

West Lake Hills ECHO

Volume 3, Issue 4

April 2014

A DYNAMIC DUO THAT CAN HELP YOUR LAWN WEATHER THE DROUGHT

by Brett Briant | LCRA Water Conservation Coordinator

Some things just go together, and mulch and compost are two of them. When used together, this formidable pair not only improves your garden and lawn, but they also use water more efficiently.

The combo is important as many of us move to maximum once-a-week watering during this time of severe drought. The pair can help your landscaping survive the drought because plants will be more disease tolerant and water efficient, thereby better able to defend themselves against the drought.

Using a hardwood mulch/compost blend is the best choice for retaining water and improving your soil. The mix will hold its color longer, and the compost will help break down the mulch, which will become a beneficial nutrient for your soil.

However, if you choose to go with one or the other, keep in mind that you can use compost as mulch, but you can't do the opposite. You can't use straight mulch as compost – it's too hard on its own and takes too long to break down and become a beneficial micro-organism to your soil. Mulch should smell like a fresh forest floor. A mulch/compost blend should have a carbon-to-nitrogen ratio of about 20-to-1. That's 20 percent carbon to 1 percent nitrogen. When applying this to your existing soil, a soil depth of at least six inches is highly recommended. You can build your soil with the mulch and compost through either

core aeration, where you remove approximately 1 inch by 2 inch cores of soil from the ground to improve the infiltration of water/nutrients, or through light scarifying with a rototiller to remove any debris from the lawn.

A good layer of mulch of about two to four inches in your garden will help suppress weeds. It will also hold in moisture in the heat, and help keep the soil warmer in the winter and cooler in the summer. If you are using it as a top dressing to improve the soil on your lawn, you will want to apply a layer of compost that is one-fourth of an inch to one-half of an inch deep.

Another benefit of adding compost to most types of soil, including clay, sandy, alkaline or acidic, is that compost has natural pH buffers. That's the microbiology or bacteria in the soil that creates a healthy environment for your plants. The pH level should be close to neutral, which is a pH of 7. If you add compost to your lawn and compost/mulch to your beds, you will build the soil profile to be much more water efficient and increase its capacity to hold water. The soil will be able to drain and breathe.

Using mulch and compost together is a cost-efficient way to build your soil. They're relatively inexpensive and will help cut down on your water bill. It's a pair you want on your team.



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EMERGENCY	911
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Ambulance.....	911
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Crossroads Utility Service 24 Hour Number....	512-246-1400
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OTHER NUMBERS

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Municipal Court	512-327-1863
Property Tax.....	512-854-9473
Appraisal District	512-834-9317
Chamber of Commerce.....	512-306-0023
City of West Lake Hills	www.westlakehills.org

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ARTICLE INFO

The West Lake Hills Echo is mailed monthly to all West Lake Hills residents. Residents, community groups, churches, etc. are welcome to include information about their organizations in the newsletter. Personal news for the Stork Report, Teenage Job Seekers, recipes, special celebrations, and birthday announcements are also welcome.

To submit an article for the West Lake Hills Echo please email it to westlakehills@peelinc.com. The deadline is the 15th of the month prior to the issue.

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BLOOD PRESSURE

TAKE CONTROL OF THE SILENT KILLER

High blood pressure, or hypertension, is sometimes called the silent killer because there are often no symptoms. That's why keeping track of blood pressure is one of the most important things a person can do to stay healthy, said doctors at Baylor College of Medicine.

Left untreated, hypertension, can cause organ damage over time, leading to heart attack, blindness, kidney failure or stroke, said Dr. Biykem Bozkurt, professor of medicine at BCM.

Some factors that are associated with hypertension are diabetes, family history of hypertension, being overweight, taking in too much sodium, drinking excessive alcohol and smoking.

Generally a healthy reading is 120/80, and hypertension diagnosis is made at 140/90. People considered prehypertensive generally have readings that fall between 120/80 and 140/90.

Doctors always check blood pressure as part of appointments and there are also many locations where blood pressure machines are available for anyone to have their pressure checked. Bozkurt advises talking to a doctor to determine if your reading is at a healthy level rather than taking the machine's reading at face value.

"For a relatively healthy person not suffering from any other illnesses, only a few lifestyle changes like diet modifications and exercise may be needed," said Bozkurt.



8 YEAR OLD AUSTIN BOY GOES TO NATIONAL CONTEST

Eight-year-old Austin boy will represent Texas photography in the National contest. Max Whitney, second grader diagnosed with autism, was awarded the Overall Award of Excellence in Photography for Special Artists by the Texas Parent Teacher Association on Saturday. He will represent all Texas Special artists in photography in grades K through 12 in the National PTA Reflections Program.

Max's photograph, titled Lizard InspEyer, was selected from thousands of entries submitted to the 2013-2014 theme: Believe, Dream, Inspire. Each year the contests begin in each grade on school campuses across the state. The school campus winners go to their school district contests. This year 1005 entries in 6 categories (photography, dance choreography, film production, literature, musical composition, and visual arts) advanced to Texas PTA. Only 30 of these were awarded Overall Award of Excellence and will advance to the National contest. Max, son of Traci and Cameron Whitney, is the only Austin Area winner in all 6 categories in the entire Reflections Program.

Over 100 outstanding student entries are recognized with Honorable Mention, Award of Merit, Award of Excellence, and the Overall Award of Excellence winners. They will be on display for public viewing at the Texas Education Agency, the Legislative Budget Board, and the Texas Commission on the Arts March 10 through



April 30, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

This year's theme, Believe, Dream, Inspire, was submitted from an elementary school student in East Rockway, New York. Next year's theme, Let Your Imagination Fly, was submitted by a student in Northwood, North Dakota. Each year a new theme is selected in the National PTA Reflections Theme Search Contest.

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DON'T BE SIDELINED BY HEARTBURN

With college basketball's March Madness comes plenty of dribbling and dunking – both on the court and on the couch or at the local sports bar. But following a few tips from Dr. Wagar Qureshi, associate professor of medicine and chief of endoscopy at Baylor College of Medicine, means basketball fans won't have to worry about heartburn and can concentrate instead on those all-important brackets.

-Sit up. Lying down or reclining after a meal makes it easier for stomach acid to move up into the esophagus, causing heartburn.

-Eat in moderation. If you can't give up cheesy nachos, then say no to hot wings, or else eat smaller portions.

-If you know a particular food triggers heartburn, Qureshi suggests avoiding it altogether.

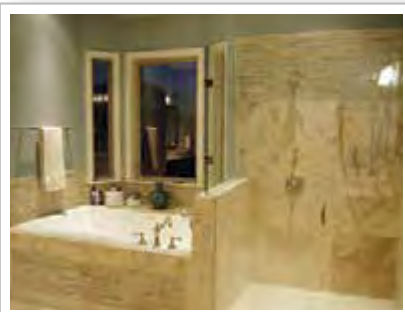
-Wear loose-fitting garb.

-Take an over-the-counter antacid for fast relief.

If you find yourself taking antacids three or more times a week, your heartburn is more than just game-related. Frequent symptoms could signal chronic Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD), which afflicts more than 7 million Americans annually.



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Are You Listening?



TOGETHER, WE SAVE FORESTS.

Together, we are saving forests from Austin, Texas. This Earth Day, we want to share with you how we are doing this right here in Austin.

Rainforest Partnership, an Austin-based international nonprofit organization, has expanded the environmental passion of this city to a globally focused, locally relevant issue just as our city started its transition to its current global significance and attention.

Founded in December 2007, Rainforest Partnership (RP) was formed with the idea that the way to protect the “lungs” of the planet is to help the people who live in those “lungs” make a living that allows them to protect their forests. Forest communities know that sometimes the easiest option to earn an income is to cut down their trees. By selling the timber, planting a cash crop, or having cattle, they can eke out an income to pay for health care or education for their children. But, more than anyone else, the people who live in the forests know the damage this does. They know it takes generations for a forest to come back after it’s cut down. They know that destroying the forest will destroy their way of life. They’re looking for an alternative.

That’s where Rainforest Partnership comes in. Using a bottom-up approach, we work with local communities to find their needs and desires and adapt it to their culture, knowledge, and skills. These are then matched to the business opportunities created by each individual rainforest to create a sustainable, workable alternative to slash and burn. It all begins when a community asks for our help.

Although they seem far away, tropical rainforests are an important part of our lives and our community. What was once over 12 percent of the landmass of our planet in just a hundred years is now less than 5 percent. These forests play a crucial role in storing carbon, regulating water cycles and temperature, and providing biodiversity. We all directly benefit from the many rainforest plants used in modern medicines and for food. Currently deforestation—the cutting and burning of forests—is responsible for more than 17% of carbon dioxide emissions worldwide. What happens to these forests affects us all everywhere.

Besides directly partnering and working with indigenous rainforest communities, we partner with local governments, local nonprofit organizations, and businesses. Our work is based on a replicable model that is collaborative and results-driven, and facilitated by these partnerships – international, U.S., and Austin-based. From brooms made from sustainably and legally sourced palm fibers from the

rainforest, to artisan products made from forest plants, to an ecolodge for birdwatchers eager to catch a glimpse of the elusive Andean Cock-of-the-rock – we have helped our partner communities create sustainable livelihoods, while saving their forests and their way of life.

We are very proud of all our partner communities, but we are especially inspired by the women of Sani Isla, Ecuador. When we first met them in 2009, they were too shy to speak or even meet anyone’s eyes. In Summer of 2010, during their first workshop as part of our project working with them, they barely spoke. That is, until they did. When they started talking, they told us why they had been silent all morning: Nobody had ever asked them what they thought, what their vision was. But they had a vision: To recover the lost arts of making artisan products like jewelry and bags and baskets from seeds, vines and fibers from forest plants. We helped them set up relationship with nearby ecolodges to sell their goods to visiting guests in their Amazon community, and established connections with hotels in Quito for selling their goods. The older women began training the younger women. We helped them work out a plan for sustainably harvesting the raw materials they would need. They used them to create goods of startling beauty. And the goods sold, beyond anyone’s expectations.

In four years, the women of Sani Isla went from never having made an income to making a steady and growing income. And today the same women who were too shy to talk to any outsiders have become the strongest voices in their communities against the oil drilling that threatens to destroy their forest. For the first time, these women are at the forefront of protecting their forests – and their future.

Today, communities all over Ecuador and Peru are rejecting the old model of forest destruction. They’re asking for Rainforest Partnership’s help in coming up with a new way, and we want to help because it’s always a joint effort. Not one community has asked for a handout.

Rainforest Partnership’s projects represent the real-life execution of its working model. By working with forest communities to help them bring their skills, traditions, and values to the marketplace, we have begun to overcome the most powerful driving forces of deforestation. Go to www.RainforestPartnership.org to learn more.

This Earth Day, learn more about how you can change a habit and save a forest. Tell your kids about what we do. Every child learns about rainforest ecosystem. Together, we save forests. From Austin, Texas. And, so can you.

Empty Nest Chance To Chase Forgotten Dreams

Middle age woes are hard enough to deal with, but throw in empty nest syndrome and it is a recipe for potential depression. Psychologists at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston say not to look at it as an ending, but as the beginning of a new stage in life with more time to travel, develop new hobbies, rediscover forgotten dreams and get to know your spouse all over again.

"Parents have channeled all of their energy into their children for so long they may not know what to do with their time once they leave," said Dr. James Bray, associate professor of family and community medicine at BCM.

Empty nest syndrome often leads to divorce, but parents should assume that leaving your spouse will make the unhappiness go away.

"Marriage takes time and energy, so make the effort to get reacquainted," Bray said.

Talk with friends to reevaluate goals and take note of some lifelong dreams you haven't had time to accomplish, said Bray. There may be more time to take dance classes, travel, exercise or go back to college to retool skills. The empty nest transition usually lasts six months to a year, depending on how well parents can adjust to their newly found freedom.



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				7				
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2								
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View answers online at www.peelinc.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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Choosing a Summer Camp

By David Ettenberg, co-owner of Camp Shane

Summer camps come in a wide variety of interests and themes -- from music and sports camps to weight-loss and peace corps camps -- there is a camp for every child who has ever said, "I'm bored." How do parents sort through them all to find the right one for their child? Dave Ettenberg, co-owner of Camp Shane (a weight-loss camp for kids), recommends that parents consider these six guidelines before registering your child.

1. The Staff What are the camp's hiring procedures? Do they check references and run complete background checks? Also - many camps hire teens as junior counselors, which can be a wonderful experience for all, but it can cause problems if the camp relies too heavily on this cheaper workforce. It is important that a number of experienced adult staff members are on hand to deal with any problems that may arise. Also, ask to speak to the camp's director, he or she sets the tone for absolutely everything and will be able to give you an immediate sense of the camp's culture.

2. Referrals Get them, but get meaningful ones. Don't make the common mistake of relying solely on the names offered to you by the camp—these are typically hand-selected and will undoubtedly be positive. Instead, try to get five names of families that live within 20 minutes from you to ensure a more random sampling. It's ideal if you can ask someone you know whose child has attended the camp. If you don't know anyone personally, ask around in your community, chances are you'll find people.

3. Healthy Atmosphere If possible, try to visit the camp during the summer while in session to ensure there is an active, "happy" atmosphere, with a non-cliquey and non-threatening environment. It should be a place where your child can find strong support and make lifelong friends. Also, ask about the kind of food that is served at the camp—make sure they provide healthy, balanced meal options. You would be shocked to see what's on the menus at some "reputable" camps.

4. Marketing Materials Read all marketing materials carefully. If they are sloppy and unimpressive it may reflect how they run the camp. On the flipside, beware of materials that appear super-slick; a surprising

number of camps are now owned by corporations or investors who produce the marketing materials but have zero contact with your child. Look for realistic reflections of the camp and specific information that will give you insight to determine if the camp's philosophy, people and procedures will create the best experience for your child. Also, make sure to read the fine print; some weight-loss camps in particular advertise insurance reimbursements – but check with your particular carrier, as this is often times not the case.

5. The Facilities Are the buildings in good repair? Has everything been freshly painted? Has the grass been cut? Chances are if they don't take care the facility, they won't do such a good job with your child.

6. Kid's Choice Make sure to keep your child involved with the decision-making process. He or she needs to be comfortable with the camp, or the experience won't be optimal. Also, does your child want to focus in on a special skill or sport? Be sure to consider his or her specific interests and needs. State-of-the-art athletic fields are great but they won't do anything for a kid who loves music.

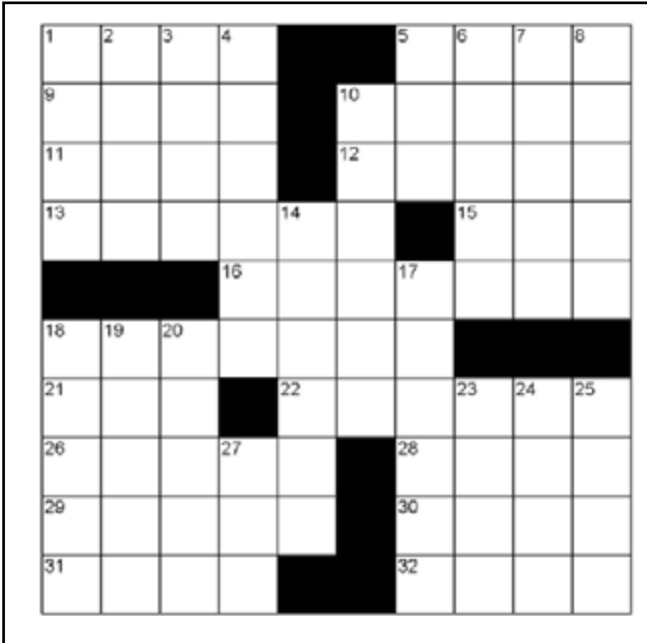
Taking time to research summer camps is key to ensuring a fun, safe, and enriching environment for your children - but it doesn't have to be overwhelming," said David. "By focusing your search based on a few key factors and by asking the right questions, you can easily find a great match that suits your child's particular needs."

ABOUT CAMP SHANE.

For more than 45 years, David Ettenberg's family has owned and operated Camp Shane, successfully helping children shed pounds and establish a healthy, confident lifestyle at Camp Shane (www.campshane.com) Currently Camp Shane operates in Georgia, New York, California and Arizona; Camp Shane Texas will open this summer in San Antonio. Kids shed unwanted pounds, gain self-esteem and learn how to live a healthy lifestyle while having a blast. An average weight loss for campers is 10-15 pounds in three weeks; 20-25 pounds in six weeks; and 30-35 pounds in nine weeks. For more overweight campers, it is not unusual to lose more than 50 pounds over the summer. Camp Shane has been featured in all national media, including NBC Nightly News with Brian Williams, 20/20, Oprah, Dr. Phil, MTV and Family Circle.



CROSSWORD PUZZLE



ACROSS

1. Grabs
5. Capital of Western Samoa
9. Healing plant
10. Canned chili brand
11. Baby powder
12. Howdy
13. Mexican food brand
15. Billion years
16. Smash
18. In abundance
21. Scarf
22. Prejudice
26. Living
28. National capital
29. Fathers
30. Margarine
31. Entertainer
32. Nightly tv show

DOWN

1. North Atlantic Treaty Organization
2. Winged
3. Fastening device
4. What the confederates tried to do
5. Dined
6. Whiter
7. Ice house
8. Hurting
10. Brand of soda
14. Literature
17. Baron
18. Embarrass
19. Crippling disease
20. Dens
23. Island
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25. Cow noises
27. Animal doctor

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The Echo

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Sugar, Heart & Life

A program called Sugar, Heart and Life: A Guide to Living with Diabetes is available for people dealing with the disease. The interactive and fun program developed by Baylor College of Medicine's department of family and community medicine offers information on how individuals with type 2 diabetes can manage their diabetes. The SHL program includes recipes, practical tips and games on diet, exercise, and medication. The program allows users to follow a year in the life of the Gonzalez family as they learn more about managing diabetes and help them make decisions that will keep their family healthy.

All diabetes management recommendations contained in this program are consistent with clinical practice recommendations of the American Diabetes Association and the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases. Recipe Box was adapted from heart healthy recipes from the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute.

*Sugar, Heart and Life can be found at
www.bcm.edu/shl.*

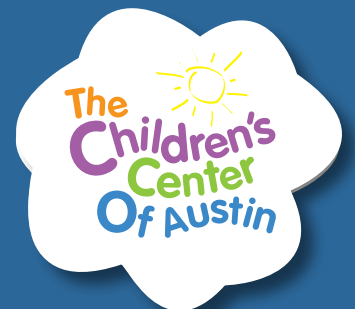


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NATURE WATCH

by Jim and
Lynne Weber

Ghosts in the Graveyard

Commonly found growing in rural areas including graveyards, Twistleaf Yucca (*Yucca rupicola*) is sometimes called ‘ghosts in the graveyard’, for when in bloom the clusters of white flowers on thin stalks appear as floating apparitions. But this common plant, which is widespread in our area, has a much more uncommon, mysterious association with a rarely seen butterfly called the Yucca Giant-Skipper (*Megathymus yuccae*).

Flying in the spring, the Yucca Giant-Skipper is a medium-sized, robust-bodied butterfly with a fast, powerful flight. Above, its dark forewings are elongated with a variable pale yellow outer band, and a yellow marginal border can be seen on the hindwings. Below, the hindwings are a dark blackish brown with a violet-white frosting and prominent triangular white spot along the leading margin. Males and females are similar, but females are generally larger and males have wider, more rounded forewings. Although fairly common, this species is like a ghost in the butterfly world, as sightings of adults are rare.

The most fascinating aspect of these butterflies is how they depend on the Twistleaf Yucca to carry out their life cycle. Males perch on low

vegetation or on the ground near twistleaf yuccas, awaiting passing females. Producing only one generation per year from February to May depending on location, the cycle begins when the female butterfly lays a single egg on the leaf of a Twistleaf Yucca. The young larvae (or caterpillar) feeds on the leaves of this plant and constructs small, individual silken shelters to protect itself as it grows.

Once larger, older larvae bore deep into the plant crown and feed within the root, constructing a prominent silk tent at the opening of the burrow. Active tents can be discovered by looking for larvae excrement (called ‘frass’) that is pushed out of the tent opening before the larvae pupates. In the spring, the adult butterfly emerges from the tent opening and allows its wings to dry before it takes flight and begins the search for a mate. Adult yucca giant-skipper do not visit flowers to feed, and it is unknown how long they live, or if they utilize other food sources.

Look closely and take care when performing your winter landscape cleanup, so as not to unwittingly destroy the tents that may be present on your Twistleaf Yucca plants. These ghosts of the graveyard may just be harboring ghosts of their own!



LEFT: *Twistleaf Yucca bloom stalk*

MIDDLE: *Yucca Giant-Skipper tent (photo by D. Hanson)*

RIGHT: *Yucca Giant-Skipper (photo by Randy L. Emmitt)*

*Send your nature-related questions to naturewatch@austin.rr.com and we'll do our best to answer them. If you enjoy reading these articles, look for our book, *Nature Watch Austin*, published by Texas A&M University Press.*

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