



United Electric Cooperative, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

United Electric Cooperative, Inc.

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From the President & CEO



Committed to a co-op culture for all

By Brenda Swartzlander

OVER THE years, you've heard me express why and how United Electric is different: because we're a cooperative. Our business model sets us apart from other utilities because we adhere to seven guiding cooperative principles that reflect core values of honesty, transparency, equity, inclusiveness and service to the greater good of the community.

Electric cooperatives, including United, have a unique and storied place in our country's history. We democratized the American dream by bringing electricity to rural areas when for-profit electric companies decided the effort was too costly. Throughout the early 1900s, cities were electrified, and rural areas were not, creating the original rural-urban divide. Newly established electric cooperatives built the electric lines that powered economic opportunity in rural areas. Today, that spirit of equity and inclusion is a vital part of our co-op DNA.

Equal access for all

When our electric co-op was founded in 1936, each member contributed an equal share in order to gain access to electricity that benefited individual families, as well as the larger local community. Each member had an equal vote in co-op matters. That sense of equity and inclusion is still

how we operate today. United Electric was built by and belongs to the diverse communities and the members we serve.

By virtue of paying your electric bill each month, you're a member of the co-op, and every member has an equal voice and vote when it comes to co-op governance. This ties back to our guiding principles of equitable economic participation and democratic control.

We encourage all members to vote in director elections, and we invite all members to participate in co-op meetings to weigh in on discussions that set co-op policies and priorities.

We know members of our community have different needs and perspectives, and we welcome diverse views on all issues under consideration by the co-op. The more viewpoints we hear, the better we are able to reflect the needs of all corners of our community.

Inclusion

While our top priority is providing safe, reliable and affordable energy, we also want to be a catalyst for good in our community. Because we are your local electric cooperative, co-op revenues stay right here in our community. In turn, we invest in our diverse community base through scholarship programs, charitable giving, educational

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Rustic Views

Marching into March

By Glenn Schuckers

THE EASIEST way to remember what I have to do this month is remember its name: March. If I remember it not as a noun (the name of a month), but as a verb (as in “march forward”), I know what I have to do. March is a time to look ahead, to “march” toward spring and then summer.

For the people who like to grow their own vegetable plants and flowers from seeds rather than buy plants that are ready to set out, this is the month to plant those seeds. Plants like tomatoes, peppers, cabbage and the like need about eight or nine weeks to grow before making the trip to the garden. That means that plants that go to a garden in mid-May need to get started around the middle of March. Locally, we are generally past the danger of frost by May 15, and that is usually a good time to plant.

Some flowers grow a little faster, so they may not need to be planted until close to the end of this month. Nonetheless, scratching the itch to get things growing can be satisfied by starting plants in little cubes or peat pots or whatever you choose to use this month.

When we lived in our former house, we had a room with a wall of windows that faced south. It was an ideal place to put trays of plants. It received lots of sun for at least half a day and had a wide shelf that allowed us to have four or five trays of plants growing. We no longer have a room like that and, short of grow lights and some other changes that would be necessary, I don't have a



Glenn Schuckers, a longtime member of United Electric, operated Schuckers' Orchard in Luthersburg until the mid-1990s. He is a retired high school teacher and a contributing writer for *The Courier Express*.

We are pleased to have Glenn provide our *Penn Lines* readers with his take on rural life.



IT'S TIME: Get your pruning tools of the trade ready to go in March.

good place to start plants from seeds.

But there is no excuse for not doing another job that needs to be done this month: trimming, or to use a fancier word, pruning.

Since trees of all varieties follow their own natural order, they need our help to stay healthy. One thing trees of all kinds need is yearly trimming. Trees may produce limbs and branches that will be prone to breaking as they get larger, there may be more limbs than a tree can support, and they may produce so many limbs that the tree cannot get the two things it needs to grow.

The two things all trees need to grow are sunlight and air. A tree that is so thick that neither sunlight nor air can flow freely though it will not thrive. That is one of the things we all need to remember when we go out to trim.

The other thing to keep in mind is that in March most trees have no leaves on them. They look very barren and bare. I have to keep in mind that by the end of May they will be covered with leaves that will fill in the open places we see now. It's hard, but I have to try to visualize a tree that is covered

with leaves and will have new growth everywhere.

Seeing something not as it is but as it is going to be is hard, but farmers and gardeners do it all the time. A field that is brown in March may be covered with rows of corn or oats by June. That takes vision to see.

Planting rows of beans that are 30 inches apart may seem like a waste of space, but visualizing the rows with plants that grow a foot wide means that there will be room to cultivate the plants and then pick the beans later.

Take it from someone who tried to “save space” by planting bush beans in rows about a foot apart. By the time the beans were ready to pick, I could not get through the rows and had to reach out over the plants to find the beans. Not a good way to harvest green beans.

The same thing goes for things like tomatoes, squash and pumpkins. They all (at least the ones called “indeterminate”) spread out. That word is one the seed companies use to mean they will spread out over half the garden. Again, that is experience talking.

I looked at a new variety of tomatoes that looked interesting: old-fashioned taste, 12-ounce tomatoes, ripe in 80 days, resistant to disease. But there



READY FOR PRUNING: Many trees, including this crab apple tree, are waiting to be pruned.

at the end of the description was the phrase, “These 8-foot vines will produce loads of tomatoes.” Eight-foot vines? Can you imagine the stakes it’s going to take to support those vines? Me neither. Someone else can plant them. I do use some 4-foot “cages,” but where we live, the wind usually blows them over as soon as the plants get to the top.

Last year, I went back to the method we used 40 years ago when we grew tomatoes for the commercial market: plants 3 feet apart in rows 4 feet apart with straw on the ground as mulch.

It’s not a perfect system, but with the straw from a good neighbor and plants spaced far enough apart, we had a good crop.

So, I’m looking ahead this month. I have the trimming tools ready and have already trimmed some trees. Ice storms broke some big limbs on trees and that will require a chainsaw, but mostly it will be opening trees for air and sunlight, and remembering what the tree will look like in June.

That’s marching forward in March and trying to stay in step with nature. ☀

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The advertisement features a large, white, cylindrical water heater with a control panel on the right side. The background is a blue, wavy pattern. The text is in white and black, with some bolding for emphasis.

From the President & CEO

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programs and more. We strive to make long-term decisions that improve and enrich the communities we serve.

While today's world is completely different than it was when United was founded in 1936, our cooperative values have stood the test of time and remain just as relevant today. We recognize that today's co-op members expect more, and my pledge to you, our members, is to promote a cooperative culture of inclusion and equity for all.

Until next time,



Brenda

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