

SISTERHOOD IS GLOBAL

By: Sugandha Jain



On March 5th, all roads in the Northwest part of Austin lead to only one place-Brushy Creek Community Center, to celebrate International Women's festival. From the impressive turnout, there is no doubt that every event organized by the wining trio-Rasna, Kalyani and Bhavani (Memories and Events) is fast evolving as a thread that sews hearts in the Indian community together.

There's nothing quite like riding back to our nostalgic memories of silk kurtis, dangling earrings and embroidered tops. This event was one of the adventuresome

element of honoring our shared sisterhood in a foreign land. Some exciting journeys at this event included mother-daughter dances as remixed by DJ Nish. The bond of friendship was an essential feature running through the highlights of the day.

Rasna Kukreja, one of the organizers, welcomed the gathered guests and expressed her happiness in uniting the Indian community on this occasion. She offered her sincere thanks to the local women entrepreneurs including Indy Vogue, Nistarika collection, Neha Beauty, Stella and Dot, Glitter Garnet, Sweetzions, Devi's collection Shop Jaipore, who helped make this event a resounding success.

There was a colorful potpourri of cultural events, like only a country as diverse as India could offer, each one distinct and adding to the expression of the colorful bouquet that is India. Most dances had participation from diverse communities, which truly represents the spirit of multicultural Austin. That is what building bonds of friendship is all about.

The exhibition stalls held their own with interesting displays of jewelry, baked goods, handicrafts, ethnic Indian garments for the

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Our meeting and program this month will be Wednesday, April 13 at 10:15 am until 1 pm at Brushy Creek Community Center, 16318 Great Oaks Drive, Round Rock. We are having a very "fun" program. A Magical Mystery Tour by "Affordable First Class" is waiting to take us away! Chuck Denny of AFC will be telling us about a possible

new and thrilling adventure. If you are adventurous and want to go to some unique places come and join us. You will have fun and meet some new and interesting people of RRNN.

We have many groups: Card and game groups, gardening, Wine Tasting, Foodies, Antiquing, Hiking, Movie, Photo, Potluck, Safari, Walking and Caring Hands. There is something for everyone. Many activities take place during the day and some activities include couples. Please visit our website at www.rrnewneighbors.org for more information and to see our newsletter. Or call Traci Clegg, Membership Chair at 512-992-1069 for information.

The Forum

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(Continued from Cover)



visitors. Women flocked to these stalls to buy Punjabi suits, breezy skirts, tops and colorful saris. The diverse guests and booth vendors were a reminder that US and India have more in common than we realize. We can achieve more by building on these ties and working together in a shrinking world.

The aroma wafting from the food stalls offered stiff competition to the cultural offerings on stage, enticing the crowds. As the sun began to set on the beautiful community center, the excitement was palpable in the air as the crowds eagerly settled to dance and relish the veritable smörgåsbord of culinary delights. The completeness of an Indian meal was added by garam chai.

Everyone who attended left with the feeling of having been treated as a beloved guest. This warm memory of an evening well-spent will take us through the coming months of spring until we meet again for another event led by Rasna and her team.



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PRUNING GUIDELINES FOR PREVENTION OF OAK WILT IN TEXAS

Oak wilt, caused by the fungus *Ceratocystis fagacearum*, is the most destructive disease affecting live oaks and red oaks in Central Texas. Most of the tree mortality results from tree- to-tree spread of the pathogen through interconnected or grafted root systems, once an oak wilt center becomes established. New infection centers begin when beetles carry oak wilt fungal spores from infected red oaks to fresh, open wounds on healthy oaks. Wounds include any damage caused by wind, hail, vehicles, construction, squirrels, birds or pruning. Research has shown that both oak wilt fungal mats on infected red oaks and insects that carry oak wilt spores are most prevalent in the spring. Below is a brief description of how you can reduce the risk of fungal spread when pruning.

- Always paint fresh wounds on oaks, including pruning cuts and stumps, with wound dressing or latex paint immediately after pruning or live tree removal at all times of the year.
- Clean all pruning tools with 10% bleach solution or Lysol™ between sites and/or trees.
- If possible avoid pruning or wounding of oaks during the spring (currently defined as February 1 through June 30). Reasons to prune in the spring include:

- To accommodate public safety concerns such as hazardous limbs, traffic visibility or emergency utility line clearance.
- To repair damaged limbs (from storms or other anomalies)
- To remove limbs rubbing on a building or rubbing on other branches, and to raise low limbs over a street.
- On sites where construction schedules take precedence, pruning any live tissue should only be done to accommodate required clearance.
- Dead branch removal where live tissue is not exposed.
- Pruning for other reasons (general tree health, non-safety related clearance or thinning, etc.) should be conducted before February 1 or after June 30.
- Debris from diseased red oaks should be immediately chipped, burned or buried.

Regardless of the reasons or time of year, proper pruning techniques should be used. These techniques include making proper pruning cuts and avoiding injurious practices such as topping or excessive crown thinning. If you are uncertain about any of this information, you should consult with a Texas Oak Wilt Certified arborist, ISA Certified Arborist, or an oak wilt specialist from a city, county or state government agency such as the Texas Forest Service or Texas AgriLife Extension Service.



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April GARDENING TIPS

Offered by WeekendGardener.Net

Use this list to help you figure out what gardening tasks you want to accomplish this month.

Planning

When purchasing bedding annuals this spring, choose properly grown plants with good color. Buy plants with well-developed root systems that are vigorous, but not too large for their pots. Plants that bloom in the pack are often root bound and can be set back for several weeks after being transplanted. Plants not yet in bloom will actually bloom sooner, be better established and grow faster.

For hot-weather color, select one of the following: Gloriosa Daisy, Madagascar Periwinkle, Ornamental Peppers, Mexican Zinnia or Amaranthus 'Joseph's Coat. Plan to attract hummingbirds to your garden this year by planting red or orange flowers. Monarda (common names: beebalm, horsemint, Oswego tea, and bergamot) is a good perennial plant that thrives in sun and provides nectar for these small birds.

Planting

Begin to plant seedlings of warm-season vegetables such as

tomatoes, peppers, and eggplants. You can also start your pumpkin seeds now.

Sow beets, beans, cucumbers, carrots, lettuce, sweet corn and radishes

Plant herbs such as thyme, sage, parsley, chives and basil

Sod or sow new lawns, and over seed damaged older lawns

Start planting out warm season annuals such as impatiens, marigolds, petunias, sunflowers, zinnia, lobelia, alyssum

Finish planting summer-flowering bulbs like tuberose, gladiolus, dahlias, and callas

Plant chervil, coriander, dill, rosemary, and summer savory outside after the last spring frost date for your area. Your Extension agent should be able to give you the date.

Maintenance

Mulch soil to save water, smother weeds, keeps soil cooler. Spread 1-3 inches (2.5-7cm) of bark chips, compost, wood shavings, or other organic material under shrubs trees, annuals and vegetables. Thin vegetables that were sown too thickly, like basil, carrots, green onions, or lettuce. Prune spring-flowering shrubs and trees after bloom is over.

Fertilize everything right now, but do not feed spring-flowering shrubs like azaleas, camellias, and rhododendrons until after they have finished flowering. Use an acid based fertilizer. They also should be pruned after blooming.



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Alzheimer's Respite Center in Austin

In today's world almost every family is touched by Alzheimer's. Someone in the family falls prey to this dreaded disease and it eventually impacts immediate and often extended family. The person with the greatest responsibility is the primary caregiver. Alzheimer sufferers often reach a stage of the disease that demands that someone be with them twenty-four hours every day. This places the caregiver in an extremely stressful position. If family does not live in the same city or if family is unavailable to help, the burden on the caregiver can become overwhelming. Accomplishing the simplest tasks becomes sometimes impossible because of the pressing needs of the person they are caring for.

A public, on-campus Alzheimer's respite center was established in Austin, TX several years ago. The center provides four hours of weekly care for people with Alzheimer's so that their caregivers can have a few hours of respite to do whatever they need to do. Great Hills follows the guidelines of the Alzheimer's Association Capital of Texas Chapter, and works closely with their Executive VP and Program Director to be sure that their Alzheimer's respite center meets all required standards.

The Great Hills Baptist Church Radiant Friends Alzheimer's Respite Center is located at 10500 Jollyville Road, Building A, Austin, TX 78759. Alzheimer's patients are welcomed with skilled caregivers, enjoyable activities, a nutritious meal, and safe exercise free of charge every Tuesday from 9:30 am until 1:30 pm. If you have a need in this area, contact Barbara Cross at 512-250-0826 for more information, and/or to apply for services.



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by Jim and Lynne Weber

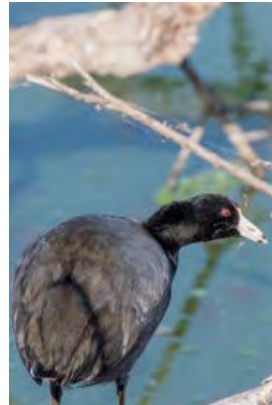
Spend any amount of time observing wildlife around freshwater wetlands, swamps, marshes, suburban lakes, and sewage ponds, and you'll no doubt see a Mud Hen or American Coot (*Fulica americana*). Commonly mistaken to be ducks, coots belong to a distinct scientific order and differ significantly from other species of marsh birds.

An overall blackish, plump, chicken-like bird with a rounded head, red eyes, a sloping whitish bill with a dark band near the tip, and a small reddish brown forehead shield, coots swim like ducks but do not have webbed feet



American Coots are commonly called 'Mud Hens'.

like ducks. Their yellow-green legs end in long toes with broad lobes of skin on either side that help them kick through the water. Each time the bird lifts its feet, the lobes fold back to facilitate walking on dry land. Their tiny tails and short wings make them awkward and clumsy fliers, and they often require many wing beats and long running takeoffs to get airborne. Coots mainly eat aquatic plants and can dive in search of food, but they can also forage and scavenge on land for terrestrial plants, arthropods, fish, insects, and mollusks. Mating season occurs in May and June, with coots requiring heavy stands of aquatic vegetation along a shoreline with some standing water within those stands. It is here that they make their nests, which consist of multiple structures used as display platforms, egg nests, and brood nests. Egg nest material is woven into a shallow basket and lined with finer grasses to hold the eggs. The entire nest is anchored to upright plant stalks and is generally



An American Coot showing its lobed feet.

a floating structure. Females deposit eggs between sunset and midnight, one per day, until the average clutch of 9 eggs is complete. Both males and females share the 21-day incubation responsibility.

Being persistent re-nesters, coots will replace lost clutches within 2 days during the deposition period. Additionally, once hatching begins and a certain number of chicks are present, coots will abandon the remaining eggs. Unlike the drab color of the adults, coot chicks are quite colorful, having conspicuous, orange-tipped, ornamental plumes covering the front half of their bodies, often referred to as 'chick ornaments.' While these plumes get bleached out after about 6 days, experiments have shown that chicks with more of this ornamentation are given preferential treatment by their parents. The oldest known coot lived to be more than 22 years old.

In winter, coots can be found in large groups or 'rafts' of mixed waterfowl and in groups numbering thousands of individuals. They can consume very large amounts of aquatic vegetation, but because they live in wetlands, they can accumulate toxins from pollution sources including agricultural runoff, industrial waste, and nuclear facilities. As such, scientists monitor coots as a way of measuring the effect these toxins have on the health of the environment at large.

Send your nature-related questions to naturewatch@austin.rr.com and we'll do our best to answer them. Check out our book, *Nature Watch Austin*, published by Texas A&M University Press, and our blog at naturewatchaustin.blogspot.com if you enjoy reading these articles!

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