



Little River Basin Master Gardeners charter members include Debbie Harris, Carolyn Dorner, Susan Humble, Connie Anderle and Jackie Thornton, and Sandy Braswell, not pictured. This hardworking group created an award-winning garden.

Little River Basin Master Gardeners

Keeping the Community “Alive and Growing”

BY BRENDA ALLISON

THE LITTLE RIVER BASIN MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION, like their motto, is alive and growing. With a total of 55 members, the group celebrated their 10th anniversary in October 2015 with a rededication ceremony at the Triangle Demonstration Garden in Cameron.

The project is an ongoing labor of love for this group of energetic gardeners. The group is guided by association charter members Connie Anderle, Sandy Braswell, Carolyn Dorner, Debbie Harris, Susan Humble and Jackie Thornton.

“It was amazing how the community came together to create this garden,” Anderle said.

Community is what this garden is all about

It all began when Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service agent Clint Perkins arrived in Cameron. His enthusiasm for the master gardening program was contagious. In January 2005, 30 area residents signed up and began training to become master gardeners. Anderle was one of them.

After the group completed their course, they became interns. To become a Texas Certified Master Gardener, each was required to complete 50 hours of community service. This is where the idea of a community garden grew.

Anderle, at the time, was a newly elected member of the Cameron City Council. The question that she heard most often was, “When are you going to clean up that lot?”

The gardeners approached the city council to request permission to take over the small plot of land at the intersection of North Washington Avenue and 21st Street, near Cameron Junior High School and Cameron Elementary School. The city agreed, cleared the area of the rocks and debris, and brought in topsoil.

The entire class of gardeners participated in the design of the Triangle Demonstration Garden. James Anderle drew a scale drawing of the plot of land. Everyone was given a copy and asked to make suggestions for designing the garden. The group undertook the project with no money and no donations—just 30 eager volunteers.

The result is an award-winning project that incorporates beautification with outdoor educational opportunities. It is home to butterflies, bees and other small creatures.

The community rallied around the garden project. A request to the Milam County judge allowed the group to use surplus stone from the courthouse renovation project. While assessing what would be needed to move the stones, then-sheriff Charlie West volunteered his help, and the stones were trucked to the garden and put in place.

Surplus brick donated by the Milam County Historical Society also found a new home at the garden.

Because the garden was near the junior high school, it drew the interest of the students there. Among the first donations received was a \$500 gift from Cameron ISD’s National Junior Honor Society.

Like the garden, the list of community groups donors grew. The Cameron Arts & Service League, Cameron Lions Club, Cameron Rotary Club and Fleur de Lis Garden Club are just a few. Individuals and businesses stepped up, as well, in what became a true community effort. A small plaque at the gazebo lists those who contributed to make the Triangle Demonstration Garden a reality.

Award-Winning Garden

The garden has earned recognition from the Texas Master Gardeners Association and the Texas Municipal League.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department certified a section of the garden as a Texas Wildscapes Wildlife Habitat Demonstration Site in 2007. To earn this designation, a site must provide food, shelter and water for wildlife on a continuous basis.

The garden features native or adopted plants and a creekbed with water supplied from a rainwater collection system. A rose garden, herb garden and xeriscape also occupy sections in the garden.

A Look Back

Although work on the garden began in 2005, the project took years to create. The original gazebo and arbor were installed in 2006. A variety of plants were incorporated to provide beauty year-round, including red oak, redbud, crape myrtle, Mexican plum, Texas sage, lantana, butterfly weed, fire bush, antique roses and salvia.

Petrified wood from a lignite surface mine near Sulfur Springs was delivered and installed by Luminant in 2010.

A granite marker was added in 2012. Anderle and Harris visited Rockdale Memorial Company to select a stone for engraving. The Luckey family, owners of Rockdale Memorial, generously donated the stone and the engraving. They also delivered and erected the marker.

Two years later, additional improvements were made and lighting was added.

On July 1, 2014, the gazebo, arbor and about one-third of the garden was destroyed when a truck crashed through it. Although heartbroken, these dedicated gardeners dug in and got to work. A new gazebo, walkway, arbor and irrigation system were added. Within a few months, the garden was restored to its original award-winning glory.

The group meets at the garden once a month to continue their magic.

“A garden is ongoing,” Anderle said. “It is never complete.”

Community Service

Little River Basin Master Gardeners are volunteers who work with the Texas AgriLife Extension Service to improve gardening skills throughout the community. They share gardening knowledge through community service, gardener training and educational programs.

They are active in schools through both classroom demonstrations and the Junior Master Gardener Program, which teaches the benefits of gardening to schoolchildren. The group has also installed raised garden beds at an area nursing home.

This is not a group of retirees. Although a few are retired, most of the gardeners have careers and work full time.

Anderle wears several hats. Although gardening is “near and dear” to her heart, she also serves as mayor of Cameron and works with her husband in the family business, Anderle Lumber Company.

Interested in joining this group of master gardeners? For more information, contact the Milam County Texas A&M AgriLife Extension office in Cameron at (254) 697-7045.



TOP TO BOTTOM: Thanks to the generosity of the Luckey family, owners of Rockdale Memorial Company, this marker was added to the garden in 2012. Bumblebees and butterflies enjoy the beautiful flowers at the Triangle Demonstration Garden in Cameron. Chris Wilson and Jennifer Lazarow hang a wind chime to add a special touch and sound to the garden’s 10-year anniversary celebration.

Youth Tour: Trip of a Lifetime

YOUR STUDENT COULD WIN an all-expense-paid week in Washington, D.C.

Win a free trip to Washington, D.C.! Sound too good to be true? In this case, it can become a reality for one Heart of Texas EC high school student.

For more than 50 years, electric cooperatives have sponsored high school students from across America to visit the nation's capital and meet members of Congress. You could be part of this tremendous opportunity that allows students to learn about the political process and how their federal government works. Heart of Texas EC will select one student to attend the Youth Tour in June—with all expenses paid!

The Government-in-Action Youth Tour is sponsored in conjunction with Texas Electric Cooperatives and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

Nearly 1,500 students from across the country gather to learn about each other and what life is like in other parts of the U.S. on what's been called the "trip of a lifetime." For some, this may be their only opportunity to visit Washington, D.C.

Students also have the chance to participate in the wreath-laying ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery, see the sunset parade at the U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial, and visit the Supreme Court, the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives chambers, and the Library of Congress.

We hope you will encourage your school or student to apply. If you have questions, please email Ron Poston at ronposton@hotec.coop or call (254) 840-2871. You can obtain applications online at hotec.coop.

Eligibility

Students who have completed their freshman year in high school and whose parent, grandparent or legal guardian is a member of Heart of Texas Electric Cooperative are eligible. Past HOTEK members and family members of HOTEK employees or board members are not eligible.

Contest Rules

Students must submit an essay based on the history of electric cooperatives, not to exceed 500 words. A winner will be chosen according to the originality and content of his or her essay. The winner will be asked to give a brief summary of his or her trip at HOTEK's annual membership meeting in October.

Essays and applications must be received by 5 p.m., February 15.



Attention Grads: Scholarship Opportunity

DOES YOUR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE need money for college?

Heart of Texas Electric Cooperative will award five \$1,000 scholarships to local high school graduates. Applications are now being accepted. HOTEK takes great pride in our local schools and is excited to take part in furthering their students' education.

To qualify for a Heart of Texas EC scholarship, your student must have graduated high school within two years of the application deadline and reside in the household of a Heart of Texas EC member. The recipient must be enrolled full or part time in an accredited college or technical school.

Each scholarship will be divided between the fall and spring semester, \$500 respectively. The funds must be used within one year of issuance.

Applications must be received by the Rosebud or McGregor office no later than March 1 to be considered for the scholarship.

For an application and a complete list of qualifications, visit hotec.coop, click on Programs, then click on Youth Tour/Scholarships.



Mallory Wright of Lott represented Heart of Texas EC on the 2015 Youth Tour.

YOUTH TOUR: EURO BANKS | ISTOCK.COM; SCHOLARSHIP: DEBBI SHIRROFF | ISTOCK.COM

Oglesby Rattlesnake Hunt

February 27-28

THE OGLESBY LIONS CLUB WILL HOLD ITS 47th annual rattlesnake hunt February 27-28. World-famous snake handler Jackie Bibby will present live demonstrations beginning at 10 a.m. Saturday, and 11 a.m. Sunday.

Snake hunter registration begins Saturday morning and ends at 10 a.m. Sunday. Professional hunters are not allowed to register.

Prizes will be awarded for snakes caught. General admission is \$5.

The Oglesby Lions Club sponsors the hunt, but it is a community-wide event. The Oglesby Volunteer Fire Department will sell barbecue, and the Oglesby 4-H Club will host a concession stand. There are arts and crafts booths and entertainment throughout the day at the community center.

Booth spaces are available for vendors to rent.

Oglesby is about 8 miles east of McGregor on FM 1996.

For more information on booth space rentals or event details, contact Charles Walter at (254) 744-7855 or Duane Hiner at (254) 495-6629.

The Texas Snake Man, Jackie Bibby, will perform during the Oglesby Rattlesnake Hunt.



HOTEK To Visit Home Shows

HEART OF TEXAS EC WILL HAVE A BOOTH at two area home shows. We invite you to stop by, pick up some great energy-efficiency information and meet a few of our fabulous Heart of Texas EC staff members.

Heart of Texas Builders Home Products Show
Extraco Events Center, Waco
February 13, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
February 14, 11 a.m.-5 p.m.

Home and Garden Show
Bell County Expo Center, Belton
February 27, 10 a.m.-6 p.m.
February 28, 12-5 p.m.



Heart of Texas Electric Cooperative

Operating in Bell, Bosque, Coryell, Falls, Hamilton, McLennan and Milam counties

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Distributed Generation 101

RULE NO. 1: BEFORE YOU INVEST in DG power, know the rules.

Distributed generation, or DG, refers to the production of electricity on-site near the end user. It is a concept Thomas Edison developed to produce electricity for his own use. Today, small DG sources, for the most part, have been replaced with larger, centralized power plants capable of producing large quantities of electricity to a broad spectrum of customers at an economical price.

From concerns about the environment to cutting electricity costs, Heart of Texas Electric Cooperative members continue to express an interest in renewable energy, such as wind and solar power, and in energy conservation. There has been a resurgence of DG, especially in the form of wind turbines or solar cells.



Heart of Texas EC supports and encourages wind, solar and other DG projects. Producing “green” power is important to us all. Installing geothermal heating and air conditioning or switching to an air-source heat pump can drastically decrease your electric consumption.

But not everyone is interested in or can afford to install DG equipment.

“It is just as green to reduce electric consumption as it is to install DG equipment,” HOTEK Member Services Manager Ron Poston said.

Options for energy conservation can include simple techniques such as

wrapping your water heater with a thermal cover or investing in a solar clothes dryer (hanging your clothes out to dry).

More involved procedures include upgrading the insulation in your home, installing an air filtration system, or adding roof vents if none exist. If you are interested in more ways to conserve electricity, whether it is for the sake of your wallet or to reduce your global impact, access our website at hotec.coop for useful tips.

Work With Your Cooperative

Before investing money in your personal power source, expecting to receive credit for the energy you don’t use, there are considerations you should take into account.

The installation of renewable DG equipment must be approved by the co-op during every phase of the project from beginning to end. An approved interconnection must follow certain safety and electric reliability guidelines essential to the protection of co-op members and employees. The guidelines also ensure that the electric distribution system performance is not jeopardized.

You may familiarize yourself with these requirements by downloading “Distributed Generation Procedures and Guidelines Manual for Members” at our website, hotec.coop. The guidelines are also available at our offices in Rosebud and McGregor. This manual provides the procedures, guidelines and requirements to interconnect a DG facility.

Please be aware that there are scammers and dishonest installers hoping to take advantage of unsuspecting consumers. Before you sign a contract, please call HOTEK and verify that the company you are dealing with is reputable.



PLEX Meter Upgrade Continues

HEART OF TEXAS ELECTRIC Cooperative works hard to maintain and improve the quality of electric services for our members.

With this in mind, HOTEK began installing a new state-of-the-art advanced meter-reading system in late 2014. The installation and transition to this new technology have gone well. This system replaces the outdated “Turtle” system that was installed in 1996.

The new meters from Landis+Gyr will enable the cooperative to perform several functions remotely, such as reading meters in a more timely manner, monitoring voltage and reconnecting or disconnecting power at some locations.

In addition, these meters will provide more accurate information about outages and restoration times, allow for faster response times to outages and ultimately lead to fewer outages. Improved power quality and more efficient power distribution will help keep costs down for members. Better detection of power theft will be an additional benefit.

The remaining substations scheduled to be commissioned include Calvert, Midway, China Spring, Lorena and Buckholts.

Deployment updates will also be posted on our website, on Facebook and in *Texas Co-op Power* magazine.

If you have any questions, contact our office at the following numbers: McGregor, (254) 840-2871; Rosebud, (254) 231-0444; or toll-free, 1-800-840-2957.

Operation Round Up

Neighbors Helping Neighbors



OPERATION ROUND UP IS A VOLUNTARY PROGRAM in which Heart of Texas EC electric bills are rounded up to the nearest dollar every month. The additional pennies, nickels and dimes are added to a special fund to be distributed back to local community organizations. The Operation Round Up Trust Board, composed of HOTECC members, meets once every quarter to review applications and decide how the funds are to be allocated.

If you would like to participate in the Operation Round Up program, contact your local HOTECC office and request to be added. Nonprofit organizations interested in applying for funds should visit our website at hotec.coop or call for an application. Recent Operation Round Up recipients include:

Flat Volunteer Fire Department	\$2,500
Oglesby Volunteer Fire Department	\$2,500
Valley Mills Public Library	\$2,500
Preservation Rosebud	\$1,500
McGregor Youth Vo-Ag Booster Club	\$250

THE TRIP OF A LIFETIME

GOVERNMENT-IN-ACTION

YOUTH TOUR



High school students: Apply now for an all-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C., with about 125 of your peers to see historic sites and meet your elected officials.

Deadline to apply is February 15.

For more information, visit hotec.coop.



Scan this code to see the Youth Tour video

Statement of Nondiscrimination

HEART OF TEXAS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE IS an equal-opportunity provider and employer.

If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, found online at ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, or at any USDA office, or call 1-866-632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail at U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Ave. SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410, by fax to (202) 690-7442 or email at program.intake@usda.gov. Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent possible.

RECIPE OF THE MONTH



STEPAN POPOV | ISTOCK.COM

Cheesecake With Dark Chocolate

CRUST

- 1 cup crushed nuts (macadamias or walnuts work best)
- 1 cup flour
- ¼ cup brown sugar
- ½ cup butter (1 stick), softened

1. Combine all ingredients and press into 9-by-9-inch baking dish. Bake 30 minutes at 325 degrees, then cool.

FILLING

- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1 package cream cheese (8 ounces)
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 3 squares dark baking chocolate

1. With an electric mixer, whip the heavy cream until it thickens.
2. In a separate bowl, combine cream cheese, sugar and vanilla. Fold whipped cream into cream cheese mixture.
3. Grate dark chocolate into mixture, reserving some for topping.
4. Spoon mixture over crust, smooth with back of spoon and top with reserved grated chocolate.
5. Refrigerate 1 hour before serving.

Find this and more delicious recipes online at
TEXASCOOPPOWER.COM