



The AUUF Green Pages – April 2008

Living Green, Living Well!

(o o) ∨ *The Green Raven*

Since my electric utility (Tallapoosa River Electric Co-op) puts out a monthly magazine, *Alabama Living*, which sits to the right of most of what I read, I browse it for a bit of balance, for our own Katie Lamar Jackson's garden column and various other useful articles. This month it features a piece on global warming, calling it, demurely: "A Sound Approach to Climate Change," by Jennifer Taylor and Scott Gates, writers for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

So this article shows how the people at the top of the national rural electric club propose to keep producing more and more electricity while keeping climate change in check. That would be nice. Electric power is the biggest source of greenhouse gases – so far. As things get worse, methane bubbling out of the thawing

tundra, or CO₂ off-gassing from the acidic oceans may be more appalling.

Page one of the article has a pie chart showing about half our co-op's energy comes from coal; the other half is split about evenly into hydro and other renewables, nuclear, and natural gas.

The authors say "electric cooperatives have a responsibility to keep policy makers in check, ensuring that the right solutions are developed and implemented in ways that keep the nation's lights on in an affordable way." That puts a heavy burden on the co-ops, but where has democracy gone? "Keep policy makers in check?" I thought it was climate change to be held back.

Page two has another colorful illustration, a circle of seven hexagons supposedly representing elements to make up some future "energy mix." It says, "The energy mix of the future will be diverse." The parts of this mix?

- Clean coal.
- Nuclear.
- Renewables.
- On-site power.
- Energy efficiency.
- Carbon capture & storage.
- Electric vehicles.

Nice. With a bit of legerdemain we have reduced coal from half our power source to 1/7th. Who will notice that on-site power (like wind and solar) is the same as renewables (like wind and solar)? Who will see that electric vehicles are consumers, not producers (for the most part). Carbon sequestration is still a pipe dream. And not a source of energy. The new source added is "energy efficiency" or conservation. This actually

Flick the Switch? Or just Invite the Light? Judy Collins basks with her Buddha-buddy in light from the tubular skylight that really helps brighten up an otherwise dark living area. Tubular skylights don't seem to have the problems of heat gain (or loss) that conventional skylights do. But you do get a lot of light and the satisfaction of knowing this lighting fixture is not spewing any CO₂ or mercury into the air. Questions? Ask Judy.

By the way, that's a sprig of delicious redbud blossoms the Buddha is holding; and that's freshly picked rosemary in the tall vase.



could be the greatest source of “new” power that the cooperatives could produce.

They could subsidize twirly bulbs and caulk for their customers. They could encourage storm windows and efficient appliances. They could lobby for the buy-back provisions for integration of private sources of electricity into the grid, instead of opposing them. They could make coherent policy, instead of “keeping it in check.” Maybe they will. Lets hope so.

*How will we do it? Let me count the ways
We'll do it with those little twirly bulbs that some despise
When waiting for their slowly brightening eyes
We'll do it turning off the things that blaze
while we are down the hall.
We do it when we dry outdoors on sunny days
We do it when we flick off surge protectors
Shutting down our standby powers
We'll do it in a dozen other sectors
That we don't need for hours
We'll do it with a bunch of course correctors
And vegetables, and flowers....*

– Chip Busch

April in the Garden

April might be the garden's biggest month, although the harvests have only just begun. If you were at all lucky in March you will have lots of greens, peas, and broccoli in April. I'm looking forward to peas, mostly, as I've had lettuce, parsley and broccoli all winter. I wonder if peas would do as well over the winter. Tune in next year.

Remember my annual complaint about April: I put out tender transplants in early April. Too often a frost requires covering them in mid-month. Average annual last frost is March 28 or thereabout, but the average is not the latest. Latest recorded frost in Auburn was April 21. Tender plants include tomatoes, peppers (hot and sweet), eggplant, beans, squash, melons, and probably others I am forgetting. Beans won't germinate in cold soil. I guess most of those plants won't grow in the cold.

Tomatoes, peppers and eggplant are usually started indoors, or bought from a nursery well started. Squash, melons can be started indoors, but don't let them grow very much before you move them out. I guess you could do the same with beans. Corn can go into colder soil. Carrots, beets, parsnips, corn, can be planted in early April.

Cultivation is not necessary if you have had a garden before in the spot you are using. People have spoken of “well cultivated soil” for centuries as if it were a

virtue, but periodically we discover that churning is not the point. The point is reducing competition. Pull up the weeds, or mulch them heavily. It may be easiest to dig up clumps of grass and turn them over. Of course, if you are planting on an old roadway, the soil may be too compacted to grow anything well. But you should be aware that stirring up the top 6 or 10 or 15 inches just moves the compacted area down deeper in the soil. “Double-digging” loosens up two shovel depths, and may be useful in some cases. Putting a 6 inch raised bed on top of the ground will do about as well, especially if it has lots of compost in it.

Plant corn in blocks rather than rows, or prepare to help it pollinate. I had my corn in hills last year and would pick one piece of a tassel (when it was shedding pollen) and use it to touch all the silks I could find. Had a decent crop. Corn is heavily subsidized if you happen to be Archer-Daniel-Midland or Cargill. Those of us who try to grow a bit of sweet corn to eat find it an extravagant crop -- it takes up a lot of your garden space for the food it produces. You'll get the most food per square foot, I think, from potatoes or sweet potatoes. But many people think you get the most taste from tomatoes. And peppers are pretty to grow; surely they can have a place in your flower border.

– Chip Busch



Eastern Redbud – *cercis canadensis*

Redbud flowers are edible, with a slightly nutty flavor. They can be added to pancakes or fritters or used as an attractive garnish on salads. Or you can use them to make a unique pickle relish! If you want to sample Redbud flowers, remember, as with the gathering of any wild edible, don't take all that you find. Leave plenty for the tree to produce seeds, for the insects to get nectar and pollen and for people to enjoy for their beauty. When green and tender, the seed pods are also edible and can be cooked and served with butter just like peas.

<http://www.gpnc.org/redbud.htm>