

Trail Writer

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Winchester Trails

Maintenance Assoc. Social Committee

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GREEN THUMB CORNER

Once again a spell of hot and dry weather is making life tough for our grass and shrubs, and it emphasizes the value of using low-maintenance perennials and native southwestern plants that are tolerant of the heat. Yaupon is an attractive small tree, and dwarf yaupon is an excellent hardy shrub for creating low hedges. Lantana, although considered a weed by some people, is a tough drought-resistant plant that is becoming more popular every year and is now available in a number of attractive colors. Check with the local nurseries for other naturalized Texas plants.

If you decide to do any lawn feeding during a dry spell, make sure that you water well to avoid the grass being "burned" by the concentrated fertilizer. And don't forget to give the trees an occasional deep watering by allowing a hose to trickle at the base of the trunk for a few hours - particularly important if we have any prolonged dry spells. If your spring annuals are past their best, don't hesitate to pull them up and replace with fresh plants. Or plant seeds of quick-growing varieties (such as zinnia, marigold, petunia and portulaca) to provide color until late fall. Bear in mind that when your impatiens plants get too "leggy" you can cut them back and obtain a second showing for late summer and fall; just keep them well watered. And if you would like your own display of bluebonnets next spring, now is the time to sow seed (actually, anytime between now and January).

Established annuals should be fed every few weeks with a complete plant food. Liquid fertilizer works well, or you can make your own by dissolving a handful of 13-13-13 in a two-gallon watering can. Soak beds as needed and keep well mulched. Patio plants dry out very fast if they are out in the open, particularly clay pots, and hanging baskets also need frequent watering.

Tomato plants are usually past their best by the middle of July, and should be pulled up to allow reworking the bed ready for replanting in August. Although most popular tomato varieties are "indeterminate", meaning that they will continue to grow and bear fruit indefinitely until killed by frost, you'll get a much better crop of fall tomatoes by starting again with fresh plants. Peppers, on the other hand, can be left to grow through the summer into fall, and okra and eggplant also are very happy in the heat.

There's not a lot of exciting gardening activity to write about at this time of year, so I usually take the opportunity to say a few words about composting. This is a great way to avoid those bags of grass clippings lining the curb on garbage day, and produce something useful in the process. Together with weeds, leaves, shrub clippings and vegetable scraps you can produce a rich and nutritious humus which can be used as a mulch or dug into the beds as a "free" organic fertilizer and soil enrichment. All you need is a little unused space in an out-of-the-way corner or behind the garage. I like to construct a number of adjacent open-fronted bins, about 5' wide by 3' deep and 3' high, using scrap lumber or chicken wire (the latter is good because it allows aeration). Having more than one bin allows you to easily cycle the composting materials from one pile to the next, every month or so, to get good aeration and mixing, a lot easier than trying to turn over the material in situ. You can throw almost any organic material in there, including tea leaves, coffee grounds and eggshells, but no meat products because you may attract foraging animals. It helps to arrange alternating layers of different textures, also to add a few shovels of soil every now and then to provide extra bacteria, and it should be kept moist.

Phil Richards - Prich8935@aol.com

MILESTONES

NEW TEENAGERS - HAPPY 13TH!

07/13 Drew Gwynne

07/15 Nathan Mulholland

NEW DRIVERS - HAPPY 16TH!

07/07 Emily Hickey

07/08 Blake McDermott

07/10 Kayla Schwarze-Martin

NEW VOTERS - HAPPY 18TH!

07/15 Ashely Criswell

07/21 Andrew Formas

07/22 Daniel Miller

NEW ADULTS - HAPPY 21ST!

07/01 Wesley Scales

07/06 Jabari Howard

07/25 Kyle Calbat

HAPPY 25TH ANNIVERSARY!

07/11 John Gray & Uti Pieters-Gray

07/11 Cesar & Susie Rodriguez

07/18 Danny & Maria Bowen

07/18 David & Marlene Gafrick

07/25 Paul & Pat Powell

07/25 Steve & Stephanie Sheeran

07/26 Kenneth & Sayuri Clement

HAPPY 30TH ANNIVERSARY!

07/01 Alex & Dora Verraires

07/31 Richard & Linda Turner

HAPPY 35TH ANNIVERSARY!

07/23 David & Deenie Ricke

Melissa Zmerzlikar

directory@winchestertrails.com

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NEWSLETTER

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CRIME REPORT - MAY 2012

According to the reports by the Harris County Sheriff's Office, published on <http://www.CrimeReports.com>, the crimes reported in the Winchester Trails neighborhood during the month of May 2012 are as follows:

NO CRIMES REPORTED

Please report anything suspicious to the Harris County Sheriff's Department at 713.221.6000.



HAPPY 4TH OF JULY!

**TBD - TRAILS 50+ POTLUCK LUNCHEON AT THE CLUBHOUSE
11:00AM - 2:00PM. PLEASE CONTACT ALICE BRUNSON 281-955-9045.**

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THE PET CORNER

by Vickie N. Lawrence, D.V.M.

Summer is finally here and while we humans look forward to it, sometimes our pets don't.

One of the most common types of infections in dogs, especially in summer, is an ear infection in the part of the ear canal that can be seen and smelled when the ear is lifted up. It has the medical name of otitis externa. In some dogs, this can be a persistent and chronic health problem. The infection itches and hurts. Dogs shake their heads and paw their ears much more than normal. A smelly black, brown or yellowish discharge is often present. Spaniels, Poodles and Labs are breeds that are prone to ear problems. One or both ears can be affected.

There is no really effective over-the-counter remedy for this once it is noticeable, and your dog needs medical help to heal properly and prevent the infection from becoming chronic. Some of the problem with dogs' ears that leads to infection is that no one can see 80-90% of the ear canal of the dog. When you see or smell the infection, it is already serious. What we can see is actually a very small percentage of the ear canal. The entire ear canal of the dog is like an L shaped pipe with the foot of the L extending far into the head before it reaches the ear drum. All we can see without an otoscope is the top of the stem of the L that opens up onto the inside of the ear flap. The rest of the canal is hidden under the skin of the side of the head, and then turns into the skull. The entire canal is very long and makes a sharp bend, just like an L. Due to this weird anatomy, infections in dogs are very hard to treat at times.

There are several different types of bacteria and fungi that cause ear infections as well as tumors that can be present in the canal of older dogs. Pieces of grass and plants or other foreign bodies can get down into the ear of a dog and cause an infection. The veterinarian will look in the ear, with an otoscope, into the part that can't be seen on the outside, to diagnose the problem. Smears of the ear wax/discharge are spread on slides and when they are stained they can tell the doctor what type of bacterial or fungal infection is present. These findings determine the kind of medication that is needed.

Medicine has to flow from the very top of the stem of the L-shape, down around the bend and into the foot of the L, and this takes a lot of medication. Oral antibiotics or anti-inflammatories may also be needed. Sometimes the ear hurts so much that we have to sedate the dog to examine the ear and clean out the debris. Regular once a week cleaning with an ear wash formulated for dogs to prevent infection will prevent the problem. Swimming and the water in the ears may make the condition worse.

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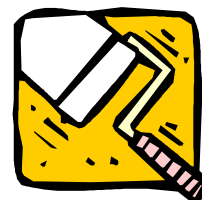
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