



# POST

The Official Newsletter of the  
Plum Creek Homeowner Association

June 2012  
Volume 3, Issue 6

USA  
Plum Creek's Annual

## *Fourth of July*

on Wednesday, July 4th

*Hosted by the Recreation Committee*

Come out for our annual 4th of July Parade and Picnic! The fun happens on Wednesday, July 4th from 10:00 am to Noon.

Decorate those wagons, strollers, bikes, and scooters and come out to march with your neighbors in the parade. If you don't want to decorate your stuff or walk, please come out and cheer on those in the parade, it is a sight to see!

The Parade will start at the corner of Witte and Negley and continue down Witte to McNaughton Park with the picnic to follow. Bring the whole family and enjoy the fun.

We will have lunch for you at the park but be sure to bring blankets and lawn chairs for you to sit and eat on. Don't forget the swimsuits and sunscreen, as we will have a waterslide to help keep you cool.

We are looking for volunteers to help us cook and serve.

If you have any questions or would like to volunteer, please contact Brandee at [recreation@plumcreektxhoa.com](mailto:recreation@plumcreektxhoa.com) or 512-557-2728.

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## Newsletter Info

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### PUBLISHER

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# Congratulations

to the

## May Yard of the Month winners:

*1st place 5913 McNaughton*

*2nd place 326 Witte*

*3rd place 125 Polk*

Please take a look at these beautiful yards; they are only three of the many wonderful landscapes in Plum Creek. Signs of recognition will appear in the winning yards May 15. The next judging for June Yards of the Month will be June 7. Please send nominations (yourself or your neighbor) to [landscape@plumcreektxhoa.com](mailto:landscape@plumcreektxhoa.com).



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## At the Fence

**Front Porch Days Winners, Annual Meeting Update, and Pie Recipes Coming July**

Due to PC Press deadlines, all of the winners for the events at Front Porch Days, the annual meeting update, and the pie recipes will be in the July issue! Thanks!

**Six Flags Discount Tickets for Plum Creek Residents!**

Once again, our Recreation Chair Brandee Otto has secured a great deal for Plum Creek residents! Saving is easy with Six Flags and Plum Creek HOA!

Just log into your own Six Flags site to buy tickets with substantial savings off the main gate price. This online benefit program offers not only substantial savings, but allows you to "print and go" so you have your ticket in hand when you get to the park with no waiting in the line to purchase tickets. To access your special tickets, please go to [www.sixflags.com/PartnerLogin](http://www.sixflags.com/PartnerLogin), then log into the site with the username and password provided.

Username:

PLUMHOA

Password: (Password is Numeric & Case Sensitive)

SixFlags4

**From the Landscaping Committee: XERISCAPING!**

If you are still pondering what to do with your yard, please consider XERISCAPING. No we do not mean all cactus, rocks, and cattle skulls. That is not xeriscaping. According to Dr. Welch from Texas A&M University, xeriscaping is a quality landscape that has proportional balance of 1/3 plantings, 1/3 lawn, and 1/3 hardscape (decks, patios, sidewalks). You can see quality landscapes (i.e. XERISCAPED) in magazines such as Southern Living and Better Homes & Gardens. There are many yards in Plum Creek that are xeriscaped according to Dr. Welch's definition. With his definition in mind, you can have a beautiful landscape and also save time and conserve water. It is never too late to start saving water and doing our part to preserve our planet. Happy Gardening!

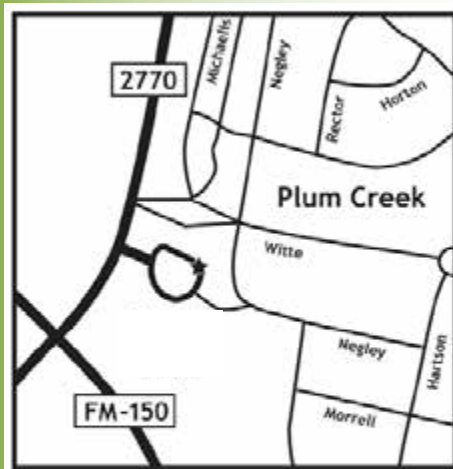
## Social Groups

### SIP AND SEW

The tables were filled with neat ideas at the last meeting. Feed sack pillows were being formed along with a crocheted beach bag in great colors. Pillows for chairs, to go in a newly decorated kitchen. Not to forget punch needle, needlepoint and knitting! Everyone seemed inspired! Come join this group of talented individuals (of all ages) at the Fergus Community Center, the second Tuesday of the month, June 12th, 6:30-9:00. For additional information contact: Pam Chapman - 512-656-6050, Iris Sandle - 405-0054 or Sandra Sigler - 405-0187



## Today's healthcare has a new name.



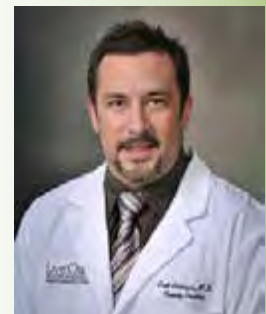
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## Hummers: Fireworks in your Garden

*By: Christina Baese, PC Landscape Committee*

Every summer, thousands of hummingbirds migrate through Texas.

Much of the action occurs from August to October, but you may have already noticed some buzz past you this summer. Right now, it's too hot for more than garden maintenance, so sit back and enjoy the hummingbirds' firework display.

Weighing 1/10th of an ounce, they weigh less than a pencil. At speeds of 25 mph and 75 wing flaps per second, their acrobatics include flying backward, forward, straight up or down, and upside down.

Locally, we see lots of Black-chinned and Ruby-throated hummers, but we have 18 species in the state and 16 in our area. Hummers need a few things to make your garden their home, including food, water, and shelter. However, if you are eager for a garden visitor, simply put out a hummingbird feeder.

The best feeders are easy to fill and clean. Perches are great but not needed. For the birds' safety, clean the feeder every three days during spring and fall, but once we hit 80 degrees, clean them every other day to prevent syrup spoilage and to keep mold from accumulating. The mold and bacteria can kill the hummingbirds, so keep it clean and the solution fresh. Usually, just a warm water rinse will clean the feeder, but if you see black goo growing, use soap and water followed by vinegar. Toss in a few grains of rice inside, use an old toothbrush, or try a special feeder brush to scrub it clean. Remember to rinse well with warm water and allow to dry before refilling.

To make the sugar syrup, mix 4 parts boiling water to 1 part white sugar. Let the mixture cool before pouring into the container. If you make a large batch, it will keep for a day or two in the fridge. Remember, do not add red food coloring or honey. Commercial feeders have enough red on them to attract hummers, and in the wild, they don't eat honey or red dye. Many experts suspect that the red dye creates tumors in the little guys and affects their metabolism, and the honey causes mouth sores. Essentially, they don't need it, so please don't add it.

Even though they enjoy our homemade candy, nectar is their favorite food, and they visit 1,000 flowers each day. They love anything with a tubular shape or long neck in bright colors. Red and orange flowers are their favorites, including Red Yucca, Coral Bean, Cigar Plant, Firebush, Firespike, and Turk's cap. However, I find them indulging in many pink and purple flowers, including Mexican Bush Sage, Mexican Oregano, and most any color Sage.

Believe it or not, hummers feed heavily on insects, so avoid using insecticides anywhere near your hummingbird garden. Tree sap is another delicacy for them, and they will follow woodpeckers from tree to tree to dip into the leftovers.

Just a few last tips... Hummingbirds are attracted to moving water, and you'll see them fly through your sprinklers. Also, misters and drippers make great hummingbird additions to birdbaths. When offering shelter, plant lots of trees and stick with native trees and plants.

Hopefully, we have spiked your interest in Hummers and gardening for them. For more information visit the Texas Hummingbird Roundup at [www.tpwd.state.tx.us](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us) or [www.hummingbirds.net](http://www.hummingbirds.net). Of course, we are always happy to answer your questions at [landscape@plumcreektxhoa.com](mailto:landscape@plumcreektxhoa.com).

## 101 Ways You Can Save Energy at Home

We've assembled a collection of tips and useful, interactive tools developed by Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives to help you improve energy efficiency in your home this summer, this winter and year 'round.

### WATER HEATING

1. Set water heater temperature no higher than 120 degrees Fahrenheit.
2. For households with one or two members, a 115-degree Fahrenheit setting may work fine.
3. Install water-heater wrap per manufacturer's instructions.
4. Drain 1-2 gallons from bottom of water heater each year to reduce sediment buildup.
5. Install heat traps on hot and cold water lines when it's time to replace your water heater.
6. Insulate exposed hot water lines.
7. Limit shower length to 5-7 minutes.
8. Install low-flow showerheads.
9. Fix dripping faucets.
10. Don't let water run while you are shaving.
11. Don't let water run while brushing your teeth.

### LAUNDRY

12. Wash clothes in cold water. Use hot water only for very dirty loads.
13. Do only full laundry loads.
14. If you must do smaller loads, adjust the water level in the washing machine to match the load size, especially when using hot water.
15. Always use cold-water rinse.
16. Use bath towels at least twice before washing them.
17. Clean your dryer's lint trap before each load.
18. Make sure the outdoor dryer exhaust door closes when the dryer is off.
19. Verify that the dryer vent hose is tightly connected to inside wall fitting.
20. Check that the dryer vent hose is tightly connected to dryer.
21. Make sure dryer vent hose is not kinked or clogged.
22. Minimize clothes drying time; use moisture sensor on dryer if available.
23. Dry consecutive loads to harvest heat remaining in dryer from last load.
24. Consider using a "solar-powered" clothes dryer — an old-fashioned clothesline.

### KITCHEN

25. Use your refrigerator's anti-sweat feature only if necessary.
26. Switch your refrigerator's power-saver to "ON," if available.
27. Clean refrigerator coils annually.
28. Set the refrigerator temperature to 34- 37 degrees Fahrenheit and freezer temperature to 0-5 degrees Fahrenheit.
29. Ensure that gaskets around door seal tightly.
30. Unplug unused refrigerators or freezers.
31. Use microwave for cooking when possible.
32. When cooking on the oven range, use pot lids to help food cook faster.
33. If you are heating water, use hot tap water instead of cold.
34. Remember to use the kitchen exhaust fan when cooking and turn it off after cooking.
35. Use a Crock-Pot™ instead of simmering foods on the stove.

36. Rinse dirty dishes with cold water before putting them into the dishwasher.

37. Use cold water for garbage disposal.

38. Run dishwasher only when fully loaded.

39. Use air-dry cycle instead of heat-dry cycle to dry dishes.

### LIGHTING

40. Replace any light bulb that burns more than one hour per day with its equivalent compact fluorescent bulb.

41. Turn off unnecessary lighting.

42. Replace outdoor lighting with its outdoor-rated equivalent compact fluorescent bulb.

43. Use fixtures with electronic ballasts and T-8, 32-watt fluorescent lamps.

44. Use outdoor security lights with a photocell and/or a motion sensor

### MISCELLANEOUS

45. Turn computers and monitors off when not in use.

46. Make sure electric blankets are turned off in the morning.

47. Turn waterbed heater off when not needed.

48. Turn large-screen TVs off completely when not in use.

49. Turn off stereos and radios when not in use.

50. Remember to turn off hair curling irons and hot rollers.

51. Turn off coffee makers when not in use.

52. Turn off pool pump and/or heater when not needed.

53. Verify livestock water tank heaters are off when not needed.

54. Make sure heat tape is off when not needed.

55. Unplug battery chargers when not needed.

56. Ensure all new appliances purchased are ENERGY STAR approved.



### Heating & Air Conditioning

57. Set thermostats to 78 degrees Fahrenheit in summer, 68 degrees Fahrenheit in winter.

58. Run ceiling paddle fans on medium, blowing downward in summer.

59. Run ceiling paddle fans on low, blowing upward in winter.

60. Change HVAC filters monthly.

61. When installing new air filters, make sure they are facing in the correct direction (look for arrow on side of filter).

62. When heating or cooling, keep windows locked.

63. Insulate electric wall plugs and wall switches with foam pads.

64. Caulk along baseboards with a clear sealant.

65. Close fireplace dampers when not burning a fire.

66. Caulk around plumbing penetrations that come through walls beneath bathroom and kitchen sinks.

67. Caulk electrical wire penetrations at the top of the interior walls.

68. Close shades and drapes at night to keep heat in during the winter.

69. Make sure drapes and shades are open during the day to catch free solar heat in winter.

70. Close shades and drapes during the day to help keep heat out in summer.

*(Continued on Page 6)*

## Defeat Fire Ants - Juice 'Em

*By Christina Baese*

*PC Landscape Committee Member*

Fire ants have been described as both a blessing and a curse. After all, they eat ticks, chiggers, termites, boll weevils, flies, fleas, cockroaches, and many other troublesome pests. However, they don't stop there. They eat almost any young plant, baby animal, or beneficial insect or reptile, and they cause significant amounts of electrical damage by chewing through wires and invading electrical boxes. Not to mention, they seem strangely attracted to my toes...

Fortunately, they have some natural controls, including lizards, birds, and beneficial nematodes, the worm-like microscopic organisms in our soil that eat white grubs, fleas, and the larvae of fire ants. Unfortunately, these natural controls don't always keep the fire ants in check, and thus, we spend our summers battling the bugs.

To start, treat the individual mounds. Drench each mound in boiling water, vinegar, soapy water, or a compost tea mixture called Garrett Juice from Garden-Ville. Alone, three gallons of boiling water eliminate them by almost 60 percent. However, you must be careful with the vinegar, soapy water, and boiling water, as they can all damage and burn your nearby plants and lawn.

Thus, Garrett Juice proves the best tool. The mixture controls fire ants, and it nourishes your lawn and garden, too. You can purchase Garrett Juice at Home Depot, Lowe's, Wal-Mart, and many local nurseries, or you can make your own Garrett Juice by combining 1 cup of compost tea, 1 tablespoon of blackstrap molasses, 1 tablespoon of liquid seaweed, and 1 tablespoon of natural apple cider vinegar per gallon of water. If you want to add an extra punch to your Garrett Juice, add 2 ounces of citrus oil to each gallon of water. Never use citrus oil alone, as it burns plants by itself. Always mix it with a compost tea, molasses, or another organic substance.

For more information, please email us at [landscape@plumcreektxhoa.com](mailto:landscape@plumcreektxhoa.com) and check out [www.dirtdoctor.com](http://www.dirtdoctor.com) for more great tips for your lawn and garden.



### *101 Ways You Can Save Energy at Home (Continued from Page 5)*

71. Ensure that the attic access door closes tightly.
72. Insulate the attic access door.
73. Make sure insulation in your attic does not block soffit vents.
74. Do not close off unused rooms that are conditioned by forced-air systems.
75. Do not close supply air registers.
76. Check to be sure return-air grilles are not blocked by furniture or bookcases.
77. Ensure that windows and doors are properly weather-stripped.
78. Make sure outside soffit vents are not blocked.
79. Do not use rooftop power ventilators for attic exhaust as they may evacuate conditioned air from your home.
80. Have your HVAC system serviced once per year by a NATE-certified technician.
81. Monitor your home's relative humidity in the summer. If it consistently stays in the 60 percent range or higher, ask your HVAC technician about lowering your central air conditioning unit's indoor fan speed.
82. Ensure that window A/C units are weather-stripped.
83. Ensure that windows with window-mounted A/C units have weather stripping between the middle of the top and bottom panes.
84. Remove and clean window A/C filter monthly.
85. Keep "fresh-air" vents on window A/C units closed.
86. Use heavy-duty, clear sheets of plastic on the inside of windows to reduce the amount of cold air entering your home.
87. Minimize use of electric space heaters.
88. Ensure that your outdoor heat pump/air conditioning unit is kept clean and free of debris.
89. When using the fireplace, reduce heat loss by opening the damper in the bottom of the firebox (if provided) or open the nearest window slightly.
90. In a basement, seal the sill and band joist with durable caulking or foam sealant.
91. Ensure that floor registers are not blocked with rugs, drapes or furniture.
92. Outside your home, caulk around all penetrations including telephone, electrical, cable, gas, water spigots, dryer vents, etc.
93. Caulk around storm windows.
94. Caulk around basement windows.
95. Verify that your supply air duct "boots" (behind supply air registers) are caulked to your ceiling or wall sheetrock or flooring.
96. In unconditioned spaces, verify that your ducts are tightly connected to your HVAC equipment.
97. Verify that all outdoor doors (including storm doors) close and seal tightly.
98. In two-story homes serviced by one HVAC system, a paddle fan at the top of the stairs can push down hot, second-floor air.
99. Install 15-minute, spring-wound timers on bathroom ventilator fans.
100. Always run your HVAC system fan on "AUTO." Running it on "ON" uses more electricity and can decrease your air conditioner's ability to remove moisture.
101. Keep your garage door down. A warmer garage in the winter and cooler garage in the summer will save energy.

*Provided By: PEC*



## Missing Cat: "Li-Grr"

Orange tabby, with a white tummy and all white paws, also with more white than orange on his face. He has orange/green eyes. He is a neutered male, about a year and a half old, and fully vaccinated. He is very friendly and acts like a dog. Responds to name and is an outside/inside cat. He has been missing since 4/26/12. Offering a reward (\$\$). Call cell: 512-660-4448



## Texas Oven-Roasted Beef Brisket

### INGREDIENTS

- 2 tablespoons chili powder
- 2 tablespoons salt
- 1 tablespoon garlic powder
- 1 tablespoon onion powder
- 1 tablespoon ground black pepper
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 2 teaspoons dry mustard
- 1 bay leaf, crushed
- 4 pounds beef brisket, trimmed
- 1 1/2 cups beef stock

### DIRECTIONS

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.

Make a dry rub by combining chili powder, salt, garlic and onion powders, black pepper, sugar, dry mustard, and bay leaf. Season the raw brisket on both sides with the rub. Place in a roasting pan and roast, uncovered, for 1 hour.

Add beef stock and enough water to yield about 1/2 inch of liquid in the roasting pan. Lower oven to 300 degrees F, cover pan tightly and continue cooking for 3 hours, or until fork-tender.

Trim the fat and slice meat thinly across the grain. Top with juice from the pan.

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