

# Landscaping for Energy Efficiency

**THE APPROACH OF SPRING HAS MANY GARDENERS TURNING THEIR ATTENTION TO** planting plans, but if energy efficiency is one of your goals as a homeowner, you should know that landscaping can beautify your home while helping you control energy costs for years to come.

According to researchers at the Department of Energy's National Renewable Energy Laboratory, carefully positioned trees can save a household as much as 25% on its heating and cooling costs. Foundation shrub plantings can also help control energy costs by diffusing solar heating or wind to moderate temperature transfers.

No matter how much you love trees, give them some room. Don't plant too close to foundations, pavement or plumbing because root systems and maturing branches can damage foundations, roofs and pipes. And always make sure trees will be well clear of power lines when they reach their full size.

But planted in the right place, within five to 10 years, a fast-growing shade tree can reduce outside air temperatures near walls and roofs by as much as 6 degrees on sunny days. Surface temperatures immediately under the canopy of a mature shade tree can be up to 25 degrees cooler than surrounding shingles or siding exposed to direct sunlight.

According to the Department of Energy, deciduous trees—those that lose their leaves in autumn—are great options for summer shade. Tall varieties planted to the south of a home can help diffuse sunlight, providing shade for the roof.

Shorter varieties of deciduous trees can be planted near exposed west-facing windows to help shade homes on sultry summer afternoons. Mass plantings of evergreens—selected for their adaptability to regional growing conditions—can be planted farther away, on a north or northwestern section of a yard to form a windbreak, which helps shield a home from frigid winter winds.

Deciduous trees with high, spreading crowns (i.e., leaves and branches) can be planted to the south of your home to provide maximum summertime roof shading. Trees with crowns lower to the ground are more appropriate to the west, where shade is needed from lower, afternoon sun angles. Trees should not be planted on the southern sides of solar-heated homes in cold climates because the branches of these deciduous trees will block some winter sun.

Trees are available in appropriate sizes, densities and shapes for almost any shade application. To block solar heat in the summer but let much of it in during the winter, use deciduous trees. To provide continuous shade or to block heavy winds, use dense evergreen trees or shrubs.

Although a slow-growing tree may require many years of growth before it shades your roof, it will generally live longer than a fast-growing tree. And because slow-growing trees often have deeper roots and stronger branches, they are less prone to breakage by windstorms or heavy snow.

Trees, shrubs and ground cover plants can also shade the ground and pavement around a home. This cover reduces heat radiation and cools the air before it reaches your home's walls and windows. Use a large bush or row of shrubs to shade a patio or driveway. Plant a hedge to shade a sidewalk. Build a trellis for climbing vines to shade a patio area.

To ensure the durability of energy-saving landscaping, use plant species that are adapted to the local climate. Native species are best, as they require little maintenance once established and sidestep the dangers of invasive species.



## WCEC Supports Students With Scholarships

**WOOD COUNTY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE** supports higher education at every level through our robust scholarship program. In the fall, we awarded three adult scholarships, and this spring, we'll award 12 high school seniors with even more. And, because we believe in and support the trades, two of those 12 \$1,000 scholarships are reserved for students pursuing a trade school education.

To be eligible, applicants must be a graduating high school senior and a dependent of an active WCEC member and must live in a household on WCEC's distribution system.

Applicants must complete an official WCEC application that includes academic standing certified by a school official, two letters of reference and an essay of up to 500 words. In the essay, applicants should describe their current interests; their educational, professional and personal goals; and why they have chosen their particular field of study.

For those awarded a scholarship, funds will be paid directly to their college or trade school.

WCEC's scholarship program is funded entirely by unclaimed capital credits payments returned to the co-op by the state of Texas.

Applications are available online at [wcec.org](http://wcec.org) under the Programs & Sponsorships tab. All entries must be received at WCEC headquarters by April 7.

WCEC  
PROUDLY PRESENTS

# HIGHER EDUCATION

*Scholarship Opportunities*

**For High School Seniors**

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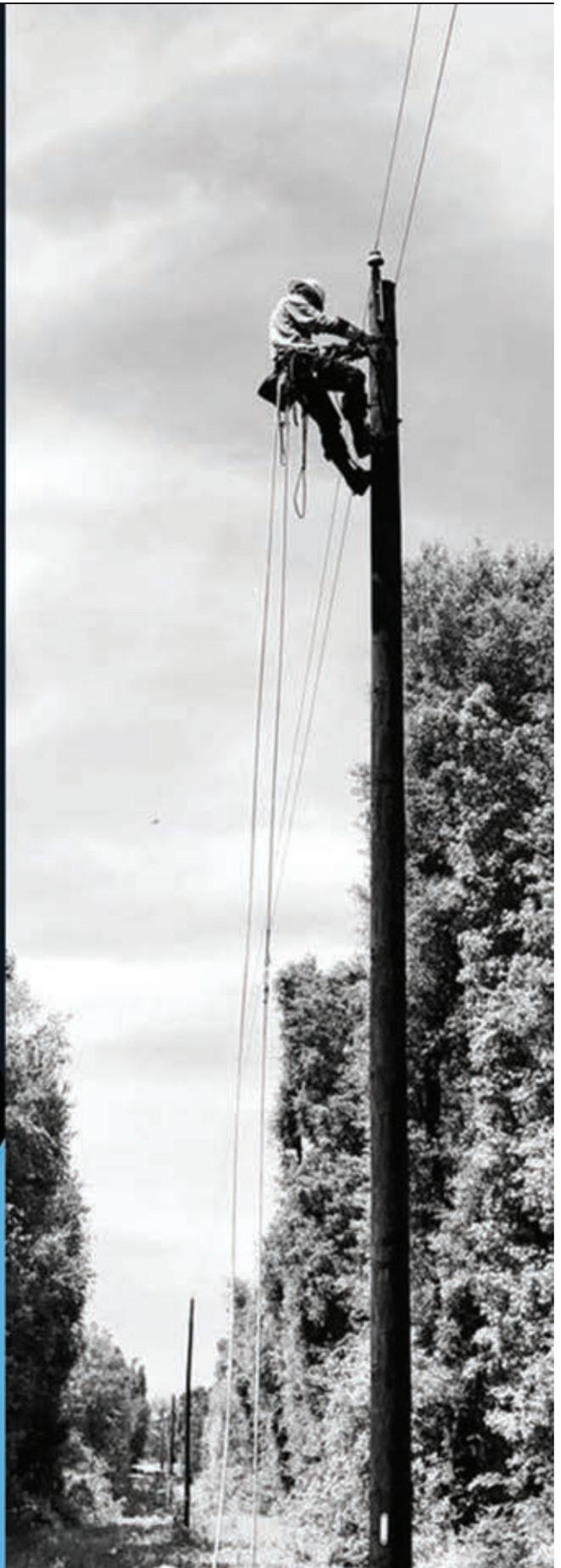
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**What do you want to be when  
you grow up?**

We'll help you get there!

Entries must be received  
at WCEC by April 7, 2020.

Download a Power My World  
Scholarship Application @  
WCEC.org.



# We've Updated the Tariff

**AT WOOD COUNTY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, WE NEVER WANT TO** increase charges, but rising costs—including material costs and other factors—make it necessary to adjust rates from time to time. In December 2019, the board adopted a resolution that changed, added and eliminated some fees. WCEC also took the opportunity to eliminate some rates and fees that are no longer in effect and to update terminology.

The good news is that none of the changes increased base rates or kilowatt-hour charges. Therefore, most current members will not be affected. We mailed all members a notice of these changes in December but wanted to offer a little more in-depth explanation of the areas of change.

## Tariff Title

First off, we renamed the Wood County Electric Cooperative Inc. Electric Service Tariff. It's now simply titled Member Policies and Schedules. This document dictates all of our rates and fees.

## Fee Adjustments

We eliminated certain fees and charges, which included removing rate classes that are no longer in effect and making adjustments to some existing charges.

The trip fee was increased from \$25 to \$30. Members are never charged a fee for WCEC workers to visit their service location during the normal course of business or during regular outages. This fee is charged when a WCEC employee is required to visit a member's property as a result of the member's actions. For example, this fee may apply if co-op employees have already visited a location to stake a job and a member decides they want the service in a different place, requiring the co-op to repeat the work. There are other instances in which this fee applies, but its purpose is to ensure the cost is paid for by the member that initiated the trip and not the rest of the membership. As a nonprofit, we do our best to make costs fair and equitable for all members.

The nonstandard meter reading fee was increased from \$25 to \$30. This is an elective service fee that is charged monthly to members who request their service be metered by equipment that doesn't communicate with WCEC's metering system. WCEC incurs an added cost to maintain these nonstandard meters because an employee must travel to the member's property every month to physically read the meter. Because it's an elective service, that cost is passed on to those members who choose it.

Line extension charges are paid by a member when construction is required to provide new electric service and start at the load point. The underground single-phase primary cost has increased from \$8 to \$9 per foot, and the underground multi-phase cost has increased from \$10 to \$12 per foot. Instead of the previous wire credit, members will receive a dollar credit up to \$450 for new primary overhead, up to \$500 for new underground primary construction and up to \$500 for new underground sec-

ondary construction. Credits for overhead multiphase primary construction have been eliminated. This change ensures that members get the cost savings of the construction credits. For convenience, WCEC will sell wire to members at cost for their new service.

Switchover fees are charged to members who choose to abandon WCEC's facilities and switch their electric service to another provider in areas where such a change is permitted under Texas law. The current base charge of \$155 and the current base charge adder of \$35 have been repealed and replaced with a new single switchover fee of \$315.

## Other Fees and Charges

**We changed and added some fees and charges:**

**Connect Fee, \$95:** This fee is applied when a member specifically requests an after-hours electricity connection. Because this falls outside of normal hours (8 a.m.–5 p.m. Monday–Friday), there is added cost to the cooperative to send personnel to perform the work.

**Meter Tampering Fee, \$250:** Only WCEC employees and representatives and certified electricians that have received permission from the cooperative should disconnect, modify or attach any equipment to a meter or meter base. When meters lose power, we are notified in the office and will investigate. If the co-op finds evidence of tampering, such as a cut meter seal or any other sign, the member will be charged this fee. If there is evidence of a crime, such as electricity theft, charges will be pursued in a court of law.

**Minimum Deposit, \$150:** WCEC uses a third-party credit rating service to determine if a deposit must be paid by a member. Deposits help us control costs, which benefits all members. If you're asked to pay a deposit, it will accrue interest at a rate set by the Public Utility Commission of Texas. After a member has established good credit with the co-op by paying all bills on time for 12 consecutive months, the member will receive a refund of the deposit, with interest, as a credit on their electricity bill.

## Outdoor Lighting Service

We renamed the security light service schedule. It's now called the outdoor lighting schedule to better reflect the actual use of these lights.

## SmartPower Program

Lastly, we consolidated and organized certain fees and charges found in the tariff. The new SmartPower program rider replaced the old prepaid schedule, and it reduces the previous base charge for prepay members by \$1 per month.

The new Member Policies and Schedules, in its entirety, can be found at [wcec.org](http://wcec.org) under Resources at the bottom of the page. And, as always, if you have any questions or need clarification, just give us a call.



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# Ways To Make Your Home Safer

**IF YOU HAVE SMALL CHILDREN, MAKE SURE UNUSED WALL OUTLETS HAVE SAFETY coverings.** Unprotected wall outlets can be a hazard. Also:

- ▶ Check that outlets and wall switches are cool to the touch. Unusual warmth may indicate unsafe wiring and should be checked by an electrician.
- ▶ Ensure all outlets and switches are working properly. Faulty equipment may mean unsafe wiring.
- ▶ All outlets and switches should have faceplates. Exposed wiring is a shock hazard.
- ▶ Check that extension cords are correctly rated for the amount of electricity they are going to carry and are approved by a reputable safety standards organization.
- ▶ Screw lightbulbs in securely. Loose bulbs may cause a fire or shock.
- ▶ Check all electric cords for visible damage. Frayed cords can be dangerous.
- ▶ To avoid excessive wear and cord damage, ensure that cords don't run under rugs and don't have furniture resting on them.
- ▶ Do not nail or staple electric cords in place. Cord damage can result in a fire and shock hazard—and extension cords should only be used for temporary purposes.
- ▶ If you have wet hands or are standing on a wet surface or in water, don't touch or use any electrical device.
- ▶ Small appliances (hair dryers, toasters, etc.) should be unplugged when not in use. Unattended, connected appliances create an unnecessary risk.
- ▶ Keep all appliance cords away from hot surfaces (toasters, range tops, ovens, etc.). Cords can be damaged by excessive heat.
- ▶ In kitchens, bathrooms and anywhere there is water nearby, standard outlets should be replaced with ground-fault circuit interrupters. GFCIs provide shock protection by quickly cutting off the circuit and preventing injury.
- ▶ Make sure you're using the correct wattage and proper kind of lightbulb in all lighting fixtures. The wrong type of bulb can lead to overheating or fire.

## Wood County Electric Cooperative

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## Contact Us

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1-866-415-2951

### FIND US ON THE WEB

[wcec.org](http://wcec.org)

### MEMBER BENEFITS AND SERVICES

- Online account access and bill payment
- Paperless E-Bill services
- Free bill-paying app
- Visa, Mastercard 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, *Winnboro*  
**Friday**, Economy Drug, *Grand Saline*

