



Austin Charity Making a Difference for Local Families

Austin Families Awarded Therapy Sponsorships for Children with Autism

Imagine A Way, an Austin based charity that helps families whose children are diagnosed with autism, awards therapy sponsorships to three more Central Texas children.

Imagine A Way sponsors local families with children on the Autism Spectrum by funding proven, critical therapies during the child's early years of ages 2-6. While the cause of autism is still unknown, early intervention has shown proven success. The most significant impact occurs when children receive intense, consistent therapies during their preschool years. Everyday children are entering, and leaving, this window of time. Limited resources can mean the difference in reaching the child or losing them.

"When we established Imagine A Way, we committed to making a difference, one child and one family at a time," Joel explains. "By providing therapies during this window of time, the children are given the opportunity to reach their full potential – and parents get their child back" says Joel Price, founder of Imagine A Way.

In Austin, therapies for children with autism average between \$36,000 and \$72,000 a year, far beyond what most

families can afford. Last month, three more children were chosen to receive the charity's support.

With Imagine A Way's help, these children may receive over 6000 hours of speech and ABA therapies before turning age 7. And with autism, every hour counts.

"For every family we can help, we make a difference. This changes the trajectory of a child's life," states Mark Taylor, President of Imagine A Way's Board of Directors.

Imagine A Way is accepting applications for sponsorship and invites any Central Texas family with a child (age 2-6) diagnosed on the Autism Spectrum to please visit their website www.ImagineAWayFoundation.org or call for more information on how to apply.

About Imagine A Way:

Imagine A Way is an Austin based 501(c)(3) non-profit organization bringing support, therapies and hope for the future to Central Texas Area families affected by Autism. For more information about Imagine A Way visit their website www.ImagineAWayFoundation.org or call (512) 220-4324.

The Forum

NEWSLETTER INFO

NEWSLETTER

Editorforestcreek@peelinc.com

NEWSLETTER PUBLISHER

Peel, Inc.www.PEELinc.com, 512-263-9181

Advertising.....advertising@PEELinc.com, 512-263-9181

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Portable Fire Extinguishers

A portable fire extinguisher can save lives and property by putting out a small fire or containing it until the fire department arrives; but portable extinguishers have limitations. Because fire grows and spreads so rapidly, the number one priority for residents is to get out safely.

Use a portable fire extinguisher when the fire is confined to a small area, such as a wastebasket, and is not growing; everyone has exited the building; the fire department has been called or is being called; and the room is not filled with smoke.

To operate a fire extinguisher, remember the word PASS:

- **PULL** the pin. Hold the extinguisher with the nozzle pointing away from you, and release the locking mechanism.
- **AIM** low. Point the extinguisher at the base of the fire.
- **SQUEEZE** the lever slowly and evenly.
- **SWEEP** the nozzle from side-to-side.

For the home, select a multi-purpose extinguisher (can be used on all types of home fires) that is large enough to put out a small fire, but not so heavy as to be difficult to handle.


Choose a fire extinguisher that carries the label of an independent testing laboratory.

Read the instructions that come with the fire extinguisher and become familiar with its parts and operation before a fire breaks out.

Install fire extinguishers close to an exit and keep your back to a clear exit when you use the device so you can make an easy escape if the fire cannot be controlled. If the room fills with smoke, leave immediately.


Know when to go. Fire extinguishers are one element of a fire response plan, but the primary element is safe escape. Every household should have a home fire escape plan and working smoke alarms.



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LOVELY LUPINES

by Jim and Lynne Weber

NATUREWATCH

Bluebonnets are often thought of as the 'floral trademark of Texas', akin to the shamrocks of Ireland, the cherry blossoms of Japan, the roses of England, and the tulips of Holland. Loved for centuries, bluebonnets were described by early explorers as they roamed the vast prairies of Texas, planting them around the Spanish missions by early-day priests, and making them the subject of several Native American folk tales. Technically known as 'lupines' or 'lupins', bluebonnets received their present-day common name due to the shape of the flower petals, which resembled the bonnets worn by pioneer women to shield their faces from the sun.

Bluebonnets are part of the legume or bean family, and like other members of this family they offer nitrogen-fixation through their root system's symbiotic relationship with

Rhizobia bacteria. This gives them the useful ability to grow in poor, disturbed soils, and bring much-needed nitrogen back to these soils as they decompose. Ironically, bluebonnets are all in the genus *Lupinus*, which is Latin for 'wolf-like', from the original but erroneous belief that these plants ravenously exhausted the soil.



In our area, bluebonnets normally bloom between March and April, but the timing and extent of the blooms depends on the amount of rain received the previous fall and winter. The flower is purple to blue in color, about half an inch long, with a white spot on the upper petal or banner. This banner spot acts as a target to attract the bumblebees and honeybees that pollinate the flower. When

the pollen is fresh and sticky, the banner spot is white, and is seen by the bees as reflected ultraviolet light and appears to them as a good

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Questions? Contact:
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Nature Watch...Continued from Page 3

landing spot. But as the flower and its pollen age, the banner spot turns yellow and then reddish-magenta, and is ignored by the bees, whose vision cannot see red. The decline in bee populations has a direct effect on how many seeds a bluebonnet can produce, because bluebonnets cannot self-fertilize. Each plant has the potential to produce hundreds of seeds, but often only a small number result, due to the recent decline in the number of bee pollinators.

Infrequently, both white, and more rarely, pink bluebonnets can occur naturally. In fact, there is a legend associated with how the pink bluebonnet came to be. Many years ago, in a spring wildflower field near San Antonio, children came across a pink bluebonnet on their way to Lenten devotion at the mission church. Their grandmother told them the story of Texas, when it was a remote province of Mexico. After their Constitution was overthrown by a terrible Mexican dictator, a war broke out between the brave new Texans and the Mexican troops. The troops eventually overwhelmed the Texans, and much blood was shed and lives lost. Several years later, the grandmother saw her mother place a pink bluebonnet in a vase by the statue of the Virgin Mary. She said she found it by the river, where "it had once been white, but so much blood had been shed, it had taken a tint of it." Interestingly, the only place in the state where the original native pink bluebonnets were found was along the side of a San Antonio road not far from the original mission.

Texas has 6 state flowers, more or less, and they are all bluebonnets. In the spring of 1901, the Texas Legislature selected a state floral emblem after much debate and consternation. Both the cotton boll and prickly pear cactus were hardy contenders, but the National Society of Colonial Dames of America won the day, and the Sandyland Bluebonnet (*Lupinus subcarnosus*) was selected and passed into law on March 7th. And that's when the bluebonnet war started. The Sandyland Bluebonnet is a dainty little plant growing in the sandy hills of coastal and southern Texas, and many thought it was the least attractive of all the bluebonnets. They wanted the Texas Bluebonnet (*Lupinus texensis*), which was a showier, bolder bloomer. For the next 70 years, the Legislature was encouraged to correct its oversight, not wanting to get caught in another botanical trap or offend any supporters. As politicians often do, they solved the problem with clever maneuvering by creating an umbrella clause, and in 1971 added the two species together, plus "any other variety of bluebonnet not heretofore recorded" (including potential species not yet discovered), and lumped them all into one state flower.

Long before the bluebonnet became the Texas state flower, many stories existed about its origins. Some believed it was a gift from the Great Spirit, and that it arrived with rain after a young, orphaned girl sacrificed her precious doll in the hopes of bringing a terrible drought to an end. Whatever you believe, look for these lovely lupines during our central Texas spring!

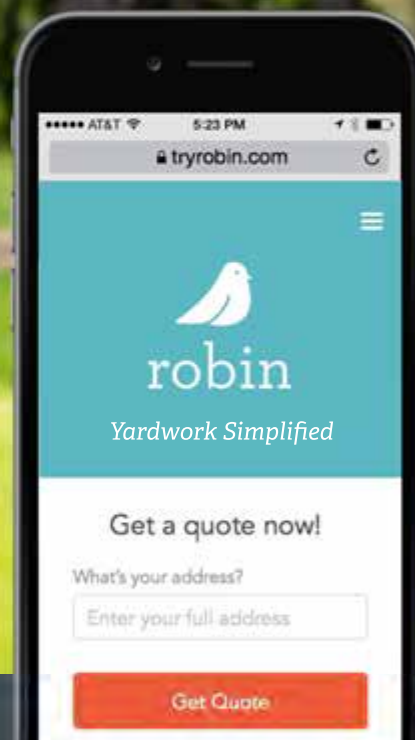
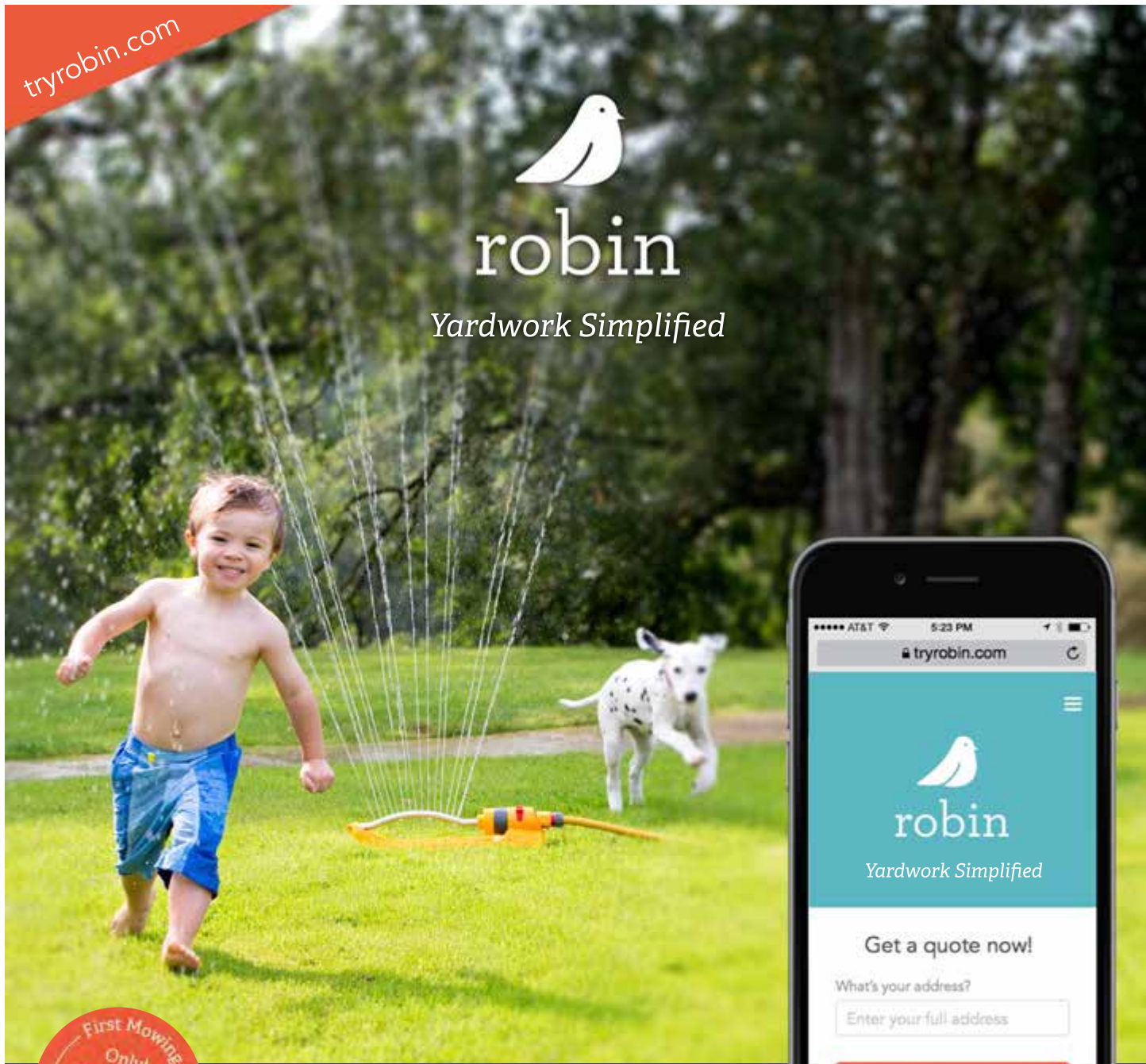
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BACKYARD BENEFICIALS

Beneficials in the Landscape

First off, let me mention that a pest is all a matter of perspective. There are insects that are commonly thought of as pests that can also be considered beneficial when viewed through the proper lens. An easy example would be termites. People are very unhappy when they find termites eating the cellulose material in their home, but in a natural setting, termites help break down cellulose material when trees fall in the forest. Of course, this works both ways. A flipped example is ladybird beetles. They are often called beneficial insects because they help to consume aphids and other small, soft-bodied insects that attack desired plants. I have seen ladybird beetles by the thousands enter my parents' home to overwinter. These beetles are not the kind little helpers that ladybugs are made out to be- they dive bomb you, bite you and can stain fabrics with a fluid they exude. So keeping that in mind, let us proceed with a few "beneficials" you may find in the landscape.

Ladybird beetles a.k.a ladybugs

Ladybird beetle adults come in a variety of sizes and colors. Many of them are some shade of red and often have spots. Eggs are often laid in clusters near a food source, often aphids. The eggs are a yellowish-orange color and look like footballs sitting up on their end. Most larvae are elongated and a blackish-grey color with orange markings. Ladybird beetles pupate on the plant and pupae are non-moving. The adults and larvae are the stages that help to control soft-bodied pests such as aphids, whiteflies, mealybugs and scale insects.



Praying Mantises

Praying mantises are general predators in the nymphal and adult stages. They are also cannibalistic. Adults are fairly large insects with an elongated prothorax and front legs modified for capturing prey. Nymphs look similar to

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Backyard Beneficials...Continued from Page 6

adults but are smaller and do not have fully developed wings. Adult females lay egg cases on small twigs and branches. At first the egg case looks like a frothy mass, but it soon hardens into an elongated, ridged case.

Spiders

Spiders are not insects, but arachnids. They have two body regions and eight legs which differentiates them from insects. Spiders are a large group with many shapes, colors and sizes. They are general predators as immatures and adults. For more information on specific spiders, see spider ID article from the May 2011 issue of the Compost Bin here: <http://www.tcmastergardeners.org/newsletter/2011/News2011.05.pdf>

There are many more beneficial creatures that help keep pest populations in check. Before you decide to utilize a pesticide to manage a pest, take a closer look to see if nature is already controlling pests for you.

For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist at 512.854.9600. Check out my blog at www.urban-ipm.blogspot.com

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