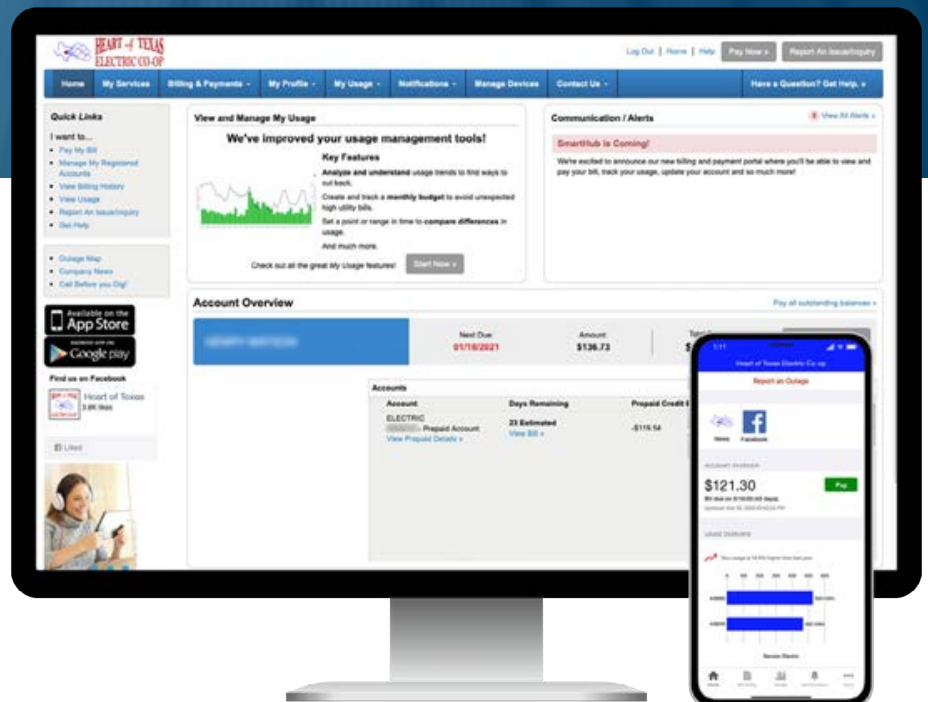




# SMARTHUB IS HERE!



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IS AVAILABLE ONLINE AT  
[hotec.coop/smarthub](http://hotec.coop/smarthub)



# SMART MANAGEMENT



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**SMART MANAGEMENT. SMART LIFE. SMARTHUB.**



**At Heart of Texas Electric Cooperative, we are excited about our member services upgrade. Beginning in July, we will roll out our new SmartHub app and billing layout. While this new system comes with a lot of great new features, the process of switching will require our members to download the SmartHub app and register their account.**

## IMPORTANT STEPS

### BEGINNING IN JULY

Our old billing system and online bill payment site is permanently offline. SmartHub has arrived for all members that use our online payment site for payments, automatic payments and paperless billing. Those using these features need to download the new app and set up their account on the new SmartHub platform. We will be sending out emails with enrollment directions, and enrollment assistance is available on [hotec.coop/smarthub](http://hotec.coop/smarthub).

Cash and check payments may be made in our offices or put in the night drop box at either location. You may also mail your payment to the address on your payment coupon or visit a VanillaDirect payment location. VanillaDirect payments require a barcode found in SmartHub under BILL & PAY look for Pay by Cash. Payments are no longer accepted at Fidelity Express locations. Visit our website, [hotec.coop](http://hotec.coop), for more information on payment locations.

To help members with our transition to SmartHub, late charges will be waived this month to serve you better.

### MANAGING YOUR ACCOUNT IS EASIER THAN EVER

You will be able to manage your account like never before through our web portal or mobile app. You'll be able to:

- View and pay your bill.
- Monitor your monthly usage.
- Send and receive communications about your service.

### WHAT DO YOU NEED TO REGISTER?

You need access to your email address and your account number. Your account number is on your monthly bill. For those members who have an old eight-digit account number, your number will change. New account numbers will be shown in enrollment emails and shown on the new bill print format. For example, if your account number looks similar to 19345678-001, your number will change.

### HOW WILL YOU REGISTER FOR SMARTHUB?

With the July launch of SmartHub, HOTEK is operating through a new billing and payment system. To continue to receive an electronic bill and pay your bill online, you are required to re-register as a new user through SmartHub.

When you get to the SmartHub login screen, click the link at the bottom of the screen that reads "New user? Sign up to access our self-service site." You will need your account number and your email address to register for SmartHub.

## IMPORTANT NOTICE

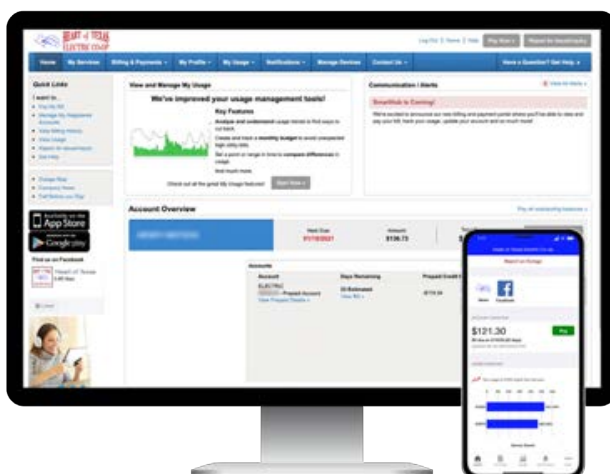
After you have successfully registered with SmartHub, you will receive a verification email. The first time you log in, you'll be asked to create a new password. Once you register for your online account, you will need to update your payment options.

### Auto-pay members will need to enter their debit or credit card or banking information into the new SmartHub system.

At the end of the registration process, we encourage you to select our paperless billing option so you can receive your new bill immediately, no matter where you are. Members who sign up for paperless billing during July will receive a \$5 credit on their August bill.

After registering, if you would like to add another existing account, click on the **My Profile** menu and then click on the **Manage My Registered Accounts** submenu. Inside you will find an **Add Account** button.

Detailed information on how to download our free, secure SmartHub app from the Apple or Google Play stores will be given on our website, [hotec.coop](http://hotec.coop).



### WHERE CAN YOU GET YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED?

If you have any questions or issues with the registration process, you can contact us by emailing [info@hotec.coop](mailto:info@hotec.coop) or by calling 1-800-840-2957. We will also have answers to frequently asked questions at [hotec.coop/smarthub](http://hotec.coop/smarthub).

# SMARTHUB TO-DO LIST!



## ✓ **JULY MUST-DO LIST**

**Help us help you by completing these action items this month.**

**1.** Sign up for your SmartHub account and set up paperless billing on [hotec.coop](http://hotec.coop).

**2.** Update your payment information.

If you are currently signed up for Auto Pay using your debit/credit card or bank draft, **you will need to reenroll in Auto Pay.**

If you use your bank's online bill payment service to schedule payments, you will need to verify your HOTECH account number to ensure that payments are routed properly. Members with eight-digit account numbers have been assigned new nine-digit numbers.

**3.** Scan this QR code to download the SmartHub app to your mobile device.



**SMART MANAGEMENT. SMART LIFE. SMARTHUB.**

COTTON GINS TRANSFORM  
THE LANDSCAPE

TEXAS BRIDGE,  
COLORADO PRIDE

CHET BRAVES  
THE GHOST ROAD

# Texas Coop Power

FOR HEART OF TEXAS EC MEMBERS

JULY 2022

## Texas' Best Bird

Kreuz Market  
serves up superb  
barbecued chicken



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# July 2022



08

## Prized Fibers

Cotton gins still turn sweat and tears into a treasured commodity.

*Story and photos by Julia Robinson*

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## Why'd the Chicken Cross the Pit?

Because Kreuz Market has perfected the once-scorned barbecued bird.

*By Joe Nick Patoski  
Photos by Wyatt McSpadden*

ON THE COVER

Chicken that pitmaster Roy Perez describes this way: "Simple. With love."

*Photo by Wyatt McSpadden*

ABOVE

Jerry Harris inspects raw cotton at King Mesa Gin.

*Photo by Julia Robinson*

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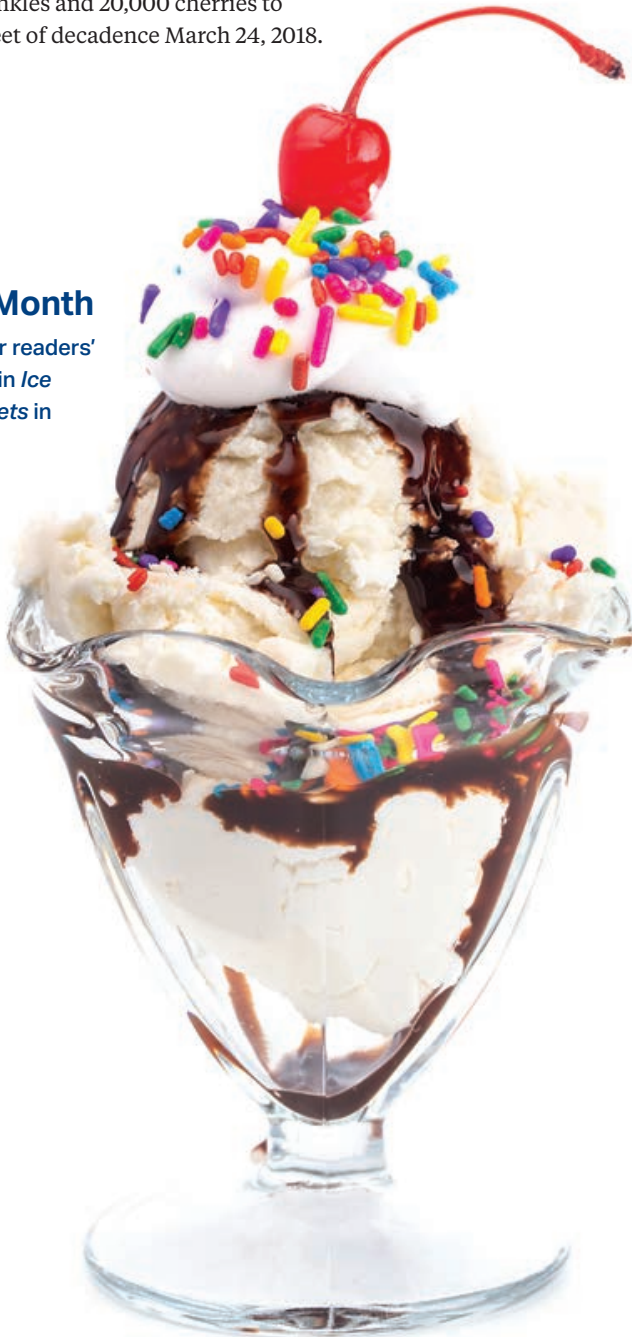
# Sundae Best

**THE WORLD'S LONGEST** ice cream sundae—more than 15 football fields long—was concocted four years ago in College Station.

The creators at the Spirit of Texas Festival used 500 gallons of H-E-B Texans Tackle Crackle ice cream, 2,000 cans of whipped cream, 300 gallons of chocolate and strawberry syrup, 25 pounds of sprinkles and 20,000 cherries to assemble 4,549 feet of decadence March 24, 2018.

## July National Ice Cream Month

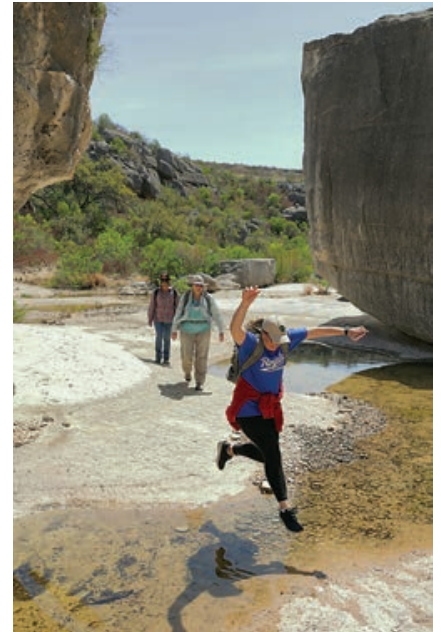
Celebrate with our readers' recipes, featured in *Ice Creams and Sorbets* in July 2021.



## WORKING FROM HOME?

Save electricity by unplugging your least-used devices—printers and scanners—when you don't need them.

Your electric cooperative is in the people business; it just happens to sell power. The less you use, the more you'll save.



## Dig This

Texas Co-op Power readers ... well, they rock.

One reader, inspired by an October 2021 story, donated \$20,000 to a research program in South Texas.

*Learning Rocks* featured a Shumla Archaeological Research and Education Center program, above, involving high school students in Comstock. The donation will help Shumla purchase a camera with accessories, scaffolding to help students photograph rock art and tablets for data entry.





## HQ TX

Texas is home to 53 Fortune 500 companies, the most in the nation.

### TCP Contests and More

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#### TEXAS GULF SHRIMP GIVEAWAY

Two readers will each win 5 pounds of wild-caught Texas shrimp. Enter now to win.

# News Flash

**LIGHTNING OVER TEXAS** reached a long way, though not to the ground.

A storm April 29, 2020, produced a bolt that stretched a record 477 miles, from Southeast Texas to Mississippi. Scientists used satellite technology to confirm the record in February.

Also this year, Flatonia, a small town about halfway between Houston and San Antonio, was announced as the lightning capital of the U.S. Vaisala, a weather measurement and analysis company, determined that Flatonia received 1,043 lightning events per square mile in 2021—more than any other city in the country.



## FINISH THIS SENTENCE

I FEEL  
PATRIOTIC  
WHEN ...

**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 May prompt: **Three words that brighten my day are ...**

I love you.

SANDRA BOWEN  
BIG COUNTRY EC  
HAWLEY

Ice cold beer.

STEPHEN SEWELL  
PEDERNALES EC  
KEMPNER

I've got this. (A nice young man ahead of me in line at 7-Eleven this morning decided to pay for my juice and coffee.)

LINDA RIDEOUT  
VIA FACEBOOK

To see more responses, read Currents online.



BRAVE UNION

**A Deep Dive**

“What a fascinating story about a fascinating aspect of our state. I was amazed to learn such a unique place exists in the Lone Star State.”

DONALD HAHN  
HAMILTON COUNTY EC  
HICO

**Hope Lives On**

To find that the photo of the Wantland family was taken inside what was the old Hope Lutheran Church of Buckholts really took my breath away [*'A Little Source of Joy,'* May 2022].

Our family were members of Hope Lutheran, and our daughter's wedding was the last one before the old church was hauled off to the pasture of the man who purchased it to use as a barn. The building was later cut into several pieces and moved to Round Top to be restored and used as a children's library.

Lamerle Zajicek  
Lucas



ERICH SCHLEGEL

I love Ms. Dolly, not only for her music [*'A Little Source of Joy,'* May 2022]. She has done so much for the community she grew up in.

SHERRI CONSTABLE  
VIA FACEBOOK

**It Takes the Cake**

The Texas Praline Sheet Cake featured in March was one of the most amazing cakes I've ever made. It was a big hit on our Easter table.

I've made several of the recipes featured in the magazine over the years and really liked them all, but this cake takes the cake.

Cindi Boyd  
Medina EC  
Freer

**A Great Mix**

I love your magazine. I am always surprised at how much you get into so few pages. And it's a great mix of heartfelt stories, usable information, wonderful recipes and beautiful pictures. You represent our state well.

Anita Askew  
Pedernales EC  
Wimberley

**Along Those Lines**

As a child in the 1940s and '50s, we would travel between Vernon and Amarillo. There were always hundreds of scissor-tailed flycatchers on the electric lines [*Scissortail Signals,* April 2022]. My favorite bird. I love them.

Penny Haulman  
Via Facebook

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

Editor, Texas Co-op Power  
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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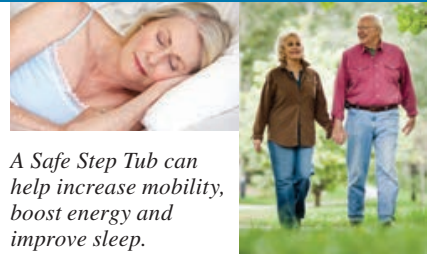
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|--|---|
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## *Texas' cotton gins have turned more sweat and tears into lint than*

STORY AND PHOTOS BY JULIA ROBINSON

**A**t times the fabric of Texas' economy has been 100% cotton. The availability of cotton products, though, belies a complicated transformation.

"Blood, sweat and tears," says Kirk Tidwell, a cotton farmer in Lamesa, about halfway between Lubbock and Midland. "There's a lot of tears sometimes."

"There's just so much risk; we don't know from the day we plant it if it's ever going to make it to harvest or not," says Tidwell, who also serves on the board of directors at Lyntegar Electric Cooperative. "We may lose it to a hailstorm or a sandstorm or an early freeze. We're always just hopeful."

That cotton-hope blend—formed by a lot of hard work and a little luck—has not frayed much over two centuries. Times are still tough for cotton farmers, but cotton gins are still going. Texas had 4,300 gins in 1900; 185 operate today,

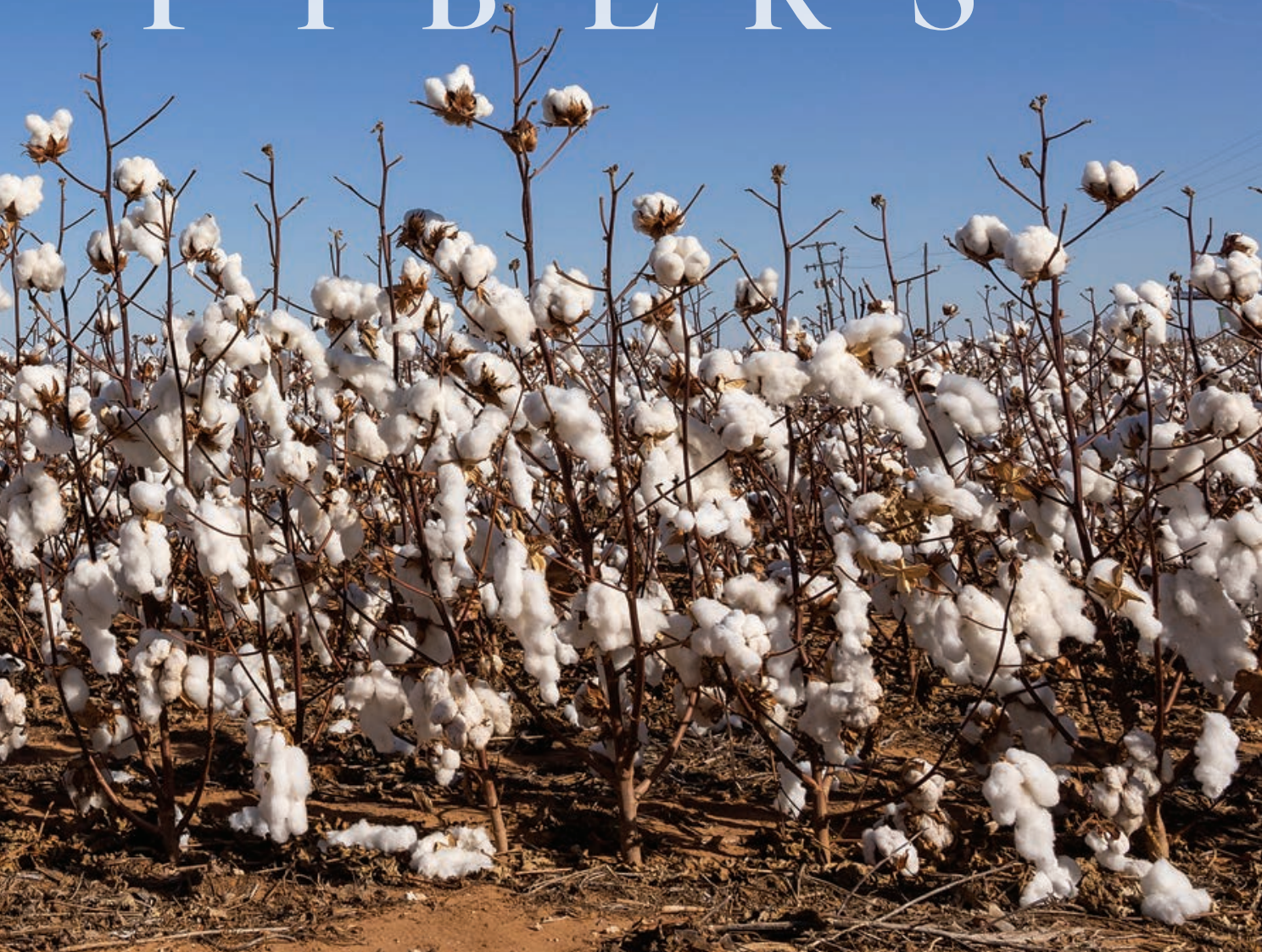
according to the Texas Cotton Ginners' Association.

"I would guess half of those are on the way out," says Jerry Harris, general manager of King Mesa Gin in Lamesa.

"As the number of gins go down, the number of bales ginned stays the same or goes up," Harris says as 18-wheelers pull onto scales with round bales bound in colorful plastic. "There used to be a gin every 6 miles because that's as far as people wanted to carry their crop, but now people will come hundreds of miles with a crop."

Spanish missionaries were the first to raise cotton in Texas. By 1821, Anglo colonists turned to the crop in earnest, reaping profits and building an industry by relying on the labor of enslaved people. Cotton drove the state's economy until the 20th century. Today it thrives in several areas of the state, and the South Plains region around Lubbock, where Tidwell farms, devotes more land to growing cotton than any other part of the world—as much as 3 million acres some years. Irrigation and easy weed control make

# F I B E R S =



## *any other state for 150 years—and they're still innovating*

growing cotton there more productive than in other parts of the state.

Starting at Odessa and going north up the Panhandle, the soil turns reddish brown as fields of cotton spread beneath the pump jacks and wind turbines that dominate the horizon. It's a geography of vast spaces—"so flat that your dog can run away, and you'll still see him a week later," a Texas congressman once said—and the white bolls in tidy rows are set off dramatically against unblemished blue skies.

**S**ince 1850, Texas has led the nation in cotton production, tallying 8 million bales in 2021, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Every one of those bales is processed at a cotton gin, where bolls move through machines that separate the embedded seeds, which are about the size of a grain of rice, from the prized fiber, which is called lint. Cotton production at this scale is possible only because of the gins that dot the state.



TOP The South Plains region around Lubbock devotes more land to growing cotton than any other part of the world. ABOVE A handful of cotton seed left over after the ginning process.



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE Kirk Tidwell raises cotton on 6,500 acres in Lamesa. An 1833 hand-operated cotton gin. Jerry Harris runs King Mesa Gin in Lamesa. Curtis Stewart, manager at Spade Co-op Gin northwest of Lubbock, catches cotton seeds as they fall through a gin's spinning blades.

The largest gin in the world, Adobe Walls Gin in Spearman, about 35 miles from the Oklahoma border, produces 300,000 bales per year. Operations were much smaller during fall and winter harvests generations ago, when cotton gins became gathering places where farmers socialized and shared news while waiting their turn to have their crops baled. Those days could be stressful.

“There was a lot riding on the processing and selling of your cotton,” says Andrew Torget, a University of North Texas professor and author of *Seeds of Empire: Cotton, Slavery, and the Transformation of the Texas Borderlands, 1800–1850*. “This is an industry where you basically have one payday. The emotional tenor of that was tremendous. How much profit you had, what you could buy your kids or couldn’t for the coming year—all these things got concentrated in this one location and this one experience for farmers.

“Today we like to look back with a sort of bucolic romanticism about things that are unfamiliar to us, but I think we forget the terrors and the fears and the helplessness that sometimes accompany those experiences.”

Still, gins greatly eased much of the anxiety of cotton farming, which in the early days of our state was only possible because of labor by enslaved people. It takes 10 hours for one person to remove enough seeds by hand to get 1 pound of lint. “Cotton has this problem that the seeds are stuck inside this prison of fibers,” Torget says. “How you get those out is a real bottleneck because doing it by hand means you can’t do it at scale.”

**E**arly gins used hand-cranked stone or iron rollers to separate the seeds from the fiber and could process 5 pounds of lint per day. In 1794, Eli Whitney designed a machine, a cylinder with spikes that pulled lint clean from the seed as it was cranked, that increased production to 50 pounds per day.

Two years later, Henry Ogden Holmes patented a design that increased the output to thousands of pounds per day with a set of spinning saw teeth on a circular steel blade that pulled lint from seeds in a continuous motion. This design



## *Since 1850, Texas has led the nation in cotton production, tallying 8 million bales in 2021.*

year. In 1915 it pressed nearly 1,000 bales.

“We would have been serving 60 farmers in a really good day,” says Tynan Shadle, the museum’s programs coordinator and a member of Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative. Teams and wagons full of cotton would wait their turn—first come, first served—in the yard. Some farmers camped out the night before; some would unload in the morning and return in the afternoon with another load.

The gin featured pneumatic tubes that inhaled the raw cotton and blew it through the entire ginning process, an innovation that came from Robert Munger of nearby Rutersville. The system is still used today in gins around the world.

Nothing from cotton was wasted in those days. Seed was separated from the lint and delivered back into the farmer’s wagon to plant for the next year. Sometimes the gin bought it to use as livestock feed or to press into oil.

The Burton gin continued operations until 1974, when it closed its doors after producing only seven bales that year. Lint cleaning, feed milling and other services had kept the facility going longer than most, but its time had come.

“We’ve seen boll weevil infestations lead to crop failures, two world wars taking men off the farms, and then the GI Bill, which gave those returning men better opportunities,” Shadle says. “We saw a mass exodus from farms.

“Cotton was just not able to make enough money, and so it was more profitable to switch back to cattle. Not too long after that, they began finding natural gas in the area, too.”

**A** community group formed a nonprofit and began restoring the Burton Farmers Gin in 1990. It’s the oldest operating cotton gin in the U.S. and is a Historic Mechanical Engineering Landmark listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Out in Lamesa, King Mesa Gin, which operates around the clock at times to keep up with the 7 tons of raw cotton delivered several times a day by truck, is the only gin in the U.S. to offer DNA tracing to its producers, ensuring the same cotton that’s sent overseas for manufacturing is the same cotton in the finished product on store shelves.

In 2019, Texas growers were responsible for three-quarters of all American organic cotton, which is grown using more sustainable practices. “Where you’re sitting right now is in a hundred-mile circle of the most organic cotton grown in the U.S.,” says Harris, a member of Lyntegar EC.

For Tidwell, becoming part owner of King Mesa just made sense for ensuring his livelihood.

“We went in together as a community to keep the gin in the community, under our control and to do it the way we’ve always done it,” he explains from his knee-high cotton field. “I only get paid once a year, and this is my payday right here.” ■

is still used in modern cotton ginning. Gin designs and innovations proliferated across the South, and daisy chains of gins began to be operated by animal and water power.

Visitors to the Texas Cotton Gin Museum in Burton, halfway between Austin and Houston, can see some of this history up close, including an open stand that reveals 80 saw blades that spin vertically through metal ribs. A group of local German farmers sold \$50 shares, raising \$10,000 to build the Burton Farmers Gin in 1913. The gin fired up for the first time August 3, 1914, and produced 82 bales that



Roy Perez, general manager and head pitmaster at Kreuz Market in Lockhart.



# WHY'D THE CHICKEN CROSS THE PIT?

## Because Kreuz Market has perfected the once-scorned barbecued bird

### THE **poor barbecued chicken.**

The holy trinity of Texas barbecue consists of beef brisket, pork ribs and sausage. Other meats pulled from pits around these parts include prime rib, pork chops and giant beef.

Barbecued yardbird? Not so much. Even the generic turkey breast gets more 'cue love.

Traditionally, slow-smoked chicken has been regarded as too tricky to cook consistently, the end product either undercooked with too much red visible or overcooked to a dryness rivaling jerky.

Chicken, it would seem, is meant to be fried, roasted on a rotisserie or grilled in the Mexican style of the El Pollo Loco and Pollo Regio franchises.

For the past 10 years, however, the best barbecued chicken in Texas has been turned out quietly, as something of an afterthought—an almost under-the-counter thing—in one of the most obvious places on Earth: Kreuz Market in Lockhart, one of the temples of Texas barbecue.

Moist and tender, every morsel packs savory-sweet smoked flavor, enveloped by deep-bronzed skin that's crispy, not greasy.

Full disclosure: "Best barbecue" is a loaded phrase, I know. But that's how my friend Wyatt McSpadden described the whole chicken wrapped in butcher paper he brought me when I was bedridden following a hospital stay last year. I didn't open the sack until about three hours after he left. When I did, bells rang and the lights started flashing.

Chicken!

I was part of the original *Texas Monthly* barbecue team for the magazine's top-50 barbecue joints ranking in 1997 and 2003. Barbecued chicken was never part of the discussion on either top-50 quest.

McSpadden photographed some of the top-50 locations, and today he's known as one of the foremost photographers

of Texas barbecue, capturing pitmasters including Austin's Aaron Franklin and Lexington's Tootsie Tomanetz and sampling their esteemed meats.

I met him at Kreuz Market to gauge his assessment, and now I'm willing to stick my neck out and declare it's the best.

Roy Perez chuckles when he hears that.

He says he started tinkering with yardbirds 10 years ago, after noting a number of customers—typically first-timers—asking about chicken. "It wasn't on the menu for years," he says. "We got tired of people asking, 'You got chicken?' and 'You ain't got chicken?' In my head, I went, 'You want chicken? We got Golden Chick, Chicken Express, all these chicken places.'"

But those are fried, not slow-smoked.

"There's something about barbecued chicken that's different," he says. "It just came to me: 'Can I do chicken?' I thought: Let's throw it on there and mess with it, see how it turns out."

As general manager and head pitmaster at Kreuz and with 35 years' experience, the mutton-chopped Perez is renowned for turning out top-shelf brisket as well as exceptional pork ribs, dino beef ribs and sausage.

But a hands-on approach to minding the pit and trial and error led him to consistently turn out slow-smoked birds that are moist and flavorful throughout. His favorite part? "I've always liked the thigh," he says. "We're old-school. As you can see, I'm sitting here keeping my eyes on this fire instead of sitting in an office somewhere."

Perez says he learned the pitmaster trade from Rick Schmidt, one of the owners at Kreuz Market when he started, back in 1987. Chicken takes as much skill as any of the cuts that Kreuz is known for.

"You've got to stay on it, take care of it," Perez says. "Keep an eye on it, twist on the leg to see if it's still tender and still needs more cooking. It's all visual. We don't use thermometers."

Still, most barbecue pit bosses don't share his respect for the craft.

"These guys laugh when we're cooking the chicken," Perez



# CHOICE CHICKEN

**We asked electric cooperative employees where they get their barbecued bird. Here are a few of their favorite spots.**

Mimsy's Craft Barbecue, Crockett  
Lockhart Smokehouse, Dallas  
Iceman's BBQ, Edgewood  
Stiky Ribz, Forney  
Bar-B-Que To-Go, Ganado  
Heavy's Bar-B-Que, Hondo  
Back Porch BBQ & Grill, La Grange  
Cooper's Old Time Pit Bar-B-Que, Llano  
The Smoking Oak, Mercedes  
Mack's Split Rail BBQ, Mineola  
Judge Hunt's BBQ, Quitman  
Hickory Roots BBQ, Terrell

Slow-smoked chicken at Kreuz Market.

## **Roy Perez's method emphasizes simplicity: about two hours of cooking time at about 300 degrees.**

says. "I'll say, 'Those are ready.' 'No, they're not!' I'll say 'OK, get a thermometer so we can check the internal temperature.' Sure enough, they'll poke it and say, 'How did you do that?'"

"With my years of experience, I don't need nothing to tell me this is done or this is not done. You got to make sure how it all comes out because people travel from all over. Even the locals—you don't want to let them down."

His method emphasizes simplicity: about two hours of cooking time at about 300 degrees.

"Put it in the back, let it cook slowly. When you know it's ready, take it off, put it in a container with the lid to keep the moisture in," Perez says. "It's such a little piece of meat; you have to keep an eye on it. You can't walk away like you can with a brisket."

The wood that provides the heat in Perez's pit is post oak. The seasoning, he says, "is no secret: just salt and pepper, a little cayenne, chili powder—same way we do our brisket." But timing is everything. "You can't sell it too early. If it's got blood in there, people might get sick. You can't sell it too late."

Kreuz was famous for not providing barbecue sauce as a condiment; the establishment has never used sauce in the cooking process, no matter the meat.

"It's cheating," Perez says. "It's a quick way out. Here we've

always been, 'Don't put nothing on it. Eat it, try it before you start covering it up with sauce.' Simple. With love. Everything else will take care of itself."

This is barbecue I can eat almost every day.

Hipster barbecue fetishists in search of the exotic tend to bypass the bird. Perez says it's because most young folks don't have the time or patience to slow-smoke chicken.

"They don't want to cook something that you have to babysit," he says. "They want to throw on a big brisket, a big clod, big rack of ribs, ring of sausage, pork chops. Then you get a little chicken—'Man, I don't want to sit here all day—it's hot!'"

Only one of Kreuz Market's eight pits accommodates chicken. The other pits, where briskets are cooking at 700 degrees, are too hot. Chicken sales have steadily increased, Perez says, despite a determined lack of emphasis on the product.

"We don't cook much of it," he says. "We're not known for chicken. The old people who have been coming for years don't order chicken. They don't want something new or different. They're set in their ways."

For the rest of us though, there's a whole other reason for making a barbecue pilgrimage to Lockhart: Roy Perez's barbecued chicken. ■

**ALL-NEW** mobility technology

# Introducing the world's lightest mobility scooter with anti-tip technology

*The So Lite™ Scooter is easy to transport and almost impossible to tip over.*

Like millions of older Americans, I struggle with mobility. For years, I watched my quality of life slip away, as I was forced to stay home while friends and family took part in activities I'd once enjoyed. I thought I'd made some progress when I got a mobility scooter, but then I realized how hard it was to transport. Taking it apart and putting it back together was like doing a jigsaw puzzle. Once I had it disassembled, I had to try to put all of the pieces in the trunk of a car, go to wherever I was going, and repeat the process in reverse. Travel scooters were easier to transport, but they were uncomfortable and scary to drive, I always felt like I was ready to tip over. Then I found the So Lite™ Scooter. Now there's nothing that can hold me back.

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## Why a So Lite™ Scooter is better:

- Latest "No-Tip" Technology
- Lightweight yet durable
- Folds and locks in seconds
- Easier to operate



**Exclusive Electronic Stability Control helps prevent tipping**

more, it easily folds up for storage in a car seat, trunk or even on an airplane. It folds in seconds without tools and is safe and reliable. Best of all, it's designed with your safety in mind, from the newest technology and superior craftsmanship. Why spend another day letting your lack of mobility ruin your quality of life? Call now and find out how you can get a So Lite™ Scooter of your very own.

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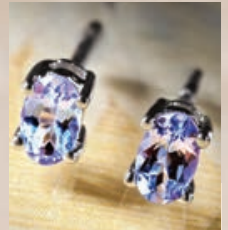
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"The most important gemstone discovery in over 2,000 years."

— Henry Platt, former president and chairman of Tiffany & Company



**EXCLUSIVE FREE**  
Tanzanite Stud Earrings  
-a \$99 value-  
with your purchase of the Sunburst Tanzanite Ring



"This ring is incredibly beautiful — the pictures do not do it justice! ...well worth the price."  
— K. M., Palm Coast, FL

## African Gem Cutter Makes \$2,689,000 Mistake... Will You?

This story breaks my heart every time. Allegedly, just two years after the discovery of tanzanite in 1967, a Maasai tribesman knocked on the door of a gem cutter's office in Nairobi. The Maasai had brought along an enormous chunk of tanzanite and he was looking to sell. His asking price? Fifty dollars. But the gem cutter was suspicious and assumed that a stone so large could only be glass. The cutter told the tribesman, no thanks, and sent him on his way. Huge mistake. It turns out that the gem was genuine and would have easily dwarfed the world's largest cut tanzanite at the time. Based on common pricing, that "chunk" could have been worth close to \$3,000,000! The tanzanite gem cutter missed his chance to hit the jeweler's jackpot ... and make history. Would you have made the same mistake then? Will you make it today?

In the decades since its discovery, tanzanite has become one of the world's most coveted gemstones. Found in only one remote place on Earth (in Tanzania's Merelani Hills, in the shadow of Mount Kilimanjaro), the precious purple stone is 1,000 times rarer than diamonds. Luxury retailers have been quick to sound the alarm, warning that supplies of tanzanite will not last forever. And in this case, they're right. Once the last purple gem is pulled from the Earth, that's it. No more tanzanite. Most believe that we only have a twenty year supply left, which is why it's so amazing for us to offer this incredible price break. Some retailers along Fifth Avenue are more than happy to charge you outrageous prices for this rarity.

Not Stauer. Staying true to our contrarian nature, we've decided to lower the price of one of the world's rarest and most popular gemstones.

This stunning two-total carat Sunburst Tanzanite Ring features marquise-cut gems set dramatically in gorgeous sterling silver. Each facet sparkles with the distinct violet-blue hue of the precious stones. But we don't stop there. While supplies last, we'll include these tanzanite studs **FREE** with your purchase of the ring — a \$99 value!

**Limited Availability.** We only have ~~1200~~, 954 left for this ad only. Of course, your satisfaction is 100% guaranteed. If you are not completely aglow with the Sunburst Tanzanite Ring, send it back within 30 days for a complete refund of the item price. But, please don't wait, our supply is dropping rapidly.

### Jewelry Specifications:

- 2 ctw genuine tanzanite set in .925 sterling silver setting; whole sizes 5–10

**Sunburst Tanzanite Ring** (2 ctw) ~~\$349~~ \$79\* + S&P **Save \$270**  
**Plus FREE Tanzanite Studs** (½ ctw) with your purchase of the Sunburst Tanzanite Ring — a \$99 value!

\*Special price only for customers using the offer code.

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# The Invention of the Year

The world's lightest and most portable mobility device

Once in a lifetime, a product comes along that truly moves people. Introducing the future of battery-powered personal transportation . . . **The Zinger.**

Throughout the ages, there have been many important advances in mobility. Canes, walkers, rollators, and scooters were created to help people with mobility issues get around and retain their independence. Lately, however, there haven't been any new improvements to these existing products or developments in this field. Until now. Recently, an innovative design engineer who's developed one of the world's most popular products created a completely new breakthrough . . . a personal electric vehicle. It's called the **Zinger**, and there is nothing out there quite like it.

*"What my wife especially loves is it gives her back feelings of safety and independence which has given a real boost to her confidence and happiness! Thank You!"*

*—Kent C., California*

The first thing you'll notice about the **Zinger** is its unique look. It doesn't look like a scooter. Its sleek, lightweight yet durable frame is made with aircraft grade aluminum so it weighs only 47.2 lbs. It features one-touch folding and unfolding - when folded it can be wheeled around like a suitcase and fits easily into a backseat or trunk. Then, there are the steering levers. They enable the **Zinger** to move



Available in Green, Black and Blue (shown)

forward, backward, turn on a dime and even pull right up to



The Zinger folds to a mere 10 inches.

a table or desk. With its compact yet powerful motor it can go up to 6 miles an hour and its rechargeable battery can go up to 8 miles on a single charge. With its low center of gravity and inflatable tires it can handle rugged terrain and is virtually tip-proof. Think about it, you can take your **Zinger** almost anywhere, so you don't have to let mobility issues rule your life.

**Now available in a Joystick model**  
(Zoomer Chair)

Joystick can be mounted on the right or left side for rider's comfort

Why take our word for it? Call now, and find out how you can get a **Zinger** of your very own.

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HEALTH & LIFESTYLE

The Zinger and Zoomer Chairs are personal electric vehicles and are not medical devices nor wheelchairs. They are not intended for medical purposes to provide mobility to persons restricted to a sitting position. They are not covered by Medicare nor Medicaid. © 2022 Journey Health and Lifestyle





MESSAGE  
FROM  
GENERAL  
MANAGER  
**BRANDON  
YOUNG**

## Unplug To Cool Off and Beat the Peak

**WE'RE IN THE THICK** of it. Summer's heat is near its peak, school's out, vacations are underway, and the Fourth of July is here again. As you plan celebrations, travel or simply go about enjoying the rest of the season, take a cue from the holiday and declare independence from needlessly high electric bills.

Here are a few simple, low-tech ways to rein in midsummer energy costs.

Run the washer and dishwasher only when each appliance is full, and beat the peak by not using either between 3 and 7 p.m.

Set your thermostat to your highest comfort level when you're home and turn on ceiling fans in occupied rooms to add to the cooling effect. Run the blades counterclockwise to create a cooling downdraft and turn off the fan when you leave the room.

Take a break from devices and screens and get outside after dinner—after the heat relents just a little—and use that much less electricity while you digitally detox. Take a walk, water plants, say hello to a neighbor, or just enjoy the sunset and nature with a cool drink.

While you're outside, consider some areas around your home that might benefit from energy-wise landscaping. Providing shade for an outdoor air conditioning unit can increase its efficiency, and planting deciduous trees on the east, south and west sides of your home will create shade in the summer while still allowing sunshine in the winter. You might also see some opportunities to plant trees to shade windows now; as they mature, they'll shade your home's walls and roof.

Once you're back inside, unwind with a cool treat from the freezer and a tech-free activity like a board game or book. The long light and lazy days of this time of year are fleeting, so make the most of them. Heart of Texas Electric Cooperative wishes you and your family a restorative summer. ■



**Enjoy a Happy  
and Safe  
Independence Day!**  
Monday, July 4

Our offices will be closed Monday, July 4, in observance of the holiday. Text or call 1-800-840-2957 to report an outage.

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First-aid and emergency response courses are key components of training for our lineworkers.

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## Your Co-op's Employees Are Part of the Community

**KEEPING THE ELECTRICITY** on is a lineworker's main responsibility, but every member of Heart of Texas Electric Cooperative's crews lives and works right here in our community. They're volunteer firefighters, youth league coaches and Scout leaders.

And sometimes their training is put to work in lifesaving ways.

Take John Hert, for example. The Central Texas lineworker was finishing lunch and refilling his drink at a diner in Kingsland back in February when he heard a commotion in the restroom area.

"I heard somebody say, 'Hey, she's choking!'" Hert said.

He sprang into action, putting his training to work and performing the Heimlich maneuver, which he had never had to administer in his 19 years as an EMT.

A lifelong co-op member who was at the restaurant with her husband and mother had run to the restroom to dislodge a piece of food and was struggling to breathe. Her husband was yelling for help.

"I told him that I could help," said Hert, who left a firefighting career to work as a lineworker. After several attempts, Hert was able to dislodge the food from her airway. "We got her to a chair and sat her down, and her color immediately started coming back," he said. "It gives you a good feeling that her family was so appreciative and that your actions kept her alive."

Of course, it's not every day that lineworkers get the chance to save a life, but we do depend on them day in and day out to light our lives. Our lineworkers go through rigorous training not only on how to build, repair and maintain our electric system but on how to do it safely. That training includes courses in first aid and emergency response, so they're always ready to help their fellow lineworkers in an emergency—or their neighbor, fellow co-op member or a stranger.

Heart of Texas EC employees work in all conditions, around the clock, to keep our lives powered, and they're a valuable part of our community. ■

## Heart of Texas Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

### CONTACT US

P.O. Box 357  
McGregor, TX 76657  
**Local** (254) 840-2871  
**Toll-Free** 1-800-840-2957  
**Web** hotec.coop

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## 24/7

## Outage Hotline Numbers

For information and to report outages, please call us.

**LOCAL**  
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**TOLL-FREE**  
1-800-840-2957

Call or text "OUT" to report an outage.

### ABOUT HEART OF TEXAS EC

HOTEC owns and maintains more than 3,800 miles of line to provide electric service to more than 16,500 members in Bell, Bosque, Coryell, Falls, Hamilton, McLennan and Milam counties.

### MCGREGOR OFFICE

**(254) 840-2871**

1111 S. Johnson Drive • P.O. Box 357  
McGregor, TX 76657

**Office Hours:** Monday–Friday, 8 a.m.–5 p.m.  
**Drive-Thru Hours:** 8 a.m.–5 p.m.

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**Office and Drive-Thru Hours:**  
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### BILL PAYMENT OPTIONS

- Credit/debit card payments
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- By phone at 1-855-399-2688

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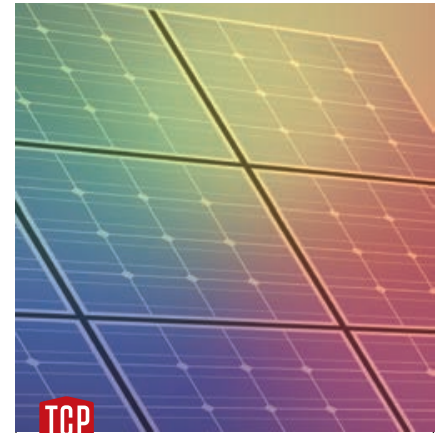
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Check us out at  
[TexasCoopPower.com/hotec](https://www.texascooppower.com/hotec)



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## Questions about solar? Call us first.

As your **trusted energy adviser**, your co-op is here to help. Make us your first call for questions and information.

**(254) 840-2871**  
**hotec.coop**

**HEART OF TEXAS**  
**ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE**

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

## Beware of Co-op Equipment

**AS YOU SPEND TIME OUTSIDE** this summer, Heart of Texas Electric Cooperative reminds you to use caution near electrical equipment. Often we are surrounded by electric infrastructure without even realizing it, so look up and around to make sure you know the location of poles, power lines, transformers and other co-op property in your surroundings.

**Never climb trees near power lines.** If you touch a tree that is touching a power line, your body could become the path of electricity from the line to the ground. If you encounter an animal trapped in a tree near power lines or inside a substation, do not attempt to rescue it. Call your co-op for assistance instead.

**Don't fly drones near electrical equipment.** Remote control toys should never be flown near power lines, substations or other electrical equipment. If contact is accidentally made with a power line or a transformer inside a substation, many members of your community could be left without electricity. To avoid accidents, keep the remote control toy in sight at all times and avoid flying in windy conditions that might make you lose control.

**Keep kites away from power lines.** Kites can cause power outages if they come into contact with power lines, so it's best to fly them only in wide-open areas. If the wind pushes your kite near a power line, let go of it and don't try to retrieve it without help from your co-op. Never attach anything metal to a kite or fly it when it's wet.

**Leave balloons inside and away from power lines.** Keep them tethered at all times and attached to weights. Never use metallic ribbon on balloons. Be especially careful with Mylar balloons, whose metallic coatings conduct electricity and can cause short circuits or power surges if they come into contact with power lines. Properly dispose of balloons by puncturing them to release the helium that could cause them to float away.

Here at Heart of Texas EC, your safety is important to us. Share this message of electrical safety so that you and others can enjoy plenty of summer days filled with fun. ■



### POWER TIP

In summer, run large appliances that emit heat (like clothes dryers and dishwashers) during the evening when it's cooler. This will minimize indoor heat when temperatures are highest.

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## New Utility Scams Capitalize on COVID

**A SPATE OF SCAMS** is targeting utility customers, as fraudsters alter their strategies and seek to capitalize on vulnerabilities created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Members of an electric cooperative in Wisconsin recently reported two unique tactics, according to a report from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

One involved a call from a bogus representative of an investor-owned utility claiming to have taken over the member's account and demanding immediate payment or disconnection. The member wasn't fooled and contacted the co-op to warn others.

This scam comes on the heels of an earlier trick in which a swindler claiming to be with the co-op told a member that she had overpaid her utility bill and that to get the refund she was due, she'd need to provide her financial information. The member didn't fall for the scam, hung up the phone and notified the co-op.

Members need to stay vigilant because scammers have adapted their tactics over the past two years to exploit consumer vulnerabilities and changes in habits created by the pandemic.

The increased use of technology paired with concerns about the economy have created a breeding ground for scams, according to Utilities United Against Scams.

Numbers from the Federal Trade Commission show that consumer fraud in general spiked during the past two years.

In 2021, about a quarter of all reported fraud losses stemmed from scams originating on social media. Those scams resulted in \$770 million in total losses, which is an 18-fold increase from 2017, according to the agency's latest Consumer Protection Data Spotlight report.

Somos, the entity that manages toll-free numbers in the U.S., tracks when those numbers are used fraudulently. They often work with UUAS to combat scams, and their collaboration has shut down more than 12,000 phone numbers since 2017.

If you receive a suspicious message—whether a phone call, text, social media message or email—regarding your electric cooperative account, please contact Heart of Texas Electric Cooperative immediately. ■



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## Cool Tips for Hot Weather

**It's time for another hot Texas summer—time to enjoy all the outdoors has to offer. While in the heat, make time to stay cool so you can enjoy each day. Follow these tips to keep your cool:**

**Take frequent** cooling-off breaks in the shade or air conditioning.

**Drink plenty** of water before starting any outdoor activity and during the day. Drink fewer caffeinated and alcoholic beverages.

**Wear lightweight,** loosefitting, light-colored clothes.

**Kids, cars and heat** make a deadly combination. Never leave a child—or pet—in a vehicle, even for just a few minutes.

**If someone** has heatstroke-related symptoms, act rapidly: Remove excess clothing and lower the person's temperature with wet sheets or a cool bath. Transport the person to the nearest hospital.

**Heart of Texas EC encourages you to always practice safety.**

# ATTENTION AUTO-PAY MEMBERS!

## *SmartHub Is Here!*

If your account is set up for auto-pay, you will need to download the SmartHub app to your computer or mobile device.

Scan  to download SmartHub.

Once registration is complete, enter your payment information.

If you prefer to submit a paper form, visit our website at [hotec.coop/forms](http://hotec.coop/forms) and select Credit Card/Bank Draft Authorization.

Members signing up for paperless billing during July will receive a \$5 bill credit in August.

Our previous payment portal, eBiz, has been retired.

Watch for updates on our website, [hotec.coop](http://hotec.coop), and on our Facebook page at [facebook.com/hotec.coop](https://facebook.com/hotec.coop).

**SMART MANAGEMENT. SMART LIFE. SMARTHUB.**



**Life is fast, and it can be hectic, but paying your bill doesn't have to be complicated. With Heart of Texas Electric Cooperative's SmartHub web and mobile app, it won't be. Here is some valuable information to get you started with SmartHub.**

**On the go and in control, manage your account like never before**

### What is SmartHub, and what's in it for you?

You may have heard about SmartHub, our innovative tool for account management, but what can it do for you? SmartHub can help you take control of your account like never before.

SmartHub has several features that make managing your account as easy as possible. Whether through the web or on your Android or iOS smartphone or tablet, you can pay your bill, contact member services and get the latest news.

As soon as you log in, you can view your billing history and make a payment with just a couple of clicks. You also can view your current bill and bills from previous months.

Making payments through SmartHub is fast and easy. The first time you make a payment, either through the web or through your mobile device, you can store your payment information securely for future transactions. The next time you need to pay your bill, it will only take a couple of clicks.

You also can see important notices through SmartHub and select how you want to be notified about your bill, including email and text messaging.

Reporting a service issue is a snap with the SmartHub mobile app. There's no need to call the office; just let us know about the issue with a few clicks. You can also contact us for member service requests or with any questions you may have. You now can contact us at anytime from anywhere.



### Locating Your Account Number

Because this is a new billing system for us that integrates in many new features it will mean that some of our members may get new account numbers. You can find your new account number on your monthly bill.

### When can you register for SmartHub?

As we launch SmartHub, we are providing instructions on our website, hotec.coop; facebook.com/hotec.coop; and in this issue of Texas Co-op Power. We will alert you when it is time to register your account so that you can continue to receive an electronic bill and pay your bill online.

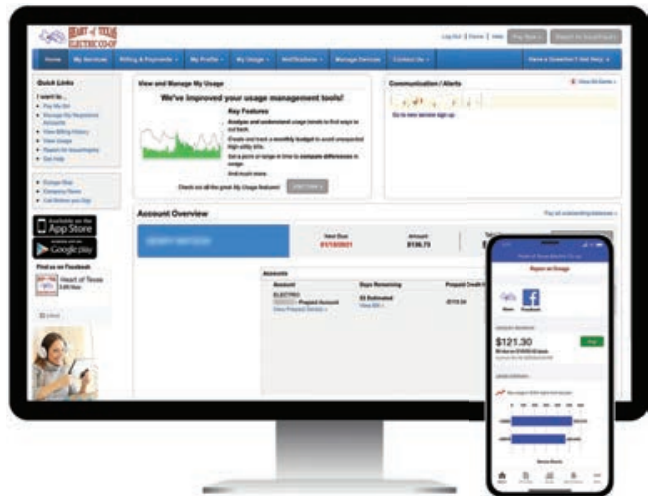
Members need to create a new online account even if they previously had a HOTECE login.

Please note that auto-pay members need to enter their payment information into the new SmartHub system.

After we launch, we will provide information on how to download our free, secure SmartHub app from the Apple or Google Play stores. Other new features will be added to the SmartHub member services program in the months following the initial launch. Watch for those announcements.

### Can you still pay your bill by phone?

Yes. Members may continue to pay their bill by phone by calling 1-800-840-2957 and selecting option 2. If you have any questions concerning the new SmartHub program, call the office. One of our member services representatives will be happy to assist you.



### Where can you get your questions answered?

If you have any questions or issues with the registration process, you can contact us by email at info@hotec.coop or by calling 1-800-840-2957. We will also have answers to frequently asked questions at hotec.coop.

**SMART MANAGEMENT. SMART LIFE. SMARTHUB.**

# Ascending Acclaim

Van Horn has always offered views of the stars; now rockets provide a closer look

BY MELISSA GASKILL • ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID VOGIN

**THE WORLD WATCHED** in July 2021 as Blue Origin sent four people on a 10-minute ride to the edge of space, 66.5 miles up. The trip launched from a facility about 20 miles outside Van Horn, in far West Texas.

It was the first time many folks had ever heard of the tiny town of about 2,000. And for some Van Horn residents, it was the first time they'd heard of Blue Origin.

The company started construction on the facility, dubbed Launch Site One, in 2006 on former ranch property north of town. It began testing rockets there in 2012. Some Van Horn residents noticed the sound of rockets blasting off, but many could have mistaken it for train cars connecting on the busy track that slices through the town.

Van Horn Mayor Becky Brewster was city administrator when Blue Origin first arrived. "Most people thought, these are big ideas, but it's never going to happen," she says. "There wasn't a lot of public participation in the process. They kept pretty much to themselves, and construction was so far away that it didn't affect our daily lives one way or the other."

That changed in 2021 as test launches became more frequent and once humans started riding the rockets.

"That first launch was unreal," Brewster says. "We were almost overcome. All the hotels were full. News reporters were having to stay in Marfa and El Paso." Space enthusiasts lined the highway to watch the launch.

The flights travel at three times the speed of sound, and occupants float weightlessly for several minutes before their craft descends by giant parachutes for a dusty desert landing nearby.

Some signs of Van Horn's new far-out identity have popped up: a mural of Blue Origin CEO Jeff Bezos on the side of a building, Blue Origin feather logos on others, space-themed T-shirts and mugs on sale at Hotel El Capitan and at Boots and Scoops, a café. El Capitan's Gopher Hole Bar has a large silver feather over the door, a token of appreciation from the company.

The feather also adorns a sign along Texas Highway 54 marking the entrance to the launch site. Thomas Lancaster and Belle Peña of Marfa Cement Works, members of Tri-County Electric Cooperative, produced the artsy display—a 20-foot stainless steel

feather perched alongside a blue concrete planter filled with native plants.

Blue Origin chose this area for Launch Site One because it provided safe, open space to test, transport and fly launch vehicles, a Blue Origin representative said.

The sprawling launch facility includes a vehicle barn, launch pad and training center. About 10 minutes away is Astronaut Village, a collection of Airstream trailers with a restaurant and bar for those preparing to travel to space.

Van Horn's economy has long relied on much older forms of transportation; the railroad and Interstate 10 run through town, making it a hub for day trips to Guadalupe Mountains National Park and the McDonald Observatory. But the town is starting to embrace its new role in the cosmos.

"We started a Facebook page where we share announcements of launches," Brewster says. "And we're working on an app for this five-county region to highlight points of interest for tourists."

Van Horn officials meet regularly with Blue Origin, and Brewster says the town would like to have a viewing area for launches. Blue Origin has helped bring in more than \$1 million for the community through grants that benefit the school district, food bank and infrastructure, according to Morrissey, who said the company is building an apartment complex and a dozen single-family homes in the area. Blue Origin employs 285 people and 50 contractors in West Texas, and some serve on city councils, school boards and in community groups.

Van Horn's longtime residents have had mixed reactions to the whole space thing, Brewster says. "Some people don't even pay that much attention; others see endless possibilities."

Anyone can sign up online to book a seat on future Blue Origin flights. Prices aren't public, but a seat on the first flight went for \$28 million in an auction. Blue Origin donated that money to its Club for the Future, which funds nonprofit organizations working to support the future of life in space.

The rest of us can make the much less expensive trip to Van Horn. And even take home a T-shirt. ■



**BLUE ORIGIN**

**LAUNCH SITE ONE**

FIGURE 2

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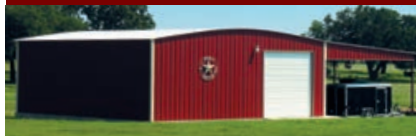
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It was a perfect late autumn day in the northern Rockies. Not a cloud in the sky, and just enough cool in the air to stir up nostalgic memories of my trip into the backwoods. This year, though, was different. I was going it solo. My two buddies, pleading work responsibilities, backed out at the last minute. So, armed with my trusty knife, I set out for adventure.

Well, what I found was a whole lot of trouble. As in 8 feet and 800-pounds of trouble in the form of a grizzly bear. Seems this grumpy fella was out looking for some adventure too. Mr. Grizzly saw me, stood up to his entire 8 feet of ferocity and let out a roar that made my blood turn to ice and my hair stand up. Unsnapping my leather sheath, I felt for my hefty, trusty knife and felt emboldened. I then showed the massive grizzly over 6 inches of 420 surgical grade stainless steel, raised my hands and yelled, "Whoa bear! Whoa bear!" I must have made my point, as he gave me an almost admiring grunt before turning tail and heading back into the woods.

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I was pretty shaken, but otherwise fine. Once the adrenaline high subsided, I decided I had some work to do back home too. That was more than enough adventure for one day.

Our Grizzly Hunting Knife pays tribute to the call of the wild. Featuring stick-tang construction, you can feel confident in the strength and durability of this knife. And the hand carved, natural bone handle ensures you won't lose your grip even in the most dire of circumstances. I also made certain to give it a great price. After all, you should be able to get your point across without

getting stuck with a high price.

But we don't stop there. While supplies last, we'll include a pair of \$99 8x21 power compact binoculars **FREE** when you purchase the Grizzly Hunting Knife.

Make sure to act quickly. The Grizzly Hunting Knife has been such a hit that we're having trouble keeping it in stock. Our first release of more than 1,200 SOLD OUT in TWO DAYS! After months of waiting on our artisans, we've finally gotten some knives back in stock. Only 1,337 are available at this price, and half of them have already sold!

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# Colorado's Texas Bridge

The Royal Gorge Bridge, highest in America, was built and owned by Texans

BY W.F. STRONG

**BRIDGES ARE MEASURED** in three ways: longest, tallest and highest. In Texas, the Fred Hartman Bridge across the Houston Ship Channel boasts the longest span at 1,250 feet and is the tallest at 440 feet. But it's not the highest. That honor goes to the aptly named Pecos High Bridge, where the deck is an astounding 273 feet above the Pecos River—nearly a football field straight up.

The highest bridge in America is the Royal Gorge Bridge—just shy of 1,000 feet high. It's in Colorado. But without Texas, it might not exist at all.

The Royal Gorge Bridge was the dream of Lon P. Piper of San Antonio. They say he stood on the edge of the gorge in 1928

and imagined laying a bridge across it. He had already built a bridge across the Rio Grande into Mexico.

The Royal Gorge would be different though. It would be a bridge to nowhere, one that would exist purely to give tourists heart-stopping views they couldn't get anywhere else in the world.

Within two years it was done—at a cost of \$350,000, or more than \$6.2 million today. When it was finished, Piper owned the highest bridge in the world, and it would remain so for 72 years.

Piper hired bridge engineer George Cole of Houston to design the Royal Gorge Bridge and to serve as the general contractor. With 80 workers, they com-

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



pleted the project in seven months without a fatality or any serious injuries.

As I learned about the bridge's history, I couldn't help but notice its national character. It was a bridge built by Texans in Colorado spanning the Arkansas River with Oregon timber for the deck. Cole went on to design and build a railroad that would take brave riders to the bottom of the gorge at a 45-degree angle. Now there are gondolas far above the gorge for those who want to go higher still and zip lines for those who can't get enough tachycardia in their lives.

In 1947, Piper sold the bridge to another Texan, Clint Murchison Sr., who bought it sight unseen as an investment and strangely never traveled there to walk across his magnificent possession. Instead, Murchison set up the Royal Gorge Bridge Co. and managed the Colorado property from Dallas. When he died, the bridge was passed on to his sons, Clint Murchison Jr. (you remember him—he founded and owned the Dallas Cowboys for 25 years) and John Murchison. When John died, his wife, Lucille, inherited the bridge, and they say she just loved it, traveling often to see it.

For the past 21 years, Texan Mike Bandera has served as the Royal Gorge Bridge's general manager of operations. But today, the bridge—after nearly 100 years—has Colorado ownership. After Lucille Murchison passed it on to her grandchildren, they sold it a few years ago to nearby Cañon City.

So I'd like to say this to Colorado, about the world-class bridge we envisioned, financed, built and managed for you all those years: You're welcome. ■

# Stone Fruits

This season of abundance offers a variety of delectable options

BY MEGAN MYERS, FOOD EDITOR

When summer hits, I know I'm not the only one looking forward to that first bite of a juicy peach. My family loads up on stone fruits, making sure to have enough to cover our snack cravings and to enjoy in sweet and savory recipes. In this curry, fresh nectarines take the place of the dried fruits more commonly used. You can peel the nectarines if you like; I keep the skins intact to let them bubble away into the sauce.



## Chicken Nectarine Curry

**1** tablespoon olive oil  
**2** pounds boneless, skinless chicken thighs  
**2** teaspoons salt, divided use  
**½** teaspoon pepper, divided use  
**1** onion, halved and thinly sliced  
**4** cloves garlic, minced  
**1** tablespoon grated fresh ginger  
**2** teaspoons cumin  
**1** teaspoon paprika  
**1** teaspoon ground coriander  
**½** teaspoon ground turmeric  
**¼** teaspoon ground cinnamon  
**⅛** teaspoon ground cayenne pepper  
**1** cup chicken broth  
**4** nectarines, pitted and sliced  
**½** cup chopped fresh parsley, divided use  
**2** cups cooked couscous  
**¼** cup roughly chopped pistachios (optional)

- 1.** In a large straight-sided skillet with a lid, add oil and heat over medium-high. Season the chicken on both sides with half of the salt and pepper, then add to the hot skillet. Cook until browned on both sides, about 12 minutes total. Remove from pan and set aside on a plate.
- 2.** Reduce heat to medium and add onion. Sauté until slightly softened, about 3 minutes. Add garlic and ginger and cook another 30 seconds. Stir in remaining salt, pepper and spices, and cook until fragrant, about 1 minute.
- 3.** Add a small amount of chicken broth to deglaze the pan, scraping the bottom, then pour in remaining broth. Return chicken to the pan with any accumulated juices. Scatter nectarine slices over the top.
- 4.** Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to medium-low, cover and simmer for about 25 minutes. Remove lid and stir occasionally. Once chicken is tender, simmer uncovered for 5 minutes to thicken sauce. Stir in half the parsley and serve over couscous, with remaining parsley and pistachios for garnish.

**SERVES 4**

**TCP** Follow along with Megan Myers and her adventures in the kitchen at [stetted.com](http://stetted.com), where she features a recipe for Peach Barbecue Sauce.



## Apricot Scones

JANET EAKINS  
NAVASOTA VALLEY EC

These tender scones, a perfect way to feature dried apricots, are wonderful straight out of the oven but also keep well, so you can enjoy them multiple days in a row.

- 2½ cups flour**
- ½ cup plus 2 teaspoons sugar, divided use**
- 2 teaspoons baking powder**
- ½ teaspoon salt**
- ½ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, cold and cut into pieces**
- 1 cup finely chopped dried apricots**
- 1 cup plus 1½ tablespoons heavy cream, divided use, plus more as needed**

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Line a baking sheet with parchment.
2. In a large bowl, combine flour, ½ cup sugar, baking powder and salt. Using a pastry blender or two knives, cut butter into flour mixture until crumbly and butter is evenly blended. Add apricots, stirring to mix well. Add 1 cup cream, stirring just until dry ingredients are moistened. If mixture looks too dry, stir in more cream, 1 tablespoon at a time, until dough is equally moistened and coming together.
3. On a lightly floured surface, scoop out dough and knead gently just to bring it together. Pat dough into an 8- to 9-inch circle and cut into 8 equal wedges. Place on baking sheet slightly separated, brush with remaining 1½ tablespoons cream and sprinkle with remaining sugar. Bake 20 minutes or until browned.

SERVES 8

[MORE RECIPES >](#)

\$500 WINNER

## Peach Cream Cheese Danish

MARY MITCHELL  
GRAYSON-COLLIN EC



Easy to make and bursting with peaches, this braided danish makes for an elegant presentation on the brunch or dessert table. Swap in your favorite fresh or canned fruits and serve as is or with ice cream on the side.

SERVES 6



FILLING

- 6 ounces cream cheese, at room temperature**
- ¼ cup sugar**
- 1 egg yolk, at room temperature**
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract**
- ½ teaspoon lemon juice**
- Pinch of salt**

PASTRY

- Flour, for dusting**
- 1 sheet puff pastry, thawed**
- 1 can (15 ounces) sliced peaches, drained and sliced into bite-size pieces**
- 1 egg**
- 1 tablespoon water**
- 1–2 tablespoons coarse sugar**

GLAZE

- ½ cup powdered sugar**
- 1½ teaspoons milk**

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
2. **FILLING** In a bowl, beat together cream cheese and sugar until smooth. Add egg yolk, vanilla, lemon juice and salt and beat together until well blended.
3. **PASTRY** Lightly dust a sheet of parchment with flour and roll out puff pastry, flattening creases if needed. Set onto a rimmed baking sheet. Spread cream cheese mixture down the middle of the pastry lengthwise, leaving a 1-inch border at the top and bottom. Spoon diced peaches onto the cream cheese mixture.
4. Use kitchen shears or a paring knife to cut an equal number of 1-inch strips diagonally down both sides of the pastry, leaving ½ inch between the filling and the start of each cut. Braid the pastry strips by folding them into the middle, alternating from side to side.
5. In a small bowl, whisk together egg and water and brush over pastry. Sprinkle with coarse sugar. Bake 25–30 minutes or until pastry is golden brown. Let cool to room temperature.
6. **GLAZE** In a small bowl, whisk together powdered sugar and milk until smooth, then drizzle glaze over the pastry and let set or serve immediately.

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## Easy Cherry Pie

POLLY BELT  
COSERV

Instead of a bottom crust, this pie features a buttery crumble topping that bakes into the filling. Make sure to keep the syrup separate from the pie until ready to serve so the topping stays delightfully crisp.

- 1 can (14.5 ounces) sour or tart pitted cherries**
- 1 cup plus 1 tablespoon flour, divided**

- use**
- 1½ cups sugar, divided use**
  - ½ cup chopped pecans**
  - 1 teaspoon baking powder**
  - ¾ teaspoon ground cinnamon**
  - ¼ teaspoon salt**
  - 1 egg**
  - ¾ cup (1½ sticks) butter, melted**

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees and set a rimmed baking sheet on the lower rack to catch any spilled juices.
2. Drain the juice from the cherries into a small saucepan and reserve. Pour the cherries into the bottom of an ungreased 9-inch pie dish.
3. In a medium bowl, combine 1 cup flour, 1 cup sugar, pecans, baking powder, cinnamon and salt. Using a fork, mix in egg until mixture is evenly moist and crumbly. Spread evenly over the cherries. Pour the melted butter over the crumble topping, coating it completely.
4. Bake 40 minutes, until browned. Let pie cool while you make the sauce.
5. To make the sauce, whisk together

remaining flour and sugar. Place reserved saucepan of juice over medium heat, whisking in sugar mixture. Cook until slightly thickened, then remove from heat (sauce will thicken more as it cools).

6. Serve slices of pie with spoonfuls of warm sauce over the top.

SERVES 6-8

**TCP** You'll find hundreds more recipes featuring these and other stone fruits on our website. Most of them are from the kitchens of *Texas Co-op Power* readers just like you.



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COURTESY CHET GARNER

## Creeping Along

I was brave enough to visit the eerie Ghost Road. How about you?

BY CHET GARNER

I **VIVIDLY REMEMBER** the first time I set out to see the Saratoga lights. My mom loaded up the family van with as many people as it could carry so we could experience a bona fide unsolved mystery.

Generations of locals say the lights are a periodic presence of unexplainable orbs and lights dancing up and down an old Big Thicket dirt road under a dark canopy of piney woods. My mom killed the headlights, and we crept along, holding our breath. My only comfort was that I was inside a locked car.

Bragg Road (aka Ghost Road) is a rite of passage in East Texas, between Beaumont and Livingston. It's only about 8 miles long, originally a railroad spur used during the East Texas oil boom. Legend holds this run through swampy land was full of danger, and crews suffered numerous casualties from accidents, malaria and other perils. Some say those killed never left the work site.

The tracks and ties were removed in the 1930s, leaving a very straight road that anyone with a healthy dose of Lone Star courage can drive to see if the ghostly orbs appear. Some say they change colors. Others say they dart back and forth, even coming toward vehicles at light speed.

Naysayers believe they're simply distant headlights, and scientists explain them as swamp gas. But nobody can explain everything that happens out there in the dark.

It took Mom over an hour to drive the entire length of Bragg Road. Every couple minutes she would yell, "Did you see that?" or "Whoa, that was beautiful." As soon as I looked, the light (or whatever it was) would be gone.

By the end, I didn't see a thing. But I did settle the fact that I was brave enough to travel the infamous Ghost Road. ■

ABOVE Chet discovers that what you don't see can be as frightening as what you do see on the Ghost Road.

**TCP** A dark lane with a chance of ghosts. What could go wrong? See Chet's video on our website to find out. Watch all his Texplorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.



## Know Before You Go

Call ahead or check an event's website for scheduling details.

JULY

08

**Canton [8-9] Balloon Fest,**  
balloonfestcantton.com,  
(903) 567-1849

**Lewisville [8-10] Texas  
Art and Literary Festival,**  
texasartandlitfest.com

09

**Galveston Bill Engvall  
Farewell Tour,** thegrand.com,  
(409) 765-1894

**Grapevine 1920s Ice  
Cream Social at Nash  
Farm,** 1-800-457-6338,  
nashfarm.org

**Lampasas Toughest 10K  
in Texas,** runsignup.com,  
toughest10klampasas@  
gmail.com

**La Porte Cycling Saturday,**  
(281) 479-2431, thc.texas.gov

**Mason Roundup Festival  
and Parade,** (325) 347-5758,  
masonxoc.com

**McDade Watermelon  
Festival,** (512) 736-4302,  
mcdadetexas.com

**Meridian Chisholm Trail  
Roundup,** (254) 435-2381,  
facebook.com/meridiantx

**Palacios Poker in Palacios,**  
(361) 972-2615,  
palacioschamber.com

**Palestine East Texas  
Southern Soul Zydeco  
and Blues Festival,**  
(832) 892-1407, eventbrite.com

**Weatherford Parker  
County Peach Festival,**  
(817) 596-3801,  
parkercountypeachfestival.org

**Kerrville [9-10] Summer  
Market,** 1-888-225-3427,  
kerrvilletexascvb.com

**Palestine** [9, 16, 23, 30, Aug. 6] Farm & Flower Market, (903) 723-3014, visitpalestine.com

14

**San Angelo** [14–Sept. 11] Banjara Textiles From a Private Collection, (325) 653-3333, samfa.org

15

**Ennis** [15–16] Creative Quilters Guild of Ellis County Quilt Show, (972) 878-4748, elliscountyquilters.com

**Bastrop** [15–17] Corvette Invasion, (512) 303-0558, corvetteinvasion.com

**Laredo** [15–17] International Sister Cities Festival, (956) 795-2200, visitlaredo.com

16

**Paris** Tour de Paris, (903) 784-2501, tourdeparis.org

**Round Rock** Colombian Fest ATX, (512) 903-8929, colombianfestatx.com

**Fredericksburg** [16–17] Night in Old Fredericksburg, (830) 997-2359, gillespiefair.com

**Waco** [16–17] Duel on the Brazos, (830) 385-3106, sdbaracing.com/schedule

19

**Lubbock** [19–23, 25–30] **Hamilton**, (806) 792-8339, visitlubbock.org

21

**Waco** [21–24] Deep in the Heart Film Festival, deepintheheartff.com

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## Pick of the Month

### Salt Lime & a Good Time

Comanche, July 23  
 (325) 356-3233  
[comanchechamber.org](http://comanchechamber.org)

Celebrate National Tequila Day at the courthouse square with the spirited beverage and other treats.

## JULY EVENTS CONTINUED

22

**Kyle Dive-in Movie: Lilo & Stitch**, (512) 262-3939, [cityofkyle.com](http://cityofkyle.com)

**Lubbock Dwight Yoakam**, (806) 792-8339, [visitlubbock.org](http://visitlubbock.org)

**Waxahachie [22-23] Metroplex Archaeological Society Indian Artifact Show**, (469) 309-4040, [waxahachie.com](http://waxahachie.com)

**Palestine [22-24, 29-31] The Little Mermaid**, (903) 724-4385, [visitpalestine.com](http://visitpalestine.com)

**Victoria [22-24, 28-31] The Wizard of Oz**, (361) 570-8587, [theatrevictoria.org](http://theatrevictoria.org)

**Lockhart [22-24, 29-31, Aug. 5-6] Annie Get Your Gun**, (512) 376-5653, [mygbt.org](http://mygbt.org)

23

**Bandera National Day of the American Cowboy**, (830) 796-3045, [banderacowboycapital.com](http://banderacowboycapital.com)

**San Angelo National Cowboy Day**, (325) 657-4444, [fortconcho.com](http://fortconcho.com)

28

**Buffalo Gap [23-24] Tour de Gap**, (325) 829-0617, [tourdegap.com](http://tourdegap.com)

**Gonzales [23-24] Float Fest**, [floatfest.net](http://floatfest.net)

**Salado [23, 30, Aug. 6], Salado Legends**, (254) 308-2200, [tablerock.org](http://tablerock.org)

**Clute [28-30] Great Texas Mosquito Festival**, (979) 265-8392, [mosquitofestival.com](http://mosquitofestival.com)

29

**Fredericksburg [29-31] Hill Country Auto Swap Meet**, (254) 751-7958, [visitfredericksburgtx.com](http://visitfredericksburgtx.com)

**Junction [29-31] Sizzler Disc Golf Tournament**, (361) 549-5507, [junctiontexas.com/disc-golf](http://junctiontexas.com/disc-golf)

**San Angelo [29-Aug. 5] Wild West Fest**, [facebook.com/wildwestfestsanangelo](http://facebook.com/wildwestfestsanangelo)

**Stafford [29-31, Aug. 5-7, 12-14] The SpongeBob Musical**, (713) 302-5329, [inspirationstage.com](http://inspirationstage.com)

30

**Bowie July Jam**, (940) 872-6246, [cityofbowietx.com](http://cityofbowietx.com)

**Lubbock An Evening With Journey**, (806) 742-7362, [visitlubbock.org](http://visitlubbock.org)

## AUGUST

02

**Bandera Cowboy Capital Opry**, (830) 796-4969, [banderatex.com](http://banderatex.com)

06

**Camp Wood Nueces Canyon Old Settlers Reunion**, (830) 597-6241, [nuecescanyonchamber.org](http://nuecescanyonchamber.org)

**Frankston Neches River Wilderness Race**, (903) 245-9490, [necheswildernessrace.com](http://necheswildernessrace.com)



# Morning Glory

A new day is dawning in Co-op Country, and members have captured the magnificence, from dewy haze to warm sunshine. So fetch yourself a cup of coffee, and let's greet the sunup.

CURATED BY GRACE FULTZ



**1** DANNY VIVIAN  
NUECES EC  
"The sun rises over the breakers near Port Aransas."

**2** BRIAN FOX  
PEDERNALES EC  
Sunrise over Caprock Canyons State Park.

**3** CASSIE DE LEON  
TRI-COUNTY EC  
"Breakfast. Need I say more?"

**4** MICHAEL HRISCHUK  
TRINITY VALLEY EC  
"Our backyard on a cool fall morning."



## Upcoming Contests

- DUE JUL 10 **Aerials**
- DUE AUG 10 **Winter Wildlife**
- DUE SEP 10 **Nature's Colors**



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

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





## Can't Top This

Finding more than just a sense of accomplishment on Guadalupe Peak

BY ANDY RHODES  
PHOTO BY E. DAN KLEPPER

“HOW FAR AWAY is the peak?”

“Once you get to the really hard part, you're nearly there.”

“Wait ... *this* isn't the really hard part?”

I was approaching the summit of Guadalupe Peak—or at least I thought I was—and glad to catch my breath while giving my rubbery legs a break. After encountering the descending hiker, I was momentarily discouraged but not daunted. My three-hour trek in far West Texas had so far been challenging but not overwhelming, and I wanted to carry my momentum all 8,751 feet up to the tallest natural point in the state.

The last eighth of a mile was indeed tricky—a couple sheer rock faces (I didn't look down) and large boulders to ascend—but it never felt dangerous. Finally, I took one giant step and came face to face

with a metal pyramid atop the peak.

But I also encountered something I hadn't expected: Surrounding the sculpture was a spontaneous community. About a dozen of us smiling hikers shared the rewarding accomplishment of having just summited Guadalupe Peak. Cheers of “You did it!” and “Welcome to the top of Texas!” erupted. We beamed with adrenaline and pride, knowing how much planning, commitment, resolve and stamina it took to conquer such a formidable foe.

I was also rewarded by the most spectacular 360-degree views I've ever seen in Texas. It was a perfect fall day—65 and sunny—so visibility was pristine. The sky was pure blue, a cheerful overstretched canvas. I took in multicolored ridges of mountains stretching for miles and miles beyond Guadalupe Mountains National Park.

I had started the day with a hearty breakfast and hit the trail in the cool shade. The first hour was tough, with tight switchbacks and steep ascents. I reminded myself I wasn't in a race and listened to my body's cues; when I felt weary, I'd stop for water or take a few bites of a protein bar. My trusty trekking poles helped me navigate the rocky trail and pivot up tough spots.

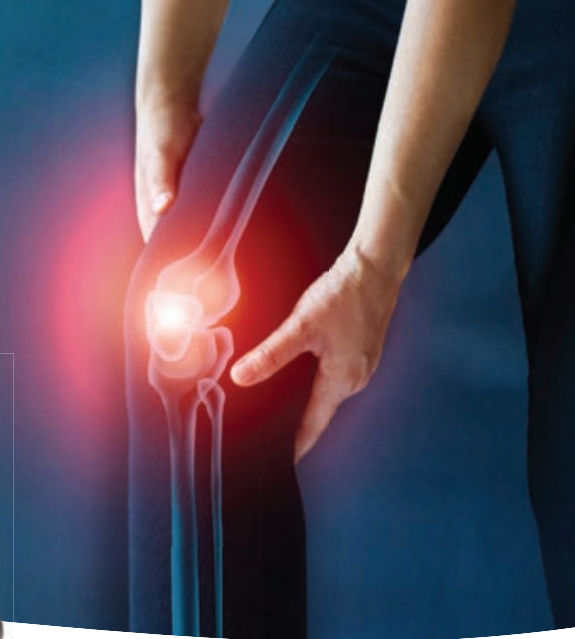
The second hour was easier—a large section of trees provided welcome shade, and I noticed more flora, including jade-colored desert scrub and small waxy succulents. The trail was well maintained and easy to navigate, which helped guide me through the final stretch.

By the end, my legs were fatigued, but that seemed a small price. I was excited about completing the quest. When the shiny obelisk entered my view, the smile on my face reflected the joy I felt in joining my new community.

At that moment, it felt like the top of the world. It just so happened that it actually was. ■



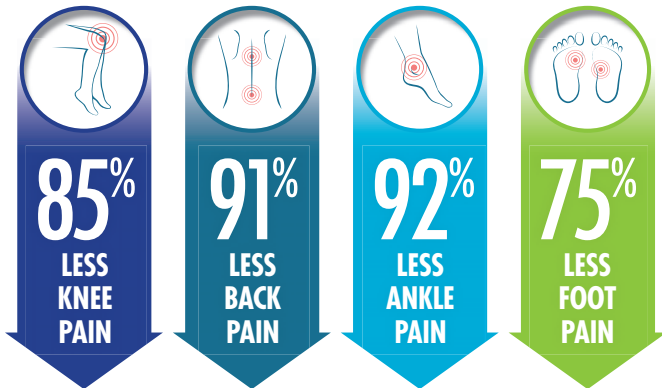
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