

ECE Co-op Advantage

Have you heard the buzz?

Pollinators play a key role in the production of over 150 American food crops (see this month's Watt's Cookin' recipe). Declining populations, due mostly to habitat loss, could spell disaster for some food producers.

We manage vegetation along thousands of miles of line, allowing us to play a unique role in creating and preserving pollinator habitat. By removing tall, problematic trees from our rights-of-way, we allow low-growing grasses and flowering shrubs to flourish.



Blooming prairie, for the benefit of pollinators, at Great River Energy's Elk River Campus.

We are also creating roughly 2.5 acres of pollinator-friendly habitat near our Superior Operations Center. These combined efforts help provide habitat connectivity, which is crucial for migrating pollinators like the monarch butterfly.

Please visit one of our offices in June to pick up a free packet of native seeds to plant at home.



(One per member household while supplies last)

June 17-23 is National Pollinator Week



Feeling inspired to join the call to action? You're not alone; adding native vegetation to gardens is becoming more and more popular with businesses and homeowners alike. Native plant communities not only look beautiful, they also provide a range of ecological benefits—one of which is habitat for several thousand plant and animal species. There are many simple things each of us can do at home to protect our pollinators:

- **Choose native plants.** It is best to choose locally-sourced, native species. Native plants have adapted to the local climate; therefore, they provide the best source of nutrition to native animals.
- **Reduce or eliminate insecticides.** When you use insecticides in your yard and gardens to control unwanted bugs, they are usually toxic to pollinating insects as well. Limit their use as much as possible.
- **Support local beekeepers.** Buy honey from trusted sources. Most importantly, support sustainable beekeepers who sell honey, and when possible, buy from local beekeepers at your closest farmer's market.
- **Conserve resources.** Support land conservation in your community by helping to create and maintain community gardens and green spaces to ensure that pollinators have appropriate habitat.
- **Become a citizen scientist.** Everyday citizens are gathering data to help scientists understand more about pollinators. Visit monarchwatch.org for ideas.

Together, we can *bee* the solution!



Contributed by ECE Member Account Analyst Alicia Kroll

Follow Alicia's blog, Powering our Pollinators, on our website for more information and updates on our pollinator habitat project.

Watt's Cookin'

June is Pollinator Month! Support our pollinators with this delicious recipe contributed by ECE employee (and pollinator blogger) Alicia Kroll.

STRAWBERRY SALAD

 = Ingredients made possible by pollinators

SALAD

10 oz. mixed green lettuce or spinach
1 lb. strawberries, hulled and thinly sliced 
4 clementines, peeled and segmented 
¾ c. dried cranberries 
¾ c. sliced almonds (toasting optional) 
1 avocado, diced 
¾ c. feta cheese

DRESSING

½ c. olive oil
3-4 large clementines (2 tsp. zest and 4 T. juice) 
1 large lemon (½ tsp. zest and 2 T. juice) 
2 ½ tsp. honey 
2 tsp. Dijon mustard 
½ tsp. fine sea salt

In a large bowl, toss together lettuce, strawberries, clementines, and dried cranberries. For the dressing, combine all ingredients (except the olive oil) in a food processor or blender. Blend until incorporated. Slowly add the oil in a stream until combined and emulsified. Just before serving, add almonds, avocado, feta cheese, and dressing to taste.

*Note: Dressing can be made up to five days ahead and stored in the refrigerator. Does not store well once dressing is on salad.

To enter our Watt's Cookin' contest, mail your favorite 10-minute meal recipe to Watt's Cookin', P.O. Box 39, Braham, MN 55006. Entries must include your name, address, telephone number, ECE account number, and be received by Aug. 16, 2019. The winning recipe and the contributor's name and city will be featured in a future edition of the Co-op Advantage. Recipes can also be emailed to info@ecemn.com.



Will your AC unit make it through the summer?

Don't sweat it—ECE's got you covered. With rebates up to **\$2,000**, the time to purchase an air source heat pump is **NOW!** Plus, you may qualify for ECE's zero-percent financing.

For environmentally friendly heating and cooling, an air source heat pump is the natural choice. Quiet and efficient, heat pumps use the heat found naturally in the air.

Enhanced rebates for a limited time only! Visit our website or call us for details.



Auto Pay WINNER

Visit our website to learn about Auto Pay. If you would like to be entered in the monthly drawing, sign up for Auto Pay today!

Members who currently participate in Auto Pay will automatically be entered in the drawing.

Congratulations
Reid Masloski, North Branch, MN

Cindy Rolain closes her ECE chapter

After nearly 12 years of sharing ECE's messages with members, I've put down my pen and opened a new chapter in my life—retirement.

I came to our electric co-op in search of a new work experience after 27 years as a local newspaper editor. Like most of you, I called the pad-mounted transformer in our yard 'the green box.' One power line was the same as the next to me. I had no idea what happens in a substation. This industry loves its acronyms—NRECA, kWh, SCADA, OH, URD, to name just a few. It was like jumping into a bowl of alphabet soup.

Immersed in learning my new job, I found my touchstone in a simple phrase, "the cooperative difference." At ECE it manifests itself in ways too numerous to count, but for me, the following example comes to mind: I was asked early on to write a response to a member who had jotted a comment on his payment stub. My initial thought was, 'What business takes the time to do that?' I was proud to learn this one does.

The people who work here would never say this, but they really do live the cooperative difference, treating each other with respect and kindness, volunteering in the community, and rushing generously to help anyone who is suffering through hard times. I've interviewed many retiring employees in my time here, and they all gave the same answer when asked what they liked best about their job. Without any prompting they said, "The people I worked with." I agree.



As community relations coordinator, my job has kept me in touch with our local newspapers and radio stations and deepened my appreciation for these important community institutions.

I enjoyed coordinating and helping with GreenTouch at Father Hennepin State Park in Isle each year because of the wonderful people who participate. Spending a day with a line crew in the Superior area so I could write an article about their work remains one of my favorite adventures. Thanks to the members who shared their stories of life with kerosene lanterns, woodstoves and water pumped by hand, I gained a new appreciation for the comforts of electricity. I'll never marvel at the power of a storm again without thinking of everyone at ECE.

Communicating about the co-op has been both a challenge and a delight as change transforms this industry. The incandescent light bulb gave way to the CFL, which has

now been replaced by the LED, all in less than a decade. The futuristic topics of 2007 are now part of our daily lives: a solar array at our headquarters and an electric vehicle in the garage. I couldn't imagine telling you to "tap the app" or "live chat with us" just a few years ago. The ability to recognize change and successfully adapt to it are ECE strengths.

Until my husband, Jaye, catches up to me in a couple years, retirement means unhurried summer mornings drinking coffee on the deck and watching our puppy try to catch squirrels. I hope to spend time at Prairie Lake, enjoy road trips in our motorhome, visit our son and daughter-in-law more often, and maybe put some words on paper for the fun of it now and then. For the time being, just having an unscheduled life is enough for me.



Signing off one last time,

~ Cindy

Generator safety with an RV

When you hit the road in your recreational vehicle (RV) this summer, you may use a generator to power the microwave, refrigerator, or other small appliances. Generators produce carbon monoxide (CO), which is an odorless, colorless gas. It can poison people or animals who breathe it in. To avoid RV-related CO poisoning, make sure your area is properly ventilated.

Also:

- Inspect the generator's exhaust system before using.
- Always make sure the exhaust is directed away from the camping area.
- Listen for unusual sounds when starting your generator.
- Try to run the generator at least once a week to keep the unit lubricated.
- Do not use generators at night.

Remember, CO poisoning can occur in any enclosed space, including a zipped tent. Keep a CO unit in your RV. For more information, visit SafeElectricity.org. Happy trails!



ENERGY MATTERS

with ECE President/CEO Steve Shurts

Powering our pollinators through solar

Renewable energy is comprising an ever-larger portion of our electricity supply. Hundreds of you have helped facilitate this growth in cleaner generation resources by participating in our renewable energy program, agreeing to a small additional charge on your monthly electric bill. Your support is helping to add renewable energy to the electric grid.

Great River Energy (GRE), our power supplier, exceeded the 25% renewable energy standard six years ahead of the state requirement. The renewable power generation portfolio includes wind energy, hydropower, and solar. GRE has also announced plans for more favorably priced wind energy by 2020.

When ENGIE North America, a private energy company, completes its 2 MW solar array in Cambridge, MN later this year, a bit more of the sun's energy will be added to ECE's portfolio. GRE will purchase the energy from ENGIE under a 25-year contract, and then deliver and sell the entire output to

ECE. We'll connect the array to our lines, which is our only investment in the project. This solar array will generate enough electricity for more than 300 homes.

Construction of the array is expected to begin in July on 15 acres of city land adjacent to Sandquist Park. ENGIE will lease the property from the city. The layout includes a low-growing, pollinator-friendly meadow, eliminating the need for mowing and other costly upkeep. This new natural habitat is equivalent to planting wildflowers and grasses in over 9,000 backyard gardens. The deep roots of pollinator grasses also have significant soil and storm water benefits.

We're happy to see renewable energy projects like this one cropping up in communities across the state and the nation. Though they can't completely replace baseload power plants, they are a critical part of the balanced energy mix that's necessary for a cleaner environment and a continued supply of safe, reliable electricity.



East Central Energy
P.O. Box 39
Braham, MN 55006

Service Center locations:
Braham, Milaca, and Finlayson
Monday-Friday
Hours vary by service center.

1.800.254.7944
General business calls are answered from 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday-Friday.

Emergency and outage calls are answered 24 hours a day.

Email: info@ecemn.com

The ECE Board of Directors meets monthly. Please call Executive Administrator Julie Johnson at 763-689-8046 to confirm meeting information.

The Co-op Advantage newsletter is published by East Central Energy, your not-for-profit, member-owned, local electric cooperative.

ECE is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Website:
eastcentralenergy.com





PREVENT **DEADLY SHOCKS**

Check your boats and docks

Have a safe summer on the water.
Poor wiring creates hazards that can electrocute swimmers, boaters and people on the dock.

Learn more about electric shock drowning at [Safe
Electricity.org](https://www.SafeElectricity.org)

ECE 1.800.254.7944
eastcentralenergy.com

ECE is an equal opportunity provider and employer.