

● APRIL 2024

iowa

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

All the above is all we need

Money-saving gardening tips

Egg-ceptional recipes

Meet the staff and directors who keep the lights on ▶ See Page 12

CONTENTS



6



8



10

VOLUME 77 • ISSUE 4

3

STATEWIDE PERSPECTIVE

Lineworkers power our lives

3

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

Win a \$100 gift card to a local garden center

14

ENERGY MATTERS

Celebrate Earth Day with conservation

15

OUT BACK

It's OK when things make you happy

EDITOR
Ann Foster Thelen

DESIGNERS
Megan Walters
Bree Glenn

IAEC EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT
Chuck Soderberg

IAEC DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS
Erin Campbell

IAEC BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Kenny VandenBerg, District 1 – President
Jim Miller, District 5 – Vice President
Deena Moore, District 4 – Secretary/Treasurer
Tony Lem, District 2 – Asst. Secretary/Treasurer
Jerry Keleher, District 3
Gordon Greimann, District 6
Bruce Amundson, District 7
Marion Denger, Prairie Energy Cooperative – NRECA Representative
Kevin Wheeler, Access Energy Cooperative – Managers' Representative

Iowa Electric Cooperative Living magazine (ISSN: 2770-8683) is published monthly by the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives, a not-for-profit organization representing Iowa's member-owned local electric cooperatives. Association address: 8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48, Des Moines, IA 50322-2992. The phrase ***Iowa Electric Cooperative Living*** is a mark registered within the state of Iowa to the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives. The magazine does not accept advertising.

Editorial Office
8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48, Des Moines, IA 50322-2992. Telephone: 515-276-5350.

Email Address
editor@ieclmagazine.com. *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine does not assume responsibility for unsolicited items.

Website
www.ieclmagazine.com

Postmaster
Send address changes to *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine, 8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48, Des Moines, IA 50322-2992. Periodicals Postage Paid at Des Moines, Iowa, and at additional mailing offices.

Change of Address
Every local electric cooperative maintains an independent mailing list of its members, so please send your change of address directly to your local electric cooperative's office. *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine cannot make an address change for you.

© Copyright 2024, Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives. No portion of the editorial, photographic or other content of *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine or its website may be reproduced without written permission of the editor.



ON THE COVER

Special thanks to Shelley Hundling, a Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative member-consumer, for supplying this month's cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to editor@ieclmagazine.com. You could receive \$100!

LINEWORKERS POWER OUR LIVES

BY SCOTT MEINECKE



You may not think about them until your power goes out, but electric lineworkers protect our homes and communities 24 hours a

day. Like other first responders who keep us safe, lineworkers endure all kinds of weather and challenging conditions.

In April, we officially celebrate Lineworker Appreciation Day to honor the men and women who power our lives. However, the work of lineworkers is celebrated and appreciated every day of the year. Here are some facts about the career of lineworkers.

Nearly two centuries of history

Lineworkers first appeared during the 1840s rush to spread telegraph service across the U.S., stringing wires between trees and other natural objects. It didn't take long for everyone to realize tall poles were safer and more practical.

Today, more than 122,000 U.S. lineworkers are responsible for maintaining and upgrading the nation's electric grid that connects more than 7,300 power plants to 145 million consumers. The grid also includes 60,000 miles of high-voltage lines, millions of miles of distribution lines and more than 50 million transformers.

On-the-job training

Described by the U.S. Department of Energy as one of the nation's highest-paid professions that doesn't demand postsecondary education, becoming a journeyman lineworker typically requires a high school diploma or equivalent, training and a paid apprenticeship, which generally spans four years. Apprentice lineworkers receive hands-on training and experience in the field before advancing to "journeyman" status.

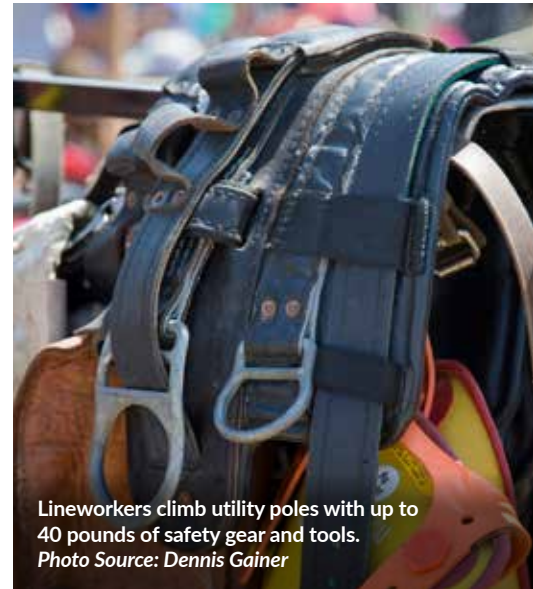
Powering our communities

Restoring electricity after a power outage is just one of the many duties of lineworkers and is often the most visible. In addition, lineworkers perform many other essential services that power Iowa's communities. Some of these responsibilities include:

- Installing and connecting new power lines to homes and businesses;
- Maintaining and performing upgrades to improve our electric grid;
- Diagnosing and pinpointing power delivery issues;
- Planning and managing large-scale projects; and
- Ensuring safe work practices in often challenging conditions.

Inspiring safety

Each year, lineworkers respond to devastating storms and the damage they leave behind. In addition, lineworkers face various dangers, including electric shock, falls from elevated work locations and roadside traffic accidents.



Lineworkers climb utility poles with up to 40 pounds of safety gear and tools.
Photo Source: Dennis Gainer

Safety is always the number one priority, so lineworkers continuously receive training to stay mindful of safety requirements and up to date on the latest equipment and procedures.

The next time you see a lineworker, remember to thank them for their essential work. And always remember to move over or slow down if you see any vehicle stopped on the side of the road with flashing lights activated. Our lineworkers and their families thank you!

Scott Meinecke is the director of safety and loss control for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

WIN A \$100 GIFT CARD TO A LOCAL GARDEN CENTER!

It's gardening season! Whether you are planting a garden or a pollinator habitat, it's rewarding to create the perfect backyard oasis. To help your green thumb this season, we're giving away a \$100 gift card from a local garden center.

Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.ieclmagazine.com no later than April 30, 2024. You must be a member of one of Iowa's electric cooperatives to win. There's no obligation associated with entering, we don't share entrant information with anyone and multiple entries from the same account will be disqualified. The winner of the Express Finish Toaster from the February issue was James Denney, a Southwest Iowa REC member-consumer.



ENTER ONLINE BY APRIL 30!

THANK YOU FOR A SUCCESSFUL ANNUAL MEETING

A heartfelt “thank you” to our member-owners who participated in this year’s annual meeting. It was another year of successful connections and engaging conversations.

The meeting provided an opportunity for reflection on the origins of Franklin REC. Lauren Koehler, a family and consumer sciences education and studies major at Iowa State University, presented and traced the history of electricity in the household. Franklin REC was established to meet the shared needs of united individuals with a common goal: to bring electricity into rural Iowa for their homes and farmsteads.

The cooperative frequently looks back on its roots and envisions the future path for the success and well-being of both Franklin REC and our valued members. Thank you to all our member-owners as we continue to provide you with another year of safe, reliable energy to power your lives.



Office
1560 Highway 65 • P.O. Box 437
Hampton, IA 50441

Office Hours
Monday through Friday, 7 a.m.-3:30 p.m.
Closed Saturdays, Sundays and holidays

Telephone Number
641-456-2557
Calls answered 24/7

Secure Pay-by-Phone Number
1-844-344-4370

Website
www.franklinrec.coop

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

ALL THE ABOVE IS ALL WE NEED

BY GARRETT THOMPSON



In past columns, we’ve discussed the term “all the above.” It’s in reference to the need for all generational assets to be included in an electric provider’s energy portfolio. This includes all forms of generation, such as coal, hydro, wind, solar, natural gas, batteries and nuclear. To be able to provide safe, affordable and reliable electricity for your everyday needs, we must be able to employ as many of those assets as possible.

It often helps to think of an all-the-above mentality like a retirement account, such as a 401k. Most financial professionals won’t advise placing all your retirement money into one single company’s stock. What would happen if that company had a catastrophic event and their stock plummeted and turned into a penny stock? That would be devastating and is the main reason why it’s smart to spread your money around to diversify your risk. An all-the-above energy portfolio helps diversify risk as well.

Single source risks

Take coal for example. It’s not wise to only have coal-fueled plants for your electric needs. What happens if the price of coal skyrockets, the coal supply chain runs into issues or the government steps in and limits the amount of coal or the type of coal that can be used in these plants?

Let’s also look at solar as a sole generation source. If we are in the middle of winter and have 10 straight days of cloudy skies, how will we heat our homes? According to www.currentresults.com, the Des Moines area has 202 days with sun, which means there are 163 days without. That would be equivalent to living in the dark for over five months!

However, if we employ both coal and solar generation resources, they can work together and pick up the slack when the other struggles. This affords us the ability to deliver the reliable, safe and affordable power you have come to know and expect from Franklin REC.

Continued discussion

We at Franklin REC want to continue this discussion over the coming months. To do that, we will choose a few of the more popular energy generation resources and perform a deeper dive into each one. That way, we, including myself, can better understand how they work and the advantages and disadvantages of each.

If you have any questions throughout this series, please reach out and we will be glad to research and respond in a timely manner. Is there a specific generation resource you want to see covered? Let us know that, too!

*Garrett Thompson is the CEO/
general manager of Franklin REC.*

7,200 VOLT LINES RESTORING POWER TO 16 YEARS ON THE JOB 500 MEMBERS BUT RIGHT NOW IT'S YOU I'M WORRIED ABOUT.

HIS JOB IS DANGEROUS ENOUGH. The last thing he needs is for you to drive into his utility truck because you ignored the flashing lights, cones and signs. When you see utility crews at work, slow down and move over. You have the power to protect a life.

MOVE OVER SLOW DOWN



OUTDOOR SAFETY TIPS FOR YOUTH

As the sun shines brighter and the days grow longer, spring and summer become the seasons of endless adventures and outdoor activities for children. However, amidst the fun and excitement, it's crucial for parents and guardians to prioritize safety, especially when it comes to electricity. From swimming pool mishaps to backyard playtime, the risks associated with electrical hazards are real.

Consider these helpful reminders as we head into warmer weather.

TIP Outdoor play
From trampolines to inflatable bounce houses, outdoor play areas are synonymous with spring and summer fun. Yet, overhead power lines or buried cables pose a significant risk. Before setting up play equipment, carefully survey the area and maintain a safe distance from power lines. Encourage children to avoid flying kites or climbing trees near electrical infrastructure to minimize the risk of accidental contact. Remember to call 811 at least 48 hours before digging at your service location to avoid contact with underground public utility services.

TIP Pool safety
During the heat, swimming pools offer a refreshing escape for kids. Nevertheless, the combination of water and electricity can be lethal. Ensure that all poolside electrical equipment, such as pumps, lights and outlets, are properly grounded and installed by a certified electrician. Furthermore, establish clear rules prohibiting the use of

electronic devices near the pool to prevent accidents caused by wet hands.

TIP Sun safety
Sun safety is essential. Encourage youth to wear sunscreen, hats and sunglasses when spending extended periods outdoors and seek shade during peak sun hours to reduce the risk of sunburn or heat-related illnesses.

TIP Lightning safety
Educate children about the dangers of lightning and the importance of seeking shelter indoors at the first sign of a storm. Remind them to wait at least 30 minutes after the last clap of thunder before resuming outdoor activities.

TIP Educate
Above all, instilling a sense of awareness and responsibility in children is essential to warm weather safety. Teach them about the fundamentals of electricity, including the dangers of tampering with outlets or electronic devices. Supervise outdoor playtime and regularly reinforce safety guidelines to ensure that children understand and adhere to precautions.

As you embrace the joys of the season, prioritizing electrical safety is essential to safeguarding children from potential hazards. By implementing proactive measures and fostering a culture of awareness, parents and guardians can create a summer environment that is both fun-filled and free from electrical accidents. Let this season be remembered for laughter, adventures, and, most importantly, safety.

FROM YOUR BOARD ROOM

During the February meeting, Franklin REC directors:

- Approved work orders and special equipment capitalization of \$25,626.40
- Approved two Operation Round Up requests
- Approved changes to two sections of the employee handbook
- Approved a revolving loan application
- Approved an Industrial Park development agreement
- Approved the presented estate patronage retirements
- Approved Federated Insurance Subscriber's Agreement & Power of Attorney

A FUN SURPRISE IN THIS MONTH'S BILL

You will find a coloring page waiting to be brought to life inside this month's bill! But that's not all. By coloring and submitting it back to the cooperative by April 30, your child will be entered into a random drawing to win an epic summer adventure kit!

If you're all about paperless bills or need extra copies, we have you covered. You can find a coloring page on our website, Facebook page or in our office.





ELECTRIFIED AGRICULTURAL EQUIPMENT

BY JENNAH DENNEY

The electrification trend in agricultural equipment has gained momentum in recent years as farmers increasingly embrace electric vehicles and machinery. This shift offers numerous advantages, including reduced carbon emissions, lower operating costs, improved energy efficiency and quieter operation.

Smaller electric equipment, such as irrigation systems and utility vehicles, are becoming increasingly popular. Many farmers are now using electric motors in place of older, inefficient diesel motors for farm irrigation.

Larger agricultural equipment can be difficult to replace with electric alternatives due to their weight. In response, manufacturers are developing tractors that are more compact,

lower in weight and feature battery-powered options. The compact and lighter design of these tractors allows for better maneuverability in smaller farming spaces, improving efficiency and productivity in the field. For example, a small orchard farmer may opt for a compact electric tractor instead of a larger, traditional tractor. The smaller size and electric power allows farmers to easily navigate between rows of trees without causing damage to the fruit or soil, ultimately increasing the yield and reducing maintenance costs.

In addition to smaller equipment, drones equipped with electric agricultural technology are proving to be valuable in many cases. Electric drones allow farmers to monitor crops, perform precision spraying and even participate in crop pollination. Equipped with

specialized sensors and cameras, these drones capture high-resolution imagery to help farmers make informed decisions about crop management. The versatility and cost-effectiveness of electric drones make them a valuable tool for optimizing crop health, detecting pests and enhancing irrigation practices.

Use for various types of farming operations

Here are some common types of farming operations that benefit from electrified agricultural equipment.

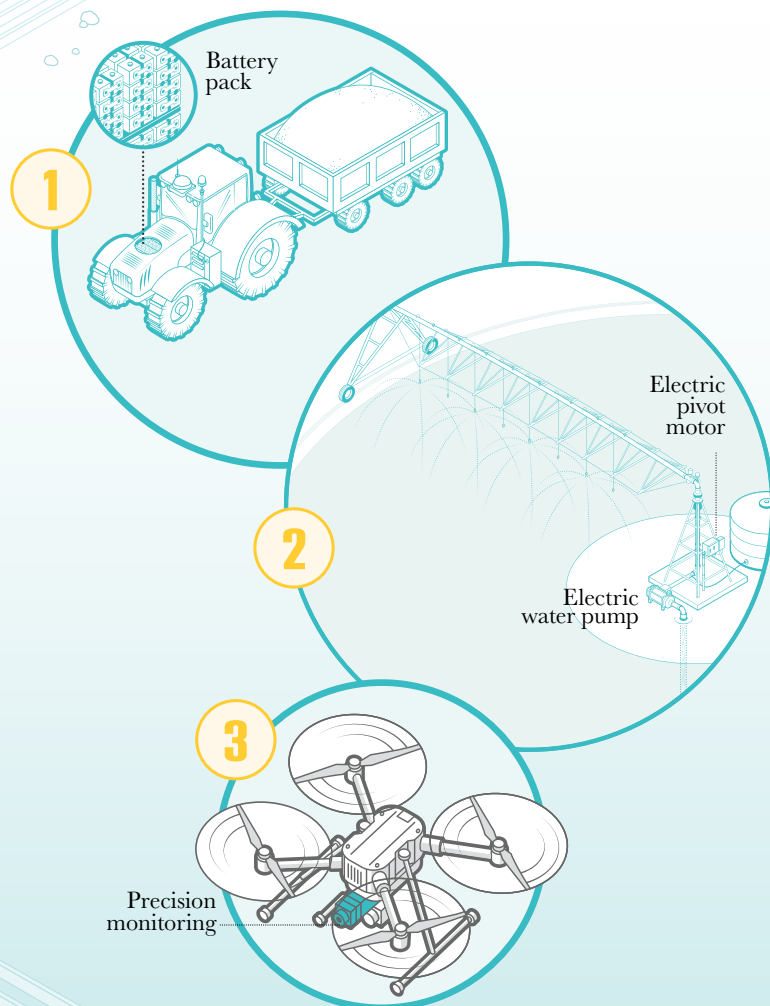
Crop farming: Electric equipment, such as tractors, sprayers and harvesters are used in crop farming operations for tasks like plowing, planting, spraying pesticides, drying and harvesting crops.

Livestock farming: Electric equipment can be utilized in livestock farming

THE FUTURE OF ELECTRIFIED AG

Many farmers are making the transition from gas-powered equipment to electric models. Electric-powered farming equipment offers lower operating costs, improved efficiency and quieter operation. Here are a few ways the electrification trend is gaining momentum on the farm.

- 1 Electric tractors** show promise for increased efficiency and reduced maintenance.
- 2 Electric motors for irrigation** are more efficient than diesel motors and result in greater cost savings for farmers.
- 3 Drones equipped with electric agricultural technology** make them a valuable tool for optimizing crop health, detecting pests and enhancing irrigation practices.



for tasks such as feeding, milking and waste management.

Vineyards and orchards: Electric pruning equipment can be used in vineyards and orchards for precision pruning of grapevines, fruit trees and bushes.

Greenhouses and nursery operations: Electric equipment such as tillers, seeders and potting machines are often used in greenhouse and nursery operations for efficient soil preparation, seeding and transplanting.

Organic farming: Electrified agricultural equipment is also used in organic farming operations, with a focus on sustainability and environmentally friendly practices. Electric tools and equipment help minimize the use of fossil fuels and reduce emissions.

Benefits of electrified ag equipment
Electrified agricultural equipment offers several benefits beyond reducing carbon emissions.

Electric drivetrains are simpler and easier to maintain compared to traditional tractors, resulting in lower maintenance costs. Additionally, electric equipment is more energy efficient, converting a higher percentage of electrical energy into usable work.

Electricity flowing through batteries and electric motors is more efficient than diesel being delivered to farms, moved into tanks and burned in diesel engines. As battery technology advances, further improvements in electric farming equipment are expected.

This efficiency leads to reduced energy consumption and lower operating costs for farmers. Additionally, the quieter operation of electric equipment minimizes disruptions to nearby communities, livestock and wildlife, making it ideal for residential areas or sensitive environments.

Considerations for farmers

When considering electrified equipment, farmers should evaluate their specific needs, including power requirements and operational tasks. Farmers should work with their local electric cooperative to assess the farm's power supply capacity to ensure it can handle the additional load without causing issues. By conducting a thorough analysis of their unique needs and goals, farmers can determine if adopting electrified agricultural equipment is a suitable and advantageous option.

The electrification of agricultural equipment presents a promising future for farmers. Farmers can improve operational efficiency and benefit from cost savings by embracing electric vehicles, machinery and drones.

Jennah Denney writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives.

EGG-CEPTIONAL

RECIPES



FAMILY BREAKFAST CASSEROLE

- 1 pound sausage
- 6 slices white bread
- 4 large eggs
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon mustard powder
- 2 cups whole milk
- 1 cup mild cheddar cheese

Cook sausage on low heat, then drain. Line bread in a 9x13-inch pan sprayed with olive oil. Mix eggs, salt, mustard powder and milk; stir in sausage. Pour over bread and sprinkle cheese over egg mixture. Cover and refrigerate overnight. Bake covered at 325 degrees F for 45-60 minutes. Uncover and bake for 30 minutes. Serves 6-9

Arlene Husak • Toledo
T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative

CRUSTLESS CUSTARD

- 6-8 egg yolks
- ½ cup sugar
- 2½ cups half-and-half (or milk)
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- ½ teaspoon nutmeg
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon

Beat all ingredients together. Pour in pie pan or custard cups and bake at 450 degrees F for 15 minutes. Turn oven down to 350 degrees F and continue to bake until knife comes out clean. Serves 8

Sara Riley • Conrad
Grundy County Rural Electric Cooperative

BREAKFAST FRENCH TOAST

- butter, to coat bowl
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1 tablespoon milk
- 2 slices dry bread
- cinnamon, to taste

Coat a microwavable bowl with butter, then add eggs. Add milk and beat. Break up dry bread and combine with egg mixture. Shake cinnamon on top as desired. Microwave 1 minute, stir, then microwave 1 more minute.

Ken and Jill Leafgreen • Fairfield
Access Energy Cooperative

NO CRUST CRAB QUICHE BAKE

- 8 eggs (or 16 ounces liquid egg product)
- 2 cups half-and-half
- 1 red pepper, chopped
- 8 ounces imitation crab meat, chopped
- 1 cup bread crumbs
- 1 cup Swiss or mozzarella cheese
- 1 cup cheddar cheese
- 2 green onions, chopped
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper

Combine all ingredients in a bowl, then transfer to a greased 9x13-inch baking dish. Bake at 350 degrees F for 30-40 minutes or until a knife inserted in the center comes out clean. Let stand for 10 minutes to set up. Serves 6-8

Diana Thorn • Marshalltown
Consumers Energy

CARB-FREE EGG BAKE

- 2 cups sausage, cooked and crumbled
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- ½ cup onion, chopped
- 12 eggs
- ¾ cup half-and-half
- ¾ cup sour cream
- 1½ cups cheddar cheese
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper

Cook sausage, garlic and onion, drain off grease. In a large bowl, whisk together eggs with half-and-half. Add sour cream, cheddar cheese, sausage mixture, salt and pepper. Mix well and pour into buttered 9x13-inch pan. Bake at 350 degrees F for 40-60 minutes. Recipe can be refrigerated and baked the next morning. Serves 10-12

**Glenda DeBoer • Rock Rapids
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative**

AIR FRYER EGG FOR ONE

- 1-2 tablespoons picante sauce
- 1 egg
- 1-2 tablespoons cheddar cheese, grated

Preheat air fryer to 370 degrees F. Spray a custard dish or similar dish with non-stick cooking spray. Add picante sauce. Break egg on top of sauce and sprinkle with cheese. For a runny yolk, air fry for 6 minutes, add more time for a firm yolk. For a sodium-restricted diet, reduce sauce and cheese. Serves 1

**Sandra Lacey • Danbury
North West Rural Electric Cooperative**

EGG SPINACH CASSEROLE

- 2 10-ounce packages frozen spinach
- 1 pound sausage
- ½ cup onions
- 7 eggs
- 4 cups cottage cheese
- 6 tablespoons flour
- 8 ounces cheddar cheese
- 3 tablespoons butter
- optional: broccoli, asparagus

Quickly thaw spinach in colander under hot water and drain well. Spinach can be substituted with broccoli or asparagus. Cook sausage with onions, drain. In a large bowl, mix spinach, sausage, eggs, cottage cheese, flour and cheddar cheese. Put mixture in a greased 9x13-inch pan and dot with butter. Cover and bake at 350 degrees F for 1 hour. Serves 10-12

**Trudy Woolman • Stuart
Guthrie County Rural Electric Cooperative Association**

BACON EGG CASSEROLE

- 6 slices bacon, diced
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1 small onion, diced
- 1 red bell pepper, chopped
- 1 green bell pepper, chopped
- 12 eggs, beaten
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 1-2 cups shredded cheddar cheese

In a large skillet, cook bacon over medium heat until it becomes soft. Add minced garlic and onion, and cook until bacon begins to brown. Add red and green peppers, cover and cook for 5-10 minutes or until the veggies are soft and bacon is browned, stirring occasionally. Remove from heat and let cool. In a medium bowl, whisk together eggs, then add salt and pepper. Add cooled bacon and veggie mixture to the beaten eggs and stir. Add cheese and pour into greased 9x13-inch baking dish. Bake at 350 degrees F for 25-30 minutes or until top is set. Let cool slightly before serving.

**Kathryn Meyer • Rowan
Prairie Energy Cooperative**

WANTED:

WRAP & SANDWICH RECIPES



THE REWARD:

\$25 FOR EVERY ONE WE PUBLISH!

Deadline is April 30.

Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name and the recipe category on all submissions. **Also provide the number of servings per recipe.**

EMAIL: recipes@ieclmagazine.com

(Attach your recipe as a Word document or PDF to your email message.)

MAIL: Recipes

Iowa Electric Cooperative Living • 8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48, Des Moines, IA 50322-2992

DIGGING FOR DOLLARS: HOW TO SAVE MONEY IN THE GARDEN

BY GEORGE WEIGEL

Plant prices are up sharply. So are insecticides, fertilizers, deer repellents, mulch, tools and other accessories gardeners use to keep their green investments alive. Even bagged dirt is no longer dirt cheap. What's a gardener on a tight budget to do? Fortunately, this is one pastime that lends itself to lots of belt-tightening strategies.

Ways to save on plant purchases

Consider perennials relegated to a bargain rack after they've finished blooming for the season. Annuals and vegetables that are still viable but unsold after the spring rush are another great way to save. You can also look for trees and shrubs that are misshapen markdowns but fixable via pruning and patience. Tulips, daffodils and other spring-blooming bulbs are often 50% off when unsold but still plantable by the end of October.

If you shop local, get on your favorite garden center's loyalty program.

These programs offer discounts, coupons, rewards and special sales to regular customers. While you're at it, let local garden center managers know you're interested in plants they want to clear out.

Pay attention to unconventional sources including plant societies, Master Gardeners, libraries, public gardens, farmers markets, schools and garden clubs – all of which often hold plant sale fundraisers using divisions from members' yards, locally started seedlings and discounted greenhouse transplants.

Ways to trim the plant budget

Wherever you buy plants, opt for less-expensive smaller sizes. Given patience and good growing conditions, a quart-sized perennial will end up at the same mature size as a gallon-sized one but at a significantly lower starting price.

Opting for small especially saves on trees, which can double in price for just two or three feet of additional height.

Starting new plants from seed yields way more plants to the dollar than transplants. Planting seeds directly in the ground outside is even less expensive, bypassing the need for lights, pots and potting mix.

A third plant budget-stretcher is mining your own plants for expansion. Most perennial flowers can be dug and divided into fist-sized pieces after several years of growth, giving you free plants to use elsewhere.

Check with friends and neighbors to see if they'd like to trade divisions, which can yield free new varieties for your yard. New shrubs, trees, roses and evergreens can be created by snipping 4- to 6-inch pieces off the tips of "mother plants" and sticking them into moist potting mix. That induces roots to grow from the buried cut ends, giving you a new "baby" copy of the plant.

Potted plant savings

Save on your potted plant budget by starting with fewer plants each season. With patience, pots of fewer premium-priced potted annuals will fill in eventually and cost less than tightly packed ones.

Another pot option is scavenging the yard for perennial flowers you can dig and divide to use in pots. The best are ones with colorful foliage that add interest beyond the few weeks they're in flower, such as coralbells, hostas, golden sedge, variegated liriopse and ferns. Return the perennials to the ground in fall to overwinter and mine again next year.

Most so-called "houseplants" (crotons, palms, snake plants, peace lilies, rubber plants, etc.) are tropical or sub-tropical species that do perfectly fine outside in northerly summers and inside over winter.

Ways to save on gardening products

The fastest way to save on gardening products is to cut out things your plants don't need and reduce the amounts you use, such as fertilizer.

Plants take up only the nutrients they need. Adding more doesn't make them grow bigger or better and is a waste of money.

If plants are growing well, there's usually no need to add anything. If they're not, a soil test will tell if lack of nutrition is a culprit – along with precisely what nutrients are needed and in what amounts. Extension offices and many garden centers offer inexpensive DIY soil-test kits to help you spend fertilizer dollars wisely

Bug and disease sprays are another potential cost-saver. Some gardeners routinely use pesticides "just in case," wasting money and potentially killing beneficial insects that would've controlled pest bugs naturally (and at no charge).

Expensive potting mix can be stretched by mixing your own from bulk ingredients or by "refreshing" last year's saved mix with half new mix.

George Weigel is the author of five gardening books and is a special contributor to Iowa Electric Cooperative Living magazine.



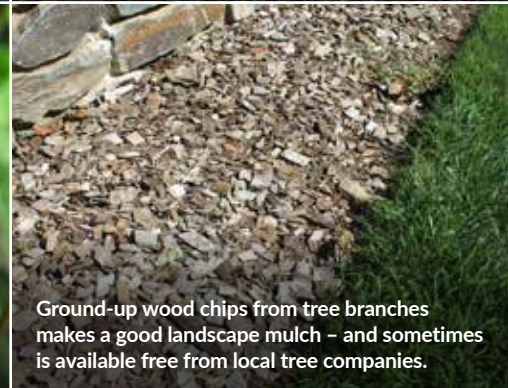
Perennials with colorful foliage, such as the coralbells in the middle of this container, can be dug and used in pots to trim the flower budget.



Dividing clumps of expanded perennials is a way to add plants at no charge.



Saving your own seeds to plant next year is a practice that cuts the seed-buying budget.



Ground-up wood chips from tree branches makes a good landscape mulch – and sometimes is available free from local tree companies.



Yard sales are one unconventional source where you might find plant bargains.



Plants are less expensive when you start them from seed vs. buying transplants that are greenhouse-grown.

SIX MONEY-SAVING GARDENING PRACTICES

Changes in how you garden is an avenue for limiting expenses. Here are six tips to consider:

- 1 Make the most of retail seed.** Most seeds bought in packs are good for two or more years, especially if you store them in a cool, dry place (the refrigerator is perfect). If the packs have more seed than you can use, share or trade with gardening friends and neighbors or look for seed swaps.
- 2 Make your own compost.** Start a pile or two where you can recycle your property's leaves, grass clippings, spent plants and kitchen scraps into highly nutritious (and free) compost.

If you buy bagged compost (or soil or mulch), look for discounted broken bags.

- 3 Watch for annuals that pop up on their own.** Flowering annuals might sprout in spring from your own self-seeders as well as seeds brought in by

birds, bugs and the wind. If you recognize these as flowers and not weeds, you've just been gifted with free flowers.

- 4 Take season-long advantage of all vegetable garden space.** Many gardeners plant veggies once in spring, then let the space empty after harvest. Reload harvested space with new crops planted in summer to fully use the growing season.
- 5 Save water by letting lawns go dormant during a hot, dry summer spell.** Most turfgrass can survive without water for at least three or four weeks after going brown in a summer-survival dormant state. There is no need to water until then.

- 6 Save on mulch by covering bare ground with low, spreading ground cover plants.** Examples are creeping sedum, creeping thyme, leadwort and liriopse. You'll pay more at planting time, but as the plants spread, they'll hold down weeds without having to buy mulch.

UNsung HEROES DEDICATED TO KEEPING THE LIGHTS ON

Franklin REC's mission is to provide safe, reliable energy day in and day out is made possible by the dedicated work of 15 employees united with one goal: to keep the lights on. With more than 190 years of experience under one roof, Franklin REC's employees are a powerhouse of knowledge and skill.

As electric cooperatives nationwide celebrate the tireless efforts of those who power the lives of members, businesses and communities, Franklin REC takes this opportunity to acknowledge the driving force behind your power.

Linemen

While being a lineworker may not seem like a glamorous job, it is undeniably essential to our community's well-being. Nationwide, approximately 120,000 electric lineworkers put their life on the line daily in one of the U.S.' most

dangerous occupations. At Franklin REC, our six linemen are entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring uninterrupted power flow 24/7 year-round. To achieve this, they maintain more than 800 miles of power lines across six counties, implementing year-round improvements, vegetation management and technological upgrades.

To uphold Franklin REC's commitment to reliability, the line crew collaborates closely with Franklin REC warehouseman Jens Hovenga. Maintaining a well-stocked, organized and adaptable warehouse is crucial for swift response during outages or large work plans. Through this collaborative effort, the cooperative's line crew and Hovenga remain prepared for any challenge they may encounter.

Administrative personnel

While Franklin REC's line crew

operates in the field, the cooperative's administrative personnel continue to be the beacon of knowledge for our membership. From energy efficiency to billing and alternative energy to outage management, our staff is educated and equipped to address all service-related inquiries. Embracing technological advancements, our administrative personnel have expertly adjusted to changes, facilitating increased efficiency in daily operations.

Over the last five years, Franklin REC has implemented significant technological upgrades, including the outage mapping system and metering system, impacting operations such as outage monitoring and billing. Our administrative personnel have not only adjusted to internal changes but have also adapted to evolving member needs. Technological innovations, including our SmartHub app and the rising trend of paperless billing and online bill payment, have empowered member-owners to have detailed access to their electric utility information. Our administrative team stands ready to address all inquiries, ensuring seamless delivery of electric services.

Management staff

At the helm of Franklin REC's operations is the cooperative's management team, overseeing the daily functions of the cooperative. From maintaining fiscal responsibility to planning the year's work plan for the line crew operations and installing and monitoring the metering system to advocating for cooperatives at a national level, Franklin REC's management staff is well-versed. Grounded in the cooperative business model, the management team embodies the seven principles guiding our daily operations.

Board of directors

Comprising of seven experienced delegates, Franklin REC's board



Pictured from left to right: Warehouseman Jens Hovenga with linemen Austin Neff, Chace Klein, Tom Demro, Cole Marzen and Hunter Sutter.



Pictured from left to right: Administrative personnel Emily Rush, Madison Alert and Christy Mason.

of directors brings a wealth of knowledge to the decision-making table, boasting a combined 128 years of experience and education. Franklin REC directors are an arsenal of knowledge; many directors hold national accreditations and represent the cooperative on various boards. Committed to ongoing education, directors regularly attend training that helps bring knowledge and perspective when making decisions and addressing the industry's future challenges.

Franklin REC sincerely appreciates our line crew, warehouseman, administrative personnel, management staff and board of directors for their unwavering dedication. With more than 300 years of collective experience serving the cooperative and its members, Franklin REC takes immense pride in delivering safe, reliable electricity. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our roster of committed and hardworking cooperative personnel.



Pictured from left to right: Member Service Representative Chad Foster, CEO/General Manager Garrett Thompson, Line Superintendent Scott Hagenson and Office Manager/CFO Karen Ringleb.



Front row pictured from left to right: Darwin Van Horn, Board President Gordon Greimann and John Snyder. Back row pictured from left to right: David Keninger, Matt Roelfs, Dale Schaefer and Don Greimann.

SAFELY HARNESSING CONTROLLED BURNS

Harnessing controlled burns can yield numerous benefits for agricultural landscapes. However, without proper management, these burns pose significant risks, including property damage, power disruptions, injuries and fatalities. Franklin REC advocates prioritizing safety and offers insights on essential precautions, particularly concerning power infrastructure.

Before initiating a burn, familiarize yourself with relevant laws and

regulations. Only individuals proficient in fire management and burn paths should undertake such activities. Avoid burning near public thoroughfares or aviation routes to mitigate potential visibility hazards. Inform potentially affected parties – including neighbors, local fire services and law enforcement – and adhere to any mandatory permit requirements dictated by local authorities.

Power pole and line considerations

Preventive measures, such as clearing grass and weeds and dampening the area surrounding poles, help minimize fire risks. Be vigilant to prevent water streams from contacting power lines. Consider environmental factors, including temperature, humidity and wind patterns. Optimal conditions include low wind speeds and fixed wind

direction to prevent fire escalation. Continuously monitor weather forecasts and on-site conditions to ensure safe burn operations.

After the fire is kindled, exercise caution around power poles and lines. A power pole fire could trigger widespread outages and substantial financial liabilities for the responsible party.

If a power pole ignites, promptly notify the fire department and utility provider to address potential electrical hazards. Even if you believe you can extinguish the fire independently, inform the utility so they can assess the extent of damage. Creosote, a preservative within the pole, may continue burning internally, posing risks of shock, electrocution or uncontrolled fires from downed lines.



Important: Never leave a fire unattended. Before leaving the burned area, ensure the fire has been completely extinguished.

CELEBRATE EARTH DAY: WHY TAKING STEPS TO CONSERVE MATTERS

BY MIRANDA BOUTELLE

Earth Day is April 22, a time when we celebrate this beautiful planet we are lucky to call home. During this day of appreciation, it's a great time to take action at home by making changes to conserve energy. If we all contribute, even small adjustments and changes to how much energy we use can have positive impacts.

Conservation vs. efficiency

Before diving into ways to use less energy, it's important to know the difference between conservation and energy efficiency. Energy efficiency refers to equipment that uses less energy to do the same job. For example, ENERGY STAR®-certified refrigerators keep food just as fresh as standard models but use about 9% less energy to do it, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. Conservation is using less energy by changing behavior and practices. For example, adjusting your thermostat to be closer to the temperature outside during

warmer months or turning off the lights or a ceiling fan when you leave the room conserves energy.

Conservation has the best return on investment. It's often free and can save a little or a lot – depending on what you are changing and how drastic of a change you make.

Tackle the biggest energy users

The biggest energy user in the average household is heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) equipment. Keep your house a little warmer in the summer and a little cooler in the winter. A good rule of thumb is to set the thermostat to 68 degrees F in the winter and to 78 degrees F in the summer.

Typically, the second biggest energy user is the water heater. Replacing an electric storage water heater with a heat pump/ hybrid water heater is an excellent example of an energy-efficient project. Adjusting the temperature

setting to the recommended 120 degrees F and using less hot water in your home conserves energy. Wash clothes in cold water. When washing dishes, don't let the hot water run longer than necessary.

Earth Day also lends itself to thinking of ways we can connect with each other and limit screen time. Look for electricity-free opportunities with your family or community. Consider unplugging and getting outside with friends and family. Going for a hike, a walk or even just spending time in your yard or local park is a great way to reconnect with others and nature. Before you head out, adjust that thermostat and turn off everything possible. Unplug chargers from outlets and turn off all electronics and lights.

Miranda Boutelle writes on energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing nearly 900 electric co-ops.



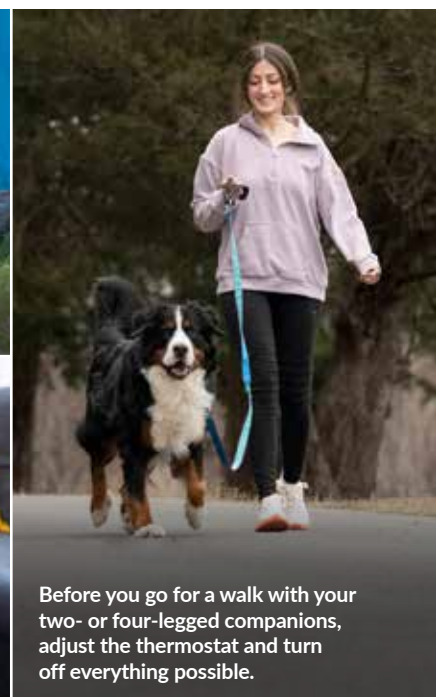
Even small changes, including unplugging chargers from outlets and turning off lights, conserve energy in your home.



On Earth Day, think of ways your family can limit screen time and connect with each other.



Look for electricity-free opportunities with your family, such as starting a game night.



Before you go for a walk with your two- or four-legged companions, adjust the thermostat and turn off everything possible.

IT'S OK WHEN THINGS MAKE YOU HAPPY

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

One of my guilty pleasures is trolling thrift shops, garage sales, antique shops and other secondhand stores. My mom's father, Ralph Brown, was one of the original fans of Goodwill, and he passed his love of thrifting onto my mom, who passed it onto me – so that makes me a third-generation thrifter, right?

Some of my favorite finds revolve around dishes and farm-themed items. I savor the moments when I'm sipping green tea from my blue Fiestaware teacup and saucer, which I scored at the Coralville Goodwill last summer. One of my latest quirky finds came from the Goodwill in Spencer – two cow-themed mugs for 99 cents each. Cartoon designs of Holstein cows on vacation to the Black Hills, Florida, Mardi Gras in New Orleans and a ski resort in Colorado make me smile.

When I posted a picture of these fun mugs on my Facebook page, one of my friends shared this comment:

“Adorable! I have a picture on my wall of a farm wife milking her Jersey cow, out in a pen with a chicken or two and a small cat. I bought it at an auction years ago and love it – just because. I couldn't begin to explain to anyone what thoughts it conjures up for me when I look at it. Some days, I am so thankful

I've lived long enough to have time to just sit, think and remember.”

Research connects happiness to ordinary things

This got me thinking – can things truly make us happy? Is it OK if they do? For years, we've been advised that if we want to be happier, we should invest in experiences rather than things. But what about those go-to purchases of ours – maybe those comfortable boots, an interesting coffee mug or fresh-cut flowers – that just make us feel good?

It turns out that the material things in our lives aren't incidental to our happiness. That's according to Ingrid Fetell Lee, author of “Joyful: The Surprising Power of Ordinary Things to Create Extraordinary Happiness.”

Her research shows that the objects in our surroundings can have a surprisingly powerful influence on our emotional well-being.

Take flowers, for example. Studies show that just being exposed to flowers can lift our mood, reduce anxiety, improve memory and even decrease the pain medication patients use in a hospital after surgery.

Manmade objects can have similar effects. Did you know that objects with round or symmetrical shapes are known to elicit positive emotions, while sharp, angular, asymmetrical objects are associated with tension and sadness? That helps explain

why I love the glossy, round, bright red teapot I purchased at a local thrift shop for \$2.

It's clear that objects can affect our happiness in deep ways, some that we aren't even consciously aware of. My advice? Choose items that enhance your joy and well-being rather than detract from it.



Linking the past and present

Objects that inspire joy give you a lasting sense of pleasure. Not only do these items connect you to the past (I'm thinking of the antique oak secretary/desk with a beveled, oval mirror in my living room), but the feelings they evoke are equally potent in the present.

Rather than thinking of our favorite things as wasteful or unnecessary indulgences, let's consider them treasures that can bring out our best selves.

Do you have an item that makes you happy every time you look at it or use it? Tell me about it at yettergirl@yahoo.com. I look forward to hearing from you.

Darcy Dougherty Maulsby lives near her family's Century Farm northwest of Lake City. Visit her at www.darcymaulsby.com.





IOWA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING


The magazine
for members of
Iowa's electric
cooperatives.

April 2024

Visit our website at www.franklinrec.coop

SAFETY

IS THE BACKBONE OF RELIABILITY



Safety is **#1** at your **Touchstone Energy® cooperative.** This commitment to provide electrical safety has always been our priority so we can deliver reliable energy and peace of mind. That's why safety runs through everything we do.



Touchstone Energy Cooperative
The power of human connections®