Franklin REC
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

MAY 2024

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ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

Plant trees in the right places

A deep dive into nuclear power

Sensational salad recipes

Show you care with RECare ▶ See Page 5

CONTENTS

VOLUME 77 • ISSUE 5

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Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

ON THE COVER Special thanks to Andrea Carlson, a Consumers Energy member-consumer, for supplying this month's cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to editor@ieclmagazine.com. You could receive $100!

RECOGNIZE A DESERVING VOLUNTEER IN JUNE

BY ERIN CAMPBELL

Often, the best way to thank a volunteer is to simply say "thank you" and recognize the work they are doing in the community. Our annual Shine the Light contest, which will open in June, offers a great opportunity to show appreciation for a deserving member of your community by nominating them for statewide recognition.

Commitment to community

Now in its fourth year, this statewide contest is a way for Iowa's electric cooperatives to "shine the light" on our commitment to community. During June, we invite member-consumers and employees of Iowa's electric cooperative to visit www.IowaShineTheLight.com and nominate local volunteers who are making a positive difference. If you receive electricity from an electric cooperative, you're a co-op member-consumer and eligible to make one nomination per account/household.

Winners receive $3,000 for their local charity

In July, a panel of judges will review all the nominations and select three volunteers who will each receive a $3,000 donation to their local charity. We will also announce our three winners on social media in early September and feature them in the September issue of this magazine.

As part of the nomination process, be prepared to share some basic contact information about you as the nominator and for the volunteer you are nominating. You may nominate a volunteer under the age of 18 with parental consent. You will also need to answer this question in 500 words or less: **How has your nominee made a difference in the community, and how might their local charity use the $3,000 donation?**

As the person who sees the nominations come in as they are submitted through the contest website, it's a privilege to read your essays each year. We have many incredible volunteers throughout the state who are improving the quality of life in their communities.

You can view the contest rules and see our past winners at www.IowaShineTheLight.com. Thank you for considering the opportunity to recognize a hardworking friend, neighbor or relative in your life.

Iowa's electric cooperatives are grateful to local volunteers across the state who deserve to be celebrated for the remarkable work they are doing in their communities. We look forward to learning about many of them through this year's Shine the Light contest!

Erin Campbell is the director of communications for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

WIN $100 IN BEEF CERTIFICATES!

May is Beef Month in Iowa! To celebrate, we're giving away $100 in beef certificates to use at a grocery store. You can select your favorite cuts to purchase, and then make mouthwatering meals at home.

ENTER ONLINE BY MAY 31!

Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.ieclmagazine.com no later than May 31. You must be a member of one of Iowa's electric cooperatives to win. There's no obligation associated with entering, we don't share entrant information with anyone and multiple entries from the same account will be disqualified. The winner of the BISSELL® Carpet Cleaner from the March issue was Jason Collison, a Farmers Electric Cooperative, Inc. member-consumer.

A DEEP DIVE INTO NUCLEAR POWER

BY GARRETT THOMPSON

To kick off our "all-the-above" series on energy generation resources, I want to start with my personal favorite, nuclear power.

Nuclear has gained a lot of attention with climate change initiatives, and rightly so. If we, as a country, are interested in moving away from fossil fuels and reducing our greenhouse gas emissions, all while having electricity available 24/7 year-round, nuclear is the clear answer. Nuclear energy isn't without drawbacks; however, there is nothing else like it in the energy sector today.

Overview

Nuclear power can be divided into two basic types: nuclear fission and nuclear fusion. Nuclear fusion is much more difficult to control and thus is not safe or reliable to use today. However, new technology is emerging in this arena that claims fusion reactors could last hundreds of years. It will be exciting to follow the developments in this technology.

Nuclear fission is what most, if not all, nuclear power plants use today. It's a process in which a neutron slams into another atom, often larger in size, and splits the larger atom into two smaller ones. At impact, additional neutrons are released, creating a chain reaction of atoms slamming into one another.

Whenever an atom is split, it releases a tremendous amount of energy, thus creating heat. That heat then warms a cooling agent, usually water, until it becomes steam. Once steam is produced, it turns a turbine that generates electricity to be placed onto the grid.

Uranium ore

The atoms that are being split within the nuclear reactor are from the metal uranium. Uranium is a common element found naturally in low concentrations of soil, rock and water. It can be mined in a few different ways, such as an open pit or underground excavations. Uranium metal is very dense. At 19 grams per cubic centimeter, it is 1.67 times denser than lead, according to the U.S. Department of Energy nuclear fuel facts on uranium.

The U.S. imports most of the uranium it uses, but from 1961 through 1981, it produced more domestically than it imported. In 2022, the U.S. purchased 27% of its uranium from Canada, 25% from Kazakhstan, 12% from Russia, 11% from Uzbekistan, 9% from Australia, and 16% from six other countries combined, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration report on the industry. Congress is currently working on legislation that would require uranium for nuclear power plants to be produced within the U.S.

Nuclear waste and decommissioning

Nuclear power plants produce varying levels of radioactive waste, categorized from low to high. The radioactivity of nuclear waste decreases over time through a process called radioactive decay. Most waste related to a nuclear power plant has relatively low levels of radioactivity by volume.

High-level waste consists of spent nuclear fuel rods (containing uranium) and must be stored in a specially designed pool of water. The water acts as a radiation shield and helps cool the spent rods. There are also specially designed dry storage containers to house spent fuel rods using specialized concrete with air cooling.

When a nuclear reactor ceases operations, it must be decommissioned. Decommissioning involves safely removing the reactor and all equipment that has become radioactive from service. The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission governs strict rules on how the decommissioning process is to be carried out due to the severity of the radiation. Often, there is a requirement that the owners of the nuclear plant

SUMMER OFFICE HOURS

Beginning Tuesday, May 28, Franklin REC office hours will be adjusted to 6:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. for the summer season. Our phone lines are answered 24/7 at 641-456-2557 if you need assistance. To make a payment, call the secure payment line at 1-844-344-4370.

Franklin REC
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

Office
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Hampton, IA 50441

Office Hours
Monday through Friday, 7 a.m.-3:30 p.m.
Closed Saturdays, Sundays and holidays

Telephone Number
641-456-2557
Calls answered 24/7

Secure Pay-by-Phone Number
1-844-344-4370

Website
www.franklinrec.coop

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

set aside a decommissioning fund to cover these costs.

Financial cost

In July 2023, the first newly constructed nuclear unit in the U.S. was placed in service. Before Vogtle Unit 3 in Waynesboro, Georgia, was up and running, it had been more than 30 years since the U.S. had seen a new unit go live. This unit is estimated to power 500,000 homes, and another nuclear unit of similar size will come online sometime in 2024, according to an article by Marketplace.

If you've seen the news headlines surrounding this project, you'll know it was seven years behind schedule and cost an eye-watering $35 billion. These are the major concerns surrounding nuclear energy: the time it takes to build a new unit and the final cost. However, these plants are estimated to have useful lives up to 80 years. To date, 20 nuclear units currently in service are planning to operate up to those 80 years, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. Imagine what building a new nuclear unit would cost 40 years from now.

Small modular reactors

Small modular reactors (SMRs) are just what their name implies: smaller versions of traditional nuclear power plants. SMRs are generally 300 megawatts or less in size but can be "daisy chained" together to form a larger generation asset, according to the World Nuclear Association. For comparison purposes, the new Vogtle reactors in Georgia are over 1,100 megawatts.

SMRs are still a new technology; however, there are some promising advantages if all come to fruition. Generally, SMRs are expected to be simpler in construction and design, thus leading to shorter construction times and a significant reduction in costs. Their footprint is also much smaller and will require less valuable land, also reducing the final cost. For example, a 920-megawatt SMR would only have a 35-acre footprint, while the traditional nuclear plant of a similar size would require 500 acres, according to the Idaho National Laboratory.

Most units are designed for a high level of passive or inherent safety in the event of a malfunction. This safety feature comes from SMRs that are designed to be placed below ground level. Being placed underground could also help with potential terrorist attacks.

Another advantage of SMRs is that they could be more strategically placed throughout the electric grid. This would help gain efficiencies and more accurately size generation plants to a specific portion of the grid.

Summary

Overall, there are many positive and exciting things happening in the nuclear power world. It's a tried-and-true technology that works once the traditional construction timeline and costs can be overcome.

In my opinion, if our government is truly interested in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, they need to stop subsidizing solar and wind, and start financially helping companies build nuclear power plants as the backbone of our nation's energy security. Without nuclear or fossil fuel generation, our country will have to become accustomed to regular brownouts and/or rolling blackouts. Neither of which, I believe, is a viable option for a developed country that wants and needs safe, affordable and reliable electricity.

Garrett Thompson is the CEO/General Manager of Franklin REC.

Sources: U.S. Department of Energy, U.S. Energy Information Administration, Marketplace, World Nuclear Association, Idaho National Library.

SHOW YOU CARE WITH RECARE

As an electric cooperative, Franklin REC is invested in helping our communities thrive, and that means supporting our low-income member-consumers, too. RECare is a nationwide program exclusive to rural electric cooperatives encouraging fellow member-consumers to make a one-time or monthly donation to help other members in need.

Donations are directed to a local community action agency for distribution to low-income families on Franklin REC lines. Funds are used to help alleviate the financial stress for other member-consumers straining to pay their electric bills, or funds may also be used to weatherize the recipient's home to make electricity use more efficient. You can feel good that the dollars you donate are helping your friends and neighbors.

YES, **I want to help my neighbors by contributing to RECare.**

☐ I will make a one-time contribution to Franklin REC's RECare program. My check is enclosed.

☐ I will contribute $_____ per month to Franklins REC's RECare program. I understand that this amount is automatically added to my monthly electric bill.

Name _____

Address _____

_____

City _____

State/Zip Code _____

Account # _____

Some homeowners are taking a closer look at the latest battery-powered systems for backup power when the lights go out. *Photo Source: Tesla, Inc.*

BACKUP POWER: IS A BATTERY-POWERED OPTION RIGHT FOR MY HOME?

BY SCOTT FLOOD

We depend on reliable electricity more than ever before, which is why service interruptions from storms or other situations can be frustrating. Some homeowners are taking a closer look at the latest battery-powered systems as backups during an outage.

Battery technology has advanced significantly in recent years, with batteries able to hold more electricity even as they shrink in size and cost. The same innovations that boosted the performance of electric vehicles (EVs) are being engineered into today's battery-powered backup systems.

How battery backup systems work

As their name implies, battery backup systems like Tesla's Powerwall are essentially high-capacity batteries that store a set amount of electricity, which you can then use to power your home in the event of an outage. Some are constantly charged by the power grid, while others rely on solar panels for recharging.

Traditional standby generators use small internal combustion engines fueled by natural gas, propane or diesel. They can be connected to your home's electrical panel and kick on automatically whenever the flow of electricity stops. Assuming you keep them refueled, most can operate for days at a time. However, some standby generators can be noisy, and nearly all produce smelly exhaust containing deadly carbon monoxide gas, so they can't be operated indoors. Large standby generators are typically installed outdoors on a concrete pad, which may detract from your home's curb appeal.

Most home battery backups are smaller than comparable generators. Because they don't use combustion to generate electricity, there's no danger of carbon monoxide exposure.

Portable battery-powered backups can be used indoors to power smaller appliances, like your laptop, TV or microwave. *Photo Source: Goal Zero*

As their name implies, battery backup systems like Tesla's Powerwall are essentially high-capacity batteries that store a set amount of electricity, which you can then use to power your home in the event of an outage. *Photo Source: Tesla, Inc.*

Some battery-powered systems are constantly charged by the power grid, while others rely on solar panels for recharging. *Photo Source: LG*

That makes them safer and more environmentally friendly than generators. Most can be installed in a small space indoors. Battery backups are also significantly quieter.

During a power outage, battery backups start instantaneously, unlike generators that may take a few moments to spool up and reach operating speed. Battery backups also don't need regular maintenance like oil changes or spark plug replacement, and there's no need to store fuel.

Pros and cons

Of course, battery-powered generators do present some disadvantages. The amount of power they deliver is limited by the capacity of their batteries. When they're out of electricity, they may need hours of recharging before being used again, so they're not as well-suited for lengthy outages. Energy-hungry appliances, such as air conditioners and water heaters, may drain the batteries' capacity more quickly, so you may have to disconnect them during an outage.

Fortunately, some battery backups are modular, allowing you to add capacity as needed. If you only need a few devices powered during an outage, consider a portable battery-powered system. These small, quiet backups can be used indoors to power smaller appliances, like your laptop, TV or microwave.

Generally, batteries require long charging times, so if an initial outage is quickly followed by another, they may not be able to respond. There are fast-charging systems on the market, but they carry substantially higher price tags. In fact, the upfront cost of a battery backup is more than a standby generator – in some cases, twice as much for comparable performance.

Like the one in your mobile phone, batteries in these systems can degrade over time. In five or 10 years, they may need to be swapped out with new batteries, adding to the overall cost. Being able to recharge battery backups with solar panels appeals to many homeowners, but the performance will depend upon the amount and angle of sunlight falling upon your roof.

Considerations before purchasing

So, is a battery-powered backup system right for your home? The answer is different for every homeowner, but whether you're considering a battery system or a traditional standby generator, start by calculating the amount of power you need to keep your home's systems and conveniences operating efficiently. Once you know that, you can determine which models are up to the task and calculate how long the device you're considering can power your home. (If you have a family member whose health depends upon devices, such as a CPAP machine or supplemental oxygen, be sure to factor that into your decision.)

Finally, whether you choose a battery backup or a traditional standby generator, make sure it's designed to protect your home and all your electronics from power surges and other issues that may damage your TVs, computers and other sensitive electronics. That way, you won't have to worry about remaining without them long after an outage has ended.

Scott Flood writes for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing nearly 900 electric co-ops.

WHAT ABOUT USING YOUR EV?

The growing acceptance of EVs offers another emergency power option. EVs are basically large batteries on wheels, and some models can deliver backup power to homes. Today's average EV stores enough electricity to power the typical home for up to two days. Bigger vehicles, such as Ford's F150 Lightning, store even more.

Tapping into that stored electricity isn't as easy as parking in your garage and pushing a button. Your vehicle must be equipped with the right technology to connect safely to your home's power, including a special transfer switch and an inverter. If you're thinking about using an EV as a power backup, reach out to your electric utility or a qualified electrician for advice.

SENSATIONAL Salads

STRAWBERRY KALE SALAD

- ½ cup olive oil
- ⅓ cup cider vinegar
- 1 teaspoon honey
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ⅛ teaspoon pepper
- 12 ounces kale, trimmed and chopped
- 2 cups fresh strawberries, sliced
- ¾ pound bacon, cooked and crumbled
- ¼ cup fresh mint, minced
- 1 cup feta cheese, crumbled
- ¼ cup slivered almonds, toasted

Whisk together olive oil, cider vinegar, honey, salt and pepper for a dressing. To serve, place kale, strawberries, bacon and mint in a large bowl. Toss with dressing and sprinkle with feta cheese and almonds. To toast almonds, bake in a shallow pan at 350 degrees F for 5-10 minutes or cook in a skillet over low heat, stirring occasionally until lightly browned. *Serves 10*

Shirley DeSmet • Alvord
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

CRUNCHY SPRING SALAD

- 4 celery sticks, finely chopped
- 1 cup cooked chicken, chopped
- 16 Spanish olives, chopped
- ½ cup walnuts, finely chopped
- 3 tablespoons mayonnaise

In a bowl, combine celery, chicken, olives and walnuts. Add mayonnaise and combine well. Serve chilled. *Serves 4*

Anita Doughty • Ankeny
Consumers Energy

COOL CUCUMBER SALAD

- 1 cup oil
- 1 cup vinegar
- 1 heaping cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon garlic salt
- 1 teaspoon celery salt
- 1 teaspoon onion salt
- 3 cucumbers, peeled and thinly sliced
- tomatoes and/or peppers, chopped (optional)

Mix the first six ingredients together. Pour over sliced cucumbers and optional vegetables, if desired. Let salad set for 30 minutes. *Serves 8*

JoAnn Nester • Rock Rapids
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

SPRING SALAD

- ½ cup mayonnaise
- ¼ cup sugar
- 1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar
- 4 ounces large macaroni, cooked and cooled
- 1 cup carrots, matchsticks
- 1 cup radishes, matchsticks
- 1 cup peas
- ½ cup red bell pepper, diced
- 1 scallion, sliced
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste

Mix mayonnaise, sugar and vinegar. Stir in macaroni, then add vegetables and season with salt and pepper. Chill. *Serves 6*

Chris Daniels • Casey
Guthrie County Rural Electric Cooperative Association

YUMMY SPRING SALAD

- ¼ cup walnuts, toasted
- 6 ounces broccoli slaw
- 1½ cups kale, chopped
- ½ cup apple
- ½ cup blueberries
- ½ cup strawberries
- 1 orange
- 1 avocado
- ¼ cup mayonnaise
- 1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- ½ teaspoon lemon juice

To toast walnuts, roast at 350 degrees F for 15 minutes. Cut vegetables and fruits into small pieces and mix with walnuts. In a fruit jar, add mayonnaise, apple cider vinegar, sugar and lemon juice. Shake well. Pour dressing over salad and mix well. *Serves 6*

Kary Blunk • Russell
Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.

POP OF PINK! SPRINGTIME SALAD

Salad

- 1 bunch tender, garden-fresh asparagus, cut into 1-inch pieces
- ½ cup fresh peas (or frozen, thawed)
- sea salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste
- handfuls of salad greens
- 2 radishes, thinly sliced
- ½ cup feta cheese, crumbled
- ½ avocado, diced
- ¼ cup toasted nuts (pistachios, almonds, walnuts or pepitas), chopped
- ½ cup roasted chickpeas (optional)

Dressing

- ¼ cup fresh basil
- 1 small clove garlic
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- ½ teaspoon lemon zest
- 1 tablespoon white wine vinegar
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- ¼ teaspoon sea salt

Blanch asparagus in boiling salt water for 1 minute until tender but still bright green. Transfer to ice water for 1 minute. After draining, dry asparagus and mix it with the peas in a bowl. In a food processor, pulse together basil, garlic, lemon juice, zest, vinegar, olive oil and ¼ teaspoon sea salt. Add half of the dressing to the asparagus and pea mixture and toss to coat. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Arrange salad greens, layer asparagus and pea mixture, radishes, feta cheese, avocado, nuts and chickpeas. Drizzle with remaining dressing, season with salt and pepper. *Serves 4*

Angela Bell • Grundy Center
Grundy County Rural Electric Cooperative

COTTAGE CHEESE FRUIT SALAD

- 1 24-ounce carton cottage cheese
- 1 15-ounce can mandarin oranges, drained
- 1 15-ounce can fruit cocktail, drained
- 1 20-ounce can crushed pineapple, drained
- 1 cup miniature marshmallows
- 2 cups whipped topping
- 1 cup pecans, chopped (optional)

Combine all ingredients and mix well. *Serves 8*

Raymond Robbins • Fort Madison
Access Energy Cooperative

BROCCOLI AND CAULIFLOWER SALAD

- 2 cups broccoli
- 2 cups cauliflower
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 cup sour cream
- ½ cup mayonnaise
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon garlic salt
- white pepper, to taste

Mix all ingredients together. *Serves 6-8*

Nancy Aldrich • Ankeny
Consumers Energy

WANTED:

TAILGATING RECIPES

THE REWARD:
$25 FOR EVERY ONE WE PUBLISH!

Deadline is May 31. Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name and the recipe category on all submissions. **Also provide the number of servings per recipe.**

EMAIL: recipes@ieclmagazine.com
(Attach your recipe as a Word document or PDF to your email message.)

MAIL: Recipes
Iowa Electric Cooperative Living • 8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48, Des Moines, IA 50322-2992

PROTECT NEW TREES
BY PUTTING THEM IN SAFE PLACES

BY 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 p.m. on the steamy Thursday afternoon of Aug. 14, 2003 – with everyone's air conditioners cranked up to MAX – a sagging transmission power line in the Buckeye State 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 critical element of the U.S. power grid. These lines crisscross North America, some held up by slim poles, while others hang below towers resembling science-fiction robots. The giant wires suspended from both types 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 event 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 our power lines are a safe distance from trees and other vegetation. If your home received a visit from one of our tree-trimming crews, it was likely because your trees were closer to power lines than the rules allow, and your electric co-op was legally required to act.

You have every reason to be proud of your home and yard, and the last thing we want to do is find ourselves altering or removing a prized part of your landscaping. We'd rather help you avoid conflict between electricity and greenery altogether. How? By reminding you to plant your new trees, shrubs or other vegetation where they won't grow into power lines or other electric equipment.

Consider growth

Whether you want to plant a tree, a decorative shrub or something else, it's helpful to consider how it will grow over the next 20 or 30 years. Consider 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 won't top out at more than 15 feet high. Trees that will be up to 40 feet high or less should be at least 25 feet from electricity, and larger trees should be at least 50 feet away.

Call before you dig

Thinking about what's above the ground is only part of tree planting safety. Before you grab a shovel and start digging, contact 811 to ensure you will avoid accidentally cutting into underground utility lines. The service will send people to your property to mark the approximate locations of utility lines. Because it can be challenging to pinpoint exact locations, use only hand tools when digging within a couple feet of the markings.

All vegetation requires planning

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

Finally, if you notice your trees or other vegetation have 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!

Scott Flood writes for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing nearly 900 electric co-ops.

Whether you want to plant a tree, a decorative shrub or something else, it's helpful to consider how it will grow over the next 20 or 30 years. Consider the eventual height and how wide the canopy of branches is likely to spread.

Plant Trees Safely

Before you dig, call 811 to locate buried utility lines.

LOW TREE ZONE

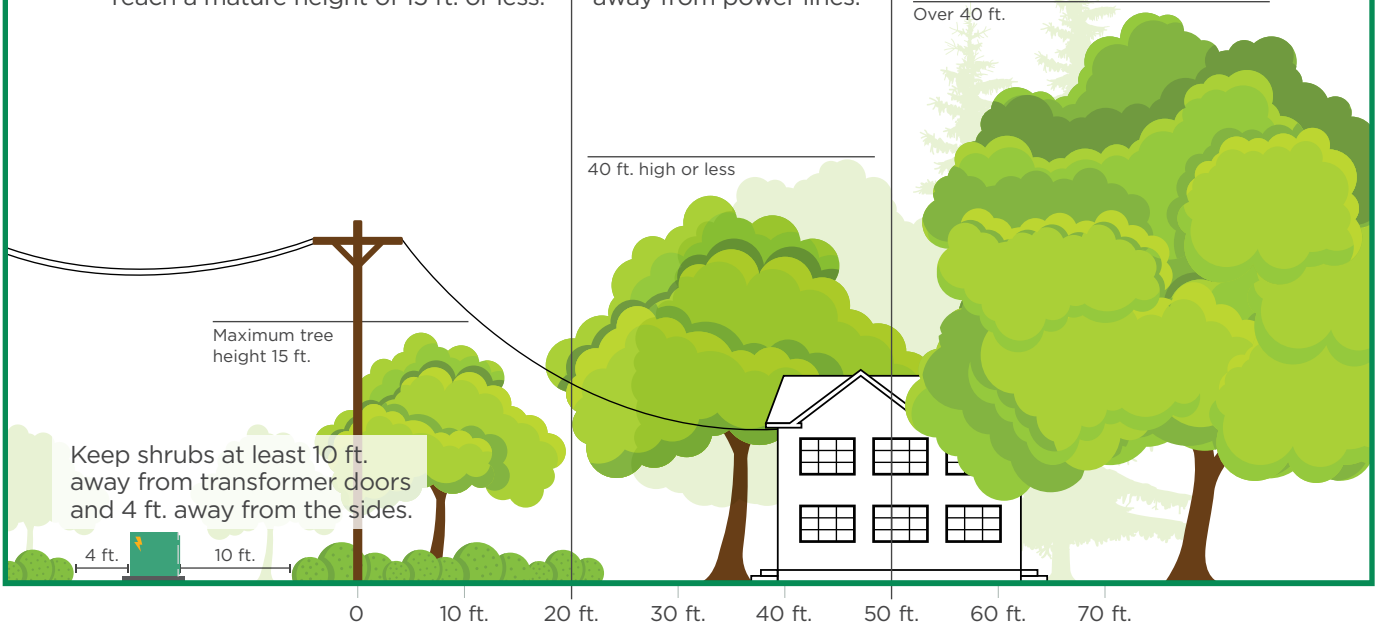
Avoid planting within 20 ft. of power lines. If planting is unavoidable, only plant shrubs and small trees that reach a mature height of 15 ft. or less.

MEDIUM TREE ZONE

Plant medium trees (under 40 ft. when mature) at least 25 ft. away from power lines.

LARGE TREE ZONE

Plant large trees (over 40 ft. when mature) at least 50 ft. away from power lines.



FROM YOUR BOARD ROOM

During the March meeting, Franklin REC directors:

- Approved work orders and special equipment capitalization of $170,018.83
- Approved Reliability Plan and Report
- Approved delegates for Corn Belt Power Cooperative annual meeting
- Approved Federated Insurance Renewal Policy
- Approved Moll's Utility Services for construction work plan

COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

Effective May 22, 1991, the Iowa Utilities Board passed a ruling requiring all non-rate regulated utilities to post the following notice to its membership:

If a member has a question or concern regarding his/her electric service, please write or call Franklin Rural Electric Cooperative at 1560 Highway 65, PO Box 437, Hampton, Iowa, 50441-0437 or 641-456-2557. Office hours are Monday through Friday, 6:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. from Memorial Day to Labor Day and 7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Labor Day to Memorial Day.

If your complaint is related to Franklin Rural Electric Cooperative's service rather than its rates and Franklin Rural Electric Cooperative does not resolve it, you may request assistance from the Iowa Utilities Board by calling 515-725-7321 or toll-free 877-565-4450; writing to 1375 E. Court Ave, Room 69, Des Moines, Iowa, 50319-0069; or emailing customer@iub.iowa.gov.

CELEBRATING CO-OP WORKIVERSARIES

Congratulations to Karen Ringleb and Chad Foster, esteemed members of our management staff, as they celebrate their continued dedication and service at Franklin REC this month.

Ringleb, our office manager/CFO, has been an indispensable part of our cooperative for 35 years. Her unwavering commitment has been instrumental in ensuring the smooth administrative operations of the cooperative while effectively navigating technological advancements throughout her tenure.

Foster, our member service representative, has exemplified dedication during his 27-year journey with us. Starting as a member of the line crew, he has grown into the role of a trusted energy advisor, metering technician and member service representative.

We are grateful for their enduring contributions and unwavering commitment to our cooperative's success.

COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY

Franklin REC maintains its ongoing collaboration with the Iowa Department of Transportation as a highway helper within the Adopt-A-Highway initiative. Co-op workers contribute by participating in biannual clean-up efforts along a two-mile segment located west of Hampton.

HIT THE BIKE TRAILS THIS YEAR

For more ideas, visit www.traveliowa.com.

Proudly recognized as the World Capital of Trails, Iowa's 2,500 miles of bike trails cater to all kinds of adventures. Grab your bike and spend a day (or two) pedaling through prairies and woods, along lakes and rivers, through cities or past rural farmland. Whatever vista you're craving, Iowa's got it. If you make a pit stop at a restaurant or shop along the way, you might be supporting a business served by Iowa's electric cooperatives.

Here are some trails to get your pedals spinning:

Cedar Valley Nature Trail

The Cedar Valley Nature Trail spans four counties and is more than 50 miles from Waterloo's George Wyth State Park to Cedar Rapids. Riders can find plenty of exciting stopping points along the way, from Waterloo's diverse restaurants to small-town eateries in Gilbertville, La Porte City, Brandon, Urbana and Center Point to even more options in Cedar Rapids. Along the way, enjoy the views of Iowa's farmland, rivers and prairies.

Photos: Iowa Tourism Office

Photos: Iowa Tourism Office

Fairfield Loop Trail

Recognized as the best trail in the state at the 2013 Mid America Trails and Greenways Conference, the 16-mile Fairfield Loop Trail offers a perfect route for nature lovers. The challenging trail wraps around the community and through its countryside, connecting two major state preserves and passing through pine forests and wildflower meadows. Be sure to bring a trail map with you as the loop combines paved trails connected by short stretches of road.

High Trestle Trail

Art and nature collide on this beautiful 25-mile trail near the communities of Ankeny, Sheldahl, Slater, Madrid and Woodward. A tree canopy shades you from the sun as you cycle to the award-winning Trestle Bridge, which is 13 stories tall.

Sauk Rail Trail

Hop on the Sauk Rail Trail and enjoy a 33-mile jaunt between two state parks, from Lake View's Black Hawk State Park south to Carroll's Swan Lake State Park. Along the way, riders can enjoy diverse views, from friendly small towns every few miles with stopping opportunities to wildlife areas, the Black Hawk Marsh, farm fields and pastures. The trail is a converted railway and is mostly flat until you reach the hills surrounding Swan Lake.

Three Rivers Trail

Named for its crossings of the Boone River and the west and east forks of the Des Moines River, Three Rivers Trail offers excellent wildlife viewing. The trail runs 32 miles between Rolfe and Eagle Grove, taking riders through a variety of habitat types, including woodlands, grasslands and open prairie.

Wabash Trace Nature Trail

One of Iowa's premier trails, the Wabash Trace Nature Trail allows riders to explore more than 60 miles of rural communities and the surrounding farmland. The former railroad route runs from Council Bluffs to Blanchard, passing through various small towns and offering stunning views of the wide-open landscape. Admire the vast blue skies and farmers hard at work in the fields while enjoying an easy and flat route.

WHY SOLAR IS NOT FREE

BY MIRANDA BOUTELLE

The ability to generate your own renewable energy at home often piques people's interest. The concept of "free" energy from the sun sounds appealing – and many less-than-reputable vendors often make this claim – but the truth is, solar power isn't actually free. There are costs associated with capturing that energy for use in your home.

Prices for a solar energy system and installation vary, but adding solar typically comes with a five-figure price tag. Solar energy systems only provide power when the sun is shining. You still rely on your electric power cooperative for power at night and when the skies are cloudy. You will still have a monthly electric bill unless you disconnect entirely from local electric service.

Solar might be a good investment for you, or it might not. Several factors impact how well the investment pencils out, including where you live, home orientation and shading, electric bill rate structure and cost, available incentives and tax credits, your budget and credit rating.

If you are considering solar on your home, take these steps first:

1 Ensure your home is as energy-efficient as possible. It wouldn't make sense to put a new motor on a boat with holes in it, so why would you put a solar system on an energy-wasting home? Invest in reducing wasted energy before investing in creating new energy. A more efficient home means a smaller – and lower-cost – solar energy system. Solar systems are typically designed to produce the amount of energy a home uses in a year, so if you complete energy efficiency improvements before installing a solar system, make sure the solar contractor accounts for those energy savings.

2 Check with your electric cooperative about the requirements to install solar and how it will impact your bill. If you decide to install solar panels, working with your electric co-op is essential, as you will need to take necessary steps, such as signing an interconnection agreement to ensure the system is properly connected to the electric grid.

3 Get at least three quotes. Compare each contractor's recommended system design, equipment and cost. It's a significant investment, so you want to know your options.

There are several ways to pay for a solar energy system and installation. It can be bought outright with cash or financed by a loan. There is also the option to install a solar system through a lease or power purchase agreement.

Loans, leases and power purchase agreements can impact the sale of a home. Although a solar system may increase the value of your home, some buyers – or their lenders – are not interested in taking on leases or power purchase agreements.

Before you consider a leap to solar, improve your home's energy efficiency and empower yourself by thoroughly weighing the costs and benefits.

Miranda Boutelle writes on energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing nearly 900 electric co-ops.

Get at least three solar quotes to compare each contractor's recommended system design, equipment and cost.

Make your home as energy-efficient as possible before purchasing a solar energy system.

A more efficient home means a smaller – and lower-cost – solar energy system.

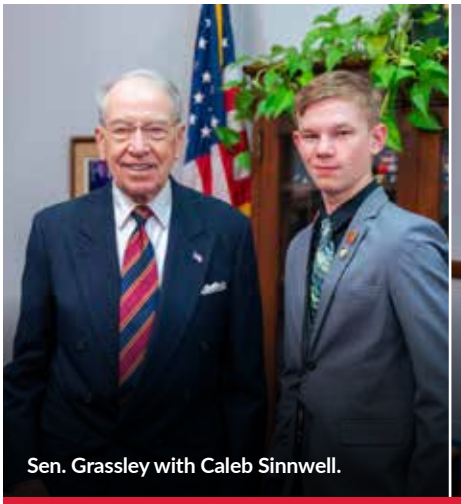
Installing a residential solar system doesn't necessarily equate to $0 energy bills. You will need to rely on your electric utility for electricity when your system is not producing power.

HONORING THE "GHOST ARMY" OF WORLD WAR II

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

Do you ever hear something that makes you snap to attention? It happened to me this spring when I heard the words "Ghost Army" during a radio news broadcast.

The news report mentioned that this mysterious military unit included Iowan John Cantrell (1923-1990) of Des Moines. The Ghost Army made news that day because the soldiers (most of whom are now deceased) received the Congressional Gold Medal, Congress's highest honor.



Sen. Grassley with Caleb Sinnwell.

Sen. Grassley with David Cantrell, son of John Cantrell.

In 2021, Sen. Chuck Grassley attended Caleb Sinnwell's (his parents are members of Butler County REC) National History Day award ceremony at Nashua-Plainfield High School. Sen. Grassley co-sponsored legislation to honor the Ghost Army with the Ghost Army Congressional Gold Medal Act and garnered congressional support for the bill until it was passed and signed into law in 2022. All this culminated in a March 2024 ceremony in Washington, D.C., when members (living and deceased) of the Ghost Army received the Congressional Gold Medal.

Ghost Army saved lives

The Ghost Army used inflatable tanks, phony uniforms, special effects and other trickery to deceive German forces during World War II, diverting attention from larger military units and saving thousands of American lives in the process.

As I researched the Ghost Army, I kept thinking, "I'm a lifelong history buff. I've written multiple books about Iowa history. Why haven't I heard of the Ghost Army before?" The answer is simple. Those soldiers' contributions remained classified for decades, with many veterans taking the secret to their graves.

Activated on Jan. 20, 1944, the Ghost Army (officially known as the 23rd Headquarters Special Troops) used visual, sonic and radio deception to fool German forces during World War II's final year. With 82 officers and 1,023 men, this top-secret unit could simulate two whole divisions – approximately 30,000 men, according to the National WWII Museum's newest special exhibit, "Ghost Army: The Combat Con Artists of World War II."

U.S. Army planners in London, England, were inspired by how the Allies had used deception to mislead the Germans about the location of the D-Day landings. This led to the creation of the Ghost Army, which included soldiers from all walks of life. Many were West Point graduates and former Army Specialized Training Program participants.

The Ghost Army also recruited art students and young professionals from ad agencies, communications companies and other creative professions to be assigned to the 23rd. Following the war, some went on to legendary careers, like fashion designer Bill Blass and painter and sculptor Ellsworth Kelly.

Waging war with imagination

Armed with nothing heavier than .50 caliber machine guns, the soldiers of the 23rd took part in 22 large-scale deceptions in Europe from Normandy to the Rhine River. The unit waged war with imagination and illusion to trick the enemy, thanks to inflatable tanks and vehicles, fake radio traffic, sound effects and phony generals.

The 23rd, along with the 3133rd Signal Service Company in Italy, helped liberate Europe from the grip of Nazi tyranny. Following the war, the unit's soldiers were sworn to secrecy, and records were officially classified until the mid-1990s.

This incredible story has a remarkable Iowa twist, thanks to Caleb Sinnwell of Nashua. In middle school, Sinnwell won first place in the National History Day project for his work to research and build a website on the Ghost Army.

As Memorial Day approaches, I'm grateful for the service of the Ghost Army. Rarely has such a small group had so great an impact on the course of history. I'm also inspired by Sinnwell, whose hard work proves that just one person can make a positive difference that resonates throughout history.

Darcy Dougherty Maulsby lives near her family's Century Farm northwest of Lake City. Visit her at www.darcymaulsby.com.

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