

BUTLER'S BRIDGE

WEST BEND COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

VOLUME 5 | ISSUE 3

MARCH 2019

March 2019

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Observed as:

- Women's History Month
- National Nutrition Month

Birthstone: Aquamarine, Bloodstone & Jade

Flower: Daffodil

Astrological Signs:

Pisces (till 20th) & Aries (21st->)

1st.....	Beginning of Spring (Meteorological)
1st.....	Zero Discrimination Day
3rd.....	World Wildlife Day
5th.....	Mardi Gras
5th.....	Shrove Tues (Pancake Day)
6th.....	Ash Wednesday
8th.....	International Women's Day
10th.....	Daylight Saving Time Begins
14th.....	Pi Day
14th.....	World Kidney Day
17th.....	Saint Patrick's Day
19th.....	St Joseph
20th.....	Board Meeting
20th.....	Start of Spring (Spring Equinox)
20th.....	International Day of Happiness
21st.....	Purim (Start)
21st.....	Holi (Hindu Festival)
21st.....	International Day of Forests
21st.....	World Poetry Day
22nd.....	World Water Day
23rd.....	National Puppy Day
24th.....	World Tuberculosis Day
25th.....	Greek Independence Day
30th.....	National Doctors' Day
31st.....	Cesar Chavez Day

CELEBRATE



MARCH 2019

BE BRAVE, BE BOLD

Be Fearless

Women's History Month in March is an ideal time to celebrate the brave, bold, and fearless women who have influenced history. The important role women have played in shaping our nation and the world can often be overlooked, whether in the fields of science, politics, environment, legal, the arts, and more. Positive Promotions proudly offers a unique selection of women's history products to educate young and old alike about key historical figures, milestones, and motivational messages that remember those who paved the way.

IMPORTANT NUMBERS

MANAGEMENT COMPANY

CIA Services, Inc.

3000 Wilcrest, Houston, TX

713 981-9000

EMERGENCY

Emergency Situation	911
Constable Precinct 5	281 463-6666
Sheriff Emergency & Non	713 221-6000
Harris County Sheriff (Store Front)	281 564-5990
Harris County Sheriff (sub-station)	281 463-2648
Poison Control	800 764-7661
Crime Stoppers	713 222-TIPS

UTILITIES

AT&T (Repairs)	800 246-8464
Center Point Energy (Electric)	713-207-2222
Center Point Energy (Gas)	713 659-2111
Mud #120 (Water)	713 405-1750
Street Light Repairs -need Pole#	713 207-2222
Trash (Texas Pride Disposal)	281 342-8178

PUBLIC SERVICES

Local U.S. Post Office	281 920-9337
<i>12655 Whittington Dr, Houston, TX 77077</i>	
Toll Road EZ Tag	281-875-EASY (3279)
Volunteer Fire Dept.	281 498-1310
Steve Radack (<i>County Commissioner</i>)	713 755-6306
Animal Control	281 999-3191
Dead Animal Pick-up (Precinct 5)	713 439-6000
Dead Bird Report	713 440-3036
Graffiti Clean-up	281 463-6300
Mosquito Control (Health Dept.)	713 440-4800
Mow the Bayou	713 684-4000

SCHOOLS

Alief Independent School Dist.	281 498-8110
Alief Transportation (to report Bus)	281 983-8400

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Register on www.crimereports.com



NEXTDOOR.com

Nextdoor is the free and private social network just for West Bend neighbors. On Nextdoor, neighbors share crime and safety concerns, local events, recommendations, items for sale/free, ideas about how to make our neighborhood better, messages from the Harris County Sheriff's Dept., and the Houston Chronicle.

Our neighborhood is using a private online network called Nextdoor.

Please join us to build a better neighborhood!

www.nextdoor.com/join Code: MZXJX

ARCHITECTURAL CONTROL COMMITTEE

The (ACC) Architectural Control Committee must be informed if you are planning to change the exterior style, color, or have plans for additions or any removal to your property. A mandatory Architectural Review Form will need to be completed and signed. You may obtain this form on-line at www.ciaservices.com

Why I Don't Recommend Dyed Mulches

by Randy Lemmon

Ranking with my disdain for the “Annual Crape Myrtle Massacre” and killing trees with weed-and-feed fertilizers is my disgust for dyed mulches.

I especially loath the black variety.

Among the many reasons for my hatred is that the wood sources are very questionable trash wood. And I don't care what they dye it with, it's still a dye that leaches into the soil, causing negative side effects.

Let me take you back a few months to a debate I had with a landscaper at a party. I could tell right away he was one of those “I got a bone to pick with you” guys. He agreed with me on crapes, and stated that he didn't use weed-and-feeds. But then he argued that he just complies with customer requests when it comes to applying dyed mulch. I told him he was being “environmentally irresponsible”... and lazy, and he actually didn't argue either of those points.

I asked him to write down the following five reasons to employ in convincing clients not to use dyed mulch. After considering the list, a revealing look washed across his face. And at that point, I knew I had converted him to Texas-native and naturally shredded mulch.

If you are a landscaper or have a neighbor or friend using dyed mulches, please consider these five points. If your landscaper insists on using dyed mulch, get a new landscaper.

1. It doesn't look natural: It looks artificial, and to me, it's the equivalent of putting plastic or fake flowers in a landscape – an artificial look that people make fun of. Mulch for a landscape should be part of nature ... and it should reflect the area's natural aspects. Plus, when dyed mulch dries out or the leaching happens, it looks gray and ugly. Then, more dyed mulch gets lumped on top. Ugh!!!

2. Most dyed mulches are made of recycled waste wood: It's almost always composed of trashed pallets, old decking, demolished buildings, or - worse yet - treated “CCA lumber.” CCA stands for chromium, copper and arsenic - chemicals used to preserve the wood. That ground-up trash wood is then sprayed with a dye or tint to cover up the inconsistencies in the wood and give it a uniform color. Most dyed-mulch manufacturers claim their dye is “organic,” but they rarely reveal their wood sources. So, if it looks like chipped-up wood with no elements of compost or organically enriched soil, that's an indication of a questionable wood source.

3. There's a negative effect on the soil: Dyed mulch doesn't break down into the soil the way native and shredded mulches do. Instead, dyed mulches – especially the midnight-black variety - leach the dye and possible CCA contaminants into the soil, killing good bacteria, beneficial insects and earthworms.

4. Nitrogen fixation almost always follows: This is indicated by yellowing leaves on annuals and perennials. The soil's natural nitrogen, needed to help keep the plants green, starts working hard to break down the mulch wood instead.

5. Shredded native mulches with composted elements break down in the soil: The best mulches become part of the soil's organic content over time. That makes for more beneficial soil bacteria and enhances the environment for earthworm production. Composted

mulches, or those naturally aged, actually release nitrogen into the soil, helping the plants rather than robbing from them.

Now, you may wonder which mulches I *do* recommend. That list can be found with my ...

10 Commandments of Mulch.

While some mulch manufacturers dye shredded hardwood mulches and try to convince you that they're a “new innovation,” it's still dyed. And the dye still leaches into the root system, but at an even faster pace! On the positive side, those suppliers are at least trying to make positive changes in colored mulches, and that gives me hope that one day they will be usable. But I still don't like the unnatural look, and until that changes, I'm nowhere close to recommending any dyed or colored mulches.

I've long asked landscapers to come forward with data showing that dyed mulch is good for a landscape.

Bring me the research. No one has ever been successful.

In fact, it seems that the only landscapers who want to argue with me on this issue are those who got fired or are about to be replaced because they don't do the environmentally responsible thing; or they're too lazy to explain the five points to their customers. The last time someone chewed me out because they were fired by a customer who wanted the change, I was told, “You don't know anything ... you don't know what the hell you're talking about.” Really?!



West Bend CIA

Reminders...

- ✓ Please drive safely, obey stop signs, and observe speed limits
- ✓ Architectural Review is required on any Exterior Modifications (www.ciaservices.com)
- ✓ Approval required on any Exterior Modifications...
Visit: www.ciaservices.com
- ✓ Garage Doors are to be the same color as the body of the house and not the trim
- ✓ Remove trash cans from public view on non-trash days
- ✓ Remove Holiday Decorations and Lights by January 20th.
- ✓ Yard of the Month begins in April.

GO **GREEN**
GO **PAPERLESS**



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Report Streetlight Outages



CenterPoint Energy maintains streetlights throughout West Bend. If a light is out or blinking, please call CenterPoint at 713-207-2222 or report it online <https://slo.centerpointenergy.com/>. You will be asked to provide:

- a pole number for the non-functioning lights you want to report
- contact information (in case more information is needed to locate a streetlight)
- an e-mail address (if you want feedback regarding your repair request)
- the number of streetlights you would like to report

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Yard of the Month Guidelines

West Bend Community Improvement Association

Homeowners of West Bend C.I.A. will be sponsoring a self-governed “Yard of the Month” program. The purpose of the program is to recognize West Bend C.I.A. neighbors who demonstrate above-average efforts in maintaining their property, thereby contributing to the overall appearance of the community at large. There is a great award and the program is administered entirely by volunteers. All award winners receive an official “Yard of the Month” lawn-sign, to be placed on their property for the duration of their award month. If your sign becomes lost or damaged, please request a replacement by sending an e-mail to www.ciaservices.com. Position of the sign should be prominent in the yard located midway between the street and the front of the house. West Bend C.I.A. Yard of the Month group congratulates all “Yard of the Month” award selections and encourages all neighbors to join the efforts of these homeowner’s in keeping their yards and homes beautiful.

CONTEST GUIDELINES:

All current West Bend C.I.A. properties are automatically eligible by default.

- Award winners are selected based on the recommended judging criteria listed below.
- Recipients must reside in West Bend C.I.A.
- Key criteria include manicured yard, beautification, originality and creativity.
- The upkeep of the yard can reflect the efforts of the residents themselves or that of a professional landscaper or groundskeeper.
- An award duration term lasts a single calendar month and runs from the first day of the month to the last day of that same month.
- The same property cannot receive more than one award in the same rolling 12 month calendar period. At least 12 months must elapse between awards for the same yard.
- Recipients receiving awards in the middle of the month shall surrender their award at the end of that same month.
- More than one Yard of the Month recipient may be selected in a single month. In other words, multiple yards may be concurrently recognized.
- While an individual's home is being recognized as a West Bend C.I.A. "Yard of the Month" they are expected to maintain their yard in the same manner that allowed them to win the title.

RECOMMENDED JUDGING CRITERIA

West Bend C. I. A. Yard of the Month candidates are judged solely on the total exterior appearance of their property and front yard as viewed from the street. General upkeep of the yard and property is paramount. Factors include the overall appearance, tidiness and neatness of the front of the property as evidenced by pruned, trimmed and shaped foliage, edged and defined

lawns, borders & flower beds, and a visually appealing facade.

LAWN: Healthy grass with no bare spots or excessive weeds. Grass shall be mowed and edged, and grass around foundations and fences shall be trimmed. Debris (garbage, pet feces, etc.) shall be picked up and removed. A unified, simple, and balanced landscape design. Neat and natural.

LANDSCAPE & FLOWER BEDS: Beds weeded and edged. Flowers deadheaded and dead plants removed. Trees and shrubs pruned. Natural areas cleaned. Beautification efforts including new flowers, new trees, new shrubs, etc. Plantings in scale with the surroundings and limited to a few different types of plants rather than too many which may confuse the eye.

WALKWAYS & DRIVEWAYS: Walkways and driveways shall be clean (including trash containers or yard products removed from view). Area in front of curb free from debris and dirt. Evening appearance after dusk including accent lighting, safety lighting, visible interior lighting, etc.

AESTHETICS: Overall look of landscaping (formal versus informal, use of color and textures, garden art). Inviting look of front entryway (hanging baskets, pots, cleanliness etc.) Originality/creativity (any special touches of the owner i.e., yard art, bird feeders, etc.)

***Summary note:** While lack of strict adherence to the criteria above does not necessarily result in a disqualification, these principles offer general guidelines that should be recognized by the West Bend C.I.A. Yard of the Month program. WBCIA Yard of the Month is dedicated to improving the quality of living and appearance of our community. We encourage residents to take pride in their homes and neighborhood. In turn, we look to celebrate those who do a superior job in maintaining their yards in such a way that they enhance the overall curb appeal of the entire community. Yards of the Month are awarded at the beginning of each calendar month. Yards are judged on neatness, landscaping and color. All yards are eligible. If you feel your yard is being overlooked, please send a voting e-mail with your name, address & phone number to www.ciaservices.com.*



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Eating Right Isn't Complicated

Reviewed by Sharon Denny, MS, RDN

Eating right doesn't have to be complicated — simply begin to shift to healthier food and beverage choices. These recommendations from the Dietary Guidelines for Americans can help get you started.

- Emphasize fruit, vegetables, whole grains and low-fat or fat-free milk and milk products.
- Include lean meats, poultry, fish, beans, eggs and nuts.
- Make sure your diet is low in saturated fats, trans fats, salt (sodium) and added sugars.

Make Your Calories Count

Think nutrient-rich rather than "good" or "bad" foods. The majority of your food choices should be packed with vitamins, minerals, fiber and other nutrients, and lower in calories. Making smart food choices can help you stay healthy, manage your weight and be physically active.

Focus on Variety

Eat a variety of foods from all the food groups to get the nutrients your body needs. Fruits and vegetables can be fresh, frozen or canned. Eat more dark green vegetables such as leafy greens and broccoli and orange vegetables including carrots and sweet potatoes. Vary your protein choices with more fish, beans and peas. Eat at least 3 ounces of whole-grain cereals, breads, crackers, rice or pasta every day.

Know Your Fats

Look for foods low in saturated fats and trans fats to help reduce your risk of heart disease. Most of the fats you eat should be monounsaturated and polyunsaturated oils. Check the Nutrition Facts panel on food labels for total fat and saturated fat.

For more information, view the Academy infographic on the Total Diet Approach to Healthy Eating.



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How to Spot Bad Neighbors When Buying a House

It might sound extreme, but buyers should investigate their neighbors before making an offer.

You are not just buying a house, but also the neighborhood.

How to Spot Bad Neighbors When Buying a House

After months of looking, you've finally found the house of your dreams. It's the perfect size, the perfect price, and the perfect layout. However, there's only one small problem. You think you might be living next door to a neighbor, or a neighboring property, that's less than desirable.

How do you know? The grass in the yard is knee-high, there's a rusty vehicle peeking out of some overgrown brush, and the house's paint is peeling away like old wallpaper. As a result, you're torn. Is a lousy neighbor going to make the house more difficult to sell when you're ready to move again?

This is an important question to ask when buying a house, and there's a one word answer for it: Yes. When you're shopping for a home, even a fantastic house is going to seem blighted if it's plopped right next door to a lousy neighbor. You may love the place, but most buyers are going to shy away from the property, which means selling could be a long, complicated affair.

Remember, the old adage "location, location, location" is around for a reason. You can always change a house, but you can't change its location. Ignoring the neighborhood, and your neighbors, is one of the most common home buying mistakes you can make, especially if you're a first-time home buyer. And, bad neighbors can come in many disguises. What should you look for?

How to Spot Bad Neighbors

1. Property Upkeep

First, look for signs of disrepair and neglect. Make sure you look at all the homes surrounding your potential buy, as well as homes down the street and behind your property. Look for uncut grass, garbage and other clutter left in the yard, and weedy flowerbeds. Also, look closely at the homes and buildings around you. If they look like they're hurting for some love and care that could be a red flag. The neighborhoods in your price range might be full of modest, older homes, but the yards and the exteriors of the homes should indicate pride of ownership.

2. People

Who wants to listen to yet another frat party at 2am Friday morning? Bad neighbors don't just neglect their property; they can also have no consideration for other people in the neighborhood. If you're buying in a college town, or in a neighborhood where there are already lots of rentals, be aware that you might have to listen to more than your fair share of loud music and late night parties. Inspect the neighborhood during the day, and make sure to also drive around the neighborhood at night.

Look for signs such as one house having a lot of cars parked outside and front porches dotted with sofas, recliners, and ottomans. Bad neighbors might also ignore their pets; no one likes listening to a

barking dog all night. When you're house shopping, keep an eye out for neighborhood pets. Are they tied up outside, or in a small fenced area? Do they look like they're taken care of, or are they being neglected? A neighbor's pets offer an important clue to how good, or bad, a neighbor is likely to be. It can be helpful to talk to other homeowners in the area to find out the inside scoop about their neighbors.

Many home buyers also forget to look into the criminal history of neighbors. Think that's going overboard? Well, you might think differently if you found out your new home was right next door to a registered sex offender. Living in the same neighborhood as registered sex offenders and other criminals can drive down the value of a home. According to researchers at Longwood University in Farmville, VA, living within one-tenth of a mile of a sex offender will lower your home's value by 9 percent. So, find out before you buy. Visit FamilyWatchdog.org to see who you'll be living next to if you buy a home in the area.

3. Homes in Foreclosure and Vacant Buildings

Absent neighbors and empty buildings can also bring down property values in the neighborhood. Search online to find foreclosed homes for sale in the area, and then drive by the homes to inspect their condition. Look closely for damage to the exterior of the homes, overgrown yards, and graffiti. In addition to searching for vacant or foreclosed homes in the neighborhood, look for vacant commercial buildings as well. Neighborhoods with stores that have gone out of business and schools that have closed do not reflect a growing, prosperous community. Furthermore, vacant buildings encourage a variety of nefarious activities that you do not want in your neighborhood.

4. Zoning Changes and Development Plans

Zoning laws and plans for development can negatively impact neighborhoods. For example, are residential homes mixed with commercial buildings or mobile homes? Do any of the homes have poorly built additions? Does the city plan to build a road alongside the home? Learning more about existing zoning laws and development plans can tell you more about the neighborhood.

5. City or Community Services

If your potential dream home is located near a power plant or landfill, you might have a problem when it comes to selling your home. Homes located near city services lose, on average, 6 to 10 percent of their value. And if the landfill happens to be designated as hazardous, then your home's value could drop off by 15 percent or more. Excessive light pollution at night, caused by a nearby power plant or prison, can also make your new home seem a lot less desirable. Although many people depend on these services, no one wants to live near them. So avoid buying a home close to major city or community services whenever you can.

Final Thoughts

Bad neighbors can take many different forms: neglectful or inconsiderate homeowners or renters, or a bad location. Not only will bad neighbors lower your home's value and make it harder to sell, they can also make your home life miserable.



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