Wounded Warrior Project helps veterans manage PTSD.

I AM LIVING PROOF

WOUNDED WARRIOR
TANIKI RICHARD

SUPPORT WOUNDED VETERANS AT iamlivingproofwwp.org
Readers Saw the Light

In January, Dave LaBelle began a new chapter in The Great Picture Hunt by putting a special emphasis on participation. Dave’s column now features a monthly photography assignment that invites readers to test their skills and share their work. In January, Dave invited readers to look for dramatic lighting that stirs imagination and emotion.

Many of you did, and we’re excited to share the results. Check out our Instagram and Facebook sites (instagram.com/ruralitemag; facebook.com/Ruralite) to see what readers did with the assignment. Check our social media channels around the 15th of each month to see a gallery of the best photo submissions from our readers, such as those at right by Dick Quinn.

While you’re checking out our social sites, take a moment to check out our all-new magazine website, Ruralite.com, which is modern, engaging and pleasing to the eye. We think you will like what you see.

Happy photo hunting.

Leon Espinoza
Editor
Headed to College?

Apply for an Academic Scholarship from Golden Valley Electric

Applications are now available for $31,000 worth of scholarships from Golden Valley Electric. Seven academic scholarships will be awarded in April 2020.

To be eligible for a Golden Valley Electric scholarship, the applicant or someone in the applicants’ immediate family must be a member of GVEA.

Applications and complete guidelines are available for download at www.gvea.com/inside/scholarship.

Scholarships:

**Academic Degree ($15,000)**
This is a four-year scholarship awarded to only one student each year. Applicant must be a graduating senior from a high school, correspondence study, or distance education program in GVEA’s service area. Applicant must be a graduating senior from a high school, correspondence study, or distance education program in GVEA’s service area. Minimum cumulative high school GPA of 3.0 required. Applicant must be pursuing a four-year Bachelor Degree at any University of Alaska campus and have a minimum cumulative high school GPA of 3.5.

**Academic ($2,500)**
This nonrenewable scholarship will be awarded to three students. Applicant must be a graduating senior from a high school, correspondence study or distance education program in GVEA’s service area. Minimum cumulative high school GPA of 3.0 required. Applicant must be pursuing a four-year Bachelor Degree at an accredited school.

**Continuing Education ($2,000)**
This nonrenewable scholarship will be awarded to three students. Current year graduating high school seniors not eligible. Applicant must be enrolled or accepted as a part-time (at least 6 credit hours per semester or 4 hours per quarter) or full-time student at an accredited school in a program leading toward a Bachelor or Master’s Degree. Applicant must have competed 12 or more credits with a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.5.

**Career & Technical Education ($2,500)**
This scholarship is ideal for students considering a career in a health, industrial or technical field such as cosmetology, dental hygiene, diesel/heavy equipment operation or auto mechanics. This is a nonrenewable scholarship awarded to one student per year. Applicant must be enrolled or accepted as a part-time (at least 6 credit hours per semester of 4 hours per quarter) or full-time student at an accredited school in a program leading toward a recognized license, certificate, or an Associates Degree. Applicants must have a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.0 at the most recent educational institution attended (high school or post-secondary)

Applications for this scholarship will be available in April 2020. This scholarship will be awarded in August 2020.
Help Those Who Help You

When it comes to keeping your lights on, the good guys wear hard hats.

Keep your right-of-way clear

During power outages, we may have to access the right of way (ROW) on your property in order to make repairs.

ROWs blocked by fences, abandoned cars, equipment or debris slow down restoration efforts and can create unsafe conditions for GVEA linemen – especially in the dark and during bad weather.

Help those who help you. Make sure your ROW is kept clear of obstacles at all times.
High Electrical Bills?

Learn the common causes and how to avoid them

By Juan D. Alfonso

While the winter holidays may be over, frigid weather continues to impact much of the country. With the cold comes higher electric bills, and the increase typically brings some not-so-happy utility consumers. “My frustration is probably more frequent than anger,” says Jeff Marshall, communications specialist with Clearwater Power. Billed in October and assume that because we bill them for the previous month’s lower bills in the summer months.” I think most people just forget because of the most recent bill to the previous year’s. “But when we compare their consumer is a common industry practice. Similar. Comparing past bills with the previous months when temperatures were higher than it was in previous years or previous months when temperatures were similar. Comparing past bills with the consumer is a common industry practice.

“Just a lot of people come to us very confused as to why their bill is so high, says Kelly. “I was at a conference once where the staff lowered the heat below 36 hours before the event in anticipation of what happens when you have 50 people in a room.” Jeff says. “If the thermostat had been 68 degrees, the room would have easily heated past 80. Don’t underestimate the cost savings of people in your home.”

Lastly, Jeff wants everyone to know that lighting isn’t the biggest of a deal.

“Don’t be afraid of lights,” he says. “They really don’t use up a lot of energy. Switching CFLs to LEDs, the savings are hundreds of dollars a year.

“Manufacturers are invested in creating devices that load more quickly and efficiently,” Jeff says. “On the flip side, these devices are always turned on and absorbing power from the grid. When you turn a dishwasher off, it’s off, but a lot of electronics are never turned off!”

“An easy solution to vampire loads is buying a smart power strip. Jeff recommends the Trickle Star advanced power strips. These smart strips detect when electronic devices are in an off or standby state, and cuts their connection to the outlet. Another way to reduce the electric bill is by inviting friends and family over. The ambient body heat produced by each person will heat the home, allowing for a much lower thermostat setting.”

“People will think their heat is off,” Jeff says, “but it’s pretty rare for it to actually be off. 55 degrees tend to be as low as the thermostat goes. You can turn both of these appliances off at the breaker box, but a lot of people think that not using something electrical is the same thing as being turned off.” Another common misconception is when consumers keep their thermostats at the same temperature year-round and expect the bill to remain constant.

“We get a lot of snowbirds who leave their home around 60 and expect their bill to be drastically cheaper,” says Kelly Jackson, senior member services specialist with Mt. Wheeler Power Inc. in Nevada. “But it gets so cold that their heater works hard to maintain what they think is pretty cold to begin with.”

However, there are some cases where excess energy consumption does occur. “I was getting ready to bill a member when I noticed her bill went from $210 in September to $500 in October,” Kelly says. “I spoke to her, we investigated it and turned out the heater in her home needed to be replaced.”

What Kelly did was not unusual, according to Christina Sawyer, internal communications specialist at Mt. Wheeler Power. “We do take the time to look at the higher bills before they go out to the customer service procedures, so they are prepared for these larger bills and we can have a discussion about how to make things easier for them.”

A common complaint utilities face is when consumers claim their bill is much higher than it was in previous years or previous months when temperatures were similar. Comparing past bills with the consumer is a common industry practice.

“Just a lot of people come to us very confused as to why their bill is so high,” Kelly says. “But when we compare their most recent bill to the previous year’s usage, it turns out to be pretty comparable. I think most people just forget because of the lower bills in the summer months.”

Another part that leads to confusion is that we bill them for the previous month’s usage. They get their September usage bill in October and assume that because October and November had similar weather, their bill will be about the same.” Many consumers are surprised when their new, energy-efficient homes cost far more to power than they were expecting. “It’s called Jevons Paradox,” Jeff says. “When you have a more efficient device, you tend to use it more freely. For example, heat pumps use less power than a furnace, so people with heat pumps will make their home warmer than they would with a less efficient system. This eats into their savings and ends up costing them more in the long run. Newer houses have better insulation and windows. All of these things have savings, but the alarm in the back of your head is just quarter. You use it more and you’ll light places that aren’t normally lit.”

Vampire or phantom loads from smart TVs, gaming consoles and other electronics may also drive up the electric bill. “Manufacturers are invested in creating devices that load more quickly and efficiently,” Jeff says. “On the flip side, these devices are always turned on and absorbing power from the grid. When you turn a dishwasher off, it’s off, but a lot of electronics are never turned off!”

“An easy solution to vampire loads is buying a smart power strip. Jeff recommends the Trickle Star advanced power strips. These smart strips detect when electronic devices are in an off or standby state, and cuts their connection to the outlet. Another way to reduce the electric bill is by inviting friends and family over. The ambient body heat produced by each person will heat the home, allowing for a much lower thermostat setting.”

“I was at a conference once where the staff lowered the heat below 36 hours before the event in anticipation of what happens when you have 50 people in a room.” Jeff says. “If the thermostat had been 68 degrees, the room would have easily heated past 80. Don’t underestimate the cost savings of people in your home.”

Lastly, Jeff wants everyone to know that lighting isn’t the biggest of a deal.

“Don’t be afraid of lights,” he says. “They really don’t use up a lot of energy. Switching CFLs to LEDs, the savings are only about a quarter. It would take years to recoup that investment.”

Tips for Reducing Your Electrical Bill

➤ Lower the temperature when you are not at home and before going to bed. The U.S. Department of Energy estimates a 5% savings for every eight hours you lower the thermostat.

➤ Dust your refrigerator. Your refrigerator is working much harder if the coils are covered in dust.

➤ Replace your bulbs. Dirty filters for your air conditioner or air filters that are torn will work harder to push air through the vent and uses more energy.

➤ Make it. Cooking with a microwave or an electric skillet consumes far less energy than your oven.

➤ Plant trees. Plants around your home generate shade during the warm months of the year, reducing your air conditioning needs. Planting trees with leaves that fall during the winter will increase sunlight and reduce your warming needs when it is cold.

➤ Buy energy-efficient appliances. Replacing your older inefficient appliances with smart ones can save hundreds of dollars a year.

➤ Install a ceiling fan. Fans move air around the room without actually cooling it. This provides a significant reduction in energy use while keeping your home comfortable when it is warm.

➤ Cover air leaks. Caulk cracks and openings in your home to keep the warm air in during the winter and out during the summer.

➤ Seal air ducts. Leaks from unsealed ducts can be responsible for up to 30% of your electric bill.

➤ Don’t open the oven door. Opening your oven door while baking or cooking can reduce the internal temperature by 25 degrees. Taking just 30 minutes before your meal is done to allow the ambient heat to finish cooking.
Will a pet door affect your energy bill?
Pet doors are convenient for pet owners and pets, but they can affect energy bills. A poorly made or improperly installed pet door will create unwanted drafts that increase energy bills and reduce the overall comfort level of your home. The wrong type of door also may be pushed open during high winds.

Consider installing a pet door certified by the Alliance to Save Energy, or one that has a double or triple flap. These types of pet doors can reduce energy loss and make life easier for you and your furry friends.

The best solution may be a high-quality electronic door that is activated by a chip on your pet’s collar.

It’s difficult to undo a pet door installation, so we suggest doing your homework before taking the leap. There may be other strategies that will give you and your pet some of the convenient benefits without the downsides.

How much hot and cold can your pup and tabby handle?
Cats and dogs can handle the cold better than humans. The U.S. Department of Agriculture, which regulates facilities that house cats and dogs, requires facilities to maintain temperatures above 50 F. Some exceptions are allowed for breeds accustomed to the cold or if some form of insulation is provided for the animals. Your pet’s tolerance really depends on their breed and coat thickness.

A report by the Purdue Center for Animal Science says Siberian huskies can tolerate temperatures below freezing, but some short-haired dogs require temperatures of 59 F or warmer. Older animals may require warmer temperatures than younger ones.

During summer, cats and dogs handle the heat in different ways. Cats clearly enjoy warmer temperatures more than dogs, and do a good job reducing their activity level as temperatures climb. But both cats and dogs can get overheated. The USDA says room temperatures in facilities housing dogs or cats should not exceed 85 F for more than four hours at a time.

Is it OK if your pet sleeps in the garage overnight?
USDA rules suggest this should be fine if your garage temperature stays between 50 F and 85 F. Pets might be able to handle a lower temperature if they have a warm, insulated bed.

I do not recommend heating or cooling your garage for your pet. This could lead to extremely high energy bills, which makes sense. An uninsulated, but heated, garage could easily cost more to heat than a home. A better solution is a heated pet house, which you can buy from multiple retailers. If you’re willing to spend a little more, you can find climate-controlled pet houses that include heating and cooling options.

You can also buy heated beds for cats and dogs. Some beds use as little as 4 watts of electricity, so they won’t drain your energy bill.

This column was co-written by Pat Keegan and Brad Thiessen of Collaborative Efficiency. For more energy tips, go to www.collaborativeefficiency.com/energytips.
Couples Take
A Leap of Love
By Ginger Meurer
10 FEBRUARY 2020

ENTERING A MARRIAGE IS A LEAP OF FAITH. This year, couples can choose to take that leap on the most appropriate day of all, February 29.

"Leap day is a unique and interesting wedding date," says Katie Brownstein, who handles communication at the wedding planning site Joy (withjoy.com). "While the downside is that couples can only celebrate their true anniversary once every four years and must celebrate on another date on non-leap years, the upside is that couples with leap day weddings have a rare and memorable anniversary date, which loved ones are unlikely to forget."

Katie says this leap day is shaping up to be a popular wedding date. So far, 13% of all February 2020 weddings registered on Joy are on leap day. The day is second only to February 22, or 2/22/2020.

Oregon couple Helen and Chris Hedgepeth answered the call for readers to share leap day love stories. They were married on leap day in 1996.

"It was Chris who picked 2/29—also his brother’s birthday," Helen says. "I told him if he thought he would only have to celebrate once every four years, he was mistaken. I informed him that the other three years we would celebrate it on the 28th and 1st because 28+1=29."

This year, the Hedgepeths celebrate their sixth leap year anniversary, though they’ve actually been married 24 years. "My husband jokes we have a 21-year-old born in wedlock, but will only be celebrating our sixth anniversary," Helen says. At least one pair the couple knows has followed in the Hedgepeth’s footsteps.

"Years later, I worked with a lady who thought it was great we took the leap on leap year," Helen says. "She got married February 29, 2012."

Amy and Stan Craig fell into a leap year wedding 12 years ago. The Utah couple knew they were getting married, but hadn’t picked a date. They went to fill out the paperwork for a wedding license not even realizing it was leap day.

"The lady says, ‘Do you guys want to get married today on leap day? I’ll go get the justice of the peace.’" Amy says.

Stan turned to her and asked, "Do you want to? I want to!"

They hadn’t even bought Stan’s ring yet, so they rushed to the mall to pick one up. Back at the courthouse, they took their vows in T-shirts and jeans sharing a batch of caramel corn. Later, their family—especially Amy’s younger sister who set them up—gave them grief for the swift guest-free wedding. They got the most grief for not taking a single photograph.

"If it wasn’t leap day, I think we would have wanted to get married," Amy says. "I don’t think we would have got married right that second at the courthouse."

The rare wedding date helped Amy bond with her friends Heather and John Roxus. They married on February 29, 2012. Heather says it was a second marriage for both of them, so they kept it simple and had a party at their house after.

"We decided to get married in February, and my daughter said, ‘Do it on my birthday, February 22—and I won’t go to do it then,’” Heather says.

Instead, the couple embraced the leap year option.

"Then I found out that Amy was married on leap day,” Heather says. "I felt like we had a connection, that commonality. You can’t usually copy someone on that date because you may have to wait four years. You’d have to plan that out. It’s pretty cool."

Heather says the only person who teases her about the date is her mother, who regularly wishes her a happy anniversary on the 28th, which Heather says will never happen.

Jasmine DePompei and Harold Hickey are set to marry on this year’s leap day. The couple met more than three years ago while stationed in Bahrain.

"It was Bahrain National Day, and there was a big party at the Bahrain Rugby Club where we met through mutual friends," Jasmine says. "We went to the Naval Academy and graduated the same year, but just didn’t know each other at school."

Jasmine says when they got engaged in November 2018, they started looking at potential dates.

"And we’re like, ‘Oh, man, leap day falls on a Saturday, and that would be so cool.‘” she says.

Booking a venue and vendors for the popular date wasn’t a big deal.

“We booked really early,” Jasmine says. “I’m just a big planner, so I booked everything right away.”

As for celebrating, Jasmine says, “I think we’re just going to have a huge anniversary celebration every four years.

Obviously, we’ll acknowledge it in between, but we’ll do something over the top, go on a trip or really go crazy with it every leap day because it’s kind of cool that it only comes every four years.”

Megan Gaskin and Kenny Bowe picked this leap year as their wedding date, too.

“When we were talking about getting engaged, we were looking at the calendar,” Megan says. “And he said, 2020 is a leap year. And we said, ‘Oh my gosh, we’re doing that.’”

We knew before we were even engaged that we would do it leap day”

Megan has cousins planning wedding dates, too, but she’s convinced her date is the best. "I feel like our date is so much more fun and interesting," she says. "People always have questions about it. It’s so much better than a boring any other day!" ■

Why We Leap: To learn more about leap day, go to www.history.com/news/all-about-leap-day, or watch this video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AgKaHThsGhs

—AMY CRAIG, MARRIED FEBRUARY 29, 2008

“Being married on leap day is great, but there’s jokes associated with it. People tease us about how long we’ve been married in dog years.”

—AMY GRAIG, MARRIED FEBRUARY 29, 2008

PHOTO BY M PLACE PRODUCTIONS

UP CLOSE
SPOTLIGHT

General Labor-Savers
Pace yourself. It’s OK to take breaks. Split jobs over several days instead of one big mammoth job into a series of manageable small ones. Vary the work. Don’t do a little digging, a little weeding, a little watering, same motion hour after hour. Do a little digging, a little weeding, a little watering, variety reduces soreness, blisters and repetitive-motion injuries. Simplify. Walk the yard and assess which plants or gardens cause an unacceptable amount of work. Bite the bullet and replace them with plantings that need less care. Re-evaluate. Can you reduce or let go of unrealistic standards? Does the lawn really have to be totally weed-free? Can the hedge grow looser instead of being tightly clipped three times a season? Is that fresh coat of mulch really needed every spring? Get help. Hire out the toughest jobs first. Spreading trucksloads of mulch might be a good place to start.

Jobs to Skip
Tilling. You probably will need to till a new bed and work in compost, but after that, regular tilling is counter productive. It stirs up weed seeds, kills earthworms and harms soil structure when wet soil is tilled. Raking. There is no need to rake every last leaf out of the yard. Leaves insulate plants during winter and feed the lawn when they’re mowed in rather than raked off. Rake only if there are too many leaves on the lawn to effectively blow them. Spraying. Be more forgiving of temporary, cosmetic plant damage. Few bugs and diseases are plant-killers. For plants threatened by repeated potential fatal problems, consider replacing them rather than constantly rescuing them. Mass planting annuals. Cut back on planting and watering annual flowers by spotting them in smaller clusters, or switch to using them just in pots, hanging baskets and window boxes. Bulb care. Skip braiding bulb foliage after the flowers bloom. It’s a waste of work and is counter-productive. Interplant bulbs with perennials so the emerging perennial foliage will hide the decaying bulb foliage, or lean toward short, small-leaved bulbs whose foliage fades away.

Great Gardens, Less Work

By George Weigel

12 FEBRUARY 2020

Gardening doesn’t get easier as you age, as your creaky bones and sore back might remind you after that first yard-cleanup weekend of spring.

Pretty much everything involves getting down, getting up, bending over or lugging items around. AARP-aged backs don’t tolerate that as well as 30-year-old ones, but “experienced” gardeners can compensate by gardening smarter instead of harder.

By doing necessary jobs more efficiently and skipping a few unnecessary ones, it’s possible to maintain a nice yard with less stress—and that’s a good goal no matter your age.

Work smarter, not harder, when creating or maintaining your home garden. ADOBE STOCK PHOTO BY FREEDOMZ

General Labor-Savers

Face yourself! It’s OK to take breaks. Split jobs over several days instead of one-day marathons. You may even be able to spread work into the off-season, such as clipping spent perennials or edging beds during a winter thaw. Zone it. Carve the landscape into zones (front, back, vegetable garden, etc.) and worry about just one zone at a time. Tackle each by priority. This breaks one mammoth job into a series of manageable small ones.

Vary the work. Don’t overdo it by repeating the same motion hour after hour. Do a little digging, a little weeding, a little watering. Variety reduces soreness, blisters and repetitive-motion injuries.

Jobs to Skip

Tilling. You probably will need to till a new bed and work in compost, but after that, regular tilling is counter productive. It stirs up weed seeds, kills earthworms and harms soil structure when wet soil is tilled.

Raking. There is no need to rake every last leaf out of the yard. Leaves insulate plants during winter and feed the lawn when they’re mowed in rather than raked off. Rake only if there are too many leaves on the lawn to effectively blow them.

Spraying. Be more forgiving of temporary, cosmetic plant damage. Few bugs and diseases are plant-killers. For plants threatened by repeated potential fatal problems, consider replacing them rather than constantly rescuing them.

Mass planting annuals. Cut back on planting and watering annual flowers by spotting them in smaller clusters, or switch to using them just in pots, hanging baskets and window boxes.

Bulb care. Skip braiding bulb foliage after the flowers bloom. It’s a waste of work and is counter-productive.

Interplant bulbs with perennials so the emerging perennial foliage will hide the decaying bulb foliage, or lean toward short, small-leaved bulbs whose foliage fades away.

Weed-fighting

Prevention is the best medicine. Keep 2 to 3 inches of bark or wood mulch over beds, or use granular weed preventers over garden beds in early spring before new weeds begin to sprout.

Use the right weapons. Switch to long-handled weeding tools if bending over is too hard on your back, or spot-spray weeds with an herbicide or vinegar.

Watch what you plant. Use the right weapons.

Weed when wet. Weeds come out easier in damp soil. Hoeing is more effective in dry soil since cut-off weeds are less likely to regrow.

Watch what you plant. Use the right weapons.

Overseed to keep lawn thick. Dense grass is a great defense against weeds. There’s no room for anything else.

Reduce lawn size. In the long run, low-care beds of shrub beds, perennials, compact evergreens and groundcovers are less expensive and less work than lawns. What other plant do we need four or five applications a year? Organic or slow-release nitrogen fertilizers give you good but slower-growth results and can be done just twice a year.

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Lean toward compact, dwarf varieties in any new plantings, or at least give adequate growth space.

More trees. Some of the lowest-care landscaping is island beds of groundcovers, shade-tolerant shrubs and low-care perennials growing under trees. Pick small to mid-size ornamental trees that do more than one thing in one season.

Homework. Research how much care a plant needs before buying it. Lean toward varieties that seldom run into pest problems. Good resources include garden centers, public gardens and local cooperative extension services.

**Other Labor Savers**

Prune when needed. For plants already outgrowing the space you’ve given them, it’s better to prune them lightly each year than to let them overgrow for several years, then try to whack them back into submission.

Let perennials stand over winter. It’s easier to rake off semi-decayed perennial plants at winter’s end than to cut still-rigid ones in fall. Plus, birds appreciate the dried seeds and nesting material.

Eliminate edging. Lay stone or brick around bed perimeters. Set one upright and butt a second one against it flat and level with the ground on the lawn side. This holds in mulch, keeps grass out and lets you run the mower wheels over the flat course.

Use tools that fit. Switch to more ergonomically designed tools that are comfortable to use. You may need to switch to power tools from people-powered ones as you age. Keep whatever tools you’re using sharp.

George Weigel is a horticulturist, garden consultant, author and newspaper garden columnist. His website is http://georgeweigel.net.
Gardening With Pets: A Sensible and Cautious Approach

By Pamela A. Keene

When you’re gardening, you’re in your pet’s natural environment. Most pets thrive on being outdoors with their owners. However, experts suggest using care when combining gardening and time with your pets, especially when they’re young.

“Dogs love to roll around in the grass and to explore,” says Suzanne Brosche, owner of Arts of Stone Gardening in Dahlonega, Georgia, north of Atlanta. “Plus, dogs and cats often eat grass as an aid to digestion. Puppies and kittens tend to chew on just about anything, so they need to be watched more closely.”

Planning your landscape and gardens with your pets in mind can go a long way toward the safety and health of your plants.

Safe Choices
Create a shady pet-safe area for your canine friends. Build a sandbox or sand pit for dogs to dig and lie down in to cool off. Wood chips can encourage animals to use the area as their own. Plant pet-friendly flora such as catnip or its horticultural relatives to encourage cats to nibble, rub against it or roll in it. Give it a separate area of the garden. As a perennial, it will grow for a season, die back, then sprout the next year. It may need to be pruned periodically to keep it from overtaking the space.

Landscape with edible plants that are also safe for humans, such as marigolds, pansies, violets and roses. Herbs—including parsley, mint, rosemary and thyme—are nontoxic. Because of their strong odors and taste, your pets may naturally avoid them.

For maximum safety, garden organically, avoiding chemicals, pesticides and synthetic fertilizers on your lawn, trees, shrubs or gardens.

Fence Your Gardens
Start training your pets from a young age about where they are allowed to go in your yard. Be consistent and firm.

Keep an eye on your pets when you’re outdoors, and make time to play with them.

There is more to worry about than your pet destroying your garden, such as your pet’s safety. Set aside a pet-safe area and teach your pets from an early age to avoid dangerous plants.

Use Caution
If you must use chemicals, read package labels completely, from directions for use to cautions when using around pets and children.

Fire ants are a risk to humans and pets. It can be difficult to rid your landscape of them naturally. If you must use chemical bait, read the package instructions and cautions, then cordon off the area after applying to prevent exposure to your pets—and your children.

Beware of natural risks to your pets, such as mushrooms and funguses that grow in the fall and spring. Most are not toxic, but it’s better to be cautious and remove them before letting your pet out.

Avoid planting certain vegetables, such as tomatoes and onions, unless your garden is fenced. According to the American Kennel Club, leaves from both are toxic to dogs.

Other plants are poisonous. Oleander, sago palms, mistletoe, Asiatic lilies and azaleas—plus tulip, daffodil and hyacinth bulbs—can be harmful or fatal to pets. If you have these plants in your garden, fence the area to keep your pets away. Store bulbs on high shelves or in drawers, and don’t let dogs dig in gardens where bulbs have been planted. Poisoning symptoms can include vomiting, excess salivation/drooling, diarrhea or seizures.

A word about houseplants: Many—such as Easter lilies, Christmas and Easter cactuses, poinsettias, peace lilies, cyclamen, pothos, English ivy and chrysanthemums—are harmful to pets. Keep them out of your pet’s reach.

“If your pet eats a poisonous plant or bulb, or you suspect that she has, call your veterinarian immediately,” Suzanne says. “It’s better to be overly cautious than to hope the symptoms will disappear on their own.”
VALENTINE’S DAY for the Whole Family

Light, fun and entertaining treats satisfy child and adult taste buds

Strawberry Breakfast Cream Puffs

Recipe by Chelsea Glanz; photo by Dan Glanz

Serves 4

Cream puffs

Heat oven to 400 F.

Combine water, ghee, honey and salt in a large saucepan. Bring to a boil. Add flour. Stir until mixture resembles a smooth ball of dough. Remove from heat. Add eggs slowly, one at a time, and beat until dough becomes shiny and silky. Drop the dough by the spoonful (slightly less than ½ cup each) onto a large, ungreased baking sheet. Bake for approximately 30 minutes, until slightly golden. Remove from baking sheet immediately and cool on a wire rack.

Cream and filling

Evenly divide frosting into three wide-mouth bowls. Add single drops of red food coloring to one bowl of frosting, stirring thoroughly, until frosting is a desired shade of red. Add fewer drops of red food coloring to the next bowl of frosting, until a desired shade of pink is achieved. Carefully cut heart-shaped pieces out of each sandwich, using a medium cookie cutter so two mini sandwiches are obtained from each larger sandwich. Arrange on serving dishes on a bed of watercress and cherry tomatoes.

Heart-Shaped Tea Bites

Recipe by Chelsea Glanz

Strawberry Lemon Spritzers

Recipe by Chelsea Glanz

Cranberry Lemon Spritzers

Recipe by Chelsea Glanz

Pink, Red and White Pretzels

Recipe by Chelsea Glanz; photo by Dan Glanz

Looking for more Valentine’s Day-inspired recipes? Go to http://ruralite.com/vday-recipes

Go to http://ruralite.com/vday-recipes

IN THE KITCHEN

IN THE KITCHEN

16 FEBRUARY 2020
**Books/Magazines**

Looking for any or all books by Janette Oke. Will help with postage. Thanks.

**Jenifer McLeod**
P.O. Box 84331
Fairbanks, AK 99708

I am looking for a copy of the children's book “The Thingamajig Book of Manners” by Irene Keller. I read it to my grandchildren, now I would like to read it to my great-grandchildren. Thank you.

**Carolyn Crader**
1010 Benton Ave.
La Grande, OR 97850

Crafts/Hobbies

I am looking for beads and yarn for small projects to pass out as gifts for social gatherings. Whatever you can offer is greatly appreciated. Thank you.

**Bernadette Meyers**
P.O. Box 5186
Pilot Station, AK 99650

Friends and I are knitting hats for soldiers. If anyone would like to donate yarn for the cause, it would be greatly appreciated. Black, superwash wool yarn, worsted weight is required. One skein makes one hat. Many thanks.

**Kathy**
P.O. Box 607
Cle Elum, WA 98922

Want Brother VX 540 sewing machine service/repair manual and Brother XL 3500 instruction and repair/service manuals. According to all the sites I have looked at, the manuals are no longer available. I would be happy to pay for postage.

**Marie Cox**
642 Oriental Ave.
Burley, ID 83318

Milestones

My parents are 89 and 91. They will celebrate their 65th wedding anniversary February 27, 2020. They would be so excited to receive cards from wonderful Ruralite people. It would make their anniversary even more special. Their contact info is: Gene and Marcia Montalbano, 19596 Blue Lake Loop, Bend, OR 97702. Thank you very much in advance for making my elderly parents feel extra special.

**Meredith Savadove**
Bend, Oregon

My dad will be 85 in February. He is very social and would love to hear from as many people as possible by getting a birthday card. Please send them to: Walt Guzy, 3307 Baker Road, North Pole, AK 99705. Thank you so much.

**Pam Guzy**
Fairbanks, Alaska

Odds

My daughter and I are looking for electronic components, i.e. nixie/vhf tubes, resistor, capacitor and such. We enjoy experimenting and creating circuits. Basically any electronic parts or even old broken radios, power supplies, as we can fix or even salvage the parts. We reuse and then properly recycle any remaining items. Thank you.

**Gary Battles**
P.O. Box 249
Oakridge, OR 97463

Looking for charm bracelet-sized musical instruments, up to 1½” long, any material. Guitar, bass, saxophone, drums, flute or other instruments. Happy to reimburse shipping costs.

Thanks

We would like to thank all of our sponsors and donors that helped make our 2019 Annual Turkey Shoot a huge success.

**Pueblo Mountain Inc.**
DBA Denio Community Club
Denio, Nevada

I am overwhelmed with gratitude. I asked for Vintage Volkswagen stories and wow, the answers came in abundance by email and U.S. mail. It has been pure joy for me to read these adventures. So many had me laughing out loud, but also crying or enjoying just good old smiles. I am amazed at the amount of “Volkswagen” people are out there and now I am nearly ready to begin the editing process. My Volkswagen Memory book is on its way. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

**Donna Lage**
Reno, Nevada

I would like to thank all the wonderful people who sent my father birthday cards on his 95th birthday in December. He was so pleased and touched by all the wonderful wishes and thoughtful blessings. It meant so much to him. Ruralite readers are awesome.

**Laurie Sakkinen**
North Pole, Alaska

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**Submitting Requests to Reader Exchange Is Free**

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ADVENTURE AWAITS

After the Fire, It’s Time to Hike the Columbia River Gorge

PHOTO BY RON REASON

WHERE IS IT?
Shaped by ancient volcanoes and floods, the Columbia River Gorge is about an hour east of Portland, Oregon, on US 84.

WHAT IS IT?
The Gorge is an 80-mile-long river canyon that winds past cliffs, spires and ridges, providing spectacular views of the Cascade Mountain Range. Rich in culture and history and home to 75,000 people, it’s also a vital transportation and communication corridor.

WHAT’S NEW?
Approximately 40 miles of trails from Cascade Locks to Ainsworth State Park on the Oregon side of the Gorge remain closed due to damage from the 2017 Eagle Creek fire, but many other hiking trails that offer breathtaking views are open to hikers of every level.

HISTORY
In the 1980s, a group called Friends of the Columbia Gorge worked to preserve the area’s pristine beauty and protect it from the encroachment of commercial development. In October 1986, Congress passed the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act to preserve the natural beauty.

AVOID CROWDS
Parking can be a challenge, especially on weekends. Set out early and plan to get there before 8 a.m. on weekdays and before 7 a.m. on weekends to guarantee a spot.

FIND A HIKE
Friends of the Columbia Gorge has a detailed list of trails with a ton of information to help you plan a trip. Find it at tinyurl.com/ron52vu.

20 FEBRUARY 2020
You can’t always lie down in bed and sleep. Heartburn, cardiac problems, hip or back aches – and dozens of other ailments and worries. Those are the nights you’d give anything for a comfortable chair to sleep in: one that reclines to exactly the right degree, raises your feet and legs just where you want them, supports your head and shoulders properly, and operates at the touch of a button.

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Please mention code 109126 when ordering.
Capture Moments From the ‘Big Game’

IT WASN’T THE FIRST TIME I was stranded on an airplane during a Super Bowl or World Series game because of a snowstorm. Air travel in late fall or winter is always uncertain, which can be frustrating for a sports fan. In years past, the pilot or a flight attendant would sometimes announce the score of a big game. But with today’s smartphone technology, hardcore fans don’t have to miss important game moments.

A few rows ahead of me, football fans leaned into the aisle to watch the closing minutes between the Philadelphia Eagles and the New England Patriots during the 2019 Super Bowl.

Most of us will never photograph a Super Bowl or World Series game, but that should not keep us from looking for pictures that reveal the excitement of the event. Stay focused on the fans during big plays, especially early or late if the game is close.

If a television screen is in your picture, use a slow shutter speed, 1/30th of a second or less. You can then bounce flash off a white card or low ceiling to properly expose those reacting to what is happening on the screen. If the screen isn’t in the picture, and there is enough light to see faces, consider using a higher ISO, 1600 or higher, and a wide aperture, 2.8 or however wide open your lens will open, and turn off the flash.

Reader Challenge: Photograph the Big Game, But Without a Ticket

People gather for parties, buy truckloads of snacks and beverages, and congregate in groups anywhere a big screen television shows the Super Bowl. Storytelling pictures are everywhere. See if you can capture the mood and emotions—the joy, despair and anxiety—surrounding the “Big Game.”

To respond to this challenge, and share your work, email your best image to social@pur.coop with a caption and photo credit. We will share the best submissions on our website or social media channels.

David LaBelle
spent his boyhood years taking photos and began his storied photojournalism career while still in high school. He has worked for 20 newspapers and magazines in nine states, and taught at three universities. The internationally known photographer, author and lecturer has shared his photo tips and life perspectives here since 2009. For more information, visit www.greatpicturehunt.com.
Cooking for Two

This cookbook contains more than 180 recipes. Most include a side dish as well as dessert. Included are the heartfelt and entertaining stories that accompany the recipes.

Some of the recipes featured are Fabulous Fish Tacos, Peach Cobbler, Cheddar Cheese Scones, Black Bean and Tomato Soup, Crunchy Peanut Bars, India Butter Chicken and Marmalade Salmon.

The cookbook is spiral-bound with covers, indexed and costs $6 (includes postage).

To order by mail, submit with proper payment, include the cookbook title, name, address and number of cookbooks wanted to Ruralite Cookbooks, 5625 NE Elam Young Pkwy, Ste 400, Hillsboro, OR 97124.

To pay with Visa, MasterCard, Discover card or American Express, call 503-357-2105. To order online, visit www.ruralite.com.

Allow 2-3 weeks for delivery.
Big, bold and full of life. That’s the dream American sculptor James Earle Fraser had for his new U.S. five-cent piece—and boy, did he deliver.

The classic American Buffalo Nickel is incredibly brave in its use of space, taking up nearly the entire face of both sides of the coin. It showcases two icons of the American spirit—an American bison and a composite profile of three Native American chiefs.

The Buffalo Nickel created generations of coin collectors around the world. And now, through this special offer, you can secure a half or full roll of these historic, absolutely authentic coins in Good or better condition at an incredible price!

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Struck between 1920 and 1938, these coins circulated heavily throughout the United States, especially during the Great Depression. Many were worn down until they were unrecognizable, while others have disappeared into private collections. But you’re in luck—the coins offered here have stood the test of time for more than 80 years with their full date and main details intact.

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By Michael Rovito

The email in your inbox looks like it came from a coworker. The signature line is the same. The person’s name is spelled correctly, and it even talks about something you deal with in your job. The email contains a request to click on a link. Without thinking much about it, you click that link and open the door for a hacker. They have just gained access to your computer and everything on it.

What was once a scenario in science fiction movies is now an inconvenience in everyday life. The connected world enables countless possibilities, including the chance for nefarious actors to exploit security vulnerabilities and take control of your digital information.

The first line of defense against cyber intrusions starts with the weakest security link: Us. It only takes one misplaced click for perpetrators to gain access.

Electric cooperatives in Alaska have made cybersecurity a high priority, alongside physical security and general safety. Many cooperatives have worked with federal agencies such as the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and the Department of Homeland Security to strengthen their defenses. Trainings offered by many organizations (including Alaska Power Association, the statewide trade association for electric utilities) help co-op employees keep engaged with and practice sound cybersecurity as a regular function of their jobs.

Everyday computer users should educate themselves on how to stay safe as well. The United States Computer Emergency Readiness Team is part of the National Cybersecurity and Communications Integration Center, a federal agency focused on reducing systematic cybersecurity and communications challenges.

On its website, US-CERT recommends a variety of ways to protect yourself against cyber intrusion:

- Install and maintain antivirus software directly from a reputable vendor.
- Use caution with links and attachments, even if they seem to come from people you know. Take appropriate precautions when using email and web browsers to reduce the risk of an infection, and turn off the automatic downloading of attachments.
- Block pop-up advertisements. Pop-up blockers disable windows that could potentially contain malicious code. Most browsers have a free feature that can be enabled to block pop-up advertisements.
- Change your passwords. If you think your computer is infected, change all of your passwords, including those stored in your web browser. Create strong passwords that are difficult for attackers to guess.
- Regularly back up your documents, photos and important email messages to the cloud or to an external hard drive. If an infection occurs, your information will be safe.
- Avoid using public Wi-Fi. Unsecured public Wi-Fi may allow an attacker to intercept your device’s network traffic and gain access to your personal information.

For the full US-CERT list, visit www.us-cert.gov/ncas/tips/ST18-271
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Experience the new Ruralite.com
New technology and personal preferences give you more control over your electricity.

By Paul Wesslund

The designer trend in electricity use has been driven by new technology, regulations, and new ways of thinking about utility. Consumers can regulate their energy use and enjoy more control over their electric service. You might call it designer electricity.

The thermostat on your wall marks a new era in electricity. Whether it’s a dial-style older than you or a digital model installed last month, it’s become more than just a way to set the temperature in your home. That familiar gadget is now a gateway to a world where consumers have more say over their electric service.

You might call it designer electricity. New technology, new regulations and new ways of thinking about utility are reshaping the industry. Consumers can regulate the temperature in their homes more precisely. They can even generate their own electricity with rooftop solar panels and sell the excess power back to their utility.

This new world started taking shape in the 1990s, says Andrew Cotter, a program manager for the Business and Technology Strategies Group of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. "Cutting costs and raising reliability for sensitive electronic equipment was top of mind. Companies were willing to pay extra for electric service that wouldn’t blink off for even a fraction of a second. Other companies didn’t need such high reliability, and looked for ways to pay less in return for occasional power interruptions."

"There’s a trend that’s been going on for a long time, but it’s just starting in homes," Cotter says. "New technology, new regulations and new ways of thinking about utility are reshaping the industry. Consumers can regulate the temperature in their home, and look for ways to pay less in return for occasional power interruptions."

A designer trend can be the entry point for a lot of people to take advantage of smart home technology and be more energy efficient.

"That’s just the beginning of ways consumers are making more of their own energy decisions. Highly efficient LED bulbs can be controlled from your smartphone. Washers and dryers sense how much water and heat need to be used to clean and dry your clothes.

All that efficiency makes a difference. American’s electricity use has decreased by about 2% in the past three years, according to the U.S. Department of Energy’s Energy Information Administration. That trend is expected to continue for at least the next couple of years.

It Started With Batteries

While energy efficiency saves money, the story of battery storage shows the bigger picture of how consumers are putting utility decision-making into their own hands.

The story began with homeowners using portable, motorized generators to power refrigerators and other crucial appliances during extended outages. Driven by the demand for smaller and stronger chargers for smartphones and other electronics, battery technology improved.

Battery companies thought their improved product could grab part of the portable generator market. Tesla, the high-end electric car company, soon announced a battery designed to look attractive enough to hang on your wall and provide backup power. Other companies followed.

In addition to providing relief from power outages, Tesla promoted its battery to the growing renewable energy market. Homeowners installing solar panels on their roofs ran into a problem. They generated a lot of electricity in the middle of a sunny day, when no one was home to use it, and none at night, when they were home wanting to use electricity.

"Batteries can store the sunlight. Utilities are navigating a lot of difficult decisions," Cotter says. "They’re not selling as many kilowatt-hours. They’re selling technology that reduces sales, so they’re working to come up with a sustainable business model. There are no easy answers.

"Batteries are in a unique position, with long power lines that have to cover a much larger area than the local energy expert, " he says. "Vendors are working to give people a way to use energy more efficiently. Consumers need to talk to their utility before making major power-use decisions."

"Talk to your co-op first because they’re the local energy expert," he says. "Vendors need a goal of selling products. The co-op— as a not-for-profit, member-owned utility—has a different perspective that will be more in your interest."
BEFORE YOU GO

Take a bow: Kathy Jederlinich asked readers to donate leftover fleece material to serve the greater good, and, wow, did you deliver!

Labor of love: Kathy, of Blodgett, Oregon, wanted to give seniors in assisted living a way to be involved in their community. Her answer: “Heart in a Blanket.” The special outreach invites seniors to put the finishing touches on fun patchwork fleece blankets, which then go to those in need.

Special delivery: During Christmas, five blankets went to a local family, and six others were given to a nonprofit in town that donates beds to kids.

Not done yet: “Heart in a Blanket” is going multigenerational, with the Oregon State University Craft Center partnering with the project. As part of the effort, OSU students will make soft fleece toys to put in pockets in the blankets, Kathy reports. That means even more fleece is needed.

To donate, email Kathy at thejeds@peak.org

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Stauer... Afford the Extraordinary.
Sacred Stone of the Southwest is on the Brink of Extinction

Centuries ago, Persians, Tibetans and Mayans considered turquoise a gemstone of the heavens, believing the striking blue stones were sacred pieces of sky. Today, the rarest and most valuable turquoise is found in the American Southwest—but the future of the blue beauty is unclear.

On a recent trip to Tucson, we spoke with fourth generation turquoise traders who explained that less than five percent of turquoise mined worldwide can be set into jewelry and only about twenty mines in the Southwest supply gem-quality turquoise. Once a thriving industry, many Southwest mines have run dry and are now closed.

We found a limited supply of turquoise from Arizona and snatched it up for our Sedona Turquoise Collection. Inspired by the work of those ancient craftsmen and designed to showcase the exceptional blue stone, each stabilized vibrant cabochon features a unique, one-of-a-kind matrix surrounded in Bali metalwork. You could drop over $1,200 on a turquoise pendant, or you could secure 26 carats of genuine Arizona turquoise for just $99.

Your satisfaction is 100% guaranteed. If you aren’t completely happy with your purchase, send it back within 30 days for a complete refund of the item price.

The supply of Arizona turquoise is limited, don’t miss your chance to own the Southwest’s brilliant blue treasure. Call today!

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