

THE ATASCOCITA FOREST COMMUNITY GAZETTE

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THE OFFICIAL MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE ATASCOCITA FOREST COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

ENERGY \$AVER



few little adjustments, you could lower your energy bill even more.

Pull the Plug

Appliances draw power even when not in use. Unplugging devices (laptops and cell phone chargers) and small appliances (coffee pots and toasters), could add up to hundreds of dollars in savings per year.

Turn down the Thermostat

Lowering the thermostat on your water heater can save 3%-5% in energy costs for every 10°F decrease. Many manufacturers set water heater thermostats at 140°F, but acknowledge 120°F is more than adequate for most households.

Change those Filters

Regularly replacing filters on your furnace and AC can save 5%-15% on heating and cooling costs.

Fill it Up

Load up that dishwasher. Experts claim, a load of dishes cleaned in a dishwasher requires approximately 35% less water than washing dishes by hand. Additionally, opening the door after final rinse to air dry dishes, and running the dishwasher during off-peak hours will

reduce your energy costs even more.

Choose Cold

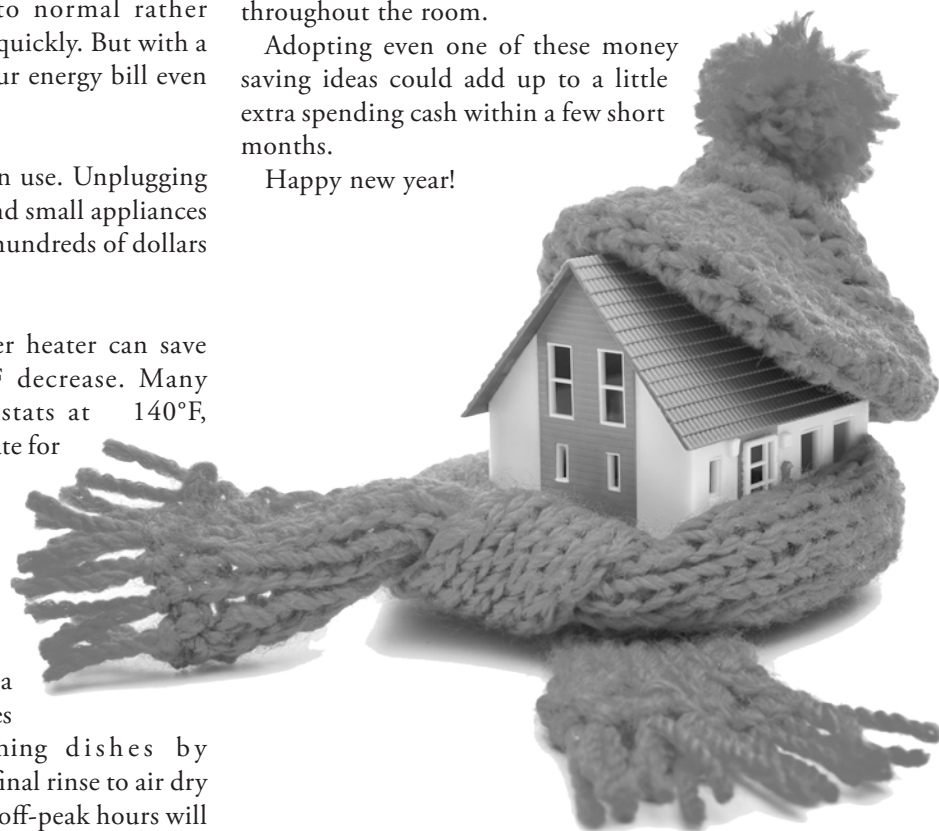
Much of the energy used to launder clothes is for heating the water for hot and warm water cycles. Many laundry detergents available today are formulated to clean using cooler water temperatures. When possible, choose “Cold” to wash your clothes.

Put it in Reverse

Ceiling fans are a great way to cool your house in the summer. But did you know you can use those same fans to warm your house in the winter. Simply reverse the direction of the fan blades to recirculate the warm air collecting near the ceiling, throughout the room.

Adopting even one of these money saving ideas could add up to a little extra spending cash within a few short months.

Happy new year!



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Poison Control 800-222-1222

NON-EMERGENCY NUMBERS

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Atascocita Volunteer Fire Dept. 281-852-2181
Harris County Precinct 4 281-376-3472
Texas No Call List Registration 866-TXN-OCAL
Emergency Roadside Assistance..... 800-525-5555

SCHOOLS

Humble ISD 281-540-1775
Whispering Pines Elementary..... 281-641-2500
Humble Middle School..... 281-641-2500
Humble High School 281-641-6300

UTILITY NUMBERS

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Report Street Light Outage - Centerpoint 713-207-2222
Report Gas Leak - Centerpoint 713-659-2111
Centerpoint (Gas) 713-659-2111
Call Before You Dig 811
Water - SiEnvironmental..... 832-490-1600
Emergency Number 832-490-1601
Electricity - Multiple Providers..... www.powertochoose.org
Trash - RR&R of Texas..... 866-516-9805
MUD District www.TrailoftheLakesMUD.com

PUBLIC SERVICES

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DPS Office..... 281-446-3391
Harris County Clerk (Will Clayton Pkwy.) 281-540-1173

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Community Asset Management
www.CommunityAssetManagement.com
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Texas Christian High School Alumni News

Elisa Kendall, a graduate of Texas Christian High School, is now ranked 14th nationally and 3rd regionally in NCAA DIII Women's Tennis. This is so exciting to hear for her junior year at ETBU. Texas Christian is so proud of your hard work Elisa!!! We are praying for you!



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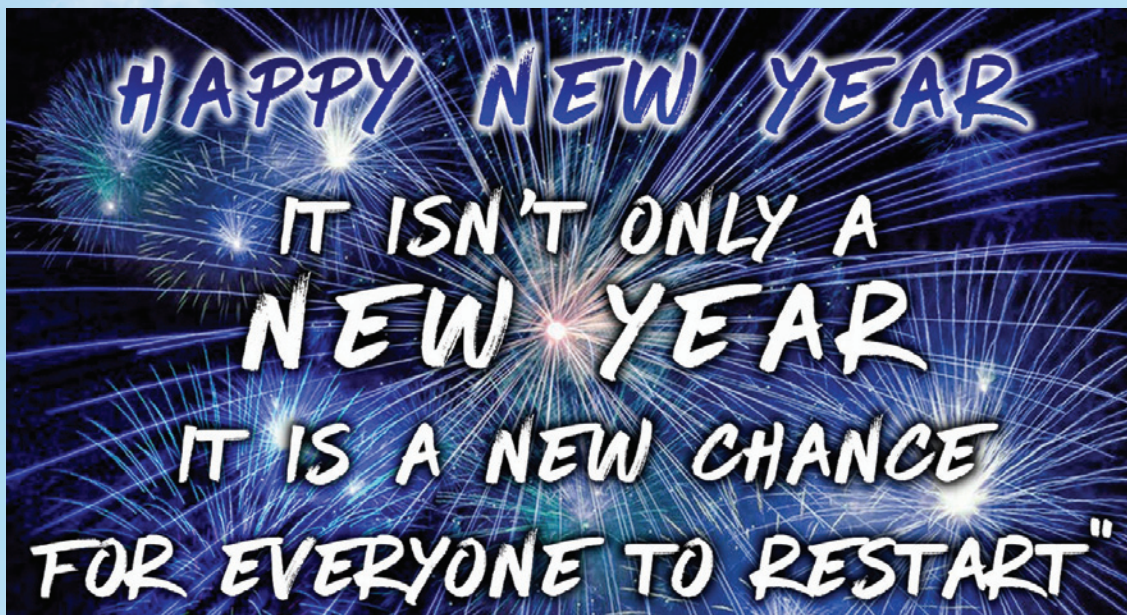
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The Minimalist Gardener

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 crapees, so select a shorter variety if height is a problem.

Plant cool-season seedlings such as asparagus, broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, Chinese cabbage, collards, turnip greens, Irish potato, kohlrabi, leaf lettuces, onions, and swiss chard. Sow seeds this month for beets, carrots, English peas, greens, leaf lettuces, radishes, sugar snap, snow peas, and turnips.



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ATTRACTING WILDLIFE

By Cheryl Conley, TWRC Wildlife Center

It seems that everywhere we look we are seeing trees being torn down and grassy areas being turned into parking lots. Sadly, there's not much we can do about it. There are things you can do, however, to help replenish some of the natural resources that are destroyed. You can turn your backyards and even small apartment balconies into areas that attract wildlife, butterflies and even bees.

You can provide food by planting wildlife-friendly plants. Choose plant species that bloom and fruit at various times of the year. Like the woodpecker, some birds will dine on insects during the summer but will eat berries in colder weather. Shrubs and trees can provide seeds and berries for mammals and birds while a flower garden will provide food for a variety of insect pollinators and hummingbirds. Bird and squirrel feeders are great to help supplement what is found in nature. If you can, leave dead trees. They can be a food source by attracting insects, lichens, mosses and fungi.

Every living thing needs water. Birds not only need water to drink but to bathe in. The easiest way to do this is to provide a birdbath or a shallow dish of water. Make sure to keep it clean and be careful to use animal-friendly cleaners! No bleach or anything toxic. If you're fortunate enough to own a little land, you can add a water garden or pond to your property.

Wildlife needs cover from the elements just like we do. In our area we don't have to worry about snow but we often get heavy rains and extreme heat. Again, dead trees work great for some species. Planting dense



A very "lived-in" squirrel box.

(Continued on Page 6)

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(Attracting Wildlife - Continued from Page 5)

shrubs provide shelter for rabbits, turtles and some bird species. Don't forget about man-made shelters, too, like bathhouses and birdhouses.

There are books available to help you garden for wildlife. One of them is, Texas Wildscapes by Kelly Conrad Bender. It's published by Texas A&M. Texas Parks and Wildlife is also a great resource. Some organizations provide instructions and help so that your school or home can become a Certified Wildlife Habitat. One such organization is the National Wildlife Federation.

You can make this a family project and have fun with it. Get the kids involved. Plant some trees and shrubs, hang some birdhouses and squirrel boxes and decide where you want your birdbaths.

TWRC Wildlife Center is getting ready for a busy spring and we're looking for baby feeders. We'll train you to care for baby squirrels, baby opossums and baby birds so you'll be ready to start in the spring. No previous experience is needed—just a desire to help wildlife babies, a great attitude and you must be reliable! Send your resume or letter of interest to operations@twrcwildlifecenter.org.



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EDITOR'S ELEVEN-MINUTE MICROWAVED BAKED POTATO

INGREDIENTS

- 1 large russet potato
- 1 tablespoon of butter or margarine.
- 3 tablespoons of shredded Cheddar (or your favorite) cheese.
- 2 tablespoons of bacon crumbles
- Dash of Salt
- Dash of Pepper
- 2 tablespoons of seeds such as pumpkin, flax, sunflower, etc. (if desired)
- Add after cooking if desired:
- 2 tablespoons of sour cream

DIRECTIONS

- Scrub the potato, and prick several time with the tines of a fork (to avoid having potato explode). Place on a microwave-friendly dish.
- Cook on full power in the microwave for 5 minutes. Turn over, and continue to cook for 5 more minutes. When the potato is soft, remove from the microwave, and cut in half lengthwise. Mash up insides with a fork. Add salt and pepper, butter, bacon crumbles, seeds, and Cheddar cheese. Return to the microwave, and cook for about 1 minute to melt the cheese.
- Top with sour cream (if desired), and serve.



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10 TIPS TO HELP YOU KEEP YOUR NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION

1. BE REALISTIC - The surest way to fall short of your goal is to make your goal unattainable. For instance, resolving to NEVER eat your favorite food again is setting you up to fail. Instead, strive for a goal that is attainable, such as avoiding it more often than you do now.

2. PLAN AHEAD - Don't make your resolution on New Year's Eve. If you wait until the last minute, it will be based on your mindset that particular day. Instead, it should be planned well before December 31st arrives.

3. OUTLINE YOUR PLAN - Decide how you will deal with the temptation to skip that exercise class or have that piece of cake. This could include calling on a friend for help, practicing positive thinking and self-talk, or reminding yourself how your "bad" will affect your goal.

4. MAKE A "PROS" AND "CONS" LIST - It may help to see a list of items on paper to keep your motivation strong. Develop this list over time, and ask others to contribute to it. Keep your list with you and refer to it when you need help keeping your resolve.

5. TALK ABOUT IT - Don't keep your resolution a secret. Tell friends and family members who will be there to support your resolve to change yourself for the better or improve your health. The best-case scenario is to find a buddy who shares your New Year's resolution and motivate each other.

6. REWARD YOURSELF - This doesn't mean that you can eat an entire box of chocolates if your resolution is to eat a better diet. Instead, celebrate your success by treating yourself to something you enjoy that doesn't contradict your resolution. If you have been sticking to your promise to eat better, for example, reward yourself with new fitness clothing or by going to a movie with a friend.

7. TRACK YOUR PROGRESS - Keep track of each small success. Short-term goals are easier to keep, and each small accomplishment will help keep you motivated. Instead of focusing on losing 30 pounds, focus on losing the first five. Keep a food journal to help you stay on track, and reward yourself for each five pounds lost.

8. DON'T BEAT YOURSELF UP - Obsessing over the occasional slip won't help you achieve your goal. Do the best you can each day, and take one day at a time.

9. STICK TO IT - Experts say it takes about 21 days for a new activity to become a habit and six months for it to become part of your personality. It won't happen overnight, so be persistent and patient!

10. KEEP TRYING - If you have totally run out of steam when it comes to keeping your resolution by mid-February, don't despair. Start over again! Recommit yourself for 24 hours. You can do anything for 24 hours. The 24-hour increments will soon build on each other and, before you know it, you will be back on track.



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Lisa Hughes
Cell: 281.323.5894

If you know of someone who would appreciate the level of service my Team provides, please call me with their name and business number. I'll be happy to follow up and take great care of them.



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