



POWER FACTS

An informational publication for members of Mecklenburg Electric Cooperative concerning electricity and related subjects.

MAY 2014

May

ELECTRICAL SAFETY MONTH

It's spring. And after a winter spent indoors, many of us love to get outside and enjoy warmer temperatures – even if it's just to work around our homes and yards.

Too often outdoor chores, whether cleaning the gutters, landscaping your yard, or trimming shrubbery, include life-threatening electrical hazards.

According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, nearly one in ten electrocution-related deaths are caused by ladders contacting power lines. Mecklenburg Electric Cooperative would like to remind you to look up and live. Virginia law prohibits work within 10 feet of an overhead power line carrying over 600 volts; that means you must make certain your ladder never comes any closer than 10 feet of an electric line. Remember; never touch a person or object, such as a tree limb, ladder or even a kite string, that has made contact with a power line.

Not only is it important to look up, you must also think about what's below. As you develop your landscaping plan, include a call to Miss Utility before ever picking up a shovel. Dial 811 or 1-800-552-7001 at least three working days (excluding weekends and legal holidays) before beginning any digging project. Virginia law requires your Cooperative to mark the approximate location of its underground lines within 48 hours, beginning at 7:00 AM the day after you call 811. For example, if you plan to do work in your yard on Saturday, you should call 811 no later than Tuesday of the same week. So, whether you're setting fence posts, a mailbox, or planting a tree, call before you dig.

As you move down your list of chores don't forget to inspect those trimmers and other power tools for frayed cords, broken plugs, and cracked or broken housings. Repair or replace damaged power tools before using them. You should always store power tools indoors, never carry them by the cord and unplug them when not in use.

Check out your extension cords, too. Only use cords that are labeled for outdoor use and match the power needs of any electric tool to the cord's label information. Avoid damp conditions when using any electrical device and keep them away from water.

One last important safety tip is to teach your children to stay away from electric transformers and substations. Make sure they understand what the posted warning signs mean and never play around them.

Made in the Shade

Indoors, you may be protected from the sun's rays, but your energy bill can rise as your air conditioner works harder to keep your house cool and comfortable. Planting shade trees can add to your comfort at home by dropping the surrounding air temperature by as much as nine degrees Fahrenheit. But choosing just the right tree may require a compass and patience while they grow to work for you:

- When selecting shade trees, keep in mind the mature height of the tree and the shape of its shade canopy in relation to the height of your home. These factors are important because they should influence how far from the house you decide to plant a tree. Always avoid planting near underground utility lines.
- Shading takes time—a 6-foot to 8-foot deciduous tree planted near a house 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.
- Make planting shade trees due west of west-facing windows your first priority.
- Select a tree that can be planted within 20 feet of the window and that will grow at least 10 feet taller than that window. If you have the space, use as many trees as needed to create a continuous row along all major west-and east-facing windows.
- Contrary to intuition, the least energy efficient place for a tree is to the south of a house.

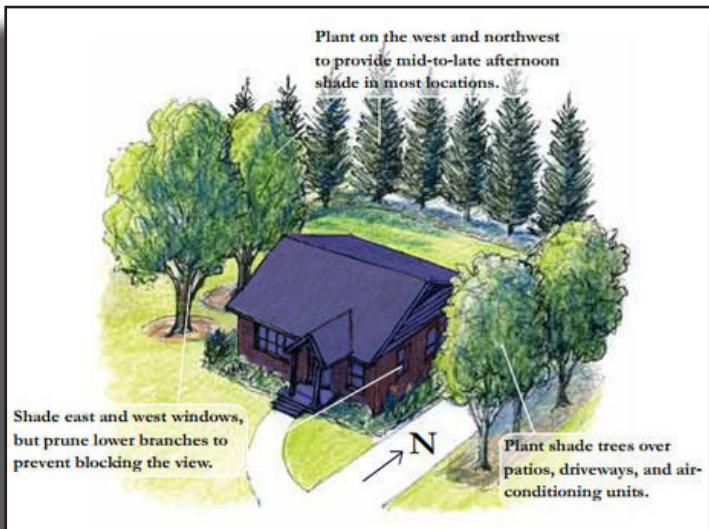


Energy Efficiency

Tip of the Month

A well-designed landscape provides both energy efficiency and curb appeal for your home. The type of vegetation you choose is as important as where they are planted. Sunlight streaming through windows and bearing down on the roof can drive up air conditioner use. Using shade trees and shrubs in your landscaping plan can help reduce cooling costs. In the winter, deciduous trees lose their leaves and let in warmth.

Source: Energy.gov



Different trees can serve a variety of purposes. To block summer heat while letting sun filter through in the winter months, use deciduous trees or those that lose their leaves seasonally. Evergreens and shrubs, on the other hand, are ideal for providing continuous shade and blocking heavy winds. Also, keep in mind that not all shade plants are tall. Shrubs and sturdy groundcover plants also provide good shade by reducing heat radiation and cooling air before it reaches your home's walls and windows.

Start planting savings and let your yard do all the work—a well-placed tree, shrub, or vine can deliver effective shade, act as a windbreak, and reduce your energy bills.

Remember - Plant trees that will grow 25 ft. or taller at least as far away from utility lines as the tree's full height at maturity.

Mark your Calendars!!



Mecklenburg Electric Cooperative's
Annual Meeting of the Members
will be held June 18.

Mecklenburg Electric Cooperative Offices Will Be Closed Monday, May 26, in Observance of Memorial Day.