

MERIDIAN *Community Monitor*

NEWS FOR THE RESIDENTS OF MERIDIAN

6 Ways to Save Money When Shopping on Amazon

These days, everyone's looking for bargains and ways to save while shopping online from the comfort of their own homes. With low prices, a wide selection and fast shipping for customers, Amazon has a lot to offer to save you both time and money. Below are six easy ways to save when shopping on Amazon:

1. Discounted offers: Customers receiving government assistance through EBT or Medicaid can enjoy the benefits of an Amazon Prime membership for a discounted monthly price of \$5.99, with the ability to cancel anytime. With Prime, members can enjoy fast, free shipping, exclusive savings, and easy access to entertainment with Prime Video, Prime Music, Prime Reading and more. Learn more and sign up for a free 30-day trial at <http://amazon.com/qualify>.

2. Stick to your budget. Making purchases with cash is a savvy way to stick to your budget, as it makes you more conscious of what you're spending. When you're shopping online, you can use Amazon Cash instead of your debit or credit card. It's a simpler way to shop and will help you manage your spending. You can visit more than 45,000 participating stores - including pharmacies like CVS and convenience stores like 7-Eleven - to add cash to your Amazon Balance. This method is quick, easy and Amazon doesn't charge any fees.

3. Take advantage of subscriptions. Families can maximize their savings by enrolling in convenient programs such as Subscribe & Save, which allow you to subscribe to a wide selection of items you buy frequently (such as diapers, baby food and household products), and have them shipped to you for free on a regular basis. You'll not only save up to 15% on the purchases, but you'll also save the time and energy normally spent on trips to the store.

4. Scout out deals as they pop up. You can track the best deals on Amazon with Lightning Deals, which offer new deals daily to help you save money. It allows you to find the best prices on items you need, want and love. You can also sign up for "watch a deal" alerts so you'll never miss out on a discount!

5. Earn rewards by waiting. Not in a hurry to get your package? Here's a little-known Prime perk for those who don't need their order right away - selecting the "No-Rush" shipping option at checkout earns you rewards and discounts on future purchases. Rewards are automatically added to your Amazon balance, so you can start saving right away. Keep an eye out for this option next time!

6. Discover Bargain Finds. Check out Amazon's Bargain Finds for a wide selection of seasonally relevant products that are priced even lower - items can vary from clothing and jewelry to gifts and home decor.

Shopping online does not have to break the bank, and you don't have to spend all your time surfing and comparing prices. Thanks to Amazon, you can enjoy some of the best options available for shopping all in one place, and do it within your budget.

Save the Date:

What's Happening in Meridian? Social Events & HOA Board Meetings

August

6 - HOA Board Meeting

15 - Middle School Pool Party w/DJ

23 - Back to School Food Truck Night

& Pool Party

September

2 - Ice Cream Social

October

1 - HOA Board Meeting

26 - Fall Neighborhood Garage Sale

November

16 - Chili Cook-off

December

3 - HOA Board Meeting

14 - Holiday Lights / Snow Spectacular

* All dates subject to change and new events may be added. Annual homeowners meeting will be scheduled in May 2019. Goodwin Mgt will be sending out information soon. For more information, the Meridian HOA Board can be reached at: MeridianHOABOD@gmail.com

THE MONITOR

WELCOME

A Newsletter for Meridian residents

The Monitor is a monthly newsletter mailed to all Meridian residents. Each newsletter is filled with valuable information about the community, local area activities, school information and more. If you are involved with a school group, play group, scouts, sports activity, social group, etc. and would like to submit an article for the newsletter you can do so online at www.PEELinc.com or you can email it meridian@peelinc.com. Personal news for the Stork Report, Teenage Job Seekers, special celebrations, birthday announcements and military service are also welcome. Our goal is to keep you informed!

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Teenage Job Seekers

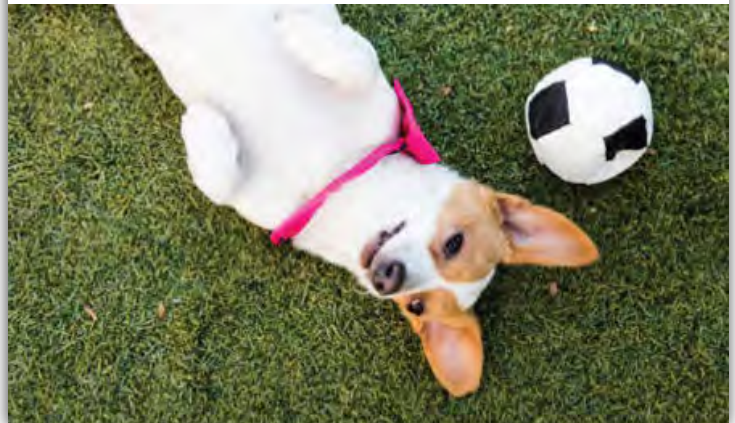
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*-CPR Training +-First Aid Training

Attention Teenagers

The **Teenage Job Seekers** listing service is offered free of charge to all Meridian teenagers seeking work. Submit your name and information to meridian@peelinc.com by the 9th of the month!

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 and click the RESIDENTS tab



NATURE WATCH

by Jim and Lynne Weber

NIGHT BLOOMERS

Many night blooming flowers have white or light-colored blossoms, a strong fragrance (although not always to human noses), and are open by night and close by day. These flowers are extremely important nectar sources for pollinators, and they are attracted to these flowers' nectar mainly by scent. Two of our best night blooming native plants are Berlandier's Trumpets (*Acleisanthes obtusa*) and Jimsonweed (*Datura wrightii*).

Also known as Vine Four O'Clock, Berlandier's Trumpets is an upright perennial herb or climbing vine up to 6 feet long, easily controlled but often clambering over shrubs and small trees if left unchecked. Its opposite, bright green leaves are triangular shaped, about 1.5 inches long, with slightly wavy edges. But it is its white to light pink trumpet-shaped flowers, about 2 inches long, that bloom from April to December, producing a fragrant scent when open at night. Berlandier's Trumpet does well in full sun to part shade, is drought tolerant, and easy to grow and maintain.

Jimsonweed is a 3 to 6 foot tall stoutly branched herb, with alternate, coarse, large gray-green leaves that are broad at the base and pointed at the tip. While its foliage is often described as rank-smelling, its flowers are sweetly fragrant white trumpets, up to 8 inches long, sometimes tinged with purple at the edges. It blooms from May to November, and its flowers close during the heat of the day. The fruit of this plant is a very distinctive spiny, globular capsule up to 1.5 inches in diameter, which opens fully when ripe. Jimsonweed has several other common names such as Sacred Thorn-apple, Angel Trumpet, Devil's Trumpet, and Sacred Datura. Some of these names refer to its use as a hallucinogen in Native American ceremonies, but it is important to note that all parts of this plant are toxic to humans.

Both of these native night blooming species attract several species of Sphinx moths (sometimes known as hawkmoths or hummingbird moths) as well as other pollinating insects such as long-tongued bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds. But it is the Jimsonweed that has mastered the art of mutualism. While it is common for this plant to benefit from its relationship with the Carolina Sphinx (*Manduca sexta*) in the form of pollination, in turn it provides nectar for the adult moth and is the host plant for the moth's caterpillars. These large caterpillars (known to gardeners as 'hornworms'), consume many or all of the Jimsonweed's leaves. But the plant is prepared for the attack, storing resources in its massive root enabling it to produce more leaves. In effect, it grows its own pollinators to ensure its reproductive success!

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.



Jimsonweed



Berlandier's Trumpet

Tips for Packing a Healthy School Lunch

by *Stephany Pando, cooksmarts.com, edited for space*

Packing lunches for your back-to-schoolers is no easy task. It takes time and planning. Plus, every parent knows that just because you pack it, doesn't guarantee your kids will actually eat it.

However, this doesn't mean you have to fill your kids' lunchboxes with pizza and cookies everyday. Below we offer 5 tips for how to pack a nutritious lunch that your kids will look forward to eating and you'll feel good about giving them.

Tip #1: Get Your Kids Involved

- Give your kids healthy food options from each food group and let them make the final decisions on what goes in their lunch.
- Take your child grocery shopping with you and let them have a say (to a certain extent) in what goes into the cart. This promotes feelings of responsibility and empowerment.
- Designate a part of your kitchen as the "lunch packing station" and spend some time there with your kids the night before to get lunch ready for the next day.

Tip #2: Turn Healthy Foods into Fun Foods

- Use cookie cutters to make shapes out of bread, deli meat, cheese, or a melon-baller for fruit.
- Use kid-friendly skewers to make colorful food kebabs.
- Create a theme for the day and have all of the foods in their lunch relate to the theme

Tip #3: Make Your Own Snacks – and limit processed ones

Kids rely on snacks to keep their energy up, but the type of snack is important to consider. Packaged snacks tend to lack important nutrients and can be high in sugar, sodium and saturated fats. Take control of what is in your kids' snacks by making them yourself.

Tip #4: Incorporate All Food Groups

A balanced diet includes all of the food groups. Luckily, there are so many different ways to enjoy each food group:

- Fruits: fresh, frozen, dried, canned, baked (think apple chips!) or pureed.
- Vegetables: fresh, frozen, or baked (think kale chips!)
- Lean protein: baked chicken, deli meats, hard boiled eggs, beans or nuts (be aware of nut allergy regulations at your child's school).
- Low-fat dairy: milk, cheese or yogurt
- Whole Grains: pita, sandwich bread, tortillas, wraps, and pastas

Tip#5: Encourage Hydration

It's recommended that school-aged kids drink between 6-8 cups of water a day (even more in hot weather or if their activity level is high).

- Let your child pick out their favorite water bottle and encourage them to drink the whole thing at least twice at school. They'll be more inclined to do it if they feel like they are completing a challenge!
- If the "flavor" of water is too boring for them, throw in a few pieces of frozen fruit to sweeten it up – and keep it cooler.

With these tips in mind, you and your child are ready to start out the school year on the right foot. Good luck – and happy packing!



We're in the Neighborhood

Please Join Us for Sunday Morning Worship!

8:45 a.m.	Traditional
10 a.m.	Contemporary
11:15 a.m.	Traditional



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TAWNY CRAZY ANTS

The tawny crazy ant, also known in Texas as the Raspberry crazy ant, was originally discovered by pest management professional Tom Rasberry (hence the name) in Harris County in 2002. Since then, the ants have been distributed to other parts of the state via people, plants, materials, and other things and are currently confirmed in 40 Texas counties.

Distribution map of Texas counties with confirmed presence of tawny crazy ants (in red).



Tawny crazy ants are about 1/8" and orangish-brown in color. With a good hand lens or microscope, you can see 12 segmented antennae, 1 node, and a circle of hairs at the tip of the abdomen. These ants can be confused with other ants, so if you are unsure of what you have check with your local Extension office.

Tawny crazy ants have a cyclical population level throughout the year with populations peaking in late summer, decreasing in the fall and then beginning to build again in the spring. Tawny crazy ants are capable of biting, but do NOT sting like fire ants. They are mostly nuisance pests, but can reach extraordinary population levels (in the millions) and can become a problem if they get into electrical equipment. Tawny crazy ants do not have nests or mounds like fire ants; they tend to nest under things- rocks, landscape timbers, flowerpots, etc.

For more information on this particular ant species go to <http://urbanentomology.tamu.edu/ants/rasberry.html>

Treatment Options

- Removing harborage areas- fallen limbs, rocks, leaf

litter, etc. These ants will nest under pretty much anything on the ground, so you may want to remove anything that is not necessary.

- Alter moisture conditions (crazy ants prefer moist, humid conditions)- reduce watering, repair any water leaks, and improve drainage

- Eliminate honeydew producers from area. Crazy ants tend honeydew producers such as aphids, whiteflies, hoppers, mealybugs and scale insects.

- Use pesticide sprays to treat infested areas- under rocks, along landscape edging, etc. Pesticide sprays can also be used to create a barrier around the outside of the home. Piles of dead ants may build up in treated areas. If this occurs, remove dead ants to keep the pesticide barrier maintained.

- Hire a pest management professional (PMP). PMPs have access to pesticides that are unavailable to homeowners for tawny crazy ant treatment and they also have experience dealing with pest problems regularly.

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

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COYOTE DENNING SEASON

During this time of the year, coyotes may be more active as they get ready to have pups in the den. Denning season last from April-November. Coyotes are typically most active at dawn and dusk, though they may be seen hunting or traveling during daytime hours. We want to share space with coyotes, but not time. Hazing is a process that helps shape coyote behavior and encourages them to avoid contact with people and pets. It reinforces coyotes' natural wariness without harming them.

Please contact 311 to report concerning behavior or to receive more information about how to respond. Below are considerations regarding hazing and pet safety and coyotes: Hazing should be exaggerated, assertive and consistent:

- Make eye contact, yell and wave your arms. You want the coyote to know the behavior is directed at it. Waving your arms will make you seem bigger.

- Use noisemakers such as whistles, air horns, a "shaker" can full of small rocks (or something similar), or bang something like pots and pans together.

- If the coyote does not leave immediately, throw non-edible objects near it. You can use something like small rocks, sticks or tennis balls. Remember, the goal is not to hurt the coyote, you're trying to get it to leave and associate humans with unpredictable, "scary" behavior.

- Spray the coyote with a water hose, water guns or spray bottles. You can also use a mixture of water and vinegar, pepper spray or bear repellent.

- If the coyote does not leave after escalating hazing efforts, maintain eye contact and back away slowly. Notify 311 immediately.

- Don't haze if a coyote appears sick or injured, is cornered or displaying acceptable coyote behavior. Please call 311 to report sick or injured animals. Pet safety:

- Keep small pets inside if possible and monitor them when outside (specifically during twilight/night time hours)

- Feed pets indoors

- Provide secure shelters for poultry or other animals living outside

- Avoid using extendable leashes; walk dogs on leashes that are 4-6 feet in length

- Avoid letting dogs explore vegetation that you cannot see through

For more information on hazing, attractants or reliable food sources, and pet safety, visit: <http://www.austintexas.gov/department/coyotes-central-texas>

To keep coyotes and other wildlife wild, we can follow a few, simple preventative measures:

- Always keep trash and compost in a secure bin

- Keep your barbecue grill clean

- Keep the area under your fruit and nut trees free of droppings (a coyote's diet can be up to 40% fruit in Texas)

- Avoid feeding pets outdoors (if you must feed pets outside, feed during the daytime and remove the uneaten food as soon as the animal has finished).

- Feeding wildlife and feral cats can attract coyotes. In addition to coyotes eating the food, mice and other animals will be drawn to leftovers, which can subsequently attract predators such as foxes and coyotes

For immediate assistance, call 311. To schedule a one hour presentation with a Wildlife Educator, call (512) 978-0514. Visit our website to learn more about coyote ecology, hazing, pet safety, and attractants. <http://www.austintexas.gov/department/coyotes-central-texas>



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SEVEN WAYS TO HELP HURRICANE VICTIMS



Natural disasters come in multiple forms and can quickly devastate many lives in a matter of moments. While they all can cause nightmares for those affected, few are as powerful and destructive as hurricanes.

That's why, when hurricanes make landfall and wreak havoc, help is immediately needed and accepted by the people and communities impacted the most. Here are a few ways you can make

a positive impact for those affected by natural disasters, specifically hurricanes:

Start a Fundraiser

One of the most potentially impactful ways to lend a hand after a natural disaster is to start a community fundraiser. This can be as simple as an online account accepting donations for a group of people and sending a large sum to a relief organization, or as thought-out as a large-scale event, like a raffle or dinner, accepting donations for entry.

Donate

Money is typically the resource relief organizations can use the most during natural disasters, and it can also be the easiest way for people to lend aid. There are typically many trustworthy organizations available to donate to during times of need.

Promote Fundraising Efforts

After you've made a donation yourself, spread the word to others whether it's via word of mouth, social media or other forms of communication. Let friends and family know how they can join the cause.

Volunteer

While it isn't viable for everyone, some people closer to the affected region can directly help those in need with physical help at the place it's most needed. Whether it's passing out supplies, serving food to those displaced or other means of lending a hand, volunteers are a valuable resource following natural disasters.

Provide Shelter

Another option for people looking to help who are closer to the devastation is to offer shelter, especially if they have family members or friends who have been affected. Assisting at places sheltering the displaced is another way to provide help, if offering space in your home is not an option.

Give Blood

Injuries can be unavoidable when hurricanes and other disasters strike. One way to help those hospitalized or otherwise injured is to donate blood, possibly saving lives in the process.

Stay Persistent

In the immediate aftermath of storms and natural disasters, the news cycle is dominated by stories of triumph and despair, and by ways people can help. However, the storm is eventually overshadowed by other, more recent news. One major way people can help after a hurricane is by continuing their support long after the storm has passed, as those affected will need assistance, supplies and donations for much longer than just a couple of weeks after the incident. As time passes, it can be helpful to continue donating money and supplies, committing to helping physically rebuild structures and promoting fundraising efforts.

Find more ways to help those in need at eLivingToday.com.

Staying Safe Through a Hurricane

While the immense power of hurricanes and tropical storms can greatly affect the lives of many in an instant, there are ways to increase your safety before, during and after the storm. These tips from the American Red Cross can help protect yourself and your family.

Before

- Put together an emergency kit, including basic but crucial items such as: water, food, a first aid kit, cell phones with chargers, contact information for family and friends, flashlights, extra batteries, medications, radios, copies of key personal documents, extra cash and maps.

- Working with your family, create an evacuation plan for your home. This includes discussing how to prepare and respond to emergencies, identifying the responsibilities of each person in the home and practicing the plan.

- As a storm is approaching, stay tuned to local radio or TV stations for the latest updates.

- Be prepared to evacuate quickly, and ensure that your emergency kit and other necessities are ready.

During

- Stay inside.

- If power is lost, use flashlights in the dark rather than candles.

- If possible, keep radio or TV stations tuned in for any new or developing information.

- Because waters could be contaminated with sewage or contain other dangerous substances, avoid contact with floodwater.

- If instructed to do so by local authorities, shut off the power and water mains.

- If you must be outdoors, don't walk, swim or drive through floodwater. Don't walk on beaches or riverbanks, and don't allow children to play in or near floodwater.

- Stay out of areas subject to flooding, such as underpasses, dips and low spots.

- If you must drive and are caught on a flooded road with rising waters, get out of the car and move to higher ground.

After

- Communicate with family and friends to let them know you're safe.

- If you are evacuated, don't return until authorities confirm it is safe to do so.

- Continue listening to radio or TV stations for new or developing information.

- Be prepared for continued rainfall and additional flooding.

- Don't use water that could be contaminated.



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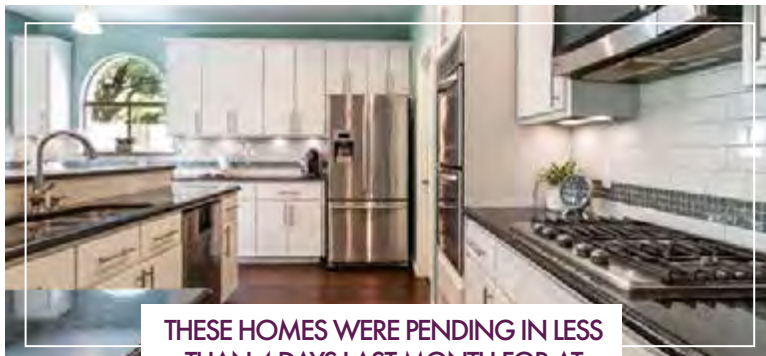
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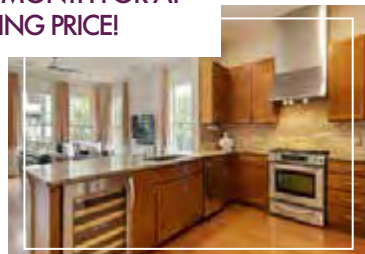
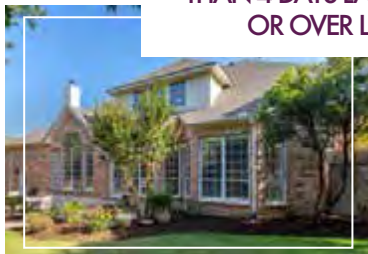
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