellow flowers. I eyeballed the specimen. Lindheimer’s senna? James and I beelined to the easement where they’d found the plant. It was twoleaf senna, a new-to-me species. A few weeks later, I collected seeds from the site, which has since been cleared. Hopefully the seeds will germinate in our meadow, and the twoleaf senna will live on.

Why go to all that trouble? Because I deeply care about these plants. Because they were here long before us. Because they’re resilient and adapted to our soils and climate. Because they, unlike most ornamental plants, sustain the pollinators and other wildlife that inhabit this place we call home.

From blunt-leaf rabbit-tobacco to zizotes milkweed, we’ve welcomed neighborhood natives into our gardens, where I hope they’ll be appreciated and perpetuated for years to come. So call me a renegade. Or call me a tree hugger. I’ll answer to either one and make no excuses.

I’m a street walker on a mission in a green-light district. ■



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