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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

Village Creek Management Company ....[spectrumam.com](http://spectrumam.com)  
.....832-500-2221  
Village Creek Board Website.....[myvillagecreek.com](http://myvillagecreek.com)  
Village Creek Website Unrelated to the Board  
.....[VillageCreekCommunity.com](http://VillageCreekCommunity.com)  
Harris County Animal Control .....281-999-3191  
Lost/Found Pets ..... [Nextdoor.com](http://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  
Best Trash.....281-313-2378  
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#### NEWSLETTER

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... [villagecreek@peelinc.com](mailto:villagecreek@peelinc.com) or [Watson.g@sbcglobal.net](mailto:Watson.g@sbcglobal.net)

## THE MINIMALIST TEXAS HARRIS COUNTY GARDENER

*By Flint Sage*

Continue with your freeze protection effort through the remainder of the winter. When the weatherman predicts a “hard freeze” (or similar), shut off and drain your backflow preventer. Water landscape plants, trees, and vegetables before the freeze. Try not to water foliage. Water is very good at retaining heat in the soil to help prevent freezing. Maintain a layer of mulch on bare areas to retain heat and moisture and to keep weeds down. Best of all, read plant labels before you buy. If they won’t tolerate freezing, consider planting something different.

Lawns: Very little water is required, but water plants and lawns once a month if it doesn’t rain.

Plant roses anytime. If planting in January, choose bare root.

Plant annual flowers such as calendula, cyclamen, dianthus, ornamental kale, cabbage, pansies, and petunias. Plant bluebonnet transplants into garden beds.

Pruning: Avoid pruning frost-damaged trees and bushes until February or March. Crape Myrtles are trees and should be allowed to grow as trees. Unless you have a good reason, please don’t cut off any branch larger than a pencil. There are many varieties of crape, so select a shorter variety if height is a problem.

Photo: Mustard with a rare December snow covering.

In early January, plant onion bulb sets. In mid-January, plant broccoli plants, cabbage plants, Swiss chard seeds, and lettuce seeds.



## A HOUSE DETECTIVE MYSTERY

### *The Case of the Dead Electrical Receptacle*

*Gordon R. Watson*

I recently repainted a small bathroom upstairs. In doing so, I also replaced the light fixtures. To replace the lights, I had to use a trouble-light to provide sufficient task light. Oddly, I discovered that the electrical receptacle near the lavatory (sink) didn't work, so I had to use an outlet in an adjacent room.

Typically, receptacles are on different circuits from lighting, so I thought the outlet connected to the same breaker as the lights was a bit odd. Upon completion of the work, I discovered that the outlet still didn't work even after I had turned the circuit breaker back on. I figured that I had inadvertently left a wire off at the light fixtures, so I took the trouble of removing each fixture. Nope. There were no extra wires.

Then I began thinking as a detective should. The code requires Ground Fault Interrupters (GFI's) in bathrooms, and the GFI wasn't at this bathroom. Dang. I began sleuthing. I have one of those GFI and receptacle testers (which everyone should have). These cost less than \$7 and are worth more. They have three LED's which show if the wiring is on and correct. Further, it allows you to test a GFI. I figured the original electrician might have connected the upstairs outlet to the GFI in one of the downstairs bathrooms. Note that it is common for one GFI to protect several outlets. Sure enough, the tester showed that the downstairs bathroom receptacles didn't work.

The fix was easy because all it took was to reset the GFI in the master bathroom. I don't know why the GFI tripped, but the receptacles work now. I am convinced they often trip just out of boredom, but I digress.

The bottom line, to overuse a phrase, is that I created a GFI chart. I plan to list each GFI in the house and indicate which receptacles it

serves. Our home probably has five GFI's serving fifteen outlets, and I more or less know which receptacles they protect, but the House Detective won't be around forever. My secretary will probably appreciate having this list sometime in the future. She may even smile that I did something right.

While ground fault interrupters can be frustrating, they save lives. They work by measuring incoming and outgoing current. If these don't match, they trip within 1/40th second to avoid impacting a human heartbeat. The code has gradually become more stringent where GFI's are used. I have listed their history below:

GFCI requirements (and effective date): Underwater pool lighting (since 1968), Receptacles: Outdoors (since 1973), Bathrooms (since 1975), Garages (since 1978), Kitchens (since 1987), Crawlspace and unfinished basements (since 1990), Wet bar sinks (since 1993), Laundry and utility sinks (since 2005), Also consider portable GFCI protection: Whenever operating electrically-powered garden equipment (mower, hedge trimmer, edger, etc.) With electric tools (drills, saws, sanders, etc.) for do-it-yourself work in and around the house (last paragraph from cpsc.gov).



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## THE VOICE COOKS UP SOME VITTLES

# George and the Dragon's Bacon Onion Dip

*Submitted by Donna Lowe and Village Creek taste tested as delicious. Super Bowl 52, is on Feb. 4, 2018.  
It is never too soon to plan your snacks.*

### DIP INGREDIENTS:

8 oz cream cheese  
1/4 C mayonnaise  
1/2 tsp dry English mustard  
1/4 tsp cayenne pepper  
1/4 tsp kosher salt  
1/4 tsp Worcestershire sauce  
1/2 Cup plus 2 TBSP shredded Parmesan  
1/3 C onion jam (recipe follows)  
3 strips bacon, cooked/crumbled  
Chopped chives for garnish  
Serving suggestions: crackers, toasted bread, vegetables

### DIP DIRECTIONS:

Beat cream cheese until fluffy, about 5 minutes. Add mayo, mustard, cayenne, salt, and Worcestershire - continue to beat until smooth, about 5 minutes. Add 1/2 C of Parmesan and the Onion Jam, and mix on low speed just until combined. At this point, cook immediately or store the dip in the fridge until ready to serve.

Preheat oven 350 degrees

Scoop the dip into a baking dish and top with remaining 2 TBSP Parmesan and bacon. Bake until the cheese melts and the dip begins to bubble, 8-10 minutes. Garnish w/ chives and serve.

### ONION JAM INGREDIENTS:

1 TBSP vegetable oil  
2 yellow onions, thinly sliced  
1 tsp kosher salt  
2 TBSP balsamic vinegar  
1 tsp brown sugar

### ONION JAM DIRECTIONS:

In a large frying pan set over medium low heat, add the oil and then onions. Add the salt and cook, stirring often, until softened, about 5 minutes. Reduce heat to low and add 2 TBSP water, the vinegar and sugar. Continue to cook over low heat, stirring often, until the liquid is absorbed and the onions are a rich golden brown, about 20 minutes. Spread the onion jam on a cookie sheet and cool to room temp. Refrigerate any leftovers. Makes 1 Cup.



*Finished Bacon Onion Dip*



*Onion Jam*

## COOKIES WITH SANTA



Christmas music filled the air, and, as has become so common, the Village Creek Board and Social Committee, under Lisa Rawle's experienced

guidance and hard work, created a magnificently wondrous "Cookies with Santa." Katherine, Conner, and Nathan Elkins handed out delicious hot chocolate with puffy marshmallows and whipped cream along with scrumptious cookies to both delighted children and smiling and appreciative adults. Lisa handed out generous bags of wondrous gifts (I hadn't seen a ball and paddle toy for years, but loved seeing a five-year-old mystified by it). Jimmy Rawles restocked and assisted with the heavy lifting. Sherry Watson distributed delicious

candy and rang the Christmas bell to keep lines flowing smoothly. Of course, the star of the show was Santa Claus. Still warming up from his trip from the North Pole, he always had a perfect smile for photos and finely tuned ear for each child's request.

## THE VOICE SPEAKS UP ON SAFETY

46,000,000 American vehicles have defective airbags. The defective bags are dangerous even without being in an accident. To find out if a particular car is affected, go to [www.nhtsa.gov](http://www.nhtsa.gov). You will need your make, model, and year for a start, and maybe the VIN number.



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## TOMBALL PROVEN PLANT OF THE MONTH

*By Flint Sage*

### ALTHAEA, ROSE OF SHARON (HIBISCUS SYRIACUS)



We have two Rose of Sharon plants. They require little pruning and are slow-growing as, after eight years, ours are about six feet tall and as wide. Ours hide our fence in summer, but are deciduous, so they are not a good year-round hedge. Our flowers are lavender, but other varieties may range from white, red, lavender, or light blue. There is no obvious fragrance. The flowers this year waited until late August to make their showing. The plant has many trunks, so are a bit like crape myrtles in that respect. They apparently can be trained to be single trunk trees, but their natural shape is more bush-like. Left to their own, they can attain heights and widths of 15 feet. They do not appear to attract fire ants to their roots as we rarely see them there. They originally came from India and China, but have been around the United States for many years. For example, Thomas Jefferson planted some from seed. They like rare, deep watering and are drought tolerant. They also tend to be disease resistant unless stressed with a drought. I noticed a Monarch butterfly flitting around ours today. They like the sun and well-drained soil.

## DON'T STOP ME IF YOU'VE HEARD THIS ONE BEFORE

*Nodrog Nastaw*

A neighbor was walking down the street, and I noticed that he was wearing pants and a shirt that had been ironed into small 1" vertical pleats. Thinking that was strange, I said, "Hey, neighbor, why did you iron pleats into your shirt and pants?"

"Well," he said, "I am going to a polka-fest tonight, and I thought I should dress accordionly."

## Check It Out!



## New Official Village Creek Web Site

Did you know that less than 1% of Village Creek's homes are represented at HOA Meetings? A good way to see what the Board is doing, make comments, or give suggestions is Village Creek's website. Its address is [myvillagecreek.com](http://myvillagecreek.com). You will need to sign up, but it is very easy to access. Board Member Greg Davis created this site with little or no cost to Village Creek. If you have problems with signing on, his email is [greg@greg-davis.com](mailto:greg@greg-davis.com).

As I write this, [myvillagecreek.com](http://myvillagecreek.com) has listed the following projects to their "to-do" list:

1. Add some adult exercise equipment on paths or park.
2. Rename our parks,
3. Add a pre-school-type playground near the pool.

This site allows you to comment on any of these or even bring up new thoughts. We have noticed in the past that public input can be very helpful to assure the right decisions are made. We thank Greg and the Board for providing this excellent tool.

## WEBSITE OF THE MONTH

*By The Editor*

Do you have a question that is so esoteric\* that you have no idea how to find the answer? The website Quora ( <https://www.quora.com/> ) allows you to ask any reasonable question you may have. The way it works, in general, is that anyone can ask a question and "experts" answer it. Some of the questions you see depend on what you enter as your own credentials. For example, I see many questions about the College I attended which you probably would not see.

Using either computers or humans, the questions are well-filtered to avoid any really offensive questions or answers. In general, the site is very subdued and pleasant. I only recently started using it, so don't know all of the answers. Basically, though, there are experts answering questions in about any field you can think of. Give it a try. Others' questions are often really interesting too.

Word of the Month

\*Esoteric: intended for or likely to be understood by only a small number of people with a specialized knowledge or interest (quoted from Bing.com).



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I wish you a prosperous and wonderful 2018!



**Kara Puente**

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