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M A G A Z I N E

APRIL 2025

## Fields Blue as Sky

The Ennis  
Bluebonnet Trails  
highlight a state  
treasure

Bluebonnet Trails  
2025 Shopping Guide

In the Kitchen With  
Minnie Vaughn

Also inside:


Scavenger Hunt

Sudoku

Featured Business:  
Odd Fellow & Rebekah  
Home for the Aged

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## ON THE COVER



Bluebonnets blanket the highways and byways of Ennis.

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# MANAGING EDITOR'S NOTE

*Happy April!*

Though you may associate the month of *March* with all things green due to St. Patrick's Day, April also has a heavy emphasis on green — green thumbs that is! Most are familiar with Arbor Day, celebrated the last Friday of the month (April 25 this year), when people are encouraged to plant trees. Trees clean the air and prevent rainwater runoff, but they aren't just good for the environment. They're good for our emotional health, as well. Their beauty brings us pleasure.

A similar, though less familiar, April holiday is International Plant Appreciation Day, which is celebrated every year on April 13. On this informal holiday, people are encouraged to beautify their homes/property with plants. The choices available are vast, and their colorful blooms bring a smile to my face.

In Ennis, plants are celebrated not just on April 13 and 25, but all month long. Well, at least our Texas bluebonnets are! With 40 miles of mapped trails to enjoy, the roadways will be packed with people coming to enjoy the wildflower show. Some of my favorite memories of my mom were made and captured in photos along the bluebonnet trails out near Sugar Ridge. One of them hangs on my living room wall.


Mom loved plants. I have a plaque that she used to hang on the fence in the backyard. She bought it because it reminded her of her aunt who had the greenest thumb of anyone I have ever known! It says, *One is nearer to God's heart in a garden than anywhere on earth.*

*Enjoy the beauty this month!*



*Becky*

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# FIELDS BLUE



**"THE TRAIL BECAME AN OFFICIAL EVENT IN 1951, BUT AS FAR BACK AS 1939, THERE WERE UNOFFICIAL TRAILS MARKED OUT FOR DRIVERS TO ENJOY THE SIGHTS."**



*Bluebonnets are part of a Texas spring. Ennis has more than its fair share of them. Rolling, hilly fields blanketed in blue are part and parcel of the city's identity. Since 1997, Ennis has been officially recognized as both the state's official bluebonnet trail and bluebonnet city.*

Nancy Swindell, Penny Attwood and Pat Warren are three members of the Ennis

Garden Club who, together, have more than 115 years invested in Ennis and its bluebonnets. The trail became an official event in 1951, but as far back as 1939, there were unofficial trails marked out for drivers to enjoy the sights. In those early years, motorists and their families would make day trips from as far away as Dallas and Waco. Now, the bluebonnet trails draw visitors from China, India and Europe.

"When this started in 1951, the Garden Club just set up a tent in front of the library and passed out hand-drawn maps. We sold handcrafts," Nancy reported. Blue checked aprons and bonnets, painted rocks and T-shirts were featured alongside homemade sandwiches and cookies.

"The first year, 400 cars came, and the club passed out 1,000 maps," Pat informed.

"There were three main trails, but we didn't have painted metal signs," Penny added. "It was just cardboard that some lady nailed to a tree!" This

# AS SKY

— By Adam Walker

was the “primitive” state of affairs from which today’s festival grew.

“When I first joined the Garden Club, 50 years ago, the club did this alone,” Nancy explained. “We were on a very tight budget. We borrowed a tent from Keever’s, tables from the churches. Gina Rokas, the previous tourism director, was an integral partner and was so passionate about the bluebonnets. In the last eight years, it’s really gotten big. We brought in partners because it had outgrown the club. It’s all been stepping stones. Every year, it gets a little better. We partnered with the city. Now, we have tours, vendors, live music, security and a huge tent for selling our official souvenirs. The money from selling souvenirs gives us funds to seed some of the parks and to start planning for next year. The extra money is given to local charities.”

Though they have lots of help from the city and other partners these days, the Ennis Garden Club members still form the backbone of the festival. “All of the members volunteer at least one two-hour shift,” Penny informed.

Bluebonnets grow naturally here. The only seeding that the Ennis Garden Club does is in some of the parks, where they partner with the city to add to the blooms. The trails are all nature’s handiwork. Fall rains and cold weather in the winter make for the best blooms, so this year promises to be good.

“They bloom along the highways first,” Nancy explained, “because the ground is hotter there. Then two to three weeks later, the hills bloom. They like slopes with poor soil. They don’t want their feet wet. They need to drain. People don’t realize that they have a smell. Such an aroma! One place blooms,

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while another goes to seed. When will the best time to see them be? Only God knows!”

“I love the beautiful color, with the other flowers mixed in,” Pat added. “I grew up on a farm. This is home to me. God is so close. Many times, we don’t take the time to stop to enjoy what’s right here. And it’s given to us, free, to enjoy. I enjoy getting to share this with other people.”

Ashley Colunga, the community engagement director for the city of Ennis, has a unique perspective. “I’ve been with the city for eight-and-a-half years and have enjoyed watching this event, so rich in history, adapt

and change. Our team handles the marketing, planning and logistics of the event. This is our largest event of the year and feeds into the brand and identity of our town, so we take great pride in ensuring this is a wonderful experience for both locals and visitors. Next year will be the 75th year, which is a huge milestone! Our team is already conceptualizing how to celebrate the history for next year’s festival with ideas like recreating photos from the past.”

Ashley grew up in Ennis. “The house I grew up in was on the trails, and the house I currently live in is on the trails. But I didn’t really believe how big this was until I started working for the city

of Ennis. People come from all over the world. It makes me proud that people want to come experience the beautiful nature we have to offer. They want to see the bluebonnets, the Belgian horses, the donkeys and the tree-lined roads. Every year is different, which is what keeps people coming back.

“The Welcome Center offers one-on-one conversations about where to find the best bluebonnet viewing and dining recommendations. We recently added a welcome video, but you need to talk to our volunteers to get the full, authentic experience. Instagram influencers are getting the word out to younger generations. Social media has certainly been a driving factor of growth over the years. Our first post of the season’s blooms always goes viral!” **NOW**



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# Odd Fellow & Rebekah Home for the Aged

— By Bill Smith

## Odd Fellow & Rebekah Home for the Aged

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director@ofrrc.org  
www.iooftx-rc.org

**Hours:** Daily: 7:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.

The Odd Fellow & Rebekah Home for the Aged is one of the premier facilities in the county, and they continue to provide quality care in a safe and secure environment. “The facility is open to the public,” Director Levenne Cannaday said. “You no longer have to be a member of the

Independent Order of Odd Fellows to enjoy the peaceful atmosphere and age-appropriate amenities offered here.”

Located just a mile south of downtown Ennis and five minutes from the local hospital, the Odd Fellow & Rebekah Home for the Aged offers so much for the loved one who is looking for that special home away from home. Levenne and her staff work as a close-knit team. “Several years ago, we updated the facility, and we continue to work diligently to make it the very best it can be,” Levenne stated. “Patrick Rose, our maintenance technician, stays on top of things.” There are a couple of suites available, and there are a number of them that have been remodeled to be comfortable new homes for future residents.

Residents at the Odd Fellow & Rebekah Home for the Aged live an independent lifestyle. The in-home choices are many. The chapel provides a quiet place to pray and participate in Bible studies, and there is a church service on Friday evenings. The library is stocked with books in all genres, and movies are shown weekly in the theater. Sometimes the movie featured will be a new release, while

other times a classic film will be playing. Residents take part in a friendly game of bingo once a week, as well. Bingo is always a favorite!

Many of the residents still enjoy crafting, quilting and working their magic with fabric. The sewing room allows them the creative outlet they are looking for with its sewing machines, fabric and craft supply choices. "A few of our residents enjoy crocheting and puzzling," LeVonne said. Judy Cryer still arrives once a week to do hair. "Judy has been with us for a very long time," LeVonne admitted. There is also a game room and an exercise room. As the resident count continues to increase, so will the selection of activities.

**“Several years ago, we updated the facility, and we continue to work diligently to make it the very best it can be.”**

Residents attend community activities, go on local shopping trips to Wal-Mart and make it to their local doctor's appointments stress-free and on time, thanks to the transportation offered. The monthly fee also includes the privacy of a spacious room, an oversized, cozy community living area, a large, communal dining room and laundry facilities on-site.

Diet and nutrition for the residents at the smoke-free facility are provided by six wonderful cooks. They ensure that the residents are fed well, buffet style with a choice of entrées. "The residents get along well with one another," LeVonne shared. "The three mealtimes are great times for them to socialize with one another."

The Odd Fellow & Rebekah Home for the Aged also provides respite care for those caring for seniors who can still live independently. Please call the office for details. The facility also offers guest rooms for family members who travel to see their loved ones. "The home combines independent living in a community setting designed especially for the aged," LeVonne said. "Through friendship, love and truth, we are dedicated to providing quality care to all who come to make their home with us." **NOW**



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by Debbie Gaultney

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*Isabelle Pecina spends some playtime on the swings at Lions Park.*

By Bill Smith

## **Zoomed In:** Esperanza Galaviz

This month marks Esperanza Galaviz's first anniversary working for Arden Insurance Agency. "I have been working with insurance for seven years," she related. "My first year was in personal lines, but I have enjoyed working with commercial insurance clients since then. Before I joined Arden, my work was primarily with long-haul trucking accounts, and I drove back and forth to Plano every day. Now, there is more variety in the accounts I service, and the long commute is gone!"

Esperanza has three daughters from age 18 to 24, with only the 18-year-old still at home. When not working or spending time at home, she enjoys all kinds of fishing, but mostly what she calls the "old-fashioned" kind from the banks of Chambers Creek. She also enjoys attending car races, with her favorite track being the drag strip at Ferris.



*Eleanor Howell celebrates the success of the Bowie Spaghetti Supper with the 1st grade mascot and Head Chef.*



*Ennis Junior High One Act Play claims first place in a district competition.*



*Lolli and Pop's Shops holds a ribbon-cutting ceremony.*



The Ennis VFW hosts its first steak dinner.



Scarlet Sarmienta celebrates her quinceañera.



Willow and Harlow Gouthreaux ride with Uncle Nicholas and Aunt Samantha after Kids Day Out at Baylor Baptist Church.

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Sweet Potato Pie

## CookingNOW

# IN THE KITCHEN WITH MINNIE VAUGHN

— By Sandra Walters



“I was born and raised in Texas. I grew up in Greenville,” Minnie Vaughn said. “Growing up, I never got to be in the kitchen because back then, small children were not allowed to be in the kitchen while Mama was cooking. Around the age of 12 was the first time I was permitted to explore the kitchen. I learned how to make homemade biscuits. I truly enjoyed learning, and once I had it mastered, I made them all the time.”

Cooking is her happy place. She loves eating and seeing others appreciate her meals. “I have a few favorite seasonings and spices. I often use sea salt mixed with black pepper, but for my sweet flavorings, I like vanilla and nutmeg,” she added. “Mealtimes are important occasions that bring people together. In my house, we prefer down-home cooking — soul food.”

During the holidays, Minnie looks forward to pulling out all the favorite holiday recipes to make lots of others smile while fellowshiping over a good home-cooked meal. “Everything that I have learned to cook over the years has been self-taught with the help of the Lord. Cooking is a gift. And I thank God for allowing me the ability to bless others in this way.”<sup>NOW</sup>

## Tea Cakes

**4 cups flour**  
**1 Tbsp. baking soda**  
**1/2 Tbsp. nutmeg**  
**2 sticks butter**  
**1 cup sugar**  
**3 eggs**  
**1 cup buttermilk**  
**1 Tbsp. vanilla**

1. Preheat the oven to 350 F.
2. Put the flour, baking soda and nutmeg in a bowl; set aside. In another bowl, mix the butter, sugar, eggs, buttermilk and vanilla. Combine the ingredients.
3. Roll out the dough on a flat surface; use a round cookie cutter to shape tea cakes.
4. Place the tea cakes on a parchment paper-lined cookie sheet; bake in for 15 minutes. Remove from the oven; let set.
5. Enjoy with a cup of your favorite drink.

## Sweet Potato Pie

**4 large sweet potatoes**  
**2 sticks pure butter**  
**2 1/2 cups sugar**  
**1 Tbsp. nutmeg**  
**1/2 cup flour**  
**1 Tbsp. vanilla**  
**4 eggs**  
**2 unbaked deep-dish piecrusts**

1. Peel and boil the sweet potatoes until soft; drain the water.
2. Place the sweet potatoes in a large mixing bowl. Add the butter and sugar while mixing well.
3. Once the mixture is blended, add the remaining ingredients; mix until smooth.
4. Transfer the mixture into the unbaked piecrusts. Bake for 45 minutes to 1 hour until golden brown.

## Old Fashioned Beef Stew

**5 lbs. beef stew meat**  
**Salt, to taste**  
**Pepper, to taste**  
**Sugar, a pinch**  
**3 lg. potatoes, peeled and cut into chunks**  
**1 lg. onion, diced**  
**4 stalks celery, diced**  
**1 bag frozen carrots**  
**2 cans stewed tomatoes**  
**1 jar original Ragu sauce**  
**1 bag frozen mixed vegetables**

1. Season the stew meat with salt, pepper and sugar. Brown the meat in a large skillet.
2. Place the meat, and remaining ingredients in a large pot; stir to combine. Boil for 1 hour.
3. Serve with corn bread.

## Greens

- 4 bunches mustard greens
- 3 bunches turnip greens
- 4-5 bite-size pieces salted bacon
- 1 Tbsp. salt
- 1/3 cup sugar

1. Thoroughly rinse the greens in lukewarm water; rub them with your hands to remove dirt before cooking.
2. Put the salted bacon, salt, sugar and the greens into a pot; bring to a boil over medium-high heat for 1 1/2 hours until tender.
3. Serve with corn bread.

## Homemade Biscuits

- 2 cups self-rising flour
- 1/4 cup Crisco
- 1 cup buttermilk
- PAM cooking spray

1. Preheat the oven at 350 F for 12 minutes.
2. In a large bowl, mix the flour and Crisco. Add the buttermilk; mix with your hands. Do not overmix. After mixing the ingredients, add a sprinkle of flour to roll out the biscuit dough.
3. Use your biscuit cutter or a cookie cutter to form the biscuits.
4. Spray PAM cooking spray on a cookie sheet; place the biscuits on the pan.
5. Bake for 10-15 minutes.

## Potato Salad

- 1 lg. potato
- 1/2 cup mayonnaise
- 2 Tbsp. mustard
- 2 Tbsp. sugar
- 1/2 cup sweet relish
- 4 boiled eggs

1. Peel and dice the potato. Place the potatoes in a pot of boiling water; cook until soft. Remove the potatoes to cool.
2. In a large bowl, add all ingredients; stir together. Cover; put in the refrigerator to chill before serving.

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## Are You Afraid of Outliving Your Money?

Do you worry about running out of money during your retirement years? If so, how can you help prevent this from happening?

In the first place, if you have this type of fear, you're far from alone. Consider this: 58% of retirement savers from all age groups, including current retirees, say that outliving their assets is their greatest retirement fear, according to a study by Cerulli Associates, a financial services research organization.

This type of fear can certainly affect your quality of life when you retire. Still, there's no need to panic — because you can take steps to help prevent the running-out-of-money scenario.

Here are a few to consider:

- **Know how much you'll need during retirement.** You need to get a clear picture, or at least as good an estimate as possible, of how much money you'll need to support your retirement lifestyle. Once you do retire, some costs, such as transportation or other work-related expenses, might go down, while others — medical expenses, in particular — will likely go up. The fear of running out of money, like many fears, is caused largely by what you don't know, so having a good sense of how much you'll need in retirement can help reduce your anxieties.

- **Build financial resources before retirement.** You're probably at your peak earning capacity in the years close to your retirement, so consider contributing as much as you can afford to your IRA and 401(k) or other employer-sponsored retirement plan.

- **Maximize your Social Security payments.** You can start collecting Social Security as early as 62, but your monthly benefits will be larger if you can afford to wait until your full retirement age, between 66 and 67 (Payments will "max out" at age 70.)

- **Re-enter the workforce.** Going back to work in some capacity is one way to possibly help build retirement resources and delay taking Social Security. If you have a particular area of expertise, and you enjoyed the work you did, you might be able to go back to it on a part-time basis or do some consulting. You could boost your cash flow, and potentially extend your contributions to an IRA and to an employer's retirement plan.

- **Cut costs during retirement.** Possibly the biggest cost-cutting measure is downsizing — are you willing and able to move to a less expensive area or scale down your current living space? Of course, this is an emotional decision, as well as a financial one, and downsizing isn't for everyone, but it might be something to at least consider. As for the lesser ways of reducing expenses, take advantage of senior discounts, which are offered in many areas, including entertainment, public transportation, restaurants and retail establishments. And look for other opportunities, such as cutting out streaming services you don't use.

- **Look for more income from your investments.** As you get closer to retirement, and even when you do retire, you might want to adjust your investment portfolio to provide you with more income-producing opportunities. However, even as a retiree, you'll want some growth potential in your investments to help keep you ahead of inflation.

Ultimately, the more you can bolster your financial security before and during retirement, the less fear you may have of outliving your money. **NOW**

*This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor. Edward Jones, Member SIPC. Jeff Irish is an Edward Jones representative based in Ennis.*

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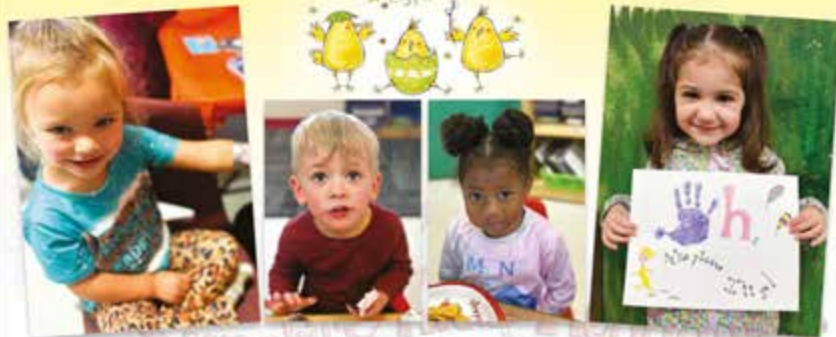
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					7	3		
3	5	2	6					
		3					5	
		1				9		8
				2			1	
7				3				9
		8	1			2	6	
					5			

Medium

	9	2		1				
				9		4		
				8	2			1 6
		1						8 3
							2	
	8	6		9				
		5						
	1			6	8			4
		3						5 1

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# Hello, Spring

## APRIL

Some events may have been cancelled or rescheduled while we were at press. Check with individual organizations or your city or Chamber websites to verify dates and times.

### 4/1-4/30

#### Ennis Bluebonnet Trails:

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### 4/11-4/13

#### Ennis Bluebonnet Trails Festival:

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### 4/12

#### Bluebonnet Run:

A professionally timed 5K and 10K race benefiting CROME Nonprofit, which supports student scholarships and mentorship programs. Awards for top finishers. Check-in: 6:00 a.m.; 10K start time: 8:00 a.m.; 5K start time: 8:15 a.m.; Kids Run start time: 9:30 a.m.; awards ceremony: 10:00 a.m., in downtown Ennis. After the race, stick around for the Bluebonnet Trails Festival with live music, food and more. Register at [www.bluebonnetrun.com](http://www.bluebonnetrun.com).

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#### Bike the Bluebonnets:

Ride the country roads viewing fields of bluebonnets. 8:45

a.m.-9:15 a.m., Ferris Junior High School/ Yellow Jacket Stadium, 1002 E. 8th St./FM 660, Ferris (East of I-45). Online registration only at [www.gdbclub.com/bluebonnets](http://www.gdbclub.com/bluebonnets). [rallydirector@greaterdallasbicyclists.com](mailto:rallydirector@greaterdallasbicyclists.com).

*Submissions are welcome and published as space allows. Send your current event details to [bill.smith@nowmagazines.com](mailto:bill.smith@nowmagazines.com).*

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