

FEBRUARY 2024

# PENNLINES

## Allegheny and You

How Rural Electric Cooperatives Banded Together to Forge a Reliable Energy Future

**INSIDE!**  
SNOW  
MORE  
STREAK

**A RECIPE FOR  
TOGETHERNESS**

**PREPARE A MEAL  
FROM THE HEART**

**PLANTS THAT DEER  
LIKE BEST**

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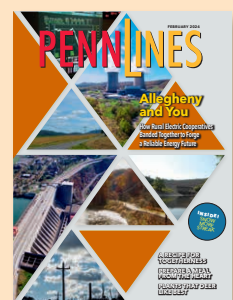
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**ON THE COVER**  
Generating and transmitting electricity from a mix of nuclear, hydro, and more, Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc. was founded by cooperatives to ensure a reliable, cost-effective supply of energy for rural Pennsylvania and New Jersey.  
COVER ILLUSTRATION BY GRAPHCOM, INC.

# Stronger Together



**JIM STAUFFER**

**AS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE MEMBERS**, we've chosen rural life for a reason: Along with the beauty of our rural areas, we also appreciate the comforts of our communities, like knowing our neighbors and having a quiet place to call home.

The challenges, however, are real here — and, collectively, we've had our share. In the not-too-distant past, for instance, rural families sat on the sidelines and watched as electricity revolutionized life in more populated areas.

The very communities we live in were left in the dark as other parts of Pennsylvania and the nation glowed with progress. Let's just say, it didn't stay that way for long.

Determined rural leaders rallied together to put up the poles and string the wires that lit up the countryside, an accomplishment some said was impossible.

In doing so, our predecessors realized something: There's power in numbers.

Eventually, the growth of rural electricity led to the establishment of rural electric cooperatives, which are governed by a truly fitting business model, one that underscores such grassroots values as cooperation and concern for community.

In the years that followed, the Commonwealth's cooperative leaders would come together once again to form the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association (PREA) in 1942. The organization empowered these cooperatives to share resources and present a unified front on legislative battles.

Just a few years later, in 1946, the cooperatives formed Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc. (Allegheny) to ensure a reliable and cost-effective source of power for rural areas. (Read this month's feature to learn more about Allegheny and its importance to our cooperatives.)

Today, these dual organizations serve the interests of our 14 electric cooperatives and their consumers in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. A multifaceted service organization, PREA provides legislative support; communications support through publications like *Penn Lines*; and education and training support for lineworkers, cooperative directors, and staff. Allegheny is the wholesale energy provider for our cooperatives, with a portfolio of self-owned nuclear and hydroelectric resources.

Together, the organizations support cooperatives in our role as energy providers, community leaders and local economic drivers. Thanks to PREA's advocacy efforts and Allegheny's power supply initiatives, cooperative consumers enjoy some of the lowest and most stable electric generation rates in the entire region.

Our work, however, isn't finished.

As the leaders of PREA and Allegheny, we are committed to continuing and expanding our collaborative mission, which is centered on strengthening our member systems, providing safe, affordable, and sustainable electricity for consumers, and finding solutions to our shared challenges.

While PREA and Allegheny may be rooted in the past, our boards — made up of local cooperative members just like you — are firmly focused on the present and future. And if our collective history has taught us anything, it's that we truly are stronger together. 🤝

**JIM STAUFFER**  
CHAIRMAN, ALLEGHENY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

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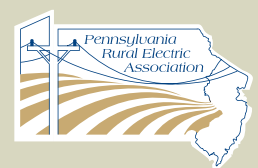
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## Scientific Discovery Stuns Doctors

# Biblical Bush Relieves Joint Discomfort in as Little as 5 Days

*Legendary “special herb” gives new life to old joints without clobbering you. So safe you can take it every day without worry.*

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 54 million Americans are suffering from joint discomfort.

This epidemic rise in aching joints has led to a search for alternative treatments—as many sufferers want relief without the harmful side effects of conventional “solutions.”

Leading the way from nature’s pharmacy is the new “King of Oils” that pioneering Florida MD and anti-aging specialist Dr. Al Sears calls “the most significant breakthrough I’ve ever found for easing joint discomfort.”

Biblical scholars treasured this “holy oil.” Ancient healers valued it more than gold for its medicinal properties. Marco Polo prized it as he blazed the Silk Road. And Ayurvedic practitioners, to this day, rely on it for healing and detoxification.

Yet what really caught Dr. Sears’ attention is how modern medical findings now prove this “King of Oils” can powerfully...

### Deactivate 400 Agony-Causing Genes

If you want genuine, long-lasting relief for joint discomfort, you must address inflammation. Too much inflammation will wreak havoc on joints, break down cartilage and cause unending discomfort. This is why so many natural joint relief solutions try to stop one of the main inflammatory genes called COX-2.

But the truth is, there are hundreds of agony-causing genes like COX-2, 5-LOX, iNOS, TNF, Interleukin 1,6,8 and many more—and stopping just one of them won’t give you all the relief you need.

Doctors and scientists now confirm the “King of Oils”—Indian Frankincense—deactivates not one but 400 agony-causing genes. It does so by shutting down the inflammation command center called Nuclear Factor Kappa Beta.

NK-Kappa B is like a switch that can turn 400 inflammatory genes “on” or “off.” A study in Journal of Food Lipids reports that Indian Frankincense powerfully deactivates NF-Kappa B. This journal adds that Indian Frankincense is “so powerful it shuts down the pathway triggering aching joints.”

### Relief That’s 10 Times Faster... and in Just 5 Days

Many joint sufferers prefer natural solutions but say they work too slowly. Take the best-seller glucosamine. Good as it is, the National Institutes of Health reports that glucosamine takes as long as eight weeks to work.

Yet 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



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

daily for 30 days. Remarkably, Indian Frankincense “significantly improved joint function and relieved discomfort in as early as five days.” That’s relief that is 10 times faster than glucosamine.

### 78% Better Relief Than the Most Popular Joint Solution

In another study, people suffering from discomfort took a formula containing Indian Frankincense and another natural substance or a popular man-made joint solution every day for 12 weeks.

The results? Stunning! At the end of the study, 64% of those taking the Indian Frankincense formula saw their joint discomfort go from moderate or severe to mild or no discomfort. Only 28% of those taking the placebo got the relief they wanted. So Indian Frankincense delivered relief at a 78% better clip than the popular man-made formula.

In addition, in a randomized, double blind, placebo controlled study, patients suffering from knee discomfort took Indian Frankincense or a placebo daily for eight weeks. Then the groups switched and got the opposite intervention. Every one of the patients taking Indian Frankincense got relief. That’s a 100% success rate—numbers unseen by typical solutions.

In addition, BMJ (formerly the British Medical Journal) reports that Indian Frankincense is safe for joint relief — so safe and natural you can take it every day.

Because of clinically proven results like this, Dr. Sears has made Indian Frankincense the centerpiece of a new natural joint relief formula called **Mobilify**.

### Great Results for Knees, Hips, Shoulders and Joints

Joni D. says, “**Mobilify** really helps with sore-

ness, stiffness and mild temporary pain. The day after taking it, I was completely back to normal—so fast.” Shirley M. adds, “Two weeks after taking **Mobilify**, I had no knee discomfort and could go up and down the staircase.” Larry M. says, “After a week and a half of taking **Mobilify**, the discomfort, stiffness and minor aches went away... it’s almost like being reborn.” And avid golfer Dennis H. says, “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.”

### How to Get Mobilify

Right now, the only way to get this powerful, unique formula that clobbers creaking joints in as little as five days without clobbering you is with Dr. Sears’ breakthrough **Mobilify** formula. 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 **1-800-342-2154**. “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 ever 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 **1-800-342-2154** 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 this limited time offer provided at a significant discount. To take advantage of this exclusive offer use Promo Code: **PLMB224** when you call.

WORD ON THE WEATHER

Admittedly, weather forecasting as a profession doesn't seem to get a lot of respect. People joke that it's a job where you can be wrong and still get paid. In fact, if there's one thing folks like to complain about more than the weather, it's the weather forecaster, especially when they get it wrong.

In our home, though, there's one meteorologist who is spared even the slightest criticism. Punxsutawney Phil, Pennsylvania's most famous weather prognosticator, is held in high regard in our family for his annual predictions about how much more winter we can expect. We've even made a trip to Gobbler's Knob, out in United Electric Cooperative's service territory, to pay a visit to the furry forecaster. After all, he is the "seer of seers."



But when you're as famous as Phil, people like to compare notes. The weather experts at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) point out that Phil gets it right only about 40% of the time, "even though he's been forecasting since 1887." Longtime forecasters over at the *Farmers' Almanac* say they don't use "folklore" for their predictions. Instead, they employ a "mathematical and astronomical formula" that is accurate 80% to 85% of the time, according to their website. And now, artificial intelligence (AI) has entered the weather game. In a test of AI-based forecasting, Google's experimental software recently outperformed the world's most accurate weather prediction models. Quite a feat, but I'm sure it didn't involve a top hat ceremony.

No matter the model or the method, the weather business has gotten trickier lately. In terms of their frequency and intensity, extreme weather events seem to be the new normal. Five different organizations, including NOAA, declared 2023 the hottest year on record. NOAA also noted the past year contained a record number of billion-dollar weather- and climate-related disasters in the U.S. Some of that severe weather impacted Pennsylvania, with tornadoes touching down in cooperative areas and causing significant damage. Researchers note these extreme events are making weather prediction even more difficult.

Given all they're up against, maybe it's time we gave meteorologists a break. At least in our home, Phil's Feb. 2 forecast will be spot on. Early spring or six more weeks of winter, we'll take his prediction as the word on the weather.

PETER A. FITZGERALD  
EDITOR



**SNOW MORE STREAK**  
**January storm ends central Pa.'s string of snowless days**

When the Jan. 6 snowstorm arrived, it ended central Pennsylvania's 346-day streak of no accumulating snow, according to the National Weather Service. The last time the region had any measurable snow was Jan. 25, 2023.

Central Pennsylvania isn't the only area missing out on accumulating snow. Before the early January storm, the following cities had lengthy snow droughts, too: Washington, D.C., 719 days without snow measuring more than 1 inch; Baltimore, 707 days; Philadelphia, 706 days; New York City, 691 days; and Boston, 316 days.

**DOGGONE IT!**  
**Pittsburgh pup has expensive taste**

Cecil, a Pittsburgh goldendoodle, has gone viral thanks to his expensive taste. The dog ate \$4,000 in cash after his owners, Clayton and Carrie Law, placed the money for a home improvement project on a kitchen counter.

Over the next few days, the Laws spent considerable time and effort piecing together the bills that came out both ends of the dog. They were able to recover \$3,550 with serial numbers intact, meaning the money could be replaced. It's also possible the pair will be able to recover the

remaining \$450 through the Bureau of Engraving and Printing.

The U.S. Treasury reports it handles, on average, about 24,000 claims and redeems an average of \$30 million worth of damaged and mutilated currency annually.

Now that's something to chew on.

**POPULATION SHIFTS**  
**As nation's population grows, Pennsylvania's numbers decline**

The U.S. population is increasing (a 1.6 million-person gain between July 2022 and July 2023); however, Pennsylvania lost about 10,400 residents, according to data from the U.S. Census Bureau.

Pennsylvania's population is now listed at 12.96 million. States that lost the most population during the time period were New York, California and Illinois.

Several of Pennsylvania's neighbors increased in population, with New Jersey adding 30,000, Ohio gaining 26,000, Maryland gaining 16,000 and Delaware gaining 12,000. Neighboring West Virginia also lost population, shrinking by about 4,000 residents.

"U.S. migration returning to pre-pandemic levels and a drop in deaths are driving the nation's growth," said Kristie Wilder, a demographer in the Population Division at the Census Bureau, in a press release.

“Although births declined, this was tempered by the near 9% decrease in deaths. Ultimately, fewer deaths paired with rebounding immigration resulted in the nation experiencing its largest population gain since 2018.”

Pennsylvania’s population grew rapidly between 1900 and 1960, then slowed, taking 40 years to grow from 11 million people to 12 million in 2000. Recent decades have seen growth in southeast and south-central Pennsylvania, while the population has stayed the same or declined in the remainder of the state.

### TAKING ITS TOLL

## New year brings higher rates for Pa. Turnpike travelers

A year after its last increase, the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission has once again raised tolls by 5%. The new rates took effect in early January.

According to the commission, the most-common toll for a passenger vehicle has increased from \$1.80 to \$1.90 for E-ZPass customers and from \$4.40 to \$4.70 for Toll By Plate

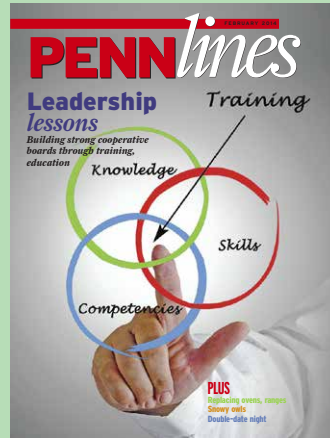
customers. Rates for tractor-trailers also went up.

“Our annual toll increases directly support the escalating Act 44 debt service we have had to manage due to the mandates of Act 44 of 2007,” said Rick Dreher, the commission’s chief financial officer. “However, even given that significant financial management challenge, our per-mile toll rates are lower than national toll averages and remain in the mid-range among the 47 toll roads in the U.S.”

In addition to the toll increases, the commission said it has taken “internal steps to control costs” that include debt refinancing, a leaner work force and capital project cuts. It has also introduced non-toll funding sources, such as electric-vehicle chargers at service plazas.

The commission is in the midst of implementing an all-electronic overhead tolling system along the turnpike that drivers pass under with no need to slow down or pass through a booth. The first portion of open-road tolling is expected to be operational in 2025. 📍

## TIME LINES



FEBRUARY 2014

A decade ago, *Penn Lines* readers got a behind-the-scenes look at what it’s like to be a rural electric cooperative director. Elected by fellow members, directors help co-ops navigate the complex electric utility industry. It’s a huge responsibility, and many are committed to taking training to better serve consumers and their cooperatives.

# FEBRUARY



### ENJOY A DAY OF WINTER FUN

Get out of the house and get on the road to Clarendon for the Warren County Winterfest Feb. 3. From 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Chapman State Park will host a variety of outdoor activities, including horse-drawn carriage rides, kid and dog sled races, a polar bear plunge and more. Learn more at warrenwinterfest.com.

### YOU LOOK ‘MAH-VELOUS’

Help a friend, family member – or even a stranger – feel warm and fuzzy inside by celebrating National Give a Compliment Day, Feb. 6. Go ahead: Make their day.



### ONE FOR THE GALS

Sure, we all know Valentine’s Day is coming up, but women around the world will be gathering the day before, Feb. 13, to commemorate Galentine’s Day, an unofficial holiday celebrating female friendships.

### HAPPY BIRTHDAY, LEAPLINGS!

Every four years, an extra day – Feb. 29 – is added to the calendar, making 2024 a Leap Year. It’s believed “leaplings,” or people born on that day, have good luck. If you know one, wish them a happy birthday.





# Allegheny *and You*

How Rural Electric Cooperatives  
Banded Together to Forge a  
Reliable Energy Future

**MICHAEL T. CRAWFORD**





**Y**OU COME HOME AFTER a long day. You've worked hard. As you walk through your home, your hand rises without even thinking about it and flicks a switch. The darkness is gone, the light is shining, and — even better — the cost is affordable because you are a member of a rural electric cooperative.

If you've leafed through the pages of *Penn Lines* before, you know it wasn't always so easy. You've probably heard the tale of rural electrification — how for-profit utilities found little reason to invest in rural America, prompting everyday citizens to rally together to bring electricity to their farms, homes and communities. You also likely know that Pennsylvania and New Jersey cooperative members today enjoy some of the lowest and most stable electric generation rates in the region.

But how is that still possible in a world where the price of everything, including energy, keeps climbing?

"It's always about co-ops helping co-ops," says Chad Carrick, president & CEO of Indiana-based REA Energy Cooperative. "Everything we do, at every level, stems from that."

**'Our strength is in numbers'**

The lion's share of cooperative energy in Pennsylvania comes from Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc. (Allegheny), formed in 1946 to provide electric cooperatives with a reliable supply of energy at a competitive price. Together with the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association (PREA),



**STEVE BRAME**

which was founded in 1942 to act as the unified voice for cooperatives, the dual organizations serve the interests of 14 electric cooperatives and their consumers.

**POWER PROVIDER:** Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc. generates the power distributed by rural electric cooperatives to consumers in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. A portion of that power comes from the Susquehanna Steam Electric Station (top, opposite page), a two-unit nuclear power plant in Luzerne County, and the Raystown Hydroelectric Plant in Huntingdon County (bottom, opposite page).



**ALLEGHENY OPERATIONS:** Eric Reed, lead operations and maintenance technician at the Raystown Hydroelectric Plant, reviews the facility's operating system. Allegheny, formed in 1946 to provide electric cooperatives with a reliable supply of energy at a competitive price, owns and operates the plant in Huntingdon County.

"Formed by our member cooperatives, our history is rooted in working together," explains PREA/Allegheny President & CEO Steve Brame. "Whether it's using economies of scale to provide cost-effective services or investing together for our power supply needs, PREA and Allegheny reflect that member-driven approach to finding solutions in a cooperative way."

Through Allegheny, rural electric cooperatives own and manage about 65% of their generation needs, all of which are powered by carbon-free resources. Allegheny operates the Raystown Hydroelectric Plant in Huntingdon County and owns a 10% share of the Susquehanna Steam Electric Station, a two-unit nuclear power plant in Luzerne County.

Allegheny also has long-term contracts with the New York Power Authority, which oversees hydroelectric projects along the Niagara and St. Lawrence rivers in upstate New York. These low-cost hydro resources have saved cooperative consumers an estimated \$423 million since 1966.

"The individual distribution co-ops derive strength from joining together and tackling various issues," says Rus Ogburn, general

**"Formed by our member cooperatives, our history is rooted in working together."**

manager of Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative. “Allegheny is the first level of that cooperation, and it focuses on the most significant cost to our co-ops and members, which is power costs.

“The strength associated with us joining together [decades] ago is still seen today,” he adds, “because the 65% that Allegheny owns on our behalf provides significant savings, significant continuity and significant predictability for our members. It just illustrates the strength of the ‘cooperation among cooperatives’ principle — our strength is in numbers.”

What Allegheny doesn’t own, it has to supplement with open-market purchases of roughly 35% of its power needs. However, thanks to agreements and relationships with more than 20 key power trading firms, Allegheny is able to react quickly to changing market conditions to minimize any volatility it encounters and limit the impact on cooperative consumers.

The strategy has paid off, earning Allegheny a reputation for rate stability.

“We’re living in a world where the cost of everything

**LOAD MANAGEMENT:** Allen Tobias, PREA/Allegheny senior coordinated load management system (CLMS) operator, conducts a routine inspection of one of the CLMS servers in Harrisburg. The voluntary CLMS program helps reduce electricity use during periods of peak demand, which ultimately lowers costs for cooperative members.

is going up, and people are stressed about making ends meet,” says Todd Sallade, PREA/Allegheny vice president – power supply & engineering. “If we can save our members a couple nickels and dimes here so they add up to dollars down the line, that’s extra money in their pocket for whatever they need.”



**TODD SALLADE**

**Affordable rates, greater reliability**

To help consumer-members hold on to more of their hard-earned dollars, Allegheny has championed initiatives to control peak demand and help with the development of renewable generation systems.

The Coordinated Load Management System, a demand-side program in place since 1986, helps shift the use of hot water heaters and other appliances from times of peak electricity demand to off-peak hours. By doing so, the voluntary program has saved cooperative consumers more than \$163 million in avoided power costs since its inception. The system is being updated to include state-of-the-art automatic meter reading, load control and smart meter/smart appliance capability.

“You can look at all the technology changes and advancements, the way the world has changed from the 1940s to today, and how all our processes and tools have changed, but Allegheny’s mission has stayed the same: It’s



**"The local link between our members and our statewide organizations is a key part of what makes the cooperative model so successful."**

**Jim Stauffer, Chairman  
Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc.**



all about keeping rates as low as possible and keeping the lights on as best we can," Sallade says.

Allegheny, in partnership with PREA, also helps cooperative members who want to install a clean energy generation system at their home or farm. The Renewable Energy Assistance Program provides grants to electric distribution cooperatives to cover various interconnection costs, such as metering equipment and distribution transformers. It also pays for certain transitional costs to ensure other electric cooperative members are not subsidizing the operation or installation of small renewable energy generation systems — whether the system is an anaerobic digester, wind turbine or solar array.

"Pretty much every part of what we do — whether it's the Raystown Hydroelectric Plant, the power scheduling team or the power delivery staff — touches on rates and reliability," Sallade explains. "Allegheny was set up for the purpose of acting as the power supply provider on the cooperatives' behalf. That was established in the 1940s when the organizations (PREA/Allegheny) were set up, and that's Allegheny's mission today: rates and reliability."

Maintaining reliability requires forward thinking. Much like your local rural electric cooperative plans for substation upgrades to meet peak demand and maintains rights of way to keep trees from disrupting your power, Allegheny is constantly analyzing energy trends and policies, which, of late, have started jeopardizing sustainability, Brame says.

"It's concerning because at the same time we're being asked to electrify more of the economy, environmental policy is taking away some of the resources the country has traditionally relied on for power, particularly coal and natural gas," Brame explains. "While Allegheny's generation resources are mainly carbon-free, any policy that affects grid reliability should concern us all. Fortunately, we are well-positioned to deal with these challenges."

Carrick agrees that Allegheny's generation mix helps provide cooperatives a solid foundation going forward into a changing energy environment.

"Being more than 60% carbon-free and the programs we offer, like coordinated load management, are a benefit to the member," he says. "As more fossil-fuel fired generation comes offline, we have to be more efficient and have programs that help our members manage their electricity to adapt to the changing energy mix that's going to be available. That's a mix of demand-response, shifting electric use to other times of the day and accepting distributed generation — all those elements working together, I think, are going to be how we achieve the goals to make sure that reliability stays intact."

### **Putting the consumer first**

According to Ogburn, the primary benefit of statewide collaboration comes from having the resources — personnel, generation, and institutional knowledge — to be able to adapt to the rapidly changing market rules,

**“Cooperatives are represented by the people we serve, and that makes a huge difference.”**

power supply issues, and regulatory challenges.

“Behind the scenes, the periodic updates that we get involved in every few years — whether it’s a new substation or an upgrade to lines — we have the benefit of the knowledge Allegheny has,” Ogburn explains. “On the planning side or reliability side, there’s a lot that happens that Allegheny streamlines for us; we would have a very hard time doing that ourselves or we’d have to pay consultants to do it in one-off situations.

“While Allegheny proactively addresses rapid-fire changes in the power industry at large, it really allows us to commit resources to issues that directly impact our members.”

Although Allegheny does much of its work behind the scenes, its members — not just the cooperatives it serves, but down to the individual consumer-member — have a say, thanks to its democratically controlled board.

Each cooperative has a seat on the Allegheny Board of Directors and is represented by a locally elected consumer-member.

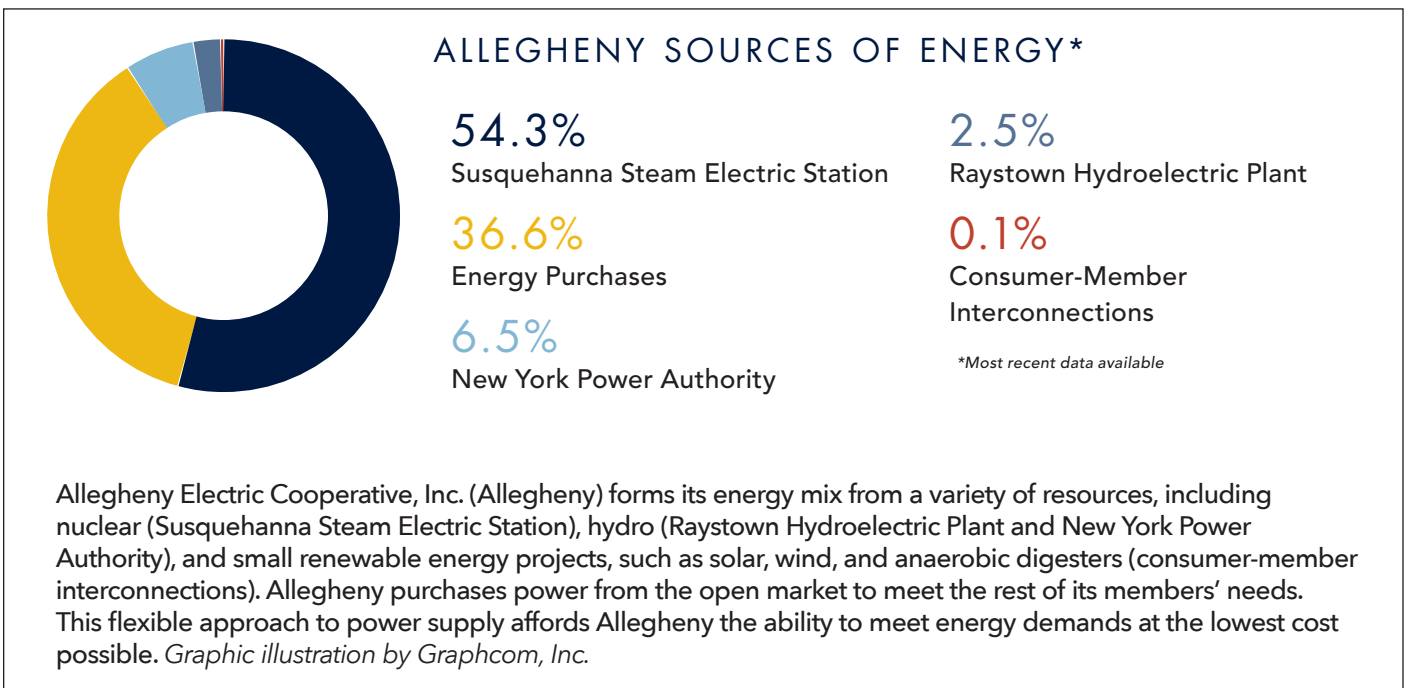
“Cooperatives are represented by the people we serve, and that makes a huge difference,” says Jim Stauffer, chairman of the Valley Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) Board of Directors, who was recently elected Allegheny chairman. “The local link between our members and our statewide organizations is a key part of what

makes the cooperative model so successful.” Sallade agrees.

“In an investor-owned model, a consumer’s concern almost never rises to the level of the people satisfying the investors,” he says. “The cooperative business model is very different because everything is aligned. When our directors go to the gas station or watch the local high school football game, they meet other consumer-members face-to-face and hear their concerns. It’s a much more consumer-centric business model — and it works. If you could wipe the slate clean and let the utility industry evolve all over again, I think everyone would be better served if they had some sort of cooperative business model.”

Stauffer, who has been a member of Valley REC since 1993 and has served on its board since 1997, also sees the value of having a local voice in energy decisions.

“As representatives serving on the Allegheny board, we’re making decisions that impact members’ daily lives,” he says. “We understand those impacts because we live in the communities we serve. And that’s what sets it apart: Allegheny is focused on people. When we talk about affordability and reliability, we’re talking about people. We’re talking about our communities.”





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## Local Lore

### Bedford Rural Electric Cooperative

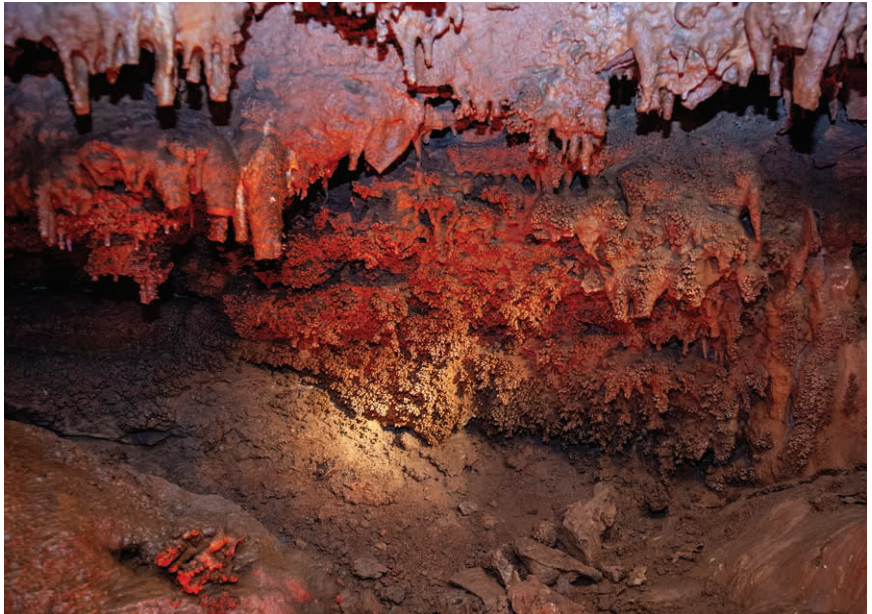
#### *The Bed Beneath Bedford*

**BENEATH THE ROLLING** Appalachian Mountains, below the power lines of Bedford Rural Electric Cooperative and just under the fertile Earth, rests a reminder that we are but nature’s guests.

Approximately 405 million years before Scottish-Irish immigrant Robert MacRay came along in 1750 and opened the first trading post in Bedford County, there was no dry land. Below what would eventually become the Borough of Manns Choice, a coral reef once served as home to ancient aquatic life, right up until the tectonic plates shifted and pulled the reef and its inhabitants beneath an immeasurable weight of stone.

The reef, however, has been immortalized — fossilized, to be precise — alongside the many creatures who lived there, and now rests quietly and without fanfare within Coral Caverns, a hidden gem that’s just minutes from downtown Bedford. Today, the caverns are humbly cared for by an everyday Bedford native and his sons.

“From all walks of life and all nationalities, world travelers come here,” owner and caretaker Bill VanDeventer says. “These hills have



**CORAL CAVERNS:** A 405-million-year-old fossilized coral reef rests beneath the soil and stone of Manns Choice in Bedford County within Coral Caverns. Visitors can tour the site on the outskirts of Bedford and spend time in the museum operated by owner Bill VanDeventer.

been a contributor to progress, and now a contributor to science. To continue its ability to be recognized, I found that in itself to be an admirable goal.”

Above the caverns, a small museum showcases artifacts found from within, as well as science exhibits related to other prehistoric treasures from throughout North America. Tours of the cavern and museum are from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. by appointment only. General admission runs \$21 for ages 12 and up, \$10 for ages 3 to 11, and free

for ages 2 and below.

What lore lies beneath your feet? Let us know your stories at [communitycorner@prea.com](mailto:communitycorner@prea.com).



**Main Office:** Bedford, Pa.  
**Consumer-members served:** 9,566  
**Website:** [bedfordrec.com](http://bedfordrec.com)

## Attention: Young Artists

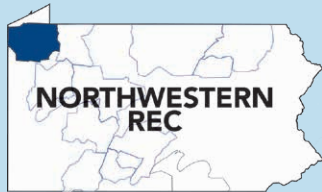
**AMERICA'S GOT TALENT;** so do rural electric cooperatives. We’re calling on all kids, ages 5 to 17, to share their artistic skills with us.

Each month, we’ll feature a picture drawn by our young readers (or our readers’ youngsters) about something they’ve read in *Penn Lines*. Paints, pencils, crayons – whatever medium the artist feels most appropriate – as long as it is a physical creation. You may send digital photos of the drawing to [CommunityCorner@prea.com](mailto:CommunityCorner@prea.com), but please: no digital artwork.

Be sure to include the young artist’s name, age and electric cooperative, plus a short (between 25 and 50 words) description of the art.

# Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative Association, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives  
serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

## NORTHWESTERN REC

P.O. Box 207  
22534 State Highway 86  
Cambridge Springs, PA 16403  
[www.northwesternrec.com](http://www.northwesternrec.com)

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## MAIN ACCESS NUMBER

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## FAX

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## OFFICE HOURS

Monday through Friday  
7 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Amy Wellington, *Editor*

## Finding a Needle on 2,650 Miles of Electric Line



**RYAN MELLER**

**TRANSPARENCY IS NOT NEW** to us. As a not-for-profit electric distribution cooperative owned by you, our members, we have always tried to keep you up to date on important matters. Our service territory spans five counties in northwest Pennsylvania and just over the border into Ohio and New York. With more than 20,000 meters and 2,650 miles of electric lines, we've learned that what matters most to our members varies from place to place.

For that reason, I would like to focus my column over the next few months on specific sections of our service territory. This month, I will focus on the western section, which includes the Conneautville area. Next month, I will share an update for members in the Centerville and Oil Creek areas.

All members are important to us ... and what matters to you, matters to us. Blinks on our system can happen for a variety of reasons. Trees, of course, are the primary source of blinks; however, something as tiny as a pinhole in an insulator (the piece of equipment used to keep the wire off the utility pole) can occasionally be the culprit.

During the last few months of 2023, our members in the Conneautville area experienced an unusual number of blinks, some multiple times in one day. Believing trees were responsible, our crews spent several days in the area trimming even the smallest limbs away from the line — yet the blinks continued.

Typically, when we have a blinking line, which is recorded by our SCADA (supervisory control and data acquisition) system, we send out a single crew to patrol the area. We knew one crew would not be enough in this case. Searching for the root cause of these blinks would be like trying to find a needle on 2,650 miles of electric line. So, we divided the afflicted line into sections and dedicated three crews to this job.

These lineworkers spent many hours patrolling the area on foot and with binoculars. During their investigation, they were able to identify and repair several minor issues that contributed to many of the blinks. For instance, they replaced a handful of bolts and washers, about 10 crossarm braces, 30 feet of wire, a few guy wires, and 13 porcelain insulators.

We believe we resolved much of the blinking issues in the Conneautville area but will continue to monitor the situation. This is also a good reminder for consumers-members to report any potential tree hazards to our field services department by calling 800-352-0014. And if you are contacted by one of our contracted tree crews, please allow them to trim any hazards on your property.

Our spring meetings are right around the corner, and I encourage you to attend one of these informative events. Watch for more information in next month's *Penn Lines* magazine and for a personal invitation in your mailbox. Cooperatively yours,

**RYAN MELLER**  
PRESIDENT & CEO

# The Ten Districts of Northwestern REC

**AMY WELLINGTON**, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

**HAVE YOU EVER LOOKED OUT** your window during a power outage, seen lights on at your neighbor's house (a fellow co-op member) and wondered why they still had power but you didn't? Assuming you checked your breaker box and confirmed your power was indeed out, the short answer is they are more than likely on a different line section.

Last month in *Penn Lines*, we described how the entire electric grid is divided into three major, interconnected systems. (For more information, please read "Beginners Guide to the Electric Grid" in last month's magazine.) Our cooperative's electric system is also divided into smaller sections to limit the extent of an outage.

Our service territory has 10 districts, which you can see on the next page and learn about in more detail below. We have 17 substations strategically placed throughout these districts. And each substation has multiple feeders, or lines, that serve a group of members. In the cooperative's early years, our engineers had the foresight to build these substations in such a way that would more than accommodate our growth even as we enter our 88th year.

So, if you have ever wondered why your neighbor next door has power when you don't, they could be on a different feeder, a different fuse or even a different substation altogether.

As a member, it's also important to know that each of our 10 districts is represented on our board by the following directors:

**June Shelhamer of District 1**, who represents Conneaut, Elk Creek, Franklin, Girard, and Springfield townships, and Cranesville and Platea boroughs in Erie County, and parts of Monroe Township and the City of Conneaut in Ashtabula County, Ohio.

**Earl Koon of District 2**, who represents LeBoeuf, McKean, Washington, and Waterford townships, and Edinboro and Mill Village boroughs in Erie County.

**Candy Brundage of District 3**, who represents Amity, Concord, Union, and Wayne townships, and Elgin and Union City boroughs in Erie County, and Spring Creek Township in Warren County.

**Robert Agnew of District 4**, who represents Beaver, Conneaut, Pine, Sadsbury, Spring, Summerhill, and Summit townships, and Conneautville Borough in Crawford County, and Pierpont and parts of Monroe and Richmond townships in Ashtabula County, Ohio.



**Kathryn Cooper-Winters of District 5**, who represents Cambridge, Cussewago, Hayfield, Venango, and Woodcock townships, and Saegertown and Woodcock boroughs in Crawford County.

**Kim Docter of District 6**, who represents Athens, Bloomfield, Richmond, and Rockdale townships in Crawford County.

**David "Earl" Snyder of District 7**, who represents Oil Creek, Rome, Sparta, Steuben, and Troy townships, and Centerville Borough in Crawford County, and Eldred and Southwest townships in Warren County.

**Marian Davis of District 8**, who represents East Fallowfield, Fairfield, Greenwood, Union, and Vernon townships in Crawford County, and Andover, Kinsman, Williamsfield, and part of Richmond townships in Ashtabula County, Ohio.

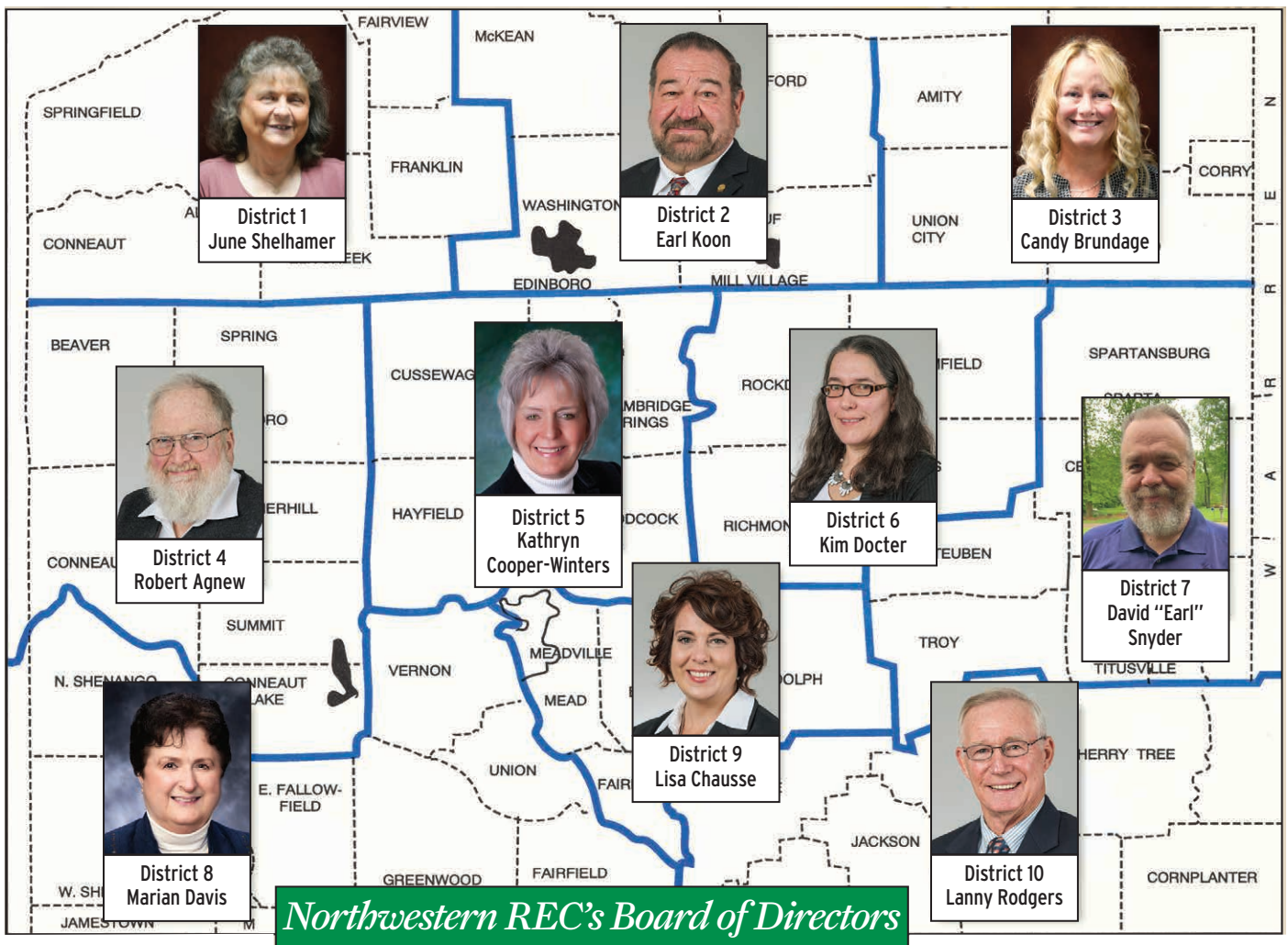
**Lisa Chausse of District 9**, who represents East Fairfield, East Mead, Randolph, and West Mead townships, and Blooming Valley Borough in Crawford County.

**Lanny Rodgers of District 10**, who represents Wayne Township in Crawford County, Canal, Cherrytree, Jackson, Oakand, and Plum townships in Venango County, and French Creek Township in Mercer County.

These individuals were elected by you, the members, and are accountable to you. This year, Districts 3, 5 and 10 have seats up for election. Nomination meetings for these will held in April. Elections take place electronically and online beginning in June, and the results are announced at the annual meeting, scheduled Saturday, Aug. 3, at New Beginnings Church of God on Leslie Road in Meadville.

More information about these meetings will be featured in the March *Penn Lines* and also mailed to members. Anyone interested in running for a director seat should visit [NorthwesternREC.com](http://NorthwesternREC.com) for the position description and qualifications. 🗳️





*Northwestern REC's Board of Directors*

## You're a Member: You Own the Co-op

**COOPERATIVES ARE DEMOCRATIC** organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting policies and making decisions. Through the annual election of directors, members of Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) have the power to determine who represents them on the board of directors.

Your vote matters! Every year, members elect a set of fellow members to represent them on the cooperative's board for a three-year term. This year, Districts 3, 5 and 10 have board seats up for election.

With assistance from co-op employees, the board ultimately sets the overall direction for Northwestern REC, both in the short and long term. The board provides financial oversight for Northwestern REC, sets policies and guidelines for the co-op's management, and

advocates for its fellow members.

Since the cooperative's inception in 1936, members have had the opportunity to vote in the annual director election. This used to take place in-person during the annual meeting, but our director election process now includes electronic and mail-in voting as well. This has significantly increased the percentage of voting members, meaning more members are now making their voice heard in setting the direction of the cooperative.

If you or someone you know is interested in running for the co-op board of directors, and you live in any of the previously mentioned districts, you will have the opportunity to be nominated at one of the nominating meetings this spring. More information will be provided in the March issue of *Penn Lines* and at [NorthwesternREC.com](http://NorthwesternREC.com). 🗳️

# Show Your Love with Life-Saving Gifts for Your Valentine

**FLOWERS, BALLOONS, AND** chocolates are always great gifts for your Valentine, but really show you care with gifts that could save a life. Here are a few safety gift ideas:

**Appliance timer with a safety turn-off:** Is there someone on your list who is repeatedly forgetting to turn off a curling iron or other small appliance? An appliance timer with a safety turn-off can be found for around \$8 and provides an added layer of protection against fire or burn hazards when a small appliance

accidentally gets left on.

**Portable ground-fault circuit interrupters (GFCI):** A GFCI detects and prevents shocks. You may have noticed these in many bathrooms, kitchens, and other places where water and electricity may meet. They are the outlets with red and black buttons. If you know someone who works outside often, a portable GFCI is a perfect gift. A portable GFCI starts around \$25 and offers protection from shock, helping keep your loved ones safe wherever they work.

**Tamper-resistant outlets (TRO) or outlet plugs:** Young children, without understanding the dangers of electricity, love to put fingers or other small objects in outlets, but a TRO offers a permanent solution. TROs have shutters that stay closed unless a plug with two prongs is plugged in. If you do not have a thorough understanding of electricity, a TRO should be installed by a professional. Another option is simple outlet plugs. A TRO costs less than \$2. Packs of multiple outlet plugs start around \$3.

**Non-contact voltage tester:** This gift is for the do-it-yourselfer. This inexpensive tool detects the presence of voltage without touching a bare wire. The tester can identify voltage in cables, cords, wires, circuit breakers, lighting fixtures, switches and outlets. Prices start around \$12.

**Power strips and smart strips:** Many people will get new electronics for the holidays. Help your friends power electronics safely with a new power strip. Choose a power strip with a circuit breaker that will trip if the power strip becomes overloaded. Overloaded power strips are dangerous and can cause shocks and fires. Power strip prices start around \$7.

Smart power strips are another option that add energy savings. Electronics that are turned off sometimes still draw power. So a control unit, such as a television or computer, is plugged into one outlet. The smart strip detects when the control unit is off and shuts off power to peripherals, like DVD players and printers. Smart strips can be found for as low as \$22.

For this Valentine's Day, Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative encourages you to take time to keep all of your celebrations safe. For more information, visit [northwesternrec.com](http://northwesternrec.com).

**Not Just Greeting Cards Anymore**

*According to the National Retail Association (NRA), more than half of U.S. consumers celebrate Valentine's Day.*

**VALENTINE'S DAY GIFT GIVERS SPEND \$26B**

**HOW DO I LOVE THEE?**  
Let me count the ways, I mean dollars.

- It is the third largest spending holiday in America (behind Christmas and Halloween).
- Shoppers spend an average of \$175.41 per person.
- Holiday spending was expected to reach \$25.9 billion in 2023.
- Around 67% expect their partners to get them something.
- Around 36% expect their sweetie to spend at least \$50.
- Valentine's Day flower sales account for 30% of total annual flower sales.
- Many people, especially millennials, buy gifts for their pets.

**TOP GIFTS**

- CANDY
- CARDS
- AN EVENING OUT
- FLOWERS
- JEWELRY

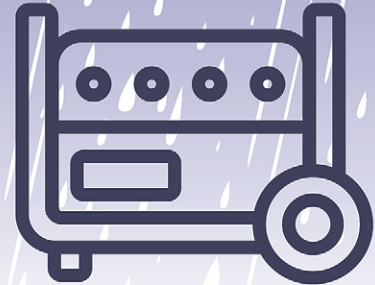
*Giving the gift of an experience is gaining popularity. Valentine's Day alternatives include Galentine's Day and Palentine's Day. And you can always splurge on yourself.*

Sources: NRA, Wallethub, vested

SAFE ELECTRICITY.ORG

# A QUICK GUIDE TO GENERATORS

With proper use and maintenance, generators provide great convenience during a power outage. Before you purchase a generator, determine your backup power needs to select the right size. Make a list of essential appliances and devices you'll want to power during an outage, then total the required wattage.



## RECOMMENDED IF YOU...

... **rarely** lose power.

### Recreational Inverter

**Up to 2,000 watts**

Lightweight, about 60 pounds

Quiet, easy to store

Power: fridge and a few smaller items (i.e. lamp, phone charger and home security system)

### Midsized Inverter

**Up to 3,500 watts**

Weighs up to 150 pounds

Power: fridge, laptop, five to 10 lights, phone charger, home security system and 10K BTU air conditioner

... **occasionally** lose power.  
Transfer switch required.

### Portable Generators and Large Inverters

**Up to 7,500 watts**

Weighs about 300 pounds

Power: fridge, gas furnace, 10K BTU air conditioner, dishwasher, multiple lights, TV, laptop and more

Ability to connect to home's breaker panel

... **frequently** lose power.  
Transfer switch required.

### Home Standby

**Up to 20,000 watts**

Must be permanently installed; starts automatically during outage

Power: nearly all home appliances and electronics (simultaneously)

Can run indefinitely on natural gas or propane

Recommended if you frequently lose power.

## SAFETY FIRST!

- Let us know if you purchase a generator that you plan to connect to an electric panel.
- Improperly installed generators can create back feed, which is dangerous to our crews and the community.  
**Before using the generator, disconnect the normal source of power coming into your home/business.**
- Never operate a generator indoors or in an enclosed space.

**Disclaimer:** Please note safety requirements may differ based on the type of generator you purchase. Thoroughly read the operator's manual and know how to shut off the generator quickly.

*Source: Consumer Reports*

## Advancements in Nuclear Energy

With strides made in technology and safety, nuclear power offers the potential for sustainable electricity generation

**JENNAH DENNEY**

PENNSYLVANIA'S ELECTRIC cooperatives' top priority is to provide reliable and affordable electricity to members. In their quest to meet the growing energy demands of their communities, the state's cooperatives have invested in one such solution: nuclear energy. With advancements in technology and safety measures, nuclear power offers the potential for sustainable electricity generation.

Nationally, nuclear energy, often overshadowed by solar and wind energy, provides a reliable source of power that can be generated at any time. Over the past two decades, nuclear power has reliably and economically contributed nearly 20% of electrical generation in the United States. It remains the single largest contributor, accounting for more than 70% of non-greenhouse-gas-emitting power generation in the country.

Nationally, nuclear energy currently accounts for about 15% of the electricity delivered by electric cooperatives, and more than two-thirds of all co-ops include a percentage of nuclear energy in their local fuel mix. In Pennsylvania, for instance, Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc., your cooperative's wholesale energy supplier, owns 10% of the Susquehanna Steam Electric Station, a two-unit nuclear power plant in Luzerne County. This energy source provides more than half — about 55% — of the electricity that powers your home.

There are 92 nuclear reactors



**RELIABLE ENERGY:** Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc., your cooperative's wholesale energy supplier, owns 10% of the Susquehanna Steam Electric Station, above, a two-unit nuclear power plant in Luzerne County.

operating in the U.S., and nuclear energy has been powering the nation's grid for six decades, producing an average of 1 gigawatt of power per plant.

Light water reactor technologies, also known as LWRs, make up the existing U.S. nuclear fleet and have a remarkable safety and performance record. An example of this is the Vogtle Unit 3, which began commercial operations last summer. It is the first newly constructed nuclear unit in more than 30 years and has the capacity to power an estimated 500,000 homes and businesses. The Vogtle Unit 3 is the first deployment of the AP1000 Generation III+ reactor in the U.S. and laid the foundation for future Small Modular Reactor (SMR) deployments across the country.

SMRs are seen as a promising alternative to traditional large-scale nuclear power plants, offering shorter construction times and increased safety. They can be easily transported and located in areas that wouldn't support a full-scale nuclear plant. However, SMRs face several hurdles, including capital investment costs, economic competitiveness, supply chain challenges and radioactive waste.

In addition to SMRs, some companies are developing microreactors, a Generation IV technology that is 100 to 1,000 times smaller than conventional nuclear reactors. A microreactor can

operate as part of the electric grid, independently from the grid or as part of a microgrid, providing heat for industrial applications. Most microreactors can be transported and hauled by a tractor-trailer.

Like any other power source, nuclear energy has its pros and cons. The most significant benefit is that nuclear power plants are a carbon-free source of electricity, emitting no greenhouse gases. Additionally, these plants provide a reliable source of power, especially during extreme weather conditions.

Safety, however, has always been a paramount concern in the nuclear energy sector. Generation III+ reactor designs, like the Vogtle Unit 3, include safety features that do not require sustained operator action or electronic feedback to safely shut down the plant in an emergency. These enhanced designs are more resilient to accidents and have a reduced environmental impact.

As electric cooperatives look ahead to long-term energy solutions, embracing innovation will play a key role in empowering communities and providing consumers with reliable and affordable electricity. [▶](#)

**JENNAH DENNEY** writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing nearly 900 local electric cooperatives.

# Why Some People Over 60 Don't Need Glasses

*Americans are maintaining healthy vision into old age thanks to a unique, once-a-day capsule.*

Americans are snatching up a new supplement for optimal eye health already popular with the Palm Beach elite.

The formula blends powerful natural ingredients to promote strong and healthy eyes as they age. Dr. Al Sears, the regenerative medicine specialist behind the solution, says its past time for all Americans to get the chance to protect their vision.

"Your eyes are one of the most complex organs you have," he said. "They need specific nutrients and minerals to stay sharp and healthy, but it's harder than ever to get these things from our diets."

Eye health is one of the most common challenges Americans can expect to face in their lifetimes. Roughly 75 percent of adults in the United States use some type of vision correction such as glasses or contacts.

"No one wants to be completely dependent on glasses or contacts," Dr. Sears added. "My new formula has already helped my patients maintain their independence, and I want the wider public to have that same chance."

Dr. Sears' eyecare supplement, known as **NutraVision**, has been making a profound impact since it's become available to the public. However, researchers have already noted just how potent its ingredients are.

## Legendary Vision

Bilberries, dubbed by doctors as the "night vision nutrient," are one of the ingredients that make **NutraVision** so effective. According to legend, British Royal Air Force pilots consumed a jam made from these inky blue berries to help them strike their targets with devastating accuracy during nighttime raids in World War II.

Now, they're helping Americans maintain clear vision for life.

In a two-year study on patients experiencing gradual loss of sight, researchers found that taking just 120 milligrams of bilberry anthocyanins per day helped shore up their defenses. Visual function improved by around 30 percent, whereas a placebo group that did not take the berries continued to experience a decline. The results were published in the *Journal of Medicinal Food*.

Another study published in *Japanese Pharmacology and Therapeutics* revealed that bilberry extract helped patients defend against eye-fatigue.

## Look on the Bright Side

Eyebright, another natural medicine used for centuries all over the world, complements bilberry to help users resist the eye irritation and redness

that can come with loss of sleep or over-exertion.

Modern day researchers have lauded the herb for its ability to protect the cornea from stress. In a test-tube study, scientists observed that eyebright extracts helped maintain healthy functioning cornea cells when exposed to agitating substances.

Eyebright's protective powers were further examined in a human study involving 65 adults. Researchers gave participants eye drops containing eyebright extracts three times per day.

At the end of the study, 81 percent of participants noticed a soothing effect, while the rest reported their eyes felt better. The results were published in the *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*.

## Sharp and Alert

**NutraVision's** efficiency owes itself to a truly unique blend of natural wonders. Another one of those is taurine, which many readers may recognize from the labels on energy drinks and other foods.

Taurine is a naturally occurring amino acid. In humans, high levels of taurine are concentrated in the eyes. According to researchers, this amino acid delivers the robust defense the eyes need to maintain good eye health into old age.

Concentrations are particularly high in the retina, the part of the eye that sends light signals to the brain allowing you to see.

Studies show that supplementing taurine supports retina function and maintain youth-like eye health.

## Natural Protection

Another ingredient included in the **NutraVision** blend is lycopene, a tomato-based antioxidant linked to several health benefits, including strong, healthy eyes.

In a case control study, researchers compared participants with less lycopene in lipid fractions of their blood with people with more optimal eye health. The study authors believed that lycopene protects other eye-related carotenoids.

In another study of 167 patients, researchers found that higher lycopene levels in the blood were associated with support for better eye health over time.

## Keep Your Eyes Strong

Rounding out **NutraVision's** cocktail of eye health wonders is a generous supply of zinc—a mineral your eyes depend on.

Science has shown that zinc is vital for optimal eye health, with the enzyme functioning as



**Give Your Eyes the Good Nutrition They Need Everyday**

a potent antioxidant. Researchers have linked it to the formation of visual pigments in the retina. According to the National Eye Institute, consuming healthy levels of zinc supports healthy vision.

In a John Hopkins study, researchers determined that if every American took daily zinc supplements, more than 300,000 of them could maintain healthy vision and good eye health over the next five years.

**NutraVision** combines zinc with natural herbs and essential vitamins to give the eyes the defense they need to weather age-related stress.

## How to Get NutraVision

While **NutraVision** is quickly becoming a popular go-to for eye health, it's not something you'll find in stores.

Instead, Dr. Sears is allowing the public to purchase it directly from his clinic in Palm Beach, Florida.

"The medical establishment loves to drag its feet, and I didn't want to force people to sit around and wait when they can take action right now," he said.

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"You shouldn't have to risk anything to protect your vision," Dr. Sears added. "If you're not completely satisfied, just send me back the bottle and any unused product, and I'll get you your money back."

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# A Recipe for Togetherness

ABIGAIL ZIEGER

## “TELL ME ABOUT YOUR DAY, SWEETIE.”

My husband smiles at my daughter across the dinner table as she launches into a long, detailed explanation of everything that happened at school. From getting out of the car in the morning ... to social studies ... to lunchtime ... to dismissal, we’re sure to hear a play-by-play of each class period. The kids clamor for their turn to describe their days in various levels of detail, and we sit at the table for a long time. It’s become a lovely dinnertime routine that, quite honestly, snuck up on me.

You see, it hasn’t always been this way. In fact, dinner used to be a distracted, disjointed affair for everyone. I would barely sit down to eat by the time the kids had almost finished their meals. One-word answers, shrugs, and general irritability were more common than sweet conversation and connection.

I was frustrated. In a world where parental burnout, sibling rivalry, overuse of screens, and general busyness keep us apart, I wanted to use dinnertime as an avenue for sharing and coming together as a family. But I kept feeling like we were far from achieving that goal.

When I was sharing my woes with a friend, she gave me a good piece of advice: “Find something that makes you all laugh together.”

We started small. My daughters love the game “Telephone” and asked to play it at dinner. Despite my fear that it would turn into utter chaos, I said yes. Soon, each of us was passing a whispered phrase from one person to the next around the table, breaking into fits of giggles as the words morphed further and further away from the original. Sometimes, when the last person shared the transformed message aloud, we would find ourselves laughing so hard we were crying.

We branched out, trying pre-written conversation starters. I would read questions aloud, such as, “If you could create a new tradition for our family, what would it be?” or “Is a hot dog a sandwich?” It may seem silly, but asking these questions would spark discussion, laughter and sometimes healthy debate among all of us. It was also

a great chance to learn new things about each other.

On other nights, my husband would initiate a round of “Pass the Story.” This is a game where one person starts telling a story verbally, then “passes” it to the next person. Each person takes a turn continuing the story until it gets to a point where it feels complete. Sometimes, the story would twist and turn quite dramatically as each person drew on their own ideas and personality, and we would have to find creative ways to tie everything together.

The kids also came to enjoy sharing a game, a song, or a project they had learned at school, and we’d all try to

replicate it at home. Whether it was our fourth grader teaching our preschooler “Obwisana,” an African rock-passing game, or our seventh grader sharing how he completed a budgeting project using algebraic inequalities, we all had a chance to learn from each other and engage in each other’s interests.

Months ago, asking the kids about their days was like pulling a stubborn

tooth. But that, too, eventually became an opportunity to share together. When the kids skimmed over details, my husband jokingly prodded them for more. A passing comment about science class turned into a good-natured investigation: “What did you do in science? Ooh, genetics, tell me about that. Punnett squares? I remember them!”

Change didn’t happen all at once. But somehow, little by little, the dinner table became a place where we were connecting. Maybe it’s because we threw out traditional rules and started playing games during a meal. Maybe it’s because we tried to be more curious about each other. Maybe it’s just because each time we sat down together, we were working to create a place of togetherness.

No matter what the reason, dinnertime is family time now — and I wouldn’t have it any other way. 🍷



**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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# Protect New Trees by Putting Them in Safe Places

SCOTT FLOOD

“WHY CAN’T THEY JUST LEAVE MY trees alone?”

If you’ve ever wondered that as you’ve watched a tree-trimming crew change the look of your favorite tree, you’ll find the reason in rural Ohio.

At a little after 4 on the steamy Thursday afternoon of Aug. 14, 2003 — with everyone’s air conditioners cranked up to MAX — a sagging transmission power line came in contact with nearby tree branches. In minutes, 45 million Americans and 10 million Canadians had no air conditioning or any kind of electric power.

Transmission lines are a vital part of the U.S. power grid. They crisscross North America, some held up by slim poles, while others hang below towers resembling science-fiction robots. These giant, suspended wires can carry enough electricity to power more than a million homes, moving it from distant power plants to electric cooperatives and other users.

Federal regulators placed most of the blame for the 2003 blackout on technology that failed to reroute power properly after the transmission line touched the trees. But they also recognized the problem would not have happened if those trees had been a safe distance away from the line. The outage led to strict rules your electric co-op and other electric utilities are required to follow to prevent large-scale blackouts.

Co-ops are required to document that every piece of equipment and every foot of their power lines are a safe distance from trees and other vegetation. If you received a visit from one of the co-op’s tree-trimming crews, it’s likely your trees were closer to power lines than the rules allow,

and cooperatives are legally required to act.

To avoid this scenario, the best strategy is to plant your new trees, shrubs or other vegetation where they won’t grow into power lines or other electric equipment. It’s also helpful to consider both the eventual height and how wide the canopy of branches is likely to spread.

For example, even small trees and shrubs should be planted at least 20 feet from power lines. If you can’t plant that far away, make sure you choose a species that, when mature, won’t grow over 15 feet in height. Trees that will be 40 feet high or less should be at least 25 feet from electricity, and larger trees should be at least 50 feet away.

Thinking about what’s above the ground is only part of tree-planting safety. Before you grab a shovel and start digging, dial 8-1-1, the universal call-before-you-dig number, to make sure you won’t accidentally cut into any underground utility lines. The service will send people to your property to mark the approximate location of utility lines. Because it can be challenging to pinpoint exact locations, use hand tools only whenever you’re digging within a couple feet of the markings.

Trees aren’t the only type of vegetation requiring thoughtful planting. If there’s a pad-mounted transformer in your yard, you might be tempted to hide it behind colorful flowers and neatly trimmed shrubs. Unfortunately, if there’s a problem, crews will need clear access to the transformer. That’s why it’s always a good idea to keep plantings at least 10 feet from the transformer’s doors and at least 4 feet from



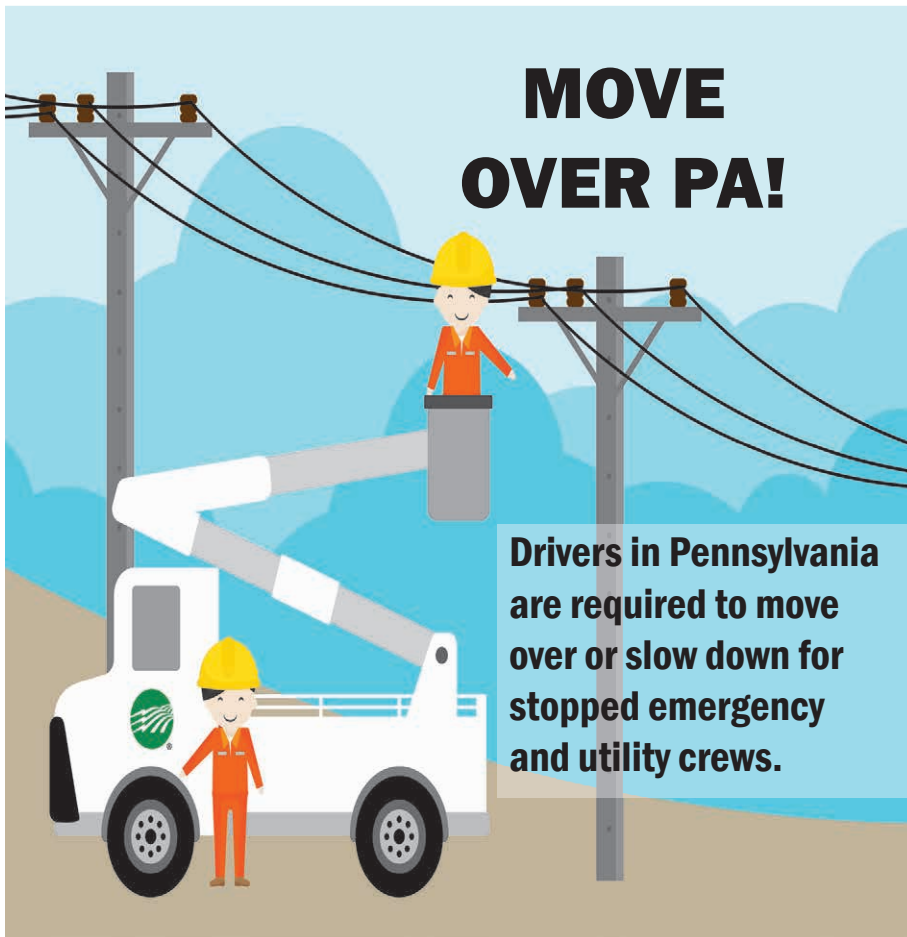
**HAVE A PLAN FOR PLANTING:** Whether you want to plant a tree, a decorative shrub or something else, it’s helpful to consider how it’s going to grow over the next 20 or 30 years. Consider both the eventual height and how wide the canopy of branches is likely to spread.

its sides. Otherwise, crews responding to a power problem may need to remove part of your landscaping.

Finally, if you notice trees or other vegetation has grown dangerously close to power lines or equipment, don’t reach for your chainsaw and try to trim them on your own. Let your local electric co-op know or hire a professional arborist. Tree trimming is more dangerous than most people realize, and you don’t want to find yourself in the emergency room — or be the person who plunges your neighbors into the dark! 🚚


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. He 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.






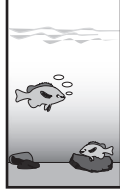
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The Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association (PREA) Scholarship Trust Fund offers a range of educational scholarships and is accepting applications for the 2024-25 college year.

### Attention High School Seniors:

The **Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association Scholarship Trust Fund in Memory of William F. Matson** is offering scholarships to high school seniors whose parents/guardians are members or employees of Pennsylvania and New Jersey electric cooperatives. Scan this QR code for more information about the scholarship and the application.



### Attention Former Youth Tour Students:

The **Jody Loudenslager Scholarship** is available to any college-bound or current college student who was selected to participate in the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association Youth Tour program. Scan this QR code for more information about the scholarship and the application.

### 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 will be announced in July 2024.

### Questions:

If you have any questions or need additional information, please email Steph Okuniewski at [Stephanie\\_Okuniewski@prea.com](mailto:Stephanie_Okuniewski@prea.com) or call 717.982.1455.



# Prepare a Meal from the Heart

ANNE M. KIRCHNER

**FEBRUARY 14 STARTED AS AN ANCIENT** ritual day. It then evolved into a religious holiday followed by a commercial holiday. As children, many of us celebrated Valentine’s Day by making cardboard mailboxes. We exchanged comical greetings with our classmates, sharing laughter and sweet treats. Now, it is common practice to use simple gestures on Valentine’s Day to let others know they are valued.

This year, Valentine’s Day falls on a Wednesday. A midweek day does not leave much time for preparation or celebration. Maybe it’s time to try something new? Skip the fancy restaurants and boxes of chocolates and host a dinner for those you care about — family or close friends. A simple menu of salad, pasta and bread is enough to say, “I appreciate you!”

**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



## EVERYTHING GREEN SALAD

- 4 cups chopped green-leaf lettuce
- 1 cup shredded green cabbage
- ½ English cucumber, diced
- 1 cup frozen green peas
- 1 cup broccoli flowerets
- 3 green onions, diced
- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
- ¼ cup lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon maple syrup
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper

In a large salad bowl, combine the lettuce, cabbage, cucumber, peas, broccoli and green onions. Set aside. To make the dressing, combine the remaining ingredients and whisk until well blended. Before serving, pour the dressing over the salad. Toss to coat the greens and serve immediately. *Makes 4 to 6 servings.*



## BAKED FETA & CHICKEN PASTA

- 1 (8-ounce) block of feta cheese
- 2 cups cherry tomatoes, halved
- 3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, divided
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 teaspoons dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 8 ounces penne pasta
- 2 cups cooked, diced chicken

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Place the feta cheese block in a 9-by-12-inch baking pan. In a mixing bowl, combine the tomatoes, 2 tablespoons olive oil, garlic, oregano and red pepper flakes. Stir gently to coat the tomatoes. Pour the tomatoes over the feta block and bake uncovered for 30 minutes. Meanwhile, cook the penne pasta using the package instructions. Drain the pasta, reserving 1 cup pasta water. Coat the pasta with 1 tablespoon olive oil. Remove the baked feta and tomatoes from the oven. Add the chicken and stir until creamy. Fold in the cooked pasta, adding reserved pasta water in small amounts to make a thinner sauce, if needed. *Makes 4 to 6 servings.*



## SOFT BREADSTICKS

- 1 tablespoon active dry yeast
- 1 teaspoon honey
- 1 cup warm water (110 to 115 degrees)
- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
- 2 teaspoons garlic salt
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 tablespoons butter, melted

Combine yeast, honey and warm water in a mixing bowl. When yeast begins to foam, add the olive oil and garlic salt. Slowly stir in flour until a soft dough forms. Drop the dough onto a floured counter and knead until all flour is blended into the dough. The dough should be soft and smooth. Roll the dough out into a 10-by-12-inch rectangle. Cut the dough into strips, about 1/2-inch wide. Twist each strip and place on a cookie sheet lined with parchment paper. Allow the breadsticks to rise for 30 to 60 minutes. Brush the breadsticks with melted butter and bake at 375 degrees for 10 to 15 minutes. *Makes 10 to 12 breadsticks.*

# Plants that Deer Like Best

GEORGE WEIGEL

**IF YOU'RE TRYING TO GROW PLANTS** anywhere near where deer are lurking — which is pretty much all of rural and suburban Pennsylvania — you've painfully learned by now that there is no such thing as a "deer-proof" plant.

These furry, four-legged eating machines will devour most anything if they're hungry enough — spiny hollies and thorny rose bushes included.

The irony, though, is that deer actually are picky eaters. When they're not at the starving stage, they have a definite preference for some plants over others.

Therein lies the key to gardening in deer country without putting up an 8-foot-tall fence or investing half the household budget in deer repellents.

As researchers at the Penn State Deer Research Center verified in a 2016 study, deer will pass over many species as long as they can fill up on other species they like better.

It's only after they exhaust the available favorites that deer move down their preference list. In other words, if a doe visits your yard and can't find anything on her top-100 list, she'll start with the best thing you do have.



**SNACK TIME:** This bottom-only damage to a line of arborvitae is a sure-fire clue that deer have been snacking here.

GEORGE WEIGEL

This theory is why most of the planting lists published by universities and other horticulture resources focus on the plants that deer like the least. Two good lists come from Penn State Extension and Rutgers University.

However, just as helpful is knowing the opposite end: what plants deer like the best and will almost always seek out. Those are good candidates to cross off your garden center list first.

If you can stay low on their favorites' list — or at least lower than the surrounding wild areas and/on neighbors' yards — you stand a fighting chance of seeing a flower bloom. (You know the saying: "You don't have to outrun an attacking bear, just be able to outrun the other people you're with.")

If I were creating a deer-party menu, here are the 10 plants I'd serve up first, in order:

**1.) Hosta**, the leafy perennial that's such a staple in shaded areas.

**2.) Daylily**, a summer-blooming perennial that thrives in poor soil but is rich in tasty flower buds.

**3.) Yew**, the ubiquitous, soft-needled evergreens that are usually sheared into balls along house walls.

**4.) American arborvitae**, the upright border-screening evergreens that are often bare of needles up to the height of, say, a deer with an outstretched neck. (Curiously, though, deer hardly ever bother the western species of arborvitae, such as the popular Green Giant variety.)

**5.) Evergreen azalea**, the broad-leaf evergreen flowering shrub that's popular along eastern and northern house foundations.

**6.) Rhododendron**, another winter target with tasty flower buds and broad-leaf evergreen leaves. (These are mostly in danger when they're young.)

**7.) Roses**. Who would think any animal would like chewing on something with stiff thorns? Deer lean

## Three Things to Know About Deer Dining Habits

1. Deer eat different things at different times, i.e., in winter vs. summer, when plant availability differs widely.
2. Not all deer have the same preferences. A male in breeding mode may go after different plants than a female who's pregnant or lactating.
3. Most deer don't like a few general plant characteristics, such as hairy or fuzzy leaves (lamb's ear and rose campion, for example) and minty or medicinal fragrances (lavender, rosemary, salvia, agastache, bee balm, etc.).

toward the young, tender branch tips, but since that's the part of the plant that produces the flowers, what's the point of having healthy branch stubs?

**8.) Euonymus**, another broad-leaf evergreen that's a good-enough option for winter snacking.

**9.) Tulip**, spring-blooming bulbs that deer like for both the shoots and flower buds — assuming rodents haven't already eaten the underground bulbs.

**10.) Cherry trees**. Most fruit trees are deer favorites, especially in their early years, but both fruiting and flowering cherries are at the top of the list. Apples and crabapples aren't far behind.

Some other common landscape plants that you can figure deer will eat: most vegetables (especially cabbage, broccoli, tomatoes, lettuce, beans, and beets); annual flowers, such as coleus, pansies, impatiens, begonias, sunflowers, and many petunias; shrubs, such as hydrangeas, blue hollies, purple-leaf sand cherry, Hinoki cypress, cherry laurel, and clematis vines; and perennials, such as hardy hibiscus, coralbells, black-eyed Susans, shasta daisies, goats beard, and dianthus. 🍷

**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](http://georgeweigel.net).

# CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

## ISSUE MONTH AD DEADLINE

April 2024	February 14
May 2024	March 14
June 2024	April 15

Please note ads must be received by the due date to be included in requested issue month; ads received after the due date will run in next issue. Written notice of changes/cancellations must be received 30 days prior to issue month.

**No ads accepted by phone/email.** For more information, please call 717-233-5704.

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- Ad copy as it is to appear in the publication.
- Heading ad should appear under, or name of special heading (additional fee). See below for FREE heading options.

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## EVENTS

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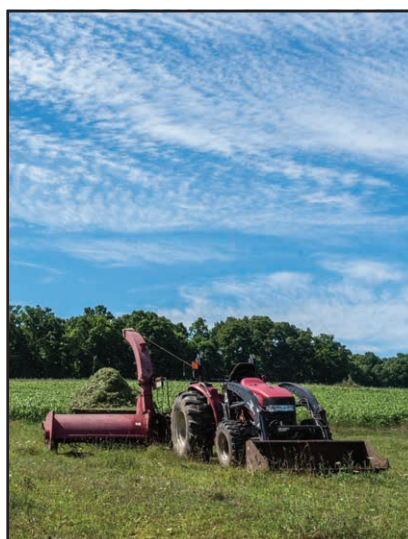
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# If You're Stupid, Don't be Afraid to Show It

JOHN KASUN

**FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO** have ever had all four wheels spinning in soft, wet mud, I do not have to explain how quickly you can coat your entire vehicle, including parts of the roof. After spending all of hunting season traveling through a swampland, my truck was so dirty I could no longer tell where the door stopped and the window started.

As I pulled into the car wash, I lingered briefly at the sign describing the services, which ranged from \$19.95 for a basic interior cleaning and exterior wash to \$329.95 for what was described as a full detail and wax. If I was going to spend \$329.95 to clean my vehicle, I would just add \$200 to it and buy a clean used truck.

"How much to run my truck through so I can see out the window?" I asked the young attendant who waved me in.

He glanced at my vehicle with a look of amazement and horror and asked if I wanted the interior cleaned, the truck hand-wiped down, glass polished or .... I stopped him in mid-sentence. "One time through," I said. "Just blow the mud off — no wiping, no drying, no special scents. Just hit it with soap and water, and I promise I will not come back for six months."

With his eyes glazed over in disbelief, he stuttered, "T-wen-ty b-u-c-k-s." I had the money in his hand before he could change his mind or the manager saw me.

Seconds later, I found myself being propelled through a tunnel of soap and water spray. The journey was uneventful until I came to the big floppy long rags that swish back and forth. Suddenly, those rags got wrapped around my driver side mirror and flipped it backward.

Concerned the mirror might get damaged, I made a snap decision, calculating that during the slight lull between rag swishes, I could lower the window and pull the mirror back into place. Looking back on that decision now, I must have looked like Wile E. Coyote holding a bomb in the shape of a birthday cake as the fuse burns down and

the Road Runner goes "beep, beep" as he runs down the road seconds before the explosion.

I got the window down at just the right time and popped the mirror back into place, but as I hit the up-button for the window, my now wet, soapy fingers slipped and the window didn't budge. Suddenly, my truck felt more like the Nautilus in Jules Verne's "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea" as what seemed like a giant, soapy squid filled the inside of the cab. Those long, soapy, tentacle-like rags swished back and forth as I again tried to hit the window's up-button. I quickly realized that, with my luck, if I trapped the rags in the closed window, I would jerk the machine

off the rails as my truck was pulled down the track.

All I could do then was wait until the swishing rags pulled themselves from the cab. However, the rags were instantly replaced with soaking wet spinning brushes. After what seemed like an eternity, the brushes disappeared, and as I struggled to put the window up again, that's when the little water jets that rinse your car shot 5 gallons of water in my face.

As my truck rolled from

the exit of the car wash, I realized I could not see, and turning the windshield wipers on didn't help, either. I panicked, thinking I must have suddenly gone blind. However, after regaining my composure, I simply removed my glasses, which were completely soaped over, and things quickly cleared up.

I pulled out of the parking lot trying to look as if nothing had happened and remembered something a friend liked to say: "There is no sense in being stupid unless you get to show it once in a while."

That day — I'm proud to say — I demonstrated my ability to be stupid quite nicely. 🐉



**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.

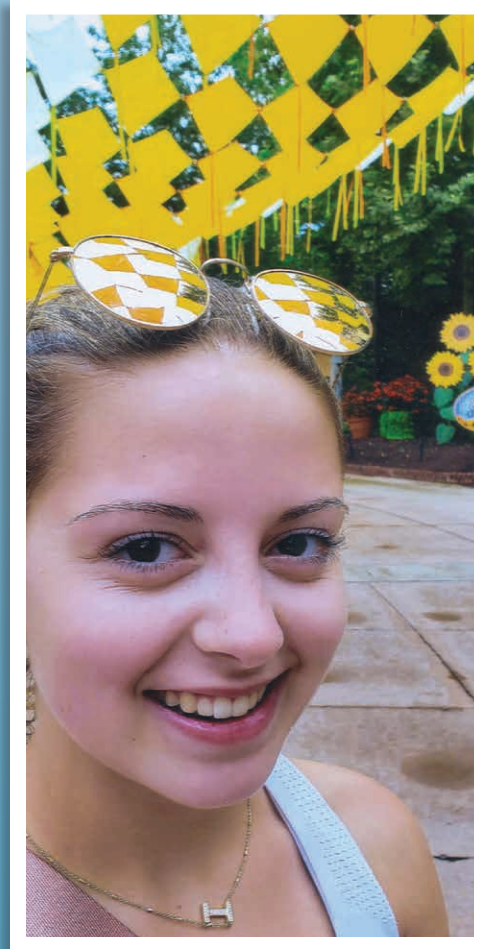
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## More Favorite Photos

WE FEATURED WINNERS of the 2023 Rural Reflections contest in January and awarded each of the photographers \$75. This month, we present the 2023 runners-up, each of whom wins \$25. 🎉

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**AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHERS** may send photos (no digital files, please) to *Penn Lines Photos*, P.O. Box 1266, Harrisburg, PA 17108-1266. On the back of each, 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 at the end of the contest year if a self-addressed, stamped envelope is included.

**ADDRESS CHANGES:**

For change of address, please contact your local electric cooperative. For cooperative contact information, please visit [www.prea.com/member-cooperatives](http://www.prea.com/member-cooperatives)

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