

## SHOAL CREEK CONSERVANCY CELEBRATES 5 YEAR BIRTHDAY (with a dog party!)

AUSTIN, TX, October 17, 2018- Local Austin environmental nonprofit Shoal Creek Conservancy commemorates five years of proudly serving the Austin community this month. To celebrate the occasion, the staff, Board, and community partners are throwing a fun-filled family event at Yard Bar (6700 Burnet Rd, Austin 78757). All ages of humans and dogs are welcome to join at Yard Bar on Sunday, October 22nd from 3-6 p.m. for live music, local beer, with a portion of proceeds going to the organization. Come party with Shoal Creek Conservancy this weekend, and the first 50 dogs will get a birthday party hat to wear/be scared of and have adorable photos taken.

The three canine winners of Shoal Creek Conservancy's "cutest pups in Austin" photo contest will be in attendance at the 5th Birthday Party at Yard Bar, and will also be featured in the upcoming "Scoop the Poop" public service announcement video.

In addition to the festivities, Shoal Creek Conservancy will be announcing the launch of the Scoop the Poop campaign, a partnership with the City of Austin and the Meadows Center for Water and the Environment at Texas State. This campaign is part of a larger project to develop a plan for the future health of Shoal Creek, in partnership with community stakeholders and funded in

part by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) through a United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) grant and the Still Water Foundation. For more information, please visit [shoalcreekconservancy.org/watershedplan](http://shoalcreekconservancy.org/watershedplan).

This important piece of public outreach and awareness centers around teaching local residents the importance of cleaning up after their dogs when using public trails and parks, especially when near critical watersheds. "As our city continues to grow, Austinites need to be especially aware of making sure to pick up after their dogs. Let's all do our part to keep our creeks and rivers clean," said Joanna Wolaver, Shoal Creek Conservancy's Executive Director.

Shoal Creek Conservancy is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and proud steward of the 13-square-mile Shoal Creek watershed in Austin, Texas. We champion the Shoal Creek watershed in order to create a healthy and vibrant community. The Shoal Creek watershed provides an oasis in a rapidly growing urban area, and we believe that with thoughtful investment, this natural treasure can better benefit our ecology, economy, and enjoyment of the outdoors. Learn more at [www.shoalcreekconservancy.org](http://www.shoalcreekconservancy.org) or see events at [www.shoalcreekconservancy.org/events](http://www.shoalcreekconservancy.org/events).



# IMPORTANT NUMBERS

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# 52nd Zilker Tree Lighting

**November 25, 2018**

**6:00 PM**

Austin's annual Zilker Holiday Tree lighting kicks off the season of festivities in Zilker Park the Sunday after Thanksgiving, and its complimentary and open to anyone to enjoy! Now in it's 52nd year, the Zilker Holiday Tree is the largest man-made holiday tree standing 155 feet tall, composed of over 3,000 lights and built upon one of Austin's 17 historic moontowers.

Food vendors and other merchants will operate at the tree throughout the month of December. The Zilker Holiday Tree will be on display each night from 6:00 p.m. to midnight until the end of the year.

On December 10, 1967, the first tree was first lighted by Mayor Pro Tem Mrs. Emma Long. In subsequent years, this honor has been awarded to the young winner of a city-wide tree art contest.

Find out more info here: <https://austintexas.gov/zilkerholidaytree>



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# TARRYTOWN REAL ESTATE market report update

November  
2018

by **Trey McWhorter**

This month I have a couple of graphs to give you a visual for Q3 performance this year vs. prior years. Median sold price of \$1.1M in the 3rd quarter (July – September) this year slightly exceeded the same quarter in 2017 (\$1.095M). This is similar to Q3 2015 vs. Q3 2016, which also saw modest appreciation.

Looking at the graph below, it is interesting to see the continuing decline in the number of active listings: on average there were 49 in Q3 2018 vs. 63 in Q3 2017 (and 77 in Q3 2016). The number of transactions, though, was the highest in several years at 38.

The median number of days on market for sold listings in Q3 2018 declined to 38 days vs. 80 in Q3 2017, and with strong demand and limited inventory, one might have expected to see year-on-year sold price appreciation be higher, but that was not the case.



If you are thinking about making a change in 2019, feel free to contact me and I'd be happy to give you my opinion on the market value of your home, and can advise you on what buyers are looking for and what you may need to do to get your home ready for sale. Making a move doesn't have to be stressful if you are prepared and have a plan.

*Note: All data comes from the Austin Board of Realtors' MLS report, reflecting activity through September 30, 2018.*



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# *3 Fun Activities To Do with Your Family This Thanksgiving*

*By MarLee Berry*

The turkey and trimmings have all been devoured and put away, but your family is here to stay for at least a few more hours. Right about now you might be thinking it is time to succumb to the usual post-Thanksgiving feast food coma or lay around the living room watching football. However, it may be a rare event when family members all come together, making this the most opportune time to participate in a few fun activities instead of just watching the back of your eyelids.

If you are stumped for ideas that can get both the young and the young at heart involved, then look no further than these three amusing activities that are sure to be remembered for many Thanksgivings to come.

## **1. Share Your Favorite Thanksgiving Memory**

Over the years, your family has probably made some wonderful Thanksgiving memories and this activity is the perfect way to get everyone talking. Old Uncle Hank may dig in his heels if you expect him to do too much on a full stomach, but he probably won't pass up a chance to share his thoughts with an attentive audience. Start with the oldest family member and work your way down through the generations. For added fun, after someone shares a story see if everyone can recount all the tales told up to that point. As a final touch, be sure to get your video camera out to record the whole scene. A few years from now it will be nice to listen to Grandma reminisce about her childhood memories.

## **2. Play a Game of "Who Am I?"**

There are different ways to go about playing this game, but however you choose to do it, this activity is a great way to get your family moving while creating hilarious Thanksgiving memories. Here are two ways you can choose to play:

1. Write the name of each family member on a sticky note. Then, mix them up and place the sticky notes on everyone's forehead, making sure no one receives their own name. See who can guess their identity the fastest by asking questions that can only be answered with a simple "yes" or "no."

2. This version is much like charades, except you only use the names of your fellow family members. After writing everyone's name on a slip of paper, mix them up and draw them one by one out of a jar. You can split up into teams, or keep individual scores. Everyone takes a turn pretending to be another relative. Remember, no talking!

## **3. Start a Backyard Game**

Now that everyone has gotten warmed up, it is time to move outside if the weather permits. Whether you channel your inner Houston Astro in a game of baseball, or take the football off the screen and into the backyard, the focus is less on winning and more on spending time together. If needed, nominate an elderly family member to keep score but don't leave them out of the fun, after all, Grandma's touchdown dance may just become a treasured Thanksgiving Day recollection.



**When**

Saturday, November 24, 2018

11am (it's approximately 1 hour long)

Rain or Shine!

**Where**

Starts at the State Capitol at 11th and Congress, moving south on Congress all the way to Cesar Chavez, ending just north of the bridge.

**What**

Benefiting Operation Blue Santa so Bring New, Unwrapped Toys to Donate! At a designated time during the Parade Procession, all units will stop to collect the toys. Santa's Helpers will line the parade route and help spectators give their toy. All toys will be distributed by the Operation Blue Santa Program to another child just in time for the holidays.

**Highlights**

Giant inflatable balloons, festive holiday floats, famous children's characters, spectacular marching bands, cool classic cars and Santa!

**Want to Get Involved?**

We have opportunities for you to volunteer for the parade, participate in the parade, or become a parade sponsor.

Please visit [chuypsparade.com](http://chuypsparade.com) for involvement opportunities, a parade map, and additional information.



**RAIN OR SHINE!**

# Rags to Wags Gala

**November 17, 2018 • 5:30-11:30PM**

Every November, hundreds of animal-lovers come together in Austin to celebrate another year of saving lives and renew their commitment to our community's most vulnerable animals. In 2018, Rags to Wags celebrates 13 years and this magical evening promises to be even more inspiring as we Unleash Love.

The Rags to Wags gala is the Austin Humane Society's largest fundraiser of the year, raising more than \$400,000. This single night provides the highest quality medical care, food, shelter and endless love for thousands of animals in the months ahead. By participating in this unforgettable night you're having a direct impact on the cats and dogs we serve.

The 13th Annual Rags to Wags gala will feature a fabulous cocktail hour where you can mix and mingle with fellow animal lovers and have your photo taken with some furry friends. Our silent auction is packed full of fantastic items from exclusive experiences to gorgeous handcrafted jewelry – there's something for everyone!

During our Rags to Wags program, you'll enjoy a delicious seated dinner, have a chance to chat with friends, and see some of the amazing happy tail stories you made possible. Then, hang on to your hats, as Cowboy Auctioneer Heath Hale takes the stage for our incredible live auction! Remember, you'll want to stay until the very end for one of the best parts of our evening together – our animal runway show!

To wrap up this magical night, our VIP after party is back for a second year. Grab a signature drink and some tasty bites as we toast to another life changing year.





## O. Henry Middle School Round Up

More than 600 O. Henry Middle School students, plus their families, friends, and members of the community, came out on the afternoon of September 28 for the PTA's most important event of the year, "Round Up."

The event, which was opened by a spirited performance by the school's nationally ranked cheerleaders and baton twirler, offered a front lawn full of carnival games such as a dunking tank (starring many brave faculty members), bungee jumping, an inflatable obstacle course, a high striker, and spray on hair color. Students and their friends from other middle schools also danced their hearts out in the gym while a DJ played their favorite hits. Food trucks selling burgers, hot dogs, ice cream sandwiches, and other carnival fare kept the attendees fueled for fun.

The most unique aspect of this event is that all of the money—raised through individual and business sponsorships, ticket sales, and a portion of food truck sales—goes straight toward funding teacher "wish lists," which include anything that teachers or departments believe would enhance their classrooms and students' learning. This year, the biggest chunk of funds raised will go toward new technology. But every department will benefit with new supplies, including those needed for an extensive list of unique electives.

"Round Up is my favorite event at O. Henry every year. It's great to see all of our students, parents, faculty, and community come together for a fun event that benefits our amazing school. You always leave feeling proud to be a part of the O. Henry family!" exclaimed PTA President Tammy Cochran.

Because of parent and faculty volunteers and generous support from families and community sponsors, O. Henry can provide the high level, whole child education that it does year after year in its pursuit of excellence.



*O. Henry Principal Marlo Malott (center) hangs out with a group of Round Up attendees, while they take a break from playing games on the front lawn.*



*The O. Henry cheerleaders get the crowd ready for an evening of fun at Round Up.*



*Students gather around balloon letters at O. Henry Middle School's entrance on West 10th Street, as Round Up begins.*



*Sixth grade World Cultures teacher Duane Devereaux celebrates with his students after receiving a check that will pay for publications subscriptions and atlases for the Social Studies Department.*

# NATURE WATCH

## ASTONISHING ACORNS

by Jim and Lynne Weber



*Live Oak Acorn*

Famous for its oak trees, there are more than 50 species of oak native to Texas. In our region of Central Texas, some of the most common include Live Oak (*Quercus virginiana*), Texas Red Oak (*Quercus buckleyi*), and Bur Oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*).

A familiar tree with a stately growth habit, Live Oak is commonly 50 feet tall but with several large, twisting limbs that form a low, dense crown that can spread over 100 feet. Its leaves are oblong in shape, leathery, 2 to 4 inches long and 0.5 to 2 inches wide. Slow-growing but long-lived, it appears to be evergreen rather than deciduous since its old leaves fall just as new leaves emerge in the spring. The annual acorns of this tree are dark brown and shiny, about 1 inch long and 0.5 inch wide, half covered in a gray, downy cup borne on a long stem.

Texas Red Oak, also called Spanish Oak or Buckley Oak, is a small to medium tree to 35 to 70 feet tall, and its habitat is restricted to limestone ridges, slopes, and creek bottoms. Its leaves are deeply lobed and it provides good shade in the summer and deep red color in the fall. Its acorns are biennial, or maturing every other year, but when they do occur they are plentiful. They can occur singly or in pairs, are up to 0.75 inches long and 0.5 inches wide often streaked with dark lines, and set in a shallow cup covering one-third to one-half of the fruit.

A large, deciduous tree reaching a height of 80 feet or more, the Bur Oak has heavy branches that form an open, spreading crown, and leaves with highly variable lobes that can grow to 12 inches long and 6 inches wide. But what is most characteristic is its' distinctively large annual acorns, up to 2 inches long, set into a deep mossy-fringed cup that gives this species its common name. In fact, an alternate common name is Mossycup Oak. Bur Oaks have a medium growth rate, and develop a deep taproot that allows them to draw water and

anchor the tree, even in drought conditions.

The origin of the word acorn is dubious, as several sources are possible including Old Norse *akarn* meaning 'fruit of wild trees', Gothic *akran* meaning 'fruit', and Old English *aecern* meaning 'mast or oak-mast.' Mast is a term often applied to the fruit of oak trees, especially when they are used as food source for animals.

In Texas, oaks are important trees for wildlife as they provide acorns for food, shelter in their huge branches, and both food and shelter as they slowly decay. For humans, oaks protect against soil erosion, buffer homes from strong winds, and provide true beauty in the landscape. All of these benefits are derived from the simple yet astonishing acorns!

Send your nature-related questions to [naturewatch@austin.rr.com](mailto:naturewatch@austin.rr.com) and we'll do our best to answer them. If you enjoy reading these articles, check out our books, *Nature Watch Austin*, *Nature Watch Big Bend*, and *Native Host Plants for Texas Butterflies* (published by Texas A&M University Press), and our blog at [naturewatchaustin.blogspot.com](http://naturewatchaustin.blogspot.com).



*Texas Red Oak Acorn*



*Bur Oak Acorn*



## The History of Thanksgiving and its Celebration

Throughout history mankind has celebrated the bountiful harvest with thanksgiving ceremonies. Before the establishment of formal religions, many ancient farmers believed that their crops contained spirits which caused the crops to grow and die. Many believed that these spirits would be released when the crops were harvested and they had to be destroyed or they would take revenge on the farmers who harvested them. Some of the harvest festivals celebrated the defeat of these spirits. Harvest festivals and thanksgiving celebrations were held by the ancient Greeks, the Romans, the Chinese, and the Egyptians, to name a few.

**The Greeks** - The ancient Greeks worshipped many gods and goddesses. Their goddess of corn (actually all grains) was Demeter who was honored at the festival of Thesmophoria held each autumn. On the first day of the festival, married women (possibility connecting childbearing and the raising of crops) would build leafy shelters and furnish them with couches made with plants. On the second day they fasted. On the third day a feast was held and offerings to the goddess Demeter were made - gifts of seed corn, cakes, fruit, and pigs. It was hoped that Demeter's gratitude would grant them a good harvest.

**The Romans** - The Romans also celebrated a harvest festival called Cerealia, which honored Ceres their goddess of corn (from which the

word cereal comes). The festival was held each year on October 4th and offerings of the first fruits of the harvest and pigs were offered to Ceres. Their celebration included music, parades, games and sports and a thanksgiving feast.

**The Chinese** - The ancient Chinese celebrated their harvest festival, Chung Ch'ui, with the full moon that fell on the 15th day of the 8th month. This day was considered the birthday of the moon and special "moon cakes", round and yellow like the moon, would be baked. Each cake was stamped with the picture of a rabbit - as it was a rabbit, not a man, which the Chinese saw on the face of the moon. The families ate a thanksgiving meal and feasted on roasted pig, harvested fruits and the "moon cakes". It was believed that during the 3-day festival, flowers would fall from the moon and those who saw them would be rewarded with good fortune. According to legend, Chung Ch'ui also gave thanks for another special occasion. China had been conquered by enemy armies who took control of the Chinese homes and food. The Chinese found themselves homeless and with no food. Many starved. In order to free themselves, they decided to attack the invaders. The women baked special moon cakes which were distributed to every family. In each cake was a secret message which contained the time for the attack. When the time came, the invaders were surprised and easily defeated. Every year moon cakes are eaten in memory of this victory.

**The Egyptians** - The ancient Egyptians celebrated their harvest festival in honor of Min, their god of vegetation and fertility. The festival was held in the springtime, the Egyptian's harvest season. The festival of Min featured a parade in which the Pharaoh took part. After the parade a great feast was held. Music, dancing, and sports were also part of the celebration. When the Egyptian farmers harvested their corn, they wept and pretended to be grief stricken. This was to deceive the spirit which they believed lived in the corn. They feared the spirit would become angry when the farmers cut down the corn where it lived.

**The United States** - In 1621, after a hard and devastating first year in the New World, the Pilgrims' fall harvest was very successful and plentiful. There was corn, fruits, vegetables, along with fish which was packed in salt, and meat that was smoke cured over fires. They found they had enough food to put away for the winter. The Pilgrims had beaten the odds. They built homes in the wilderness, they raised enough crops to keep them alive during the long coming winter, and they were at peace with their Indian neighbors. Their Governor, William Bradford, proclaimed a day of thanksgiving that was to be shared by all the colonists and the neighboring Native American Indians. The custom of an annually celebrated thanksgiving, held after the harvest, continued through the years. During the American Revolution (late 1770's) a day of national thanksgiving was suggested by the Continental Congress. In 1817, New York State adopted Thanksgiving Day as an annual custom. By the middle of the 19th century many other states also celebrated a Thanksgiving Day. In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln appointed a national day of thanksgiving. Since then each president has issued a Thanksgiving Day proclamation, usually designating the fourth Thursday of each November as the holiday.



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## Gardening Tips and To-Do Lists for November

BY MARIE IANNOTTI

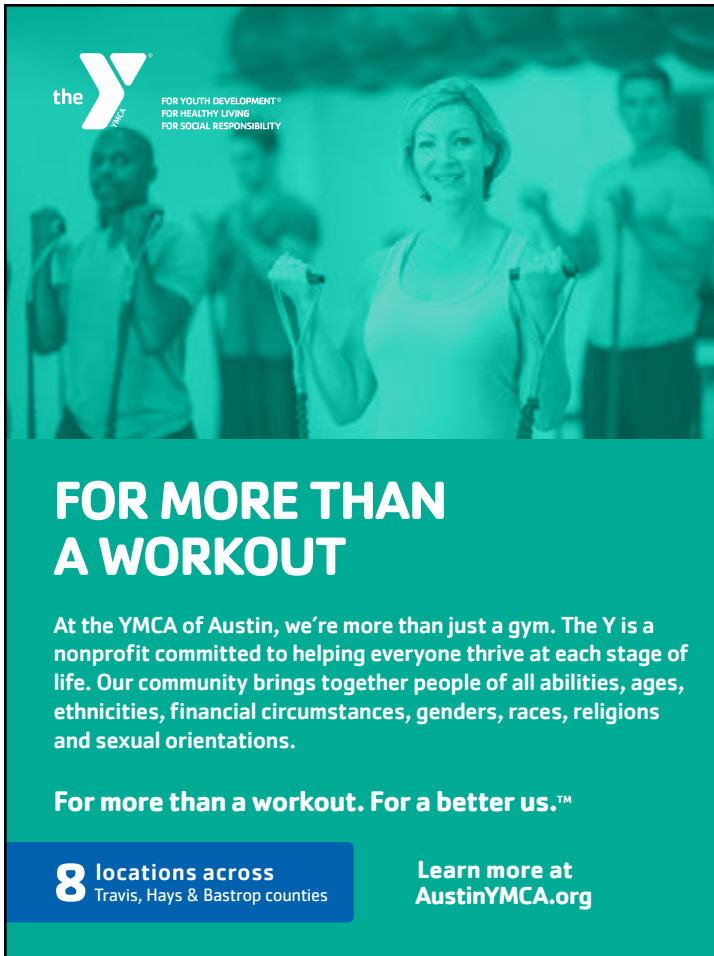
November gardening chores really highlight the differences in regional gardens. For many, there is no November garden to speak of. Others can't wait for the cool days and slower pace of fall vegetable gardening. But even if your garden is already covered in snow, there are still garden tasks calling: last minute bulbs to plant, leaves that should not go to waste, roses that need some TLC and, unfortunately, insect pests are much harder than their tiny size would suggest. You will still want to be on the alert for signs of trouble, inside and out.

On a more positive side, winter is a great time to evaluate your garden layout. You can clearly see the architecture or bones of your garden. If the view of your garden is less than inspiring or non-existent in winter, You should make some notes to add more definition in terms of things like structures, evergreens, or other architectural elements.

Take a look at what you could be doing in your November garden and try to schedule a little time outdoors before the holidays claim you.

### General November Garden Care

- Rake leaves and make leaf mold or compost.
- Clean, sharpen, and oil garden tools.
- Finish winterizing your water garden.
- Start forcing bulbs like paperwhites, hyacinth, and amaryllis for the holidays.
- Add organic matter to beds.
- Cover compost so that rain doesn't flood and leach the nutrients.
- Keep weeding. It's easier to see the weeds once the garden plants die back. Now is a great time to get rid of some perennial weeds that stay green all year.
- Keep watering, until the ground freezes. Pay particular attention to anything you planted late in the season.
- Caring for Indoor Plants in Winter
  - Check that indoor plants are receiving enough water, humidity and air circulation.
  - Keep an eye out for pests like spider mites and scale, and take care of them before they become a problem.
  - Although many indoor plants go dormant in winter, watch for signs that they are not getting enough light (yellowing leaves, straggly stems...) and move your plants to a brighter spot, if necessary.
- November Garden Tasks for Borderline Zones (Pacific NW, Southwest & Southeast)
  - Plant cool season vegetables
  - Plant asparagus and cut back tops of existing asparagus plants after they are yellowed by frost
  - There's still time to plant a cover crop in the vegetable garden
  - Watch for frost warnings. Extend the harvest by protecting plants with row covers
  - Sow wildflower seeds
  - Beef up snail and slug patrol



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