

THE BIG, BIG BOOK  
ABOUT PLANTS

REAL LIFE MEETS  
'LONESOME DOVE'

SO FAR, SNAKES ARE  
OFF THE HOOK

# Texas Coop Power

FOR BLUEBONNET EC MEMBERS

AUGUST 2023

## Pathways to Peace

Finding healing in  
labyrinths across Texas



**BLUEBONNET  
EC NEWS**

SEE PAGE 16



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# August 2023



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## Make Your Shelf Useful

Scooter Cheatham has dedicated his life to voluminous books that document uses for Texas' plants.

*By Sheryl Smith-Rodgers*

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Labyrinths provide 'a profound sense of renewal and peace.'

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ON THE COVER

Alison Hannah walks the labyrinth at Unity of Wimberley.

*Photo by Laura Jenkins*

ABOVE

Mountain pink is a great plant for rock gardens.

*Photo courtesy Useful Wild Plants*



## FINISH THIS SENTENCE

Back to school means ...

**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 June prompt: **Thanks, Dad, for ...**

Never judging us and always giving us your unconditional love and attention.

ELVIRA PULIDO  
MAGIC VALLEY EC  
MISSION

Making me get back on the horse.

LYNNE SINGHOFF  
DEEP EAST TEXAS EC  
HEMPHILL

Teaching me to use your tools, believing in me and forgiving me when I messed up.

ROSE HOLLY  
PEDERNALES EC  
GEORGETOWN

Teaching me when I was 14 to back a trailer load full of cattle through the gate.

SHIRLEY HAMPTON  
PEDERNALES EC  
HORSESHOE BAY

Visit our website to see more responses.



## Talkin' Texan

Not sure what took them so long, but the folks behind the official Scrabble dictionary finally added a few words to the book that have been heard in these parts for generations: guac, queso and yeehaw.

These potentially high-scoring words are among about 500 new words in the Official Scrabble Players Dictionary, which gets updated every few years.

# Wreck the Record

**CALL 'EM** the first family of Texas Tech.

With 44 alumni in the fold, the Wuensches set a world record for most members of a family to graduate from the same university.

Francis Wuensche, from the small town of Wilson that's about 20 miles south of Lubbock, started the procession with a degree in zoology in 1953. Three generations later, Andrew Simnacher accepted the family's 44th diploma in December 2021.

And the Wuensches, many of whom are members of electric cooperatives around the state, aren't done. Three more members of the extended family enrolled as freshmen last fall.

## **TCP** Contests and More

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## August 3 National Watermelon Day

Texas ranks fourth in the U.S. in watermelon production, growing 11% of the 3.4 billion pounds harvested annually. Together, Florida, Georgia, California and Texas produce three-fourths of the refreshing fruit.



JOHN FAULK

**In a Whole New Light**

“My wife and I just visited the Morse Museum in Florida and its large collection of Tiffany works. We can’t wait to visit the Gelman Stained Glass Museum.”

RICHARD SANTAMARIA  
PEDERNALES EC  
DRIPPING SPRINGS

**Tongue-Tied**

My maternal grandparents both immigrated to Texas from Germany and Austria in the decades before World War I [*Auf Wiedersehen*, May 2023]. My mother, born in the early 1920s, was their only child, and her first language was German. Neither my sister nor I were ever taught German.

Much later in life, I oft wondered why we were not given the gift of a second language.

John W. Palm Jr.  
Hamilton County EC  
Lampasas

**Just Dew It**

I have dewberries growing all around my house [*Crawling With Trouble*, May 2023]. I fought them for years trying to get rid of them, but you can’t. Then after harvesting some, I made a cobbler and just decided to cultivate them instead.

Sherrie Taylor  
Via Facebook



CHANELLE NIBBELINK

**Westward Bound**

*Rise Up West* [April 2023] was hauntingly familiar. An ancestor moved to West around the end of the Civil War from an area that became the Czech Republic. An uncle told me they left the old country because it was involved in a civil war of its own. That they left one country due to civil war only to arrive in the U.S. with its own civil war is ironic.

Ken Konvicka  
United Cooperative Services  
Graford

**Mockingbirds Are Mean**

I regret that the mockingbird is our state bird [*Roll Out the Red Carpet*, December 2022]. Whoever put the mockingbird up for this prestigious position obviously knew nothing about the mockingbird.

The mockingbird is very aggressive and mean. On several occasions, I have been fortunate enough to intervene and save the lives of bluebirds and cardinals from mockingbirds.

Roberta McLaughlin  
Heart of Texas EC  
Lorena

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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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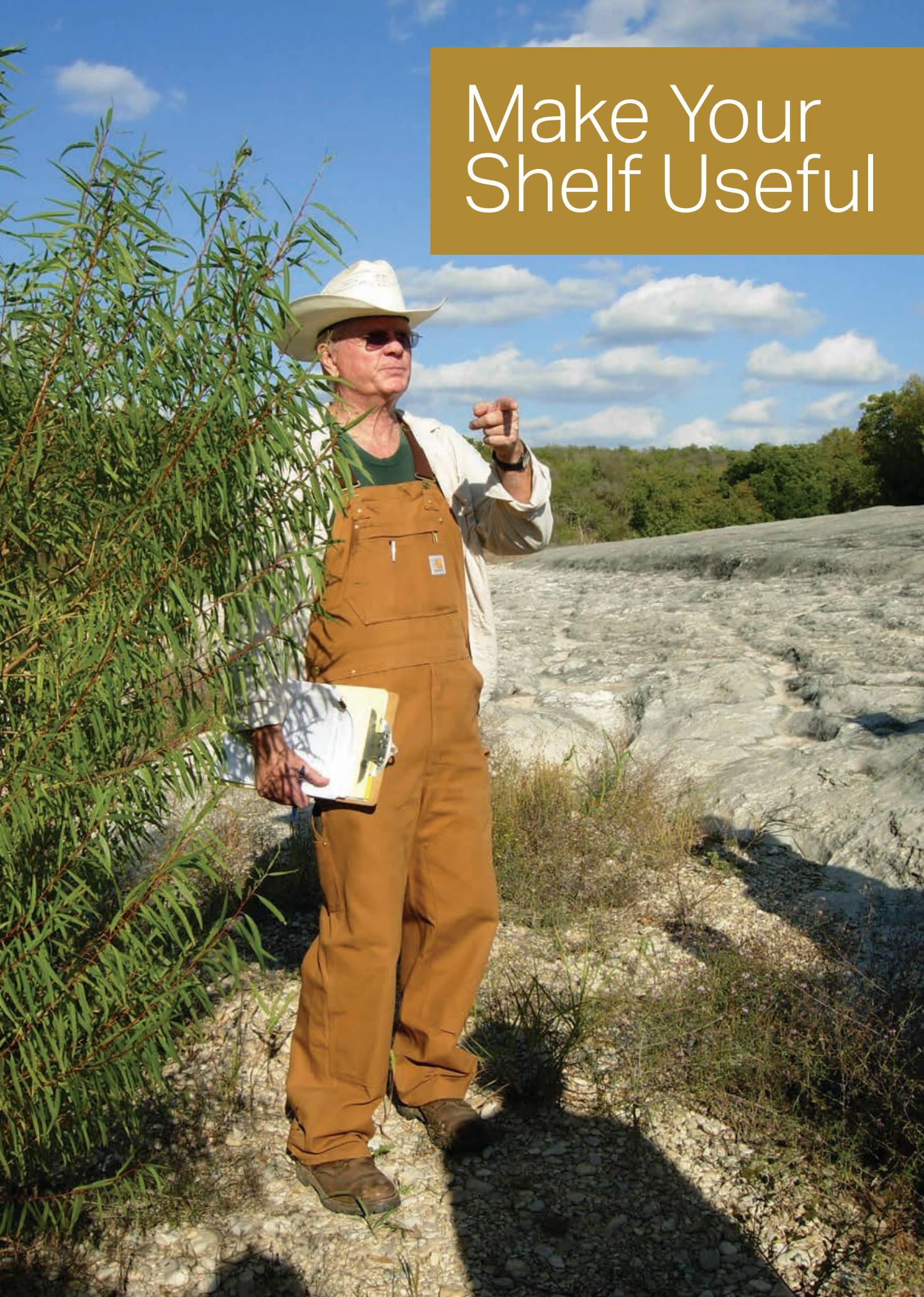
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# Make Your Shelf Useful



BY SHERYL SMITH-RODGERS

## Scooter Cheatham has dedicated his life to voluminous books that document uses for Texas' plants



**Y**EARS AGO Scooter Cheatham asked a classroom of high school sophomores to figure out how plants play a role in everything around them. As an example, he challenged them to connect plants to a pair of scissors. The Austin students, hoping for an easy answer, contacted the manufacturer. “There are no plants in our scissors,” a representative emailed back.

The response forced the teens to do their research. Ultimately “they learned that the manufacturing of steel to make scissors requires coal,” Cheatham says. “The orange plastic handles are derived from petrochemicals. The students also realized that the company representative was as ‘plant blind’ as everyone else about the importance of plants in our lives.”

They matter so much, in fact, that Cheatham has made them his lifelong mission. Plants support our food, health and industry—even contributing to the formation of coal and petrochemicals. For more than 50 years, he and his collaborators have worked to compile the ultimate reference encyclopedia: *The Useful Wild Plants of Texas, the Southeastern and Southwestern United States, the Southern Plains, and Northern Mexico*.

Since 1995, Cheatham’s nonprofit Useful Wild Plants has published four volumes, each counting 600 or more pages and collectively weighing nearly 20 pounds. When completed, the set will include at least 20 volumes and document the economic uses of more than 4,000 plant species, both native and naturalized.

“There’s nothing else like our volumes in the world,” says Cheatham, seated at UWP’s office in East Austin. “They’re the most comprehensive, interdisciplinary treatment of plant species ever done, going back to their prehistoric uses and forward to the most recent chemistry.

“People ask if this is our passion,” adds the self-educated botanist. “I say it’s our obligation to the planet. We’ve got to do this, or we won’t be ready when we run out of oil and gas.

OPPOSITE Scooter Cheatham, 77, has been documenting plants since 1971. THIS PAGE, FROM TOP The sweet, slightly tart berries of an agarita, an evergreen shrub with many medicinal uses, can be made into wine and coffee. A honey-scented agarita in bloom.

COURTESY USEFUL WILD PLANTS



The smallest single plant on our planet has more promise for our future than anything we could study in outer space.”

Whenever his time allows, Cheatham, an architect and community and regional planner by profession, returns to Cuero, where he grew up gardening, milking cows and riding horses. As a boy, he explored and hunted on his grandmother’s nearby ranch along the Guadalupe River, a portion of which he owns today. Back then, he didn’t pay much attention to the live oaks, native grasses and other plants.

That was, until 1971, when he and a pal, both students at the University of Texas, embarked on an “experimental” archaeology project. During spring break, they lived off Cheatham’s family land like Indigenous peoples once did, using tools they’d made themselves. The experience profoundly impacted Cheatham.

“For 10 days, all we ate was a possum and an armadillo,” he recalls. “Out there, we were surrounded by plants. But I knew only a few common ones, like pecans and dewberries. That’s when I realized how much we rely on plants.”

The lightbulb moment inspired a yearning to learn more about the value of flora. Back on campus, Cheatham visited botanist Marshall Johnston, who the year before had co-written and published the 1,881-page *Manual of Vascular Plants of Texas*. Cheatham asked the professor if there was a comprehensive resource on the *usefulness* of plants. “No,” Johnston told the younger man. “You should do it.”

So in 1971, at age 26, Cheatham began what would turn into a monumental, decadeslong undertaking.

Alongside the project, Cheatham, an accomplished artist and photographer, taught architecture and watercolor classes at UT for 10 years. He also led classes that taught students how to forage for wild edibles.

## Plants support our food, health and industry—even contributing to the formation of coal and petrochemicals.

In 1977, a recent UT anthropology graduate named Lynn Marshall signed up for the foraging class and agreed to pay for half her course fees by volunteering with UWP. She never left. Like Cheatham, she has dedicated herself to the endeavor.

At the project’s start, compiling just the species list and project parameters took a year and a half. Then Cheatham and Johnston traveled extensively, photographing plants in various stages of life. Filing cabinets in UWP’s office contain their 350,000 slides. More filing cabinets house thousands of manila folders, each labeled by plant genus and packed with notes, printouts and research.

In 1995, Cheatham; Johnston, who has since retired; and Marshall published their first volume. Subsequent volumes followed in 2000, 2009 and 2015. They may be ordered through the UWP website at [usefulwildplants.org](http://usefulwildplants.org).

The tomes are made to last. “We believe people will need them for several hundred years,” Cheatham says. “So we don’t use cheap paper that would turn yellow in 18 months.”

Altogether, the four volumes published so far document 833 species. Organized alphabetically by genus, Volume 1 begins with *Abronia* (sand verbenas) and ends with *Arundo* (giant cane). Volume 4 covers *Cenchrus* (grassburs) through *Convolvulus* (wild morning glories). Still in progress, Volume 5 will begin with *Conyza* (horseweed).

Each genus section includes species descriptions, range maps and color images. Subheadings enable readers to quickly find specific information, such as “Native American food uses,” “chemical components” and “author dye tests.”



OPPOSITE The drought-hardy damianita boasts aromatic blooms in spring and summer. FROM LEFT Prairie paintbrush blossoms attract hummingbirds and bees. A Texas redbud's young seedpods are edible.



Entries run from less than one page to dozens. For example, *Bowlesia* (Bowles parsley) is a scant page, but *Carex* (sedges)—the largest genus in Texas flora—fills 76 pages.

Most people know about grassburs. When stepped on, their spiny seedheads hurt like the blazes to pull out—hence their reputation as a detestable weed. But surprise: “Some members of the genus *Cenchrus* are highly valued as range grasses that increase the lease value of grazing lands,” according to *The Useful Wild Plants of Texas*. “Native Americans of the Southwest and prehistoric people of Texas used *Cenchrus* for food, therapy and utilitarian purposes.”

With more than a dozen volumes and thousands of entries still to publish, Cheatham hopes to recruit and train more staff.

“Lynn and I are spread extremely thin,” he says. “Right now, we’re in a phase to raise consciousness about the importance of plants and publicize what we’re doing so we can raise the funds necessary to build a team that will finish this project. With a full staff, all the volumes could be completed in seven years.”

“People need to know about Useful Wild Plants so they’ll carry it on after we’re gone,” he says. “This project belongs to the world.” ■



## Putting Plants To Use

Gleaned from the pages of  
*The Useful Wild Plants of Texas*:

**Beebrush** A thornless shrub with fragrant flowers. Add its fresh or dried leaves to dishes as a spice that tastes similar to oregano.

**Hackberry** A widespread deciduous tree that grows 50–80 feet tall. Make a toothbrush from a pencil-sized stem. Peel the bark from one end, then chew (or pound with a hammer) to spread out the fibers.

**Inland sea oats** A grass with drooping, oatlike seedheads. Seeds can be toasted and milled into a coarse meal. For best results, use a batter bread recipe that calls for boiling the grains before baking.

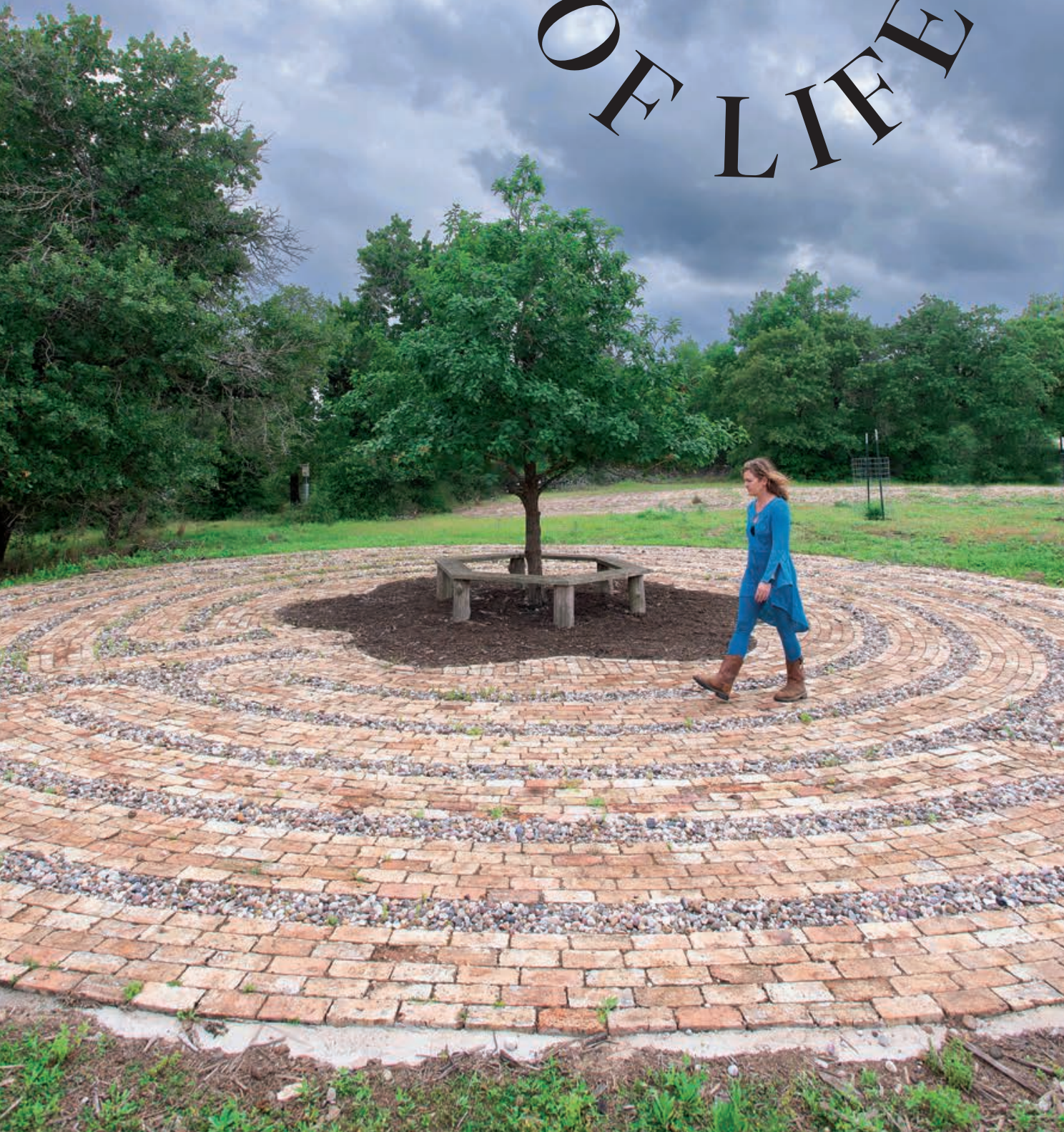
**Ragweed** Flowering plants best known for causing hay fever. A poultice of leaves applied to a poison ivy rash is said to ease the itch.

**Trumpet creeper** A woody vine with reddish-orange flowers. Collect roots to make ropes up to 30 feet long. Peel off the outer layer and boil for two to three hours in lye water, then pound with a wooden mallet to soften. Twist the strands into a half-inch-wide rope.

# CIRCLES

*Labyrinths are providing Texans with 'a profound sense of renewal and peace'*

# OF LIFE



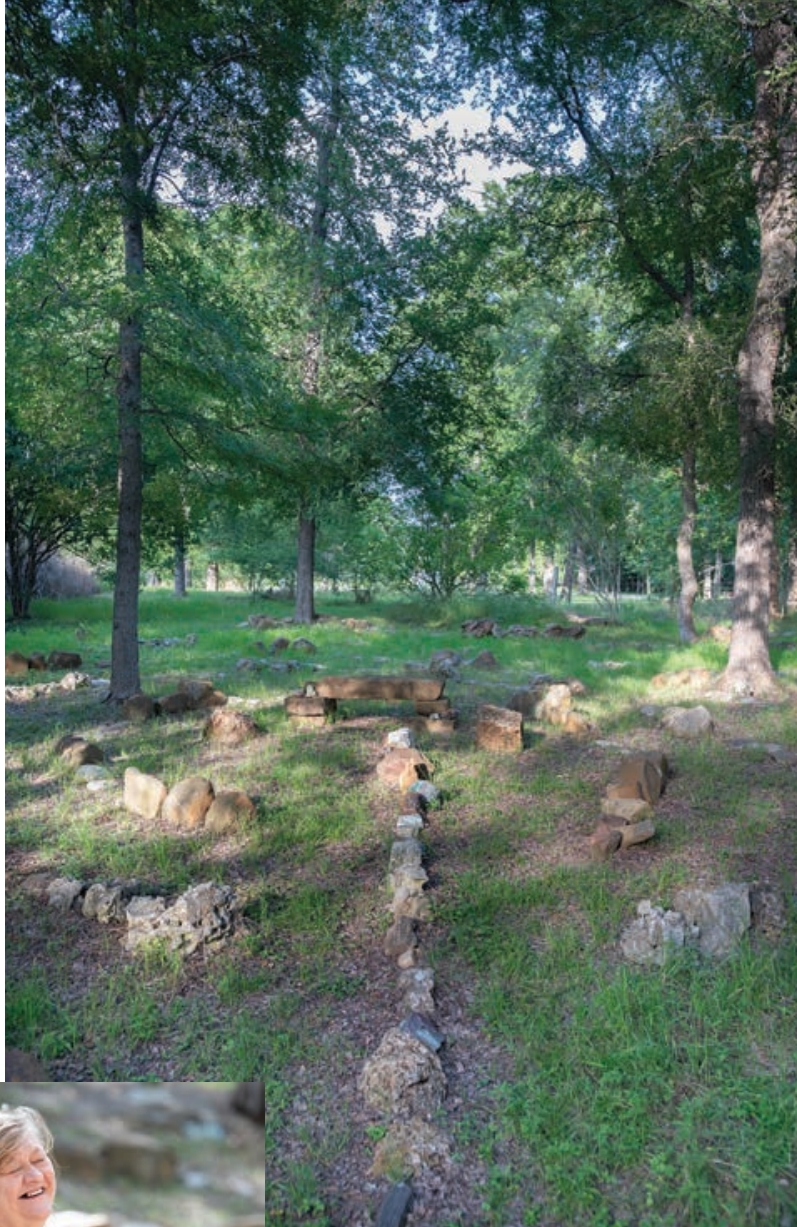
**A**BOUT 20 MINUTES northwest of Bastrop State Park, a labyrinth lies beneath a grove of towering cedar elms. Seven circles of sandstone, Colorado River rock and honeycomb limestone—all native to the area—comprise what’s known as a Cretan, or classical, design at Bastrop Botanical Gardens. A shepherd’s hook, the name of the long, perpendicular row that leads straight to the bench in the center of the labyrinth, is lined with an eclectic array of rocks and stones, gifts that Deena Spellman received for her birthday in 2012.

Each stone has a story. They celebrate friendships, symbolize memories and mark devastating losses. It was loss, in fact, that inspired Spellman to begin constructing the labyrinth she’d been dreaming of building for more than a decade.

“After the Bastrop County Complex Fire destroyed so many of our neighbors’ and customers’ homes in 2011, I wanted to create a space where people could find some peace and maybe a little hope,” says Spellman, the owner of Bastrop Botanical Gardens, a boutique nursery. “Since then, many people who needed a quiet place to heal have walked the labyrinth. The Cretan part gives you time to contemplate what’s on your mind while you’re walking to the center, or source. The shepherd’s hook gives you direct access. Sometimes you just need to get to source.”

Simply put, a labyrinth is a meandering path leading to a center, a geometric framework for walking, meditation and reflection. Many use it as a tool for personal and spiritual transformation. There are more than 4,500 documented labyrinths in the U.S., according to the World-Wide Labyrinth Locator.

OPPOSITE Karen Knight, a certified labyrinth facilitator, walks the labyrinth at her Ardor Wood Farm in Red Rock. ABOVE Deena Spellman created the labyrinth at Bastrop Botanical Gardens so visitors can “find some peace and maybe a little hope.”



At last count, 240 were listed in Texas—most open to the public, though a handful are private.

Many Texas labyrinths are situated at houses of worship or spiritual retreat centers, but they’re not just for religious folks. There’s a labyrinth in the meditation garden at the National Vietnam War Museum in Weatherford. The UTHealth Houston nursing school installed one

for students as a means of reducing stress. You can find labyrinths at parks, schools and retirement centers.

They’re by no means new. The oldest documented labyrinth dates to 1200 B.C. It was found in Pylos, Greece.

Many conflate labyrinths and mazes, but there’s one major difference between the two. Mazes may offer numerous possible routes to the center, some of which are dead ends. But labyrinths feature only one nonbranching route to the center. One way in, and one way out. They’re ancient archetypes—multicultural symbols that have been found on every continent except Antarctica.

CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT The Rev. Mike Marsh and Brenda Faulkner, director of programs at Children's Bereavement Center of South Texas. The St. Philip's Episcopal Church labyrinth in Uvalde. Labyrinth guru Robert Ferré.



*“Before we begin, I encourage people to start in a place of gratitude and to keep the three Rs in mind: releasing, receiving and returning,” Karen Knight says.*

Robert Ferré, a retired labyrinth builder and author of the book *The Labyrinth Revival: A Personal Account*, says labyrinths went from being archetypal symbols to walkable structures sometime in the Middle Ages.

“Originally labyrinths were small drawings and illustrations in manuscripts,” says Ferré, who lives in San Antonio and has designed more than 1,100 labyrinths worldwide. “At some point somebody decided to build one large enough that they could walk around in. It became a symbol you could embody.

“I think labyrinths reflect a spiritual need in a society that has wandered into living too shallowly, or on the surface of things,” he says. “They signal our need to go deeper.”

Using a labyrinth as a means of self-reflection is something Karen Knight knows a lot about. She’s a certified labyrinth facilitator and co-owner of Ardor Wood Farm in Red Rock. She became interested in labyrinths in 2011 after visiting Chartres Cathedral in France. Her husband, Graham

Pierce, built a labyrinth in the cathedral’s style at their farm for Knight’s 50th birthday, a gift that their camping and retreat guests often utilize.

Knight also offers “labyrinth magic” experiences, wherein she guides people through the labyrinth using the Veriditas method, which she learned from one of the world’s foremost labyrinth authorities, the Rev. Dr. Lauren Artress.

“Before we begin, I encourage people to start in a place of gratitude and to keep the three Rs in mind: releasing, receiving and returning,” Knight says. “You’re releasing on the way in during your walk. Perhaps there’s a specific thing you’re letting go of, or maybe you’re just releasing the busy chatter in your head. You’re receiving and staying open while you’re in the middle, and as you return you’re taking your experience home.

“I feel like it’s a moving meditation,” she says. “People need a pause. We’re often busy, depleted or distressed, and labyrinths can bring a profound sense of renewal and peace.”



A suspended sculpture by Lewis deSoto creates a labyrinth in shadow on the University of Texas at San Antonio's downtown campus.

to cope with trauma and grief. They've committed to a presence of at least five years in the small town. Brenda Faulkner, the director of programs, moved to Uvalde to take the job—not only because her son, daughter-in-law and two grandsons live there but also because she wanted to help the community heal.

She had used labyrinths as a therapeutic tool for years, so using the one at St. Philip's with some of the children came naturally to her.

"I've found that walking the sacred path, which is what Mike calls their labyrinth, serves a couple of purposes," Faulkner says. "One is that it gets us outdoors. We have a lot of beautiful days in Uvalde. At the beginning of the path I say, 'I'm old, so you're going to have to go slower for me so I can keep up with you.' And as we walk, we talk. It's also great

because it's a very physical thing. As they're moving and we're talking, they're often not even aware that the therapeutic process is going on.

"What's interesting about walking a labyrinth," she says, "is that just about the time you think you're done, you're only a quarter done, which kind of correlates with the grief process."

Marsh has observed the same thing.

"There's a metaphor in the walking," he says. "If you follow the path, you're not going to get lost. You may get disoriented because it looks like you're getting almost to the center and then you're way out on the periphery again. But the discipline is to follow the path. Don't overthink it." ■

**T**HE REV. MIKE MARSH was sold on the benefits of labyrinths long before he became the rector of St. Philip's Episcopal Church in Uvalde in 2005. Nine years later, he and Ferré designed and built one for the church. It was a gift to the community, and now it's a place of respite in the aftermath of the 2022 Robb Elementary School shooting.

"I've seen many individuals and families linger there over the years," Marsh says.

San Antonio-based Children's Bereavement Center of South Texas uses a church building that is adjacent to the labyrinth to serve children in the community struggling

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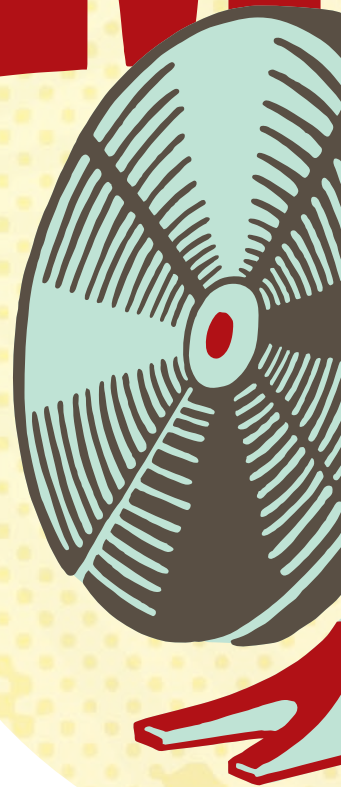
<sup>1</sup>Subject to availability, on a total purchase of 4 or more. Buy 2 windows or doors and get the second 2 windows or doors, of equal or lesser value, 40% off – applied to lowest priced window and/or door products in purchase. \$400 discount valid during first appointment only. Cannot be combined with other offers. To qualify for discount offer, initial contact for an appointment must be made and documented on or before 8/31/23 with the purchase then occurring on or before 9/10/23. <sup>2</sup>No payments and deferred interest for 12 months available from third-party lenders to well qualified buyers on approved credit only. No Finance Charges will be assessed if promo balance is paid in full in 12 months. <sup>3</sup>See limited warranty for details at <https://www.renewalbyandersen.com/homeowner-help/warranty>. \*National Replacement Window Month is not a Congressionally-approved designation. Products are marketed, sold and installed (but not manufactured) by Renewal by Andersen retailers, which are independently owned and operated under Central Texas Windows & Doors LLC, d/b/a Renewal by Andersen of Austin and San Antonio. North Texas Windows & Doors LLC, d/b/a Renewal by Andersen of Dallas/Fort Worth and West Texas. See complete information and entity identification at [www.rbaguidelines.com](http://www.rbaguidelines.com). ©2023 Andersen Corporation. ©2023 Lead Surge LLC. All rights reserved.



# SURV

Smart tips,  
tricks, products  
and tools  
to save  
electricity  
and stay cool  
in scorching  
Central Texas

# SUM



By **Melissa Segrest**

**WE'RE NEVER QUITE PREPARED** for August. Even record-breaking heat in June and July does not stifle hope that this month could be less cruel.

Every year, though, we seem to end up singing the same refrains:

“I’ve never felt anything like this.”

“This has got to be the hottest summer ever.”

“Is this heat ever going to end?”

It could be October before the first whiff of cooler temperatures reaches Central Texas. To help you get through the remainder of this Texas-sized summer, we’ve rounded up ideas, information and advice on how to save some electricity while keeping you cool.

Maybe you can make a few simple adjustments around the house today, discover interesting energy-saving products on the market or look forward to some cooling innovations on the horizon.

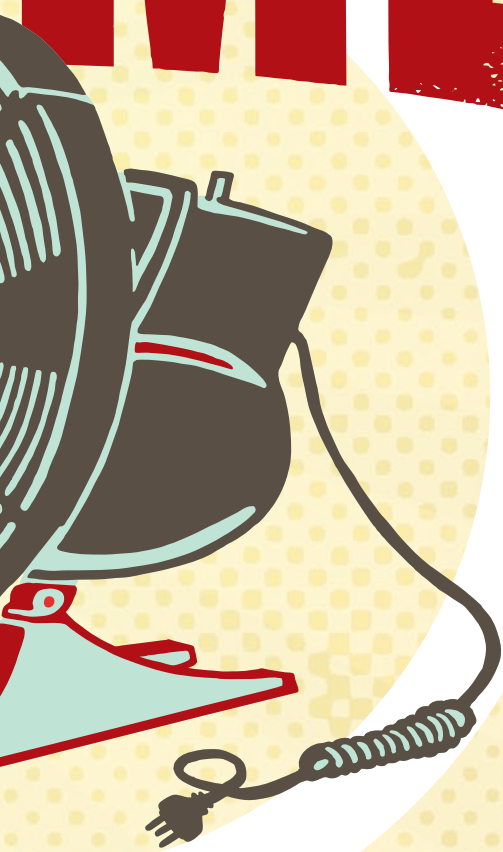
Learn about the tools Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative members can access online or on their smartphones to help track their energy use. Even Bluebonnet’s line workers have some advice on ways to stay safe if you’re working outside.

Until cooler weather rolls around, stay hydrated, indoors and safe!





# SUMMER



## TIPS TO SAVE ENERGY, MONEY THIS SUMMER

● **GRADUALLY TURN UP** your thermostat by two or three degrees to maintain your comfort at a slightly warmer temperature when you are home.

● **USE A PROGRAMMABLE** or smart thermostat. It can raise the temperature when you leave the house, lower it when you're on your way home and be adjusted with a smartphone app.

● **PLACE YOUR THERMOSTAT** on the interior wall of an often-used room, away from windows or the kitchen.

● **SWITCH TO LED** bulbs to fit any light, including fancy chandeliers.

● **CHANGE YOUR HVAC** filters monthly, or on the manufacturer's recommended schedule, to maintain efficiency.

● **USE LIGHT-BLOCKING** reflective shades and/or films on south- and west-facing windows to deflect heat; trees and awnings provide shade.

● **TURN THE WATER** heater to 120 degrees; get an insulation wrap or water heater blanket.

● **TURN OFF CEILING FANS** and lights when leaving a room. If your fan has a reversing switch, make blades turn counterclockwise to push air down.

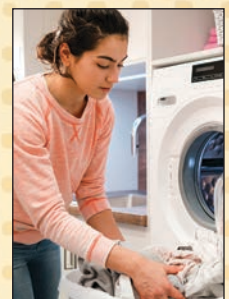
● **HAVE A PRO** inspect your HVAC unit, insulation and ductwork to spot potential problems.

● **CONSIDER A FULL** report from a professional energy assessor, who conducts blower door tests and thermographic inspections.

● **REPLACING YOUR HVAC** system? The most efficient Energy Star systems can save you 20% or more on cooling costs. Consider heat pump systems (they both heat and cool more efficiently) as alternatives.



● **DETECT AND SEAL** leaks around windows and doors with caulk or weatherstripping. Check fireplace dampers, electric outlets, attic hatches or window-mounted AC units, too. If you can rattle a door or window, or see daylight around frames, there could be a leak. Try passing a lighted incense stick around frames and watch where the smoke goes.



● **DON'T USE** large appliances when it's hot, particularly the clothes dryer; wash full loads of clothes in cold water.

### GET MORE TIPS:

- Bluebonnet's website, [bluebonnet.coop/summer-saving-tips](http://bluebonnet.coop/summer-saving-tips)
- [energy.gov/energysaver](http://energy.gov/energysaver)
- [comptroller.texas.gov/programs/seco](http://comptroller.texas.gov/programs/seco)
- [puc.texas.gov/consumer](http://puc.texas.gov/consumer)
- [tdhca.state.tx.us](http://tdhca.state.tx.us) (for weatherization assistance info)

More **SURVIVING SUMMER** tips on the next two pages



## LIFE IN A HOT SPOT

Texas consistently has four cities that make the lists of America's hottest cities, any way you measure it. Austin, above left, and Houston, are often in the top 5, behind Las Vegas, Phoenix and Tucson, Arizona. San Antonio and Dallas also typically make top 10 lists. This summer's heat records cement our state's dubious status. Last year was Texas' second hottest summer on record, with an average temperature of nearly 90 degrees Fahrenheit in Austin from June through August. We don't hold a candle to the world's hottest spots, though: Oman, Libya, Sudan and Ethiopia have recorded highs of around, or higher than, 130 degrees.

# Cool products to cut the heat

**FROM BLINDS** that adjust to sunlight and heat, to smart AC vents and ceiling fans, product innovations abound. Here are a few:

### SMART BLINDS

Motorized blinds and shades can run off a battery pack, solar panel or wall socket. They open, close or change angles via a smartphone app, remote control or voice-controlled device. Some blinds can be programmed to respond to sunlight and temperature. Shades that block and reflect light are best for Texas summers. Smart blinds start at about \$300 per window; conversion kits for existing blinds start at about \$100.



### REFLECTIVE ROOF COATINGS

Traditional roofs can absorb 90% or more of the sun's energy. Ideally, a cool roof coating or material is added when a house is built or a roof covering is replaced. Retrofitting existing roofs isn't always cheaper or easier. Reflective white paint can reduce a flat roof's heat absorption. Concrete- or ceramic-particle coatings, or polymer-based ones, can work on existing roofs. One alternative is to replace existing shingles with light-colored asphalt ones coated with reflective materials. Solar tiles or panels do double duty, reflecting heat and generating electricity. Do your homework before a DIY roof-coating project, or call a pro. [Coolroofs.org](http://Coolroofs.org) and [energy.gov/energysaver/cool-roofs](http://energy.gov/energysaver/cool-roofs) have more information.

### SMART VENTS

Motorized HVAC smart vents or registers can correct airflow imbalances. Some have integrated temperature and air pressure sensors; others use their own controller and smart thermostat. They can work with smartphone apps and voice-controlled devices, and be battery-operated or wired into your system. Keen, Flair and Ecovent are among popular brands with prices (for vents only) from \$89 to \$189. Smart Cocoon offers a "booster fan" vent to just improve air flow, \$111.

### SMART CEILING FANS

Fans cool people, not rooms, by as much as 4 degrees Fahrenheit. Smart fans can tell if a room is occupied and operate based on a room's temperature. A smartphone app or voice-controlled device operates them, or they can connect with a smart thermostat. Improve your existing fan with a new wall switch, like Lutron's Caseta, \$49.25. A smart-home hub, like the \$99 Bond Bridge, sends signals to your fan's existing remote control. Most major fan brands have smart models: Hunter's range from \$170 to \$650.





Doug Grimm, a crew supervisor in Giddings, pours an electrolyte powder into a cold bottle of water to stay hydrated. The powders use an optimal sodium-to-glucose ratio that delivers water to the body faster. *Sarah Beal photo*

## Line workers' hot weather tips & tricks

**SOME JOBS** require work outdoors in extreme heat, and that includes Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative's line workers. Though routine work is scheduled before the worst of a day's heat begins, outages require a quick response, no matter the temperature. Here are some of their secrets to beating the heat:

- **HYDRATE!** Water is the go-to, and extra hydration ingredients such as electrolyte powders containing sodium, potassium, calcium and magnesium can help replenish minerals lost in sweat. Some line workers prefer the tangy salt-and-vinegar taste of pickle juice, which can reduce muscle cramps brought on by extreme heat as well as aid hydration.

- **APPLY** cool water or damp towels to the body's temperature-regulating zones. Putting a cold compress or water on wrists, temples, the neck or behind knees can help lower body

temperature. Frozen sponges and water bottles straight out of a cooler are other tools.

- **WEAR** a wide-brimmed hat with a water-soaked bandana in it. That offers sun protection and adds evaporative cooling for the head.

- **CREATE** a shaded "cooling zone." Workers in the field set up a tent or canopy in a shaded area for quick breaks. Battery-powered fans or misting systems help with cooling.

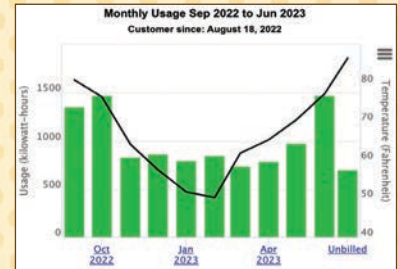
- **WEAR** lightweight, breathable clothing. While line workers on a job must wear personal protective equipment, they couple that with their lightest-weight regulation clothes.

- **MAINTAIN** close communication with co-workers. Line workers are trained to watch for signs of heat-related illness in their team members and provide aid if needed. Those signs can include muscle cramps or spasms, heavy sweating, extreme thirst, high body temperature, cool/pale skin, headache, fast but weak pulse and dizziness/fainting.

- **INCORPORATE** hydrating foods. Line workers increase their liquid intake by eating watermelon, cucumber, oranges, strawberries or food with high-water content.

## TRACK YOUR ELECTRICITY USE

Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative members have access to easy-to-use online and mobile app tools to help analyze electric consumption and costs.



### ONLINE

1. Log into your Bluebonnet account by clicking "Log in" at the top of any page on [bluebonnet.coop](http://bluebonnet.coop). If you have not set up an online account, go to [bluebonnet.coop/mybluebonnet](http://bluebonnet.coop/mybluebonnet) for instructions and information.
2. Click the "My Usage" tab in the blue bar at top.
3. Usage Explorer shows how much electricity you used by the month, day or hour, as well as corresponding daily temperatures.
4. The Usage Comparison tool lets you compare two months' bills, side by side.
5. The Average Usage tool shows how much electricity you consumed and your costs over a period of time.
6. Click Usage Management to view electric use data or download it onto your computer.

### ON YOUR SMARTPHONE

1. Download Bluebonnet's free app, MyBluebonnet, in the App Store for iPhone or Google Play for Android.
2. Log in using the email associated with your account and your password.
3. Click on Usage at the bottom of the screen.
4. See your electric use for today, the previous week or other periods.
5. Set up notifications by clicking on "..." at the bottom of the screen, then Settings, then Manage Notifications.

Sources: [energy.gov](http://energy.gov), [energystar.gov](http://energystar.gov), [science.org](http://science.org), [bbc.com](http://bbc.com), [coolroofs.org](http://coolroofs.org), [nytimes.com/wirecutter](http://nytimes.com/wirecutter), [Lutron.com](http://Lutron.com), [Pella.com](http://Pella.com), [howtogeek.com](http://howtogeek.com), [thesmartcave.com](http://thesmartcave.com), [smarterhomeguide.com](http://smarterhomeguide.com), [Keen Home.com](http://Keen Home.com), [Flair.co](http://Flair.co), [howstuffworks.com](http://howstuffworks.com), [hunterfan.com](http://hunterfan.com), [Constellation Energy.com](http://Constellation Energy.com)

# SPEND A DAY IN Caldwell

By Alyssa Meinke

**CALDWELL**, in the heart of Burleson County, has a history steeped in the trade and shipping that followed the path of El Camino Real. That famed route, established in the 1700s by Spanish colonialists, connected Texas with Mexico City.

When Caldwell's founders established the town in about 1840, they named it after Matthew Caldwell, a Texas army soldier and signer of the Texas Declaration of Independence. The community sits at the junction of State Highways 21 and 36, about 27 miles east of College Station. Its 4,109 residents, many of them descendants of Czech immigrants, still see Santa Fe and Southern Pacific railroad trains carry freight through their town, as they have for 111 years. For its first few years, Caldwell was the Milam County seat. It became the seat of Burleson County in 1846, when that county was established.

Today, Caldwell hosts several annual festivals that draw crowds from across the region. The Kolache Festival, held on the second Saturday of every September on the downtown square, attracts up to 30,000 visitors who eat thousands of the popular Czech pastries. It is the community's most popular event. The weeklong Burleson County Fair is also held each September, and the Margarita Fest happens in May.

## WHAT TO DO

Start with a visit to one of the town's eight parks, playgrounds, sports courts and sports fields. Besides typical park amenities, the largest, **Davidson Creek Park**, 560 Davidson Creek Park, offers plenty of places for activities, including fishing ponds, a splash pad, horseshoe and washer pits, batting cages, a basketball court, disc golf course, and walking and jogging trails. Entry is free. The splash pad is open 11 a.m.-8 p.m. daily, and the park is open year-round. See a list of other parks in Caldwell at [caldwelltx.gov/parks-and-recreation](http://caldwelltx.gov/parks-and-recreation).

Learn about the town's history and explore historical documents at the **Caldwell Historical Museum**, 103 Texas 21, open 10 a.m.-7 p.m. Monday-Saturday, and 1 p.m.-6 p.m. Sunday. Learn more about Czech history and culture at the **Burleson County Czech Heritage Museum**, 200 E. Fawn St., 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday. The nine-hole golf course at **Copperas Hollow Country Club**, 995 Country Club Drive, charges greens fees ranging from \$15-\$36 a person. It is open every day except Monday from 8 a.m. until dark.

Take a tour of **Royalty Pecan Farms**, 10600 Texas 21, a family-owned pecan orchard established in 1985. The next tour is scheduled for Sept. 2, and tickets go on sale in August. Admission is free for children 5 and younger and \$14.99 for everyone else. A ticket includes 4 ounces of raw pecans and a bottle of water.

Continued on next page



Above, a mural in downtown Caldwell. Plentiful trade and land for agriculture attracted early residents to its established Czech-speaking community. *Sichri Carruthers photo*



Christine Campbell, left, owner of Jake's Bakery, takes a batch of kolaches from the oven. The bakery is open just one day a month, but caters events and definitely participates in kolache festivals. Christine cuts the dough into circles with the same metal soup can her grandmother used when she owned the bakery.



A pair of Czech hymnals, left, from the 1800s are on display at the Burleson County Czech Heritage Museum. The thicker book in the foreground is believed to have been hidden inside a loaf of bread and smuggled out of Europe.

*Sarah Beal photos*



Mollie Marsh, left, and Melissa Brune enjoy cake and wine at Lissa's Restyled Sip & Shop. Mollie owns Just Because by MOI, a jewelry boutique, and Mollie's MojiLife, a home and car fragrance company.

Continued from previous page

## GRAB A BITE

Dining options in Caldwell ranked in Tripadvisor's top three restaurants are:

The **Garden Spot Cafe**, 1301 W. Texas 21, which serves a variety of American dishes, including breakfast, sandwiches, salads and daily specials, 7 a.m.-3 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday.

Indulge in fresh seafood infused with Cajun and Creole flavors at **Texas Seafood and Steak House**, 300 Presidential Corridor W., 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Sunday-Thursday, 11 a.m.-10 p.m. Friday-Saturday.

**Masfajitas**, 305 Texas 36, offers Tex-Mex and Mexican cuisine, 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Sunday-Thursday, 11 a.m.-10 p.m. Friday and Saturday.

Other dining options include **Four Tines Restaurant** at the Surrey Inn, 403 E. Texas 21, 11 a.m.-8:30 p.m. Monday-Thursday, 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Friday and Saturday, and 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Sunday; **Homestead Cafe**, 198 Texas 36, 8 a.m.-4 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, 7 a.m.-2 p.m. Sunday; and **Nonnie's Bakery**, 1601 Texas 21, open 6 a.m.-noon Sunday-Thursday, 6 a.m.-1 p.m. Friday and Saturday.

## STOP AND SHOP

Caldwell has several boutiques and gift shops run by local entrepreneurs, including:

**The Humble Life**, 100 S. Echols St., sells homemade soaps and body care products, artisan goods, and it has a smoothie bar, 9 a.m.-6 p.m. Monday-Friday, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturday.

Find gifts, paintings by local artists and drink mixes while you enjoy baked goods, breakfast or lunch specials, coffee or wine at **Lissa's Restyled Sip & Shop**, 205 S. Main St., 7 a.m.-2 p.m. Thursday, 7 a.m.-8 p.m. Friday and 8 a.m.-3 p.m. Saturday.

Other shopping options include **Rocking 5H Boutique**, 201 S. Main St.; **Back Porch Antiques**, 123 W. Buck St.; **Mimosa Mercantile**, 212 S. Echols St.; and **Nono Rose Western Wear**, 201 S. Main St.

## TIPS FROM LOCALS

Plan your visit at a time when **Jake's Bakery**, 160 N. Texas 36, is open, advises Susan Mott, Burleson County Chamber of Commerce director. There, Christine Campbell, the president of the Czech Heritage Museum, and her husband, Robert, bake authentic Czech kolaches to honor their heritage. Find the bakery's schedule at [bit.ly/43YQIOT](http://bit.ly/43YQIOT).

Get more information from [caldwelltx.gov/eat-shop-explore](http://caldwelltx.gov/eat-shop-explore) and [burlesoncountytexas.com](http://burlesoncountytexas.com).

Sources: City of Caldwell ([www.caldwelltx.gov](http://www.caldwelltx.gov)), Texas Almanac, Texas State Library, Texas State Historical Association.

— Harlye Bonorden contributed to this story



An outstanding essay allowed Manor's J.T. Thomas, third from right, to participate in a wreath-laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery, an honor accorded to only a few youth tour participants.

## Memorials, memories for area students on Washington, D.C., youth tour

**SOME OF THE NATION'S** most famous sites and symbols were among memorable stops for Johnique "J.T." Thomas and Tara Williams, high school seniors who represented Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative on the 2023 government youth tour in Washington, D.C.

The two spent 10 days in the nation's capital in June. Thomas, a student at Manor Early College High School, and Williams, a student at Colorado River Collegiate Academy in Bastrop, joined hundreds of teenagers from across the nation for the annual trip.

At Arlington National Cemetery, Thomas participated in the wreath-laying ceremony that pays tribute to the

sacrifices of unknown U.S. soldiers. One of Williams' favorite stops was the Library of Congress. Their Government-in-Action Youth Tour included visits to the U.S. Supreme Court Building, the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives' chambers, the Lincoln Memorial, Mount Vernon and many other iconic locations.

"I was surprised how accessible the people who run our government are," Thomas said. "They had welcome signs on their doors saying, 'Please come in.'"

Applications for the 2024 youth tour will become available on [bluebonnet.coop](http://bluebonnet.coop) in November.

Watch a video with this story online at [bluebonnet.coop](http://bluebonnet.coop).



Bastrop's Tara Williams was among hundreds of students from across the nation selected for the government youth tour this summer. 'I think what's going to stay with me the longest is the connection on the national level — that was pretty powerful,' she said of the experience. Photos courtesy National Rural Electric Cooperative Association

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    - Energy-saving ideas
  - Contests and giveaways
  - Career opportunities

# Grants awarded for first-responder equipment, community facilities

**BLUEBONNET ELECTRIC** Cooperative and the Lower Colorado River Authority recently provided grants to community nonprofit organizations and projects as part of LCRA's Community Development Partnership Program. Bluebonnet, one of LCRA's wholesale electric customers, is proud to partner with LCRA to support its members and communities.

Applications for the next round of grants will be accepted in January. Find more information about this program and the application at [lcra.org/cdpp](http://lcra.org/cdpp).

**TOP PHOTO:** A \$25,000 grant will help Bastrop County Emergency Services District No. 2, which serves the eastern portion of the county, acquire two mechanical CPR devices. These devices deliver chest compressions, helping reduce the fatigue of first responders who perform CPR and enabling them to focus on other aspects of emergency care. The department provided \$14,142 in matching funds. Pictured, from left, are Seth Moss, firefighter; Rick Arnic, LCRA regional affairs representative; Gregory Klaus, Bastrop County judge; Bailey Grahn, firefighter; Robert 'Bobby' Lewis and Margaret D. 'Meg' Voelter, LCRA board members; Donnie Graue Jr., firefighter; Josh Coy, Bluebonnet's Bastrop-area community representative; Josh Gill, fire chief; Kevin Hoegenauer, lieutenant firefighter; Lisa Eller, office manager; and Guy Hall III, firefighter.



**MIDDLE PHOTO:** A \$25,000 grant will help Carmine, in northeastern Fayette County, build a new concrete plaza and renovate the flood-damaged pavilion at Muehlbrad-Albers City Park. The Carmine Economic Development Corporation provided \$32,800 in matching funds. Pictured, front row, from left, are Jane Press, Carmine Economic Development Corporation board member; Vicki LaRue, Carmine EDC board member and grant project coordinator; Byron Balke, Bluebonnet board assistant secretary/treasurer; Margaret D. 'Meg' Voelter, LCRA board member; Susan Bathe, Carmine mayor pro tem and Carmine EDC board president; Kristi Wunderlich, Carmine EDC board vice president; and Wade Eilers, Carmine mayor. Back row, from left, are: Anita Drydale, Carmine city council member; Ruby McCullough, Carmine EDC board member; Sherry Murphy, Bluebonnet's Giddings-area community representative; Luke Sternadel, Fayette County commissioner, Precinct 2; Dan Mueller, Fayette County judge; Richard Thames, Carmine EDC board treasurer; Cassie Austin, Mueller's executive assistant; and Russell Jurk, Bluebonnet board member.



**ABOVE:** A \$25,000 grant will help the Tanglewood Volunteer Fire Department in northeastern Lee County purchase a new Jaws of Life hydraulic tool set that will be used to help rescue people trapped in wrecked vehicles. The department provided \$6,375 in matching funds. Pictured, from left, are Savannah Hall, Tanglewood VFD supporter; Guy Hall III, first assistant fire chief; Russell Jurk, Bluebonnet board member; Sherry Murphy, Bluebonnet's Giddings-area community representative; Margaret D. 'Meg' Voelter, LCRA board member; Guy Hall Jr., fire chief; Julie Hall, Tanglewood VFD supporter; Debbie Key, firefighter and emergency care attendant; and Travis Crim, captain. *LCRA photos*



## Brand New for 2023!

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Each of these coins is recognized for its breathtaking beauty, and for its stability even in unstable times, since each coin is backed by its government for weight, purity and legal-tender value.

**2023 American Silver Eagle:** The Silver Eagle is the most popular coin in the world, with its iconic Adolph Weinman Walking Liberty obverse backed by Emily Damstra's Eagle Landing reverse. Struck in 99.9% fine silver at the U.S. Mint.

**2023 Canada Maple Leaf:** A highly sought-after bullion coin since 1988, this 2023 issue includes the **FIRST** and likely only use of a transitional portrait, of the late Queen Elizabeth II. These are also expected to be the **LAST** Maple Leafs to bear Her Majesty's effigy. Struck in high-purity 99.99% fine silver at the Royal Canadian Mint.

**2023 South African Krugerrand:** The Krugerrand continues to be the best-known, most respected numismatic coin brand in the world. 2023 is the Silver Krugerrand's 6th year of issue. Struck in 99.9% fine silver at the South African Mint.

**2023 China Silver Panda:** 2023 is the 40th anniversary of the first silver Panda coin, issued in 1983. China Pandas are noted for their heart-warming one-year-only designs. Struck in 99.9% fine silver at the China Mint.

GovMint.com • 1300 Corporate Center Curve, Dept. WRD349-05, Eagan, MN 55121

**2023 British Silver Britannia:** One of the Royal Mint's flagship coins, this 2023 issue is the **FIRST** in the Silver Britannia series to carry the portrait of King Charles III, following the passing of Queen Elizabeth II. Struck in 99.9% fine silver.

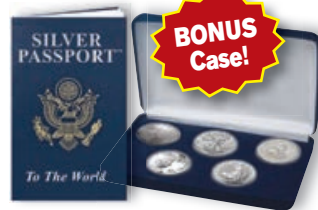


## Exquisite Designs Struck in Precious Silver

These coins, with stunningly gorgeous finishes and detailed designs that speak to their country of origin, are sure to hold a treasured place in your collection. Plus, they provide you with a unique way to stock up on precious silver. Here's a legacy you and your family will cherish. Act now!

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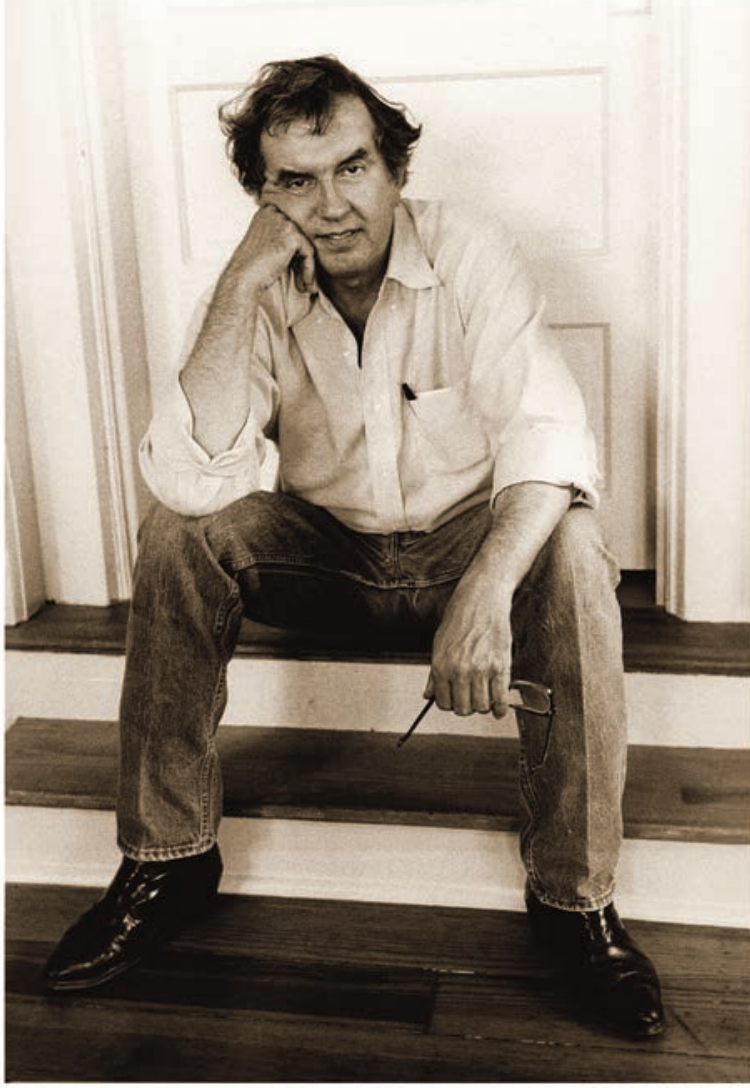
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# A Page of the Past

Traces of real-life Texans ride through McMurtry's 'Lonesome Dove'

BY W.F. STRONG

**MILLIONS OF COPIES** of Larry McMurtry's *Lonesome Dove* have sold since the novel was published in 1985. The miniseries that followed in 1989 was likewise immensely popular. McMurtry himself called it the *Gone With the Wind* of the West, but he never loved the book as much as his fans. "You know most writers come to dislike their most popular books," he once told journalist John Spong. "Henry James hated *Daisy Miller*, which is what he is known by. He's probably written 35 other books. I feel a little that way about *Lonesome Dove*."

McMurtry said he never saw the miniseries. Maybe if he had, he would have better understood how endearingly Robert Duvall, Tommy Lee Jones and

Diane Lane brought their characters to life. I can't help but wonder if those characters were modeled after real-life Texans.

But McMurtry said that that wasn't his aim. Though Woodrow Call has some attributes of Charles Goodnight, and Gus McCrae has some attributes of Oliver Loving, the novel's main characters were not modeled after actual historical figures. McMurtry said the book is not meant to be a faithful history of the era but rather one that has echoes of those times.

In fact, he sought to authentically demythologize the life of the cowboy and show how brutally difficult their lives were. "The whole book is permeated with criticism of the Old West from start to finish," he said.

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



Nonetheless, McMurtry acknowledged that somehow Call and McCrae became celebrated heroes. He said a lot of people "were nostalgic for the culture of the Old West, though it was a terrible culture."

Bits of history did however make it into the book.

One event in the actual lives of Goodnight and Loving that's enlarged within the book is Loving's death. Goodnight returned his body from Fort Sumner, New Mexico, to Weatherford. In the novel, Call takes McCrae's body all the way from Montana to Texas, a much longer journey with far more drama.

Antagonist Blue Duck was a real Native American chief, but McMurtry said that was coincidental. He chose the name without realizing that, and that's where the similarity stops. But the character's death is without question similar to that of the Kiowa Chief Satanta, who killed himself while imprisoned.

The character Joshua Deets was inspired by Bose Ickard, a longtime friend of Goodnight. When Ickard died, Goodnight carved a fervent epitaph for him. McMurtry used quite similar words—and some of the exact ones—when Call carves an epitaph for Deets.

As we read on, we do encounter genuine historical figures, though their biographies are massaged—people like Judge Roy Bean, John Wesley Hardin and the ubiquitous Goodnight, who's never very chatty and always on the move.

Near the end of the book, a reporter exclaims to Call that people are saying he's a man of vision. He responds, "Yes, a hell of a vision." The real Goodnight actually said this line in a similar circumstance, referring to all the tough times and horror he had seen as a Texas Ranger and frontier rancher. ■

# Sheet Pan Meals

All-in-one dishes make serving and cleanup a snap

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ, FOOD EDITOR

If you're looking for the perfect less-mess sheet pan meal, try this flavorful and balanced steak dinner. This recipe, adapted from our friends at Beef Loving Texans, is so easy you'll want to make it all summer.

## Cumin-Dusted Steak Sheet Pan Dinner

**1¼ teaspoons ground cumin, divided use**  
**1¼ teaspoons salt, divided use**  
**¼ teaspoon ground black pepper**  
**1¼ pounds well-trimmed boneless top sirloin or flat iron steak (cut 1-inch thick)**  
**1 pound unpeeled sweet potatoes, cut into 1-inch cubes or wedges (about 3 cups)**  
**2 tablespoons olive oil, divided use**  
**¼ teaspoon chili powder**  
**1 bag trimmed fresh green beans (12 ounces)**  
**1 teaspoon garlic powder**

1. Preheat oven to 450 degrees.
2. Combine 1 teaspoon cumin,  $\frac{3}{4}$  teaspoon salt and pepper in a small bowl. Apply the spice rub to both sides of the steak. Set aside.
3. In a large bowl, toss sweet potato cubes with  $\frac{1}{2}$  tablespoons olive oil, remaining  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon cumin,  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon salt and chili powder. Spread potatoes across a baking sheet lined with foil or parchment. Bake 15 minutes. Turn potatoes and move them to one side of the baking sheet.
4. Increase oven temperature to high broiler setting. Toss green beans with remaining  $\frac{1}{2}$  tablespoon olive oil, remaining  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon salt and garlic powder. Place green beans next to potatoes on the baking sheet. Place steak on an uncoated wire rack on top of the sheet pan, positioning the steak so that it's over the green beans.
5. Broil steak on lower rack of oven for about 7 minutes. Turn steak and broil an additional 4–5 minutes for medium-rare to medium doneness (145–160 degrees). Remove steak from wire rack and let it sit for about 3 minutes before slicing and serving. Toss green beans with pan juices.

**SERVES 5**

Reprinted with permission from Beef Loving Texans.

**TCP** Follow along with Vianney Rodriguez while she cooks in Cocina Gris at [sweetlifebake.com](http://sweetlifebake.com), where she features a recipe for Spicy Sheet Pan Hash Browns.





## No-Mess Shrimp Boil

HELENA WALLACE  
BRYAN TEXAS UTILITIES

If you've been craving a shrimp boil without all the hassle, we've got you covered with this delicious no-mess preparation.

- 2 pounds whole, unpeeled small Yukon potatoes**
- 6 ears fresh corn, cut into 2–3 sections**
- 1 large onion, peeled and quartered**
- 2 pounds shrimp, peeled and deveined**
- 2 packages smoked andouille sausage (12 ounces each), sliced**
- ½ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter**
- 2 cloves garlic, minced**
- 2 tablespoons Old Bay seasoning**
- 4 tablespoons Italian seasoning**
- 2 lemons, cut into wedges**

1. Preheat oven 400 degrees. Lightly oil 2 baking sheets.
2. Add potatoes to a large pot of boiling, salted water and cook 10 minutes or until tender. Add corn and onion in the last 5 minutes of the potatoes boiling. Drain.
3. Spread potatoes, corn and onion onto baking sheets. Add the shrimp and sliced sausage.
4. In a small saucepan over low heat, combine the butter, garlic and Old Bay seasoning and heat until melted. Remove from heat and stir in Italian seasoning.
5. Pour butter mixture over prepared baking sheets, turning to coat all ingredients.
6. Bake 12–15 minutes or until shrimp is fully cooked. Serve with lemon wedges.

SERVES 6–8

[MORE RECIPES >](#)



\$500 WINNER

## Aunt Glo's Brandied Peach Chicken

BARBARA LOYD  
UNITED COOPERATIVE  
SERVICES



A tasty tribute to Loyd's Aunt Glo, this dish takes baked chicken to the next level.

SERVES 8

- ½ cup peach nectar**
- ½ cup brandy**
- ¼ cup olive oil**
- 2 medium shallots, minced**
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar**
- 1 teaspoon salt**
- ¼ teaspoon ground black pepper**
- 4 pounds chicken breasts, skin on**
- 1 jar peach preserves (12 ounces)**
- 4 plums, sliced**
- 1 cup halved seedless green grapes**

1. In a large bowl, combine nectar, brandy, olive oil, shallots, brown sugar, salt and pepper.
2. Place chicken in mixture and turn to coat. Cover and refrigerate for several hours or overnight. Reserve marinade.
3. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Place chicken in a roasting pan, skin side down. Bake 15 minutes.
4. Turn chicken, baste with reserved marinade and bake 30–40 minutes more or until chicken is cooked through.
5. While the chicken bakes, heat the preserves in a saucepan and bring to a boil. Add sliced plums and grapes and simmer until softened. Serve warm chicken topped with the fruit sauce.

## TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

TEXAS CITRUS DUE AUGUST 10

How do you incorporate our state's wonderful grapefruit, oranges, lemons and limes in your recipes? Submit your best online by August 10 for a chance to win \$500.





## Apple Sheet Pan Pancakes

CAROLYN BESSELMAN  
PEDERNALES EC

If you're looking to feed a crowd at brunch, these sheet pan pancakes are the ultimate treat. Apples, pecans, applesauce and brown sugar create a sinfully sweet topping.

- 2 apples, cored and diced
- 1 cup chopped pecans
- ½ cup dark brown sugar
- ¼ cup applesauce
- 1 tablespoon ground cinnamon
- 2 eggs
- 2½ cups buttermilk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2½ cups flour
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 tablespoon melted unsalted butter

1. Preheat oven to 425 degrees.
2. In a bowl, combine apples, pecans, brown sugar, applesauce and cinnamon and stir to mix. Set aside.
3. In another bowl, whisk together eggs, buttermilk and vanilla. In a large third bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, sugar and baking soda.
4. Pour the egg mixture into the dry ingredients and stir gently until just combined. Do not overmix.

5. Brush the bottom and sides of a 13-by-18-inch rimmed baking sheet with butter.
6. Add the batter to the baking sheet, smoothing it evenly with the back of a spoon.
7. Dollop apple mixture by spoonfuls evenly over the batter. With a spoon, gently swirl the mixture into batter.
8. Bake 20–22 minutes, until golden brown and the top springs back when touched.
9. Remove from oven and serve with butter and syrup.

SERVES 10–14

**TCP** We have more than 1,000 recipes in our online archive. Check out our website to find other options for entrées, breakfasts and desserts.

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COURTESY CHET GARNER

## Extracurricular Activities

A small-town schoolhouse is now a community-focused brewhouse

BY CHET GARNER

**FOR MOST PEOPLE**—including me—the idea of going back to school sends shivers down their spine. But what if the curriculum consisted of craft beer, live music and scratch-made food? That sort of school would have a wait-list the length of the Rio Grande. Lucky for all of us, this sort of continuing education actually exists near San Angelo at Farm Ale Brewing Co., inside an old schoolhouse in Eola. Class is in session!

Eola is a rural community surrounded by cotton fields as far as the eye can see. Its downtown consists of a few blocks, three churches and a single school building that for decades housed every grade in the public system—kindergarten through 12th. The school closed in the 1980s and sat vacant until 2006, when a group of thirsty Texans decided to turn it into a craft brewery. After all, turning grains into beer is a very scientific process.

I stepped inside and was immediately hit with a wave of nostalgia that was even stronger than the smell of fermenting grains. The bones of the old school are still intact. The classrooms are now dining rooms with chalkboards and flags. The wood-floored gymnasium is now full of family-friendly games, and the auditorium houses the entire production process, from brewing to canning. Farm Ale Brewing Co. brews its beer with as many local ingredients as possible and even gives a percentage of profits back to local farmers.

The biggest upgrade came to the school cafeteria, which now serves up incredible pizza, smash burgers and rotating specials such as meat-loaf. Just like in my school days, I polished off my plate in record time and then headed to the schoolyard for recess—with the added bonus of live music. ■

ABOVE Chet does his homework at Farm Ale Brewing Co. in Eola, outside San Angelo.

**TCP** Raise your hand if you want to see a video of Chet's visit to Farm Ale 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.

## AUGUST

11

**Alpine [11–12] Big Bend Ranch Rodeo,** (432) 837-2326, bigbendranchrodeo.com

**Junction [11–12] Rodeo & Dance,** (254) 212-9160, junctiontexas.com

12

**Chappell Hill Wine and Cheese Stroll,** (979) 337-9910, chappellhilltx.com

**Denton North Texas Book Festival,** ntbf.org

**Grand Prairie Hatch Chile Fest,** (972) 237-8084, grandfungp.com

**Vanderpool Maples and Meteors Night Sky Fest,** (830) 966-3413, tpwd.texas.gov

16

**Brady [16–19] Heart of Texas Honky Tonk Fest,** (325) 597-1895, heartoftexascountry.com

17

**Corsicana Jimmy Fortune: God and Country,** (903) 874-7792, corsicanapalace.com

**Johnson City [17–19] Blanco County Fair and Rodeo,** bcfra.org

18

**Palestine Wine in the Pines,** 1-855-632-7729, texasstaterailroad.net

**Bastrop [18–20, 25–26, Sept. 1–3] Steel Magnolias,** (512) 200-3826, bastropoperahouse.org

19

**Bowie Outdoor Expo,**  
(940) 872-6246,  
959theranch.com

**Chappell Hill Farmers Market,** (832) 720-5685,  
chappellhillrv.com

**Castroville [19-20] St. Louis Day Celebration,**  
(830) 931-2826,  
saintlouisday.com

24

**Fredericksburg [24-27] Gillespie County Fair,**  
(830) 997-2359,  
gillespiefair.com

26

**Crosby Kids Kicking Cancer,** (281) 785-4098,  
addisfaithfoundation.org

**Kerrville River Roadster Show,** (830) 257-7300,  
kerrvillex.com

**Lakeway [26-27] Cool Arts Show and Studio Tour,**  
(512) 261-1010,  
lakewayartsdistrict.com

27

**Stonewall LBJ's 115th Birthday,** (830) 644-2252,  
tpwd.texas.gov

## SEPTEMBER

01

**Bandera [1-3] Western Heritage Music Festival,**  
(830) 796-4849,  
banderacowboycapital.com

02

**Brenham Seth James,**  
(979) 337-7240,  
thebarnhillcenter.com

**Kerrville Kerr County Market Days and Hill Country Swap Meet,** (830) 459-6198,  
kerrmarketdays.org

### TCP *Submit Your Event*

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



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# Hoof and Horn

What a barnburner! This month readers answered the cattle call, and these prizewinning beasts moo-ved into first place. Now that the dust has settled, don't be baa-shful. Let's see who's best in show and who's just horsing around.

CURATED BY GRACE FULTZ

**1** JEFFREY BENSON  
PEDERNALES EC

"The big boy from Study Butte down by Big Bend."

**2** NICK GROSSMAN  
PEDERNALES EC

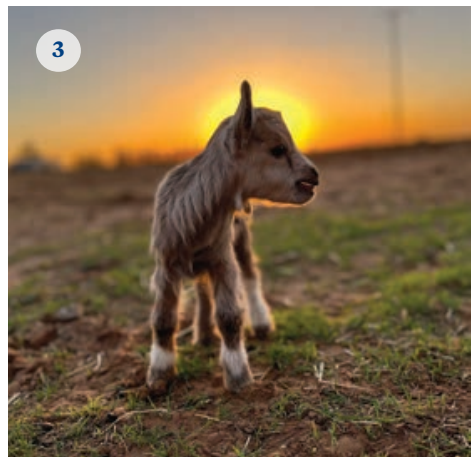
"Two wranglers heel and toe a calf in the arena."

**3** CRYSTAL VALDEZ  
LYNTEGAR EC

"Muffin was born smaller than her two brothers, but she held on to fight against all odds."

**4** MARIA CASTILLO  
COSERV

"This beauty was captured roaming the fields at my daughter's wedding venue in Terrell."



## Upcoming Contests

- DUE AUG 10** Mailboxes
- DUE SEP 10** Local Landmarks
- DUE OCT 10** Vibrant Color



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

**TCP** See Focus on Texas on our website for more Hoof and Horn photos from readers.



## Off the Hook?

The perfect tool, unused but ready, awaits the arrival of snakes

BY PATTY MOYNAHAN  
ILLUSTRATION BY  
TAYLOR CALLERY

MANY A NATIVE TEXAN, beholding an expanse of ranchland, will sooner or later think: snakes. A few years ago, my husband and I bought a house in southwest Austin. Our backyard abuts a cattle ranch, and the two properties are demarcated by a wrought iron fence. The fence is by no means a shield. Its spires—a hand's width apart—offer space enough for critters to wriggle or slither through.

Before moving into the house, we'd heard about sightings in the area: rat snakes, ribbon snakes and garter snakes. Also rattlers, coral snakes and copperheads. I wasn't entirely sanguine about these reports. But I wasn't terrified either. When I was growing up in Bryan, my family often visited friends on a nearby ranch, where I'd learned to identify and avoid venomous snakes.

Soon after settling into our new house, a tall, narrow box arrived on our doorstep, a birthday present from my husband. As I unwrapped the gift, I saw a rubber grip and metal shaft and thought, ungratefully, that my husband had bought me a golf club. But it proved to be a tool far more useful to me than a 2-iron: a snake hook—a 43-inch stainless steel beauty, elegant in its simplicity.

The term "snake hook" can be misleading. No flesh is pierced. You ease the U-shaped hook under a snake and lift it. The snake dangles at the shaft's end, out of striking distance, while you figure out what to do next.

For a sublime moment, as I regarded the gift, I was as excited as *A Christmas Story's* Ralphie with his BB gun. I imagined myself deftly hoisting a 2-pound rattler and ... and what? Flinging it over the fence? Passing it between the spires and dropping it onto the ranchland? The affronted snake could be back in my yard before I was in the house. The phrase "fool's errand" came to mind.

Alas, in four years, we've seen only one snake: a baby rattler, mortally wounded, perhaps dropped from a hawk's talons.

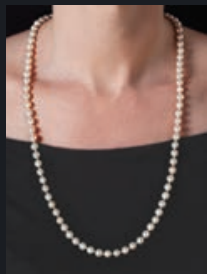
The snakes are out there, I am certain, but they've not been in evidence—so far.

My snake hook stands at the ready, on the back porch. I feel both relief and disappointment that I've not had to employ it for snake removal.

But we've discovered its myriad other uses. Before trimming bottom branches of lantana plants, I wave the hook under the plants to flush out any creatures. My husband uses the hook's pointy tip to pulverize abandoned mud dauber nests. And a snake hook is the perfect tool for retrieving a grandchild's stray crayons, puzzle pieces and grapes from beneath the living room sofa. ■

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