



The spring peach blossoms at Bob Wells Nursery foretell of a fruitful summer harvest.

## Hometown Roots Are Simply the Best

**ROB MCDONALD ISN'T RELATED TO BOB WELLS**, but he might as well be. When he was 12 years old, he began working for Wells' father, Bobby Lenis Wells, at Bob Wells Nursery in Lindale. At first McDonald did odd jobs, then eventually he worked more formally part time after school and then during the summers until he left his hometown of Lindale to attend Blinn College in Bryan.

Even then, McDonald would occasionally work for the Wells family, helping them out at garden shows. Because he'd learned so much about the nursery business from the Wellses, it was easy for him to get a job working at a nursery near school. Following school, McDonald worked in landscaping and then worked as the administrator for a nonprofit. But while he loved that job, he always missed working in horticulture.

Upon returning to his hometown of Lindale in 2008, McDonald also returned to his roots at Bob Wells Nursery, where he is now the manager. The nursery is now owned by Bob Wells, and McDonald's job satisfaction is evident as he says,

"This is the best job by far that I have ever had." And then he adds of Wells, "He is the best boss by far that I have ever had."

Farming is a fifth-generation business for the Wells family, with a long lineage in trees and produce that evolved into the nursery. The core of their business is "edible landscape," such as nut and fruit trees, along with berry bushes and grape vines. But they also sell shade and ornamental trees, rose-bushes and other flowering shrubs. And they carry specialty and hard-to-find plant varieties.

"People know Bob Wells Nursery for the quality, and people come back year after year," McDonald says. In addition, McDonald says that every customer gets personal attention. In fact, that credo is even in the business' mission statement.

McDonald explains, "We help our customers with variety selection, and we are very big on customer service. In fact, that is what sets us apart from the big-box stores. Even after a customer buys a tree, they are not on their own. We educate people, and that is the part I most enjoy."



The employees at Bob Wells Nursery have full days taking care of the many plants as well as preparing them for the daily mail-order business. The crew includes, from left, Mark Wells, Jane Ivey, Manager Rob McDonald, Owner Bob Wells, Felicio Hernandez, Jessica Hutchins and Adolfo Romero.



Rob McDonald, manager at Bob Wells Nursery, especially enjoys helping customers learn so they have a successful experience with their plants.



Bob Wells backs up the business that bears his name by solidly focusing on customer satisfaction.

McDonald says the joy of his job is seeing the customers be successful, and customers can always call to ask questions about a plant before or after they have purchased it. He then quotes an oft-repeated refrain of Bob Wells: “A green thumb is just a little education and a lot of hard work.”

At Bob Wells Nursery, they want to paint every customer’s thumb green.

Part of that educational process is to make sure their customers buy the right plants for the hardiness zone applicable to them. These zones were designated by the United States Department of Agriculture, dividing the United States into 11 zones based on the lowest temperatures experienced there. While a plant may be able to live in a particular area, it might not thrive if it does not get the minimum number of chilling hours, or temperatures under about 45 degrees, in winter. For example, if a low-chill variety is planted in a colder climate, it may blossom too early, and the cold will damage the blossoms and end the promise of fruit.

Many fruit and nut trees have a minimum period of cold

weather they must be exposed to before they will blossom, and the blossom is essential for the tree to bear fruit. Because Bob Wells Nursery ships all over the United States, they have varieties suitable for every climate. But they also specialize in plants for Zone 8, which is the zone East Texas falls in. And some of those plants are surprising.

Most apples are grown in the northern states because they require longer chilling hours than are typically experienced here in East Texas. But McDonald says they have quite a few varieties of apple trees that do very well in Zone 8, including Fuji, Gala and Pink Lady. The same goes for other fruits not typically grown in East Texas, such as cherries, apricots, avocados, olives, nectarines, pears and even a variety of satsuma called Arctic Frost.

Speaking of surprising plants, Bob Wells Nursery carries quite a few hard-to-find and unique plants. They sell goji berry, a shrub that has become quite popular of late because of the high antioxidant content of the fruit. They also have the jujube tree, which produces a sweet date to eat fresh or dried.



Mail-order customers of Bob Wells Nursery are often pleasantly surprised by the large size of the tree they receive by mail.



ISTOCKPHOTO | © HOUSE\_RED

Other edibles include tangelos, tangerines, mandarins, Kaffir limes, Meyer lemons, muscadines and other grape varieties, and blackberry and blueberry vines. Nut trees include many varieties of pecans (including paper-shell species), walnuts, almonds, chestnuts and hazelnuts.

The nursery also carries specialties like the “fruit cocktail tree,” a multigrafted product that bears peaches, plums, nectarines and apricots all on one tree. They also carry apple and pear trees that bear three varieties of the same type of fruit. “All I have to do is mention these, and they sell themselves,” McDonald says.

For their mail-order business, employees dig plants right out of the ground and ship them with bare roots. They can fit up to seven trees into one shipping box for the same shipping cost of sending one tree. Whether pickup or mail order, the bare-root season begins in October and continues through May. That’s because bare-root trees need to be planted when the temperatures are not so hot. Special shipping arrangements can also be made for container plants to be delivered by common carrier all year. Customers also can visit the store year-round to shop for container trees.

While the nursery specializes in fruit- and nut-producing plants, it also sells a large selection of roses, including all of the old favorites, climbers and the newer hardy knockouts. The nursery also carries flowering shrubs and trees such as magnolia, camellia, crepe myrtle, forsythia, flowering quince, wisteria and Japanese snowball.

In the spring and summer, the nursery sells seasonal vegetable plants and herbs as well as fresh produce grown on-site. The selection is wide and includes summer garden favorites such as tomatoes, squash, peppers, beans, onions, peas and berries.

The nursery has seven employees, and of them, the busiest is Bob Wells himself. He personally oversees virtually every order, and does so with great energy. What he most wants people to know about his business is this: “We are not high-pressure. We want our customers to have what they want. We want them to be happy, whether they come here or not.”

His business is all about giving the customer knowledge to help them cultivate their own green thumbs. Wells embraces his own lessons, too. He says, “I learned a long time ago that the customer is always right.”

McDonald agrees and says that his favorite part of his job at Bob Wells Nursery is helping customers. He says, “I have the best of both worlds because I enjoy working in the office fulfilling orders and then being able to work outside with the customers, as well.”

### BOB WELLS NURSERY

**Address:** 17160 CR 4100, Lindale 75771

**Hours:** Weekdays, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.; Saturday, 8 a.m. to noon

**Phone:** (903) 882-3550 **Email:** bobwellsnursery@gmail.com

**Website:** bobwellsnursery.com

# Auditing Energy Yourself

*Small measures, real savings*

**NO MATTER THE AGE OF YOUR HOME**, it could benefit from an energy audit performed by a professional energy advisor. But you can get started on your own by finding low-cost solutions that could save money on your monthly electric bill.

First, ask yourself a simple question: Does my home feel drafty and cold in the winter, or stuffy and hot in the summer? If the answer is “Yes,” then it probably experiences air leakage.

To track down where those spots are, start with the usual suspects, like damaged seals around doors and windows. If you see daylight or feel air, then apply caulk and weatherstripping to keep outdoor air where it’s supposed to be.

But don’t forget spots you might not immediately think of, like recessed canister lights and electrical outlets. Outlet insulation kits can be purchased for as little as \$2, and you can fix up your canister lights with caulk around the edges.

Also, look where walls meet the ceiling: Cobwebs mean you’ve got drafts.

Next, peek into the attic and inspect the crawlspace or basement for sufficient insulation; how much you need depends on your climate. And keep in mind that insulation won’t do its job well if you don’t have a proper air barrier working in tandem. That means that all joints and cracks must be sealed between your living space and the insulated space.

Finally, look to your light fixtures. Compact fluorescent lamps are up to 75 percent more efficient than traditional incandescent lightbulbs, and they’ve come a long way in light quality, design and affordability. You can purchase CFLs in a variety of



**Caulking around doors and windows is a quick and cost-effective step in improving your home’s energy efficiency.**

shapes and hues. They cost more up front, but you’ll make your money back in less than nine months—and after that, they start saving money.

Make sure to purchase a CFL that’s rated by Energy Star, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s program that denotes products meeting specific energy-efficiency criteria. An Energy Star-rated CFL will typically last 10 times longer than a traditional incandescent bulb producing the same amount of light.

LEDs—light-emitting diodes—are part of the next wave of residential lighting. An Energy Star-rated model is estimated to use only a quarter of the electricity consumed by traditional bulbs, and can last for 25 years. As with many new technologies, the up-front cost for an LED bulb is still much more than even a CFL, but prices continue to drop as new products are developed.

To learn more about ways to reduce your electric bill, visit [wcec.org](http://wcec.org).



## Wood County Electric Cooperative

501 S. Main St. • P.O. Box 1827  
Quitman, TX 75783

### CEO/GENERAL MANAGER

Debbie Robinson

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Pat B. Lindley, President, *District 1*
- Dennis Wright, Vice President, *District 3*
- Lewis D. Young, Secretary-Treasurer, *District 7*
- Burke Bullock, *District 2*
- Brent Glenn, *District 4*
- Jane Roberson, *District 6*
- Cathy S. Roberts, *District 5*

### MEMBER BENEFITS AND SERVICES

- Online account access and bill payment
- Paperless E-Bill services
- Free bill-paying app
- Visa, MasterCard, American Express and Discover accepted
- SmartPower prepay electric system
- Scholarships and youth programs
- Safety and energy conservation programs

### MOBILE CONVENIENCE CENTER

- Monday**, First Methodist Church, *Van*
- Tuesday**, Family Dollar, *Mount Vernon*
- Wednesday**, City National Bank, *Hawkins*
- Thursday**, Brookshire’s, *Winnsboro*
- Friday**, Economy Drug, *Grand Saline*



## Contact Us

**CALL US**  
**(903) 763-2203**

**EMAIL**  
**[info@wcec.org](mailto:info@wcec.org)**

**OUTAGE HOTLINE**  
**1-866-415-2951**

**FIND US ON THE WEB**  
**[wcec.org](http://wcec.org)**

# Understanding Power Outages

**ALTHOUGH WOOD COUNTY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE** does everything it can to reduce the possibility of outages at your home or business, they still do occur. There are a variety of reasons for power outages, including severe storms causing mass destruction, tree limbs coming into contact with power lines, vehicles crashing into utility poles, and animals such as squirrels causing short circuits while climbing electrical equipment.

Whatever the reason, rest assured that your co-op is working as fast as it can to get your power restored quickly and safely.

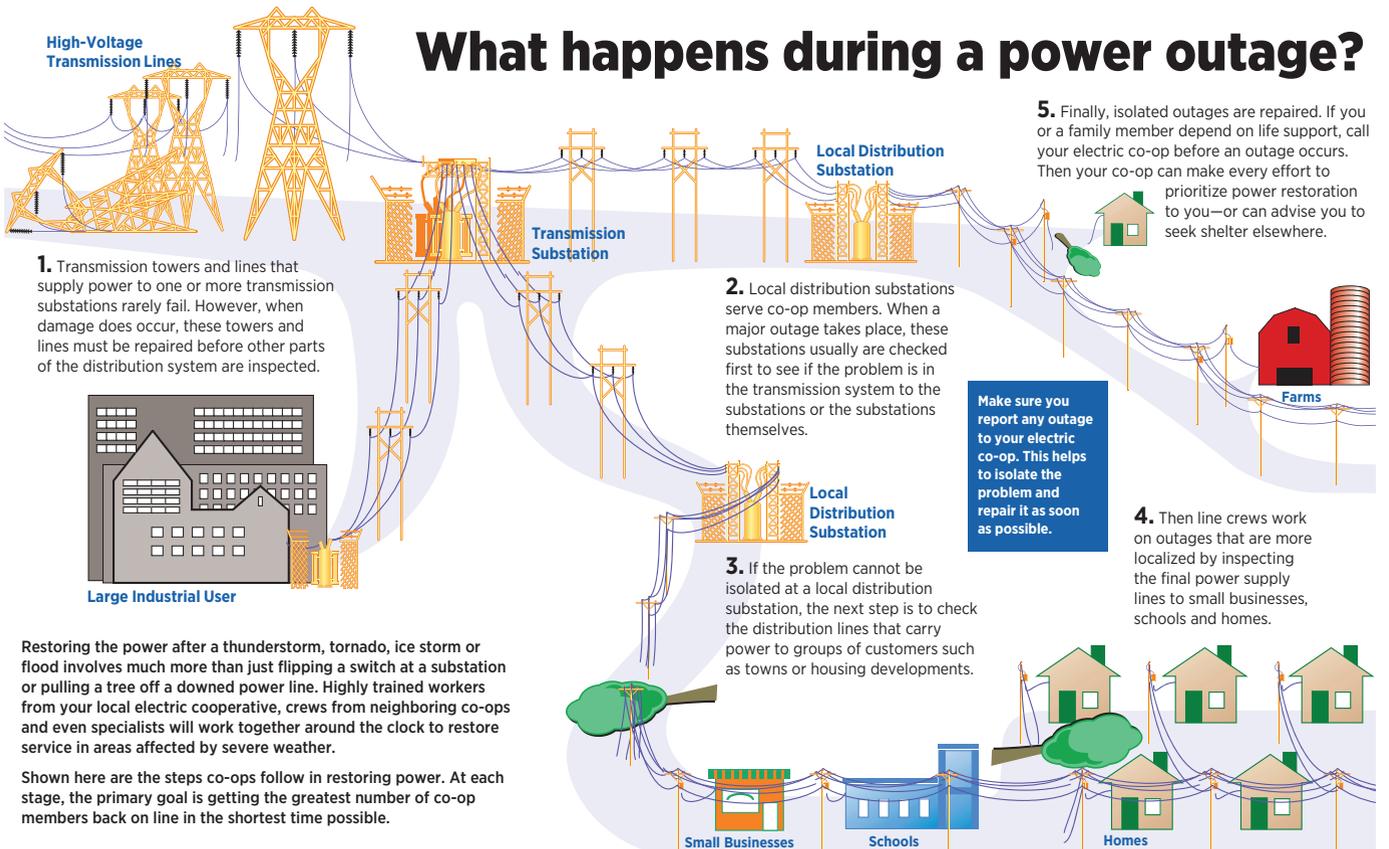
Our No. 1 focus will always be public safety. This means that first in an outage, our crews will clear lines and equipment that could pose safety hazards to the public. Next, they will turn their attention to generation facilities that provide the actual electricity to power your home or business. After that come transmission lines and substation equipment repairs. Subsequently, your co-op will focus on feeder lines that can serve one to 3,000 customers, then tap lines that provide power to 20 to 30 homes or businesses, and then connections to individual customers.

During this process, crews will generally first make repairs to facilities that are critical to public health and safety—like

hospitals, police and fire stations, water treatment plants and communication systems. How long it takes to get your power restored depends on the extent of the storm's destruction, the number of outages and when it becomes safe for co-op personnel to access the damaged areas.

Whether the outage is long or short, it pays to know what to do when the power goes out so you can keep your family safe. Follow these suggestions:

- ▶ Use WCEC's Outage Hotline (1-866-415-2951) to immediately report the outage.
- ▶ Use safe alternative food preparations. A barbecue grill is an excellent way to prepare food, but always grill outside.
- ▶ Have a storm kit (with items like flashlights, a battery-operated radio, batteries and first-aid supplies) prepared for use during power outages.
- ▶ Turn off electrical appliances and unplug major electronics, including computers and televisions. Power sometimes comes back in surges, which can damage electronics. Your circuits could overload when power returns if all your electronics are still plugged in and turned on. Leave one light on to indicate when power has been restored. Once it has, wait a few minutes and then turn on other appliances, one at a time.



Restoring the power after a thunderstorm, tornado, ice storm or flood involves much more than just flipping a switch at a substation or pulling a tree off a downed power line. Highly trained workers from your local electric cooperative, crews from neighboring co-ops and even specialists will work together around the clock to restore service in areas affected by severe weather.

Shown here are the steps co-ops follow in restoring power. At each stage, the primary goal is getting the greatest number of co-op members back on line in the shortest time possible.

# Get Smart About Standby Power

**OUR LIVES ARE FULL OF** electronic devices—at home, at work, at school and on the go. Some of these electronics are probably costing you money, even when they are turned off, because of standby power.

Standby power is the energy that is used by a device when it is turned off but still plugged in. Standby power can be useful when it powers remote control sensors, clock displays, cordless phones, satellite TV modules and the like. However, if you have a device plugged in that doesn't need standby power, then you could be wasting your hard-earned money.

Here are steps you can take to reduce the amount of standby power your home uses:

**Unplug your devices.** For some devices, it might be more trouble than it is worth to unplug, like clocks or cable and satellite television boxes that hold programmed information. However, unplugging devices that are seldom used, like secondary TVs or mobile device chargers, can keep you from wasting money.

**Enable power management settings.** Most computers and many peripherals have some sort of power management settings that will allow devices to go into a sleep mode to save energy when they are not being used.

**Use a power strip.** By plugging your entire entertainment or computer system into a power strip, you can flip one switch and shut down all the components.

Another money-saving option is the use of smart power strips. A smart power strip has some outlets that are always on, and some that control other outlets on the power strip. Outlets that are always on are just like those on a regular power strip outlet. These outlets are where you plug in things that should not be powered down—for example, a modem or backup power supply on a computer system, or the cable box on a home entertainment system. The control outlet, situated next to the regular outlets, determines whether the remaining switched outlets on the strip are powered on or off.

Using the home entertainment example, if the TV is plugged into the control outlet and turned on, then the rest of the switched outlets on the smart power strip will also power up. Devices like a DVD player, surround sound system or other items that are plugged into these outlets will be powered up. When the TV is turned off, everything plugged into the switched outlets will be powered down, saving you money.

**Unplugging power cords is a good way to reduce standby power waste, but be sure to do it correctly. Always grip and pull on the plug—never the cord itself.**



## Landscaping for Savings

**AS FLOWERS BLOOM AND TREES** fill out with leaves, many Texas homeowners think about landscaping projects in spring.

A well-designed landscape can save enough energy to pay for itself in less than eight years by lowering maintenance costs, reducing water use, protecting the home from extreme temperatures and helping to lower noise and air pollution.

Shading is the most cost-effective way to reduce solar heat gain in your home and cut air-conditioning costs.

An effective landscape can reduce an unshaded home's air-conditioning costs by 15–50 percent.

Deciduous trees planted south of a home can screen 70–90 percent of sunlight. Shorter trees planted on the west side help shade windows from afternoon sun. Bushes and shrubs or climbing vines on a trellis can shade patio areas. And low shrubs and groundcover plants help cool air before it reaches your home.

If you determine how much water your plants need, you won't overwater. Group plants with similar watering needs together, and water in the early morning hours when water evaporates less.

Aerate your soil to improve water flow to roots and reduce runoff. Use mulch to keep plant roots cool, minimize evaporation and reduce weed growth. And during warmer months, raise the cutting height of your lawn mower blade. Longer blades of grass help shade each other and retain water.