



VOLUME 15 | ISSUE 6 | JUNE 2018



*The May Yard of the Month is at 12722 Briar Harbor Drive. Thanks for keeping Village Creek beautiful!*



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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  
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Harris County Veterinary Public Health..... 281-999-3191  
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... For water leaks, water outages, water quality, or sewer  
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..... [www.centerpointenergy.com/outage](http://www.centerpointenergy.com/outage)  
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Best Trash..... 281-313-2378  
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#### NEWSLETTER

Publisher - Peel, Inc..... 512-263-9181  
Advertising ..... [advertising@PEELinc.com](mailto:advertising@PEELinc.com), 888-687-6444  
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## THE MINIMALIST GARDENER

*Flint Sage*



Search online for Texas A & M's "Maintaining St. Augustine Grass," by Taylor & Gray. It is a must-read document. The following is a summary, but there is so much in the article that you must read it completely.

Some highlights are the following:

- 3" mowing height for both sunny and shady areas.
- Leave clippings on the lawn (Note that "Texas Gardener Magazine" says that NO fertilizer should be required in the summer if you leave clippings on the lawn).
- Water to a depth of six inches. Watering several times during the watering day is best. (Example: 5 minutes three times rather than 15 minutes once).
- Water only when the grass begins showing signs of distress (usually 5 to 10 days, depending on weather).

Continue planting heat-loving vegetables such as corn, eggplant, southern peas, okra, cantaloupe, sweet potatoes, pepper plants, squash, watermelon, and pumpkins. Soil, for most vegetable gardens, should be maintained damp (not wet) 3" below the surface.

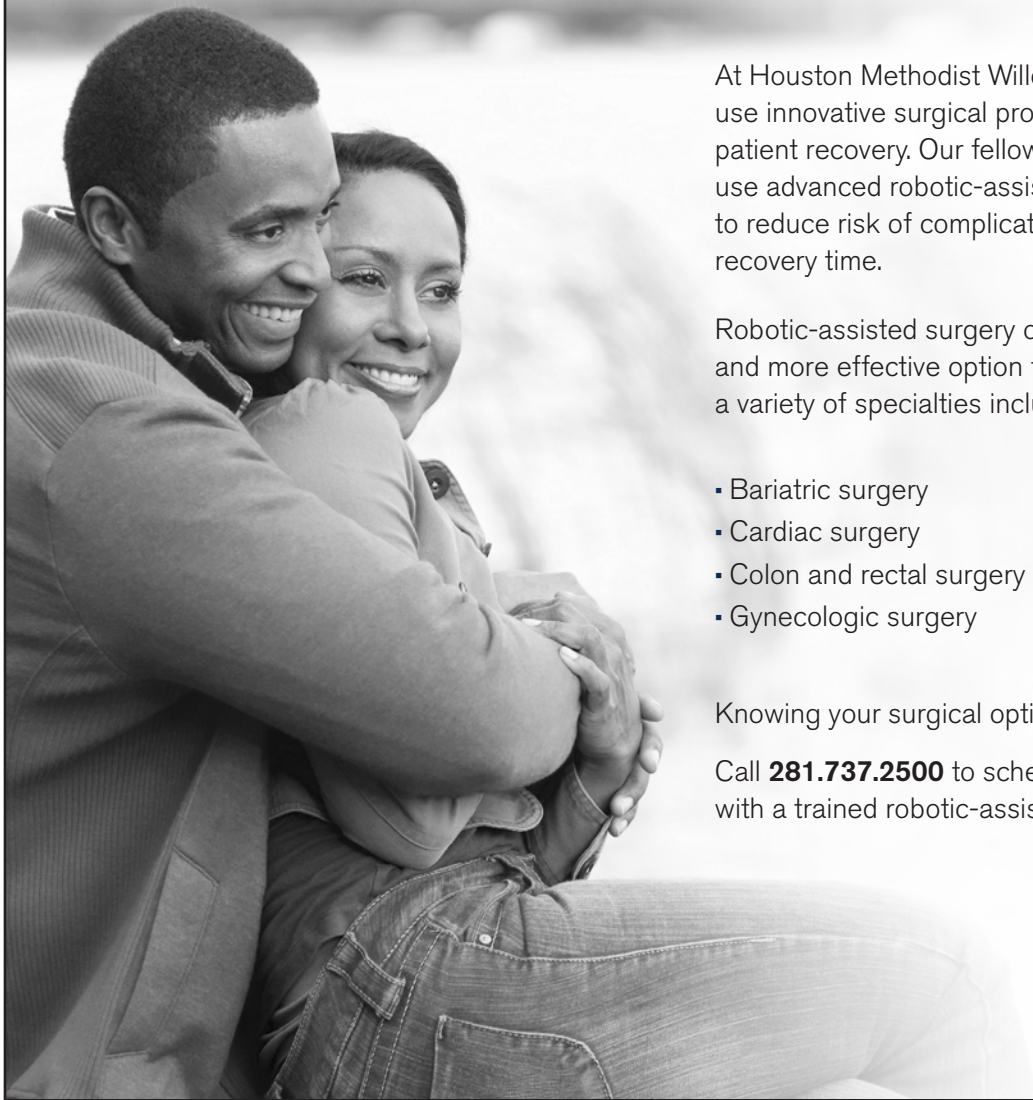
Water young trees weekly to assure the roots stay damp (not wet). Water older trees if there isn't any rain. Keep mulch around plants to retain moisture. Keep mulch away from trunks. You should see the "flare" at the bottom of the tree. Add some fertilizer to trees to encourage growth.

The summer here is not a great time to plant because of the heat. Keeping sufficient moisture for new plantings is tough. If you do plant anything, be sure you keep it watered.

Your HOA fees at work: We have noticed that some public landscape areas around Village Creek have been improved. The area around the lake outfall was recently sodded to stop erosion there and to fill in vacant landscape. Also, the end of the circle of Cobble Shores Drive had a poorly located palm removed to give space for an existing oak to grow. Wax myrtles near the end of their life were removed in the Sky Haven Park area and replaced with sod. We appreciate the work the Board and Landscape volunteer have done in these areas.

Photo: Giant Sunflower in Tomball. These grow 8' tall or more. Kids love them.

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## THE VOICE COOKS UP SOME VITTLES APRICOT STREUSEL BARS



### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup dried apricots, coarsely chopped
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 1/2 cups water
- 2 cups flour
- 2 cups old-fashioned or quick-cooking oats
- 1 cup packed dark brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 pound (2 sticks) unsalted butter, melted
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- Confectioners' sugar, for garnish

### DIRECTIONS:

In medium saucepan, bring apricots, white sugar and water to boil over medium-high heat, stirring often. Reduce heat to medium low and simmer, uncovered, stirring often, until fruit has softened and thickened into a puree, 20 to 30 minutes. Remove from heat and cool completely.

Position rack in center of oven and preheat to 350 degrees. Lightly butter 13-by-9 inch baking pan. Line bottom and short sides of pan with 14-inch-long sheet of aluminum foil, folding the excess foil back to make handles. Butter and flour foil and long sides of pan, tapping out excess flour.

In large bowl, thoroughly mix flour, oats, brown sugar and baking soda. Add melted butter and vanilla and stir well. Mixture will be crumbly. Press half of the oat mixture evenly into prepared pan and spread with cooled apricot mixture. Crumble remaining oat mixture on top and gently pat into filling.

Bake until streusel topping is golden brown and looks set in.

Cool on a wire rack and cut into bars. Makes 36 bars.

## A HOUSE DETECTIVE MYSTERY

### *The Case of the Suspicious Buyer*

*Gordon R. Watson*



Shortly after we moved to Village Creek, I got to thinking that it would be a good idea to buy a chipper: one of those things where you put a tree branch in the top and chips fly out the side. After all, we had planted lots of bushes and trees needing yearly pruning, and we would also want to buy lots of mulch. It would be a no-lose situation.

Well, I bought one. It wasn't cheap. It cost nearly \$1000. It did work, but it was noisy, heavy, cumbersome, and required about 16 square feet of storage inside our garage. The engine also had a habit of getting vapor locked after working hard in Tomball's heat. Eventually, I just started bagging our cuttings. It was simpler, safer, not so noisy, and admittedly less expensive.

In the meantime, the shredder just sat there taking up space. Finally, I decided to get rid of it. I advertised it on Craig's List. After just a few hours, I received a message from somewhere in Nebraska or some other state around there. Great! Then the details started coming in. They would send me a check for \$500 or so with an extra \$200 for my trouble to include shipping and handling. A truck would pick it up. Nice people!

Then my secretary and I got to thinking that it didn't make much sense for someone to pay \$700, or so, for a used chipper. They would be better off buying a new one. I sent them a note indicating that the deal was off. Not for them. A check arrived for \$700. It was a very nice official-looking check from some doctor's office. My secretary did a little sleuthing and called the office. They advised her that quite a few checks had been sent out in their name and none of them were authentic. I sent them another note notifying them that the deal was off. Anyway, a truck never showed up, and I didn't lose the chipper or any money...just a little of my confidence in people.

More than a year went by before I decided to try again. My first thought was to use eBay. I had sold things there before, and it was much harder to be a crook on eBay. Still, I thought, maybe Nextdoor would be worth a try.

I put it on Nextdoor and had a buyer within an hour. He came out the next day, paid in cash, and we loaded it into his truck. It turned out that he was from Tomball and had an identical shredder which was becoming worn out. I waved goodbye to the buyer and his shredder. I was happy it had a new, honest home.

I now have an extra 16 square feet in my garage to fill up with some other piece of equipment that I probably don't need.



## THE HOUSE DETECTIVE TURN THE PILOT OFF OR LEAVE IT ON? THAT IS THE QUESTION.

*Gordon R. Watson*

I have wondered whether we should turn off the standing pilot light to our natural gas fireplace during the summer. To find out, I searched the subject online. Online, various sources advised that the YEARLY cost to run a fireplace pilot light could be anywhere between nothing to \$120. These sources varied from the uninformed to the overzealous. I think the best source was HomeEnergy.Com where their estimated cost was based on an actual study. Their total was \$70/year (based on average Houston gas rates). So, if you turn off your pilot light for the six summer months, you might save \$35.

Turning off pilots is not risk-free. While it has never happened to us, I have heard that spiders occasionally get into the inactive pilot line and plug it. Also, it is possible that the simple act of interrupting the thermocouple and controls may result in a failure of some sort. Sometimes it is best not to touch anything that is working. Because I think it is probably a good idea to do a yearly vacuuming and clean the glass on the fireplace, and I usually can avoid calling a repair-guy, I will probably turn ours off during the summer.

## CLOTHES DRYERS AND FIRES



I recently cleaned out a dryer vent. Normally, it is not easy to see inside of one, but, in this case, it was fairly easy (see photo). I was amazed to see the accumulated lint. It reminded me of the time when my wife and I were younger. Neither of us knew that you had to clean the dryer vent screen that all

dryers have. Eventually, the dryer just stopped working because (I guess) the overheating controls did their job. We could not believe the accumulation on the screen. Anyway, to make a short story long, I ran a shop vacuum cleaner hose down this vent to clean it. I also used a long stick with a couple of uncut tie-wraps on the end. Of course, you can purchase special brushes for this task too. The bottom line is that somehow, you need to check and clean inside of your dryer duct to make sure that it stays clean. If the dryer controls fail, it is possible for the lint to catch fire.

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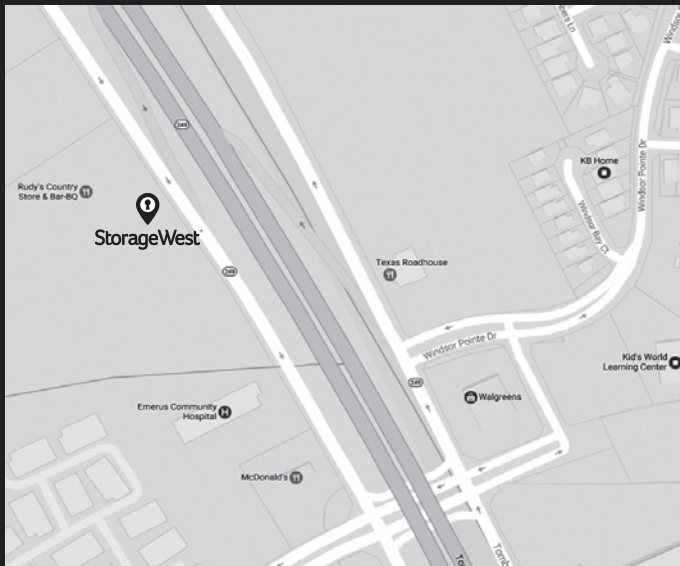
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## 2018 SOCIAL EVENT CALENDAR

From Lisa Rawles, Social Committee Chairman and myvillagecreek.com.  
Always check the marque for updates.

### • Splash Pad

The Splash pad will be open Tuesdays through Sundays from 9 AM to 8 PM and will be closed for maintenance on Mondays. The last day the splash pad will be open is Sunday, September 30, 2018.

### • Pool:

June 1 through August 19th: Closed Mondays for maintenance. Open Tuesdays through Sundays: 10:00 AM to 8:00 PM

August 20th through September 23rd: Closed Monday through Friday. Open Saturdays and Sundays: 10:00 AM to 8:00 PM.

Labor Day, September 3rd: 10:00 AM to 8:00 PM

Lap swim: Open Tuesdays and Thursdays during pool season 7:00 AM to 9:00 AM (No lifeguard on duty during lap hours).

- Fourth of July Parade - Wednesday, July 4, Parade 9:30 a.m. Judging 10:00 a.m.
- Back to School Luau & Kinder Meet & Greet - Saturday, August 18, Kinder M&G 10:00 a.m. Luau 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
- Fall Garage Sale - Friday & Saturday, October 12 & 13
- Cookies with Santa - Sunday, December 2, 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

## TREES IN FRONT YARD

According to the Village Creek Residential Architectural Guidelines (partially quoted), "...Lots in Village creek require a minimum of three front yard trees." Go to Spectrumam.com and sign in or sign up to read all requirements. The documents are filed under Home/For Homeowner/Community Information and select "Documents" from the little box. Be sure to get Architectural Review Board approval before starting any significant exterior change.



## MEDICARE MYTHS

Most of Village Creek's residents have not reached the Medicare age, but it is never too early to know more about Medicare. Did you know that Medicare is not free? Overall, taxpayers pay 80% of Medicare costs, but the remaining 20% is paid by individuals. The amount you pay depends on your financial situation and is usually taken from your Social Security check if you receive one. Many participants purchase a separate supplemental insurance plan.

## HEALTHY SNACKS

QUOTED DIRECTLY FROM VETERANS  
ADMINISTRATION WEB SITE:

- Apples (dried or cut into wedges), 1 medium or ¼ cup (35 grams)
- Bananas, 1 medium
- Raisins, ¼ cup (35 grams)
- Fruit leather (dried fruit puree) without added sugar
- Carrots (regular carrots cut into strips, or baby carrots ), 1 cup (130 grams)
- Snap peas (the pods are edible), 1.5 cups (350 grams)
- Nuts (but not too many,) 1 oz. (28 grams) (about 23 almonds)
- Whole-grain dry cereal (if sugar is not listed as one of the first 2 ingredients), ¾ cup (70 grams)
- Pretzels, 1 oz. (28 grams)
- String cheese, 1.5 oz.(42 grams)
- Low-fat or nonfat yogurt, 8 oz.(224 grams)
- Toasted whole-whole English muffin with jelly
- Air popped popcorn, 3 cups (33 grams)
- Cherry or grape tomatoes, ½ cup (120 grams)
- Hummus, ½ cups (120 grams)
- Pumpkin seeds in shell, ½ cup (18 grams)

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## THE OPOSSUM

*By Cheryl Conley, TWRC Wildlife Center (Edited for length)*

The first thing you should know is that the opossum is a hero in the fight against ticks. According to the National Wildlife Federation, an opossum can eat up to 4,000 ticks in one week helping to slow down the spread of Lyme disease. In addition to ticks, they eat cockroaches, rats, mice, snails and slugs—actually, they eat almost anything, keeping our environment free of all the nasty things we don't like. Snakes? Yep. Opossums are immune to the venom of poisonous snakes.

Is rabies a concern of yours? Not to worry. Although any mammal can be a carrier of rabies, the chance of opossums being a carrier are very rare. The body temperature of the opossum is very low making it almost impossible for the virus to survive.

Dinosaurs roamed our earth 70 million years ago. Guess who roamed it with them? Opossums. Any animal that can survive for that long deserves my respect.

“Playing ‘possum” is a real thing but opossums don't have any control over it. When frightened, some become paralyzed with fear. They drop, their lips draw back exposing their teeth and their anal glands secrete a bad smelling liquid which deters predators. They will recover in one to four hours. Some scientists believe that “playing ‘possum” evolved as a defense mechanism because opossums move so slowly and can't outrun predators.

The opossum is the only marsupial in North America. Females can give birth to up to 25 babies after a short gestation period of 11 to 13 days. The babies are so small that 20 of them could fit into a teaspoon. The babies make their way to mama's pouch where only 13 teats are available. Obviously, not all the babies survive for this reason. The lucky ones latch onto the teat and stay attached for up to 3 months. They climb out and cling to their mother's back for up to 2 weeks when they “fall” off. They are then on their own.

The opossum has 50 teeth—more than any other North American land mammal. The hairless tail is used for balance, grasping branches and carrying nesting materials but is not used to hang upside down. This is a common misconception. They also have opposable thumbs on their hind feet used for holding onto branches.

If you find a dead opossum with babies in the pouch, please don't remove them. Although difficult, we ask that you place the expired mom in a box and bring her to us. We will carefully remove the babies and care for them until they can be safely released back to the wild.

TWRC Wildlife Center can help you with all of your wildlife concerns. Answers to many of your questions can be found on our website at [www.twrcwildlifecenter.org](http://www.twrcwildlifecenter.org). If you can't find the information you need, please call us at 713-468-TWRC.

## SCALE INSECTS

Scale insects are divided into two basic categories- soft scales and hard, or armored, scales. Soft scales produce a soft, thin, cottony, powdery, or waxy covering that cannot be separated from their body. They also produce a lot of honeydew (a sweet, sticky substance excreted by some insects). Hard scales produce a hard, shield-like covering made of shed skins and wax that conceals their body but is not attached to the body.



*Hard Scale*

Scale insects lay eggs which hatch into crawlers. Eggs are usually hidden under the female's body, but some may be placed under a cottony or waxy covering secreted by the female. The first instar is called a “crawler” because when they emerge from the egg, they move around on the plant to locate a place to settle down and feed. Crawlers may be transported to other plants by wind, people, or animals such as birds. After they choose their spot, the insects typically do not move for the rest of their life.



*Soft Scale*

Scale insects cause damage to plants by puncturing and removing plant juices via their piercing-sucking mouthparts. This can lead to yellowing, wilting, leaf drop, or sometimes killing sections of the plant. Soft scales produce honeydew which can lead to growth of a black fungus called sooty mold that can further stress your plant. Depending on the type of scale, they may be found on foliage, stems, or even roots of the plant.

### **Tips for managing scale insects:**

- Prune sections that contain scales from the plant and discard in sealed bags.
- Try spraying the plant with a high pressure water spray to knock the insects from the plant.
- Try treating the plant with insecticidal soap or horticultural oil.

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](http://www.urban-ipm.blogspot.com)



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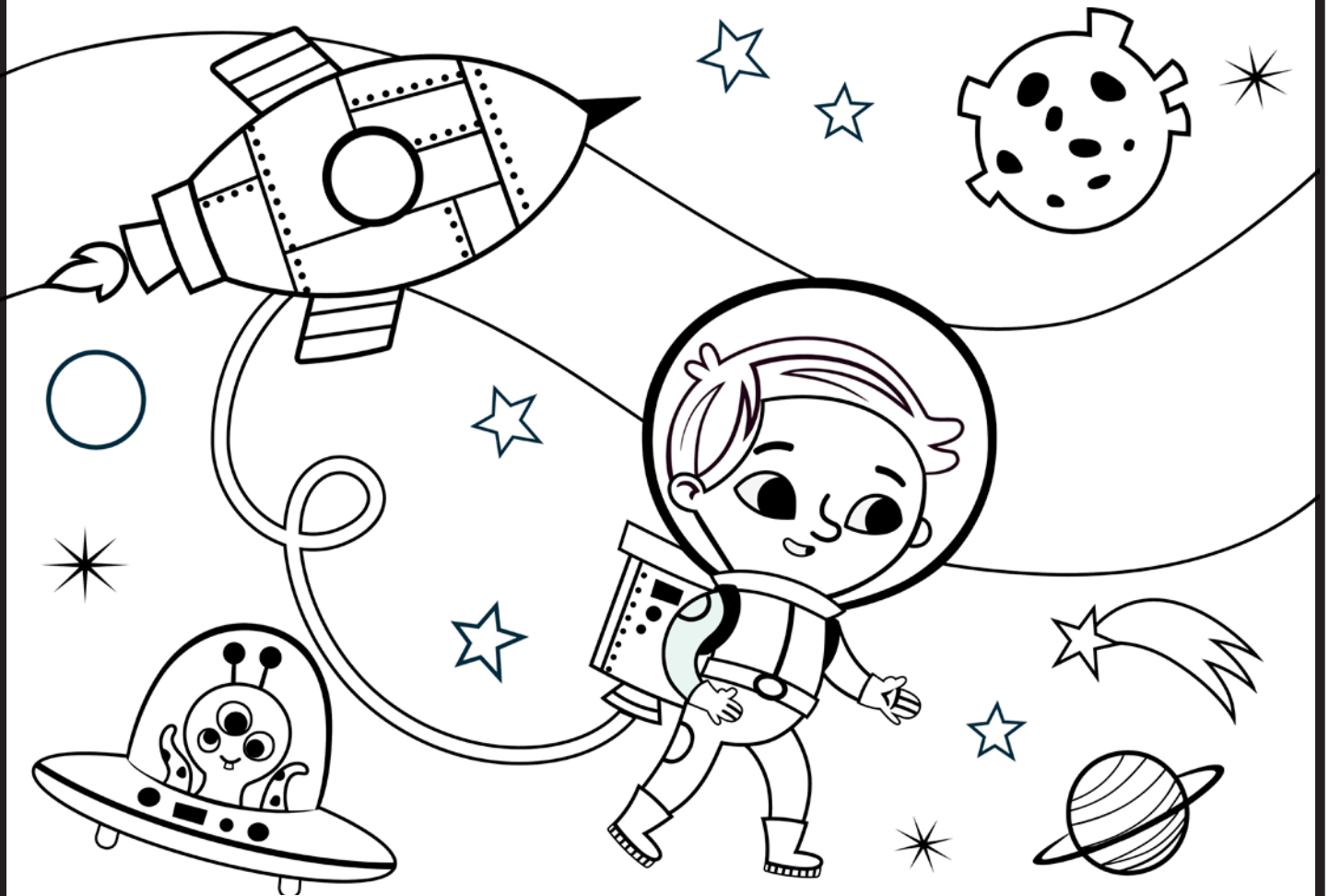
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