



# POST

The Official Newsletter of the  
Plum Creek Homeowner Association

July 2012  
Volume 3, Issue 7

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

## June Yard of the Month winners:

*1st place 169 Campos (in the newest section of PC)*  
*2nd place 6001 Hartson (near the Witte/Hartson roundabout)*  
*3rd place 6034 Hartson (near the Fergus Park)*

Beautiful yards are all around in Plum Creek in spite of the lack of rain. Thank you to everyone for making our neighborhood the best in Kyle.

Again thanks to everyone that worked on their yards and made the judging difficult.

Keep on gardening and remember to conserve water.

Suzanne Parr

Landscaping committee chair



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## 10K and 5K Results

We had a great turn out this year, we even had a couple come down all the way from Wisconsin just to run with us. Here are the Top 5s, for male and female, for the 10K and 5K!

### TOP 5 MALE FOR 10K;

Taylor Stephens 40:10  
Robert Seibert 40:18  
Greg Geesaman 41:11  
Theodore Brown 45:16  
Warren Hughes 45:47

### TOP 5 MALE FOR 5K;

Andrew McHenry 18:32  
Joel Stephens 19:41  
John Perkins 25:55  
Jack Carpenter 25:55  
Tom Ray 26:45

### TOP 5 FEMALE FOR 10K;

Ashley Gayle Morgan 46:30  
April Mawson 47:01  
Christina Rivera 48:48  
Candi Byrd 55:59  
Private Profile 56:36

### TOP 5 FEMALE FOR 5K;

Bernadette Beck 26:36  
Makayla Whitley 27:25  
Maddie Swearingen 27:25  
Mary Blomstedt 28:43  
Kathryn Olson 29:11

## Golf Tournament Winners!

### FIRST PLACE

Bryan Ette, Brent Hart, Jason Otto, and Terry Bullock

### SECOND PLACE

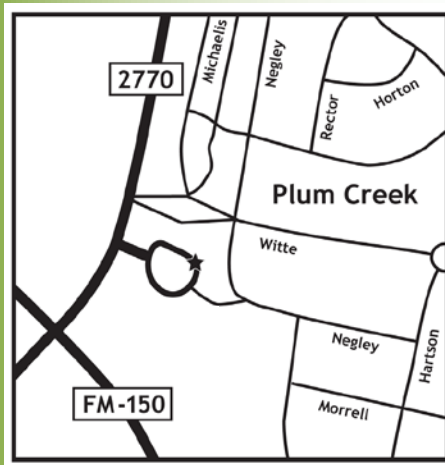
Patrick Lambright, Bradford Terrice, Scott Richardson, and Jason Chapman

### THIRD PLACE

Mark Martin, Russ Hataway, Ryan Pontus, and Seth Aikman



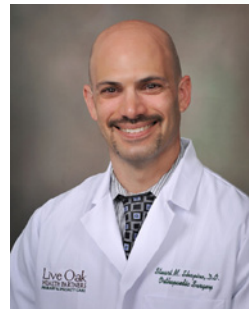
## Today's healthcare has a new name.



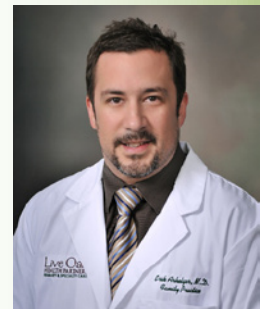
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## At The Fence

### 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 this group of talented individuals (of all ages) at the Fergus Community Center, the second Tuesday of the month, July 10th, 6:30-9:00. For additional information contact: Pam Chapman - 512-656-6050, Iris Sandle - 405-0054 or Sandra Sigler - 405-0187



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## Pie Contest Winners!!

### OVERALL BEST

Diane De La Vega

### BEST APPEARANCE

Diane De La Vega

### BEST TASTING

Sandra Graziano

### MOST ORIGINAL

Derek Bartz

## Strawberry and Feta Salad

*Prep Time: 15 Minutes Ready In: 15 Minutes Servings: 10*

*"A lively mixture of lettuce, strawberries, almonds, and feta is tossed with a tangy oil and vinegar dressing!"*

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup slivered almonds
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon honey
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 1/4 cup raspberry vinegar
- 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 1 cup vegetable oil
- 1 head romaine lettuce, torn
- 1 pint fresh strawberries, sliced
- 1 cup crumbled feta cheese

### DIRECTIONS

1. In a skillet over medium-high heat, cook the almonds, stirring frequently, until lightly toasted. Remove from heat, and set aside.
2. In a bowl, prepare the dressing by whisking together the garlic, honey, Dijon mustard, raspberry vinegar, balsamic vinegar, brown sugar, and vegetable oil.
3. In a large bowl, toss together the toasted almonds, romaine lettuce, strawberries, and feta cheese. Cover with the dressing mixture, and toss to serve



# How does my Air Conditioner work?

What exactly are those strange metal boxes in my home and my backyard???

An Air Conditioner has three main parts. The compressor, condenser and evaporator coil. The compressor and condenser are located in the same unit, outside your home. The evaporator coil is located inside the house attached to your furnace.

A working chemical called Freon circulates through the system. **The amount of Freon in the system is very important and needs to be checked regularly.** Let's start at the compressor. The Freon arrives at the compressor as a cool, low-pressure gas. The compressor compresses the gas and leaves the compressor as a **HOT, high pressure gas.**

This **hot, high pressure Freon** then flows into the **condenser** which is the large coil that wraps around the outdoor unit. The outdoor fan pulls air through the condenser to transfer the heat out. Notice all the fragile fins. These fins transfer the heat more quickly into the outside air. **These fins MUST be kept VERY CLEAN for it to work efficiently!** When the Freon leaves the condenser, its temperature is much cooler and has changed from a hot gas to a **cool liquid.**

Next, the Freon goes through some copper lines to the inside portion of the system, the evaporator. This **cool, liquid Freon** goes into the evaporator coil through a very tiny, narrow hole. On the other side of this hole (or orifice), the liquid's pressure drops. (Picture a spray nozzle on a hairspray can) When it does this, it begins to evaporate back into a **gas or vapor**. As the Freon changes from a liquid **back to a gas**, it evaporates, **and extracts heat from the air around it.** This is where the heat that is in your home gets transferred to the Freon and will soon be carried outside! When the Freon leaves the evaporator, it is a **cool, low pressure gas.** Connected to the evaporator is a fan that blows air through the evaporator fins. This is the fan that circulates air throughout your home. All of this is taking place inside small fragile copper tubes located inside this evaporator coil. Dehumidification also takes place here, where water is collected and drained out. **These drains can get clogged and need regular attention too.** It then returns to the compressor to begin its trip all over again.

This evaporator coil also has many fragile aluminum fins to help in the transfer of heat with the surrounding air. This portion needs to be very clean as well! This is why clean filters are so important!

This heat transfer process continues over and over and over until the room reaches the temperature that you tell it you want at the thermostat. The thermostat senses that the temperature has reached the right setting and turns off the air conditioner. As the room warms up, the thermostat turns the air conditioner back on until the room reaches the temperature.

Just like your car, an Air Conditioner is an expensive and complex piece of equipment that you depend on daily and requires regular cleanings and adjustments to maximize its efficiency and longevity.

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# PLUM CREEK POST

## Are you Mulching your Trees Correctly?

*By: Christina Baese, PC Landscape Committee*

Most of us know how beneficial mulch is for our plants and trees, especially during our dry summers. Mulch helps maintain moisture, reduces the need for watering, and improves soil conditions. It's incredibly beneficial for trees. In addition, mulch minimizes weeds, acts as a great insulator, and even, prevents disease, and well. it just looks nice. However, to be truly beneficial, mulch should be applied correctly. If too deep, it can actually hurt the tree you're trying to help!

When trees grow in the forest, they have a rich soil full of nutrients created from fallen leaves and other organic material. It's the perfect conditions for root growth. Our urban and suburban landscapes are less ideal with poorer soils and little organic material. Mulch helps recreate a more natural environment for your tree and other plants.

Most of us grew up hearing that the roots of the tree mirror the top, but in fact, the roots can and often do, extend much farther from the trunk. The fine roots responsible for absorbing water and nutrients are located in the top inches of the soil and actually, need oxygen to survive. If you apply a thin layer of mulch, you will improve

the soil and actually, help these roots do their job better.

The best mulches for your trees were once plants of some sort and include anything from wood chips to cocoa hulls to hardwood mulches and more. These mulches decompose over time and must be replenished periodically, but this decomposition is what improves the soil and the health of your plant or tree. Try to stay away from non-living mulches like rocks, rubber, and the like.

As with most things, you can have too much of it, and it can be used incorrectly. You want to create as wide of a mulched area as you can, but you want it to be too deep. Typically, a two to four inch depth is recommended. However, some trees fall victim to mulch mounds or mulch volcanoes – mulch piled high around the base of a tree. These mulch mounds contribute to girdling roots, according to Vincent DeBrock of Heritage Tree Care. According to DeBrock, improper mulching can create more choking roots, which will weaken sap flow and kill transplants, if not corrected. Often, the result is chlorosis (yellowing leaves). If not corrected, the roots will continue to circle the tree and in effect, strangle it. In addition, mulch volcanoes

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contribute to root rot through excess moisture and actually, encourage insect, rodent, and disease problems. Lastly, these thick mounds can prevent water and air from getting to your trees and their roots.

If you have mulch, check the depth. If you have 2 to 4 inches, don't add any more, but do rake up your current mulch to break up any spots that are matted together. DeBrock recommends clearing the base of trees from improper mulch mounds or volcanoes. Pull it back several inches to expose the base of the trunk and the root crown. Next, DeBrock suggests checking for choking roots, especially if you have a chlorotic tree (one with yellowing leaves), and if you find any of them, cut a few. Then, he suggests cutting a few more the next year. Finish his process by applying iron sulfate in the soil after removing the choking roots, and if at that point, the tree is stable, apply a good fertilizer. Of course, if cutting roots makes you queasy, as it does me, you can always call a professional.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT PROPER MULCHING, VISIT**

**[www.treesaregood.com](http://www.treesaregood.com) or  
[hort.ifas.ufl.edu/woody/addmulch.shtml](http://hort.ifas.ufl.edu/woody/addmulch.shtml).**

*Just remember, mulch is essential for your trees and your landscape, but when you apply it, mulch wide, not deep.*

## 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.

*(Continued on Page 8)*

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# PLUM CREEK POST

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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).



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## Blue Jays in Plum Creek

By: Christina Baese, Landscape Chair

Lately, I've noticed several blue jays around Plum Creek! I find them fascinating, so I decided to do a little research and share my findings.

Abundant throughout the central and eastern United States, as well as portions of Canada, the blue jay is a common sight. Once solely a resident of oak and pine forests, blue jays now inhabit wooded suburban areas and parks as well. Like other members of the corvid family (such as black crows and ravens), blue jays tend to have a bold and mischievous temperament.

A varied vocalist, blue jays can create both piercing calls as well as more subdued, almost musical notes. The blue jay also employs some mimicry, reproducing the screeches of the red-shouldered hawk to deter other birds from its territory. Their diet consists of insects, acorns, fruits, seeds, and the eggs of other birds which it robs from the nests.

Blue jays are blue above with a collapsible blue crest, a white face and black "necklace" around their white neck, with a whitish-gray breast. The wings and tail are striped blue and black, with several bars of white on each wing.

In Texas, the blue jay is found in the northern and eastern regions of the state, including the Edwards Plateau and portions of South Texas. Parks such as Palo Duro Canyon State Park in the Panhandle and Bastrop State Park in Bastrop, offer year-round viewing opportunities. Kerrville-Schreiner State Park holds potential for winter observation.

Most regions of the country have their resident "blue jay," but *cristata* is the species officially designated by that name. It ranges through Canada and the United States east of the Rocky Mountains and is the only jay species in much of that area. Several other blue-colored jays occur in the West, but only one, Steller's jay, shares the blue jay's handsome crest.

In Texas, the blue jay ranges through the northern and eastern portions of the state and the Panhandle, occurring westward to the Edwards Plateau and south to about Victoria. It may also wander farther south and west in the winter.

White patches and black-and-white barring ornament the blue jay's blue wings and tail, while a black necklace crosses the whitish breast. Washington Irving described it as "That noisy coxcomb, in his gay light blue coat and white underclothes," while 19th century ornithologist Charles Bendire was more fascinated by its ever-changing personality: "Cunning, inquisitive, an admirable mimic,

full of mischief; in some localities extremely shy, in others exactly the reverse, it is difficult to paint him in his true colors.

Blue jays roam woodlands, parks and towns in search of a variety of foods. One study found their summer diet to contain 30 percent insects and other invertebrates, as well as some small vertebrates; the other 70 percent was made up of acorns, fruits and seeds. Jays are also notorious nest-robbers and will devour small birds and suck the eggs of other species.

The blue jay's nest is a bowl of twigs and dry leaves high in a tree; the three to five eggs are blue or greenish spotted with brown. They hatch after 16 to 18 days of incubation by the female and the young fledge in 17 to 21 days more. It has a piercing call...jay, jay, jay...once described by Thoreau as the "unrelenting steel-cold scream of the jay, unmelted, that never flows into a song, a sort of wintry trumpet..."

Blue jays are one of seven jay species that range in Texas.

Blue jays are around 10 inches in length.

Males and females basically look the same.

They are very curious and intelligent birds.

Blue jays are noisy and aggressive, and have been known to attack cats and humans.

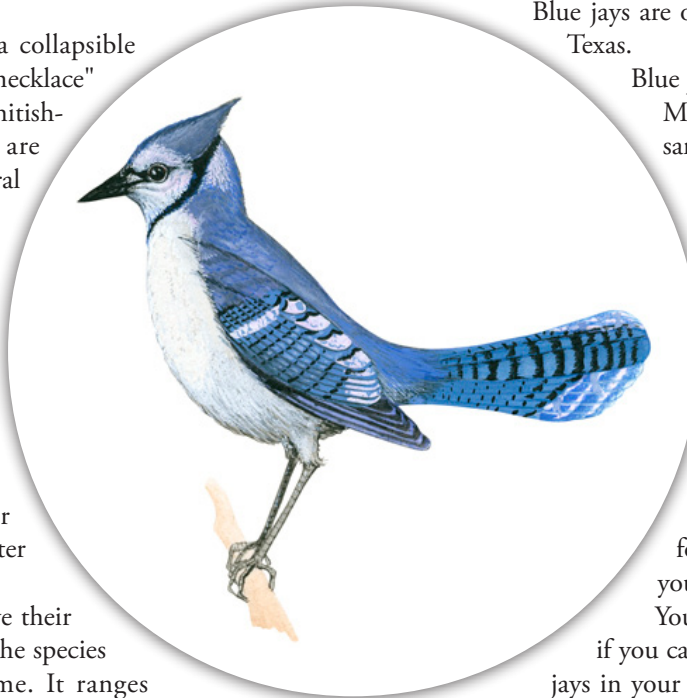
Look for blue jays in parks, woodlands and suburbs.

A garden is a good thing to have in your home. This will not only give you the feeling of relaxation and peace, but also it will give an avenue for you to be one with nature, even if you are in the middle of the city.

Your garden will have a more natural feel if you can be able to attract birds such as blue jays in your garden. Birds have this certain effect on people that creates calmness in them. Give them what they need and they may even setup their own nests if they like your place. Here are some ways to attract blue jays to your garden.

- Give the blue jays what they love. You can ask for information from local pet stores on what blue jays love to eat, what kind of environment they love to dwell in, and how they want to be treated. You can also search for this information on the internet or your encyclopedia at home.

- You will find out that blue jays are mostly vegetarians. They like to eat peanuts, cherries, acorns and anything that they can get their beaks on. But they also include insects in their diet sometimes as a source of protein.



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•Attract what attracts them. Since blue jays like to eat insects at times, you may also want attract some insects into your garden. Choose insects that love to munch on plants, not wood. This will protect the wooden parts of the house from being subject to insect infestation. Your plants, grasses and vines are especially attractive to these kinds of insects and will make blue jays enjoy your garden too.

•You may plant sunflowers in your garden as well since blue jays love to eat their seeds.

•You may also plant an oak tree in your garden, whether a young one, or a full sized tree. But it is recommended to plant a younger one since it still has young roots. You also have to provide a large space for the tree to grow. Blue jays love oak trees since they produce nuts and attract insects too. These are also used as nesting areas when breeding season comes for these cute birds.

•Be sure also that you will be able to provide the birds some sort of nesting ground when the breeding season comes. You can leave a pile of thatch or grass so that they will be able to use it as part of their nests.

•Be sure that you have an adequate supply of water. You can place a pond in your garden where your birds can drink. But it is better to install a shallow water fountain so that these birds and other birds will be able to bathe as well. Installing a fountain will also add aesthetic value on your beautiful garden. Be sure that you know how to install one, or better yet, hire a professional who knows how to properly install a water fountain.

Attracting birds such as blue jays does not necessarily require much work. You just have to be sensitive to what they need.

*Do You Have Reason  
to Celebrate?*

We want to hear from you! Email [announcements@plumcreektxhoa.com](mailto:announcements@plumcreektxhoa.com) to let the community know!

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# DROWNING IS PREVENTABLE



COLIN'S HOPE  
WATER SAFETY TIPS AT  
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## Take the Colin's Hope Water Guardian Pledge

**I WILL** constantly watch children around water.

**I WILL NOT** become distracted.

**I WILL** maintain a valid CPR certification.

**I WILL** be on duty until relieved by an adult.

## LAYERS OF PROTECTION



**CONSTANT VISUAL  
SUPERVISION**



**LEARN TO SWIM**



**WEAR LIFE  
JACKETS**



**MULTIPLE BARRIERS ON  
ALL POOLS & HOTTUBS**



**KEEP BACKYARDS &  
BATHROOMS SAFE**



**LEARN CPR**



**CHECK POOLS/HOTTUBS  
1ST FOR MISSING CHILDREN**



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