



May 2012

**RURAL**  
MISSOURI

# Sac Osage Electric Cooperative

# News

P.O. Box 111, 4815 E HWY 54  
El Dorado Springs, MO 64744  
Telephone: 800-876-2701

Visit us on the Web - [www.sacosage.com](http://www.sacosage.com)



## Ralph Bland graduates from the Management Internship Program

Sac Osage Electric Cooperative Financial and Administrative Manager, Ralph Bland, has completed an intensive program in electric utility management with the University of Wisconsin - Madison.

The Robert I. Kabat Management Internship Program (MIP) is a series of workshops offered by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association in conjunction with the University of Wisconsin. The program guides participants through all facets of the electric utility industry, including the many changes occurring around the nation.

Ralph Bland is one of only a few electric utility management staff that will graduate from the Management Internship Program this year. MIP participants go through three 10-day sessions designed to challenge and educate participants in new, innovative management techniques. Participants leave with a better understanding of what consumers want and how to ensure they get it.

By also covering the unique principles that govern the operations of electric cooperatives, the program helps the co-op analyze other business ventures it may want to enter as well as enhancing the core organization.

Only rural electric cooperative CEOs and top level management participate in the program. This allows greater emphasis of study, on management challenges and the aspects of consumer-ownership that cooperatives enjoy. Participants learn to focus on member value as part of day-to-day decision making. Ralph Bland has completed one of the most exclusive educational programs in the nation for electric cooperative management.



Ralph Bland, above, accepts a certificate from Gary Pfann for completing the Management Internship Program offered by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.



### Take advantage of Sac Osage's Rebate Program *NOW!!!*

*It will end May 31, 2012*

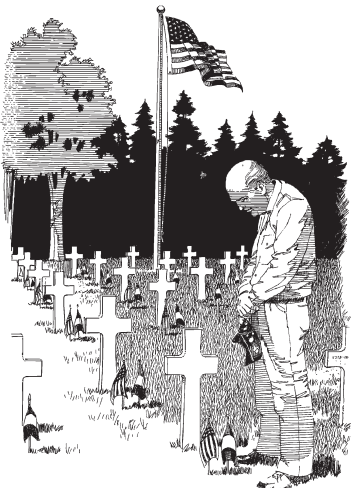
Energy Star Dishwasher - \$50

Energy Star Clothes Washer - \$100

*You must have an electric water heater  
to qualify for SOEC rebate.*



Contact our Member Service Department at 800-876-2701



**OUR OFFICE WILL BE  
CLOSED ON MAY 28TH  
IN OBSERVANCE OF  
MEMORIAL DAY.**

## Plant colonists

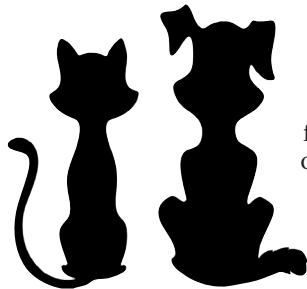
Forsythias and lilacs are common springtime sights in the United States, but neither plant is native. The forsythia made its way from China to England thanks to Robert Fortune, a plant hunter for the Royal Horticultural Society. A few plants sailed to America with settlers



in 1860. Lilacs may have come from Persia to New Hampshire in 1695. In 1750, purple lilacs were planted at Gov. Wentworth's home in Portsmouth, and in 1919, the purple lilac was adopted as New Hampshire's official state flower.

## Pet appreciation week

The American Humane Association has designated the first full week in May (May 1 to 7 this year) as a time to appreciate pets and other animals. Dogs and cats were once worshipped as gods in some societies. In the 11th century, a dog called Saur was



named king of Norway by his master, the actual ruler, who was angry with his subjects for having once deposed him. English writer Samuel Johnson fed his favorite cat, Hodge, fresh oysters every day; and U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt invited his extra-toed cat, Slippers, to diplomatic dinners.

## Tornadoes and green skies

Most tornadoes in the United States occur in May, often striking suddenly and without warning, and few natural phenomena are harder to predict. Folk wisdom advises that a "pale green sky means the wind is high." In other words, the sky turns green just before a

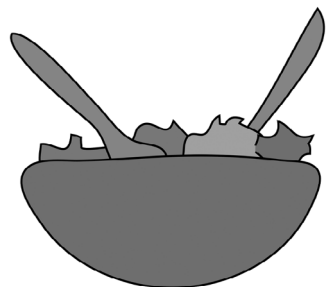


tornado forms. Although no one knows for certain why this happens, one theory suggests that because storms usually develop in the afternoon, the longer wavelengths (red and yellow) of afternoon sunlight (already deficient in blue) turn the bluish, water-heavy clouds green.

For recipes, gardening tips and weather forecasts, visit:  
[www.almanac.com](http://www.almanac.com)



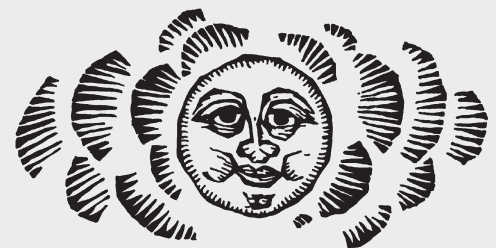
### Recipe for Goat Cheese and Greens



4 cups mixed salad greens  
1 medium red onion, peeled and sliced  
4 ounces fresh goat cheese, crumbled  
2 tomatoes, cored and cut into wedges  
Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste  
Croutons  
Balsamic vinaigrette

Rinse salad greens, pat dry and place in a large salad bowl. Add the red onion, goat cheese and tomatoes. Season with salt and pepper. When ready to serve, add the croutons and vinaigrette and toss well. Makes 6 to 8 servings.

## THE OLD FARMER'S



## WEATHER PROVERBS

**A cold May is kindly  
and fills the barn  
finely.**

**The weather usually  
clears at noon when  
a southerly wind is  
blowing.**

**With dew before mid-  
night, the next day  
will sure be bright.**

**When the thrush sings  
at sunset, a fair day  
will follow.**

**Plant the bean when  
the moon is light;  
plant potatoes when  
the moon is dark.**

**Clover contracts its  
leaves at the approach  
of a storm.**

**Wind roaring into the  
chimney, there is rain  
to come.**

**A late spring is a great  
blessing.**



H O M E C O M F O R T

# Clean Coils = Higher Efficiency

*Keeping your air-conditioning unit free of debris and dirt can save you money*

Dear Jim: I want my old air conditioner to run as efficiently as possible. If my cooling costs still are too high, I will think about replacing it. Other than a professional service call, what can I do to tune it up myself? — Bob W.



by Jim Dulley

**D**ear Bob: It is wise to make sure your existing central air conditioner is running as efficiently as possible to reduce your electric bills. Actual cooling costs depend upon weather conditions, so they can vary significantly from year to year, making accurate comparisons of energy use difficult.

The easiest way to determine the savings from installing a new central air conditioner is to compare the SEER (seasonal energy efficiency ratio) of your existing model to that of a new model. You can be pretty sure your existing unit isn't operating more efficiently than when it was first installed, so the energy savings from this comparison will be on the conservative side.

There are additional savings from installing a more efficient model. Electric utility companies have to provide enough electricity generation capacity to meet peak demand even though it is often not needed. If peak electricity demand can be decreased by homes running newer higher-efficiency air conditioners, then fewer power plants will have to be built. The enormous cost of building a power plant is a factor in electric rates.

There are some things you can do yourself to keep your central air conditioner running as efficiently as possible. This does not preclude having regular professional service calls, though. Technicians have special equipment and pressure gauges to check the internal components of the system, which is impossible for a homeowner to do alone. Regular service calls also can extend the life of a central air conditioner.

It helps to have an understanding of how an air conditioner works. It operates on a delicate balance of air flow rates over the indoor and outdoor coils and proper pressures of the refrigerant. The compressor compresses the refrigerant to make it very hot. This hot liquid is hotter than the outdoor air, so it loses heat to the outdoor air through the condenser coils.

The cooler refrigerant



Adequate air flow is key to your air conditioner's efficient operation, so keep your unit free of leaves and other debris.

then goes through an evaporator, which makes it very cold. This is similar to how your skin cools off when perspiration evaporates. This cold refrigerant flows through the indoor coil. The blower moves indoor air over these cold coils, which cools your house air. At the same time, water condenses on the cold coils so the indoor air is both cooled and dehumidified.

Getting adequate air flow through the outdoor condenser coils is important for efficiency, as it will allow the refrigerant to be colder when it gets indoors. It can really help efficiency to make sure weeds and shrubs have not grown too close to the outdoor unit and impede air flow. Also, don't rest rakes or other items against it that may block air flow.

Switch off the circuit breaker to the unit and remove the outdoor cabinet. Clean out any debris that has accumulated inside that may block the coils. You don't have to make it spotless, though. If fins have been bent over in spots, try to straighten them out enough so

more air gets through.

It is important that all the screws holding the cabinet sections together are tight when you reinstall the cabinet. Even if it is clean and you do not remove the cabinet, check all the screws. If they are loose, leaks will draw air in gaps instead of through the coils as designed.

Just as the proper amount of air flow is important through the outdoor coils, it also is important through the indoor coils. With the circuit breaker still switched off, remove the side cover on the indoor unit to expose the evaporator coils and the blower. When you reinstall the cover, make sure to tighten the screws.

Quite a bit of dirt can accumulate on the indoor coils, blocking air flow and insulating them from the air. This is because the coils get damp when the air conditioner is running and dirt sticks to it. Wipe the coils and then use the brush attachment on your vacuum cleaner to clean them and the blower as well as possible.

Even though everyone has heard to change the blower filter regularly, most people don't do it. At the beginning of the cooling season, change your system's air filter whether you think it is dirty or not. A dirty filter increases air flow resistance, which reduces efficiency. Check the joints in the ducts for any air leaks. Seal them with aluminum tape or black Gorilla duct tape.

*Have a question for Jim? Write to: James Dulley, Rural Missouri, 6906 Royalgreen Drive, Cincinnati, OH 45244 or visit [www.dulley.com](http://www.dulley.com).*



Cleaning the evaporator coils inside your indoor air handler unit will improve the unit's efficiency.



## Get ready for summer efficiency

*Here's how to save in the summer sun*

**M**issouri's typically long hot and humid summer is just around the corner. Here's what you can do now to be more energy efficient this summer:

**Take care of your air conditioner and fans** — If you haven't already attended to your air conditioner, schedule a maintenance check or do your own. Specifically:

- Replace or clean the filters and do that every month the unit is in use
  - Oil the bearing on the blower if your unit is not self-oiling
  - Have the refrigerant level checked, particularly if the unit doesn't appear to be cooling properly
  - Check relays, switches and motors if not cooling properly
  - Make sure fan and compressor are working on outdoor condensers
  - Make sure you haven't tripped a breaker if the unit doesn't come on
  - Set the thermostat low enough for the air conditioner to kick on
- If you need a new unit, consider a high-efficiency one that is Energy Star-qualified. It can save up to 20 percent on costs and use 25 percent to 40 percent less energy than a new conventional system, according to Energy Star.

Move lamps and TV sets away from room air-conditioning thermostats so the heat from these appliances doesn't trigger the unit to run longer than necessary.

**Clean your ceiling and portable fans** — or install them if you don't have any. A ceiling fan can make you feel 4 degrees cooler, meaning you can set your thermostat higher than normal and still feel comfortable, according to the U.S. Department of Energy's Energy Savers. Buy Energy Star-qualified fans, which can move air 20 percent more efficiently than other models.

**Keep the hot air out** — Seal cracks and openings to prevent warm air from leaking into your home. Add caulking or weatherstripping to seal air leaks around doors and windows and save as much as 30 percent on your energy bill. Install drapes, awnings or other shading on south- and west-facing windows to block heat. If your budget permits, add insulation to walls (R5 to R6 in Missouri, per Energy Star) and begin replacing single-pane windows with more efficient ones — which are eligible for a federal tax credit of 30 percent.

Also close the flue in your fireplace. Check air ducts for leaks and the level of attic insulation to see if it's settled. R-49 is now the insulation standard for attics in Missouri.

**Lower your water-heating costs** — Water heating can account for 14 percent to 25 percent of the energy consumed in your home. Turn down the temperature of the heater to 120 degrees. That's warm enough to do the job without scalding your hands. To remove scales that impede the efficiency of the heater, flush out the heater once a year. Also, wrap the heater with insulation if it is in an unconditioned space. According to DOE, this simple step can reduce the cost of heating water by 9 percent.

**Install a programmable thermostat** — This device will automate the cooling process in your house and can save up to \$150 in energy costs annually, according to Energy Star. Set the thermostat at 78 degrees or above and leave it there.



**Shade your house** — It's not too late to plant that tree on the south or southwest corner of your house that will provide welcome shade in a few years. In fact, a 6-foot to 8-foot deciduous tree planted near your home will begin shading windows the first year. Depending on the species and the home, the tree will shade the roof in five to 10 years.

According to DOE, strategically placed trees and shrubs can save up to 25 percent of home energy consumption year round and up to 50 percent on air conditioning costs. Even shading your room unit condenser with an awning, cover or shade from plants/trees can increase its efficiency as much as 10 percent.

**Lighten your house exterior** — Light-colored house exteriors and roofs reflect most of the radiant energy from the sun away in contrast to dull or dark exteriors that absorb 70 percent to 80 percent. If it's time to repaint your house or re-shingle it, go light instead of dark.



### Energy Efficiency

### *Tip of the Month*

Properly hooking up your clothes dryer can save on energy costs. Check to make sure the dryer vent hose is tightly connected to the dryer and the outside wall fitting and is not kinked or clogged. Use a vacuum to remove lint inside the dryer for safety and efficiency.

**Just a friendly reminder that  
May is catch up month for those  
members on Budget Billing.**