

[Subscribe](#)[Help](#)

42°
H: 47° L: 39°



Sunday, March 1, 2015

Austin American-Statesman

[Sign Out](#)

NEWS

Two teens dead, three others injured in rollover crash near Elgin

[LATEST HEADLINES](#)

BREAKING NEWS

Austin-based Freescale Semiconductor being acquired by NXP Semiconductors

[HOME](#) / [NEWS](#) / [OPINION](#)

Resize text

A

A

A

Hanks: 'Nana-technology' is closer than you think

Posted: 6:00 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 2, 2014



By Anna Hanks - Special to the American-Statesman

As I was hanging my laundry out on the line on the day following the South By Southwest Eco Conference earlier this month, I realized that one concept of the festival had stuck with me.

That idea was saving the earth through “Nana-technology” – or doing things like your Nana, or grandmother, would have done.

SXSW Eco is a small environmentally focused conference, offering panels on everything from sustainable food to the creation of nonpetroleum-based fuel for commercial airplanes.

The idea of Nana-technology came out of the “Wasted Future” panel, which featured speakers from Australia and New Zealand who discussed how to save the planet through home gardening and reusing what some would consider garbage. Since the Austin City Council has set a goal of Austin becoming a zero-waste city by 2040 – keeping 90 percent of discarded materials out of the landfill – I couldn’t help thinking that a lot of what was said in this panel applied to us.

This concept of Nana-technology resonated with me. Nearly all of my grandparents grew up on large family farms, then moved to Houston during the Depression. Growing up, I hung laundry on the line with one grandmother, while I gleefully helped tear up homegrown cabbage for sauerkraut with my other grandmother. Early each summer, I put on long sleeves at dawn to pick figs from my grandmother’s trees on her front lawn for the family fig-canning extravaganza. I felt sorry for the kids who didn’t have competing homegrown tomatoes and corn from each of their grandfathers and chicken eggs from a grandmother who also raised goats.

As I grew up, I realized I lived a lot like my grandparents, only without the goats. This panel just gave a zippy name to the way I’m already living my Nana-technology life. I’ve written about my devotion to line-drying before, but I realized that things had gone further. When possible, I prefer to leave the air conditioner off and just use the ceiling fans. Before I got married and my husband took over the chore, I mowed the lawn of my 1939 house with an old-fashioned human-powered push mower. (Pro tip: Pick up any sticks before you start to mow, so the cutting wheel won’t get stuck!) Other than the dishwasher, I’m not a big fan of labor-saving devices, preferring zealous use of the broom instead of the vacuum, and using the rake instead of the leaf blower. Every so often, I release my aggression by taking the sofa cushions outside and beating the bejesus out of them.

Apart from the impact of my grandparents, there are other reasons I’ve embraced the Nana-technology lifestyle. I love quiet. I don’t want to hear an unnecessary electric motor. And I’m cheap! Brooms cost bupkis compared to fancy machines. The fact that this September was globally the hottest in 135 years is just another reason to reach for the broom, not the vacuum.

The more I thought about it, I realized this Nana-technology movement is already starting to catch on. Gardening and canning are becoming more popular, as is the practice of having backyard chickens. Likewise making your own clothing – which was in the doldrums for decades – is also experiencing a comeback.

One of the other ideas that came from this panel was the idea of fixing things – instead of buying a replacement – as a way of fighting back the tide of trash. I realized that I had been doing that for a long time, partly because I don’t want to try to figure out how something new works.

I also realized that I may have married my husband partly because of his ability to fix all of the broken things in my life. My grandfather was known for his ability to MacGyver a solution to many a household repair, armed with only some bailing wire and an old auto part that he dredged out of his garage. It's a gift I appreciate more and more, especially when I have to call a plumber to fix a leak.

As I get older, sometimes I have a hard time reconciling the shiny fancy world I live in – where you can buy a turnkey DIY canning kit from Williams-Sonoma – with the just-off-the-farm money stretching I learned at home.

Maybe we can all improve our city by trying a little Nana-technology. Even if some of us do have to buy DIY kits to get started, we can still help the environment – and maybe we can save ourselves some cash in the long term.

Hanks blogs about pop culture at annainaustin.com.

In this Section

[Two teens dead, three others injured in rollover crash near Elgin](#)

[Dallas nurse who survived Ebola says hospital failed her, plans to sue](#)

[Federal judge in Waco investigated after sexual abuse allegations](#)

[Traffic stop in Manor yields suspected stolen items and drug arrests](#)

[Missing boys found in Bastrop County after 8-hour search](#)

[Overnight ice expected in Llano, Burnet counties](#)

[Richard Finnell, former UT journalism adviser and rocker, dies at 69](#)

[Season for Caring recipient Robert Garcia dies](#)

[One teen dead, several others hurt in rollover crash near Elgin](#)

[Icy roads Saturday contribute to nearly 200 crashes in Austin area](#)

PREVIOUS:
WORLD

Islamic State group kills 50 Iraqis, including children

NEXT:
OPINION

Other nations need gifted people; Dog pollution ruins neighborhood

Popular on MyStatesman.com

[Interactive: Texas treasures trips](#)

[Joe Beal, politically connected engineer, back in the water game](#)

[Austin's Freescale being sold in \\$11.8 billion deal](#)

[Wimberley-based group gathers 16,000 signatures to change...](#)