

Canyon Creek CHRONICLE

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LARGE LEAF DROP

Though this is slightly after the fact, I want to address the dual events this year that initiated the highest call rates I've had in a long time. Both last March and this August, we had an inordinate amount of rain. Within two weeks to over a month after the rain had ended, I received calls from the entire central Texas area about Live Oaks dropping the vast majority of their leaves. Often the trees could be right next to some others that did not drop any leaves, causing the property owners to be very concerned about the possibility that they had oak wilt. My standard practice when receiving calls about leaf drop when it occurs after rain, is to ask what the leaves look like and if possible request a photo of five or so "suspicious-looking" leaves. Live Oak leaves that drop on account of heavy rainfall have certain characteristics: mottling, speckling, blotching all of brown or yellow and occasionally black dots. Symptomatic oak wilt leaves on the other hand are very different (www.texasoakwilt.org/gallery/oak-wilt-in-live-oaks/).

This phenomenon is caused by an extended period of "field saturation". All soil has macro and micro pores/spaces in it, whether it is sand or clay or silt. When all these pores fill up it with water – there is no air left in the soil. Tree roots actually need to breathe – even the Bald Cypress trees in the swamp send up little breathing "apparatuses", which we call "knees". So a combination of not enough air in the soil, an excessive engorgement of water by the tree which causes swelling in stem - leaf attachment, and the general toxicity of excessive water in the system all play a part in the discoloring and abscission of the leaves by the tree which is an attempt to help itself. Excessive rain, though it may cause some of your Live Oaks to drop their leaves temporarily, rarely kills them unless it is standing water over entire root zone for two weeks or more. Generally, excessive Spring rains that cause leaf drop – new leaves will form within a couple of weeks after the leaf drop. Late Summer or fall rains – the tree may just go into a premature fall dormancy and wait for next

Spring to fully leaf out. It is more of a curiosity than a health threat – be reassured.

Next month we will look into the largest tree pest most of us deal with - deer.

Questions or comments this article or previous articles have generated, may be directed to me at: kevin@arborcareandconsulting.com



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View the current issue of *The Canyon Chronicle* on the 1st day of each month at www.peelinc.com

West Austin Chamber of Commerce November Luncheon



West Austin Chamber of Commerce will welcome the new Leander Independent School District Superintendent, Dr. Dan Troxell, at the November Luncheon. Dr. Troxell comes to LISD from Kerrville ISD, where he served as Superintendent for 14 years. Please join us in welcoming him to our community. Membership is not a requirement to come to the luncheon but you'll want to register online to ensure your seat and receive early-bird discount pricing!

- Thursday, November 17, 2016
- Time: 11:30 a.m. to 1p.m.
- At River Place Country Club, 4207 River Place Boulevard

For details and to register go to the West Austin Chamber of Commerce Web site www.westaustinchamber.com. While you are at the Chamber's Web site be sure to check out the other networking activities offered by the Chamber, including the monthly Happy Hour and monthly Breakfast Club networking meetings at Black Walnut Cafe.

With over 135 members and growing, the West Austin Chamber of Commerce brings businesses together along Highway 620 from Hudson Bend and Mansfield Dam to Anderson Mill, and along Ranch Road 2222 from Jester to Volente, to support business growth in the community. For more information about upcoming events visit www.westaustinchamber.org or call (512) 551-0390. Membership inquiries may also be sent directly to Linda@westaustinchamber.com.

#CompassionUp Challenge

For this month let's see how many acts of kindness we can share via social media. Use Twitter, Facebook, Google+, or Instagram.

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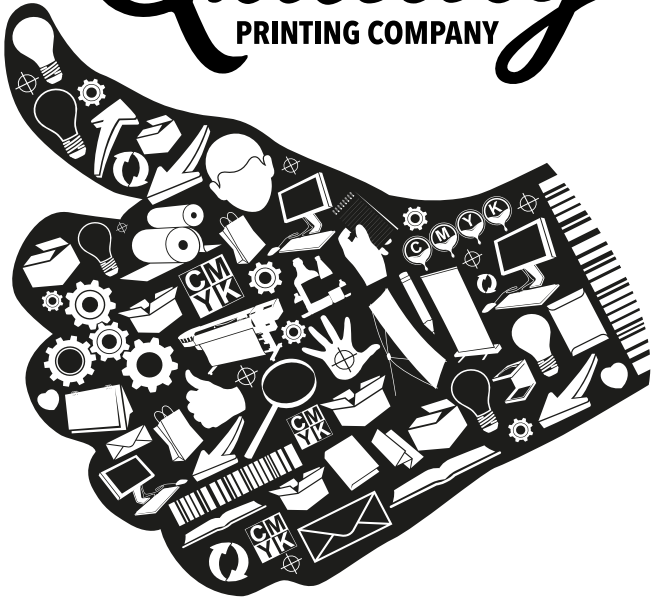
1. Provide a short description of the act of kindness
2. Be sure to add #compassionup to your post; and,
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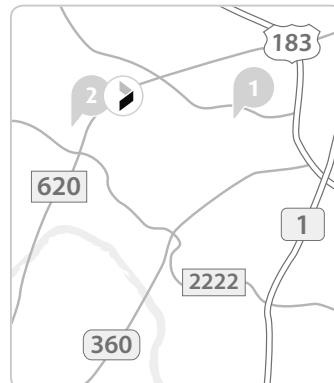
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Overnight Coffee Cake



Recipe provided by Sherry Watson. The original source is unknown (cut from an old magazine many years ago). This recipe is unbelievably simple, but it makes a beautiful presentation at the table.

- 1 pkg. frozen cloverleaf roll dough (about 25 rolls)
- 1 pkg. (four-serving size) vanilla pudding mix (not instant)

- ½ cup brown sugar
- ½ cup pecans, chopped
- 1 stick butter, melted

Separate frozen roll dough into pieces (each cloverleaf makes three pieces). Other rolls will work, but with larger pieces of dough, use only 20; more may be too many for your pan.

Combine dry pudding mix with brown sugar and pecans.

Melt butter.

Place pieces of frozen roll dough in a well-buttered Bundt pan. (Do not use angel food pan; butter leaks out!) Pour melted butter over frozen dough and sprinkle with pudding mixture.

Leave cake pan out overnight; the dough rises beautifully by morning. Bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes. Invert on serving plate to serve. Sticky – but good!

“

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NATURE WATCH

Hardy Brushfoots

by Jim and Lynne Weber

Fall and winter are hardly a notable time for watching butterflies, except for those in the Nymphalidae family known as the brush-footed or brushfoots. Most of these species are medium-sized to fairly large butterflies that hold their wings flat when resting and have a reduced pair of forelegs. This group is also commonly called four-footed butterflies, because they are known to stand on only four legs while the reduced pair are held up against their mid-section or thorax.

In some species, these shorter forelegs also have a brush-like set of soft hairs called setae, and it is unclear why these forelegs have become vestigial, or appearing to lose most of their ancestral function. One theory is that these forelegs may be used to amplify the sense of smell (yes, many butterflies 'taste' with their feet), while others believe they are used to improve signaling and communication between individuals of the same species, while standing on the other four. The latter seems to be the leading theory so far, as that ability would prove most useful in terms of reproduction and the continuing overall health of the species.

More remarkably, brushfoots are experts at overwintering, or the process by which they pass through or wait out the winter season. While many insects overwinter as eggs or pupae, brushfoots overwinter as adult butterflies. They take cover in places such as building crevices, under loose bark, or beneath fallen leaves or other plant matter. These places shield the brushfoots from the adverse conditions of winter, and their activity ceases until conditions become more favorable. On the occasional warm winter day in Central Texas, these butterflies often emerge to bask in the sun and feed on various nutritional sources such as tree sap, rotting fruit, or animal scat. While many brushfoots are brightly colored on their uppersides, their undersides are largely dull and cryptic, mimicking dead leaves and bark, offering them additional protection in their chosen overwintering sites.

Examples of the most frequently encountered and easily recognizable brushfoots in our area include the Question Mark (*Polytonia interrogationis*), Red Admiral (*Vanessa atalanta*), and Common Buckeye (*Junonia coenia*). The Question Mark is fairly common in woodland openings, and is recognized by its deep orange wings spotted with brown and angled sharply at the edges. Its cryptic underside is textured brown, resembling a dead leaf, and its hind wing is 'punctuated' by a curved silver line and dot, which gives it its common name. Red Admirals are almost unmistakable, dark above with bright orange-red slashes and white dots on the outer part of the forewings, but exquisitely colored in mostly browns and blues below. The Common Buckeye prefers open habitats, and can

be identified by its overall golden brown color above, interrupted by large and striking multicolored eyespots.

The next time the weather is sunny and warmer, make a point to go outside and take a walk in the woods, a field or your garden, and see if you can find some of these hardy brushfoots!

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, check out our book, *Nature Watch Austin* (published by Texas A&M University Press), and our blog at naturewatchaustin.blogspot.com.



Top: Question Mark
Bottom: Common Buckeye





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