

PREVENT OAK WILT STOP PRUNING OAKS ON FEB 1

Oak wilt has claimed the lives of thousands of trees in Central Texas and beyond. Majestic oaks play a large role in this region's beauty and identity; it would be hard to imagine the Hill Country without them. They are an iconic part of many local businesses and neighborhoods, providing shade, beauty, and higher property values. Following simple preventive measures can go a long way towards stopping the spread of this destructive disease.

From February through June, avoid all pruning or cutting of oaks – this is the high season for oak wilt transmission. Any wounds that occur from construction, vehicles, wind, etc., should be painted as soon as they're discovered – ideally within ½ hour of being cut – with commercial tree wound dressing or latex paint. That includes freshly cut stumps and surface roots.

Pruning is least risky during the coldest winter days and extended hot periods in mid to late summer. Any time you prune though, the Texas Forest Service recommends painting all wounds and sanitizing pruning equipment between trees using denatured methyl alcohol (shellac thinner), isopropyl alcohol, or a general purpose household disinfectant such as Lysol, Listerine or Pine-Sol. Household bleach is not recommended.

Red oaks, including Spanish (now Buckley) oak, Shumard oak and blackjack oak, are very susceptible to oak wilt and play a key role in the disease's transmission. Oak wilt is caused by the fungus Ceratocystis fagacearum, which spreads its spores from "fungal mats" that form under the tree's bark. These mats have a sweet, fruity smell that attracts insects, especially the sap-sucking nitidulid beetle. After feeding and breeding on the fungal mats, these beetles fly away covered in fungal spores. As they visit other oaks, they spread the fungus through open wounds in the bark. The nitidulid beetle is only about the size of a pinhead, but is capable of flying as far as a mile away. While red oaks are the most susceptible to oak wilt, all oaks can become infected.

Fungal mats usually form on standing trees, but can also develop

on logs, stumps and fresh firewood cut from infected oaks. Make sure to remove and either burn or bury infected oaks to prevent mats from forming, and never store unseasoned wood from infected trees near healthy oaks.

The second way oak wilt can be transmitted is through the roots. Live oaks tend to grow together in dense mottes with interconnected roots, so the fungus can be transmitted easily among them. Oak wilt is occasionally transmitted through red oak roots as well, but the movement is slower and occurs over shorter distances than with live oaks. Root transmission can be prevented by cutting trenches four feet deep between infected and healthy trees, but by far the best option is to prevent infection in the first place.

So make sure NOT to prune oaks between February 1 and July 1, and ALWAYS paint wounds on oaks no matter what time of year it is. For more information on preventing and treating oak wilt, please visit texasoakwilt.org, the website of The Oak Wilt Information Partnership, a project of the Texas A&M Forest Service, the Forest Health Protection branch of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service and the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin.



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LAS CUATRO ESTACIONES: A STORY OF HUMAN TREES

Las Cuatro Estaciones: A Story of Human Trees is a contemporary dance work premiering March 24-26, 2017 at the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center, 600 River St. Austin, TX 78701.

Part of the Mexican American Cultural Center's Latino Arts Residency Project, these performances are a collaboration between award-winning choreographer Sharon Marroquín and international video artist Ana Baer. Inspired by uncertainty, mortality, and nature, this work explores transformation and our attempts to surrender gracefully to inevitable change. The cast features 8 dancers and several children.

Marroquín says, "A life-altering cancer diagnosis six years ago changed me as an artist. My work is now focused on ideas of impermanence and transition. Las Cuatro Estaciones is about the cycles in nature, and the beginnings and endings in our lives."

For Calendar Listing

Who: Sharon Marroquín, director and choreographer

What: Las Cuatro Estaciones: A Story of Human Trees

When: March 24 at 8:00pm; March 25 at 2:00pm and 8:00pm; and March 26 at 2:00pm

Where: Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center 600 River St. Austin, TX 78701

Tickets: \$15 at the door or at:

http://sharonmarroquin.wixsite.com/dance

Contact: 512.740.9130

About Sharon Marroquín

Born in Mexico City, Sharon Marroquín has been listed numerous times as one of the top ten dance events of the year by the Austin Chronicle, and is a three-time winner of the Austin Critics Table Award for Outstanding Choreographer.

To learn more visit http://sharonmarroquin.wixsite.com/dance

BRING THE WORLD TO YOUR CHILD BY HOSTING A FOREIGN EXCHANGE STUDENT

By Vicki Odom

If you've read the newspaper lately, you know that the world can be a scary place: wars, economic crisis, revolutions, climate change, border disputes, refugees, and protests. So, how do we teach our children about the world, and the variety of people in it, when most of the examples we read about in the press are so negative?

One life changing way to broaden your child's world view is to volunteer to host a high school foreign exchange student. Foreign exchange programs have been around for almost 100 years, and their mission has always been the same – to educate people about different cultures through person-to-person exchange. What better message to pass on to your children?

There are quite a few misconceptions about foreign exchange programs – especially around who can host. The biggest misconception is that you must have high school aged children when you host a high school exchange student. Nothing could be further from the truth.

"We welcome host families of all shapes and sizes – families with young children, families with no children, empty nesters whose children have left home, single parents and non-traditional families," says Connie Coutu, Regional Manager for Ayusa, a non-profit promoting global learning and leadership through foreign exchange and study abroad opportunities for high school students. "The key requirements for a host family are to provide a safe and nurturing home environment, genuinely love children, and have a desire to learn more about a different culture."

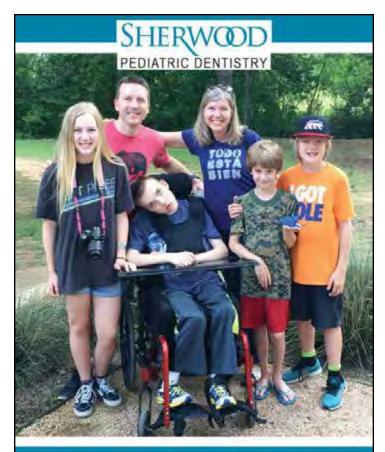
Families with young children find that hosting an exchange student provides their children with an especially unique educational experience in the form of an international big brother or sister. Without even realizing it, children learn about different types of people and different cultural traditions.

"My daughter Kelsie feels as if Isabelle, our exchange student from Germany, is an older sister to her," said Melissa Hughes, an Ayusa host mom from Ashville, North Carolina. "They have confided in each other, have had movie nights together, and have gone to the mall together - much like natural sisters would do. Kelsie will never forget Isabelle and they have already planned future get-togethers when they are older."

Volunteer host families provide foreign exchange students a nurturing environment, three meals a day and a bedroom (either private or shared with a host sibling of the same gender). Each host family and student is supported by a professionally trained community representative who works with the family and student for the entire program. All interested host families must pass a criminal background check and a home visit by an exchange organization.

"In Tunisia, we always hear about Americans and American life style, in movies, media, songs, everything, and I know it is different, and I wanted to figure out this difference myself," said Asma, a bubbly high school student from Tunisia who spent a school year living with the O'Donnell family in Anchorage, Alaska.

(Continued on Page 6)



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TARRYTOWN REAL ESTATE MARKET REPORT UPDATE

February 2017

by Trey McWhorter

Tarrytown Market

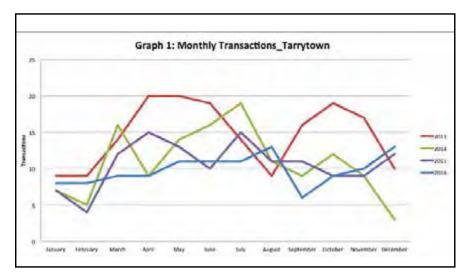
Tarrytown saw a fairly active November and December, which I had commented last month did not indicate a big postelection bump. The data still support that, as 2016 ended much like 2015 did, although slightly better. But 2015 and 2016 definitely followed a different trend than the previous two years, which saw big drops in activity in December (see Graph 1).

Austin Luxury Market Update

For Austin overall, here is an overview of the sales activity and trends for the last few years, broken out by various price bands.

As you can see, the lower price points still showed healthy growth, while the higher price points slowed (in some cases significantly) vs. 2015.

 Sales in Austin for homes priced 750K to \$1.5M grew 12% over 2015, and on average growth in these price ranges has averaged 15-20% for the last 4-5 years



- Sales in the \$1.5 2.5M range cooled some, declining 10% vs. 2015. On average, though, this price band has seen the strongest growth over the last few years
- Finally, homes sold for prices above \$2.5M in Austin have seen the most significant drop in the last couple of years, with year on year declines of 15% in 2015 and nearly 30% in 2016.

Austin Luxury Market	2013	2014	2015	2016	16 vs '15
750,000-999,999	428	417	519	602	14%
1,000,000-1,249,999	162	164	214	213	0%
1,250,000-1,499,999	101	97	109	130	16%
1,500,000-1,999,999	92	96	133	118	-13%
2,000,000-2,499,999	36	29	49	46	-7%
2,500,000-2,999,999	14	34	24	16	-50%
3,000,000-3,999,999	22	17	13	9	-44%
4,000,000-4,999,999	6	8	7	6	-17%
5,000,000+	1	2	8	6	-33%
TOTAL	862	864	1076	1146	6%

Note: All data comes from the Austin Board of Realtors' MLS report, reflecting activity through January 15, 2017.

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TARRYTOWN

(Continued from Page 3)

Foreign exchange students come from all over the world. Ayusa matches host families with students from more than 60 different countries including Argentina, China, Ecuador, Egypt, France, Germany, Japan, Lebanon, Norway, Pakistan, Sweden, Thailand, Tunisia and Turkey. All high school foreign exchange students are fully insured, bring their own spending money, and are proficient in English – and all high school exchange programs are regulated by the U.S. Department of State.

Interested host families are required to fill out an application, pass a background check and interview with a local exchange program representative in their homes. Once accepted to a program, host families can view profiles of students to find the right match for their family.

"Hosting an exchange student is a life-changing experience – for the student, the host family, and the host community," says Coutu. "There is no better way to teach your children about the world around them than through welcoming an international high school student into your home."

Ayusa is currently accepting applications for families to host an exchange student for the 2017-2018 school year. For more information about hosting a high school foreign exchange student, please contact Ayusa at 1.888.552.9872 or by visiting the website at www.ayusa.org



Please remember to pick up after your pets and "scoop the poop"





Common Structural Termites

There are three main types of termites that can cause problems subterranean termites feed only on spring growth. Formosan for homeowners in Texas- native subterranean termites, formosan termites have also been known to chew through non-cellulose subterranean termites and drywood termites.

Native subterranean termites have nests in the soil and must maintain contact with soil or an above-ground moisture source to survive. If native subterranean termites move to areas above ground they make shelter (mud) tubes of fecal material, saliva and soil to protect themselves.



Native subterranean termite workers and soldiers.

Formosan termites are a more voracious type of subterranean termite. These termites have been spread throughout Texas through transport of infested material or soil.

Formosan termites build carton nests that allow them to survive above ground without contact with the soil. Nests are often located in hollow spaces, such as wall voids.



Formosan termites feed on a wider variety of cellulose than other subterranean termites, including live plants (and can be found living and feeding on trees),

consuming both spring and summer growth wood whereas native

materials such as soft metals, plaster or plastic.

Drywood termites do not need contact with soil and reside in sound, dry wood. These termites obtain moisture from the wood they digest. Drywood termites create a dry fecal pellet that can be used as an identifying characteristic. They have smaller colonies-



Drywood termite fecal pellets.

around 1,000 termitesthan subterranean termites; they also do not build shelter tubes.

If you are concerned that you may have termites, call a pest management professional to inspect your home for termites.

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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NATURE WATCH

THE PRESERVES AROUND US

by Jim and Lynne Weber

One of the main reasons Austin is such a wonderful place to live is because it is interlaced with a patchwork of preserves, which together comprise the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve (BCP) System. In 1992, voters in the City of Austin passed Proposition 10, approving \$22M in bonds for the sole purpose of acquiring and improving lands to protect air and water quality, conserve endangered species, and provide open space for passive public use. Jointly owned and managed by the City of Austin, Travis County, the Lower Colorado River Authority, the Nature Conservancy, the Travis Audubon Society, and private landowners, the BCP's ultimate goal is to set aside 30,428 acres that contribute to the quality of all life here in Austin.

A multi-agency conservation effort that operates under a regional permit issued under the Endangered Species Act by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the BCP consists of several tracts of land in western Travis County. It is important to note that a 'preserve' is different than a 'park', and is set aside for the purpose of maintaining a natural state rather than developed for recreational use. The BCP protects prime habitat for the endangered Golden-cheeked Warbler, a bird species that is found only to breed within Central Texas' specialized mix of native, mature Ashe Juniper (often incorrectly called 'cedar') and stands of Live, Spanish, and Shin oak trees. This type of mixed oak-juniper woodland grows mainly on our moist steep-sided canyons and slopes, providing the warbler with the food, water, and nest-building material it needs to breed.

In addition to the Golden-cheeked Warbler, 7 other endangered species make the preserve system their home, including the Black-capped Vireo, Tooth Cave Ground Beetle, Tooth Cave Pseudoscorpion, Tooth Cave Spider, Kretschmarr Cave Mold Beetle, Bone Cave Harvestman, and Bee Creek Cave Harvestman. These last 6 species are called karst invertebrates, arthropods that spend their entire existence underground in karst formations. These karst features, such as caves, sinkholes, cracks, and crevices, were formed by the dissolution of calcium carbonate in limestone bedrock by mildly acidic groundwater. Over 70 other rare plant and animal species also exist on the preserves, making this region one of the most biologically diverse areas in the country. As such, Central Texas is happily home to more habitat conservation plans than any other region in the United States.

These wild and beautiful areas require management plans in order for them to remain pristine habitats. This includes establishment of secure boundaries and rules for access control, maintenance of appropriate trails, species monitoring, habitat enhancement, and — last but not least — public education and outreach to promote good neighbor relations. As Austin residents, we can do our part to become stewards of these unique habitats. While in the preserve system, we can stay on marked trails, travel only on foot, and "take only photographs, leave only footprints." In our neighborhoods, especially those that border preserve tracts, we can landscape with native plants, remove invasive plants, eliminate pesticide use, be responsible pet owners, practice water conservation, and always respect preserve boundaries.

Most importantly, we can all minimize further negative impacts on the fragile habitat that surrounds our neighborhoods by caring for the preserves through volunteering. Some of the activities you can become involved with in the preserve system include long-term habitat restoration, gathering and planting native seeds, removing non-native invasive plants, leading guided hikes, and learning about and sharing your knowledge of the native plants and animals that make this such a special place to live. For more information, visit the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve website at http://www.austintexas.gov/bcp.

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 two books, <u>Nature Watch Austin</u> & <u>Nature Watch Big Bend</u>, both published by Texas A&M University Press, and our blog at naturewatchaustin.blogspot.com.



The endangered Golden-cheeked Warbler.



The endangered Black-capped Vireo.

CROCK POT CHICKEN CHILI DIP

INGREDIENTS

3 - 4 Chicken Breasts 1 can Cream of Mushroom soup 1 can Cream of Celery soup 1 can Cream of Chicken soup 1 can of green salsa 116-oz can of chili (without beans) 1 small can of green chilies 4-6 nine-inch flour (or corn) tortilla, cut to strips 1½ cups grated American, Cheddar, & Gouda cheeses

DIRECTIONS

Boil chicken breasts in boiling water for 25-30 minutes, or until done; let cool. Tear chicken off the bones (unless boneless) into strips, or bite-size pieces. Place into crock pot. Add all other ingredients until blended. Place crock pot on low for 1 hour to heat thoroughly.



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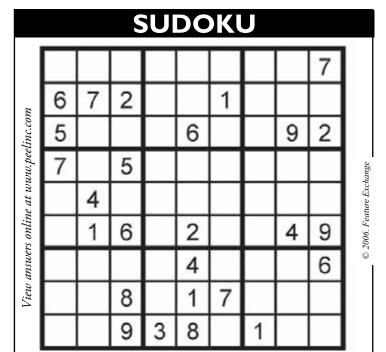
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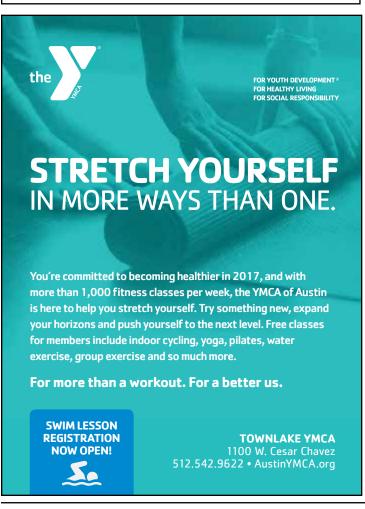
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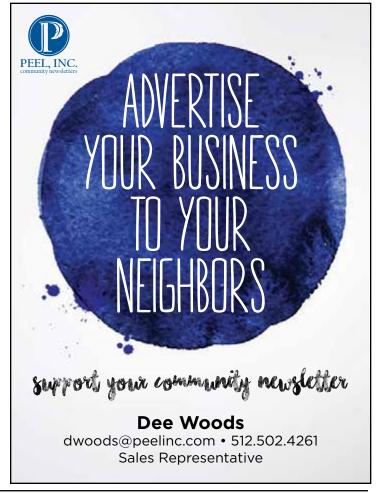
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Tarrytown - February 2017



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HIGHLIGHTS FROM TREY'S 2016 SOLDS









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