

“The Current - Informing Our Members Since 1957”

VOLUME 58

February 17, 2015

NUMBER 7



Mike Darnell, Cotton Electric’s contractor coordinator, and Donald Butcher, a heavy equipment operator for NRS, discuss progress on a right-of-way clearing along a road eight miles west of U.S. Highway 81.



A few days later, the same site has had some trees removed, branches from others trimmed back to a safe distance from the power lines. Crews will revisit over the years with herbicides and to trim again if needed.

Right-of-way clearing continues

Responsible policies assure co-op members of safe, quality, affordable power

By Karen Kaley

Mother Nature is a persistent character. Aside from more abrupt whims, Nature slowly, steadily pushes forward in unceasing cycles of growth, dormancy and regrowth.

In this manner, she provides not only for all the flora and fauna in southwest Oklahoma, but she assures job security for Mike Darnell and his crews.

Cotton Electric established a formal right-of-way (ROW) clearing program about 10 years ago, and Darnell has headed up the effort to keep tree branches from deterring the co-op’s mission to safely deliver top-quality power to all members at an affordable cost.

In addition to safety, quality and affordability, Darnell never loses sight of a fourth consideration: Responsibility. Darnell and his crews address only those trees that endanger power lines and they try to do so in a way that benefits co-op members and Mother Nature.

It may be hard to see it that way, so let’s think about each of those considerations.

Safety – There is a very real danger in allowing tree branches and power lines to come in contact. A close inspection of contact areas reveals scorch and burn marks. Not a good sign on trees that are challenged by drought or in a yard where children play.

This is so important, that the state Legislature has weighed in. Oklahoma public health and safety statutes spell out safety requirements restricting and prohibiting activity within 6 feet of power lines. Tree branches coming in contact with overhead electrical lines violate the restriction.

“We have no choice,” said Darnell. “We *must* trim the trees for safety purposes.”

Quality – Have you ever noticed how the lights seem to blink only when the wind is high? That means a tree’s branches are making contact somewhere along the power lines leading to your home. It could be nearby or a few miles away on your neighbor’s property.

Speaking of drought-challenged trees, some have succumbed. A high

wind can take a dead tree down. If it tangles with a power line on the way down, the stress can cause a domino effect. Utility poles can come down in both directions for a mile or so.

The lights won’t blink, they will go out. It will take many hours to restore power.

Affordability – Mike Ottinger, vice president of operations, said, “Cutting back branches and removing trees helps control rates. It conserves the use of the co-op’s resources.”

Since the ROW maintenance program has been in place, Ottinger said, “There has been a noticeable drop in the number of power blinks” that have been annoying rural electric customers for decades. In turn, the co-op has expended fewer man hours pursuing these trouble calls.

By following a planned path, line workers have not cut branches out of power lines in one location only to return a few weeks later to do the same thing at a spot a mile down the road.

The most cost-effective approach has been to completely clear the area of trees to eliminate the need to return

and address regrowth. Instead, co-op employees revisit a cleared area a couple of years later and apply herbicide that inhibits new tree growth without affecting surrounding grasses.

Responsibility – In addition to choosing herbicides carefully, the co-op clears and trims trees in a manner designed for long-term positive impact.

“We have worked with Kevin Keys of the Oklahoma Forestry Service and we have educated ourselves and our staff through the Arbor Day Foundation on the proper way to prune trees,” Darnell said. Every effort is made to trim in a way that satisfies safety concerns and the property owner while preserving the integrity of the tree.

Grasses and shrubs thrive in areas where trees have been completely cleared. This benefits wildlife, providing tender greens and berries for herbivores and safe spots for small nesting and burrowing animals. Tree-dwelling animals have longer life expectancies when they are not likely to come in contact with a power line.

See Several, Page 6

Power Cost Adjustment Calculated

The power cost adjustment being applied to bills mailed after Feb. 1, 2014, is \$0.00099 per kWh.

On a member’s average bill of 1500 kilowatt hours (kWh), this will amount to a charge of \$1.48 on the February bill.


January 2014 Temperature Extremes

Day	High	Low	Avg.	Day	High	Low	Avg.
1	31	24	28	16	63	21	42
2	35	30	33	17	69	24	47
3	44	33	39	18	72	24	48
4	39	19	29	19	74	28	51
5	44	17	31	20	66	32	49
6	49	26	38	21	57	32	45
7	33	17	25	22	43	35	39
8	40	13	27	23	50	32	41
9	37	23	30	24	62	30	46
10	40	22	31	25	63	32	48
11	41	30	36	26	79	27	53
12	39	30	35	27	77	33	55
13	37	24	31	28	79	33	56
14	40	32	36	29	59	42	51
15	59	26	43	30	51	38	45

Source: srh.noaa.gov/oun/

Average Daily High: 52 Average Daily Low: 28

Did You Know?



Daylight Saving Times begins at 2 a.m. Sunday, March 8. Turn clocks forward one hour.

The next issue of The Current should be delivered on March 16, 2015.

Contact Us

Do you have a story idea for The Current or do you need to place an ad? If so, let us know. We can be reached at 580-875-3351 or by email at info@cottonelectric.com. You can also drop us a line at Cotton Electric Current, 226 N. Broadway, Walters, OK 73572.

What’s Inside

Operating Stats 2

Co-op News 2

Community 3

Co-op News 4-11

Simple Savings 13

Recipes 15

Crossword 14

Classifieds 16-23

More news at cottonelectric.com

Democracy at the co-op

Democratic Member Control is critical to the operation of every co-op

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

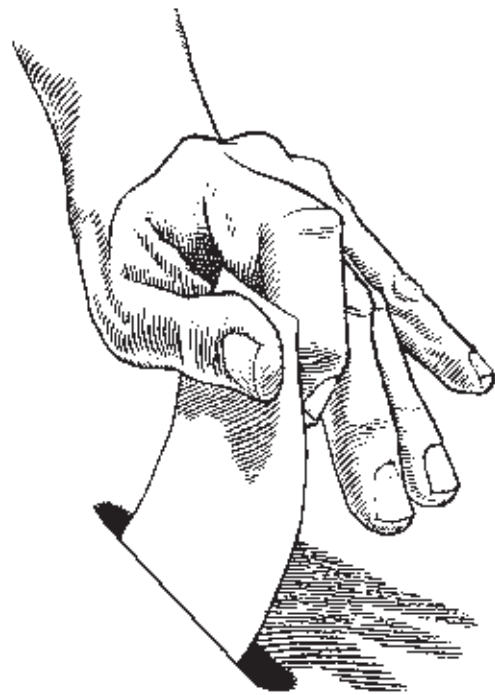
While the national elections of the past November may be fading from your memory, voting for politicians is not the only way we as co-op members can practice democracy.

Every co-op – whether it’s Cotton Electric Cooperative, your credit union or a farm co-op – follows the basic principle of *one member, one vote*. Most often, you are asked to vote and elect individuals that will represent you on the board of directors. These folks are your friends, neighbors and fellow residents of our community.

Occasionally, you may be asked to vote on a policy, such as a bylaw change. Bylaws are like the constitution for Cotton Electric.

Every member in good standing of the co-op may run for the board. This is one of the key differences between a co-op member and a customer of an investor-owned utility (IOU). Most IOUs are not too interested in customers’ opinions of how the company should be run.

Co-ops invite participation. In fact, it is critically important to the survival of the co-op. Most co-ops serve



One member, one vote

Co-ops are democratically controlled, with each member having one vote.

Members actively participate in setting policies and making decisions.

Directors are elected from the membership.

far fewer people than IOUs. Co-ops measure the number of members in the thousands, IOUs in the millions.

If you are not actively involved with the co-op, we all suffer. As the electric utility industry evolves, having interested members who are willing to take an active role is critically important.

At Cotton Electric, we believe in the Own, Use, Serve and Belong model:

Own – Refers to each member truly believing and feeling that he or she does, indeed, share in the ownership of the co-op.

This can come from attending the Annual Meeting, voting, receiving a capital credits check or participating

in other co-op events.

Use – For electric co-ops, this means that you use the co-op’s resources wisely. After all, you are an owner of those resources.

You make use of the free energy audits that Cotton Electric offers. You use energy-efficient appliances, weather-strip windows and doors, use LED or CFL lights – and you turn them off when you leave the room. Share that one with the kids!

Serve – If we are successful with “own” and “use,” perhaps you will feel called to serve your co-op – maybe as a board member, volunteer, committee member or community contributor through the co-op.

Belong – We all seek to belong to something. In the early days when the co-op was just getting started, neighbors helped neighbors.

While our lives seem busier and more electronically driven than ever, the need to connect and belong is necessary for us and our communities to thrive.

There is great power in the human connection, and at Cotton Electric, we strive to do that every day.

Cotton Electric rebate standards for 2015 listed

Cotton Electric has announced standards for the 2015 Rebate Program for the purchase and installation of energy-efficient ground source or air source heat pumps.

A total of \$200,000 in rebate funds is available on a first-come, first-served basis. Once rebate funds have been exhausted, the program will end for the year.

Ground source heat pumps

Members should note that the minimum standards for ground source heat pumps (GSHP) are divided into two tiers for 2015. In both tiers, the minimum standards apply to the full load operation of a GSHP, not the partial load.

The amount of rebate is determined by the size of each unit, its Energy Efficiency Rating (EER) and Coefficient of Performance (COP).

Qualifying units with a desuperheater – energy-saving devices in a heat pump that recycle waste heat from the home to heat water – can receive a rebate of \$525 per ton installed if the unit meets the minimum specifications in Tier 1 or \$650 per ton installed for meeting Tier 2 specifications.

If a desuperheater is not installed, members can receive rebates of \$225 or \$375 per ton installed by meeting the specifications in Tier 1 or 2.

Specifications for each tier are:

Tier 1 – Minimum specifications for closed loop installations are 15.9 EER and 3.3 COP. For open loop, 18.0 EER and 3.6 COP.

Tier 2 – Minimum specifications for closed loop installations are 18.5 EER and 3.6 COP. For



To qualify for a rebate, members will need to provide a copy of an itemized invoice and a certification by the HVAC contractor. An inspection by Cotton Electric personnel is also required to complete the rebate process.

open loop, 20.2 EER and 4.0 COP.

Replacement GSHP

Cotton Electric offers a rebate for members replacing an existing GSHP system with a more efficient GSHP system.

To qualify for a rebate when replacing an existing GSHP system with another GSHP system, the new installation must increase the EER by at least 3.0. The minimum specification for COP is 3.3 for closed loop systems and 3.6 for open loop. Rebates are \$225 per ton for systems with a desuperheater and \$75 per ton without.

Air source heat pumps

To qualify for an air source heat pump rebate (ASHP), members

must install a unit with a minimum Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio (SEER) rating of 16, EER of 13.4 or greater and a Heating Seasonal Performance Factor (HSPF) of 8.5 or greater to receive a rebate of \$150 per ton. Backup or supplemental heat can be natural gas or propane.

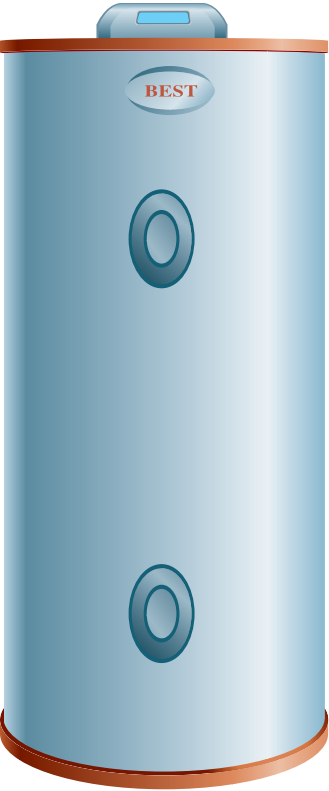
In order to qualify for the program, members will need to provide a copy of their itemized invoice and a certification by the HVAC contractor. An inspection by Cotton Electric personnel is also required to receive the rebate. The maximum rebate in 2015 will be \$3,000 per residence.

For more information about the rebate program, please contact Trent Marlett, Cotton Electric’s energy efficiency coordinator, at 580-875-3351 or 800-522-3520.

Water heater rebates

Cotton Electric offers a rebate when members purchase and install certain energy-efficient water heaters.

Water heaters should have a minimum 40-gallon capacity and an energy factor of .93 or greater. Replacing an existing electric water heater with one that meets these specifications can get a \$50 rebate. There is a maximum of one rebate allowed per unit every five years.



The rebate goes up to \$200 if the water heater is installed in a new home or is an additional heater added in a home expansion project.

Collecting the rebate requires proof of purchase dated after Jan. 1, 2015, and an inspection by Cotton Electric.

To arrange an inspection or for information to make sure your purchase is eligible, call 580-875-3351 or 800-522-3520.



COTTON
ELECTRIC CO-OP

Mission Statement

Our mission is to be the leader in providing the most reliable and innovative electric system, with affordable rates, through the positive, enthusiastic and professional use of its resources and people.

December 2014 Operating Stats		
	2014	2013
Total Amount Billed/Accrued	\$6,555,161	\$6,653,591
Cost of Purchased Power	4,556,901	4,435,953
Taxes	119,454	110,625
Average Farm and Residential Bill	174	203
Average Farm and Residential kWh	1,544	2,016
Total Meters Billed (farm, residential)	18,273	18,110

The Current

Published Monthly at Walters, Oklahoma
By Cotton Electric Cooperative, Inc.

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Jennifer Meason.....Vice President of Marketing
Karen Kaley.....Editor
Jennifer Kriz.....Display Advertising

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“Cotton Electric Current” (USPS #134-020)
is published monthly by: Cotton Electric Co-op,
226 North Broadway, Walters, OK 73572
Periodicals Postage paid at
Wichita Falls, Texas 76307-9998

**Postmaster Send #3579
To The Cotton Current
226 North Broadway
Walters, OK 73572**

Community Spotlight

If you would like your community event listed in the March issue, please submit information by March 2 by calling 580-875-4259 or send an email to info@cottonelectric.com.

Fish fry set for Lenten Fridays

Fish, fries, slaw, beans, dessert and drinks are on the menu from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. every Friday from Feb. 20 through March 27 at the annual Lenten Fish Fry sponsored by the Knights of Columbus, Council 5168. All are welcome to dine at the Marlow Catholic Church at 4th & Comanche under the blue roof or take a great meal home. Meals are \$9 for adults, and children under 12 eat free. All proceeds go to community projects serving children and those less fortunate.

AARP offers tax prep assistance

AARP offers free tax assistance and preparation for taxpayers with low to moderate income on a first-come, first-served basis through the tax due date of April 15 at several locations in the Cotton Electric service area. No appointment is necessary but certain documents are. Taxpayers should take last year's income tax return, all W-2 and 1099 forms, information about any other income, adjustment and deduction documents, Social Security cards for each person on a return, and property taxes if he or she plans to itemize.

Trained IRS volunteers will be available from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Mondays and Thursdays, and from noon to 4 p.m. Wednesdays at the Center for Creative Living, 3501 Dr. Elsie Hamm Drive, Lawton. A final session will be from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Tuesday, April 15. Volunteers will be on hand from 4 to 7 p.m. Mondays, 1 to 5 p.m. Wednesdays and 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Thursdays at Lawton Public Library, 110 SW 4th Street. The free service is available from 8:30 to 11 a.m. Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays in the Duncan Public Library Annex, 2211 N. U.S. Highway 81.

Passion Play rehearsals begin

Rehearsals for the annual performance of "The Prince of Peace" will be at 2 p.m. for six weeks prior to the pageant performances on March 28 and April 4 in the Holy City of the Wichitas. This 90th performance of the birth, life, death and Resurrection of Jesus in is need of volunteers for many roles. No acting skills are necessary.

For information, call pageant director Alan Corrales, 918-978-0316, or send him an email at alan.corrales@cox.net.

DLT presents 'Sound of Music'

Duncan Little Theatre presents "The Sound of Music," a Rodgers and Hammerstein musical about the Von Trapp family and their exodus from Austria during the Nazi occupation in World War II. The well-known classic is a repeat presentation for DLT. The 2015 performance is dedicated to the memory of the late Jimmy Zinn, who starred as Captain Von Trapp in the production in 1995. Performances are set for 7:30 p.m. Feb 20, 21, 27 and 28 in the Simmons Center in Duncan. A matinee performance will be at 2 p.m. Feb. 22. Tickets are available at the door. For information, see duncanlittletheatre.com or call 580-252-8331.

Workshop explores state hunger

"Hunger in Oklahoma" is the focus of a community workshop set for 1 p.m. Feb. 24 in the Territory Hall Room of the Conference Center at Stephens County Fairgrounds. The workshop is sponsored by Oklahoma

Home and Community Education (OHCE) and the Cooperative Extension Service of Stephens County. Guest speakers include Whitney Danker, state advocacy and public policy director of the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma. Susan Allen, of Dairy Max, will present information on "The Great American Milk Drive" to benefit local families. After the workshop, there will be a presentation of various educational programs and resources available from OHCE and the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service. Topics covered include healthy living, family issues, raising young readers, resource management, cultural enrichment, and family finance. The workshop is open to the public. For information, call Brenda Gandy at the OSU Extension Office at 580-255-0510.

Annual barbershop show set

Southwest Pride is preparing "Prairie Dog Barbershop" for its 2015 barbershop show at 7:30 p.m. March 7 at McMahon Auditorium in Lawton. The comical parody on the exciting and sometimes fragile lives of the furry, lovable creatures found in Elmer Thomas Park and the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge traces their lives through the years from fun and frolicking to near extermination. There will be no Duncan show this year. "The decision to forgo the Duncan Show for 2015 was especially difficult," Johnny Horn, Southwest Pride president said. "Our sincerest hope is that so many Duncan regulars attend the Lawton show that McMahon Auditorium cannot hold them. Such an occasion would force us to gladly re-think the arrangement for future shows." Advance tickets can be purchased from Scott's House of Flowers, Lawton Community Theater, McMahon Auditorium or chorus members. For information, call Bill Penn at 580-355-8781 or visit SWPrideChorus.com.

DRHHF plans 5K, marathon

Duncan Regional Hospital's Health Foundation is sponsoring "Stampede the Trail," a 5K and quarter marathon set for March 7 at the Simmons Center. The quarter marathon will start at 9 a.m. and the 5K at 9:30. Early packet pickup will be from 1 to 6 p.m. the day before the race. For information about fees and registration, visit DRHHealthFoundation.org.

Horse club sets annual clinic

Duncan Lake Horse Club is having its annual Coggins Clinic from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. March 7 at Duncan Lake Pavilion. In addition to Coggins testing, other vaccines will be offered, including Eastern/Western, tetanus, rabies, West Nile and flu/rhino. Coggins testing will be \$15 per horse. The clinic, conducted by Dr. Connie McLemore of Countryside Veterinary, is open to the public with no limit on the number of horses. Rain date will be March 14. Other DLHC activities that day for members include the annual Chili Cook Off at 6 p.m. at the Pavilion. New members are encouraged to attend these events. Annual dues are \$12 for an individual and \$15 for a family. For information, call 580-475-7190.

MP hosts ParkStomp March 20-22

ParkStomp is three days of live bluegrass music in Medicine Park. First acts perform at Park Tavern on March 20. Performance by The Match Sellers begins at 7 p.m. Dank follows at 9, and The Steamboat Bandits take the stage at 11. Music on the main stage begins at noon March 21. Entertainers include


Photo of the Month



This photo of Ginger and her friend Flopsy sharing a kiss is our FRIENDSHIP photo contest winner. Ginger, 3, is the granddaughter of Cotton Electric members Ken and Exa Cunningham who, by their description, live in a pasture on the Red River near Devol. Ginger's parents are Rich and Stacey Cunningham of Fort Worth. Enter your "best shot" in our Photo of the Month contest. Theme for March is FAVORITE PEOPLE. Entries can be emailed to info@cottonelectric.com or mailed to The Current, 226 N. Broadway, Walters, OK 73572. Winners will receive a Cotton Electric prize package of CEC goodies.

Dank, The Steamboat Bandits, The Big Idea, Monzie Leo and the Big Sky, Chucky Waggs and the Company of Rags and Foley's Van. Final performances begin at noon March 22. Acts include Ozark Mountain Maybelles, Tyler Gregory, Calamity Cubes and Tyrannosaurus Chicken. Visit MedicinePark.com for more information. CTAC offers 'Dueling Pianos' "Two pianos, two players, one great time" is the tagline of the next presentation offered by Chisholm Trail Arts Council. Dueling Pianos, set for 7:30 p.m. March 27 in Scarlet Event Center, 1206 N. U.S. 81 Highway, features two sharp-witted, talented musicians with two grand pianos in a roomful of people. The pianists have a repertoire ranging from classic rock to country, from R&B to show tunes. The audience plays a big role, too, calling out requests, singing along and bantering with performers. Tickets can be purchased at ChisholmTrailArts.com or by calling 580-252-4160. More Community Spotlight on Page 4

TRUTH BE TOLD, YOUR ELECTRICITY COMES FROM PEOPLE POWER. Thankfully, there's one energy source that co-op members can always depend on – the hard-working dedication and efficiency of your electric co-op linemen. Learn more about the power of your co-op membership at TogetherWeSave.com.



COTTON
ELECTRIC CO-OP
A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

TOGETHERWESAVE.COM

Community Spotlight

Home, garden show begins March 27

Find practical home improvement ideas and visit professional home and garden service providers during Lawton Home Builders 51st annual Home and Garden Show.

Doors will be open from 5 to 8 p.m. March 27, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. March 28, and noon to 5 p.m. March 29 in the Great Plains Coliseum and Annex. Admission is free.

LCT presents Lee’s ‘Mockingbird’

Performances of Lawton Community Theatre’s presentation of “To Kill A Mockingbird” are set for April 10-12 and 16-19 at John Denney Playhouse, 1316 NW Bell Avenue in Lawton.

Based on the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel by Harper Lee, the story is a timeless exploration of conscience. As lawyer Atticus Finch seeks truth against racial injustice with courage and compassion, his daughter, Scout, a young girl on the cusp of adulthood, brings new hope to a neighborhood in turmoil.

For information, visit LCT-OK.org or call 580-355-1600.

Magic Lanterns offers classic films

Magic Lantern Film Society of Cameron University screens DVD presentations of classic films each month in the CETES Conference Center, Room B.

The April 17 offering is the final screening for the 2014-15 season. “Back to the Future,” tells of a teenager who travels 30 years back and has to set things right with his parents after unwittingly changing their history. The 1985 film, directed by Robert Zemeckis, features Michael J. Fox, Christopher Lloyd and Crispin Glover in starring roles.

There is no admission charge, but donations are accepted. For information about the society, or to see a schedule and synopsis of films, visit Cameron.edu/magiclantern.

Food pantry open twice monthly

Walters Community Food Pantry is open from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. on the second and fourth Saturdays of each month. The pantry is in the old City Hall, 131 1/2 W. California Street.

Pantry organizers try to provide a two-week supply of basic staples to anyone with identification.

For information, call Roger Noland at 580-591-6826.

WMASC activities listed

Wichita Mountains Area Senior Citizens offers a variety of activities and sponsors weekly and monthly events at the Legion Building near Medicine Park.

Potluck dinners, games and TV are offered every Monday from 6 to 10 p.m.

An Indian taco sale held on the second Saturday of each month. Drinks and desserts are included.

A dance is held each Friday. Doors open at 6:30 p.m., dancing begins at 7.

For information about other activities and directions to the facility, visit WichitaMountainSeniors.org.

Honor guard serves area veterans

Seeing a need in the area, several military veterans formed an honor guard in 2007 to provide services at funerals for all military veterans. The guard is made up of veterans from all branches of the armed forces and three veterans’ organizations.

The uniformed guard furnishes a 21-gun salute, plays taps and folds a flag for presentation to the family. The guard travels anywhere in Stephens, Cotton, Comanche and Jefferson counties, and has made special trips into Grady and Carter counties.

There is no charge for the service, though donations are accepted.

For information about joining the guard or securing its services, call L.D. Williams at 580-439-8244.



Dylan Sheffield, a Ryan High School senior, earned a \$250 scholarship when he attended the 2015 Leadership Summit in Oklahoma City.

Sheffield represents Cotton at annual Leadership Summit

High school senior Dylan Sheffield represented Cotton Electric Cooperative at the 15th annual Touchstone Energy Leadership Summit held Jan. 17 at Chesapeake Energy Finish Line Tower in Oklahoma City. He was among 30 students from across the state selected to participate in the event sponsored by Cotton and other Touchstone Energy cooperatives in Oklahoma.

Dylan was chosen from the finalists participating in Cotton Electric’s 2014 Youth Tour essay contest. He attends Ryan High School and is the son of Charles and Terri Sheffield.

During the summit, students had the opportunity to hear Rhett Laubach and

former Miss America Lauren Nelson Faram, both nationally known speakers and Oklahoma natives. They presented topics to encourage and inspire the students to reach within and find their inner leader.

In addition to leaving the workshop energized with new communications tools and greater leadership knowledge, each teen in attendance took home a \$250 college scholarship.

At the conclusion of the action-packed leadership training, students and their families were treated to an Oklahoma City Barons hockey game at Cox Convention Center. The Barons beat the Texas Stars, with a final score of 5-2.

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Duncan, OK
www.vanandco.com
580-252-2205

sher@vanandco.com

Lights out? Tell us everything

The more we know, the quicker we can restore power
By Karen Kaley

In an effort to keep up with the times, our members, and how they want to be served, the folks at Cotton Electric are always considering new ideas, testing new technology and adding new ways to accomplish those goals.

During the past year, the co-op introduced SmartHub, an electronic way for members to manage power accounts. Accessible through CottonElectric.com or a free app on any mobile device, the program can be used to pay bills in a variety of ways and to monitor power use and compare it with temperature extremes and with consumption history.

SmartHub is a valuable communication method, too. Members can choose from several account alerts and arrange to receive notifications via email, text message or phone call.

Cotton Electric members using SmartHub may have noticed a new icon on the landing page. An image of a tiny clipboard labeled Report an Outage is another way to communicate with the co-op when members find

themselves in the dark.

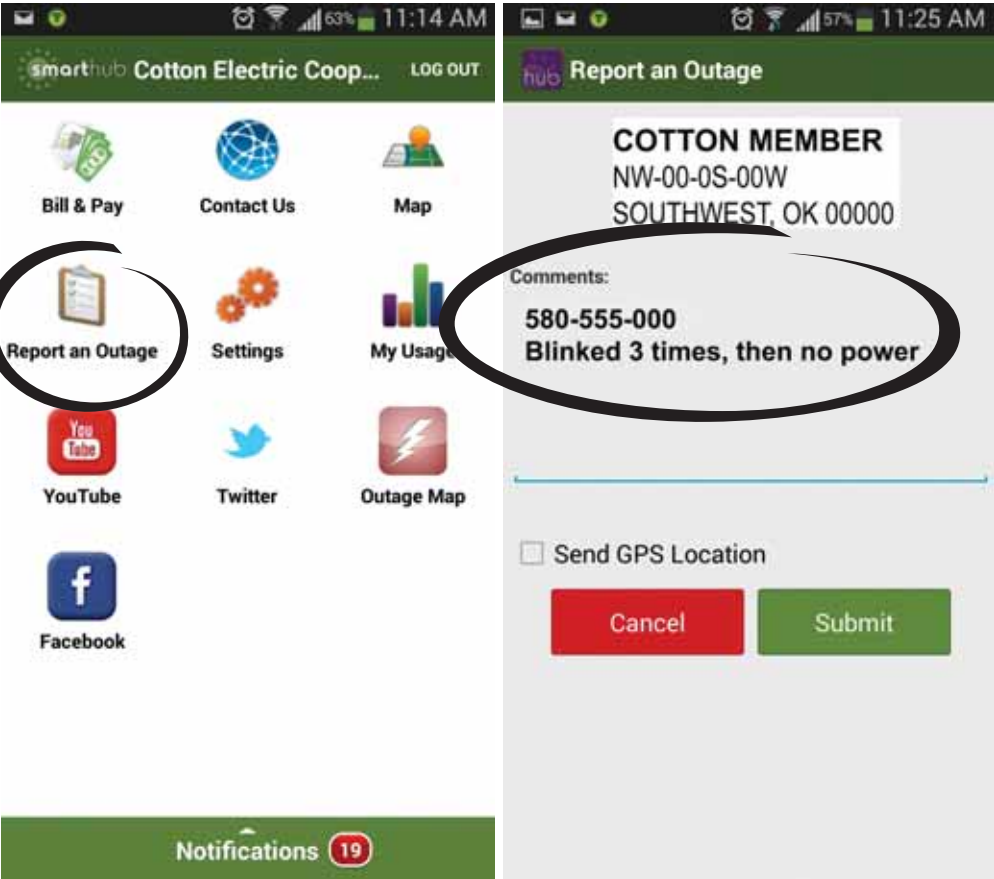
The Report an Outage feature in SmartHub is intended for use only when there is a complete loss of power. Members having problems such as power blinks or security lights not working should use the Contact Us feature. This will offer automatic links to visit the co-op website, send an email or give us a call.

The tiny clipboard depicting a checklist is a good image for Report an Outage. Before using any method to report an outage, it is important to check a few things, according to Cotton’s Chief Dispatcher Mike Morris.

“Please do two things to verify the power loss is a problem with our service before submitting an outage report via SmartHub or any other method,” he said.

“First, check your breakers. Go to your breaker box – the one in your house and the one beneath your meter – and check to make sure none has been tripped.

“Second, think about your account with Cotton Electric and ask yourself



When using the Report an Outage feature through SmartHub on a smart phone, please remember to include a good call back phone number before submitting the outage report.

a question. If you have a traditional account and make monthly payments, is your account delinquent? If you have a MyChoice account and prepay for electricity, has your balance gone past zero?”

Morris said time of day is a possible clue that could indicate power may have been disconnected for non-payment. The procedure is often automated and usually occurs mid-morning.

Considering those two steps before reporting an outage is important. Morris explained it is costly to send a crew and truck to a location only to discover breakers are off or power has been disconnected for non-payment.

“It costs the co-op and you as a member-owner,” he said and reminded that controlling costs helps control rates.

Morris has another request.

“When reporting an outage via SmartHub, please make use of the Comments box before sending.

“Please put a good call back phone number in Comments,” he said, “and please include information about what you heard or saw just as the power went out.”

These two pieces of information are important. Co-op employees sometimes need to call to check on circum-

stances of the outage or to verify when power has been restored. In the age of landlines being disconnected for ever-changing cell phone numbers, the co-op often does not have an up-to-date phone number on file.

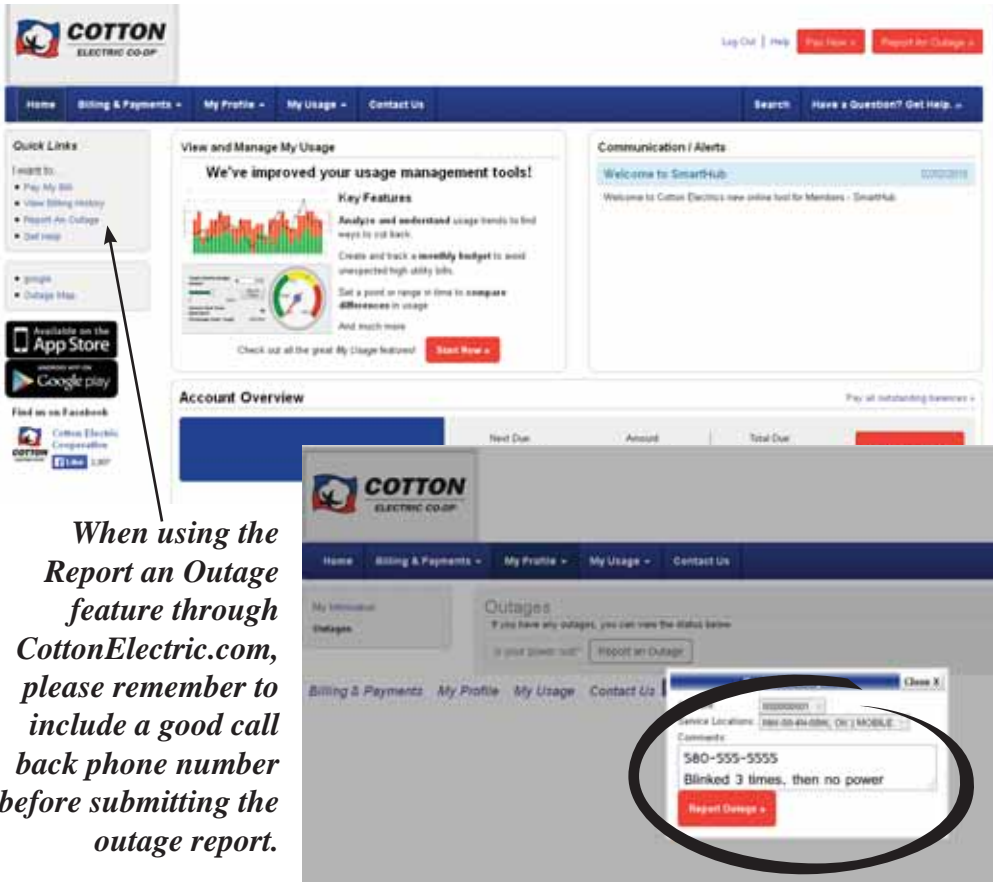
Knowing what happened when the power went out can give clues about the cause. This makes it easier to pinpoint the origin of the outage and restore power quickly.

“If a member says the power blinked three times and went off, I pretty much know it’s an OCR somewhere,” Morris said, referring to an oil-circuit recloser. The device protects electric lines by momentarily interrupting service when a fault occurs, then restoring power automatically after the fault clears. If after three attempts the fault is not cleared, the power shuts down completely.

Morris indicated he would rather talk to the member anyway. He’s a friendly guy, likes to talk, so give him a call at 580-875-3351 or 800-522-3520.

However, if there is a widespread outage, it may be hard to get through. That’s the best time to use the SmartHub Report an Outage feature.

“Just don’t forget to include your phone number,” Morris said.



When using the Report an Outage feature through CottonElectric.com, please remember to include a good call back phone number before submitting the outage report.



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Look Through this “LENS” when Making Social Security Decisions

Your Social Security benefits can be an important part of your retirement income strategy. But when should you start taking these payments?

You can begin accepting Social Security as early as 62, but your monthly checks will be much smaller than if you wait until your “full retirement age,” which will likely be between 66 or 67. And these monthly payments will get even bigger if you wait until age 70, at which point they “max out.” So, should you take your Social Security as early as possible and hope that the smaller monthly payments will be justified by the extra years of receiving them, or should you wait until you are older and hope that the bigger checks will be worth the delay?

In weighing this decision, consider the acronym LENS, which stands for Life expectancy, Employment, Need and Spouse. Let’s look at each component:

Life expectancy — If your family has a history of longevity, and if you are in excellent health, it may make sense for you to take Social Security later, when your monthly benefits will be higher. You’ll also want to consider your spouse’s life expectancy.

Employment — If you want to keep working in your “retirement years,” be aware that your earnings could affect your Social Security payments. Specifically, if you take Social Security early — that is, before your full retirement age — your benefits will be withheld by \$1 for every \$2 in earned income above a certain amount (\$15,720 in 2015). During the year in which you reach your full retirement age, this withholding changes to \$1 for every \$3 in earnings over the annual limit (\$41,880 in 2015). The withheld amounts could also affect spousal benefits. However, beginning the month you

attain your full retirement age, benefits will no longer be withheld based on how much you earn. Also, Social Security will recalculate your benefits at full retirement age to account for the benefits that were withheld. In any case, if you do plan to continue working, and you think you could have significant income, you’ll need to understand the effect that earnings will have on your annual benefits.

Need — In deciding when to take Social Security, here’s a key question: Do you need the money? If you can support your lifestyle for several years with alternative sources of income (such as a pension) and modest withdrawals from your investments, you may be able to delay Social Security, thereby increasing the size of your monthly payments. Be careful, though, because relying too heavily on your investment portfolio can shorten its own “life expectancy.” It’s essential

that you maintain a reasonable withdrawal rate for your investments throughout your retirement.

Spouse — Your decision of when to take Social Security will affect your spouse’s survivor benefit. Surviving spouses can receive their own benefit or 100% of their deceased spouse’s benefit, whichever is greater. So, if you were to take your Social Security early, when the payments are smaller, your spouse’s survivor benefits will also be permanently reduced. If you are older than your spouse, or otherwise expect your spouse to outlive you, it might be a good idea to delay taking Social Security to maximize the survivor benefits.

As you think about when to take Social Security, look at your decision through the LENS described above. It could help clarify your options.

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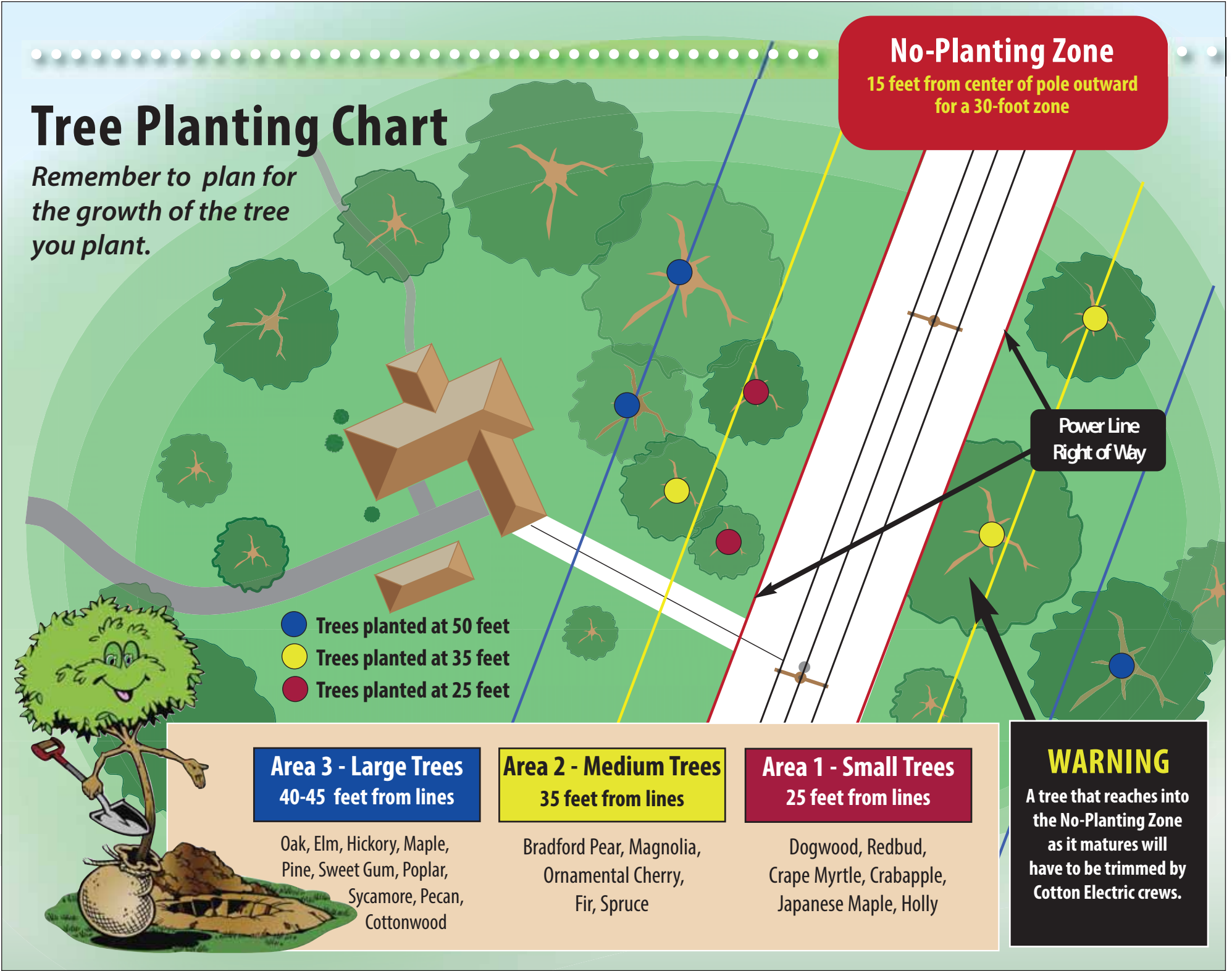
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Trees are an asset to your property and home but they also can be a power line’s worst enemy. Strong winds, storms, and heavy ice can topple trees or shatter branches that pull down power lines and cause outages. If you are planning to plant trees on your property, make sure not to plant them directly under or within at least 25 feet of power lines for short trees, and at least 35 feet away for medium-sized trees, 40 to 45 feet for large trees. Shrubs, hedges, and other plants should be kept clear of electric towers and poles. Remember to Call Okie, 1-800-522-OKIE, before you dig.

Several crews work to clear trees

Continued from Page One
All Cotton Electric line workers and brush crew employees have been certified to handle the herbicide and are trained to deal with tree growth with the four considerations in mind. The task of managing vegetation along 5,150 miles of line is so enormous that Cotton has contracted with equally mindful crews from NRS of Vinita, D&R Right of Way of Duncan and Southwest Clear Cutting of Marlow to help.

During 2015, NRS will focus on clear cutting lines coming from the Indianoma and Cache substations. Southwest is handling retrim work around the Paradise and Medicine Park substations and D&R will serve as a hot shot crew, working on problem areas as they come up. All of these efforts are intended to serve Cotton Electric members well while we enjoy as much of a peaceful partnership as a community can have with Mother Nature.



Energy Efficiency Tip

Keep energy efficiency in mind as the ground thaws and you plan spring landscaping. Properly selected and planted trees, shrubs, and bushes can create a windbreak that lowers home heating bills in the winter and insulates your home year-round. Before you start, check on the right plants and techniques for your climate at EnergySavers.gov.

Source: U.S. Department of Energy

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Conservation seedling sale returning

ODA foresters plan stops in Medicine Park, Walters

In a state known for the wind sweeping down the plain, there is an economical way to manage the effects of the wind while enhancing a property’s wildlife habitat. All it takes is a few hours of the landowner’s time to plant tree seedlings purchased from the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry (ODA).

At 88 cents or less per tree or shrub seedling, the annual conservation tree seedling sale offers one of the best bargains around.

A refrigerated semi-truck full of seedlings will be in the Cotton Electric service area on March 9. From 8:30 a.m. to noon, it will be parked at the J.A. Manning Fish Hatchery off of Oklahoma Highway 49 in Medicine Park. It will then travel to Walters to

continue the sale from 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. in the Cotton Electric Community Room.

The low-cost seedlings are available through the ODA Forestry Division to aid landowners in good land management. Some examples of uses for conservation trees include establishing windbreaks, curbing erosion, protecting watersheds and riparian areas, livestock protection, improving wildlife habitat, timber production, Christmas trees and firewood plantations.

Kevin Keys, a forester with ODA, said, “It is remarkable how a few well-placed trees will improve a site.

“Oaks, persimmon, pecan, plums, lilac and Osage orange can improve wildlife habitat. Osage orange, Arizona cypress, Scotch pine, shumard oak, and arborvitae are a few

10-Tree Bonus

The first 25 Cotton Electric members purchasing two bundles of trees at either location during the seedling sale will receive another 10 tree seedlings. To get the bonus, members will need to provide their Cotton Electric account number when purchasing the minimum two bundles of seedlings. Type of bonus seedling will depend on availability on the day of the sale.

of the species that can provide an effective, attractive farmstead or field windbreak.”

Trees can help with energy conservation. Keys pointed out that a properly placed and maintained windbreak can reduce home-heating costs in the winter by up to 30 percent.

Windbreaks also dramatically increase soil moisture available to crops and help reduce soil erosion caused by wind. Properly planted black locust seedlings can significantly reduce the growth of

an eroding gully or stream cutbank, as well as provide wildlife habitat and firewood potential.

Pecan and black walnut seedlings are available for timber and nut production.

The species mentioned above are just a sampling of the trees that may be available at the sale. Seedlings are sold on a first-come, first-served basis. This may limit the variety of choices available.

There is a minimum purchase of 100 bare-root for-

est tree seedlings in bundles of 50. Prices of the seedlings vary according to the variety of trees. Discounts apply for larger quantities purchased.

A state forester will be on hand to provide information and make recommendations about the type of tree to choose, planting and care. For information about the sale or other forestry-related matter, call Keys at 580-223-3973.

Because trees and power lines don’t mix, Cotton Electric employees will also offer planting guides to help prevent problems in the future.

To keep from damaging underground lines, call 1-800-522-OKIE (6543) at least 48 hours before digging. This free service will mark the location of lines. Location requests can also be made at callokke.com.



The truck carrying seedlings for the annual sale won’t be hard to find on March 9 in Walters.

LANDSCAPING

Landscaping doesn't only add beauty to your home, but it can also improve your home's comfort and lower your energy bills.

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Reduce your water use



Cut your heating and cooling costs



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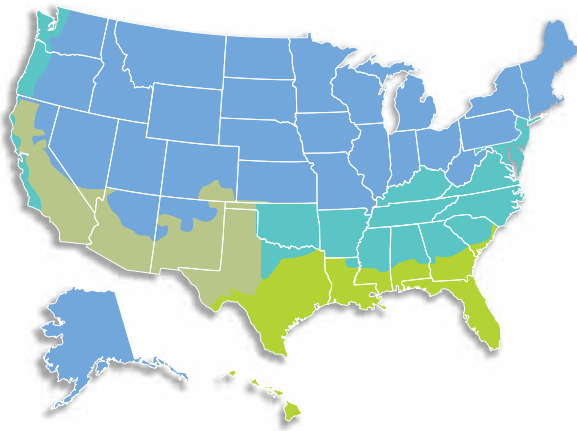


Help lower noise and air pollution

allowing you to better deal with water restrictions!

Top 3 Landscaping Strategies by Climate

The landscaping strategies you use depend on where you live in the U.S. and your home's microclimate.



What's a microclimate?

A microclimate is an area where the climate differs from the surrounding area. It can be as small as a few square feet or as large as a few square miles.

A microclimate impacts the type of plants that can grow in your landscape.

Temperate Region

Take advantage of the sun's warming effect in the winter.

Shade your home from the hot summer sun.

Deflect winter winds with windbreaks on the north and northwest sides of your house.

Hot-Arid Region

Provide shade to cool your home's walls, windows and roof.

Naturally cool your home with summer winds.

Cool the air around your home with plants.

Hot-Humid Region

Channel summer breezes toward your home to cool it.

Use trees to shade your home in the summer but allow the sun to warm it in the winter.

Avoid locating planting beds that require frequent watering close to your home.

Cool Region

Use dense windbreaks to protect the home from cold winter winds.

Ensure the winter sun reaches south-facing windows.

Shade the south and west sides of your home from the summer sun, if summer heat is a problem.

Landscaping for Shade

Shading is the most cost-effective way to reduce solar heat gain in your home and **cut air conditioning costs**. To effectively shade your home, you need to know the size, shape and location of the shadow that your shading device casts.



FACT: In tree-shaded neighborhoods, the summer daytime air temperature can be up to **6 degrees cooler** than in treeless areas.



#DidYouKnow: A well-planned landscape can reduce an unshaded home's air conditioning costs by **15-50 percent**.

Maple leaves change color with the seasons



Deciduous vs. Evergreen.

What's the difference?

Deciduous trees block solar heat in the summer but let in sunlight during the winter.

Evergreen trees and shrubs provide continuous shade.



Camphor trees are evergreen trees that can grow up to 30 m. tall.

Landscaping for Water Conservation

Design your landscape to not only save energy but also conserve water.



Always group plants with **similar water needs together**.



Reduce the use of turf and use **low-water-using types of turf grass**.



Aerate your soil -- it improves water flow to plants' roots and reduces water runoff.



Water in the morning when it is cooler and evaporation rates are low.



Organize your turf grass in **continuous patterns** -- it's easier to maintain and uses less water.



In the summer, **raise your lawn mower cutting height** -- longer grass blades help shade each other & retain more water.



Use mulch to keep plant roots cool, minimize evaporation and reduce weed growth.



By Karen Kaley

Josh Belcher is the last one. Well, maybe not *the* last one, but definitely the only Cotton Electric employee whose full-time job description carries the title Meter Reader. Time and technology have created and done away with that job over the past 60 or so years.

Back in the day, all Cotton Electric meters were read by human beings, namely the members. The cooperative relied on readings penciled in on forms and faithfully returned with payments for the previous month’s electricity.

Eventually, the co-op took on the task and hired a fleet of meter readers to visit each location and record power consumption. The service area was divided into four cycles and about a half-dozen employees would read a quarter of the system’s meters each week.

The number of meters always grew but technology allowed the co-op to cope without having to send more employees out.

Today, there are more than 22,000 meters on Cotton Electric’s system that sprawls into eight southwest Oklahoma counties along 5,150 miles of line. Most measure moderate power consumption at residences, some measure the big gulps at large commercial facilities, and some measure the tiny sips of electric fences.

All but about 1,500 of those meters are equipped with modules that send the measurements back through power lines to the co-op headquarters so each member can be properly billed for his, her or its share of power use.

And those last 1,500 meters? Those are Josh’s to visit once a month to col-

lect power consumption readings. Simple math says that’s about 375 meters per week on a four-week cycle. Visiting 75 meters a day, five days a week, sounds like an easy job for one guy, right?

Josh laughs and says easy and simple are not words he would use to describe what it takes to get the job done. “It’s an easy job,” he agrees, “anyone can read meters. But these meters ...”

There are various reasons why they still need a person to read them. Some serve large power consumers, collect special information and have to be reset after the reading. Some locations require a certain type of meter for which technology has not yet provided a reliable alternative to the meter reader.

As for getting what seems like a manageable number of meters read in a timely fashion, don’t forget the distance between them. If 1,500 meters were spread evenly along 5,150 miles, they would be about 3.5 miles apart.

Still wouldn’t be a problem if most of the meters were like a handful in Chattanooga, where Josh drives down grassy alleys, pulls up next to a meter pole and rolls down a window to take a reading.

Spots like that are outnumbered by some in eastern Stephens County, deep in the oilfield maze.

“They’re so scattered out, you get lost,” Josh said.

Many of these meters are on really bad or non-existent roads. He has created his own trail through cotton patches and goes off-roading to get to spots where meters have been placed to be out of the way of the location

Chasing meters down roads to nowhere

Josh Belcher criss-crosses service area to gather readings

Employee Spotlight



being served. Josh has to drive quickly over oil-field roads at a pace that will complete his rounds in the amount of time required. He laughed again when he recalled a co-worker accompanying him on those rounds during a cross-training week. “He said his back hurt for a week after going with me on the Velma route. “People who go muddin’ think they’re really doing something. They need to take a ride with me.” The trucks take a beating but stand up to the task. Josh has put 120,000 miles on the truck he is currently driving, his third in the nine years he has been reading meters for the co-op. The jostling routes sometimes exhaust him, but not so much that he can’t enjoy his family at the end of the day. He and his wife, Carrie, live in Walters with their daughter, Lezlie, 3, and twin sons, Christian and David, 2. And he’s not too worn out to work on the new home they are building outside Walters. He spends weekends digging a pond or doing a bit of carpentry. Come Monday, he’s back at it, chasing meters over bumpy roads at the far corners of the system.

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Home heating

Calculating the benefits of electricity vs. propane

By Anne Prince

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, heating and cooling account for nearly half of the energy use in a typical U.S. home, making it the largest energy expense for most households. While few people enjoy spending money on home heating fuels, consumers are willing to pay for comfort in the form of heat.

In these colder months when the temperatures dip and the need to heat your home rises, it makes sense when trying to determine the most economical heating method to evaluate the cost per unit of heat. This is referred to as a British thermal unit (Btu).

Evaluating cost per unit of heat for propane and electricity

The Btu content per gallon of propane is 91,500 Btu. The Btu content for electricity is 3,413 Btu per kilowatt-hour (kWh). It takes 26.8 kWh to equal the Btu content of one gallon of propane.

Using the U.S. Energy Information Administration’s table on residential propane and electricity rates for November 2014, \$2.40 per gallon, excluding taxes, and 13.01 cents per kWh, we arrive at the following calculation:

26.8 kWh x 13.01¢ = \$3.49





If we used only Btu content to determine the best energy source for home heating, it would appear that propane is less costly than electricity if the price for propane is below \$3.49 per gallon.

Comparing usable heat costs



While we may have determined the cost of the actual heat content, what matters even more is the cost of the usable heat (warmth). A low-efficiency propane furnace


IN COMPARISON TO OIL OR GAS FURNACES, ELECTRIC HEATING HAS MANY ADVANTAGES

Electric resistance heat
(i.e., energy-efficient space heaters, baseboard heating):

-  ...is 100% efficient – every single Btu in a kilowatt-hour is delivered as usable heat.
-  ...is quick to respond and can be very quiet.
-  ...takes up less space in the house than other conventional systems *(assuming space heaters are used)*.
-  ...can warm select rooms, allowing you to keep your main thermostat down while ensuring continued comfort.

Electric heating systems are:

-  ...generally less expensive to purchase and install.
-  ...safe because there is no combustion process. There is no chance of flames starting a fire or having combustion products contaminate the air.

 **America's Electric Cooperatives**

may have an efficiency rating of 80 percent, and a high-efficiency propane furnace may have an efficiency rating of 95 percent. Let’s assume we have a 90 percent efficient propane furnace. That means 10 percent of the Btus are not converted to useable heat (warmth). Here is the math:

91,500 Btu-10% Btu loss = 82,350 Btu

So now it only requires 24 kWh to equal the delivered Btu content of propane.

24 kWh x 13.01¢ = \$3.12

Electric heat is 100 percent efficient

What may surprise most consumers is that the least efficient electric heating system delivers 100 percent efficient heat. Yes, electric resistance heat (i.e., space heaters, baseboard heating) is 100 percent energy efficient. Every single Btu in a kilowatt-hour is delivered as usable heat. So if you are paying more than \$3.12 per gallon of propane for a 90 percent efficient propane furnace, it would be cheaper to use

electric resistance heat.

Are we recommending that you use electric resistance heat as your sole heating source? No. While we are proud to offer a reliable source of electricity, we don’t want to empty your wallet. However, if your only choice is electric resistance heat, we are happy to share saving tips – visit CottonElectric.com and look through our Energy Efficiency menu.

Pumping up efficiency

There are even more efficient electric heating systems called heat pumps. An air-source heat pump is at least 250 percent energy efficient. How is it so efficient?

In the heating mode, heat pumps do not use electric energy to create heat; they use it to pump heat into your home through a reversal of the refrigeration process.

If you have central air conditioning, you have already experienced this process in reverse when your unit pumps heat out of your home in the summer. If you have ever stood next to the outdoor components you know the air conditioning system is exhausting very hot air. In winter, it simply does the op-

posite, moving heat into your home.

Air source heat pumps are equipped with some type of auxiliary heat for those times when temperatures are near freezing or dip below. The typical back-up is in the form of electric resistance heat strips, but there is also a dual fuel propane option.

In calculating the Btu’s per kilowatt hour for a heat pump we use this formula:

3413 Btu x 250% = 8532 Btu.

This means that it only takes 9.65 kilowatts using an air source heat pump to deliver the same amount of warmth as a 90 percent efficient propane furnace.

9.65 kWh x 13.01¢ = \$1.25

The price of propane would need to drop to \$1.25 per gallon to breakeven with the cost of home heating using an air source heat pump. Efficiency increases even more sharply when looking at the 350+ percent efficiencies of a geothermal (water source) heat pump. An additional advantage of geothermal systems is that they can be equipped to provide

free water heating most of the year.

Providing reliable energy facts – regardless of fuel type

At Cotton Electric, we believe it is our responsibility to provide members with reliable energy facts, regardless of fuel type, so you can get the most from your energy dollars. We are committed to helping you find the best energy solution for your budget and lifestyle and hope you will consult with your local co-op before making any big home-heating decisions.

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PUBLIC AUCTION

Saturday, March 28, 2015 10:00AM
411 Wilson Avenue
Comanche, Oklahoma
(See Directions Below)

Gary Criswell Auction Service & Real Estate, Inc. has been commissioned to offer at Public Auction the Estate of Mr. and Mrs. Cain (Richard A. and Aloha W.) the Real Property and Personal Property situated at 411 Wilson Avenue.

Real Property consists of an Historic 4 Bedroom Frame Home built circa 1903. The Home is approximately 2,500 Square Feet with Living Room, Dining Room, Kitchen with Dinette and Sitting Area, Utility Room and 2 - 3/4 Baths. **NOTE:** Downstairs has 1 Bedroom and a 3/4 Bath. Upstairs has 3 Bedrooms and 3/4 Bath.

Additional Improvements include Hardwood Floors and Central Heat and Central Air, Raised Slab Porch on 3 Sides of the Home, Awnings on Upstairs Windows and a nice Gable Roof. **Improvements also include** a Detached Concrete Block Garage (24'x40') with 2 Overhead Doors, Storage Building (10'x12'). All situated on a nice Lot overlooking the City of Comanche on approximately 2.53 Acres.

Personal Property includes Antiques, Variety of Glassware and Collectibles. A detailed listing of Antiques, Glassware and Collectibles will be available in the March 16, 2015 publication. Please call the Auction Company for a Color Brochure.

Vehicles: 1947 BUICK ROADMASTER Coupe with 12,000 Original Miles, 1969 LINCOLN CONTINENTAL Convertible - all original with 68,000 original Miles (Engine rebuilt), and a 1969 LINCOLN 2 Door with 72,000 Original Miles. **NOTE:** Mileage of Vehicles is Approximate.

Directions: In Comanche Oklahoma, go West on Wilson Avenue. The Auction will be held at the corner of Wilson Avenue and 5th Street.

Terms of Sale: 10% Earnest Money on Home with Improvements the day of Sale. Balance due at closing upon delivery of Title and Deed. Personal Property - Cash, Personal or Company Check accepted. Positive I.D. required. Buyers must provide Auction Company a copy of Sales Tax Permit to avoid Sales Tax.

Preview of Real Property and Personal Property will be held Friday afternoon, March 27, from 1:00 pm to 6:00 pm. Announcements made day of sale supersede all other advertisements. Please plan to attend this Auction of this Historic Home, Quality Antiques and Vintage 1947 Buick Roadmaster Car.

Auctioneer's Note: The Quality of this Sale is second-to-none. The Antiques, Glassware and Collectibles are in great Condition and Showroom Ready. Mr. and Mrs. Cain were well-known in the Loco and Comanche Area and were highly respected. The Real Property will be offered "As-Is-Where-Is." The Estate of Richard and Aloha Cain reserve the right to accept or reject the final bid. Stephens County Abstract will serve as the Closing Agent on the Real Property.

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Smart Start of Stephens County used a Cotton Electric Charitable Foundation grant to purchase books for about 165 children enrolled in the county's Head Start program.

Opportunities multiply when children can read

By Karen Kaley

If you give a small child a book, he or she is going to flip through, look at the pictures, and imagine a story.

The child will probably ask someone to read the story, and the pictures will leave the page and take on more life in the imagination.

The youngster might enjoy the story so much that the request to have it read will be repeated many, many times. Before long, a preschooler will be able to turn the pages, run small fingers over the pictures and recite a fairly close version of the story.

He'll ask for paper and crayons so he can draw his interpretation of the story.

She will want to try more books. The young one will wrap up in a blanket and drink milk and eat cookies while hearing many tales and coming to understand that there are so many wonderful things that can come from books.

The child will grow older, go to school knowing the magic of books and learn to read on their own. A whole world will open up with this basic skill.

Eventually, perhaps as an adult, he or she will want to share the wonder and opportunities that come with the ability to read.

So, this person will give a small child a book.

With apologies and thanks to children's



book author Laura Numeroff, the parody above attempts to illustrate the purpose behind an initiative to present every Head Start child in Stephens County with a book to call his or her own.

Much like what unfolds in the book "If You Give a Mouse a Cookie," the folks at Smart Start of Stephens County believe that the simple act of giving a child a book can lead to a whole series of positive outcomes.

"Reading opens the doors to everything," Julie Sanders said. She is the community coordinator for Smart Start of Stephens County and works to bring groups, agencies and parents together to focus on getting kids ready for school.

That is a challenge in Stephens County, where barriers such as poverty, undereducated teen parents and limited English proficiency hinder a child's physical, emotional and educational readiness at school age.

"Teaching children to read is a vital ingredient to success, to changing their story," she said.

The Smart Start focus on the very young – infants to 5-year-olds – carries out a mantra Sanders repeats over and

over again: "We need to invest early in our children." Sanders said early childhood is a crucial time to nurture the learning process, and familiarizing with books is a simple and effective way to prepare a child for future education.

She explained, "The ages of 0 to 5 are formative years, and neurons for learning develop between birth and the third year."

There are many other ways Sanders and others working with Smart Start, which operates under the umbrella of United Way of Stephens County, pursue the grassroots initiative covering Cotton, Jefferson, and Stephens counties. Most efforts support and encourage families to raise children who are safe, healthy, eager to learn and ready to succeed when they enter school.


The reading and books project is one of special priority for Smart Start. To reinforce it, the agency has created a reading buddy program, which matches local volunteers with kids in Duncan and Marlow schools.

And, Sanders, on behalf of Smart Start and all the Head Start children in Stephens County,

applied for grants from Cotton Electric Charitable Foundation. Smart Start was awarded \$750 in 2013 and \$800 in 2014 to purchase books and flash cards for each child.

So you, Cotton Electric members, have given small children some books. With another apology to another beloved children's author, Dr. Seuss: Oh, the places they will go!

To learn more about Smart Start or to volunteer to become a reading buddy in Duncan, visit SmartStartSC.org.

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‘Edna’s place’ still here,
creating beauty products

By Karen Kaley

Back in the early 1970s, Edna Hennessee was a pioneer. She blazed a trail for those who followed when she identified a special ingredient and created a formula for success.

If you’ve lived in Comanche County during the past 40 or so years, you’ve probably heard of Edna’s place, Cosmetic Specialty Labs, Inc. You know she was all about aloe vera and supporting the community that supported her endeavors.

You know that Edna passed away in 2011 but have observed there is still plenty of activity at the brown building at 210 SW Texas Avenue. You can’t help but see Cosmetic Specialty Labs as you pass Lawton’s southeast industrial area while traveling in either direction on I-44.

Have you noticed the large greenhouse constructed in the last couple of years just south of the 200,000-square-foot manufacturing facility? That’s just one of the external indicators that things are still percolating inside.

Many things remain the same at Cosmetic Specialty Labs. The organization still carries out the mission of providing the greatest products, the greatest services and the greatest innovations to customers through dedication and excellence. That’s because Edna left the company in the care of an enthusiastic and hard-working staff headed up by her granddaughter, Jennifer Ellis.

The most noticeable change inside the facility is mainly, well, cosmetic. A portrait of Edna and many of her commemoratives grace the entry lobby. A doorway leads to an administra-

tive area remodeled to reflect the high qualities of southwest Oklahoma, the local community and the products developed, manufactured and packaged at the site.

At one end of office spaces is a spot set aside for the open stock line of Cosmetic Specialty Labs products, AM-PM. The line features a variety of preparations using many natural ingredients. The creams, lotions, oils and cleansers can be used to soften and protect skin and body, reverse the effects of aging and promote clean and fresh hair and breath.

“The products are really, really good,” Ellis said.

“I use them,” she said then grinned and batted her eyelashes as she joked that she is 82 years old.

On a more serious note, Ellis pointed out that Cosmetic Specialty Labs makes use of the whole leaf from aloe vera grown in the year-round summer of the greenhouse out back.

“It’s good for more than sunburns,” she explained. “It is an effective anti-inflammatory for soothing skin. It is a humectant, which helps skin retain moisture. It is an astringent, which helps with acne problems.

“Aloe vera is a very good general base for skin care products,” Ellis said.

Cotton Electric members can see for themselves by visiting the site and presenting a Co-op Connections Card to purchase the products at a 50 percent discount off the retail price.

If individuals or groups call ahead at 580-355-2182 or 800-364-2182, a tour of what lies beyond the offices can be arranged.



Jennifer Ellis now guides Cosmetic Specialty Labs, the Lawton business founded by her grandmother, Edna Hennessee.

That’s where the real surprise is found.

It’s where skin care products and over-the-counter drugs are nurtured from the idea stage to manufactured goods, complete with logo, packaging and a marketing plan.

Chemists work in a fully equipped lab to help develop products for private customers. They prepare samples and fine-tune ingredient lists for product samples.

Once a stable formula is approved, it moves to the next stages.

Cosmetic Specialty Labs creative staff works on logo, promotional and package designs and employees in the manufacturing area gather ingredients for large batches of the product.

You could say the products that come from Cosmetic Specialty Labs are artisanal. The batches are prepared by hand with close attention to details such as product recipe quantities, tem-

peratures and timing.

There is some mechanization when it comes to filling as many as 100,000 bottles, tubes or jars of a product. There are also a lot of personal touches with employees screwing on caps, adding batch numbers and expiration dates to labels and filling up shipping boxes.

The products go around the world. They can be found in the Middle East, Asia and Europe. Closer to home, they are in places such as Sephora and Walgreens or accessible through the Home Shopping Network.

What you won’t find is the words Cosmetic Specialty Labs on that little bottle of your favorite skin care product that carries a brand name. But, if there are a lot of natural ingredients, there is a good chance it was produced right here in southwest Oklahoma at Edna’s place.

Surprise!



A Cosmetic Specialty Labs employee works among the hundreds of pampered aloe vera plants in the facility’s greenhouse.



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John 4:14 "Whoever drinks of the water I shall give him, shall never thirst again."



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Good insulation, tight seals will keep you comfortable while controlling power bills

By Trent Marlett

I am a very visual learner. If someone is trying to explain something to me, it can go right over my head. But, if they have pictures depicting what they are telling me, it seems like it just clicks. Today, I am going to try to paint a word picture of how the weather affects our homes.

I get asked quite often: “Why have my bills gone up, even though I haven’t done anything different?”

I asked myself the very same question many times until I became the energy efficiency coordinator for Cotton Electric.

Let’s imagine our home is an ice chest or cooler. In that ice chest there is, well, ice. The ice in the cooler takes a longer time to melt than if the ice was just in a cardboard box, for instance.

The ice in the chest doesn’t melt as fast because there is insulation in the walls and lid of the cooler. No insulation in a cardboard box.

Now, think about taking the cooler outside in the summertime and leaving it in the 100-degree heat. Think about the same cooler outside in the wintertime on a day when the temperature is 40 degrees.

Which cooler’s ice will melt a whole lot faster?

Of course, the ice in the summer heat will melt faster, even though it is the exact same cooler holding the exact same amount of ice. The only difference is the role the outside temperature plays in its effect on the ice inside the cooler.

Now, let’s take it a step further. Suppose the cooler full of ice also has a hole in one side the size of a half-dollar. Think how much faster the ice will melt when a hole is allowing the 100-degree temperature a direct path to the ice.

Starting to make sense?

Let’s add another factor. Let’s say the cooler lid doesn’t quite shut very well or properly seal in addition to the hole on the side. The ice will melt even faster.

Our homes are affected by temperature and poor sealing the same as the cooler. Even though I used the summertime for most of my example, the same holds true for the wintertime.

We have thermostats set to a desired temperature during the summer and winter. The temperature outside has a direct effect on how long our homes can keep and hold that temperature without aid from the HVAC system.

The hotter or colder it is outside – even though we haven’t changed anything – our homes will lose that desired temperature unless something helps keep that warm or cool air longer.

Our HVAC systems have to run more to compensate for extreme temperatures outside. If our homes are leaky – have holes allowing air to infiltrate – it is even harder to hold the temperature inside the home.

If our doors do not seal properly, again, it is harder to maintain the desired temperature in the home without the extra effort of the HVAC.

Some of you have probably seen



Think of your house as an ice chest, trying to keep the contents cool or warm. If an ice chest is sitting outside, will the hot or cold weather affect how well it works? Would it do a good job if it had holes in it or the lid didn’t fit properly?

those very expensive coolers that claim to keep ice frozen for a week. Well, they can do that because the coolers have twice the amount of insulation in the walls and the lid has a very tight seal.

So, if we can properly seal our homes with caulk, make sure our doors seal up tight with weather stripping, and add insulation in the attic,

we will be able to maintain the temperature in our homes longer without the aid of an HVAC system that uses a lot of energy.

If you would like me to visit your home to see where it could use some air sealing and insulation, I would be more than happy to. Give me a call at 580-875-3351 or send me an email at tmarlett@cottonelectric.com.

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Nutrition key to healing pressure ulcers

If you are caring for a loved one with wounds caused by pressure – commonly called bed sores or pressure ulcers – a new study released in the Feb. 3 issue of the Annals of Internal Medicine discusses how nutrition can help heal pressure ulcers in malnourished patients.

Pressure ulcers cost the U.S. healthcare system billions of dollars each year. They drastically impact quality of life for patients and their families and caregivers.

Pressure ulcers are caused by many different factors and are prevalent among individuals who are bedridden. The Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services considers pressure ulcers acquired in a healthcare facility preventable in most cases and levies hefty penalties to institutions where pressure ulcers are prevalent.

Poor nutrition places patients at risk for developing a pressure ulcer. The majority of older individuals who have recently been in the hospital are malnourished, regardless of their weight.



Kim Bandelier, MPH, RD, LD

Food For THOUGHT

This study indicates addressing nutrition is key to healing pressure ulcers in malnourished individuals.

The study, conducted by Cereda and colleagues in Pavia, Italy, compared the effect of a high-protein, high-calorie formula with arginine, zinc and antioxidants to a high-calorie, high-protein formula without those added components on pressure ulcer healing in malnourished patients. Patients

were either in a long-term care facility or at home receiving pressure ulcer treatments.

Study participants drank 400 mL (approximately 13.5 fluid ounces) of the nutritional drink per day for eight weeks on top of normal food intake.

The group that drank the supplement with added arginine, zinc and antioxidants experienced a greater reduction in pressure ulcer surface area – think “healing” – than the other group. Other factors that could have affected wound healing were controlled for in the study.

Individuals with pressure ulcers should receive targeted nutrition therapy to assist with wound healing. Nutritional interventions are inexpensive compared to drugs and other aspects of wound care.

If someone in your life is dealing with pressure ulcers, make sure nutrition is a part of their therapy and share this study with them. Similar nutrition supplements are currently available for patients in the U.S.

Make control a goal during Heart Month

This American Heart Month, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Million Hearts® – a national effort to prevent 1 million heart attacks and strokes in the United States by 2017 – are encouraging Americans to know their blood pressure, and if it’s high, to make control their goal.

If you know you have high blood pressure, take these steps to help get it under control:

- Ask your doctor what your blood pressure should be. Set a goal to lower your pressure with your doctor and talk about how you can reach your goal. Work with your health care team to make sure you meet that goal. Track your blood pressure over time.

- Take your blood pressure medicine as directed. Set a timer on your phone to remember to take your medicine at the same time each day. If you are having trouble taking your medicines on time or paying for your medicines, or if you are having side effects, ask your doctor for help.

- Quit smoking — and if you don’t smoke, don’t start. You can find tips and resources at CDC’s Smoking and Tobacco website.

- Reduce sodium intake. Most Americans consume too much sodium, which can raise blood pressure. Read about ways to reduce your sodium and visit the Million Hearts® Healthy Eating & Lifestyle Resource Center for heart-healthy, lower-sodium recipes, meal plans, and helpful articles.

- ACROSS
1. Glasgow inhabitant

5. Dangerous tidal bore

10. Prevents harm to creatures

14. Upper class

15. Caused an open infection

16. Styptic

17. Am. Nat’l. Standards Inst.

18. Muse of lyric poetry and mime

19. He fiddled

20. Afrikaans

22. Don’t know when yet

23. Mottled cat

24. 1803 USA purchase

27. Engine additive

30. Reciprocal of a sine

31. ___ King Cole, musician

32. Time in the central U.S.

35. Insect pupa sheaths

37. Prefix denoting “in a”

38. Okinawa port city

39. Capital of Pais-de-Calais

40. Small amount

41. Fictional elephant

42. Grave

43. 12th month (abbr.)

44. Knights’ garment

45. One point S of due E

46. Lender Sallie ___

47. Express pleasure

48. Grassland, meadow

49. Vikings state

52. Deck for divination

55. Mountain

56. Cavalry sword

60. Largest known toad species

61. Once more

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9		10	11	12	13
14					15						16			
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52	53	54				55				56		57	58	59
60						61				62		63		
64						65					66			
67						68					69			

63. Cavity

64. Paper this tin plate

65. Slang for backward

66. James __, American steam engineer

67. Sea eagles

68. Wooded

69. Expression of annoyance
10. Yemen capital

11. Commoner

12. Street border

13. Old Xiamen

21. Soul and calypso songs

23. Explosive

25. Put into service

26. Swiss river

27. Territorial division

28. Pulse

29. Hair curling treatments

32. Small group of intriguers

33. Portion

34. Slightly late

36. Taxi

37. Political action committee

38. Grab

40. Between 13 & 19
41. Tai currency

43. Newsman Rather

44. Great school in Mass.

46. Technology school

47. Have a great ambition

49. Groans

50. Fill with high spirits

51. Expressed pleasure

52. Modern London gallery

53. A gelling agent in foods

54. Dilapidation

57. Swine

58. Footwear museum city

59. Respite

61. Creative activity

62. Slight head motion

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Easy, delicious meals make hearts happy

(Family Features) Did you know that small, positive additions to your diet and lifestyle can help promote a healthier heart? Instead of denying yourself the delicious flavors you crave, try weaving a few subtle changes into your menu and you can healthfully and conveniently meet your wellness goals.

Show your heart some love

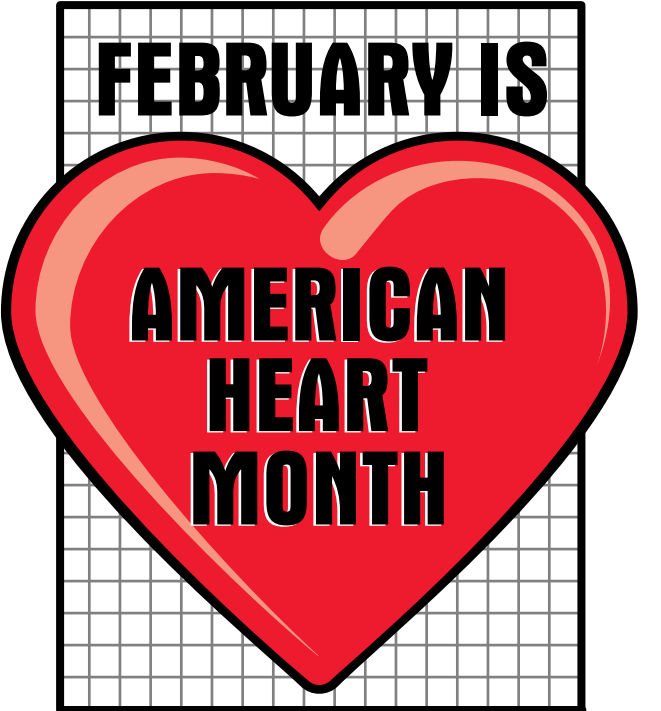
Besides giving meals a satisfying boost, soy-based foods are a heart-healthy addition to your diet. According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), a diet containing 25 grams of soy protein per day, accompanying other foods that are low in saturated fats and cholesterol, may decrease the chance of heart disease.

“Soy protein is a very high quality protein, equivalent to egg or milk protein,” said Mindy Kurzer, Ph.D. and professor with the Department of Food Science and Nutrition at the University of Minnesota. “Soyfoods, such as soymilk, have been shown to lower dietary cholesterol and saturated fat, decreasing blood cholesterol concentrations and improving heart health.”

Sprinkle soy into your diet, easily

Available in many delicious forms, soy-based foods and beverages make the swap towards healthier options a snap. Try some of these meal ideas to help you cut calories, saturated fat and cholesterol from your diet:

- Breakfast:** Take on the day by enjoying a fruit and soymilk blended smoothie for breakfast. Soymilk is the only plant-based dairy alternative with an average of 7 grams of protein per serving plus calcium, potassium, and vitamins A and D.
- Lunch:** Opt for a juicy veggie burger – easy to cook in just a few minutes. Or try this flavorful recipe for Tuna Edamame Salad, which allows you to take in all the healthy benefits of these young green soybeans with a quick and easy lunch. Did you know one cup of edamame contains 17 grams of protein?
- Snack:** Throw a protein-packed nutrition bar in your car, bag or purse so you can have a healthy snack while running errands. (But read the label to make sure it contains soy protein and isn’t loaded with sugar.)
- Dinner:** Load up on vegetables and protein with a tasty and easy stir fry using marinated tofu strips.



Or cholesterol-free soy “crumbles” can quickly and easily be added to favorites including pasta sauce, soup, chili and tacos.

To find more recipes featuring soy protein, visit www.soyfoods.org or www.soyconnection.com.

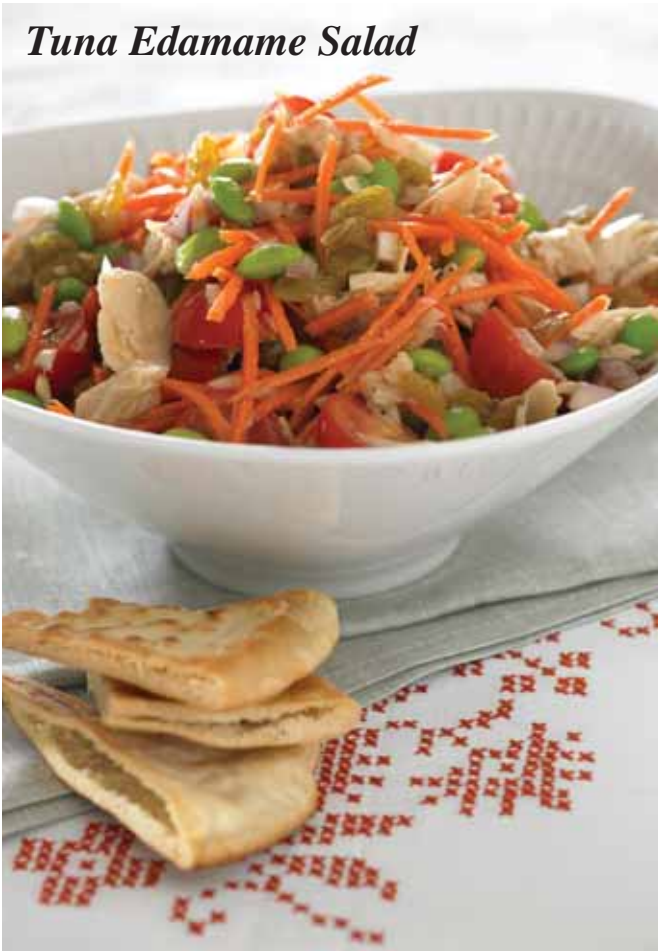
Tuna Edamame Salad

Prep time: 5 minutes
Servings: 4

- 1 cup frozen shelled edamame, cooked according to package directions
- 1 cup cherry tomatoes, cut in half
- 1 cup carrots, shredded
- 1 can (6 ounces) tuna, water packed, drained
- 1/2 cup golden raisins
- 1/4 cup red onion, diced
- 1/4 cup bottled, reduced-fat Italian salad dressing

Pita bread or whole grain crackers (optional)

Mix edamame, tomatoes, carrots, tuna, raisins and onion in medium bowl. Pour dressing over salad and toss until combined. Serve with pita bread halves or whole grain crackers.



Nutrition per 1 cup serving: 210 calories; 3 g fat (0 g saturated fat); 16 g protein; 27 g carbohydrate; 4 g fiber; 25 mg cholesterol; 350 mg sodium.

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