



When we recall Christmas past, we usually find that the simplest things -- not the great occasions -- give off the greatest glow of happiness. Bob Hope

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 Digging? Two days prior to ANY digging in your yard, call
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NEWSLETTER

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I Will Always Believe in Santa Claus

By The Editor



One hot summer day, when I was five or so, I was looking through our ramshackle garage for an old radio to investigate. My dad repaired radios in the 1930's and had quite a collection. On one of the dust-covered shelves was a tightly closed bright red box. I carefully lifted it from the shelf and removed the lid. There, magically

iridescent in the dim light, was Santa's beautiful red suit decorated with bright white fur, his black belt with a golden buckle, his hat with a snow-colored fur tassel, and even his shiny coal-black boots. I was astonished. I carefully closed the box, gingerly placed it on the shelf, and ran to my mom. I excitedly told her of my find. She calmly explained that Santa had probably put it there for safe-keeping. Imagine that! Santa could have chosen any place in the World for it, but our home was the safest, and it was.

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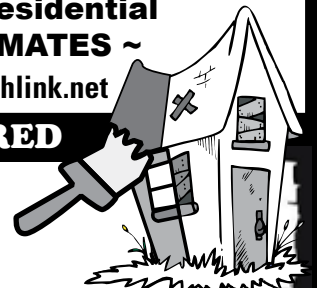
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http://www.goodreads.com/list/show/496.The_Must_Have_Series_for_Children_Ages_6_to_12

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1. The Giving Tree
2. Where the Sidewalk Ends: the Poems and Drawing of Shel Silverstein
3. Little Women
4. The Wizard of Oz
5. Heidi

Books for preschoolers

1. The Very Hungry Caterpillar
2. Goodnight Moon
3. Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What do you see?
4. The Rainbow Fish
5. Corduroy
6. The Snowy Day

Books for Children Ages 4-8

1. The Polar Express

2. Green Eggs and Ham
3. The Cat in the Hat
4. Where the Wild Things Are
5. Love You Forever

Books for Children Ages 9-12

1. Charlotte's Web
2. Hatchet
3. The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe
4. Bridge to Terabithia
5. Charlie and the Chocolate Factory

Books for Young Adults

1. Where the Red Fern Grows
2. The Hobbit
3. Summer of the Monkeys
4. The Cay by Theodore Taylor
5. The Sign of the Beaver



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The House Detective:

The Mystery of the Sticking Snow

Gordon R. Watson

Holiday decorating has been a part of my family's life since I was a young boy in Montana. That tradition carried on into my days in California. Since it rarely snowed in our town, one year, in the late 1970's, I decided to create a front-yard decoration showing two young children looking out a window upon a snowfall.

In theory, it was fairly simple. I would cut out life-size plywood cutouts of the backs of my own kids (probably 5 and 7), and they would look out a plastic window where Styrofoam would be blown around with an old furnace fan.

It was essentially a semi-air-tight plywood box with a plastic window. The whole thing measured about 6' x 6' x 4' deep. A screen separated the fan from the snow area. The whole thing had to be painted, of course, and, in general, its appearance turned out to be quite acceptable. I poured a gallon of Styrofoam peanuts into the scene and started it up. After numerous tweaks, it worked great! Snow blew around with a terrific blizzard for about five minutes, until every piece of Styrofoam stuck (with electrostatic attraction) to the plastic "window".

I ended up getting my secretary's opinion, and she suggested putting those little anti-static dryer sheets in with the Styrofoam to prevent the sticking. It worked fine. For several weeks, during the Christmas season, two small children looked out on a wondrous blizzard! Sadly, our home was on a Cul-de-sac deep inside our subdivision where hardly anyone went. I doubt if more than ten people saw this marvelous piece of Christmas yard art. I didn't resurrect it the next year.

TheHouseDetective.Com

The Minimalist Gardener

By Flint Sage

Mid November to late February is the best time to plant trees in the Houston area. The mild weather will give an opportunity for the roots to be established before our interesting summer weather. Make sure you keep the roots slightly moist...not saturated during the first month or so.

Continue to maintain a layer of mulch to minimize weeds and hold in warmth to the soil. Keep mulch away from the trunk of trees and bushes.

If you have a cool season vegetable garden, feed your vegetables with fertilizer during December.

Perennials and annuals: Fertilize to keep healthy. Remove small weeds.

Many plants have colorful berries which enhance winter. This is the time to plant or transplant woody ornamentals such as holly.

The photo is of Southern Giant Mustard from Flint Sage's garden in Village Creek.



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A Few Holiday Events for December

(Please check web sites or marque for updates).

December: Winter in the Woodlands

<http://woodlandsevents.com/winter>

December 2nd: Magnolia Hometown Christmas

<http://www.magnoliatexas.org>

December 2nd: Very Merry Pops in Houston

Jones Hall, <http://houston.eventful.com/events/very-merry-pops>

December 4th: Cookies with Santa at Village Creek's Pool House. 2:30 - 4:30.

December 9th through 11th: Tomball, 2016 German Christmas Market

(<http://www.tomballgermanfest.org/christmas-market/>)

December 10th: Tomball Christmas on Commerce

www.tomballtx.gov

December 10th: The Toys Take Over Christmas

Spring, Texas 77379

<http://houston.eventful.com/events/toys-take-over-christmas>



DON'T STOP ME IF YOU HAVE HEARD THIS ONE

It was Christmas Day morning, and a group of Confederate Soldiers was gathered around a campfire somewhere in the South... opening gifts. One of them noticed that one of the soldiers, Jeb, was off sitting by himself.

"What's the trouble with Jeb?" He queried. "Why is he so glum?"

"Well," replied another. "Ya'll recall that he said, the other day, that he didn't believe in Santa, so, of course, everyone got gifts but him. It's sad. He's a rebel without a Claus."



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The Voice Cooks up some Vittles

Maple Jalapeño-Garlic Roasted Brussel Sprouts

This recipe comes <http://indieculinary.com/via> Michelle Gilkey, Petaluma, California.

Brussel Sprouts are hard for some of us to like. This recipe, however, uses them to create a tasty addition to a meal.

Ingredients

3 pounds individual Brussels Sprouts (off the stalk)
1/3 cup good, peppery olive oil
1/3 cup maple syrup
5 fresh jalapenos
8 cloves fresh garlic
To taste, sea salt or kosher salt
(Optional) 1/2 pound bacon

Cooking Directions

- Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
- Wash and vertically halve the Brussels sprouts. Save any loose leaves and be sure to include them; they'll get crispy in the pan.
- Arrange the Brussels Sprouts in a baking dish (or even better, a large cast-iron pan) in as even a layer as possible.
- Slice all the jalapenos in half (or quarters, if they're large), vertically, and stagger among the Brussels Sprouts.
- Peel and roughly chop the garlic and scatter it over the vegetables.
- Drizzle all with the olive oil; toss.
- Drizzle all with the maple syrup; toss again.

- Sprinkle liberally with salt, to taste. (Don't add as much salt if you plan to include the bacon, though.)
- Roast in the oven until Brussels Sprouts are caramelized on the outside and tender in the middle, about 40 minutes total, but pay close attention to them. You will probably need to toss in the pan and return to the oven at least once; this keeps leaves on top from burning and gives everyone a turn in the sizzling oil at the bottom of the pan. Add a little more maple syrup if things look dry.
- Bonus bacon step! If your friends and family are of the opinion that bacon makes everything better, this will put the dish over the top. Dice the bacon and render on the stove top until bacon is cooked, but not yet crispy. Toss it in with the roasted vegetables when they have about 10 minutes to go. The bacon will crisp up, and will candy a bit in the maple syrup. You will be a holiday hero!





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We are well into the heating season, so, if you haven't already, make sure that you have checked or replaced your furnace filters. Ideally, they should be replaced at the beginning of the heating and cooling seasons, depending on household activity.

Shut off and drain your irrigation backflow preventer if a hard freeze (less than 32 degrees for several hours) is predicted. Be sure to turn it back on for irrigation or other needs.



Got a Picture, Article, or Recipe?

By the Editor

The Voice provides an opportunity for you to be creative. If you have something to say to the world, consider writing a short article for us. The article should be of general nature to appeal to a very diverse Village Creek audience. We also like to get thoughtful and constructive letters to the editor.

Do you have a good recipe? Of special interest are those with a story behind them, but those without stories are fine too. Don't forget that we also offer a place for teenagers to get jobs (Teenage Job Seekers).

Before you get out that old typewriter, go to <http://www.peelinc.com/> and click on "Submit an Article" for do's and don'ts. We won't promise that everything will be published, but we will always give your submissions polite consideration.

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Microwave Peanut Brittle

<http://www.food.com>

Be careful! This is a hot and sticky recipe. It was slightly changed by the Editor's family.

INGREDIENTS

1 cup sugar
1/2 cup white Karo
1 dash salt
1 cup shelled raw peanuts (or pecans, walnuts, sunflower seed, etc.)
1 tablespoon butter or more. With peanut brittle, more is better.
1 1/2 teaspoons baking soda
1 teaspoon vanilla

DIRECTIONS

Line baking sheet with wax paper.
Spray wax paper, spoon, and anything else the brittle touches with Pam.
Combine sugar, salt and Karo in a 3 quart microwave safe glass bowl.
Stir in peanuts.
Microwave on high until light brown (8 to 10 minutes) stirring

at least 2 times during cooking.

Remove from microwave and stir in remaining ingredient adding baking soda last (mix will be foamy).

Stir quickly and pour onto wax paper.

Spread thin for brittle candy.

Note: You can use any type nuts you prefer or even sunflower seeds (which is my favorite).



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Holiday Music

This is a list of the most popular digital downloads (from Wikipedia). Note that the best-selling physical copy remains "White Christmas" by Bing Crosby: fifty million copies according to the Guinness Book of World Records. Great trivia question: What was the flip side of "Silent Night" by Bing Crosby? "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen" by Bing Crosby as well.

Rank	Title	Artist	Released
1	"All I Want for Christmas Is You"	Mariah Carey	1994
2	"The Chipmunk Song"	Alvin & the Chipmunks	1958
3	"Christmas Eve/Sarajevo 12/24"	Trans-Siberian Orch.	1996
4	"Christmas Canon"	Trans-Siberian Orch.	1998
5	"Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree"	Brenda Lee	1958
6	"The Chanukah Song"	Adam Sandler	1995
7	"Where Are You Christmas?"	Faith Hill	2000
8	"Feliz Navidad"	José Feliciano	1970
9	"Jingle Bell Rock"	Bobby Helms	1957
10	"White Christmas"	Bing Crosby	1942

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- Lakeshore
- Lakes of Fairhaven
- Lakes of Rosehill
- Lakes on Eldridge
- Lakes on Eldridge North
- Laurel Creek
- Legends Ranch
- Meyerland
- Normandy Forest
- North Lake Forest
- Park Creek
- Park Lakes
- Riata Ranch
- Ricewood Village
- Shadow Creek Ranch
- Silverlake
- Steeplechase
- Sterling Lakes
- Stone Forest
- Summerwood
- Towne Lakes
- Village Creek
- Villages of Decker Oaks
- Villages of NorthPointe
- Walden on Lake Houston
- Willowbridge
- Willow Pointe
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