

Menard Electric Cooperative's

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A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

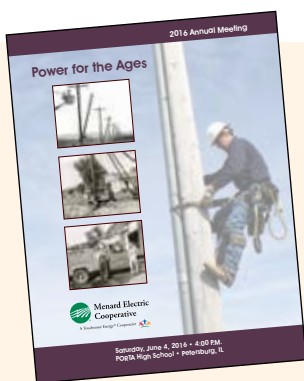


[www.menard.com](http://www.menard.com)

## 79th Annual Meeting Saturday, June 4 • 4:00 p.m. PORTA High School, Petersburg

During a short business meeting we will be electing directors from Districts 1, 4 and 6. District 4 is an open seat as current board member, Jerry Brooks, retires. Profiles of all candidates will be in your Official Notice. (The printing of this edition was prior to the Petition deadline.)

In addition to informing you about your cooperative and holding the director election, we want to take the time to show our members our appreciation!



Watch for your Annual Meeting Official Notice to arrive in the mail later this month for additional details!

Remember to bring the registration card from the back of the notice to receive your \$10 bill credit.

Stay tuned to [www.menard.com](http://www.menard.com) and [www.Facebook.com/MenardElectric](http://www.Facebook.com/MenardElectric) for details leading up to the event!

### We hope you'll enjoy the following at the event:

- An attendance gift
- Pork chop dinner
- Entertainment
- Bucket truck rides
- Prizes!



Join us for some fun at this year's meeting! Humorist and magician Lyndy Phillips will entertain you with hilarious true stories while performing impossible feats with ordinary everyday objects. This family friendly show promises to keep all ages amazed and laughing!



## Member Spotlight

# Starhill Forest Arboretum

It all started when he was in kindergarten, says Menard Electric member Guy Sternberg, “I found silver maple seeds and planted them in my sandbox and they grew; I’ve been growing trees ever since.” Those small seeds sparked a lifelong passion. Now retired, Guy and his wife Edie have devoted their time to creating and maintaining the Starhill Forest Arboretum.

Since 2008 the Arboretum has been formally associated with Illinois College. A curator on staff for the college works onsite four days a week performing many duties, including maintaining the extensive computer records for more than 2,400 trees and shrubs.

“We’ll have over 28 fields of information about each one,” says Guy. Each plant is numbered and carefully tracked. That kind of diligent record keeping makes the Arboretum a destination for scientists who come to collect data and DNA samples from species that originated all around the

world. “We’ve had scientists from China, France, Germany, England, Belgium, and other areas,” says Guy.

Many come for the oaks; with over 750 species, Starhill Forest is the largest scientific oak collection in North America. “You could spend your life studying nothing but oaks,” says Guy, adding that hybrids ensure the varieties are endless.

Four separate small greenhouses set to different lighting and temperatures allow Guy to preserve and grow species that thrive in different climates. “We’ve also altered the environment here to have more. With creeks and ponds and an 80-foot relief slope we can find a niche for about anything,” he says.

Currently he’s establishing an endangered species of oak – in its natural habitat a fungus is threatening the tree; preserving it will ensure it can be reintroduced later if desired.

Members in the Menard County area may remember the local “Gudgel Oak,” dated at over 245 years old.



*At the time this article was written in late March it was nearly transplanting season. Guy and Edie Sternberg pose while showing how they can easily transplant a tree without damaging the roots using their burlap cloth system.*



## Guy’s Tips on Tree Planting

- Start with a good quality tree from a quality nursery and pay special attention to the root system—you don’t want them all running around in a ball.
- Choose the right location—know how large it will grow so you won’t interfere with other structures—that includes power lines.
- Plant the tree properly—most people plant too deep.
- Find an expert to look at the tree once in a while so you can correct problems early.

Guy was at the forefront of efforts to preserve and protect the tree. “People would tell me how inspired they were by the tree. How they would stop there and realize how insignificant their problems were. I would see people stop just to touch it.” He’s working with others on ways to honor the tree since it was recently taken down.

There is far too much information about the arboretum to include here. Visit its website at [www.starhillforest.com](http://www.starhillforest.com) or check out its Facebook page. Please note that Starhill Forest Arboretum is primarily a research facility and does not have public open hours. However, they do accommodate scheduled visits and can provide lectures and tours. If you or an organization you’re involved in would like to schedule a visit email [guy@starhillforest.com](mailto:guy@starhillforest.com).

## Electrical safety tips

Electricity is such an integral part of our daily lives that we often take it for granted and can easily forget it can be dangerous if we don't take measures to use it safely.

"Extension cord misuse and overburdened electrical systems are two of the main causes of home electrical fires," said Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI) President Brett Brenner. In addition to fires are other hazards related to improper use of electricity.

In honor of National Electrical Safety Month we offer this checklist to help you stay safe. See [www.esfi.org](http://www.esfi.org) or [www.safeelectricity.org](http://www.safeelectricity.org) for more information.

### Safety checklist

- Verified no extension cords are being used to provide power on a long-term basis.
- Vacuumed refrigerator coils to eliminate dirt buildup that can reduce efficiency and create fire hazards.
- Watched closely to ensure young children are not plugging in/unplugging items themselves.
- Moved all appliance cords away from hot surfaces.
- Checked all outlets. Called an electrician to check out any non-working, unusually warm, or crackling/buzzing outlets.
- Talked to kids about water and electricity and the importance of locating sprinklers and water balloon wars away from outlets and appliances.
- Verified fuse box/circuit breaker box is appropriately labeled. Consulted with an electrician if circuits frequently need reset.
- Checked washer and dryer for excessive movement that would cause stress on electrical connections.
- Tested all GFCI outlets in the bathroom, kitchen and outdoor outlets near the pool. No GFCIs? Contacted an electrician.
- Visually inspected all outlet and switch cover plates for missing, cracked or broken plates. Verified all outlets are tamper resistant or contacted an electrician to install.
- Checked all cords are unwrapped, in good condition, placed out of walking areas, and free from furniture resting on them.
- Reviewed with kids never to climb trees near lines and not to play on or near pad mounted transformers (big green boxes).
- Moved all countertop appliances away from the sink.
- Instructed kids never to release mylar balloons outdoors and to not fly kites near electric lines.

IF IT'S NOT INSULATED, NEITHER ARE YOU.

REPLACE, NEVER REPAIR  
DAMAGED EXTENSION CORDS.

Helping members use electricity safely, that's the power of your co-op membership. Learn more from the experts themselves at [TogetherWeSave.com](http://TogetherWeSave.com).

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**Connect**  
to MEC

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# Board Meeting Report

For full minutes please visit our website at [www.menard.com](http://www.menard.com) or contact our office.

**P**resent were Directors Jay Frye, Jerry Brooks, Warren Goetsch, Gary Martin, Donald McMillan, Michael Patrick, and Roy Seaney as well as Manager Eric Hobbie and Attorney Charles Smith. Directors Jodine Tate and Steven Worner were absent.

Motion carried for the co-op to proceed with a Menard owned add-a-phase retirement using a 40-year life buy out.

RUS Form 674 with resolution approved. Motion carried to enter construction contract with L. E. Myers.

Manager Hobbie presented the

Manager's Report for January 2016. He reviewed the balance sheet, budget, outage summary and safety report. He also discussed the construction of a new substation near Mechanicsburg.

Hobbie advised that six irrigation systems were currently planned; presented an irrigation load management update; reviewed plans for a network migration; reviewed State of Illinois past due accounts; and discussed the line clearance contract.

Board discussed terms of a rural economic development loan and grant (REDLG) after a member requested the co-op consider such; no action was taken.

Hobbie presented the financial report for the month of January. Year to date margins were (\$4,378) compared to (\$1,956) a year earlier. Equity as of the end of January was 36.68% and the number of member accounts served was 10,816 compared to 10,777 a year ago. Net utility plant at the end of January was \$43,852,654 compared to \$42,905,363 last year. The cooperative continues to meet the requirements of the RUS, FFB and NRUCFC.

Goetsch reported on AIEC activities. Martin and Hobbie reported on Prairie Power, Inc. consolidation plans and on Prairie State.

## Items for Sale

**M**enard Electric Cooperative will be accepting sealed bids for new phase converters remaining in stock as well as several new parts. Bids from current members will be taken from May 15 until May 31, 2016.

Any items left after the May 31 deadline will be placed on sealed bid for both vendors and service companies from June 1 until June 15, 2016.

All items will have a known reserve.

Feel free to take a look at the items located at the Cooperative headquarters. Contact Dalton Whitley at 217-415-1237 or Erik Raikes at 217-632-7746.

## Tip of the Month

### Considering a pool this summer?



- Set up pools 20-25 feet from overhead lines.
- Install GFCI outlets within 20 feet.
- Investigate filter options and consider a timer.

See [www.menard.com](http://www.menard.com) for more tips on pool electrical safety and efficiency.



**Office closing  
Memorial Day  
May 30th**

## Sign Up Today for Budget Billing

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on your electric bill!**

**Call 800-872-1203  
See details at [www.menard.com](http://www.menard.com)**