



# The Tomball Texas Gardener

*By Gordon R. Watson*

**Trees:** Mature trees and bushes will need an inch of water every one to two weeks to just stay alive. If your trees are in lawns, you will need to add a bit more water, as they are competing with the lawn for moisture. Younger trees will need even more water to keep their roots in moist soil. Do a slow soaking a few feet from the trunk to a foot or two beyond the canopy (outer-most leaves). Summer is not a good month to plant trees or bushes (too hot).

**Lawns:** Arrange to keep the mower clippings on the lawn. There are few arguments for bagging clippings.

**Vegetables:** August is the time to plant southern peas, okra, and peppers. In general, though, it is the worse month to plant most things (too hot).

**Fall Color:** If you want fall color, this is the time to plant marigolds and petunias. If using seeds, start them in a shady part of the yard.

**Mulch:** Mulch keeps water in, keeps the heat out, and greatly reduces the need for weeding. Keep mulch six inches or so away from the tree and bush trunks. Lay down a minimum of three thickness of newspapers under the mulch. Wet the papers to keep them from blowing away before mulching.

**Roses:** Expect roses to look quite bad by late summer. In August, cut back between ¼ and 1/3 of the bush. Fertilize each rose with ½ pound of ammonium sulfate in mid-August. Distribute the fertilizer around the drip line. If no blooms appear in the first week of September, add a second application. Water thoroughly after pruning and fertilizing.

**Fruit Trees:** According to Texas Gardener Magazine, this is the month to stop fertilizing all fruit trees.

# Plant of the Month

*By GRW*

Not all plants do well in the Houston area, but some do. The *Hamelia Patens* (Fire Bush) does. We cut ours back in the fall, and they grow to about 30" during the summer. Ours are in full sun. They require 8 to 10 hours each day. Once established, the plant is drought tolerant and likes well-drained soil. Over-watering can kill this plant. It will usually have reddish-orange flowers from early summer to late fall. Mexicans use its fruit for a fermented drink. Hummingbirds and butterflies love this plant.



## IMPORTANT NUMBERS

### IN CASE OF ANY EMERGENCY DIAL 911

#### SCHOOLS

Tomball ISD .....281-357-3100, [www.tomballisd.net](http://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

#### SERVICES

Harris County Animal Control .....281-999-3191  
Lost/Found Pets ..... Nextdoor.com  
Harris County Veterinary Public Health.....281-999-3191  
Municipal District Services (24 hrs) .....281-290-6503  
... For water leaks, water outages, water quality, or sewer leaks or stoppage.”  
Street lights out & power outages: [www.centerpointenergy.com/outage](http://www.centerpointenergy.com/outage)  
Harris County traffic signal outages.....713-881-3210  
Republic Waste.....713-849-0400  
Trash on Tue and Fri. Heavy items on Fri only.  
Recycle Fri (#1 through #7 plastics; aluminum, steel & tin containers; glass bottles and containers; newspapers; cardboard; and mixed paper)  
Digging? Two days prior to ANY digging in your yard, call 811 or use <http://www.lonestar811.com/>

#### NEWSLETTER

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## Sunflower Update

*The Editor*

In last month's edition of "The Voice", we quoted the Lady Bird Johnson Wild Flower Center saying, "Point out to them (your children) that the sunflower heads follow the sun in a remarkable way, facing East in the morning and West at sunset." In observing our own, I began wondering if this was actually true, so I contacted the Wild Flower Center asking, Here is their response: "The information about sunflower heads being phototropic was erroneous and I have corrected the record. I'm very sorry for the confusion, but I'm very happy to remove that error from our database."

Their new entry is the following: "Contrary to common myth, the heads of sunflowers do not follow the sun each day. However, developing flower buds and leaves do exhibit some phototropism." Sometimes, a curious editor can make small changes to the world.

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## The Great Sunflower Caper: Another House Detective Mystery

By Gordon R. Watson

It was a hot and humid day in Tomball, Texas. Hotter than a black cat on a tar and gravel roof. Too hot. More humidity than a Louisiana swamp. Summer heat and moisture create lots of problems for detectives. The bad guys like to come out. As I walked to the Tomball Coffee Shop, I noticed a tin cigarette sign on the screen door outside: "It's Cool Inside." The door squeaked as I pulled it open. Nice. The A/C was working. Flo greeted me with a cup of coffee and a Danish: my standard breakfast. Bacon, pancakes, and coffee filled the air. The jukebox played "Mr. Sandman." The grille sizzled in the background.

Earlier, my secretary received a call from a Mrs. Delton in Tomball. I drove my Packard over shortly after finishing my coffee. It was hot as I walked up the steps. I noticed Crape Myrtles trees blooming. Nice.

I pushed the doorbell button. The curtain on the door parted, and she opened it.

She was about 50 or so. 5'-6" I judged based on us standing next to each other. She had gray hair. Dressed in men's coveralls. Her fingernails were short and not painted. No dirt under them. A working woman who wore gloves. I made a mental note. She smiled regularly. Did I want coffee? "Yes, please, I responded. Black.

After some discussion about the weather, she turned serious. "I am a teacher, fourth grade. I told my class that sunflowers are heliotropic."

I was taking notes and looked up. "Heliotropic?"

"Yes. It means that they follow the sun."

It turned out that she had given a class on sunflowers, and told the class that the sunflowers follow the sun. Now, she wasn't so sure. To make a short story long. We went out to the garden. It was quite a wonderland. Walkways wandered about. Some were brick. Some stone. Some just sand. I could see that she had pretty much all of the standard Texas plants and more: roses, crape myrtles, wax myrtles, pecan trees, bottle brush, and much more. I noticed some okra. A Southern woman. There is nothing like deep fried okra. Shade. Lots of shade. I made a few more notes.

We walked to the 8' high sunflowers. She pointed at her watch. "It's nearly 5:00 PM. Look at them. East."

"East?" I had stopped writing in my blue spiral notebook. I looked up. My brimmed hat cast a shadow over my face.

"Yes, East." They should be pointed west. They should follow the sun."

*(Continued on Page 4)*

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# The Voice

*(Continued from Page 3)*

I saw her point and added a note. I had an idea and advised her I would be right back. I went to the car and unpacked my tripod and camera, set it up looking at the sunflowers. I snapped several pictures.

The next morning, at sunrise, I returned and snapped another picture. I went to the Tomball Photo Shop and had them developed. A week later, I returned to Mrs. Davon's home. I put the pictures side by side.

She looked up and smiled. "They didn't change direction, so they are not heliotropic. I guess my next lesson will be on why it is so important to do a bit of investigating before I pass along any myths."

"We all pass along myths. Gardening has lots of myths. This is just one more."



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## The Voice Saves (Earns) you Money

By Gordon R. Watson

I often think of a sign I saw outside of a Southern Antique store: "We Buy Junk and Sell Antiques." I had never sold anything on Ebay. On a lark, I decided to give selling a try. We had an old saucer from a restaurant. It was somewhat unique because it had a logo. We probably bought it at an antique store in California. I have no idea what we paid for it: maybe a few dollars.

Selling on Ebay is far easier than I thought. I already had a PayPal account and was also an Ebay member, but neither of these is difficult to obtain. I already had a five star Ebay rating. I guess this was because I always paid for the things I bought on time and didn't get any negative comments from sellers. Ebay makes buying and selling fairly easy. You take some pictures and add them (not required), figure out the postage (Ebay helps), write a description and submit. It is important to be very honest with regard to the condition. I said, for example, that "the glazing was worn off from stacking and use, etc." You don't want any buyers to be disappointed and do a negative review of the transaction. There are a few minor other things to enter, but nothing significant.

I decided that I would make the item "postage free" which means I put the price in the minimum amount I would accept. In my case, the postage could be as high as \$10, so I added \$5 for the item for a total of \$15. It isn't all that uncommon for the postage to exceed the product value. I hit "Enter" "Submit Item." A box popped up. "Are you sure? Items like this have sold for at least \$25 in the past."

"Wow." I change my entry to \$25 (though . . . I had my doubts.)

Six days went by with about 100 people showing interest (which may mean nothing). I figured I would be taking the saucer to Goodwill. Then in the last minutes of the last day, the item got two bids. The last bid was for \$39.95. Wow!

I boxed it up really well and sent it off the next day. I am inspired to keep trying. Making \$40 from something we no longer need is not a bad deal. It is very likely that one of the millions of Ebay subscribers wants something you no longer do.

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## Village Creek Scheduled Events

(Check with [spectrumam.com](http://spectrumam.com) for updates)

\* Back-to-School Luau Aug. 28

\* Cookies with Santa Dec. 4

\* Fall Garage Sale Oct. 14-15

To volunteer for any of these events, call Spectrum at 832-500-2221 or email [villagecreek@spectrumam.com](mailto:villagecreek@spectrumam.com).

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*By the Editor*

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While you are at it, also check out VillageCreekCommunity.Com. VillageCreekCommunity.Com IS NOT the official web site or Facebook page of Village Creek, but we do think that it is a good mechanism for items not covered in "The Voice," Nextdoor.com, or other web sites. VillageCreekCommunity.com is not associated with the Board, HOA, or Management Company. We will occasionally critique the Board in a constructive and respectful manner. Above all, our intent is to help keep Village Creek's beauty and value. During the recent Board election, for example, we gave candidates the opportunity to expand on their views on various Village Creek issues.



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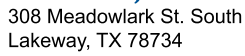
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