



August 2010

Volume 4, Issue 8

TEXAS ANNUAL TAX HOLIDAY *AUGUST 20, 21 & 22*

Texas shoppers get a break from state and local taxes on August 20, 21 and 22—the state’s annual tax holiday. Lay-away plans can be used again this year at some stores to take advantage of the sales tax holiday.

The law exempts most clothing and footwear priced under \$100 from sales and use taxes, which could save shoppers about \$8 on every \$100 they spend. Backpacks under \$100 and used by elementary and secondary students are also exempt. A backpack is a pack with straps one wears on the back. The exemption during the sales tax holiday includes backpacks with wheels, provided they can also be worn on the back like a traditional backpack, and messenger bags. The exemption does not include items that are reasonably defined as luggage, briefcases, athletic/duffle/gym bags, computer bags, purses or framed backpacks. Ten or fewer backpacks can be purchased tax-free at one time without providing an exemption certificate to the seller. A detailed list of exempt and non-exempt items can be found at www.window.state.tx.us/taxinfo/taxpubs/tx98.

BRITT'S BOOK BUZZ

The Help by Kathryn Stockett



I had heard a lot of buzz around *The Help* by Kathryn Stockett, but it wasn’t until a good friend of mine coined the book, “exceptional” that I downloaded it onto my Kindle. Boy, am I glad I did! As with humor, it is rare to be able to communicate through the written word raw tenderness between two people, but Stockett nailed it! The perspective of this book, through the eyes of “the help,” African American women working in white women’s houses during the 1960s is spectacular.

It is these strong African American women who very often raised the white children, and they did it with pride, extreme love and tenderness. There are a couple of lines within the book that really highlight this point, “Someone whose eyes simply said, without words, You are fine with me” and “You already up, Baby Girl? Why you didn’t holler for me?” and “You a smart girl. You a good girl.” These women build up the children in their care and want to teach them that color isn’t important in God’s eyes.

I also really enjoyed the different personalities and voices in the book as it really told a dramatic, entertaining, sad and funny story. It was interesting to reflect on the books mention of actual historical events, for example the birth of zip codes and well as the more obvious ones during this time—of Rosa Parks, Dr. Martin Luther King and President Kennedy’s assassination.

The Help is a beautiful story of love filled with conflict, but ultimately love.

Feel free to comment on this review, your thoughts on the book or suggest a book for me to review on my blog: <http://brittsbuzz.blogspot.com>.

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NEWSLETTER INFO

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Peel, Inc. www.PEELinc.com, 512-263-9181
Article Submissions.....shadyhollow@peelinc.com
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ARTICLE SUBMISSIONS

Interested in submitting an article? You can do so by emailing shadyhollow@PEELinc.com or by going to <http://www.peelinc.com/articleSubmit.php>. All news must be received by the 9th of the month prior to the issue. So if you are involved with a school group, scouts, sports etc – please submit your articles for The Shady Side. Personal news for the Stork Report, Teenage Job Seekers, special celebrations and military service are also welcome.

ADVERTISING INFORMATION

Please support the businesses that advertise in The Shady Side. Their advertising dollars make it possible for all Shady Hollow residents to receive the monthly newsletter at no charge. If you would like to support the newsletter by advertising, please contact our sales office at 512-263-9181 or advertising@PEELinc.com. The advertising deadline is the 8th of each month for the following month's newsletter.

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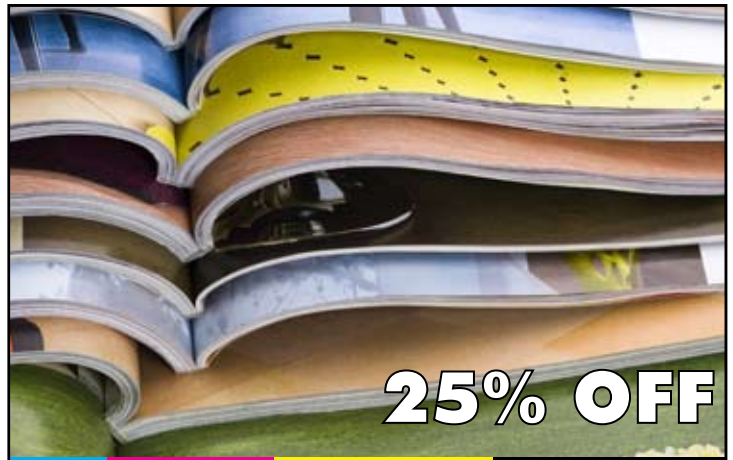


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Developing Healthy Eating Habits in Young Children

By Therese Thompson

Bread and Jam for Frances, written by Russell Hoban and illustrated by Lillian Hoban, is a story that resonates with parents who struggle with their children at mealtime. It's a tale about Francis, an adorable character who will only eat jam and bread. Out of desperation, Francis' mom decided to feed Frances only jam and bread at every meal. It doesn't take long for Francis to discover that mealtimes are much more delicious and interesting with various foods other than bread and jam.

As parents of a young child, mealtime can be frustrating and overwhelming – just as it was for Francis' mom. It may be tempting to add fruits and vegetables to the child's meal to trick them into eating healthier, but is not at all advisable. This behavior perpetuates a cycle of unhealthy control. When children are tricked, they can become distrustful of their parents by being deceived. As well, they won't have the opportunity to try and appreciate nutrition and enjoy healthful eating.

Fortunately, children can be taught to be healthy eaters. According to the American Dietetic Association, partnering with a child rather than critiquing will help them on the right track. By giving children choices and control over what they eat will empower them to make

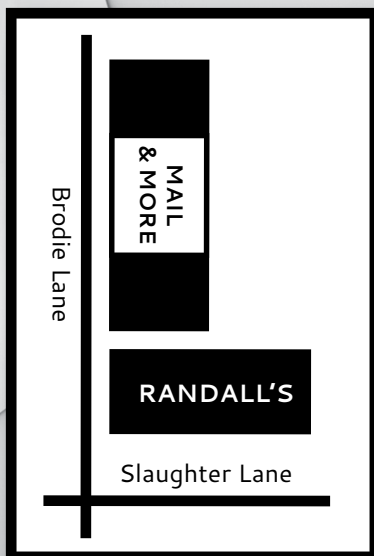
better decisions. By involving children in the food selection and cooking process, they become excited and proud of what they've created.

Start early and teach by example. It's no secret that children learn by watching and copying what they see. Parents' food preferences and food-intake patterns are a big influence on what children eat. By setting an example of nutritious eating habits and providing children with repeated opportunities to sample new foods, at least some of them will be accepted.

Gardening is another way to encourage children to make good food choices. Not only is it rewarding for children and parents, it helps children make a connection with the earth. Peas, strawberries, tomatoes, zucchini and beans are simple to plant and grow, and are easy for children to harvest. These fruit and vegetable choices can also be eaten raw directly from the garden.

It's important to remember that nutrition is an essential building block for children. Healthy, active and well-nourished children are better prepared for school and are more motivated to learn. By having fun with food, children will have fun with it also.

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CUSTOM WINDOW TREATMENTS

From Budget to Big Bucks

Submitted by Susan Kostecky



Custom window treatments are a decorative and functional complement to a home, and add color, texture and softness. Custom treatments can range in price from very reasonable to very expensive. If you are considering window treatments for your home, there are a number of factors to consider. Those factors are: style, budget and function.

STYLE

You can accomplish great style in any budget range. You may already have ideas that you like, from model homes or decorating magazines. You may prefer light and airy, or richly luxurious, casual or formal. If you are working with a window treatment specialist or decorator to determine what style treatments will best fit your home, it

is important to discuss the budget you have allotted for this project. You may decide to focus on one room at a time, which makes it easier on your wallet and also to make decisions. Knowing your budget helps your consultant present style ideas and fabrics that will keep the project in your price range.

Some treatment styles require considerably more fabric than others, which generally means more lining and more labor. Fabrics with a very large motif (such as a large bouquet of flowers) may require more yardage in order to center or match the motif throughout the project. Treatments with deep folds or pleats require more fabric than a flat treatment. Flat does not mean boring: adding contrasting trim, banding, buttons or tassels adds interest.

(Continued on Page 5)

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Custom Window Treatments - (Continued from Page 4)

A flat treatment (like a roman shade, cornice or a straight valance) also lets the fabric print be seen completely. If you have fallen in love with a tulip floral print, a flat treatment showcases the tulips much better than a gathered treatment does.

If there are blinds in place, you have many choices to select from to accent your furnishings. Consider how the room is used: a bedroom might dictate room-darkening draperies to permit sleeping late on the weekends. A west-facing window might require interlining or other linings to prevent light bleed-through, fabric fading and/or rot. Silk may be interlined to add lush body, insulation and to protect the silk from the sun. A kitchen window may only need a fabric accent valance for color and interest. These are options, depending on your goals for your room.

Fabric prices vary greatly. Retail fabric stores offer a good selection, reasonable prices and can generally order fabric for you if they do not have the quantity you require.

Outlet stores have very low prices, stock that changes rapidly and cannot be reordered, and may sell "second quality" fabrics that may be flawed. If the price is right, you can purchase additional yardage to offset flaws. The stock changes rapidly, and if you mull over your sample options, the fabric may no longer be available when you go to purchase it. A designer or window treatment consultant has access to the Decorative Center of Houston, which has tens of thousands of fabrics available. The selection of fabric, rods, trimmings, tassels, etc. is far beyond that found in retail locations. This is a huge benefit if you are trying to coordinate with existing fabrics in your furnishings that may be discontinued and no longer available.

Custom window treatments should reflect your taste and lifestyle, and still leave money in the bank! Make your home your personal oasis by choosing a treatment that has style and personality and fits within your budget.

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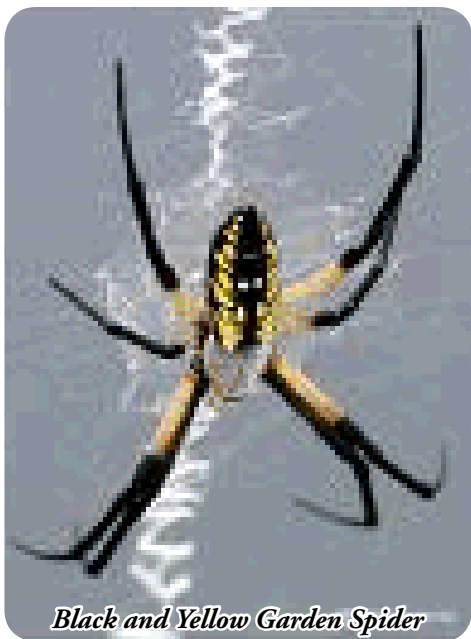
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NATURE WATCH

Spiders on the Prowl!



Black and Yellow Garden Spider

An often seen spider in our suburban yards and gardens is the black and yellow garden spider (*Argiope aurantia*). True to its common name, this spider has distinctive black and yellow (and sometimes orange) markings on its abdomen and a mostly white area behind its head. With a fairly rotund body of 1 ½ inches in length, the females of this species are twice as large as the males (common for most spiders), and can have colorful banding on the legs. These spiders are active during the summer months, and tend to be somewhat local, staying in one place throughout much of their lifetime. Like other members of the *Argiope* family, they are considered harmless to humans.

These garden spiders have three claws on each foot, unlike most spiders that have only two claws, and the extra claw helps them to

spin complicated webs. Many times these webs are built in areas adjacent to open sunny areas, often two to eight feet off the ground. Most distinctively, the circular part of their webs are up to two feet in diameter, with a dense zigzag of silk, known as a stabilimentum, in the center. While the purpose of this structure is disputed, it helps this spider earn its other common name, the writing spider. It is most often thought that the stabilimentum might warn birds of the presence of the web, and only those spiders that are active during the day construct these types of patterns in their webs.

Black and yellow garden spiders breed once a year. The males roam in search of a female, building a small web near or actually in the female's web, then court the females

(Continued on Page 7)



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Nature Watch - (Continued from Page 6)

by plucking strands on her web. When the male approaches the female, he often has a safety drop line ready, in case she attacks him. After mating, the male dies, and is sometimes then eaten by the female. The female will then lay her eggs, cover them with a sheet of silk, roll them into a sac, and hang them from the center of her web, where she spends most of her time. She guards the eggs against predation as long as she is able, but as the weather cools, she becomes more frail, and dies around the time of the first hard frost. Come spring, the tiny young spiders exit the sac and disperse, often on a strand of silk carried by the wind.

Another common but startling-looking spider is the spiny-backed orbweaver, or spiny orb-weaver (*Gasteracantha cancriformis*). Its shell is shaped like a crab shell, wide, flat and variably red, white, orange, or yellow with dark oval spots, rimmed by six red or orange spines. The males lack these distinctive spines, having only four or five stubby dark projections, and are two-thirds smaller than the females. Their Latin name comes from 'cancer' meaning 'crab' and 'forma' meaning 'shape, form, or appearance.'

Also called a jewel or jewel box spider, this spider ranges across the southern half of the United States and is found year-round in woodland edges and shrubby areas of Texas. It usually adds decorations or little tufts of silk to its web, possibly to warn birds and other animals of the web's location. A short-lived spider, its lifespan lasts until reproduction in the spring following their birth. In fact, the males die only six days after mating with a female.

Often found feeding on flowers, the Green Lynx Spider (*Peucetia viridans*) is a bright green spider and the largest lynx spider in North America. The species name is derived from the Latin *viridis*, meaning 'green', and is its signature characteristic. Its abdomen has a series of cream-colored chevrons along its length, with white stripes accented by russet margins. Long, thin legs are pale green to yellow, and are covered with long black spines and spots. Gravid females are able to change color to fit their background, and depend on this ability in September and October, to help them defend their egg sac filled with bright orange eggs, from predation.



Spiny Orb-Weaver



Tarantula



Green Lynx Spider

(Continued on Page 8)

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The Shady Side

Nature Watch - (Cont from Pg 7)

Active during late spring and summer in a wide variety of habitats, the Green Lynx spider does not spin a web, but hunts for moths and other small insects among low shrubs and plants. As such, this spider is of great interest for its use in agricultural pest management, but unfortunately also preys on beneficial insects such as honey bees. Very seldom does this spider bite humans, and its bite is harmless.

Relatively common throughout Texas, tarantulas are our heaviest and largest spiders. Typically, the head and legs are dark brown, and the abdomen is brownish-black. Coloration varies between individuals as well as between the 14 different species found in our state. Identification of species is difficult, however, and is often performed only on mature males under a microscope.

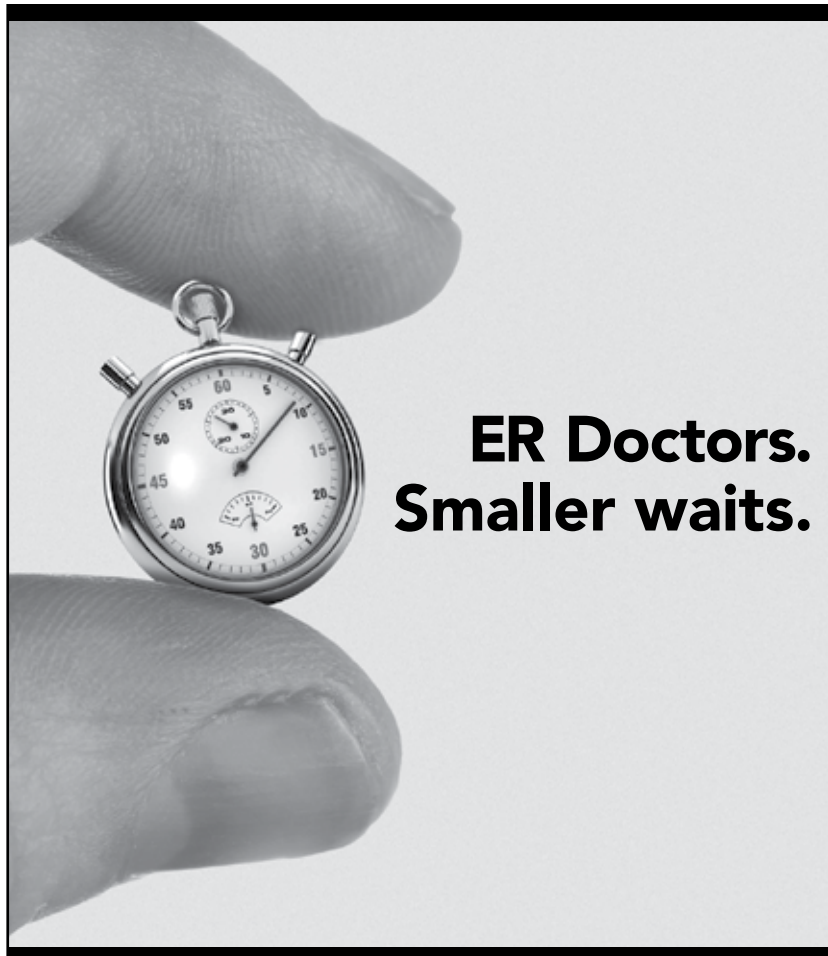
Tarantulas are typically found in grasslands and semi-open areas, and use burrows, natural cavities under stones or fallen logs, spaces under loose tree bark, and even old rodent holes as shelters. They are also capable of digging their own burrows, and often line them with webbing, placing a few strands across the front to help detect passing prey. Laying several hundred eggs in a hammock-like web constructed inside the burrow, females will guard them until they hatch. Females have lived in captivity for over 25 years, while males

rarely live over two or three months after reaching maturity.

Other insects such as crickets, beetles, grasshoppers, cicadas, and caterpillars form the basic diet of the tarantula. They inject their prey with a poison when they bite, which liquefies the prey's insides, making it easier to ingest. While they can climb, they are usually restricted to the ground, with the males actively wandering in large numbers in late summer, apparently seeking out females. The hairiness and large size of tarantulas often evokes concern, but the bites of Texas species are not serious to humans. Tarantulas maneuver quickly to face whatever disturbs them, often raising up on their hind legs and stretching out their front legs in a threatening posture. They have also been observed rapidly brushing the top of their abdomen with their hind legs to dislodge hairs that can be used to irritate the attacker's eyes or skin.

Send your nature-related questions to naturewatch@austin.rr.com and we'll do our best to answer them. If you enjoy reading these articles, look for our book, NatureWatch Austin, to be published by Texas A&M University Press in 2011.

- by Jim & Lynne Weber



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Jessica likes to color, draw, sing and make jewelry. She also enjoys reading as well. Jessica is involved in basketball and track at school and plans to play volleyball in the fall. Jessica loves animals and has recently raised a rabbit through Future Farmers of America (FFA) at her school.

Jessica's forever family needs to be patient and committed to parenting a teenage girl. Jessica would like a family that lives in the country and prefers to be any only child. Jessica needs to have a family to love her unconditionally; make her feel secure and encourage her and help her become more self-confident. *For more information contact the Adoption Coalition of Texas at 512-687-3208*



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The Shady Side



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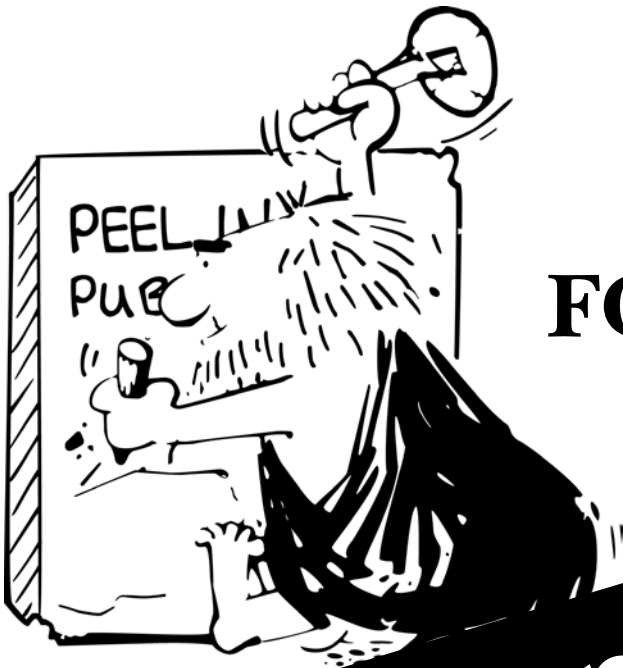
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