

The Village Gazette



Volume 9, Issue 11
Village Creek Community Association

November 2012

LANDSCAPE CORNER

Fall is ending, but the gardener cannot rest on his laurels (or on any other tree, for that matter). It is time to think about freeze protection for your water system. History shows that Tomball has gotten hard freezes in November, so this is a good time to prepare. We generally get a warning from the weatherman, but, by that time, the only insulation the hardware stores have is left-over swimming pool noodles. Get there a few days before the frost, and you can probably get the right insulation for the job. As many of you know from (expensive and exasperating) experience, the most likely point of freezing is the brass backflow preventer. This is the device that separates the drinking water from the irrigation water.



Your first introduction to this device will most likely be shortly after the freeze (maybe about 9:00 AM) when the ice inside of the device thaws. At this point, assuming you are home, you will see water babbling down the street. As you go to your backyard to check for the source of your new brook, you find the backflow preventer brass top, and other miscellaneous parts, laying on the ground, and water gushing straight up out of the top of the valve....sort of like Old Faithful. At this point, you should shut off the lower valve. Shutting this valve will stop the flow, though you may get wet during this operation. The thing that breaks, generally, is a plastic poppet valve inside.

This failure creates a large water loss and can be costly to repair as well (if you can find the plumber, and he can find parts). Let's be

proactive! On the day before the weatherman predicts a hard freeze, consider shutting the inlet water off to this valve entirely. Open the two little test valves on its side to allow it to drain. These two small test valves usually require a screwdriver to open and close. Typically, you turn those just 90 degrees counter-clock-wise to open them (the screwdriver slots should be horizontal when open). Leave them open during the freeze. Your device may be different, so check on the internet for recommendations for your particular valve. If there are any valves on the downstream side of the backflow preventer, open these to allow ice to expand. Even with the backflow preventer emptied, any water trapped inside of an exposed pipe will need to be protected against freezing. Generally, it is wise to insulate all exposed pipes. If you have any doubts, hire a handyman to handle this pesky problem.

Hint: Normally, a valve handle indicates the flow direction. This is true only on valves that turn just 90 degrees. In the picture, above, the two valves with the blue handles are open. In the case of the test valves on the side, the screwdriver slots normally indicate flow.

A few years ago, we bought some devices which would drain a little bit of water when they reached 35 degrees or so. In theory, these devices are a good idea, as water generally will not freeze if you just let a little water through. It turned out, though, that some of these devices froze, and their plastic bodies broke. We are sorry to say, we cannot recommend this type of system, though we are still looking for a better version.

Ideally, hoses should be drained and stored inside. If you don't want that hassle, at least keep one end of the hose open to allow some expansion, as hoses will freeze. We don't have enough experience to say that hose bibbs (the hose connection valve on the house) in Village Creek will freeze, but suspect they generally don't because their pipes are heated somewhat by the house. To be safe, hardware stores do have Styrofoam covers for hose bibbs. The bottom line is that any exposed pipe with stationary water MAY freeze, so take action where necessary.

Landscape Corner - (Continued on Page 2)

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IMPORTANT NUMBERS

EMERGENCY NUMBERS or 911

CenterPoint-Gas Leak713-659-3552
Constables Office 281-376-3472, www.cd4.hctx.net
Klein Fire Dept.281-376-4449
Poison Control Center800-764-7661
Willowbrook Methodist281-477-1000
EMERGENCY 24 HOUR LINE281-537-0957
(select 'emergency' option)

SCHOOLS

Tomball ISD281-357-3100, www.tomballisd.net
Willow Creek Elem (K-4).....281-357-3080
Northpointe Int (5-6).....281-357-3020
Willow Wood Jr (7-8)281-357-3030
Tomball High (9-12).....281-357-3220
Tomball Memorial High School.....281-357-3230
Transportation.....281-357-3193

HOA MGMT

Preferred Management281-897-8808
Patti Tine..... patti@preferredmgt.com
Fax281-897-8838
Mailing: P.O. Box 690269 Houston, TX 77269
Village Creek Community Association Website:
www.preferredmgt.com/villagecreek/home.asp

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CPS.....713-626-5701
CenterPoint-Gas.....713-659-2111
Dead Animal Pick up713-699-1113
Domestic Violence281-401-6250
FBI.....713-693-5000
Harris County Animal Control281-999-3191
Houston Chronicle713-220-7211
Greater Houston Pool713-771-7665
Lost Pets... <http://www.preferredmgt.com/villagecreek/home.asp>
Municipal District Services (24 hrs)281-290-6500
Reliant-Street lights713-923-3213
..... www.centerpointenergy.com/outage
Sex Offenders www.familywatchdog.us
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Republic Waste.....713-849-0400
Trash pickup Tues/Fri
Recycling Fri (only newspapers/#1 & 2 plastics/aluminum cans)
Yard Stork kpuente@garygreene.com

NEWSLETTER

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Landscape Corner - (Continued from Cover Page)

We all have plants that need freeze protection, though we are tending to agree with our son, who believes in Darwin's survival of the fittest: "If the plant can't handle the frost, then let it go, and try a different plant." Not everyone is a Darwin fan, so, in that case, read up on freeze protection at web sites such as (<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/travis/docs/FrostsandFreezes.pdf>). Here are a few hints from that source:

1. Water the soil well before the freeze. Water is one of nature's best heat storage mediums.
2. In general, don't water the plant's foliage (see the article above for the rationale).
3. Cover your plants but make sure you use cloth, though plastic in conjunction with cloth works well. Again, the article explains this.
4. Keep in mind that when you put a blanket on a plant, the source of heat is from the Earth, so make sure the blanket extends to the ground in a manner to allow the heat to rise.
5. Mulch helps keep heat and moisture in.
6. Containerized plants are especially susceptible to freezing because they have more area exposed to cold air. Bunch them together and cover with a blanket.
7. Christmas strings of bulbs (those that still give out heat) can be used as a source of heat for very valuable plants (in conjunction with blankets). Never leave cloth or plastic touching a hot bulb.
8. Do not prune plant freeze damage until February or March (Doug Welsh's Texas Garden Almanac).

(Continued on Page 3)

**NOT AVAILABLE
ONLINE**

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If you are a vegetable gardener, you can still plant kale, mustard, spinach, onions, and garlic. You will need to cover all of these during a frost.

According to Texas Gardner, pull out those annuals that die, and cut back the perennials to a few inches. Add mulch around and over the perennials to protect them from freezing.

Our citrus trees are not yet mature enough to obtain fruit, and we wonder if they ever will be. If they were, this would be the month to enjoy their fruit. Texas Gardener recommends that we regularly fertilize fruit trees, but avoid fertilizing them in winter. Resume fertilizing them after the danger of frost. In general, it is our plan to use the Darwin theory on our citrus plants.

Tools: This advice is a bit like the advice on garage door openers: to lubricate and test them monthly. Right. I'll get right to that. Anyway, for those of you with some extra time, this is a good time to clean up your shovels, rakes, and hand tools and rub their metal with a film of oil. Coat the wooden handles with linseed oil. Run your gasoline motors out of fuel to keep their fuel system free of gunk in the spring.

Parents: All children love to climb trees, and the Village Creek children are no exception. Please remind your children that most of the public trees at Village Creek are immature and incapable of

handling climbing or hanging. Please help avoid injuries both to our trees and our children!

Watering: Watering can be greatly reduced during the Winter. Water if the ground is dry or if a freeze is predicted. If there is no rain during the month, water everything at least one time.

The Village Creek Landscape Committee Update: Good news! The Board has funded work which will improve all the landscape areas around the lake. This work will be performed in early November. This is the second phase of work. The first was the new landscaping at the Village Creek entrance. The landscape committee, with Board concurrence, has a plan to improve all of the landscaping in Village Creek. Keep in mind that the drought took a heavy toll on our landscaping, and everything cannot be fixed at once. The work priority will be to take care of those areas which are seen by the most people first. The entire effort will take several years.

Here is the historical November weather data for Tomball from intellicast.com:

	Average	Average	Record	Record	Average	Average
Month	Low	High	Low	High	Precipitation	Snow
November	49	71	21	89	4.79	0

Until next time, Happy Gardening!

The Village Creek Landscape Committee.


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Pending Listings	7	\$219,129	\$80.14	203
Sold Since 6/1/12	19	\$233,847	\$76.10	46

Statistics are averages compiled from Houston Association of Realtors MLS, 10/7/12

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Social Committee Info

The Village Creek Back to School Luau and Kindergarten Meet and Greet was a lot of fun with a great turnout! We had 20 Kindergartners and their family attend along with a special visit from The Willow Creek Elementary vice Principal, Hafida Becker.

A special thanks to the social committee volunteers for putting it all together and especially Susan Giddens for heading the event. A DJ kept the party movin, pizza and cold drinks were enjoyed and the lifeguards led pool games.

Mark your calendars for Sunday, December 9, 3:00-5:00 @ the clubhouse for "Cookies with Santa!"

Avoid the mall lines and come to the clubhouse for visit with Santa, cookies with Mrs. Clause and a holiday gift. And of course, don't forget your camera!



The Nutcracker

Artisan Ballet Company invites you to attend its annual performance of the timeless ballet classic, The Nutcracker, at the Berry Center, 8877 Barker Cypress Road, Cypress, Texas 77433. Performances are at 3pm and 7pm on Saturday, December 8th and at 3pm on Sunday, December 9th. Village Creek ballerina, Anais Colin, will be among the dancers in this year's presentation. Anais is cast in several roles as one of Clara's friends (Saturday, 3pm and

7pm), a Cavalry Soldier, a Polichinelle (Saturday, 7pm) and as one of the Chefs (Saturday, 3pm; Sunday, 3pm) in the Land of Sweets.

Please support Artisan Ballet Company and our young neighborhood dancer by attending either one of the performances.



FOR TICKET INFORMATION:

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Cell: 281-704-9139

E-mail: artisansdance@sbcglobal.net

Web: <http://www.artisanschoolofdance.com>

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The goal is to fill in the grid so that every row, every column, and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 through 9. Each digit may appear only once in each row, each column, and each 3x3 box.

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tons of educational classes on color & cutting. I had a full clientele in Florida before I moved whom I miss very much! Many of them had become good friends over the years. I would love the opportunity to be your stylist and help you achieve a look you love. I have many references of past clients that I would be happy to supply to you for your confidence. I truly love doing hair & getting to know my clients and doing whatever it takes to make them overjoyed with their hairstyle! I look forward to meeting you". Angie Daniel, Master Stylist

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Christmas Decorating Contest

It's time to begin decorating your yards and home for the Holidays. Every year Village Creek outdoes itself with fabulous decorations ranging from Santa' flying helicopters to thousands of twinkling lights on reindeer. So get out your Christmas lights and your wonderful decorations to continue making Village Creek an exciting place to be during the Holidays.

The Village Creek Landscape Committee will judge decorations in the following categories:

1. Best Street
2. Most Festive Home
3. Best Overall Home
4. Best Traditional Home

The judging will be done on Monday, December 17th and Tuesday, December 18th.

Here are a few hints for safe and successful yard and interior decorating:

1. Make sure that your holiday decorations are protected by a GFCI (Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter).
2. Use a good ladder. Make sure the ladder is secure to the ground and, if possible, tie your ladder to a secure portion of a tree or house to keep it stable.

3. If you have a natural Christmas tree, cut an inch off of the bottom prior to putting it in the tree stand and use a stand that has a water basin. Never let your natural tree water go dry.

4. Many artificial trees will burn. Don't place any open flames near any tree.

5. Light Emitting Diode Christmas lights (LED) will obviously be the new standard Holiday decorating light. They use very little power, createlittle heat, and they last (at least in theory) a long, long time. What a great invention!!!



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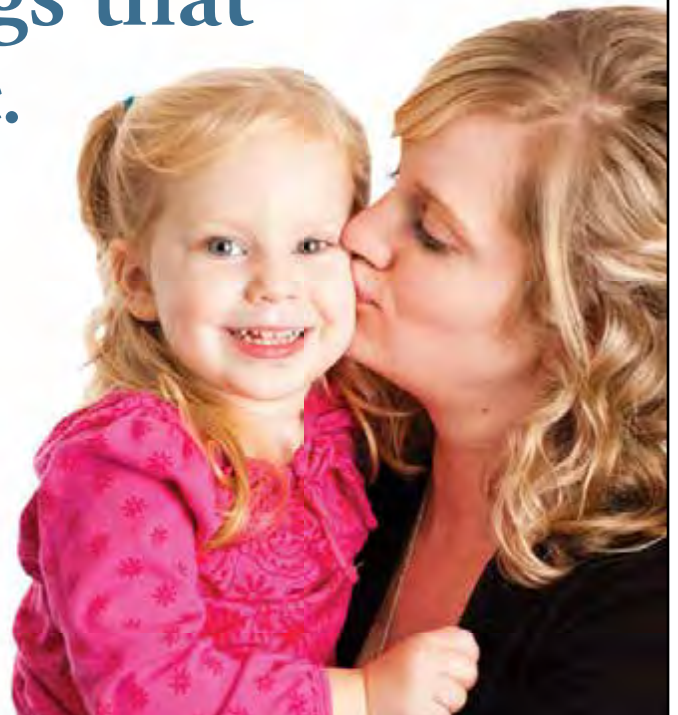
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Pick up after your pet!

When you take your pet for walks in the neighborhood, please remember to carry waste bags with you so that you can pick up after your pet. No one likes to pick up after someone else's dog, so please be considerate of your neighbors and help to keep the neighborhood clean.



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"If I Installed Solar, How Much Electricity Would It Generate and How Much Would I Save?"

By Chris Lee

For those of us living here in Houston, we're all acutely aware that the sun is a plentiful, if not unrelenting, source of heat and sunlight (okay, the heat is really a byproduct of the intense sunlight). And for many of us I bet that we've thought, "Gosh, if I could harness just some of that free sunlight...." The harder part is trying to answer the obvious questions about installing a solar array or solar panel system on the roof of your home - "How much electricity would it generate and how much money could I save on my electric bills?"

Without having to know much about solar or needing to contact a solar installer or solar company, you can easily get those estimates at your fingertips. The National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL), which is operated by the US Department of Energy, has created a website allowing anyone to calculate the amount of electricity a PV (photovoltaic) system (aka: solar panel array system) would generate. Here's the website (notice that it already takes into account that you're in Houston): <http://rredc.nrel.gov/solar/calculators/PVWATTS/version1/US/Texas/Houston.html>

Here's a shortened link: <http://goo.gl/bRurv>

Once on the website, for your initial estimate, you can use the default information presented and just click on "calculate" at the bottom. On the results page you will see that in Austin, a South facing solar panel array (which means the Array Azimuth = 180 degrees) that's built for 4 kW of electricity generation, would generate 4879 kWh in a year and save you \$473.26. To give you a better estimate, there are 3 settings you can go back and change:

1. **Array Azimuth in degrees.**
2. **DC Rating in kW.**
3. **Cost of Electricity in cents.**

ARRAY AZIMUTH:

If you're considering placing your solar array on the side of your roof that gets the most sunlight and that part of the roof faces due South, then the Array Azimuth would be 180 degrees. If your proposed solar array will be facing Southwest, the azimuth would be 225 degrees. Southeast would be 135 degrees. And so forth. The more accurate your submission, the more accurate your estimate.

DC RATING:

The DC Rating (in kW) default is 4 kW in the calculator. This would be the "size" of electricity generation by your solar array - basically, by adding (or subtracting) more solar panels to your proposed system, the DC Rating would increase (or decrease). Makes sense - if you add more solar panels to your array, you'll increase the amount of electricity generated and therefore increase the amount of money saved.

COST OF ELECTRICITY:

The default is the Texas state average of 9.7 cents per kWh. For those of you with an electricity provider with higher (or soon to be higher) rates, you should change the rate accordingly to get a more realistic estimate.

So that's it, an easy way to determine what you would be generating with a solar array on the roof of your home. This is a simple but fairly accurate way to determine the benefit of installing solar on your home. Of course, YMMV (your mileage may vary) but by getting a fairly accurate estimate of the amount of electricity generated and the money saved, you can better determine whether or not installing a solar array on your roof would make financial sense for you and your family. If you have any questions, please ping me at leec89@gmail.com.



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