

living with energy

IN IOWA



APRIL 2020

Candidates announced for board elections ▶ See Page 12

Create a
pollinator
playground

Visit our website at www.accessenergycoop.com

Youth Tour winners
announced! See Page 5

Spring forward
with safety tips

"Egg-citing"
breakfast recipes

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ALWAYS CALL BEFORE YOU DIG



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ON THE COVER

A pair of monarch butterflies feed on the nectar of *Liatris spicata* in a pollinator habitat planted at a solar farm operated by Dairyland Power Cooperative in LaCrosse, Wisconsin. Three electric cooperatives in northeast Iowa are among the co-ops receiving generation and transmission services from Dairyland Power. See Pages 6-7 of this issue for information about planting your pollinator habitat and why it's important. ⚡



Providing safe, reliable service is a co-op priority

BY ANN THELEN

Developing a monthly magazine requires planning and determining editorial content many weeks in advance. We work to stay nimble with content so that we can share contemporary articles about how Iowa's electric cooperatives are supporting their communities.

When we went to press with this issue, cases of the coronavirus (COVID-19) were rapidly increasing across the U.S. Life as we knew it was changing with schools, churches, businesses and events all shutting down. These are uncertain times. Rest assured, however, your local electric cooperative remains vigilant in its mission to serve you with safe and reliable power.

Always planning for ongoing, reliable service

Planning for challenging times – whether it's for potential major outages due to a severe storm or an unprecedented pandemic – is a core responsibility your co-op takes



seriously. Behind the scenes, your cooperative is always hard at work, implementing its business continuity plans to deliver electricity to you 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Co-ops have disaster plans and regularly conduct drills and exercises to test them. In doing so, modifications can be made before a crisis hits, which makes your co-op stronger.

Education is a core cooperative principle, and your co-op's directors and employees participate in training opportunities throughout the year to prepare for tough situations.

As COVID-19 impacts more areas, your cooperative continues to work with local, state and federal agencies to coordinate responses. In addition, electric cooperatives nationwide collaborate to share best practices, resources and strategies to fulfill the mission of powering the needs of your daily life.

Stay connected with your co-op

Across Iowa, some electric cooperatives have postponed their

annual meetings or implemented alternative methods to fulfill meeting requirements. To minimize the spread of COVID-19, your co-op may be closed to outside visitors. Many co-ops offer online bill payment, payment by phone, payment drop-off boxes and other services to help you effectively navigate these days of social distancing. Please follow your local electric cooperative on social media, visit its website and always reach out to them by phone or email with any concerns.

We know there are many trusted resources for you to receive up-to-date information about COVID-19, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Iowa's Department of Health. Therefore, we maintained our plans for this issue to focus on an important aspect of environmental responsibility.

Inside these pages, you'll find tips and information about planting and growing things that help the air or precious species to thrive. Getting our hands in the dirt, in the comfort and security of our yards, can be therapeutic for the mind and soul. That's something we can all benefit from in the coming weeks. ⚡

Ann Thelen is the editor of *Living with Energy in Iowa*.

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

Win a \$100 gift card for a pollinator habitat!

Pollinator habitats are important to help monarch butterflies and other species survive and thrive. Simple acts, such as planting more pollinator-attractive flowers this spring, can make a significant impact. We'll award one lucky winner with a \$100 gift card from a local nursery to plant your own pollinator habitat! ⚡

Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.livingwithenergyiowa.com no later than April 30, 2020. 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 Cuisinart Digital Glass Steamer from the February issue was Kyle Montgomery from T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative.



LIHEAP RELIEF

Financial Assistance

If a member-consumer is experiencing financial difficulty, they may apply for Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) financial aid by contacting their local community action agency. The Iowa Department of Human Rights recently extended the LIHEAP application period for eligible Iowans until May 31, 2020.

Member-consumers can also contact their local electric cooperative directly to discuss payment options if they are facing financial hardships. ⚡



UPCOMING EVENTS



- April 10** Office closed for Good Friday

- April 12** Happy Easter!

- April 13** National Lineman Appreciation Day

- April 23** National Picnic Day: Mark your calendars for the 2020 Annual Meeting of Members on Aug. 4 at McMillan Park in Mt. Pleasant!

- May 25** Office closed for Memorial Day

- June 18-25** Youth Tour trip to Washington, D.C.

You can call us at 866-242-4232, 24 hours a day, seven days a week – or use our SmartHub App – for answers to billing and account questions, paying your bill and service interruptions. ⚡



Access Energy Cooperative is dedicated to exceeding members' expectations for safe, reliable and efficient service, while being a good citizen in our communities.

Office: Access Energy Cooperative
1800 W. Washington St., P.O. Box 440
Mount Pleasant, Iowa 52641
Phone: 319-385-1577 or 866-242-4232
Fax: 319-385-6873
Call Before You Dig (Iowa One Call): 8-1-1
Website: www.accessenergycoop.com
Facebook: facebook.com/AccessEnergyCoop
Twitter: twitter.com/AccessEnergyC
E-mail: contactus@accessenergycoop.com
Office Hours: Monday-Thursday, 7 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
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Call our office 24/7: 319-385-1577.

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Editor: Kimberly Davis
Assistant Editor: Cherity Wibben
Officers and Directors:

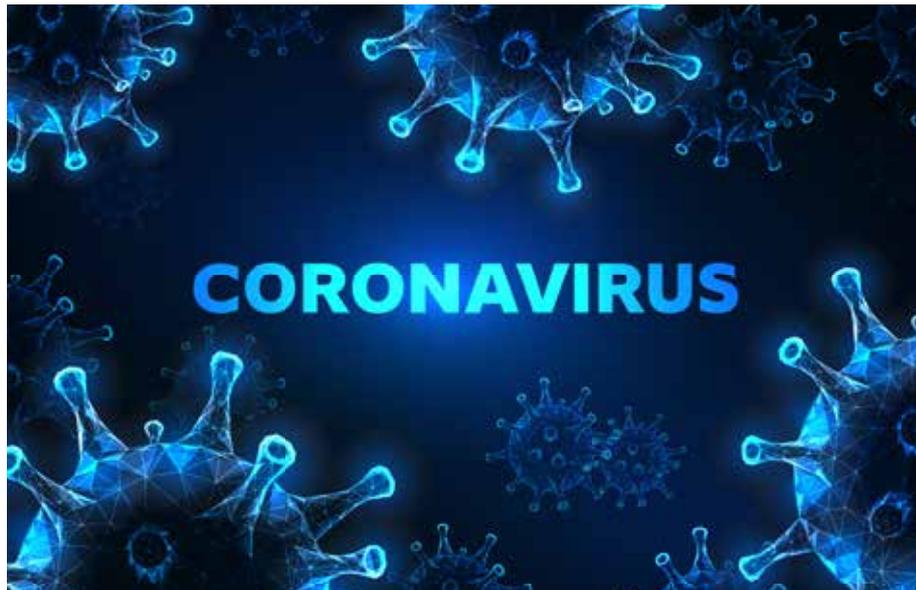
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LOCAL PERSPECTIVE

Staying prepared to serve you

BY KEVIN WHEELER



Access Energy Cooperative understands the importance and reliance our members have for a safe and reliable power supply. Our power supplier, Associated Electric Cooperative, Inc. (Associated) has a specific plan designed to address emergencies, such as COVID-19, and has been working proactively to ensure it is prepared for any impacts of the global pandemic.



“Associated continues to take appropriate measures to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, protect employees and safeguard the bulk electric system. No negative impacts to delivery of electricity have occurred or are expected due to this pandemic. Our combined efforts from all facets of our three-tiered generation, transmission and distribution system will ensure the reliable delivery of electricity that members expect,” Associated says.

Access Energy Cooperative’s utmost priority is our employees’ and

members’ safety and we are taking appropriate measures to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. We have postponed all non-essential work and member contacts. We are not hanging disconnect notices or disconnecting power through May 31, 2020. We understand that this time could be very trying for some of our members and if you need to make payment arrangements we ask that you call the office.

We will be continually monitoring and following recommendations consistent with the CDC (Centers for Disease Control) guidelines. We encourage members to utilize our SmartHub app for transactions involving your account, or reach out by phone at 319-385-1577 or 866-242-4232.

Please visit our website www.accessenergycoop.com for updated information. ⚡

Kevin Wheeler is the general manager/CEO for Access Energy Cooperative.

Area youth selected for Washington, D.C., trip

Hayley Chase of Danville and Layne Kiefer of Crawfordsville have been selected to attend the 2020 Youth Tour on June 18-25. The event is an all-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C., sponsored by Access Energy Cooperative.

Hayley and Layne will join approximately 40 other Iowa students and nearly 1,900 students from across the country who have been selected by their electric cooperative to attend the annual Youth Tour.

Hayley is a sophomore at Danville Community High School and participates in large group speech, softball, choir and band. She volunteers on mission trips, LEO Club, and works at the Danville Care Center and Scooters.



A junior at WACO High School, Layne is the son of Robin and Tim Kiefer. He is active in Student Council, National Honor Society, orchestra



Thank you, Southern Iowa Electric Cooperative and Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, for helping choose the 2020 Access Energy Cooperative Youth Tour representatives.



and band. He is also involved in Joe Biden's presidential campaign, 4-H and Empower, and worked at Pizza Hut.

While on tour, Hayley and Layne will learn about American history and government. They will visit historical sights, including monuments, museums, the U.S. Capitol, federal agencies and other

points of interest. They will also have an opportunity to meet with their legislators in the House and Senate.

Access Energy Cooperative has been a part of the Youth Tour program for more than 50 years and currently selects two students each year to participate in the five-day trip. The students are selected through an application and interview process. ⚡

SAFETY MATTERS

Move Over/Slow Down and Lineman Appreciation Day

The best way to show appreciation to our lineworkers on National Lineman Appreciation Day – and every day – is to help them stay safe. If you see anyone alongside the road when you are driving, move over to the other lane if possible and slow down. That person's life may depend on it. ⚡



**MOVE OVER
SLOW DOWN**

You may not hear them, but they are thanking you!

Create a pollinator

BY ANN THELEN



Photos: Iowa Monarch Conservation Consortium



As warm spring weather begins to transform Iowa's landscape, grass becomes lush, trees regain their leafy splendor and flowers bloom. While green is spring's signature color, green means something even more to your electric cooperative. Green is synonymous with environmental responsibility initiatives, and it's something Iowa's electric cooperatives take seriously. It's our focus every season.

One of the electric cooperatives' environmental initiatives – developing pollinator habitats – has created a lot of buzz among Iowans. Across the state, you may notice pollinator habitats sprouting up across landscapes. Whether they are located under electric cooperatives' solar arrays, along roadways or across homeowners' yards, there is a lot to be excited about with this conservation strategy.

Why are pollinator habitats so important?

Iowa is the center of the monarch butterfly's breeding range.

5 ways you can help monarchs

Each of us can do something to help pollinators. Simple acts, such as planting more pollinator-attractive flowers this spring, can make a big impact! Iowa State University Extension and Outreach offers these tips:

- 1 Take advantage of farm bill programs, such as the USDA Conservation Reserve Program, to establish monarch breeding habitat.
- 2 Establish monarch habitat on your land as part of a demonstration project.
- 3 Follow federal pesticide labels and state regulations when applying pesticides.
- 4 Consider monarch-friendly weed management for roadsides and other rights-of-way.
- 5 Establish a Monarch Waystation – a garden with both nectar plants and native milkweed species.

Visit <https://store.extension.iastate.edu/product/15817> to download details about the above tips. To learn more about the Iowa Monarch Conservation Consortium, visit <http://monarch.ent.iastate.edu/> and follow @IowaMonarchs on social media. 🦋

Iowa's electric co-ops are actively helping to protect monarchs

Through the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives, all the state's electric cooperatives are members of the Iowa Monarch Conservation Consortium, an organization that is implementing a statewide strategy to protect the monarch butterfly in Iowa. As a community-led organization, the consortium works with farmers, private citizens and organizations to enhance monarch butterfly reproduction and survival. This effort is a natural fit for Iowa's not-for-profit electric cooperatives, which collectively serve more than 80 percent of the state's landmass. 🦋



playground



Photo: Aaron Eckley

Unfortunately, the iconic monarch butterfly population has experienced an 80 percent decline in the past two decades.

The significant population decline of this beautiful and treasured butterfly stems from the loss of milkweed habitat, which is the only food source for the monarch caterpillar, loss of overwintering habitat in Mexico and extreme weather events.

In March, the World Wildlife Fund and the Comisión Nacional de Áreas Naturales Protegidas (CONANP) released its 2019-2020 overwintering monarch population report. Adult monarch butterflies covered approximately 7 acres of forest canopy in Mexico, less than half the area of last year's population. Scientists estimate a long-term average of 15 acres of the occupied forest canopy is needed to sustain the eastern North America monarch population.

The news brings attention to ongoing efforts, say leaders of the Iowa Monarch Conservation Consortium.

“The monarch butterfly population report is a timely reminder to continue implementing conservation efforts statewide,” says Mike Naig, Iowa Secretary of Agriculture.

Pollinator habitats include a diverse array of blooming species to provide nectar for adult monarchs throughout their full life cycle and their spring and fall migrations. The current Iowa Monarch Conservation Strategy seeks to establish approximately 480,000 to 830,000 acres of monarch habitat in the state by 2038.

Iowa plays a vital role for monarch butterflies

“Iowa is in the heart of the monarch's summer breeding range, and our state has a valuable role to play in providing diverse habitat for wildlife,” says Kayla Lyon, director of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. “We have many dedicated partners with broad expertise working across Iowa to support habitat conservation for

butterflies, birds, bees and much more.”

Being in the center of the monarch's summer breeding range – approximately 40 percent of all monarch butterflies that overwinter in Mexico are estimated to come from Iowa and neighboring Midwest states – gives Iowans an excellent opportunity to help. Creating additional monarch habitat within cooperative service territories can play a major role in the recovery of the species and help to prevent it from becoming an endangered species.

Since monarch caterpillars need milkweed to survive, one of the primary conservation goals is to establish milkweed as part of healthy natural ecosystems. Areas of habitat, such as gardens, can be added near homes, schools, churches and within parks. Roadsides and rights-of-way offer miles of opportunities for monarch habitats.

For information on creating a pollinator habitat, visit the online resources noted in this article. ⚡

The buzz on a new app!

At the end of this year, a critical milestone in the conservation of the monarch butterfly will be reached. In December 2020, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) will publish its decision regarding whether and how to list the monarch butterfly for protection under the Endangered Species Act.

The USFWS is collecting data on monarch butterfly populations and the habitats that support them to help make this decision. The good news is an app has been created to tally this information.



HabiTally is an iOS mobile app, with an Android version currently in development, created by The Climate Corporation. It enables farmers, landowners and private citizens to record their monarch habitat data (while protecting personal privacy), and share the information with the USFWS to help with monarch recovery and other pollinator conservation initiatives.

It's a place where everyone, including electric cooperative members, can contribute.

As users add information to HabiTally, a tracker will report gains made in milkweed stems/acres across the U.S. and allow both better estimates of how much and where current habitat exists. Plus, it will help identify opportunities for further habitat development.

For more information, visit <https://climate.com/tech-at-climate-corp/a-habitat-app-to-support-monarch-conservation> and download HabiTally in Apple's App Store. ⚡



Egg-Citing BREAKFAST Recipes



Green Chili Cheese Puff

- 8 large eggs**
- 1/3 cup flour**
- 1 teaspoon baking powder**
- 1/2 teaspoon salt**
- freshly ground black pepper**
- 1 cup, small curd low fat cottage cheese**
- 8 ounces reduced-fat shredded Monterey Jack or cheddar cheese**
- 2 tablespoons butter, melted**
- 4 ounces canned diced green chilies, drained**
- 4 or 5 scallions, thinly sliced salsa**

Beat eggs until light and lemon colored, using an electric hand mixer if desired. Add flour, baking powder, salt and a few grinds of black pepper and blend until smooth. Fold in the cottage cheese, cheese, butter, chilies and scallions. Pour mixture into 8x8-inch glass baking dish that has been sprayed with nonstick vegetable spray. Bake at 325 degrees F for 45 to 50 minutes, until edges are slightly puffed, and the very center of the puff still jiggles a bit when you move the baking dish. **DO NOT OVERBAKE.** For a moist cheesy texture, remove from oven when slightly under-baked as the heat will continue to cook it out of the oven. Allow to cool for 10 minutes before cutting into squares and serving with favorite salsa. Makes nine 3x3-inch squares.

**Jana Lower • Williamsburg
T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative**

Fuzzy French Toast

- 3 large eggs, well blended with fork**
- 2/3 cups milk**
- 1 rounded tablespoon granulated sugar**
- 1/4 rounded teaspoon ground cinnamon**
- 1 cup flaked coconut**
- 1/4 cup chopped walnuts or pecans, optional**
- 1 cup flake type cereal, crushed (corn, wheat, or bran)**
- 8 slices French or Italian bread**
- margarine**
- maple syrup**

Blend eggs and milk in a medium-sized mixing bowl with a fork or whisk. In another mixing bowl or large zipper type plastic bag, thoroughly mix the sugar, cinnamon, coconut, nuts and cereal well by stirring or shaking closed bag. Dip bread slices into egg mixture, then coat with the coconut mixture. Place coated bread on hot griddle – use medium heat and margarine to prevent sticking. Brown slices until golden on both sides. Serve with additional margarine and maple syrup.

**Susan Rickels • Grundy Center
Grundy County Rural Electric Cooperative**

Easy Quiche

- 1 cup milk**
- 1/2 cup biscuit mix**
- 4 eggs, beaten**
- 1/4 cup Colby Jack or cheddar cheese, grated**
- 1 cup vegetables, chopped (mushrooms, onions, green peppers, etc.)**
- salt and pepper, to taste**

In a large bowl, mix all ingredients together. Pour mixture into a lightly greased 9-inch pan. Bake at 375 degrees F for 35-40 minutes until the center is firm. Refrigerate leftovers.

**Dorothy Carolus • Parkersburg
Grundy County Rural Electric Cooperative**

Breakfast Bites

- 6 eggs**
- 1/4 cup milk**
- dash of salt and pepper**
- 1/2 to 1 pound sausage, browned**
- 1/2 cup shredded cheddar cheese**

Combine eggs, milk, salt and pepper. Fill greased muffin tins 3/4 full with egg mixture. Add sausage and top with cheese. Bake at 425 degrees F for 15 minutes.

Owen Miller • Alford • Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

WHITES AND YOLKS

Egg whites supply about 60 percent of an egg's protein – as well as niacin, riboflavin, magnesium and potassium. However, the yolks steal the nutritional show.

Contributing to eye health and brain function, the bright yellow center contains many other key vitamins and minerals, including vitamin D, selenium, B12 and more.

Overnight Breakfast Casserole

- 2¼ cups seasoned croutons
- 2 cups shredded cheddar cheese, divided
- 1½ pounds link sausage, browned and cut into small pieces
- 2½ cup milk, divided
- 8 large eggs
- dash of pepper
- 4 teaspoon dry mustard
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup

Spread croutons in greased 9x13-inch pan. Sprinkle 1 cup cheese over, then add sausage. Mix 2 cups of the milk with eggs, pepper and mustard. Pour over the cheese and sausage. Cover and refrigerate overnight. In the morning, let stand at room temperature for ½ hour to warm. Mix the soup with the ½ cup milk and spread over top of casserole. Sprinkle the remaining 1 cup of cheese over top. Bake at 350 degrees F for 1 hour.

Susan Huls • Sigourney
T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative

Zesty Oven Omelet

- 7 eggs
- 1 cup milk
- 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese
- ½ cup ham or sausage
- ½ cup salsa

In a large bowl, beat eggs and milk. Stir in cheese, ham or sausage, and salsa. Pour into a greased round pie pan. Bake uncovered at 350 degrees F for approximately 45 minutes or until a knife comes out clean. Let stand 10 minutes before slicing.

Ruth Van Zandbergen • Orange City
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

Pizza Quiche

- 3 eggs
- 1 cup cottage cheese, partially drained
- 8 ounces spicy sausage, cooked, drained & crumbled
- 4-8 ounces pepperoni slices, cut in half
- ¾ cup shredded mozzarella cheese
- ¾ cup shredded cheddar cheese
- ¼ cup Parmesan cheese
- 1 unbaked 9-inch pie shell

Mix all ingredients and pour into the unbaked pie shell. Bake at 350 degrees F for approximately 45 minutes until the egg mixture in center is firm. Serve for brunch or supper. Adjust the amounts of sausage and pepperoni for personal preference.

Deb Mitchell • Collins • Consumers Energy

Breakfast Bake

- 1 pound sausage or bacon
- 6 slices bread, cubed
- 6 eggs
- 2 cups milk
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon dry mustard
- 1 cup cheddar cheese
- 4 ounces mushrooms, optional

Brown sausage or bacon. Place bread cubes in the bottom of a 9x13-inch pan. Beat eggs; add milk, salt and mustard. Pour mixture over bread. Add browned sausage or bacon, cheese and mushrooms, if desired. Stir slightly to spread evenly in the pan. Cover and refrigerate overnight. Bake uncovered at 350 degrees F for 30 minutes. Serves 6-8.

Mary Ellen Coblentz • Cincinnati
Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.

IOWA IS NO. 1
Iowa is the No. 1 egg producer in the U.S. Each year, hens in Iowa lay nearly 16 billion eggs! That means Iowa's egg farmers are responsible for about 1 in 5 eggs consumed in the U.S. every year.

EGG FACTS

CHOLINE-RICH
Eggs are rich in choline, which promotes normal cell activity, liver function and the transportation of nutrients throughout the body. It's also key in the development of infants' memory functions. Think of choline as a commuter train for vitamins and minerals.

EGG FACTS

BROWN AND WHITE EGGS
Hens with brown feathers lay brown-shelled eggs, while white hens lay white-shelled eggs. But the color of an egg has no relationship to egg quality, flavor or nutritional value.

EGG FACTS

Wanted: Herbalicious Recipes! The Reward: \$25 for every one we publish!

Tell us how you put those aromatic summer herbs to use in your kitchen! Whether you grow an herb garden or buy them at the farmers' market or grocery store, fresh herbs are game changers in recipes. Share your favorites, and if we run your recipe in the magazine, we'll send a \$25 credit for your electric co-op to apply to your power bill. Recipes submitted also may be archived on our website at www.livingwithenergyiowa.com.

The deadline is April 30, 2020. Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name and the recipe category on all submissions.

EMAIL:
recipes@livingwithenergyiowa.com
(Attach your recipe as a Word document or PDF to your e-mail message.)

MAIL:
Recipes
Living with Energy in Iowa
8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48
Des Moines, IA 50322-2992



Small gardens with big

STORY AND PHOTOS BY L.A. JACKSON

Spring has arrived! If thoughts of producing oodles of fresh, homegrown edibles have you ready to dig in the dirt, it's time to roll up those sleeves and start a vegetable garden!

The physics of time and space dictate that big harvests naturally come from big gardens. For backyard growers who prefer to pass on the challenges of tending to mega-plots through the long, hot summer, there are alternative ways to still raise impressive passels of veggies.

Make the bed

First, for maximum production from limited growing areas, go with beds, not rows. Place young plants or seeds according to their recommended spacing per plant and forget about distances between rows. Rows of plants looking like tidy lines of soldiers are better for large gardens in order to have paths to walk around, but this isn't necessary in small beds. Accessibility is, of course, still important, so try not make beds over 4 feet wide.

Select compact plants

Size isn't everything in gardening, especially when it comes to growing backyard edibles. There are many vegetable selections – often tagged with such labels as “Bush,” “Dwarf” or “Patio” – that are modest in height and girth, but still quite capable of producing impressive crops.

The most common big veggie that can be found in smaller sizes is the tomato. There are a ton of cultivars available, but, for starters, give “Tiny Tim,” “Bush Beefsteak” or “Early Wonder” a look. Keep in mind, however, that most of these slight-in-stature tomato selections are determinate, meaning they produce all the tomatoes they are going to yield in a matter of weeks. Standard vine tomatoes, if kept healthy, typically crank out fruit continually over the long growing season.

Want a wider range of veggies in your small garden? Squash, watermelons, pumpkins, cucumbers, cantaloupes and green beans – all champs at chewing up space in a planting bed – can also be found in compact forms, either as young plants or seeds, at local garden shops in the spring.

Grow up

Don't think you have to stick to Munchkin-sized plants. Typical strong growers, such as tomatoes, green beans, cucumbers and squash can't be allowed to crawl across small growing spaces, but they can be trellised, staked or caged to grow up rather than out.

Even the long, rangy vines of watermelons, pumpkins and cantaloupes can be trained upward on vertical supports, but to avoid the dreaded drop-and-splat factor, it's not a bad idea to cradle the developing fruits in supporting



yields



burlap, nylon or cloth slings.

Suspension weight and size problems with standard pumpkins are obvious, but there are many cultivars, including “Spookie,” “Jack O’ Lantern” and “Sugar Pie,” that yield smaller, more manageable 6- to 7-pound fruits. The same goes for big watermelons, but with so-called “icebox” varieties like the popular “Sugar Baby” and its 8- to 10-pound melons available, it is possible to hang them high, too.

Growing vine crops on erect supports has other advantages besides saving space, starting with making harvesting easier. Also, vertical gardening improves fruit shape and, since beneficial air circulates through the foliage easier, can promote healthier plants.

Think beyond the veggie patch

Looking for even more growing ground? Limited-space gardening with edibles doesn’t need to be confined to small vegetable plots – in other words, anywhere you have dirt in your yard is a potential planting site. And many veggies can be easily interplanted in the landscape as complements, rather than complications, to existing ornamentals.

One popular vegetable that bears the double standard of being both productive and pretty is the pepper. While blocky bell peppers might look a bit clunky in flower beds, there is a wide range of hot peppers that show off long-lasting fruits in many sizes, shapes and sizzling colors on relatively compact plants.

Like bell peppers, common pudgy eggplants probably won’t qualify as eye candy in an ornamental garden, but there are vibrantly colored fruits of cultivars, such as “Fairy Tale,” “Prosperosa” and “Neon” that can also add extra visual sass to sunny flower borders.



For tips on growing vegetable gardens, check out these online resources:

Iowa State Extension
store.extension.iastate.edu/Topic/Yard-and-Garden/Vegetables-and-Herbs

The Iowa Gardner
www.theiowagardener.com

Iowa Arboretum
<https://iowaarboretum.org>

Earl May Garden & Nursery Center
www.earlmay.com/gardening/vegetable-gardens

Okra, which is closely related to the lovely hibiscus, stays true to its family ties with fancy foliage and delicate, hibiscus-like flowers. One standout beauty is “Red Burgundy,” an heirloom selection that has been a veggie garden favorite for many years because its gorgeous (and tasty) scarlet pods never fail to turn heads.

Other decorative edibles with strong, distinctive profiles, such as curly spinach, cabbage, looseleaf lettuce (especially red-tinted varieties like “Red Sails” and “Lolla Rossa”), kale and Swiss chard (look for “Ruby Red” or “Bright Lights”) are low-growing and, for vegetable plants, actually rather good looking. Any of these can be successfully incorporated as accent plants for

perennial beds or flower gardens. In addition, root vegetables, such as carrots, onions and radishes hide their crops below ground but freely flaunt flowing foliage that can be used to fill in the fronts of border plantings.

Many herbs are also great “double-duty” plants. Rosemary’s spiky leaves and delightful (as well as edible) bluish-purple flowers make it an appealing addition to any landscape setting. Bronze fennel’s smoky look is a nice touch for container planters, while the rich, dark foliage of purple basil is a horticultural fashion statement waiting to happen. And curly parsley, with its deep emerald leaves, is an ideal alt-ornamental to line the front of a flower bed. 🌿

Thank you, 2020 nominating committee!

As an electric cooperative, our members have democratic control over who serves on the board of directors. Access Energy Cooperative's directors set policies and rates. The nominating committee is comprised of members who find other members to run for the board.

Thank you to the 2020 nominating committee for your dedication to Access Energy Cooperative and finding qualified member-candidates to run for our board of directors. The committee includes Joe Ledger, Kenneth Whitham, Dean Mabeus, Tim Meyers, Bob Scarff, Brandon Ledger, Bob Wilson, Randy White and Myrna Folker (*pictured from left to right*).

The following members have been nominated by the committee to run in this year's election to be held at the annual meeting of members on Aug. 4. ⚡



District I:

- **David Hollingsworth**
1176 125th St.,
Packwood
- **Carol Wisecarver**
1548 270th St.,
Libertyville

District II:

- **Jerry Barker**
1546 Oakland
Mills Rd,
Mt. Pleasant
- **Dan Fullenkamp**
2496 150th St.,
West Point

District III:

- **Michael Holtkamp**
1693 200th Ave,
West Point
- **Michael Thimmesch**
3544 159th St.,
Wever

LEADERSHIP MATTERS

Directors receive gold program certificate

Part of serving on Access Energy Cooperative's board of directors involves training programs geared toward advancement of director knowledge and skills to effectively be able to perform their fiduciary duty to the best of their ability.

The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) is a national affiliate for Access Energy Cooperative that provides training program opportunities for employees and directors. The policies of Access Energy Cooperative encourage our board members and employees to continually advance their training through certification programs offered by NRECA.

Directors Marvin Holtkamp,

Jerry Barker, Larry White, Marvin Newton and Fred Hickenbottom (*pictured left to right*) were recently recognized for their achievements of

each obtaining the "Director Gold Credential," which demonstrates their commitment to your cooperative. Congratulations! ⚡



How will you celebrate Earth Day?



Earth Day is considered one of the world's largest civic events, and on April 22, we can all be part of this global movement to help the environment.

We're doing things at Access Energy Cooperative to better our own little corner of the world.

Over the past years, we've launched a green initiative that allows our members to purchase green power. In fact, about 20% of our energy mix comes from renewable energy sources. We have also purchased an electric vehicle that is used daily.

There are many ways we as individuals can help the environment, and some are easier than you'd think. Here are a few simple actions you can take now to reduce your energy use.

- **Audit your light bulbs.**

Swapping out any remaining incandescent bulbs with LED bulbs can make a big difference in home efficiency, and it's one of the easiest ways to reduce your energy bill.

- **Maintain your HVAC system.**

Replace your home air filters to allow your HVAC system to run more efficiently. Air filters prevent dust and allergens from clogging your HVAC system. Changing the filters makes your unit run more efficiently – keeping your home cooler in

the summer and warmer in the winter.

- **Examine your smart or programmable thermostat.**

Make sure it is programmed for the current season and family schedule. This is one of the best tools at your fingertips; however, you can only achieve these efficiencies and savings if it is programmed properly and adjusted periodically to keep pace with changes in household routines.

- **Seal window and doors.** Seal leaks with weather stripping and caulk to keep cool air indoors during warm months and prevent cold air from penetrating the indoors during colder months. Sealing gaps around piping, dryer vents, fans and outlets also helps to seal the envelope and increase efficiency.

While these suggestions may not be glamorous actions worthy of a news release or event, they do make a difference. And we're always here to help if you want more information on how you can save energy. Stop by our office or give us a call.

As we celebrate Earth Day this April, let's continue to work together and make a positive impact on our local community – and our beautiful planet. ⚡

Join us in welcoming Cole to the Access Energy Cooperative family!

Cole Wellman has joined Access Energy Cooperative as an apprentice lineman. Previously, Cole worked at Line Brothers Construction. Welcome aboard, Cole! ⚡



Save the Date!

April 23 is #NationalPicnicDay!



It's a great reminder to Save the Date for the 2020 Annual Meeting of Members on Aug. 4 at 5 p.m.

Spring forward with outdoor safety tips

With the arrival of spring, there are some specific things to look out for regarding electric safety. Remember, you can't see, smell or hear electricity, so it's very important to take these precautions seriously.



Call before you dig

Spring is prime time for landscaping projects and "honey do" lists around the home. Remember to contact Iowa One Call at least two business days before you dig to any depth so underground utilities can be properly located. It's the law, and it could just save your life! Buried utility lines are everywhere, and an underground utility line is damaged every 6 minutes in the U.S. because someone decided to dig without calling 811 first.



Put safety first in the field

As you head into the fields to plant, always make sure to keep a 10-foot clearance between your equipment and power lines. Take time to study where all overhead power lines, poles and guy wires are located on your property and inform your workers about them. Plan your route between fields and on public roads so that you avoid low-hanging power lines; never attempt to raise or move a power line to clear a path. When moving large equipment or high loads near a power line, always use a spotter to help make sure that contact is not made with a line.

If equipment comes into contact with a power line, assume the line is energized and deadly. The operator should NOT get off the machinery unless in immediate danger. If the operator touches the ground and the equipment at the same time, he or she will become a channel for electricity. Instead, the operator should stay on the equipment and



contact the local electric utility or 911 immediately to report the incident so electricity can be shut off safely before exiting.



When thunder roars, go indoors

Spring storms will be here soon, so remember that there is no safe place from lightning when you're outside. It's important to be aware of weather forecasts and watch for developing thunderstorms as lightning can strike many miles ahead of a storm front. If you hear thunder, seek shelter immediately because it indicates lightning is within 10 miles of you. Safe shelters include inside a building or in an enclosed metal-topped vehicle. Authorities warn against outdoor activity until 30 minutes after the last clap of thunder is heard.



Stay away from downed power lines

Spring and summer weather can bring storms and lead to downed power lines. Assume any wire lying on the ground is carrying electricity and stay away from it. If you spot a downed wire, immediately call your local police and your electric co-op. Keep others from getting near the downed wire until help arrives. Never attempt to drive over a downed power line.



Move over or slow down on the road

We need your help in keeping our line workers, engineers and maintenance workers safe on Iowa's roadways. If you see any vehicle stopped on the side of the road with flashing lights activated, you are required by law to move over or slow down, preferably both. Please give our employees room on the road; their jobs are hazardous enough already. ⚡

SPRING THAW BRINGS OUT THE WORST IN OUR YARD

BY VALERIE VAN KOOTEN

In case you haven't noticed, Iowa officially has five seasons: summer, fall, winter, spring ... and mud. Mud season is not prescribed to certain months and will land where it will — sometimes in the fall or winter, but most often before early spring.

The snowfall of December is charming. The blizzards of January are cozy. By February, snow's charm is vanishing, and by March or April, the last vestiges of the idyllic are gray slush in your driveway.

If there's one thing snow does for you, it's cover for a multitude of sins. Those flowers you didn't get to before winter? No one can see they should have been cut off in the fall. The groundhog tunnel that the nest of rodents made on the exterior wall of your barn? Covered with forgiving snow.

So I can cut snow a little slack. It's what is revealed during Mud Season that is problematic. On a fact-finding, cleaning-up-the-yard mission last spring, I came away with the following:

- Two action figures that my grandsons had been looking for all winter. Location: Wedged in a crack between the garage and the driveway. Condition: None the worse for wear.
- A faded red Christmas bow that had been wrenched from a wreath during a winter storm. Location: Clinging to the fence in the pasture. Condition: Done for.
- A 9x9 baking pan that my son set out to feed the wild gray cat that occasionally makes



an appearance. Location: Six inches outside the front door. Condition: Fine after a good washing.

- Fast food wrappers, cups and straws. Location: Next to the shop where my son and his friends were cutting up a deer. Condition: Disgust and forcing son to clean it up (my condition, by the way).
- Two pressure wands from Kent's power washer. Used by said grandsons as guns to hunt bobcats. Location: Near the cooking spot, by the creek. Condition: Just fine, despite grumbling from Grandpa.
- An old pink bath towel. Location: On the deck. Condition: Should have been

dumped a year ago, so no loss there.

After three boys and two grandsons, we've learned to "walk" the yard before the first mowing of the year. If we don't, we'll chew up pieces of a croquet set, tennis balls and the stray bone or two that the neighbor dog dragged over.

Maybe this year will be that rare one where there's little snow and spring comes on so gradually that there's no mud, either.

But if you believe that, I've got a few action figures for you. ⚡

Valerie Van Kooten is a writer from Pella who loves living in the country and telling its stories. She and her husband Kent have three married sons and two incredibly adorable grandsons.

FERTILE GROUND



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