

country folklore,  
slicker gifts

# Texas

## predict rain: take an umbrella

### Rain forecasters

Watch for ominous clouds if:  
— cows are grouped in a pasture  
— there are a large number of turtles or doves on the road  
— snails crawl up fenceposts or the side of a house  
— you see holes appear in a dry creekbed. These holes appear because crayfish live underground and, since they know when it is going to rain, they bore holes up to the surface so the rainwater can come down

to them.

— if the sun sets in a cloud on Sunday, it will rain by Wednesday

— it will rain in three days if there is a ring around the moon, or if fog is present for three mornings

— if it rains on the first day of the month, it will rain 15 days during the month

— if it rains on Easter Sunday, it will rain for seven consecutive Sundays

— if rain makes bubbles on top of puddles, it will rain again in three days.

— rain also can be forecast for an entire year. On the first day of January, slice an onion into 12 pieces and make each slice correspond to a month. After 15 days, check the slices. If the first slice is dry, January will be a dry month; if it is still moist, the month will be wet.

**Cold-weather ("norther") predictors**

Bring out the winter coats when:

— you see heavy bark on trees, a thick shuck on an ear of corn or thick fur on animals

— concrete sweats  
— horses run in the field  
— if it thunders in February, a cold spell is coming

— if it thunders in January, it will freeze in April

**Fishing forecasters and crop predictors**

— when the cows are lying down in a field, the fish won't

bite. When the cows are standing up, the fishing should be good.

— fish won't bite during a full moon

— crops that grow underground such as potatoes, turnips and onions, all should be planted in the dark of the moon. Everything else should be planted during a three-quarter or full moon.

Although the Almanac focuses on weather and farming, home remedies, health and beauty aids also are given. So, if you have a mole that you'd rather be without or blood that needs to be purified, read on.

### Health and beauty

— a cold sore can be healed by dabbing it with apple cider vinegar

— to stop a wound from bleeding, apply a paste of flour and water

— apply a paste of egg white and salt to sprains

— rub the inside of a piece of prickly pear cactus or a piece of fat bacon on a splinter to draw it out

— to purify blood, eat parsley

— to ease a sore throat, sip onion soup

— apples will help prevent emotional upsets, tension and headaches

— to ease stomach distress, mix ¼ teaspoon nutmeg with 1 cup water and drink

— hardening of the arteries can be prevented by eating plenty of molasses

— to remove moles, alternate applications of castor oil and the juice of fresh cranberries

— to get rid of warts, tie a string around the wart, slip it off, put the string under a rock in the yard and forget about it. When the string rots, the wart will fall off.

— rubbing the juice of a lemon on hands will make them smooth and supple

— to make hair grow faster, rub onion juice on your scalp

— to remove onion odor from hands, rub them with celery

— to remove onion and garlic odors from breath, eat a few sprigs of parsley.

There you have it, how to run your life, courtesy of the Farmer's Almanac. If the solution to your particular problem isn't given here, pick up a copy at the store. There's more for the reading.



## How-to book defines the true Texan

By Cathy Ann Saathoff

Native Texan

*How To Be Texan*. By Michael Hicks, published by Texas Monthly Press; \$6.95.

Leave it to Texas Monthly Press to come up with the definitive guide on how to be what we all are — Texans.

For those of us who have done it all our lives, being a Texan comes naturally. But even some natives have missed out on a few things along the way. Some people are actually so uninformed on Texas etiquette that they go through life with only one first name. The first page of the book sets the record straight on that point, y'all.

"How To Be Texan" is a compilation of all the things Texas Monthly magazine brings us every month — hats and belts and cars and food and dancing and all of life's little necessities, done up Texas-style.

Author Michael Hicks tells not only how Texans are, but why they got to be that way.

The book's back cover says that living in Texas and being a Texan are two very different things. Living in Texas is easy; being a Texan requires a certain attitude about life.

Hicks hasn't missed a thing. He sets the record straight on how to correctly roll a tortilla and fold a gimme cap (three folds). How to act in a bar (look tired and sweaty, don't drink white wine, avoid cowboys with no necks).

Then there are the deep analytical pieces. Did you realize the profound effect the increase in gas prices had on the love life of the West Texas teenager? Those poor children can hardly afford to drive across the western arm of the state to find an opposite-

sex type person to associate with. As Hicks points out, a hundred-mile radius from the home place may offer fewer than 15 women of the desired age group.

There's even a page on Aggies — the largest single club in Texas. It includes two old Aggie jokes and doesn't say much else, but the teasips didn't get a page. So there.

Hicks takes the reader on a coffee-table journey through the highways and backroads of Texas, making quick stops at bars, auctions and various "weird places" around the state. Dressed appropriately, of course, eating and drinking the correct Texas eats and drinks.

Throughout the book I was reminded of people and things from my 21 years as a Texan. Hicks has captured the essence of Texas, from the state-wide beans versus no beans chili wars, to how to make a perfectly gorgeous pair of new boots into a comfortably worn pair of boots worthy of any good ol' boy's feet.

Any good Texan instinctively knows about these things, but it's reassuring to see in print trivial bits of information that are already common knowledge 'round these parts. Things like what old trucks look like. How to pronounce "rodeo."

For the native Texan, the book belongs next to Webster's Dictionary and the encyclopedia. It contains things you will probably need to look up at one time or another.

It is even more valuable, however, for those outsiders who have the sense to make their homes here. Newcomers will still stand out like sore thumbs, but close adherence to Hicks' book will make the transition from regular person to Texan less painful.

As Hicks says, maybe one day the rest of the country will change for the better, and then we'll all be Texans.