



The Jester Warbler

Official Publication of Jester Homeowners Association, Inc.

June 2020

Volume 15, Issue 6

TIPS TO REDUCE WILDFIRE RISK IN THE HOME 30' IGNITION ZONE

by Carol Philipson

Since we all have some extra time to maintain our outside landscaping, here are 10 easy tips from the Austin Wildfire Division for Jester homeowners to create a defensible space around their home to reduce damage from wildfire:



1. Clean gutters
2. Trim overhanging limbs 10' above roofline
3. Cut dead tree branches up to 6-10'
4. For shorter trees, take no more than 1/3 of the tree height
5. Remove plants under or next to windows, eaves, vents
6. Where leaves gather, so will embers especially in entry and around garage. Be sure to keep those areas free of leaves.
7. Rake leaves
8. Prune ground cover, remove vegetation from under trees
9. Do not store wood or fuel under decks
10. Sign up for your FREE FireWise Home Evaluation

(Join the list of concerned homeowners to have evaluations once we return to "normal")



RECYCLING REMINDER

NO PLASTIC BAGS IN YOUR BLUE BIN

by Dale Bulla

I have noticed that some of our residents are not aware of the restrictions on plastic bags for the blue recycling bins. Even though it is on the label fastened to the lid, some have not noticed that Styrofoam and plastic bags are to go in the trash bin not the recycling blue bin.

I have learned from the single stream folks that any recyclables in a plastic bag will be discarded in the pre-sorting process and go to the landfill. Also, there is a good chance that if a truckload has lots of plastic bags, the entire load could be discarded. The plastic bags evidently clog up the whole automated sorting process and it takes quite a while to remove the plastic bags from the huge teeth that shred the recyclables. So please tell your neighbors and friends that plastic bags should go into the trash. You may put your recyclables in paper or cardboard boxes but not plastic bags. Thanks for keeping Jester green!





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ARTICLE SUBMISSIONS

Interested in submitting an article? You can do so by emailing
tgouldie@gmail.com or by going to:
www.peelinc.com/articleSubmit.php.

*All news must be received by the 12th
of the month prior to the issue.*

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*-CPR Training +First Aid Training

*If you would like to add your name, send email to tgouldie@gmail.com
with the jobs that interest you, your age and phone number
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NATURE WATCH

SERVANT SERPENTS

by Jim and Lynne Weber

Few living creatures elicit as much unfounded fear as snakes, but several species are quite beneficial to suburban living. It may seem impossible to some, but snakes can be more helpful than harmful, and many are well adapted to places of human habitation.

While they can be easily misidentified, the two most common beneficial species found in our area are the Texas Rat Snake (*Elaphe obsoleta lindheimeri*) and the Bull Snake (*Pituophis catenifer sayi*). Both are nonvenomous and belong to the Colubrid family, the largest snake family in the world with members found on every continent except Antarctica.

Found in the eastern two-thirds of the state, the Texas Rat Snake is one of our longest serpents, with most adults between 42 and 72 inches in length. Overall blackish, it has a median row of large dark brown to purplish irregularly shaped blotches against a background color that can range from yellowish to grayish-brown to reddish. Its head is typically uniformly gray on top with white lip scales across the lower jaw and throat.

The Texas Rat Snake is common in wooded or brushy areas, as it excels at climbing trees. This allows it to find refuge from ground-dwelling predators and prey such as birds and their eggs. Also quite adept at catching and constricting home-invading mice and rodents, they certainly help to keep those populations in check. Since they compete with rattlesnakes and cottonmouths for the same food supply, there is little chance you'll find those venomous snakes in their vicinity. When threatened, however, Texas Rat Snakes often imitate rattlesnakes by shaking their tails, which of course results in movement but no signature rattle, and they can be aggressive if they feel cornered.

A moderately stout-bodied snake, the Bull Snake is found in the central third of Texas, inhabiting sandy plains and prairies in the north, the tree-studded country of the Edwards Plateau, and the thorn scrub of South Texas. On average, an adult Bull Snake is typically between 4 and 5 feet long, but the maximum known length is nearly 9 feet.



Large, square-shaped, black, brown, or reddish brown blotches are present down its back, contrasting with its tan to yellowish background color. It also has less distinct markings on its sides, composed of smaller blotches and spots of variable shape and size.

Like the Texas Rat Snake, the Bull Snake is a very powerful constrictor, enabling it to capture its preferred prey of mice, rats, and other small mammals. They will occasionally eat rattlesnakes and are often mistaken for them. The Bull Snake capitalizes on its similar appearance to a rattlesnake, and will make a rattle-like hiss when threatened, along with rapidly vibrating its tail in brush or leaves.

While these snakes can often be mistaken for rattlesnakes, they perform a valuable service in keeping our homes and backyards free of many types of household pests. Now that's a servant serpent!

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



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FREE Firewise Home Evaluation

By Carol Philipson

One of the most frequent questions we get when conducting a FREE FireWise Home evaluation is what plants are the most fire resistant and which to avoid planting close to the house. Here's a list of trees and plants and a couple of websites for reference. This is only one of the valuable tips the Jester FireWise Committee evaluator will give homeowners when evaluating your home. Remember it's FREE and only takes about an hour to evaluate the outside of your home.

To sign up go to www.jesterhoa.com

Firewise Plant List – Texas.

Northwest Austin Civic Association.

PO Box 26654 Austin TX 78755

<https://nwaca.org/library/wildfire-prevention/firewise-plant-list/>

<https://nwaca.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Firewise-plant-list.pdf>

Texas Wildfire Protection Plan. Texas A&M Forest Service

<http://texasforestservice.tamu.edu/vegetationmanagement/>

<https://tfsweb.tamu.edu/TWPP/>

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Kids Can Save Lives by Getting Active at Home



(Family Features) As millions of people across the globe social distance and self-quarantine to help prevent further spread of the novel coronavirus, kids and families can help save lives by getting active at home.

With 55 million students in the United States affected by school closures, teachers, families and kids are incorporating options like UNICEF Kid Power into daily at-home schedules. A free program, the platform hosts a library of interactive dance, yoga and learning videos featuring WWE Superstars, DreamWorks characters and more. These 3-5 minute "brain breaks" help keep kids moving, provide lessons on global citizenship, encourage positive screen time, establish a sense of control and connectivity, and empower them with purpose.

As kids dance, move and learn, they unlock therapeutic food packets that get sent to severely malnourished children around the world. More than 900,000 kids across the U.S. have come together to save 100,000 lives. Through the program, kids also provide meals to their local food banks, give supplies for doctor visits and plant trees in their communities. The more active they are, the more lives they save. Families and teachers can get involved at unicefusa.org/KidPowerAtHome

Beyond this program, UNICEF USA is also providing practical guides and resources for families, including ways to keep kids safe from online harm, adjust to online learning and a quiz that unlocks \$2 in funding while outlining how COVID-19 compares to past outbreaks.



Globally, the United Nations Children's Fund is providing relief and support to vulnerable communities as they combat the ongoing pandemic. To date, the organization has reached more than 40 million health care and frontline workers with hospital equipment and personal protective equipment, as well as more than half a billion people with prevention, hygiene and informational messaging. As this crisis will have continuing effects on millions of people, UNICEF has appealed for \$651 million to address the growing humanitarian needs and provide long-lasting response.

Adults and kids can combat the impact of coronavirus, one dollar or dance move at a time. Just \$3.30 can provide 100 pairs of disposable gloves to health workers. To help fund relief programs, visit unicefusa.org/CoronavirusRelief

#14244, Source: UNICEF

Article downloaded from FamilyFeatures.com

BICYCLE SAFETY

Bicycling certainly has become a popular exercise option (or for some just to get out of the house) during the Covid Virus. Families and individuals were spotted within the neighborhood and on the walking/jogging/riding trails that surround us. Thus, this is a good time to remind everyone of bicycle safety, not just now...but anytime, such as riding for exercise/recreation, to school/work, etc.

EXCERPTS FROM THE USAA EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION

Bicycling is fun, good exercise and good for the environment. You and your family can enjoy years of safe bicycle riding when you understand the risks involved and take steps to prevent accidents and injuries. Covid 19 got a lot of people out walking and others pulling their bikes out of the garage to kill the boredom of being cooped up in the house.

5 Keys to Safe Bicycling

1. Wear a bicycle helmet.
2. Be visible.
3. Stay alert.
4. Know and obey traffic laws.
5. Be predictable.

Wear a Bicycle Helmet

You should always wear a bicycle helmet. Do not assume you will be safe from injury just because you are going a short distance or riding on an unpaved surface. Many serious bicycle accidents occur on residential streets or bike paths and do not involve vehicles.

Inspect Your Bicycle

- Lift the bicycle by its seat and spin the rear wheel. It should spin freely without wobbling, slowing quickly, or touching the brake pads.
- Apply the rear brake smoothly to stop the wheel. The brake pads should touch the wheel rim evenly. When released, the brake should spring back into place.
- Lift your bicycle by the handlebars, and spin the front wheel. It should spin freely without bobbling or touching the brake pads.
- Apply the front brake smoothly to stop the wheel. The brake

pads should touch the wheel rim evenly. When released, the brake should spring back into place.

- Inspect brake pads. Replace them if they become worn or cracked. They should be at equal distances from the wheel rim.
- Check the spokes on both wheels. Replace broken spokes before riding.
- Check the tire tread. There should be no worn patches.
- Make sure tires are properly inflated.
- Check your handlebars. Stand in front of your bicycle holding the wheel tightly between your knees and try to move the handlebars back and forth or up and down. They should not move.
- Lift the frame near the handlebars and turn the front wheel back and forth. It should swivel freely.
- Make sure brake levers are secure.
- Apply the brakes and try to move the bicycle forward or backward.
- Make sure the ends of the handlebars are protected.
- Make sure the seat is secure and does not move from side to side.
- Clean reflectors and headlight. Make sure they are securely attached.
- Lubricate the chain if needed.
- Take your bicycle for an annual tuneup and safety check to ensure it remains in good condition.

On the Road

When riding your bicycle on public streets, you are required by law to follow the same rules as any other vehicle driver. You also have the same rights as drivers of other vehicles.

Be Predictable

- Use hand signals to communicate your intentions to other vehicle drivers and bicyclists.
- Communicate verbally (ex: "passing on your left").
- Ride in straight line and avoid sudden swerves.

Teach Children Bicycle Safety

Is your child ready to ride? According to The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), most children are not ready to ride a two-wheeled bicycle until 5 or 6 years of age. Along with physical skills, your child must demonstrate the mental readiness and self-control for understanding and obeying safety rules.

Set Clear Rules

Children – and all bicycle riders – should always wear a bicycle helmet when riding. In addition, you should set age-appropriate limits on when, where, and how children may ride. Be prepared to take away children's riding privileges if they do not follow these rules.

Be A Good Example

Practice what you teach about bicycle safety. Be diligent about wearing a bicycle helmet, stopping at stop signs and following other important safety rules. Your children will learn more from your example than from your words. Ultimately you should be able to practice bicycle safety while having fun!





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Note: Due to the ongoing cancellation of events, we cannot publish an accurate calendar of activities this month.

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At Roof N Rescue, we only use installers who have extensive experience performing roof repairs, rejuvenation, and replacements. These craftsmen have been in the business for decades, so you can rest assured they are true experts of their trade. And in fact, because we strongly believe in the quality of their work, we provide an extended labor warranty.

For more information about all the services we provide, please visit our website:

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