

The Ranch Report

VOLUME 13 ISSUE 3

MARCH 2019

The New Story Festival and the Compassionate Austin Co-op!

Info at compassionateaustin.org

Questions? Contact compassionateaustin@gmail.com



New Story Festival
Austin, TX | March 29-31, 2019

You are invited to the New Story Festival, a new annual gathering for community, creativity, and the common good. The Festival is March 29-31, 2019 at Huston-Tillotson University. This is the "signature festival" of Compassionate Austin (an inclusive Austin movement to create a more compassionate city).

We are launching a new collective initiative, the **Compassionate Austin Co-op** and will host the inaugural Offers & Needs Market at the Festival on March 31st from 5:00-6:30 pm! Join the Co-op today! Join a diverse collective of organizations and individuals across our community who commit to enacting the City Council's **Compassionate Austin Resolution**, practicing compassionate action on behalf of Others, Self, and the Earth.

We welcome businesses, schools & educational entities, civic organizations, faith-based groups, advocates, artists, musicians, news representatives (TV, radio, newspapers, etc.), design-thinkers, innovators, healers, family, friends, neighbors, etc.... (basically any and everyone who is committed to compassionate action on behalf of others, self, and the Earth). We invite you to attend the Festival and, of course, to join the **Compassionate Austin Co-op** and participate in the Offers & Needs Market.



Co-op Members receive both public recognition & tangible benefits:

- **Free pass to the New Story Festival**, the signature festival of Compassionate Austin.
 - **Invitation to the Offers & Needs Market**, an innovative way to connect and collaborate with likeminded organizations.
 - Recognition on compassionateaustin.org and at the New Story Festival.
 - **Half-off on exhibitor fees** at the New Story Festival.
 - **Discounted rates** on the *Compassionate Integrity Training* group workshops.
- **There is no cost to join the Co-op or attend the Offers & Needs Market.**

How to Join the Co-op!

- Step 1:** Complete the online membership form found on the "Compassionate Austin Co-op" page at compassionateaustin.org.
- Step 2:** Download and display the Co-op badge on your website, social media, and/or establishment.
- Step 3:** Participate in the Co-op's Offers & Needs Market at least once a year.

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IMPORTANT NUMBERS

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.....	5720 McNeil Dr.

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NEWS

Articles..... AveryRanch@peelinc.com

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(Continued from Cover)



Participate in the Co-op's Offers & Needs Market!

An Offers & Needs Market is a 90-minute guided process for participants to identify and exchange knowledge, skills, and resources.

The Market combines community asset-mapping and sharing-economy principles, to enhance your own work exponentially through collaboration with others!

Whether for free, barter, or a set rate, participants might offer or need things like:

- Professional skills or services
- Consulting in various areas of expertise
- Tools, vehicles, food/drink, meeting space
- Volunteers or financial support
- **Anything else they are able to share!**

There is no cost for Co-op Members to participate.

The first Offers & Needs Market will be held at the New Story Festival at Huston-Tillotson University on Sunday, March 31, 5:00-6:30 pm.

The New Story Festival is a Festival where we all belong. Join the Co-op and Offers & Needs Market where we share, connect, and support each other! We look forward to seeing you there! Thanks so much!

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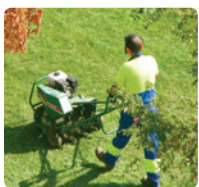
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RANCH REPORT

Aeration Now Can Help You Spring & Summer Irrigation



In order to prepare your lawn for a healthy spring growing season, you should employ basic lawn care practices at this time of year, which includes aerating your yard. It is important that nutrients reach the soil beneath your grass, and aeration can help you get that done.

Aeration involves making small holes in the soil to allow air, water and nutrients to get to the grass roots.

This helps the roots grow deeper and produce a stronger, more vibrant lawn.

Aerating helps alleviate soil compaction. Compacted soils have too many solid particles in a space, which prevents proper circulation of air, water and nutrients within the soil. Excess lawn thatch or heavy organic debris buried under the grass surface can also starve the roots from these essential elements.

So when is the right time to get this aeration done? These next six to eight weeks leading up to the spring season, when grass begins to grow again, is a good time to aerate.

The two main aeration tools are the spike aerator and a plug aerator. The spike aerator poke holes in the ground with a solid piece of metal. Plug aerators remove a core or plug of grass and soil from the lawn. Most landscaping companies and horticulturists

recommend the use of the plug aerator. The machines can be rented or you can have a lawn care service aerate for you. After aerating, it's always a good idea to apply about a half-inch of compost over the aerated yard. The compost fills in the holes left by the plug aerator and brings organic materials into the root zone.

If you have noticed that your turfgrass isn't looking its best or that water has difficulty penetrating through the soil surface, it may be time to aerate your lawn. Lawns with clay soils that get a lot of foot traffic typically require aeration more often as they become compacted over time. Here's a great tip to check to see if your yard needs to be aerated.

Using a shovel, dig a square-foot section of grass about six inches deep and take a look at it. If the grass roots don't extend further than two inches deep into the soil, your lawn would benefit from aeration.

If you plan to aerate your own yard, here are a few helpful tips to get the job done.

- Before you get started, make sure the soil is moist enough. There's nothing more frustrating than trying to aerate soil that is bone dry. Aerating the day after a rain shower or watering your lawn the day before is advised.

- Most aeration machines cover only a small percentage of soil surface per pass, so make multiple passes over the most compacted areas. Save resources (and your energy) by leaving unaffected

(Continued on Page 5)

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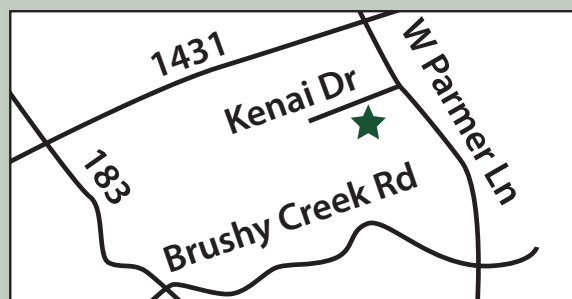


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(Continued from Page 4)

areas alone.

- The soil plugs can be left on the ground after aeration and allowed to decompose. Or, you can rake them into piles to throw in the compost bin. However, this isn't necessary as it should take about two to four weeks for the soil cores to break down naturally. Sprinkle compost (sand or peat moss can be used instead of compost) over the lawn to fill in the holes.

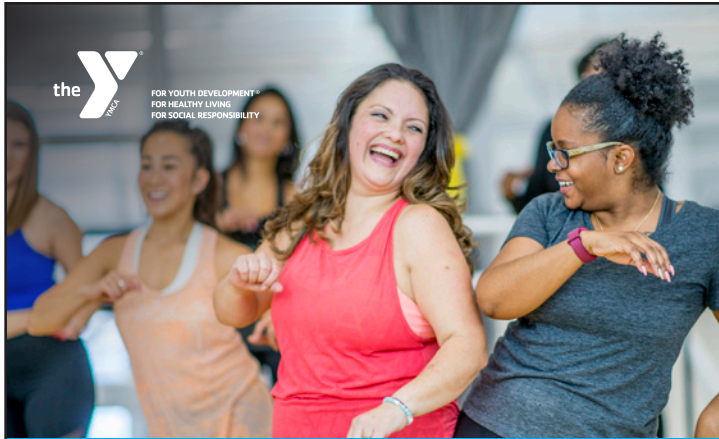
- An aeration myth is that if you apply a pre-emergent herbicide on your lawn in the spring, aerating your lawn will destroy the herbicide "barrier." This is not true — research shows that aeration will not affect crabgrass control or weed prevention.

After aerating, it's important to continue appropriate lawn care practices.

Aerating will help you save water over the spring and summer seasons. Instead of running off or only penetrating a few inches, water will be better absorbed in an aerated yard. That makes your entire landscape and your water bill happier.

Did you know...

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, outdoor water use varies greatly depending upon geographic location. In dry climates such as that in the Trinity Glen Rose District, a household's outdoor water use can be as high as 60 percent. Some experts estimate that as much as 50% of that irrigation water is wasted due to inefficient watering techniques, wind and evaporation.



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Still on the Fence About Hosting an Exchange Student?

You don't have any kids? Are you a single parent? Same sex couple? An empty nester? This is not a problem, we place our students in all kinds of families!

You're not rich? Neither am I! Your exchange student comes with their own spending money and health insurance. All you provide is room/board and three meals a day. Oh and TLC... but that's free.

Live in the middle of no where? Small town? Not a big deal. Some kids prefer to get away from the hustle and bustle of big cities. The exchange students also do pretty well in small schools, as they usually get to be the center of attention and make friends rather quickly. Our students also get chances to travel to New York, Washington DC, Hawaii and California... so they can get their fill of the city life and return back to the peaceful sounds of nature.

Do you consider yourself a boring person? More than likely this is not true, and you should quit being so hard on yourself. Your student will make friends. Your student will meet other exchange students. Your student will attend activities offered by our program. Your student will get involved in sports and school clubs. Your purpose is not to entertain them. But you might find that you bring a little adventure to each others lives.

Kids are too young? Great! Lots of students love young kids, and your kids will love them. It's beneficial to introduce your kids to new cultures at a very young age. You're preparing them to accept people no matter what the religion, color of their skin, or language they speak. That my friend, is good parenting.

Don't hold back! This is a great experience for both parties. You get the opportunity to change a child's life. You get the satisfaction of seeing them grow, even after they leave your home into becoming a doctor, a lawyer, a diplomat, artist, teacher... the list goes on. And you contributed to that success! And the best part of it all, is you gain another family member for life. We need people like you to give these kids a chance.

STS Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization whose mission is to place exchange students in our area. If you are interest in hosting, please contact me at 832-455-7881 or at vicki.stsfoundation@yahoo.com. I'll be happy to answer any question you might have and get you started on hosting your very own student!

RANCH REPORT

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Just Add Water

It's hard not to think about water. Just how much water are you using? Is it more or less than your neighbors?

In our community, water usage varies greatly by season. In the hotter, summer months more people are running their sprinklers and filling their swimming pools.

Did you know the typical 14 X 28 ft. pool holds 16,000 – 18,00 gallons? Larger pools

can hold double that amount. Don't forget about that irrigation system. Watering your

½ acre lot four times a week can use 45,000 gallons a month, or more.

Inside your home, your typical family of four uses 240-320 gallons per day! According to Texas A&M, the largest water users are the shower, clothes washer and toilets, accounting for about two-thirds of the water used in an average household. Toilets use up to 27% of the household water supply while clothes washers use 20.9% and showers account for 17.3%. Faucets account for about 15.3% and leaks account for

13.8% of a family's water use. Dishwashers, baths, and other account for the remaining water use. Assuming you have a new water saving showerhead, a four-minute shower uses about 8 gallons of water; older showerheads run at 5 gallons or more per minute. Washing machines can use anywhere from 20-57 gallons per load. Front-loaders tend to use less water and some new high efficiency machines use not only 40-50% less water but less electricity too. Do you know how much water your machine uses per load?

Let's talk about toilets. Older toilets can use 3-7 gallons per flush; newer models are less than half of that. No matter what the model, if its leaking, it's costing you money. A moderate toilet leak will generally waste 6,000 gallons of water a month – that's \$50-

\$70 depending on rates! If it's just a flapper or floater that needs replacing, it will cost you around \$3 at your nearest home improvement store. A simple and quick way to determine if your toilet is leaking is to insert a couple drops of food coloring into the tank and don't flush your toilet for 20-30 minutes. Then, check to see if there is color in the toilet bowl. If there is, then you have a running toilet leak. More serious problems should be addressed by a licensed plumber.

Lastly, don't dismiss that pesky leaking faucet. One faucet leaking at a very typical rate of 10 drips per minute, is wasting close to a gallon of water per day. Got a fast drip going? A faucet or showerhead that drips 60 drips per minute wastes 5 gallons of water a day. That's 2,082 gallons per year.

No one wants to be seen as the neighbor who wastes water, especially when your water provider may issue voluntary and/or mandatory rules about water usage during the upcoming summer months. It's always nice to be as eco-friendly as possible, and understanding your water usage often results in savings on your home water bills.

Nature Watch by Jim & Lynn Weber

Tree Serpents



Rough Greensnake

One of the most beautiful and harmless snakes in Texas is the aptly named Rough Greensnake (*Opheodrys aestivus*). Its genus is derived from the Greek *ophios* meaning 'serpent', and *dryas* meaning 'tree.'

It has a 22 to 32 inch long

and slender bright green body, which fades to yellow or yellow-green on the sides near its abdomen. Common to the eastern two-thirds of Texas, this snake is also colloquially called grass snake, green tree snake, and vine snake, but it gets its most recognized common name from its dorsal or topside scales, which are rough or 'keeled', having a ridge down the center rather than being smooth.

Primarily arboreal, the Rough Greensnake is found in open deciduous forest, pastures, and suburban gardens, most frequently those adjoining a watercourse such as a creek, stream, lake, river, or upland ravine. It climbs into bushes, shrubs, and trees, favoring those with horizontal rather than vertical growth, both for protection and to forage for food. It hunts crickets, grasshoppers, and spiders, as well as caterpillars of butterflies and moths. Rough Greensnakes are diurnal, and they sleep at night coiled up on branches of vegetation. Active most months of the year except for December through February, they take refuge in the cooler months hiding under rocks, logs, or debris.

One of the most curious facts about this snake, and others in this genus, is that they turn blue shortly after death. Yellow pigment combines with blue pigment to give the snake its vibrant green color during life, but when it dies, the yellow pigment breaks down quickly and only the blue pigment remains. Rough Greensnakes may be confused with Smooth Greensnakes (*O. vernalis*), but the latter, while similar in color, is shorter in length, has smooth dorsal scales, and occurs only as a relict population along the Gulf Coast of Texas.

While Rough Greensnakes become active as early as March, they mate in June and July, with females laying clutches of eggs in the second half of summer, typically in a depression under a flat rock. Incubation is short – only 4 to 24 days – since embryonic development begins while the eggs are still in the female's body. These snakes can be most active in August or September, when the young emerge and are foraging for food, often in grassy lawns. Be alert for these snakes when mowing grass at this time of year, as they are beautiful, harmless, and beneficial creatures!

*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 books, *Nature Watch Austin*, *Nature Watch Big Bend*, and *Native Host Plants for Texas Butterflies* (all published by Texas A&M University Press), and our blog at naturewatchaustin.blogspot.com.*



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