

## A Message From Your Co-op's President and CEO

# Trimming Future Problems

Like many of you, I enjoy the beauty that trees add to our region, especially at this time of year. But I also enjoy the comfort of knowing power will be available when I need it. At Gibson Electric Membership Corporation, we're committed to providing you with reliable power. Some things we can't stop — high winds, lightning, ice storms — but we do what we can to prevent other outage culprits.

Weather-related events cause a whopping 19 percent of power outages, according to a survey by the National Rural

Electric Cooperative Association. Trees, shrubs and brush growing too close to power lines and distribution equipment leads to 15 percent of power interruptions.

To “cut back” on potential tree-related problems, Gibson EMC operates an aggressive vegetation management program. Our line crews and contractors look for foliage growing under lines, branches that overhang lines, trees growing or leaning into power lines and other situations that could pull down a power line if a tree falls.

It's a job that's never done; by the time crews finish trimming activities along our 2,844 miles of distribution lines, vegetation has started to grow back again.

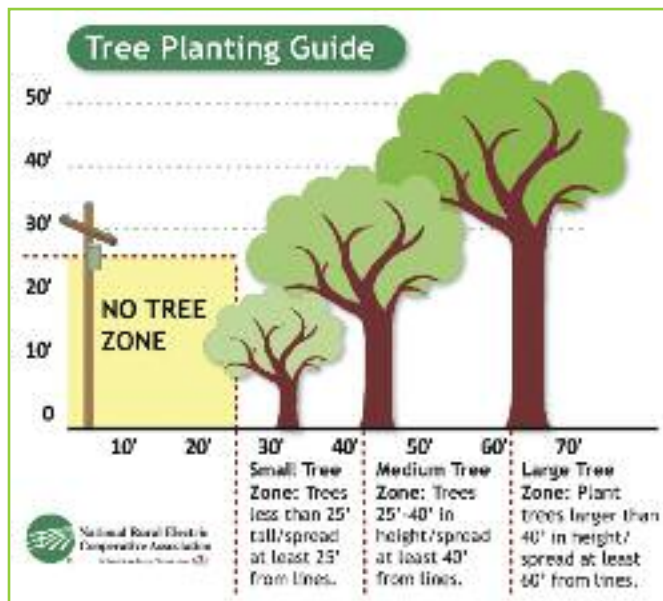
We need your help as we work to keep a safe, reliable and affordable supply of power flowing to your home or business. Call 731-855-4740, ext. 1707, if you notice trees or branches that might pose a risk to our power lines. Even more important, before planting trees in your yard, think about how tall they may grow and how wide their branches may spread.

As a rule of thumb, 25 feet of ground-to-sky clearance should be available on each side of our utility poles to give power lines plenty of space. Choose tree varieties with care, and plant with power lines in mind. To find out more about proper tree-planting, visit [www.arborday.org](http://www.arborday.org).

Thanks for your help as we work together to keep your electricity reliable.



**Dan Rodamaker,**  
Gibson EMC  
President and CEO



## Rodamaker elected to Tennessee Valley Board

Gibson Electric Membership Corporation President and CEO Dan Rodamaker recently was elected by the power distributors of West Tennessee to serve on the Tennessee Valley Public Power Association Board of Directors.

In this capacity, Rodamaker will represent the five cooperatives and 18 municipal electric systems in this part of the state on a 19-member board. The TVPPA Board provides oversight and governance for the association, serving as the final authority on legislative, governmental and rate positions for the 155 power distributors across the Tennessee Valley.

“I'm pleased to have the opportunity to serve in this capacity,” Rodamaker says. “The positions that this group takes and the decisions it makes have a huge impact on Gibson EMC's and all of the Valley's customers. Particularly now, as the future affordability of electricity is threatened by climate-change legislation, power distributors must proactively work together to protect the interests of our customer-owners.”

Rodamaker also actively serves on a number of other local, state, regional and national committees, including the TVPPA Rates and Contracts Committee, the TVPPA Technology Applications Committee and the TVA Energy Services Committee. Like the TVPPA Board of Directors, these three committees also work to protect and assist members or customer-owners of Valley distributors.

“Through the TVPPA Rates and Contracts Committee, I and other distributors help to negotiate and mitigate the impact of TVA rate changes on our customers,” Rodamaker says. “As chairman of the TVPPA Technology Applications Committee, my and the committee's core focus is to develop a smart grid roadmap for the Tennessee Valley. And, as a member of the TVA Energy Services Committee, I work to help develop Valley-wide programs and services as well as distribute information that will help the customers identify ways they can save energy and implement energy-efficiency measures.”



# Check out Gibson EMC's new website!



We have a new website that we can't wait for you to check out!

Gibson Electric Membership Corporation's newly redesigned site provides you, our customer-owner, with loads of useful information and the online tools needed to conveniently manage your electric consumption and your account.

"Our goal is continuous improvement," says Gibson EMC President and CEO Dan Rodamaker. "We are constantly pushing ourselves to provide you with more and better information and exceptional customer service," he says. "I'm confident that our new site will prove to be a great customer resource and tool."

The site makes it easier and more convenient than ever to do business with us. Of course, you can access your account information and pay your bill online, but you also can learn about and sign up for programs and services designed specifically to meet your needs.

At [www.gibsonemc.com](http://www.gibsonemc.com), you will find information specific to your account and your electric bill as well as energy calculators, outage information, answers to frequently asked questions, news, job opportunities and much more! Check it out today!

**Our redesigned website gives you easy access to your electric account and information about our many services and energy-efficiency programs.**

## Online bill payment easy to do

Gibson Electric Membership Corporation's online payment option is available to save our customer-owners time, money and hassle. You can easily view and pay your bill on the Internet in minutes, wherever or whenever you choose. You also eliminate the cost of postage.

Worried about providing your information online? Don't be. Gibson EMC's payment system includes a personal protected gateway and a secure socket layer that is among the best software available for secure commerce transactions.

What are you waiting for? Log on to [www.gibsonemc.com](http://www.gibsonemc.com) today! For more information about online bill payment, contact your local customer service center.

## Online billing helpful hints

- When logging in, be sure you drop the last two digits of your account number. For example, if your account number is 111101, type in 1111.
- Use the password that appears on your Gibson EMC electric bill. This is a generic password assigned to you that will allow you to log in and use the online billing service. You will be prompted to change your password.
- Choose a password that is more user-friendly for you. You also can leave a password hint that may help you remember your password if you forget it in the future.

**TogetherWeSave**  
2010 Annual Report



**Don't miss Gibson EMC's 2010 Annual Report, enclosed with this Tennessee Magazine.**



# Use landscaping to lower your energy bill

**Y**ou've upgraded your appliances, insulation and lighting to help lower your monthly electric bill. What else can you do? Plenty, if you have a yard with landscaping options. The right combination of plants and trees can unearth hidden energy savings.

The U.S. Department of Energy says that landscaping with energy efficiency in mind could save, on average, enough energy to recoup your investment in less than eight years. There are several ways to think about planting for energy savings:

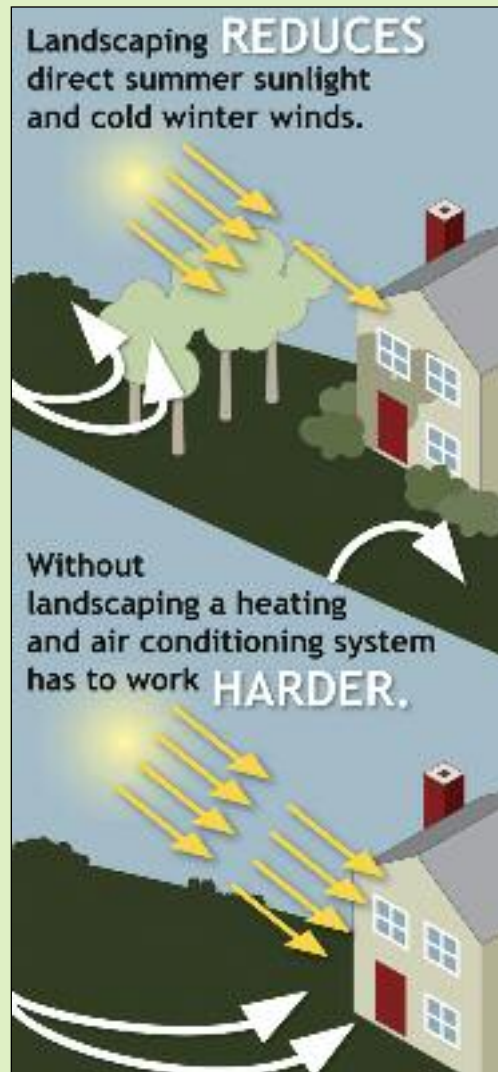
## Climate clarity

Climate determines the direction your landscaping planning should take. The United States is divided into four different types of regions: temperate, hot-arid, hot-humid and cool.

The Southeast offers a hot and humid climate, so summer breezes are welcome. Residents should make the most of summer shade but use deciduous trees that will eventually lose leaves to let winter sun shine through.

## Simple shading

You might be protected from the hot summer sun in your home, but your electric bill is not. Solar heat absorbed through windows and your roof causes your air



conditioner to work harder.

Shading a home with trees could drop the surrounding air temperature by as much as 9 degrees Fahrenheit. Since cool air sinks down, the air under trees may be up to 25 degrees cooler than the air over the driveway.

Don't forget about shrubs and groundcover plants. These short but sturdy shade-givers reduce heat radiation, cooling air before it reaches your home's walls and windows. If you have an air conditioner, shading the unit can increase its efficiency by as much as 10 percent.

Shading takes time. For example, a 6- to 8-foot deciduous tree planted near a home will begin shading windows in a year. Depending on the species and the home, the tree will shade the roof in five to 10 years.

## Windbreaks

Shrubs and trees create windbreaks — essentially walls to keep the wind chill away from a home. Why is that important? Wind speed lowers outside air temperatures. A windbreak reduces wind speed nearby, saving your home from higher heating costs.

It's best to block wind with a combination of trees and shrubs

with low crowns — foliage that grows close to the ground. Evergreens are ideal, and when combined with a wall or fence, these windbreaks can deflect or even lift wind over a home.

For the best protection, plan on leaving between two to five times the mature height of the trees or shrubs between the windbreak and the protected home.

## Ready, set, GROW!

Remember, your landscaping plan depends on your climate and how your home is situated.

Find out more about your climate, microclimates, shading dos and don'ts and windbreaks at [www.energysavers.gov](http://www.energysavers.gov). Visit [www.TogetherWeSave.com](http://www.TogetherWeSave.com) to learn more ways to save energy around your home.



Energy Efficiency

*Tip of the Month*

Heat from sunlight coming through windows and hitting the roof can increase air-conditioner use significantly. Use shade trees and shrubs in landscaping design to reduce cooling costs. Block heat in the summer — but let it through in the winter — with deciduous trees, which will lose their leaves in the winter.

Source: U.S. Department of Energy



## The **BIG** green box

**T**hey're big. They're usually green. They generally sit on concrete, often within housing developments. Some folks don't like these "electrical boxes" (a common nickname for pad-mount transformers) and try to hide them with bushes, fences or flower beds. But stay clear: Even small additions around pad-mount transformers create hazards.

To improve the looks of neighborhoods, developers often put in underground power lines. While this eliminates utility poles and overhead wires, it requires installing pad-mounted transformers in some front yards. Unfortunately, some homeowners, concerned about curb appeal, try to screen pad-mount transformers from view — creating an unsafe situation for all concerned, including Gibson Electric Membership Corporation lineworkers.

"We realize landscaping represents an investment of time and money," says Vice President of Operations Barry Smith. "We respect the effort and care our members invest in making their yards attractive. However, landscaping around electrical equipment hinders our ability to deliver reliable power."

Gibson EMC recommends leaving at least 10 feet of clear space in front of pad-mount transformers. Linemen repair units while they are energized so homeowners won't experience an

interruption in service. To ensure safety, they use an 8-foot fiberglass hot stick that requires about 10 feet of "elbow room" in front of the access panel. Routine inspections and maintenance are performed on scheduled cycles.

"In some cases, consumers may leave plenty of space in front of the transformer but grow vegetation on the other three sides," explains Smith. "This



### Transformers need to be left alone

- Never let anything grow closer than 3 feet from sides and back of transformer or 10 feet from a pad-mount transformer access panel. (The access panel is marked by a handle, lock and sticker on the front.)
- Never enclose a pad-mount transformer with fencing, shrubs or anything else with less than a 10-foot-wide gate or opening.
- Never allow children to play near pad-mount transformers.
- Never pour waste oils, chemicals or other liquids on or near a pad-mount transformer. These liquids can seep into the ground and damage underground cables.

can create other problems. For example, plant roots can interfere with its operation."

Pad-mounted transformers surrounded by vegetation or a structure may overheat and cause service interruptions when the air circulation around them is compromised. Allow at least 3 feet of space on both sides and behind the transformer.

Members should also be aware that plantings along rights of way — strips of land owned by a member on which the co-op places poles, wires and other equipment like pad-mount transformers — could be damaged by co-op vehicles.

"Occasionally, we may need to repair a transformer, and eventually transformers must be upgraded and replaced," says Smith. "To perform this work, line trucks must be driven into the right of way and the transformer lifted out. Although we try to minimize the impact, plants in the way may be damaged."



### Call before you dig!

Because underground service continues from the transformer to your home, you should never dig anywhere in your yard without first calling 811 to find out where cables are buried.



Gibson Electric Membership Corporation will be closed ...

**LABOR DAY**  
Monday, Sept. 6



## Youngsters discover tomorrow's technology at Electric Camp

Enthusiastic 4-H'ers from the Gibson Electric Membership Corporation service area attended the 2010 4-H Electric Camp at the University of Tennessee June 29-July 2. The annual event brings seventh- and eighth-graders together to learn about electricity.

About 300 middle-schoolers from across Tennessee explored energy, electricity and the basic sciences through fun, hands-on learning centers led by employees of electric cooperatives and other utilities. This year's camp, themed "Learning Tomorrow's Technology Today," featured six interactive learning centers ...

**Electronic Battery Tester:** Students completed electronic projects by soldering resistors, light-emitting diodes (LEDs) and integrated circuit chips to printed circuit boards to make battery testers that actually measured the amount of charge a used battery still held.

**"Hands-On" Energy Conservation:**



Gibson EMC Energy Services Specialist Bud Cole, far left, stands among 4-H Electric Camp participants.

Campers learned how conserving electricity in their homes not only helps lower electric bills, but also helps protect and conserve environmental resources.

**Electronic Scavenger Hunt:** Campers used global positioning system devices and sets of coordinates in this high-tech learning center to find hidden treasure.

**Electric Lamp:** Students learned how to build their own lamps using a lamp kit and electric insulators.

**Electric Vehicles:** The 4-H'ers learned how batteries and direct current are used to propel electric vehicles. Campers then drove an electric golf cart

through an obstacle course.

**Electrical Safety:** This learning center taught campers how to play it safe around high-voltage power lines.

Other camp activities included pool parties and a fun-filled afternoon at Hollywood theme park in nearby Pigeon Forge.

4-H Electric Camp is made possible through a partnership of UT Extension,

the Tennessee Electric Cooperative Association and its member cooperatives like Gibson EMC, the systems of the Tennessee Municipal Electric Power Association, the Tennessee Valley Authority and other industry donors.

"The focus of the 4-H Electric Camp is to teach young people about electricity, conservation, alternative energy sources, electronics and safety," says Energy Services Specialist Bud Cole, who chaperoned the trip. "Campers develop a better understanding of the important role electricity plays in their lives — plus they have fun and get to make new friends."

## SAVE ENERGY. EARN CASH. CASE CLOSED.

Call today to schedule an In-Home Energy Evaluation.

Take advantage of up to \$500 in energy-efficiency rebates when you make recommended reimbursable improvements to your home through TVA and Gibson Electric Membership Corporation's In-Home Energy Evaluation program.

### Homeowners can:

- Get a detailed home energy evaluation by a TVA-certified professional
- Get cash reimbursements up to \$500
- Save money on utility bills
- Reduce energy use
- Help protect the environment

To learn more and schedule an In-Home Energy Evaluation, contact your local Gibson EMC customer service center or visit [www.EnergyRight.com](http://www.EnergyRight.com).



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