



# The Village Gazette

Volume 10, Issue 3  
Village Creek Community Association

March 2013

## Landscape Corner

If you haven't seen the area around the lake for a few months, you may want to do so. You will see many improvements suggested by the Landscape Committee, approved by the Board, and implemented by the Landscape Contractor. Most of these were restoration projects to fix problems brought about by drought and erosion. As you drive or walk along Lake Vista Drive you will see the improvements made in February. The Landscape Committee's goal is to improve those areas first which are most visible to the most people.

As you see your lawn begin to green up, you should start thinking about reactivating your irrigation system. Don't rush this unless we have no rain. One way to test your lawn for lack of water is to insert a screw driver into the ground six inches. If it is very hard to push a screw driver into the ground more than three inches or so, your lawn is probably not getting enough water either from rain or irrigation. Also watch for weeds growing where you should have lawn. We may not be watering enough in those parts of our lawn which have become weed patches. We might need an additional sprinkler head or two.

In spring, fertilize your lawn after it has grown enough to mow it twice. This may occur in either March or April. Doug Welsh's Texas Garden Almanac (TGA) has an interesting recommendation: Fertilize early in spring with nitrogen-only using a fertilizer such as ammonium sulfate or any other fertilizer with straight nitrogen (21-0-0, 10-0-0, 14-0-0, etc.). Note that the first number is the percent of nitrogen in the bag by weight, the second number is the percent in the bag by weight of phosphorus, and the third number is the percent of potassium. In other words, try not using any phosphorus or potassium. The current thinking is that, except in the fall, these other two ingredients are not needed...and may be counterproductive).

Again according to the above reference, for St. Augustine Grass, which most of us have, you should put 2-3 pounds of nitrogen per 1000 feet on the lawn two or three times per year.

If you want a formula for determining the exact number of bags for the minimum fertilizer, here it is:

$$\text{(Lawn Square Feet} \times 0.2) / (\text{Bag Weight} \times \text{First Number}) = \text{Number of bags required.}$$
In words, multiply lawn square feet by 0.2. Then divide that number by the bag weight multiplied by the first number in the series on the bag (such as 10-0-0).

For example if the lawn is 10,000 square feet, bag weight is 30 pounds, and bag says it is 10-0-0, the formula is  $(10,000 \times 0.2) / (30 \times 10) = 6.6$  bags. You will need half as many bags if you pick a 20-0-0 fertilizer.

If you do fertilize, you might not have to fertilize as much if you leave the lawn mower clippings on the lawn rather than bagging them. Leaving them have many benefits: less fertilizer, less chemical runoff to our streams, improved soil, less fuel to carry clippings away, less air pollution from the engines on the trucks and at the landfill, less work for the person doing the job, and reduced landfill costs. We have been doing this for two years and have had no problems related to this practice with our lawns.

Finalize any pruning not done in February this month. This is the last month for pruning.

While the air is warming up, extreme lows are possible (18 degrees in March, 2002). Keep watch on the weather news to minimize damage to your plants and watering system.

Apply weed prevention measures, though most lawns will win the weed battle if they are properly fertilized, watered, and mowed. Again, those weed patches in our lawns may be caused by inadequate water rather than lack of weed killer.

When the soil warms up, a good project for children or grandchildren is to plant sunflowers. Sunflowers grow quickly and easily here, and the large ones can grow to well over six feet high with 12" diameter blooms. These can be planted directly in the soil about 1/2 inch deep or so and about 12" apart. The seed package may say to plant them closer, but most seeds will grow, so why waste the seeds? When the flowers die, you can use the

*(Continued on Page 2)*

# The Village Gazette

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Constables Office .....281-376-3472, [www.cd4.hctx.net](http://www.cd4.hctx.net)  
Klein Fire Dept. ....281-376-4449  
Poison Control Center .....800-764-7661  
Willowbrook Methodist .....281-477-1000  
EMERGENCY 24 HOUR LINE .....281-537-0957  
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Willow Wood Jr (7-8) .....281-357-3030  
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**Village Creek Community Association Website:**  
[www.preferredmgt.com/villagecreek/home.asp](http://www.preferredmgt.com/villagecreek/home.asp)

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Houston Chronicle .....713-220-7211  
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### Landscape Corner- (Continued from Cover)

seeds to feed the birds.

You can go ahead and buy tomato plants, but keep in mind that it is still possible to have a freeze. I am writing this article in early February, and I see that my wife has already purchased some. We will need to keep these in containers until the weather person tells us freezes are over. I am becoming a fan of small cherry tomatoes. Our luck with larger tomatoes has been mixed. We have heard that cherry tomatoes are quite tolerant of our heat and humidity. Watch for tomatoes in the stores.

Cool season crops will soon die back with the rising heat. For your reference for next fall, we had great success during the winter with kale, lettuce, collards, radishes, and carrots. Kale, in particular, is wonderful in many dishes, and our crop was essentially pest free. I love pest-free plants. April will be the month for planting most warm season plants.

Keep two or three inches of mulch wherever you have bare soil. Mulch will keep the moisture in and the light out. One trick to minimize mulch is to put down a layer of four newspaper pages before you place the mulch. Because of lack of sunlight, most weeds will not make it through this paper/mulch barrier. Note also that weeds will not grow well under the shade of plants.

(Continued on Page 3)



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## Landscape Corner- (Continued from Page 2)

A friend has reminded me that the one place where we tend to use too much mulch is against the trunk of our oak trees (or any tree or bush, for that matter). Using your gloved hand, push the mulch and soil back several inches from the trunk. There should be just a thin layer of soil just above the first horizontal roots leaving the trunk. Mulch against the trunk invites disease. Your tree will thank you.

Bare root season is over, but this is still a good time to plant potted trees, bushes, and vines.

Plant warm-season seeds for flowers such as zinnias and cosmos. At the plant nursery, look for transplants of impatiens, petunia, and salvia.

March's Historical Weather from intellicast.com



Month	Average Low	Average High	Record Low	Record High	Average Precipitation	Average Snow
March	51	72	18	90	2.94	0

Until next time, happy gardening.


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CATEGORY	NO.	PRICE	PRICE/SQ FT	DAYS ON MKT
Active Listings	13	\$222,754	\$78.21	109
Pending Listings	2	\$214,950	\$71.96	75
Sold Since 11/1/12	7	\$221,329	\$79.99	97

Statistics are averages compiled from Houston Association of Realtors MLS, 2/6/13

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## Water Heaters have a Lifetime

*By Gordon R. Watson*

While I try to stick with facts, it is fairly easy to let an opinion or mistake slip in. Please view this article as just one source of information. In all cases, follow the local code, manufacturer's instruction, and other requirements. Stay safe. It will always be less expensive to hire it done than to be taken to the hospital when things go wrong.

Most homes in Village Creek are ten or more years old. Since typical tank-type natural gas water heaters, on average, last about 10.7 years (<http://www.disastersafety.org/studies-reports/water-heater-failure-risks/>), it is likely our water heaters will soon fail. Some may already have. With most water heaters in our attics, there is a risk that a water heater failure leakage may cause damage to the ceiling or worse. According to the source above, the average insurance claim for water heater damage caused by leaking tanks is \$4,444 after the deductible. There are benefits to replacing a water heater before it fails. Arranging for a new water heater on your time-table will allow you to avoid a Thanksgiving or Christmas Day failure or, worse: a failure while you are away on a two week vacation with damage to your home's ceiling. This is one of those "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" issues.

Water heaters are commonly sold with 6, 9, or 12 year warranties. According to "Consumer Reports" web page, it is best to buy a water heater with the longest warranty. They generally have better insulation and better corrosion protection. Assuming you choose one with a twelve year parts warranty, expect to pay about \$900. This cost is for the heater, installation, and removal of old heater. Your actual cost will depend on where your heater is located, what piping can be reused, and other factors.

### **Important Safety Suggestions:**

Keep your water heater thermostat lower than 125 degrees or less to prevent burns (and, incidentally, will also save energy). Check this by putting a thermometer in a cup of water and letting hot water flow until it has reached its highest temperature.

Keep stored flammables several feet away from your water heater to avoid house fires.

### **Tankless Water Heaters**

Tankless water heaters might be of interest to some homeowners. Prior to installing one, however, I suggest you read Consumer's Reports article at the following source: <http://www.consumerreports.org/cro/appliances/heating-cooling-and-air/water-heaters/tankless-water-heaters/overview/tankless-water-heaters-ov.htm>.

### **Natural Gas Water Heater Energy Costs**

Hot water heater natural gas energy cost for an average family in the United States is about \$150 per year, or \$12.50/month. Apparently, no tank-type natural gas water heater qualifies for a tax credit. For your specific energy cost, go this excellent web site:

[http://www1.eere.energy.gov/femp/technologies/eep\\_waterheaters\\_calc.html#output](http://www1.eere.energy.gov/femp/technologies/eep_waterheaters_calc.html#output)

### **Water Heater Sizing**

You should go on line for a more accurate sizing, but, as a quick rule-of-thumb, Home Depot has this sizing chart on their web site. Note that if you have large bath tubs or some other usual usage, you may want to use a higher number.

<b>Family Size</b>	<b>Natural Gas Tank Size in Gallons</b>
5+	65+
3 to 5	50
2 to 4	40
1 to 2	30

### **Some Miscellaneous Information about Water Heaters**

Many years ago, I visited a Day and Night Company water heater factory. I observed that the basic tank is composed of a steel plate that is rolled into a cylinder. That cylinder is welded with one seam. Then two round sheets of metal are stamped into a concave shape to create the top and bottom of the tank. Then these three pieces are welded to create the tank. Though I don't recall the exact manufacturing order, this tank then has holes cut in it with the threaded fittings welded into place. Then the tank interior was coated to create a corrosion-resistant tank. The manufacturers recognize that the coating process is not perfect, so they add an anode rod to protect tiny spots where the metal coating might fail.

Tank failure is usually caused by a tiny corroded area where the tank begins to drip. In the early stages the drip dries up on the side of the hot tank before it gets to the drain pan. Over time, the hole size will increase to the point where water gets to the drain pan, but the pan just drains out to the outside of your home. At this point, you may or may not notice the leak...depending on the location of the outfall. Finally, assuming you have not noticed anything, the hole will increase in size to the point where the drain cannot keep up, and the pan will overflow. At this point, the water will saturate the sheet rock, and water will start dripping from the ceiling. If you are on vacation, things will get even worse. Of course, there are several variations on this failure story, but you get the idea.

Our water heater instructions suggest that the plastic drain valve located near the bottom of the tank (on the side) be opened and the tank drained and flushed every six months. This instruction obviously is intended for a wide range of water quality from very hard to very soft. The water in our area is actually what is considered "Moderately Hard," which is in the middle between "Very Soft," and

*(Continued on Page 7)*



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\*\*Realtor Teams per Remax 9/2008, 3/2009

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## Village Creek Community Garage Sale

- Friday March 22<sup>nd</sup>  
and
- Saturday March 23<sup>rd</sup>



## Mobile Vet Clinic Appearance

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## Water Heaters- (Continued from Page 4)

“Very Hard.” In those areas which have “Very Hard” water (with no softener), it is quite common for the water heater to accumulate calcium carbonate ( $\text{CaCO}_3$ ) in the bottom. I have seen four or five pounds of this sand-looking material accumulate...to the point where the drain valve became clogged. This material will create insulation between the water and the steel in contact with the burner. Eventually, this granular insulation will become so “good” that the water at the tank bottom will get very hot (over 212 degrees), and it will become gaseous steam. This steam, being less dense than liquid water, will rise up through the “beach-sand”  $\text{CaCO}_3$ . When these hot steam bubbles hit the cooler 125 degree F water, they will instantly implode, and you will hear a “bang...bang....bang” as the steam bubbles instantaneously change back to a liquid.

I found that (with normal hand pressure), our 10 year old drain valve will not open, so I left it alone. Opening this valve, particularly if the tank is old, has significant risks: The plastic or fiberglass drain valves are so cheaply made that it is very possible for the valve to break while you open or close it. Or, the valve may be fully clogged with  $\text{CaCO}_3$  sand....which will prevent draining. In general, if you haven't ever opened this valve, and the tank is old, you are probably best off leaving it alone. Replacing this valve is not a normal do-yourselfer thing...particularly in an attic.

In theory, if you have a good softener, you should not have significant  $\text{CaCO}_3$ , so you may never need to open the drain valve. On the other hand, for those not having a softener, with a new hot water heater, and good brass drain valve, opening the valve yearly might be a good idea. Note the idea of running a garden hose in the attic from the tank to outdoors, at our home, would be very risky, so just draining off a gallon occasionally should suffice. Your instruction manual may have other advice, and it should take precedent over what you read here.

### Things to consider when you Install or have a new water heater installed:

I have replaced water heaters in garages, but I probably will not

replace one in an attic. The attic location makes this a VERY difficult job. Furthermore, the installer must not make any mistakes (as is common for those of us who don't do such jobs daily). Natural gas and flue gases have the potential to be deadly.

Install the tank according to the local codes. Some view codes as a pain in the neck. In reality, codes are there to keep us safe. Vacuum out the drain pan and the drain pipe.

Make sure the water heater has a working pressure/temperature relief valve. Never replace this valve with a cap, plug or valve. A water heater without a temperature/pressure relief valve, with a few additional minor problems will explode. If you are lucky, it might just launch itself through your roof into the air and land on a neighbor's car. If you are unlucky, it will be much worse.

Inspect the water heater fully to make sure the flue is connected and secure. Make sure you don't smell gas. Make sure no flammable pipe insulation is anywhere near the flue.

Place a 9 volt battery-powered leak detector alarm in each drain pan and change its battery yearly. Zircon is one brand name. With water heaters in the attic, such alarms have a chance of advising you a leak in its earliest stages (before the sheet rock above you starts sagging).

Ask the contractor to replace the new tank's plastic drain valve with a high quality brass water heater drain valve. Such a valve will allow you to reliably drain the sediment without fear.

Dielectric unions on the water inlet and outlet to the tank are normally required by code. These fittings are intended to reduce galvanic corrosion because they apparently prevent an electrical current from travelling from the house piping to the heater. Do not reuse the old ones as it is likely have become less effective over time.

Read the instructions on your new water heater and file them your home-owners file.

Write neatly directly on the new water heater with a felt tip pen: “Installed on MM/DD/YYYY. Parts warranted until MM/DD/YYYY.”

Until next time, stay warm, dry, and safe.



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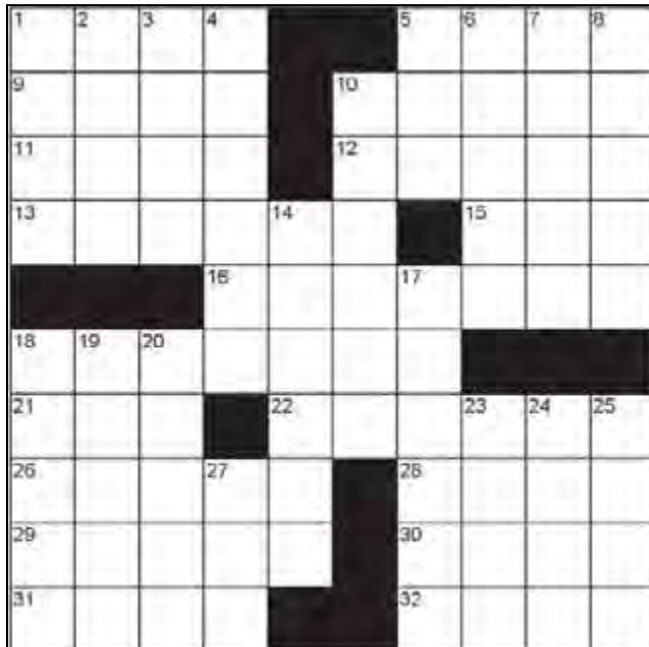
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## CROSSWORD PUZZLE



### ACROSS

1. Tails
5. Tableland
9. Billy or nanny
10. Expressing dislike word
11. Capital of Norway
12. Dote
13. Eludes
15. Beverage
16. Crime
18. Crayon name
21. Cause of sickness
22. Merchant
26. Arc
28. Dwell
29. Ballerina skirts
30. Among
31. Dueling sword
32. Fly alone

### DOWN

1. Id's counterparts
2. Eat
3. Painter of melting clocks
4. Breezy
5. Soil
6. Show emotions
7. Lark
8. In the lead
10. Fuss
14. Booths
17. City
18. Social position
19. Shred (2 wds.)
20. Having wings
23. Fancy car
24. Vile
25. Do it again
27. Regret

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	6							
	3			1		4		

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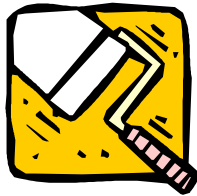
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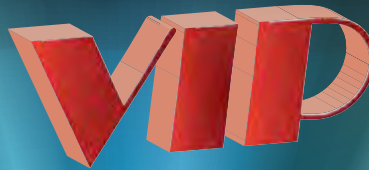
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VC

## Information Sources Buyers Used to Find The Home They Purchased in 2012 —

from research conducted by the National Association of Realtors®

The Internet - 90%

Real Estate Agent - 87%

Yard Sign - 53%

Open House - 45%

Newspaper Ad - 27%

Home Book/Magazine - 18%

Home Builder - 17%

Billboard - 5%

Relocation - 4%

With 9 out of 10 homebuyers on the internet, it is important that we have an **online strategy** to promote your home.

*Contact me for a list of web sites used to directly promote your home to prospective buyers.*

Source: 2012 NAR Profile of Homebuyers and Sellers



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#1 Village Creek Realtor®

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