

APRIL 2024

PENNLINES

The Thrill of the Chase

Morel Hunters Race
Nature's Clock to Find
Elusive Mushrooms

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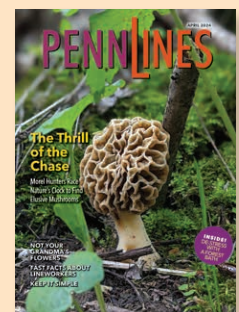
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ON THE COVER
Spring has sprung in Pennsylvania, and tasty morels – the mysterious mushrooms prized by chefs and home cooks alike – should be making an appearance soon, too.

PHOTO COURTESY OF STEVE PIATT

Kicking off the Season

Annual meetings highlight democratic process, community engagement



STEVE BRAME

I THINK THE PIRATES COULD go all the way this year. Of course, it's April, and that's generally my feeling at the start of each baseball season. That's why I love this time of year. As a Pirates fan, it's the season of hope and optimism, no matter how the standings may look come September.

April is also the start of another great American tradition: the cooperative annual meeting. Beginning this month and continuing through September, the state's 13 rural electric cooperatives will gather in communities throughout the Commonwealth for this essential business function. These meetings are a chance for cooperative members to engage with their communities, participate in democratic processes, and influence the future course of their local energy provider.

For nearly a century, electric cooperatives have helped shape our rural communities, bringing an essential resource to homes, farms, and businesses — and improving the quality of life in the process. Established by local residents, these member-driven organizations are still controlled by local residents today. Nowhere is that business model more clearly on display than at your cooperative's annual meeting. It's where you, as a member, have a say in how your organization is run.

One of the most important reasons to attend the annual meeting is to exercise your democratic rights as a cooperative member. By casting your vote in board elections or on crucial resolutions, you help shape the direction of your cooperative. This direct involvement ensures the cooperative remains accountable to the community it serves, building on a tradition of trust and transparency.

Over the past 20-plus years, I've had the good fortune to be able to attend a number of cooperative annual meetings in Pennsylvania, and even some in our neighboring states. From picnic-style events to community gatherings at the local high school, each cooperative meeting is a little different. Meetings have also evolved over the years, with technology allowing for things like live streaming and online voting. Some cooperatives have even hosted video conferences and drive-thru meetings — changes spurred by the pandemic.

Despite all the changes, the core principles of democratic participation and community engagement remain the same at cooperative annual meetings. Cooperatives, by definition, encourage people to work together. Beyond their business function, annual meetings symbolize this sense of community cohesion and belonging. As an event open to all, the meetings foster connections among members, strengthening the fabric of the cooperative community.

The best part? The cooperative annual meeting process works. No other business model allows consumers to have such a say in how things are run. The strength of cooperatives today is a testament to the inclusive nature of our business model and a direct result of our democratic process. Cooperatives provide an example of people working together to get things done, which is something we could use more of today.

But like any team, it takes all of us playing a part. So, whether your cooperative meets online, at the county fair, or at a drive-thru event, please plan to participate in your annual meeting. And if you see me there, please say hello. I'd love to talk some Pirates baseball. Let's go Bucs! 🍷

STEVE BRAME
PRESIDENT & CEO
PENNSYLVANIA RURAL ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION/
ALLEGHENY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

EDITOR
Peter A. Fitzgerald

MANAGING EDITOR
Jill M. Ercolino

SENIOR EDITOR
Michael T. Crawford

LAYOUT & DESIGN
Kaylin E. Acri

ADVERTISING & PRODUCTION
COORDINATOR
Michelle M. Smith

CONTRIBUTING COLUMNISTS
**James Duley, John Kasun,
Anne M. Kirchner,
George Weigel, Abigail Zieger**

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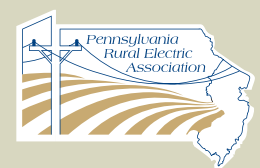
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THE VALUE OF RARE THINGS

In the recesses of our basement, there's a plastic bin. Maybe you have one, too. It's filled with thousands of pieces of Legos.

And if you have kids, you know that's not an exaggeration.

I had forgotten about the stash. Our son has since outgrown this pastime, moving on to college and other pursuits.

Recently, though, a story came across my news feed – interestingly, out of one of our cooperatives, DuBois-based United Electric – that made me think twice about all of the toys we've tucked away and forgotten.

Workers at a Goodwill warehouse on United's lines were combing through a donated bag of jewelry when they came across an unusual find: a rare Lego piece. Only 30 of the small, 14-karat gold Kanohi Hau masks (part of a special action figure set) were produced in 2001 as a giveaway – and 20 some years later, one wound up in DuBois.



SHOP GOODWILL

Initially, Goodwill priced the trinket at \$14.95. Later, at auction, the tiny mask sold for \$18,101, making it one of the most expensive Lego pieces ever sold.

That got me thinking about the value of rare things, a theme that's threaded throughout this issue. The elusive morels highlighted in this month's feature? Fresh, handpicked ones, which are available for only a few weeks each spring, sell for as much as \$60 a pound. And peace of mind, which is equally hard to find, although some say it can result from forest bathing – another topic we explore ... well, that's priceless, isn't it?

Pennsylvania has only 13 rural electric cooperatives, making them a pretty rare thing, too. But what truly makes these cooperatives unique – and valuable – among utilities is their dedication to the communities they serve.

In every issue of *Penn Lines*, you'll find evidence of this "concern for community," one of the seven guiding cooperative principles. From scholarships for high school students and donations to local teachers to programs that help struggling members keep the lights on, Pennsylvania's cooperatives put people first.

Of course, some may say that's rare, but really, it's just the cooperative way.

Jill Ercolino

JILL M. ERCOLINO
MANAGING EDITOR



SNAP, CRACKLE, POP: Rice Krispies Treats, full of marshmallow, butter and deliciousness, are the top snack for Pennsylvanians, a recent study found.

SNACK TIME! Pennsylvanians have a sticky favorite

When it comes to snacks, Pennsylvanians, as well as the majority of Americans, agree their favorite is Rice Krispies Treats, according to a recent marketing study by HubScore.

Nationally, Doritos came in second followed by Cheetos, Cheerios, and Starburst in third, fourth, and fifth places, respectively.

A closer look at the eastern U.S., however, reveals that Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York, are the odd states out. The majority of eastern states prefer Doritos. Meanwhile, Cheerios rank at the top in New Jersey, while New Yorkers like their Lays. And in New England, well, those states are crazy for Rice Krispies Treats, too.

AN APPLE A DAY Surplus apples help feed families, support farmers

An apple a day keeps *hunger* away? It's true — and it's all thanks to a state and federal initiative that's turning surplus Pennsylvania apples into applesauce and apple juice to feed families. The \$3 million effort is also

reducing food waste while supporting the state's apple growers.

"Pennsylvania apple growers had a great year in 2023," state Secretary of Agriculture Russell Redding said during a recent visit to Adams County, served by Gettysburg-based Adams Electric Cooperative. "When they came to the department looking for a solution last fall, we were able to call on existing partnerships ... to [get] nutritious Pennsylvania apple products onto the tables of hungry Pennsylvania families."

Last year's state budget set aside an additional \$1 million for the Pennsylvania Agricultural Surplus System (PASS), a program that reimburses farmers and agribusinesses for the costs of harvesting, processing, packaging and transporting surplus food. The apples were funneled through PASS then distributed by Feeding Pennsylvania's network of food banks and pantries. Federal funding — around \$2 million — also supported the effort.

Pennsylvania is the nation's fourth largest apple producer, and apples are the No. 1 fresh fruit in the PASS program.

ROARING SUCCESS

State has another record-setting year for bear hunting licenses

For the sixth consecutive year in a row, the number of bear hunting licenses sold in Pennsylvania topped 200,000. More than 206,000 hunters bought licenses, making 2023 the fourth highest year in total sales ever, according to the Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC).

White-tailed deer is the only species that puts more hunters in the state's woods than bears.

Those hunters harvested 2,920 bears, down from the 3,170 that were harvested in 2022. The PGC reports the decline wasn't a surprise given that it eliminated the extended bear season in five Wildlife Management Units last year.

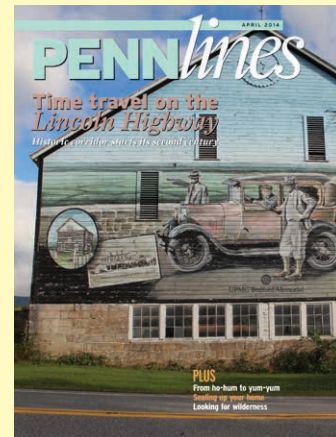
The 2023 bear harvest was spread across the state, with 58 of the 67 counties having at least one bear harvested. The traditional statewide firearms bear season contributed

the most to the harvest, with 1,086, followed by the archery season at 695, extended season with 591, muzzleloader season with 424, special firearms season at 117 and early archery season at seven.

The largest harvested bear in the 2023 season was a 691-pounder taken in Porter Township, Pike County. Five other hunters harvested bears weighing more than 600 pounds, and all of the top 10 heaviest bears weighed at least 576 pounds. The other heavy-weight bears were taken in Carbon, Jefferson, Lackawanna, Lycoming, Monroe, Northampton, Schuylkill and Sullivan counties.

Tioga County reported the most bears harvested with 176, followed by Lycoming County with 170, Potter County with 155, Pike County with 142, Bradford County with 138, Luzerne County with 135, Monroe County with 127, Wayne County with 124, Clinton County with 108 and Carbon County with 101. 📍

TIME LINES



APRIL 2014

The historic Lincoln Highway was embarking on its second century when *Penn Lines* paid tribute to it a decade ago. The country's first transcontinental road, the highway spans the width of Pennsylvania as it winds over 3,000 miles between New York City and San Francisco. Glimmers of its past can still be seen along the road today.



IN THE DARK

State parks are presenting multiple programs through April 8, the date of the upcoming solar eclipse, to help people prepare for the rare event. Look for offerings in the Calendar of Events at dcr.pa.gov. The programs will cover the basics from what causes a solar eclipse to how to safely view one.

SEE THE CYCLORAMA

If you're fascinated by Civil War history, you don't want to miss An Evening with the Painting, an exclusive up-close look at the iconic Gettysburg Cyclorama painting, from 5 to 7 p.m. April 13. Tickets are \$35. Learn more at GettysburgFoundation.org or call 717-334-2436.



COMMONS: WIKIMEDIA.ORG



WPAUMC.ORG

DISCOVER HISTORICAL CHURCHES

The St. Marys Heritage Preservation Group in Elk County will be taking a deep dive into the community's history and heritage with an April 14 tour of historical churches from 1 to 4 p.m. Tickets are \$10. For more information, contact stmaryspaheritage@windstream.net.

SPRING INTO SPRING

Arts and crafts, food trucks, live music, children's activities: The Mayfest of Huntingdon, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. April 27 in historic downtown, has it all – and admission is free. The event will be held rain or shine. Learn more at huntingdonboro.com/events-and-activities.



MAYFEST OF HUNTINGDON

THE THR🍄ILL OF THE CHASE

Morel Hunters Race Nature's
Clock to Find Elusive Mushrooms

STEVE PIATT

Penn Lines Contributor





Some folks — the lucky ones — strike gold in Pennsylvania each spring. They may simply be out for a walk in the woods, or in the field during the state’s popular spring turkey or trout seasons. Or they may be serious searchers, with the kind of knowledge necessary to consistently strike it rich.

The “gold” is out there, somewhere — or, at times, seemingly nowhere. And that is the mystery, the frustration, and, occasionally, the reward of finding morel mushrooms in the wild.

Each year about this time, the coveted, tasty fungi attract legions of dedicated hunters, as well as those who have the fortune of simply blundering across them during outdoor activities.

“Morels are kind of the gateway for people getting into foraging,” says Josh Mowris, a Crawford County resident whose family has been a longtime member of Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative (REC), based in Cambridge

Springs. “They’re probably the most popular of mushrooms.

“They’re super tasty, and a symbol of spring, so people are out there, excited that winter is finally over.”

On the hunt

Mowris, a health and fitness fanatic, initially plunged into foraging with the knowledge that certain mushrooms could serve as food supplements. His interest really took off upon joining the Western Pennsylvania Mushroom Club (wpamushroomclub.org).

The morel-hunting season in Pennsylvania and across the U.S. is a short one, he says.

“Certain mushrooms — like chicken of the woods — you can find five months out of the year,” Mowris says. “But with morels, you’re generally looking at a three- or four-week period where you can find them, and that’s it. In Pennsylvania, that’s typically mid-April to mid-May.”

Those times coincide with other Keystone State traditions like trout and turkey seasons. That means hunters and anglers can score some morels in addition to catching a few trout, perhaps tagging a longbeard, or stumbling upon the shed antler of a whitetail buck. Any way you look at it, it’s a great time to simply be out there.

“I’ve been known to take a pause during a fishing excursion or a spring turkey hunt to harvest the morels I come across,” says Grey Berrier of Pulaski, Lawrence County. “I’m serious enough to routinely carry along a mesh bag on trout and turkey trips.”

But while chance encounters with morels are special, serious hunters have learned the mushrooms aren’t found everywhere, and they’re able to confine their efforts to the likeliest of locations. Many, however, draw the line at sharing the exact location of productive hunting spots, which tend to be a closely guarded secret. Instead, they prefer to speak in generalities.

“Morels seem to favor certain tree species,” says Ryan Reed, an avid “shroomer” who works as a natural resource specialist with the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR). “I’ve had great luck around sycamores, apple, crabapple and poplar.”

Mowris agrees, adding that most morel enthusiasts would say elm trees — big, dead and dying ones — are the No. 1 location for morel potential, along with old apple orchards and, as Reed notes, tulip poplar trees. Ash, black

WHAT IS A MOREL?

Grown primarily in the wild, morel mushrooms have an earthy, nutty flavor and a meaty texture, making them a highly desired ingredient among chefs and mushroom enthusiasts.

Difficult to find, they’re only available for a short time in the spring.

Morels also vary in size and appearance. Their shape can range from oblong to bulbous, and their color from blonde to gray to dark brown.

Morels are easily identified by their cap, which resembles a honeycomb.

Keep in mind, too, several look-alike species exist, including verpa and gyromitra mushrooms, and they can be toxic.

Experts say the easiest way to identify a true morel from a false one is to cut the mushroom in half and look at how the cap attaches to the stem. Real morels have hollow centers, with the cap and stem connecting as one at the base. Some look-alikes, such as verpas, have free-hanging caps, which means the cap is attached at the very top of the stem and the rest of it hangs down like a skirt.

If you’re interested in doing more research, websites, such as thegreatmorel.com and morels.com, can be valuable resources for new and experienced mushroom hunters.



cherry and bitternut hickory are also worth a look.

“Not just morels, but mushrooms in general associate with trees,” Mowris says.

Trees, weather and timing

Curt Guyer, a longtime Valley REC member who lives in Juniata Township, Huntingdon County, has honed his morel-hunting skills over the past 20 years. But it wasn’t until he started linking them with certain tree species that he began reaping the rewards of his efforts.

“I was looking all over the place the first 10 years, just haphazardly getting lucky once in a while, but not really knowing what I was doing until I started identifying trees,” says Guyer, who has developed a solid network of productive spots on a mix of public and private land. “Poplars and elms around here; mostly elms.”

Ironically, one of Guyer’s best tactics for finding morels is to look up.

“Elms are the first to leaf out, so I’m always looking up in the air for those little leaves,” he says. “I carry a little pair of binoculars with me and when I find them, I’ll check around those trees.”

Morels are often difficult to spot on the forest floor, and Guyer says a slow pace is a must. “I’ve almost trampled on them,” he says. “And if I find one, I’ll sit right down and look all around.”

And it’s more than just location. Conditions have to be ideal for morels and other mushrooms to appear.

“Soil temperature is very important,” DCNR’s Ryan Reed says. “It must be near a 50-degree average for morels to pop up. And morels seem to love disturbance — ground that was recently pushed over by a skidder blade or bulldozer can reveal a bonanza of mushrooms.”

Mowris, too, checks the weather often and has learned through experience when the timing is right for morels.

“Morels need ample rainfall to appear, so in addition to soil temperature, I’m waiting for rainfall and checking the weather for 55- and 60-degree temperatures,” he says. “And you can’t give up on a spot; check it multiple times. A lot of people, because of soil temperature, like to check south-facing slopes that get more sunlight.”

Morel hunting can, Mowris admits, be a frustrating effort.

“It’s just a matter of building your skills and knowledge of the habitat,” he says. “Once you’re able to get some experience and find your spots, [morels] will reappear for the most part every year.”

True or false?

But how do you know when you’ve stumbled across the real thing — and that it’s edible?

COURTESY OF JOSH MOWRIS



WOODLAND TREASURES: Josh Mowris of Crawford County says he has the best luck finding elusive morel mushrooms near trees — elm, in particular.

Hannah Huber, a conservation mycologist for DCNR, has some tips, noting there are several look-alike species, some of which can be toxic. (Mycology is the branch of biology that studies fungi.)

“Verpa are the ‘early morels’ and they’re considered edible, but some people are sensitive to them,” Huber says. “Gyromitra are the ‘false morels’ that are generally considered somewhat toxic.”

“It’s a good idea for folks trying any new mushroom species, even when positively identified as edible, to go easy and avoid gorging in case they are uniquely sensitive to the species.”

Experts say the easiest way to identify a true morel from a false one is to cut the mushroom in half and look at how the cap attaches to the stem. Real morels have hollow centers, with the cap and stem connecting as one at the base. Some look-alikes, such as verpas, have free-hanging caps, which means the cap is only attached at the very top of the stem and the rest of it hangs down like a skirt.

“While some people have ways of cooking [look-alikes] to render them seemingly edible, caution is recommended,” Huber says.

In fact, most morel hunters dismiss false morels entirely.

ON THE HUNT FOR MORELS: HOW TO STAY SAFE — AND COMFORTABLE

Properly identifying morels is just one safety step mushroom hunters should take. Here are a few others:

For starters, it's very possible you'll be doing your search during Pennsylvania's popular spring turkey hunting season. (This year, April 27 is the start of the youth hunt, and May 4-31 is regular season.) Therefore, it makes perfect sense to wear a blaze orange hat or vest, or both.

Also, any time you're in the field the presence of Lyme disease-carrying ticks is possible, even likely. Spraying your clothing with permethrin offers the best measure of protection. Insect repellent is also a good idea.

As far as gear goes, you can head afield as light or as heavy as you'd like, but there are a few must-haves.

One of them is water. Morel hunting can be hard work and may involve some serious legwork, and it usually takes place on warm and maybe humid spring days. Therefore, be sure to load up your day pack with as much water as you think you'll need to remain hydrated; keep some in your vehicle for your return, as well. A dehydration headache is no picnic. A power bar or other snack may keep you going, too.

Depending on the tract of land you're searching, it might make sense to take along a map and compass – and know how to use both. Also, onX Hunt, a mapping app, can keep you "found" and make sure you don't stray onto land where you don't have proper permission. This technology provides great peace of mind while allowing you to keep your head down and focus on the forest floor.

Another tip: Make sure you gas up your vehicle and return to it before dark.

As far as clothing, long pants and long sleeves are the way to go, even on the warmest days. Chances are you'll be busting your way through some briars at some point, and ticks will likely be present. You don't want to make things easy for them.

You'll also want to plan for success, and that means carrying along a mesh bag to store your morels. A mesh bag is much better than a plastic one, which creates the kind of moisture that will accelerate the deterioration of your morels. Do your best to keep them as cool as possible after picking. Also, a theory exists that a mesh bag will allow spores to fall and perhaps restore your morel hotspot for the future.

Many morel hunters also carry a walking stick, which allows them to move grass and plant life during their ground search. And always bring a camera; you never know what you'll encounter out there – including, perhaps, a newborn whitetail fawn.

From field to table

The hardest part of morel hunting is finding them, but don't worry, you'll be rewarded because the best part is eating your discoveries. And the old phrase, "release into the grease," is pretty much on target when it comes to preparing morels for consumption.

Morel mushrooms sautéed in hot butter for several minutes or fried in bacon grease for a few minutes longer are tough to top. This cooking method helps to bring out their delicious meaty flavor while maintaining their firm texture.

Reed soaks his freshly collected morels in a salt brine for about 15 minutes; that removes any bugs they may be holding. He then rinses them off, lightly coats them with flour and fries them in hot butter until golden brown.

"They don't keep well," he says, "so I usually eat them the day I find them or the next."

But the options are many, and morels can hold their own in main dishes, such as chicken cutlets with morels, morel meatloaf and morel pilaf. You can also use them as a topping on steaks, in soups, and as part of an omelet. Scores of recipes can be found online.

That said, if you're fortunate enough to have a surplus of morels, it's best to take care of the leftovers promptly. Drying them in a dehydrator is perhaps the best option, though some morel hunters lean toward freezing or canning them.

And, of course, don't forget your morel-less friends. 🍄



MEATY FLAVOR: Morel mushrooms are highly prized by chefs and home cooks alike. One of the best ways to prepare these spring treats is by sautéing them in butter or bacon grease. But they're also delicious as a topping for steak, in soup and added to an omelet. Lots of recipes can be found online.

Better than cannabis, better than CBD

New Joint-Supporting “Miracle Oil” Capsule Delivers Hip, Knee, and Shoulder Comfort in Just Days

Thousands of Americans are rediscovering normal freedom of movement thanks to a “miracle oil” capsule that’s outperforming hemp in promoting joint comfort.

According to the official figures from the CDC, more than 58 million Americans are living with joint discomfort. This epidemic has led to a search for alternative approaches – as many sufferers seek relief without the harmful side effects of conventional “solutions.”

Anti-aging specialist Dr. Al Sears is leading the way with a new formula he calls “the most significant breakthrough I’ve ever found for easing joint discomfort.”

The capsule is based on a “miracle oil” historically treasured for its joint health-supporting properties. Marco Polo prized it as he blazed the Silk Road. And to this day, Ayurvedic practitioners rely on it to promote optimal joint health.

Now, with a modern twist backed by science, Dr. Sears is making this natural solution for joint health available to the public.

Your Body’s Hidden “Soothing System”

Joint health research changed forever with the discovery of the endocannabinoid system (ECS) in 1992. Up until that point, research on cannabinoids focused on psychoactive effects. Now, scientists were looking at a new way to fight occasional aches and pains.

Your ECS serves as a central “signaling system” that tells your body how to react to things you do every day. It controls several critical bodily functions such as learning and memory, sleep, healthy immune responses – and your response to discomfort.

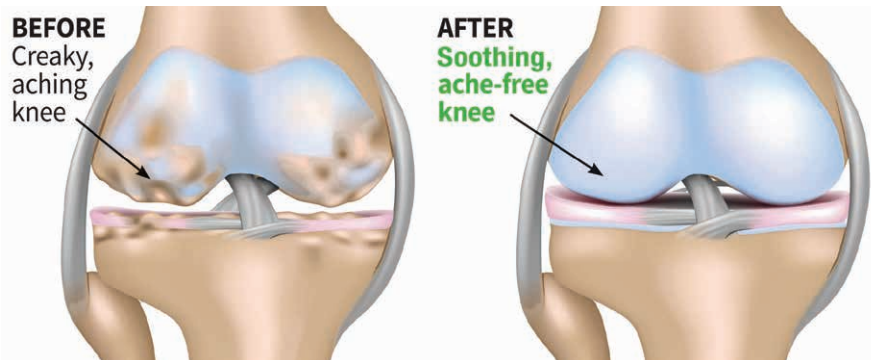
A recent study revealed a direct link between the ECS and creaky, sore joints. Researchers at the University of Edinburgh studied the aging of mice with endocannabinoid deficiencies versus “normal” mice.

As they aged, the deficient mice had a whopping 60% more joint degeneration than the mice with a healthy ECS.

As the name suggests, the ECS responds to cannabis. At the time it was discovered, scientists assumed that was the best way to support it. But thanks to Dr. Sears’ all-natural solution, you can power up your ECS without marijuana.

“Calling it the ‘endocannabinoid system’ was a misnomer from the very beginning,” Dr. Sears explained. “Modern research reveals that you don’t need cannabis to activate this incredible system. You don’t need to ‘get high’ to get joint relief.”

A scholarly review found that plants and herbs that don’t produce mind-altering effects can support the ECS and help it maintain its



The active ingredient in Mobilify soothes aching joints in as little as 5 days

healthy functions.

This includes common foodstuffs, such as kava, chocolate, black pepper, and most significantly – the star ingredient to Dr. Sears’ own **Mobilify** formula - frankincense.

Modern scientists say this natural ingredient meets “cannabinoid tetrad” – the signs used to determine if something supports the ECS. While it doesn’t produce a “high” like cannabis does, it binds to the same receptors to support a healthy response to discomfort.

All the Benefits of CBD – Without Cannabis

Indian frankincense, the chief ingredient in **Mobilify**, has been shown to provide all the benefits of cannabis without any feelings of sluggishness or sleepiness.

And studies show that users don’t have to wait long for the comfort they’re looking for.

In a study published in the International Journal of Medical Sciences, 60 patients with stiff knees took 100 mg of Indian frankincense or a placebo daily for 30 days. Remarkably, Indian frankincense “significantly” supported healthy joint function and relieved discomfort in as little as five days.

Additional research linked regular use to lasting comfort.

In another study, 48 participants were given an extract made from frankincense for 120-days. When the results came in, researchers determined the extract strongly supported joint comfort – especially in the knees.

These results were all achieved without marijuana. Research continues to back up the idea that you can support smooth, strong, and healthy joints naturally – without tiredness or sluggishness.

Get Moving Again with Mobilify

Mobilify has already helped thousands of Americans stay on their feet and breeze

through their daily activities with ease.

One user even reported getting results the same day it was used.

“**Mobilify** really helps with soreness, stiffness, and mild temporary discomfort,” Joni D. said.

Larry M, another user, compared taking **Mobilify** to living a completely new life.

“After a week and a half of taking **Mobilify**, the discomfort, stiffness, and minor aches went away...it’s almost like being reborn,” he said.

Dennis H. said it helped him get back to his favorite hobby.

“I can attest to **Mobilify** easing discomfort to enable me to pursue my golfing days. Definitely one pill that works for me out of the many I have tried,” he said.

How to Get Mobilify

Right now, the only way to get this powerful, unique **Mobilify** formula that clobbers creaking joints without clobbering you is directly from Dr. Sears. It is not available in stores.

To secure your bottle of this breakthrough natural joint discomfort reliever, buyers should call with Sears Health Hotline at **1-800-330-2416**. “The Hotline allows us to ship the product directly to customers.”

Dr. Sears believes in this product so much, he offers a 100% money-back guarantee on every order. “Just send me back the bottle and any unused product within 90 days, and I’ll send you your money back,” said Dr. Sears.

The Hotline will be taking orders for the next 48 hours. After that, the phone number may be shut down to allow them to restock. Call **1-800-330-2416** to secure your limited supply of **Mobilify**. If you are not able to get through due to extremely high call volume, please try again! Call NOW to qualify for a significant discount on this limited time offer. To take advantage of this exclusive offer use Promo Code: **PLMB424** when you call.

Fast Facts About Lineworkers

SCOTT FLOOD

YOU PROBABLY DON'T THINK ABOUT them until your power goes out, but electric lineworkers protect our homes and communities 24 hours a day. Like other first responders who keep us safe, lineworkers endure all kinds of weather and challenging conditions.

On April 8, we celebrate National Lineworker Appreciation Day to honor the men and women who power our lives. Here are some quick facts about lineworkers and what they do:

What electric lineworkers do

Restoring electricity after a power outage is just one of the many duties of lineworkers, who also:

- ▶ Install and connect new power lines to homes and businesses.
- ▶ Maintain and perform upgrades to improve our electric grid.
- ▶ Diagnose and pinpoint power delivery issues.
- ▶ Plan and manage large-scale projects.
- ▶ Ensure safe work practices in often challenging conditions.

Lineworkers are responsible for maintaining and upgrading the nation's electric grid, which connects more than 7,300 power plants to 145 million consumers through 60,000 miles of high-voltage lines, millions of miles of distribution lines, and more than 50 million transformers.

Powerful women

Roughly 6,300 of the more than 122,000 U.S. lineworkers are women. Electric cooperatives are actively seeking women for a variety of careers. Whether climbing poles or the office ladder, women have an important role to play in the energy industry.



CARLINE MITCHELL

INTO THE WILD: Lineworkers encounter all types of wildlife on the job. They've been known to rescue kittens and even curious bear cubs like the one above, which was rescued by a Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative lineworker several years ago. The cub and its two siblings were safely returned to mama bear.

Geared for safety

Lineworkers climb with up to 40 pounds of safety gear and tools — that's like carrying a 6-gallon water jug! Here's what they typically wear to stay safe while working:

- ▶ Hard hats
- ▶ Safety glasses
- ▶ Flame-resistant clothing
- ▶ Arc-flash protective clothes
- ▶ Rubber gloves and sleeves
- ▶ Climbing belts
- ▶ Fall-protection harnesses

The wild side of work

Squirrels and snakes are a major cause of power outages, and lineworkers encounter plenty of both while working. They've also been known to rescue kittens that climbed too high in a tree and curious bears on top of utility poles. When your office is the great outdoors, these encounters are part of the job.

On-the-job training

The U.S. Energy Department reports linework is one of the nation's highest-paid professions that doesn't require post-secondary education. To become a journeyman lineworker, new hires typically need a high school diploma or equivalent, training and a paid apprenticeship, which typically spans four years. Apprentice line-

workers receive hands-on training and experience in the field before advancing to journeyman.

Inspiring safety

Roughly 60,000 lineworkers hit the road annually to respond to devastating storms and the damage they leave behind. In addition to extreme weather exposure, lineworkers face a variety of dangers, including electric shock, falls from elevated locations and roadside accidents.

Safety is always the No. 1 priority, which is why lineworkers continually receive training to stay up to date on safety requirements, equipment and procedures. In Pennsylvania and New Jersey, for example, nearly 600 lineworkers, chief executives, and other cooperative employees attended safety training and schools offered by the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association in 2023.

Lineworkers power our lives. The next time you see one, remember to thank them for the essential work they do. 🙌

For more than four decades, business writer **SCOTT FLOOD** has worked with electric cooperatives to build knowledge of energy-related issues among directors, staff and members. Scott writes on a variety of energy-related topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing nearly 900 electric co-ops.

ADVERTISEMENT



FEELING REJUVINATED WITH CBD

Everyone feels the hurt as you age, but CBD can help you deal with it.

BY BETH GILES

Life really does fly by. Before I knew it, my 60s had arrived, and with them came some new gifts from dear ol' Mother Nature—frequent knee pain, stress, low energy and sleeplessness. Now, I'm a realist about these things, I knew I wasn't going to be young and springy forever. But still, with "golden years" nearly on my doorstep, I couldn't help but feel a little cheated. It is until I found my own secret weapon. Another gift from Mother Nature.

It began a few months back when I was complaining about my aches and pains to my marathon-running granddaughter, Jen. She casually mentioned how she uses CBD oil to help with her joint pain. She said that CBD gave her more focus and clarity throughout the day and that her lingering muscle and joint discomfort no longer bothered her. She even felt comfortable signing up for back-to-back marathons two weekends in a row this year. That made even this self-proclaimed skeptic take notice.

But I still had some concerns. According to one study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 70% of CBD products didn't contain the amount of CBD stated on their labels. And, as a consumer, that's terrifying!

If I was going to try CBD, I needed to trust the source through and through. My two-fold research process naturally led me to Zebra CBD.

First, I started calling my family and friends. Call me old fashioned but I wanted to know if there were people whom I trusted (more than anonymous testimonials) who've had success using CBD besides my granddaughter.

Secondly, I wanted cold hard facts. Diving deep into the world of CBD research and clinical studies, I came across Emily Gray M.D., a physician at the University of California at San Diego (UCSD) Medical School and medical advisor to Zebra CBD who is researching the effects of CBD. Dr. Gray wrote "early results with CBD have been promising and we have a lot of research underway now. I've had several patients using CBD with good success. It's important that you know your source of CBD and how to use it properly."

After hearing it from the doctor's mouth, I returned to my research, asking more people and was amazed by the number of close friends and family who were already on the CBD train. Apparently, I was the only one without a clue! And funny enough, a couple of friends who commented were using the same brand as my granddaughter—Zebra CBD. There was no consensus as to why they were using CBD, but the top reasons given were for muscle & joint discomfort, mood support, sleep support, stress and headaches, as well as supporting overall health & wellness.

Eventually, even the most skeptical of the bunch can be won over. With a trusted CBD source in mind, I decided to give it a go.

When I viewed Zebra CBD's selection online, I was impressed by its array of products, including CBD oils called tinctures, topicals, chewable tablets, mints and gummies. After reading on their website that all their products are made with organically-grown hemp, I ordered... and it arrived within 2 days!

The first product I tried was the Rub.

Now this stuff was strong. Immediately after rubbing it on my knee, the soothing effects kicked in. It had that familiar menthol cooling effect, which I personally find very relieving. And the best part is, after two weeks of using it, my knee pain no longer affected my daily mobility.

The Zebra Mint Oil, on the other hand, had a different but equally positive effect on my body. To take it, the instructions suggest holding the oil in your mouth for about 30 seconds. This was simple enough, and the mint taste was, well, minty. After about 15 minutes, a sense of calm came over my body. It's hard to describe exactly. It's more like an overall sense of relaxation—as if I just walked out of a spa, and now I'm ready to seize the day. Needless to say, I've really enjoyed the oil.

While it hasn't been a catch-all fix to every one of my health issues, it has eased the level and frequency of my aches. And it sure doesn't seem like a coincidence how much calmer and more focused I am.

All-in-all, CBD is one of those things that you have to try for yourself. Although I was skeptical at first, I can safely say that I'm now a Zebra CBD fan and that I highly recommend their products.

Also, I managed to speak with a Zebra CBD spokesperson willing to provide an exclusive offer. If you order this month, you'll receive \$10 off your first order by using promo code "PL10" at checkout. Plus, the company offers a 100% No-Hassle, Money-Back Guarantee. You can try it yourself and order Zebra CBD at ZebraCBD.com/PennLines or at 1-888-762-2699.

Local Lore

New Enterprise Rural Electric Cooperative

Starting a 'New Enterprise'

Long before New Enterprise became the name of a rural electric cooperative — serving more than 3,700 homes, businesses, and farms — and even before the town of New Enterprise sprung up in Bedford County, there lived a man named Simon Beard, who was the first to settle in the area.

Beard, a blacksmith, built his home in the region once known as South Woodberry — now South Woodbury Township — in 1844, according to the “History of Bedford, Somerset, and Fulton Counties, Pennsylvania,” written in 1884. After five years of peace and quiet, Beard got a neighbor.

Aspiring businessman David F. Buck established a storefront on the property that quickly drew more settlers to the region. The village that began to take shape went by the name Beard’s Crossing. The sentiment, though, must not have made up for the loss of peace and quiet. Beard eventually moved to

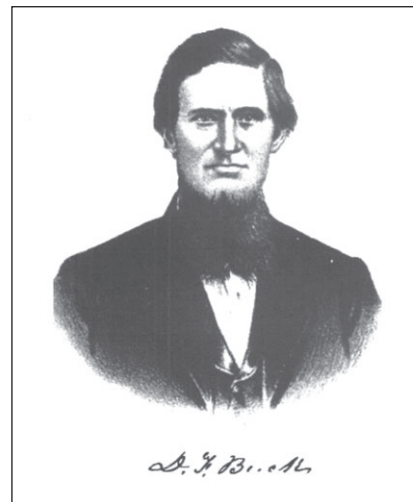
Hollidaysburg in Blair County — and the village’s name changed, too. Because the community had been built around Buck’s “new enterprise,” the name stuck.

According to one historian, the village “mushroomed” in its early years and included a post office, which Buck oversaw, a general store, a harness and saddle shop, two blacksmith shops, a wagon and buggy shop, a watchmaker and jewelry shop, a cobbler shop, and at different times, two hotels. Eventually, in 1881, a two-room schoolhouse was built in the community.

Today, more than 2,100 people have put down roots in New Enterprise, which is located along state Route 869 about 12 miles northeast of Bedford.

The “History of Bedford, Somerset, and Fulton Counties, Pennsylvania” can be found online in its entirety for free on Google Books, thanks in part to the Yale University Library.

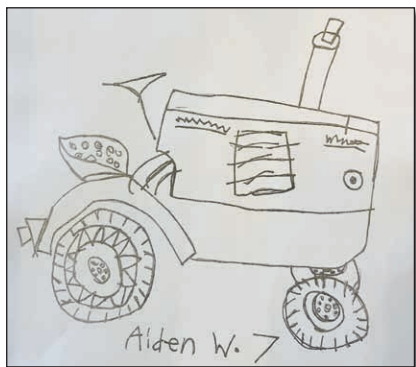
What’s the story behind your hometown? Let us know your stories at communitycorner@prea.com.



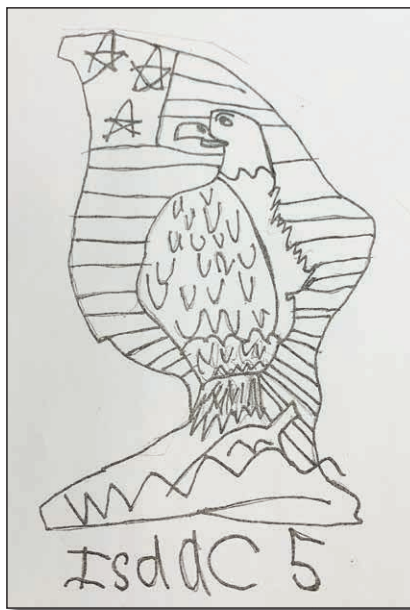
BUILDING NEW ENTERPRISE: David F. Buck, the first postmaster of the New Enterprise post office, constructed the town’s first business, a general store, and is considered the community’s founder.



**Main Office: New Enterprise, Pa.
Consumer-members served: 3,774
Website: newenterpriserec.com**



“I don’t have a tractor, but if I did, I would drive it around all day. I read about tractor square dancing – Tractor Buddies of Somerset County – and I would do that with my tractor, too.”
*Aiden Trent, age 7,
Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative*



“I like eagles. I see an eagle fly over the Stonycreek River by my house near Shanksville, looking for fish to eat.”
*Isaac Trent, age 5,
Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative*

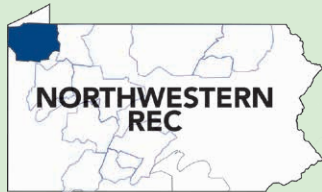
CALLING ALL KIDS, ages 5 to 17:
Show off your artistic skills!

Each month, we’ll feature the artwork of our young readers (or our readers’ youngsters), inspired by something they’ve read in *Penn Lines*. Paints, pencils, crayons, clay, sand – any physical medium is OK! You may send digital photos of the creation to CommunityCorner@prea.com, but please: no digital artwork.

Be sure to include the artist’s name, age and electric cooperative, plus a 25- to 50-word description of the art.

Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative Association, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

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P.O. Box 207
22534 State Highway 86
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www.northwesternrec.com

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Amy Wellington, Editor

Thank You, Lineworkers



RYAN MELLER

THIS MONTH IS ALL ABOUT our linemen and line personnel. As designated by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association in a formal resolution, Lineworker Appreciation Day occurs on the second Monday in April — this year, April 8. The work these guys perform is so dangerous and challenging, having one day to recognize their dedication and sacrifices is not enough in my opinion.

We have 27 linemen at Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) — all modest about the work they do. None of them want to be featured here, even though each is worthy of such recognition. When asked, they all seem to enjoy the work for similar reasons. It's challenging and rewarding. They prefer working outdoors and for the members.

Much of the work these guys do happens behind the scenes. You might see their trucks driving down the road on occasion, but until your power goes out, you probably don't think of the dangers these guys face each day.

Simply working with electricity is dangerous enough, but when you add harsh weather conditions or rugged terrain, that ups the ante tremendously. Even in perfect weather conditions, crews deal with other hazards like traffic or slips, trips, and falls, as well as tick bites, nuisance dogs, or other animals.

Being a lineworker can also be hard on families. These men all have families and have each sacrificed valuable family time to restore power to you, the members. That's the job they signed up for and they're proud of. We can't thank a lineman for his dedication and sacrifices without thanking his family for theirs.

Safety is always our top priority at Northwestern REC — your safety, our community's safety and the safety of our line crews. My goal as CEO is for every co-op employee to make it home in the same condition they were when they left for work. I owe it to them and their families.

Join me this month in thanking our linemen, other line personnel and their families: Aaron Butler, Alvey Lester, Bradley Peterson, Blaze Pietrowski, Camden Mattocks, Chris Peters, Dustin Crum, Dylan Thomas, Gary Lilly, Jay Bemis, Justin Dreese, John Mailliard, Jordan Post, Kyle Snow, Michael Frazier, Matt Maloney, Mitch Vallieres, Nevin Jones, Ryan Marsteller, Ross Thomas, Trevor Pavlik, Cole Jordan, Austin Kondielski, Brandon Hunt, Chad Gehrlein, Eric Eakin, Joe Bernier and John Heilman.

Without them, we would be in the dark. 🌑

Cooperatively yours,

RYAN MELLER
PRESIDENT & CEO



Branden's Story

AMY WELLINGTON, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

YOU COULD'VE HEARD A PIN DROP when we all walked out of the conference room that morning. Branden Bauer had just finished sharing the story of how his life had forever changed three years prior. Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative's (REC) safety committee shares statistics and other national incident reports with its employees monthly, but to hear (and see) a fellow co-op lineman recount his own horrific accident left us utterly speechless.

Branden is a journeyman lineman for DuBois-based United Electric Cooperative. He travels around the country giving a safety presentation titled, "Life Without Lim(b)its." He visited Northwestern REC on Feb. 7 for an all-employee meeting.

Dressed in blue jeans, dark hoodie, lineman boots and ball cap, Branden resembled every other 30-year-old lineman sitting in the conference room — beard included. The only difference was Branden's arms were replaced with prosthetic limbs. The kind of prosthetics with metal pinchers as hands that open and close, Branden explained, by maneuvering a pulley system with his shoulders. He prefers these over his other more technical prosthetics, because like most technical things, he said, they fail on occasion.

Branden spoke passionately about linework, his accident and his fellow linemen. He loved the work — he still loves

the work. His slideshow presentation is both gruesome and impactful.

On a typical day in January 2021, Branden and his crew were working on a large project to move three-phase lines and poles for better road access. He admits his mind was elsewhere when he jumped into the bucket truck with a guy wire in hand. His wife had just found out she was pregnant with their first child, and he had recently returned to work after spending an entire week of vacation working on projects around his house.

Branden had the bucket about 40 feet in the air when he attempted to swing the guy wire over what the crew thought was the neutral wire. In a typical three-phase service, the three wires on top are the energized phases and the neutral, or ground wire, is below. In one split second, Branden's entire body seized with contractions as 7,200 volts of electricity passed through one arm and out the other before he lost consciousness.

When Branden woke, he was on the ground where his coworkers were preparing his chest for AED pads. All he could remember saying over and over was, "It was supposed to be the neutral. It was the neutral."

Although the wire was in the neutral position, it turned out to be one of the energized phases that had been rotated somewhere down the line when the system was built de-

2024 MEMBER & NOMINATING MEETINGS

APRIL 15	APRIL 16	APRIL 25	APRIL 30
Member Resource Meeting	District 3 Nominating Meeting	District 10 Nominating Meeting	District 5 Nominating Meeting
Edinboro McKean VFW Post 740	Elgin/Beaver Dam VFD	Cooperstown VFD	Northwestern REC
6 - 7:30PM	6 - 7:30PM	6 - 7:30PM	6 - 7:30PM

All meetings begin at 6 p.m. with dinner. Presentations to follow. Email reservation (include name, date of event and how many) to info@northwesternrec.com or call 800-352-0014.



LIFE WITHOUT LIMITS: Branden Bauer, journeyman lineman and line superintendent for DuBois-based United Electric Cooperative, holds a tablet using his pulley-operated prosthetics at a job site. Bauer lost his arms after making contact with an energized line believed to be a neutral wire. He travels the country sharing his story with other cooperative lineworkers.

ades prior. There was no written warning or prior documentation of this unusual design.

Doctors tried desperately to save Branden's arms. After multiple surgeries and skin grafts, doctors inevitably had to remove Branden's forearms and other muscle tissue. Even though he and his wife had become new parents, Branden fell into depression.

The accident not only affected him, but it also affected everyone around him. Branden's voice quivered when he described having to rely on his wife to feed him, dress him, bathe him, and so on. His biggest fears were not being able to hold his newborn daughter or provide for his family.

But Branden was able to find a community of other amputees and received the help he needed to bounce back. At a national conference for amputees, Branden met a little girl, confined to a wheelchair with missing limbs, who was energetic and enthusiastic about her life. He was so taken by her optimism that moment his life turned around.

Branden has since returned to work at United Electric. He works 20 hours per week where he focuses on safety. It was his brother, a lineman for a local investor-owned utility,

who encouraged Branden to share his story with other line personnel. What began as a simple presentation for his brother's coworkers has turned into a highly sought-after safety message around the country.

Branden believes he is alive today due to the quick actions of his coworkers. They followed United Electric's "May Day" procedures to the letter, he said, including watching out for each other.

"The crew chief that day had the wherewithal to recognize the guy wire in my hand was energized to the ground and immediately warned the rest of the crew," Branden recalls.

Part of Branden's message is to look out for each other and speak up if something seems off. On more than one occasion, Branden reminded us that this type of accident affects everyone — your family, your friends, and your coworkers.

But most importantly, he stressed, is to always keep your mind on the job at hand. The slightest distraction, like the projects you're working on at home, could cost you your life — or your limbs.

For more information about Branden's story, visit our YouTube page at [NorthwesternREC.com](https://www.nwrec.com).

Thank a Lineworker on Lineworker Appreciation Day

AMY WELLINGTON, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

ELECTRIC LINeworkERS PROVIDE AN ESSENTIAL SERVICE:

They install and maintain overhead and underground power lines that keep electricity flowing. These specialized workers are on call 24/7 in case severe storms or other circumstances cause the power to go out.

Lineworkers work with high-voltage electricity, often at great heights, in all kinds of weather conditions. Maintaining the power grid is physically demanding. To become proficient, most lineworkers go through a technical training program and first learn on the job as apprentices under the careful eye of seasoned lineworkers who have earned journeyman status.

Electric power lineworkers accounted for approximately 122,400 jobs in 2022, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). Nearly half of these employees worked for electric power generation, transmission and distribution utilities.

Safety comes first

Lineworkers spend numerous hours in safety training each year and must understand and apply crucial safety regulations.

Protective clothing is required to shield lineworkers since they work around high voltages. Collectively, gear components can weigh up to 50 pounds.

According to the BLS, electric lineworkers typically:

- ▶ Install, maintain or repair the power lines that move electricity.
- ▶ Identify defective devices, voltage regulators, transformers and switches.
- ▶ Inspect and test power lines and auxiliary equipment.
- ▶ String (install) power lines between poles, towers and buildings.
- ▶ Climb poles and transmission towers and use truck-mounted buckets to access equipment.
- ▶ Operate power equipment when installing and repairing poles, towers and lines.
- ▶ Know and implement safety standards and procedures.

When a problem is reported, lineworkers must identify the cause and fix it. This usually involves diagnostic testing using specialized equipment and repair work. To work on poles, they usually use bucket trucks to raise themselves to

the top of the structure, although all lineworkers must be adept at climbing poles and towers when necessary. Workers use specialized safety equipment to keep them from falling when climbing utility poles and towers.

Storms and other natural disasters can cause extensive damage to power lines. When power is lost, lineworkers must restore service as safely and efficiently as possible. We salute our lineworkers who work around the clock to keep the power on. Their safety, as well as yours, is our top priority. 🇺🇸





Touchstone Energy[®]
Cooperatives

LIKE FATHER, LIKE DAUGHTER

Join Touchstone Energy Cooperatives in celebrating
the power of human connections.

The Joys of Our Little, Rural Community

ABIGAIL ZIEGER

I GREW UP ON THE outskirts of suburbia on a peaceful hillside road. If we drove 5 minutes in one direction, we were back into full-fledged neighborhoods, and 15 minutes took us to a few small cities, where you could find almost any retail store or service imaginable. It was easy to see friends and participate in extracurricular programs as a girl because we weren't far from anything.

I also delighted in big cities. My sister went to school and lived in New York City for many years, so driving a few hours to the Big Apple for a visit was commonplace. I loved being able to navigate the subway system, see a concert or a play, visit museums, and eat food from any culture I might possibly want to try, all within the span of a few miles.

As an adult, when we first considered purchasing the home we live in now, I was worried. "It's so FAR from everything," I thought. I wasn't used to having to drive to activities, and I was worried that the kids and I would feel isolated in a rural area. What if there was nothing for them to do out here?

However, the housing prices, low taxes and beautiful location won out. We moved to a rural county and bought a tiny farmhouse on a back road.

It wasn't long before I started to truly enjoy and embrace the perks of living in this idyllic place. The amount of natural beauty we enjoy is a true privilege. Each morning, the sun peeks through the treetops and streams across the field near our home and into our kitchen window. A creek babbles just a short distance down the hill. Our daily drive to school is surrounded by the gorgeous "Endless Mountains" our region is named after.

I love the freedom my kids experience out in the country. They can play outside, ride their bikes, explore wooded areas and swim in the creek. Together, we can garden and keep animals and still have lots of space around us to spread out and relax. We also appreciate the local parks and trails not far from our home.

However, it's not only the outdoors we enjoy. We are also lucky enough to have access to a community filled with small-town charm. When my firstborn was just a preschooler, we discovered that a nearby historic movie theater was also a cultural center, offering free and low-cost classes for all ages. We started going to preschool art class, and over a decade later, we still visit regularly for movies and community events.

Our little town is also home to antique shops, art galleries, thrift stores, cafes, restaurants, a library, dance and music studios, and a myriad of other small businesses. Kids have opportunities to join 4-H, take archery or horseback riding lessons, or even get their boating license. There

are semi-annual festivals, where it seems everyone you know comes out. The kids love visiting local vendor stands, seeing attractions like horse-drawn carriage rides and antique car shows, and enjoying local entertainment.

What I love the most about living out here is the amount of friendly community members we've gotten to know as a family. Our kids have supportive teachers and good friends at school, and we've found community and camaraderie with so many of



our neighbors and area families. It seems you can hardly go out without receiving a friendly wave or a hello from someone you recognize.

We've lived here for more than 11 years, and it feels like home now. While I appreciate my suburban hometown, and I still love a trip to the big city, my initial fears about our kids being isolated and bored out in the country have been disproven. Instead, those fears have been traded for gratitude for our little community. I'm so glad we get to raise our kids in beautiful, rural Pennsylvania. 🍷

ABIGAIL ZIEGER is a music teacher and singer by trade, but also enjoys capturing life experiences through writing. When not singing, teaching, or typing, she can be found working in her kitchen, helping her kids with school, or consuming copious amounts of coffee. A member of Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative, Abigail lives with her husband and four children in northeast Pennsylvania.

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DIY Tune-up Tips for Heat Pumps, Central Air Conditioners

JAMES DULLEY

DEAR JIM: I have my central air conditioner and furnace serviced every several years to keep them running efficiently. Is there anything I can do to the air conditioner myself on the off-years to improve its efficiency?

– *Ronnie G.*

DEAR RONNIE: There are several things you can do yourself to keep a central air conditioner or heat pump running at peak efficiency. Since the furnace air handler (blower) is also used for central air conditioning, maintaining it may also decrease your winter heating bills. A heat pump is actually just a central air conditioner that runs the refrigeration cycle in reverse when heating your home.

The two key factors to keep an air conditioner running most efficiently are making sure it has the proper amount of air flow over the indoor and outdoor coils and keeping the coils clean. Clean coils transfer heat

more efficiently to the air blowing over them so the compressor has to run less to produce the same amount of cooling output.

Keep it clean

First, remove any items — rakes, shovels, etc. — that may be resting against the outdoor condenser unit housing. These items can interfere with the air flow over the coils inside the unit. Clean off any leaves, pine needles, etc., from the top grille. They may blow off on their own when the unit starts running this spring, but it doesn't hurt to manually remove them.

Before doing any internal maintenance on a heat pump or central air conditioner, always switch off the power to the unit at the circuit breaker panel box. You may also find a large switch near the outdoor unit. Usually, you have to open the switch door and pull the connector bar by its plastic handle. If you are unsure about how to do this, DO NOT attempt it yourself.

Look inside the outdoor unit for old leaves and debris that may have accumulated during winter. These not only can reduce efficiency, but they also can accelerate corrosion of the steel housing. Remove the side access panel, reach in and clean out the debris.

Be careful not to damage the fragile fins on the coils. If you do bend a few, use the tip of a knife to separate and straighten them. It is not important for all of them to be perfectly straight. There just needs to be a gap for air flow between them. Inexpensive plastic fin combs are available to space them

more accurately if you chose.

When reassembling the access panel, be sure to adequately tighten the screws. If the screws are not tight, air may be sucked in around the loose panel instead of through the coils, reducing efficiency. Even if you do not have to clean out any debris, make sure all the exterior panel screws are tight.

Change the filter

Now, move indoors to the air handler, which circulates air throughout your house. If you have not changed the filter for the past two months, change it now. A dirty air filter may create too much air flow resistance for maximum cooling efficiency.

Remove the side panel to access the cooling coils. Use your vacuum cleaner brush attachment to clean off any dust. You may have to gently brush it first with a hand brush to dislodge any dirt.

Also, make sure the evaporator drain is fully open. Pour a cup of water into the water tray under the cooling evaporator coils to test it. The water should run out the tube into the floor drain if it is open. If not, use a wire to clean out the tube until the water flows out.

As with the outdoor access cover, make sure the screws are tight on the indoor air handler. While you are around the ductwork, seal any gaps at the joints with duct tape or aluminum foil tape. 🛠️



MAXIMIZING EFFICIENCY: Debris in and around the outdoor condenser can impact the efficiency of your heat pump or central air conditioning system. Regular system maintenance, including removing leaves and changing filters, can make a big difference — and you can do it all yourself.

HAVE A QUESTION FOR JIM? Send inquiries to James Dulley, Penn Lines, 6906 Royalgreen Drive, Cincinnati, OH 45244 or visit dulley.com.



As you prepare for planting season, don't forget to plan for safety. Keep these safety tips in mind:



TRAIN OTHERS

Train anyone working on your farm, including family members and seasonal workers, about electrical hazards.

SAFETY FIRST

Have daily meetings to review the day's work. Know and review where the power lines are, the clearance required and the proper position of extensions as they are transported.



WAIT TO UNFOLD

Remind workers to fold or unfold extensions well into the field, not close to the field's edge where power lines are typically located.

USE A SPOTTER

When working in the vicinity of power lines, always have a spotter on the ground who can direct you away from power lines or poles if you are getting too close.



DO NOT EXIT YOUR CAB

If your machinery or truck makes contact with a power line, pole or guy wire, you could become electricity's path to ground and become electrocuted if you step out of the cab.

CALL 9-1-1

Call 9-1-1 to have your electric utility dispatched to deenergize the power source. Only exit the cab if your equipment is on fire. If that happens, make a solid jump out and hop away with your feet together as far as you can.



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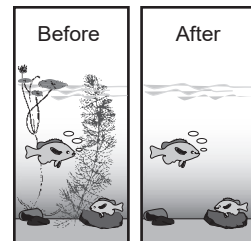
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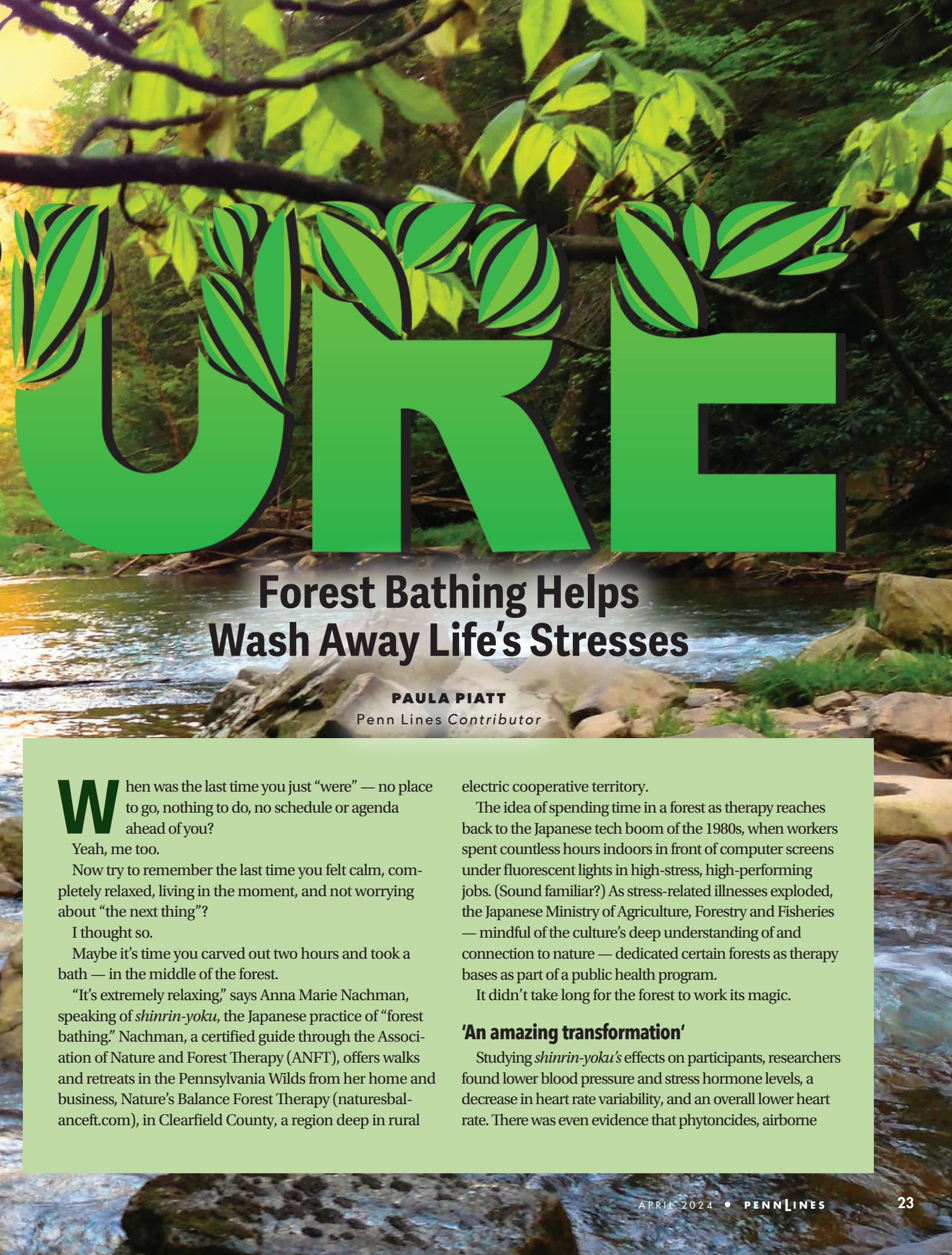
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SOAKING UP

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W R E

Forest Bathing Helps Wash Away Life's Stresses

PAULA PIATT

Penn Lines Contributor

When was the last time you just “were” — no place to go, nothing to do, no schedule or agenda ahead of you?

Yeah, me too.

Now try to remember the last time you felt calm, completely relaxed, living in the moment, and not worrying about “the next thing”?

I thought so.

Maybe it's time you carved out two hours and took a bath — in the middle of the forest.

“It's extremely relaxing,” says Anna Marie Nachman, speaking of *shinrin-yoku*, the Japanese practice of “forest bathing.” Nachman, a certified guide through the Association of Nature and Forest Therapy (ANFT), offers walks and retreats in the Pennsylvania Wilds from her home and business, Nature's Balance Forest Therapy (naturesbalanceft.com), in Clearfield County, a region deep in rural

electric cooperative territory.

The idea of spending time in a forest as therapy reaches back to the Japanese tech boom of the 1980s, when workers spent countless hours indoors in front of computer screens under fluorescent lights in high-stress, high-performing jobs. (Sound familiar?) As stress-related illnesses exploded, the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries — mindful of the culture's deep understanding of and connection to nature — dedicated certain forests as therapy bases as part of a public health program.

It didn't take long for the forest to work its magic.

'An amazing transformation'

Studying *shinrin-yoku's* effects on participants, researchers found lower blood pressure and stress hormone levels, a decrease in heart rate variability, and an overall lower heart rate. There was even evidence that phytoncides, airborne

chemicals that plants — especially evergreens — give off to protect themselves from insects, helped boost participants' immune systems.

That doesn't surprise Nachman: "It can be an amazing transformation."

Leading Penn State faculty, staff, and students regularly on guided walks, Nachman has seen the stress and anxiety of her clients melt away. "We had barely started the walk, and one student mentioned how she immediately felt so much calmer," she recalls. "The change happened that fast."

Beth Jones, also a certified ANFT guide, directs Deep Green Therapy, a Lycoming County-based nonprofit dedicated to connecting people with the healing found in nature (deepgreenjourney.com). A member of Sullivan County Rural Electric Cooperative, she leads guided walks through Worlds End State Park, Loyalsock State Forest and Rider Park in Williamsport. She acknowledges nature does the work: The forest is the therapist; the guide is just opening the door, as forest bathing practitioners say.

"Sometimes you need that guide just to help you slow it down," she says of the time in nature. "It can be a very special experience."

Moving at nature's pace, both guides say, is the key to a successful experience, but this can be extremely difficult to do. According to Jones, it takes about 20 minutes of forest immersion for the brain to settle down and for the full effect of the forest to take root.

"I'll usually start by inviting people to close their eyes

and become aware of their surroundings using all their senses," Jones explains. "What are you hearing or seeing or feeling in the breeze?"

That gives way to a slow — very slow — walk. "It's very, very slow ... and hard for some people," she says. "They are invited to notice what is in motion and what is happening as we move through nature."

"I'll help them become aware of their senses and invite them to go and spend time with a rock or a tree," says Nachman, who follows the same slow principle of immersion. "Everyone will experience this in different ways; some may just sit and think, others will become curious about what they are spending time with."

Not everyone, however, wants to sit and talk to a tree.

"Some of the invitations could be a little more edgy, depending on the people, but for some groups I'll tone things down a bit," Jones admits.

Her ultimate goal is to get people interacting with nature in some way — sitting by a stream, noticing its flow and dipping a hand in to feel the sensation of the water, or taking an up-close look at the forest floor. The final invitation is to find a spot in the forest and just sit for 20 minutes, taking in all that it has to offer.

The walks end with sharing individual experiences with the group — if that is something the participants want to do. Jones finishes — in a nod to *shinrin-yoku's* Japanese roots — with a tea ceremony, complete with a brew from things foraged along the way. It gives the bathers' sense of taste the opportunity to participate, too.

Letting nature take its course

For all that forest bathing is and does, the guides are clear: There are certain things it isn't.

"It's not a hike; you're not out for exercise, although you may get exercise," Nachman says. "There's no destination to reach, and there's nothing to accomplish. Things just happen naturally. It's not a naturalist kind of thing; we're not going out to identify plants and animals."

The best way to describe it, perhaps, is that it just is. And the experience will follow you for a while.

"(Participants) are able to recognize that they have elements of nature in their own backyard, and it encourages them to interact," Jones says. "When you have this intimate experience with trees and grass and things that we usually consider very small, they become large to you, and you recognize them in the everyday places in your own life. It encourages people to spend more time in nature. They notice, 'I feel a lot less stressed, and I have an overall sense of well-being.'"

A nice long (forest) bath will do that for you. 🌲

BETH JONES



WASHING AWAY STRESS: In *shinrin-yoku*, also known as forest bathing, participants immerse themselves in nature to promote health and well-being.

SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

The Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association (PREA) Scholarship Trust Fund offers a range of educational scholarships and is accepting applications for the 2024-25 college year.

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REQUIREMENTS & DATES TO REMEMBER:

Applicants are required to furnish necessary aptitude test scores, transcripts (high school or unofficial college, if applicable) and financial aid information. All applications and required documentation must be emailed to Steph Okuniewski (email address below) no later than **May 3, 2024**. Finalists will be sent a follow-up questionnaire that must be returned by **June 3, 2024**. Scholarship recipients, notified in July 2024, will be featured in the October 2024 *Penn Lines* issue.



QUESTIONS:

Steph Okuniewski, *Member Engagement Specialist*

Stephanie_Okuniewski@prea.com

717.982.1455

Keep it Simple

ANNE M. KIRCHNER

There are many benefits to recipes containing a handful of ingredients. Costs are minimized, preparation is efficient and sharing with others is easy. Exchanging basic recipes with family and friends can be fun. There is often a story (or two) to accompany each dish. I hope you enjoy the simple flavors and memories connected to this month's recipes.

While attending kindergarten, my son learned how to make peanut butter sunflower spread. Decades later our family still enjoys this snack. I created the Persian rice salad when opening a Mediterranean restaurant. Chocolate pound cake was a popular dessert I learned when helping with a dinner theater program.

ANNE M. KIRCHNER focuses her writing on human connections, travel and culinary arts, researching food origins, exploring cooking techniques, and creating new recipes.

PHOTOS BY ANNE M. KIRCHNER



PEANUT BUTTER SUNFLOWER SPREAD

- 1 cup smooth or crunchy peanut butter
- ½ cup honey
- ¼ cup sunflower seeds
- Wheat crackers, optional
- Pretzels, optional
- Apple slices, optional
- Carrot sticks, optional

In a small mixing bowl, combine the peanut butter, honey and sunflower seeds. Serve with wheat crackers, pretzels, apple slices or carrot sticks. *Makes 8 to 10 servings.*



PERSIAN RICE SALAD

- 2 cups brown rice
- 4 cups water
- 1½ cups mixed nuts
- 1½ cups dried cherries
- ½ cup olive oil
- ¼ cup lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon

Place rice and water in a pot and bring to a boil; reduce heat to a simmer and cover the pot. Cook the rice for 25 minutes. Place the cooked rice into a mixing bowl and allow to cool. Add the remaining ingredients and stir until well blended. Serve at room temperature. *Makes 6 to 8 servings.*



CHOCOLATE POUND CAKE

- 1 box devil's food cake mix
- 1 small box instant chocolate pudding mix
- 2 cups sour cream
- 1 cup butter, melted
- 5 eggs
- 1 teaspoon almond extract
- 2 cups milk chocolate chips
- ¼ cup powdered sugar

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Grease a 10-inch bundt pan. Use a stand or hand mixer on medium speed to combine the cake mix, chocolate pudding mix, sour cream, butter, eggs and almond extract. Add the chocolate chips and stir until well combined. Pour the batter into the prepared pan and bake for 50 to 55 minutes. Cool the cake for 10 to 15 minutes before removing from the pan onto a serving platter. Allow the cake to cool completely then sprinkle with powdered sugar. *Makes 16 to 20 servings.*

Not Your Grandma's Flowers

GEORGE WEIGEL

LIKE SO MANY OTHER GARDENERS, you'll probably gravitate to the petunias, marigolds and begonias next month when the frost clears because, well, that's just what you plant every May.

Most of these old-favorite annual flowers still do a reliable job in filling the beds with summer-long color. But for those willing to try something different, garden centers and greenhouses are offering way more choices than ever.

Here are eight worth considering for your 2024 garden beds and flower pots:

Euphorbia

This mounded, white-blooming 1- to 2-footer looks like the popular wedding flower baby's breath, but it's actually more closely related to the poinsettia.

Annual euphorbias hit the market about 20 years ago with the introduction of a variety called Diamond Frost. Now, you'll find multiple varieties that are both heavier blooming and more compact, plus a few pink-tinged beauties.

Euphorbias are highly animal-resistant and grow best in full sun, in pots or in the ground.

Angelonia

Also new in the past 20 to 25 years, angelonias send up 12- to 18-inch flower spikes that look like a cross between snapdragons and orchids.

The flowers might seem dainty, but these plants are exceptionally tough in heat and drought and are hardly ever bothered by bugs, disease, or animals.

Angelonias come in purple, pink, white, bluish-purple, and lavender, and they do best in full sun.



SOMETHING NEW: This is a bright, bi-color petchoa variety called SuperCal Premium Caramel Yellow. A new choice on the market, the annual is worth a second look for gardens and flower pots this season.

Scaevola

Sometimes called "fanflowers" for their fan-like leaf arrangement, scaevola is an excellent spreading/trailing annual that blooms primarily in bluish-purple but also in darker purple, pink and white.

It does best in partly shaded hanging baskets or pots, but can also do full sun and thrive in-ground, too.

Mecardonia

This 3- to 4-inch-tall gold-blooming creeper came along only a few years ago and is scarcely known, even by avid gardeners.

However, it's heavy in bloom, not attractive to animals, as good in the ground as trailing out of pots and baskets, and excellent in heat and drought (just avoid wet clay or too much shade).

Petchoa

Petchoas are a new cross between the familiar petunia and the similar but smaller-flowered calibrachoa, also known as "million bells."

They offer the best traits of both parents, resulting in a heavy-blooming trailer with the flower power of petunias and the brighter colors of calibrachoa.

These are best grown in containers

or hanging baskets, in full sun to light shade.

Alternanthera

Also known as Joseph's coat, this amaranth-family plant is grown mainly for its colorful foliage.

The best ones for annual beds are the low types with burgundy leaves, such as Little Ruby, Purple Prince, Plum Dandy and Red Threads. Their leaves put out rich color all season, and they make an excellent front-of-border edging.

Alternantheras grow in full sun to mostly shaded spots and tolerate dry soil. Animals seldom mess with them.

Interspecific geraniums

Most people know tried-and-true red geraniums, which are reasonably good, heat-tough performers; however, they aren't superstars when it comes to quantity of blooms. Lesser known ivy geraniums bloom better, tolerate shade better and have a trailing habit.

Breeders have crossed the two (hence, the term "interspecific") to come up with new lines of geraniums that grow bigger, better and bloom more.

They'll grow well in pots or the ground and in full sun to part shade.

Browallia

This little-known annual — sometimes called bush violet — started catching on 10 years ago when an impatiens-killing downy mildew disease sent gardeners looking for new shade options.

Browallia produces purple, star-shaped flowers on its foot-tall stems and prefers shaded to partly shaded conditions. It does well in pots or in the ground. 🌱

GEORGE WEIGEL is a retired horticulturist, author of two books about gardening in Pennsylvania, and garden columnist for *The Patriot-News/PennLive.com* in Harrisburg. His website is georgeweigel.net.

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1973-1979 HONDA CR125, CR250 DIRTBIKES, parts, projects, basket cases. Other motocross bikes considered. 724-972-8701.

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Life's Mysteries

JOHN KASUN

MY MAJOR IN COLLEGE was engineering, specifically mechanical design. It was a natural choice because I was always interested in how things were made and how they worked. I guess it was only natural that my second strongest interest was philosophy. I loved to read the ancient philosophers and discuss at length the meaning of life, inner peace, the possibility of time travel, and the untapped power of the mind.

Over time, I transitioned from pondering lofty Platonic thoughts to finding humor in everyday life. I now contemplate an entirely different set of life's mysteries, many of which are not questioned by most of society. Come with me now, to the inner workings of my mind, as we explore some of life's most fascinating and unsolved mysteries — according to me.

Let's start out with an easy one: Can vegetarians eat animal crackers? For instance, in the privacy of their own kitchens, do some who only eat plant-based foods secretly sneak those tiny baked animal crackers into their dish of ice cream? Are they living a double life? Makes you think, doesn't it?

I next find myself focusing on hospital gowns, which had to be designed by someone who was constantly experiencing hot flashes and had an intense fear of buttons. Why else would anyone design a gown with an opening in the back you could drive a truck through? I have spent many hospital stays trying to hold my gown shut with both hands in an attempt to cover what was left of my dignity. The question that begs to be answered is this: If there was a hospital in a nudist colony, would the patients still have to wear those stupid gowns? Inquiring minds want to know.

Those two questions were easy, but now they get harder. Those of you old enough to remember the live-action Tarzan movies, think back. Tarzan swung through the trees using vines. Did it bother you that the vines were not

marked, yet Tarzan always seemed to pick a vine going in his desired direction. Really? Even Crocodile Dundee, another fictional character who survived in the remote reaches of the Australian outback, knew enough to ask directions, or at least take a cab, when he arrived in New York City.

Another great source of mystery for me is cowboy movies. Not the modern ones, where the cowboys are struggling with their relationships and a bookkeeping error on the ranch books. Instead, I am thinking about the films from

the 1950s that normally ran as double features on Saturdays. The good guys wore white hats, and the women had printed calico dresses. The bad guys, on the other hand, wore the same clothes the entire movie; however, when they pulled a handkerchief over their nose and robbed the local bank, no one recognized them. Wow! That handkerchief must have been like an invisible cloak.

And did you ever consider this: Two cowboys could spend half a movie

riding through the desert on horseback while chasing outlaws with no visible equipment aside from a canteen and a rifle. However, as the sun sets, they are suddenly seen sitting on blankets beside a campfire over which is hanging a huge metal coffee pot and a pot of stew. Where did all of that stuff come from? I can only guess there was a Rent-to-Buy Store just behind that huge rock in the background.

Finally, the other day I passed a tiny storefront with a large sign that said, "Psychic." A small note taped above the doorbell said, "Ring bell for psychic." The question is, "How good is a psychic who needs a doorbell?" Again, inquiring minds want to know. 🐾



JOHN KASUN, a lifelong Pennsylvanian with more than 30 years of writing experience, looks for the humor in everyday life and then tells a story from that perspective. He is a member of Huntingdon-based Valley Rural Electric Cooperative.

Better Together

THE CHAOTIC WEATHER OF THE Commonwealth can tempt us to stay home alone, but even a cloudy, rainy day can put a smile on your face if you have the right company.

Penn Lines works better with you, so put together your finest shots of Pennsylvania, its people, places, and pets, and submit them for this year's Rural Reflections contest. The 2024 winners in five categories (artistic, human, landscape, animal and editor's choice) will receive \$75 each, and runners-up will each receive \$25. See below on how to enter your photos in this year's contest. 📷



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AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHERS are encouraged to send photos for the 2024 "Rural Reflections" contest (no digital files) to: *Penn Lines* Photos, P.O. Box 1266, Harrisburg, PA 17108-1266. On the back of each photo, include your name, address, phone number and the name of the electric cooperative that serves your home, business or seasonal residence.

Remember: Our publication deadlines require us to work in advance, so send your seasonal photos in early. Photos that do not reflect any specific season may be sent at any time. Photos will be returned one year after receipt if a self-addressed, stamped envelope is included.

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