

# *The Community* **Connection**

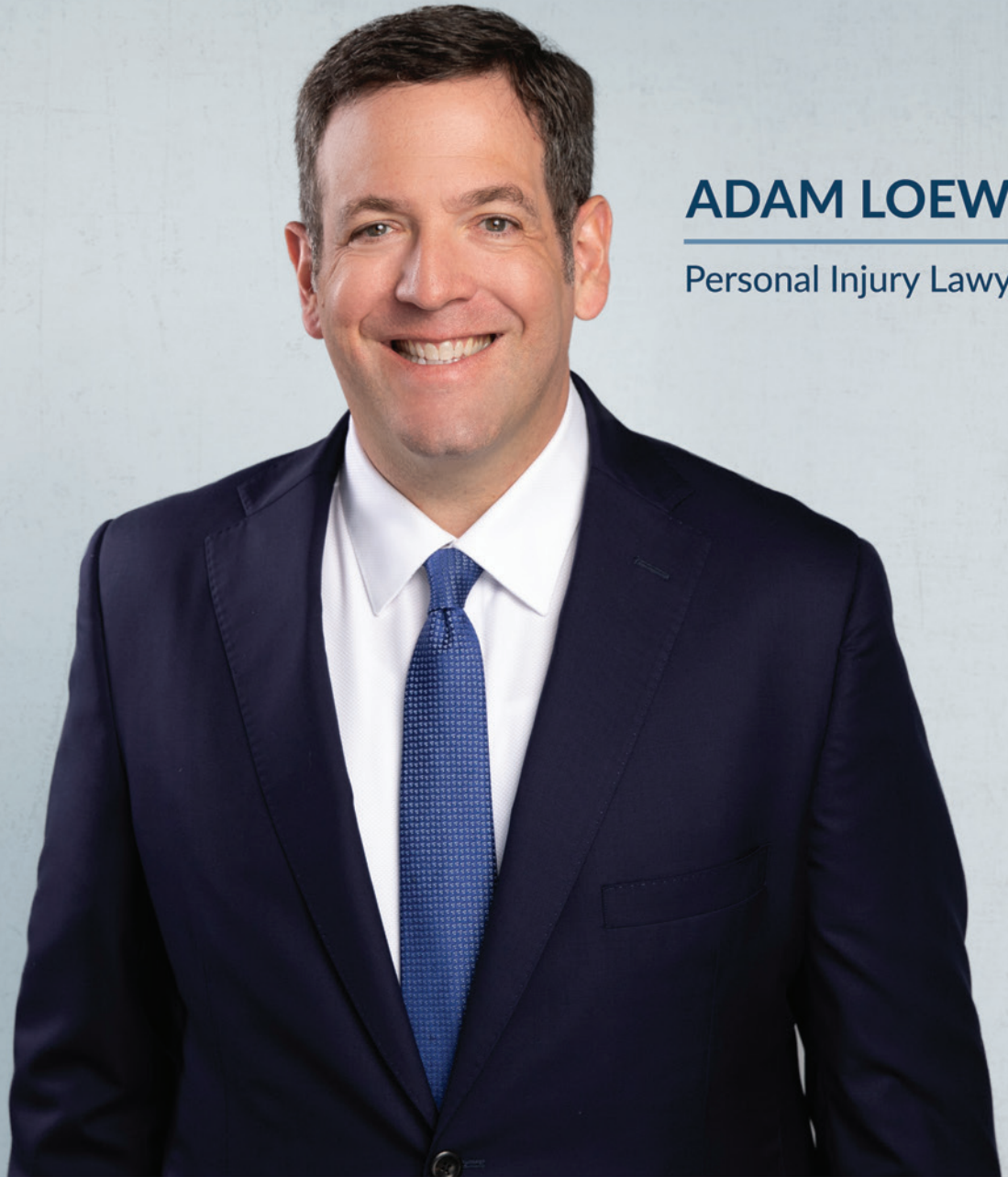
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### OTHER NUMBERS

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| Bee Cave Municipal Court.....            | 512-767-6630              |
| Lake Travis Post Office .....            | 512-263-2458              |
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| City of Bee Cave .....                   | www.beecavetexas.com      |
| Travis County (General No.) .....        | 512-854-9020              |
| .....                                    | www.traviscountytexas.gov |

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The *Community Connection* is mailed monthly to all Sweetwater residents. Residents, community groups, churches, etc. are welcome to include information about their organizations in the newsletter. Personal news for the Stork Report, Teenage Job Seekers, recipes, special celebrations, and birthday announcements are also welcome.

To submit an article for the *Community Connection* please email it to [sweetwater@peelinc.com](mailto:sweetwater@peelinc.com). The deadline is the 15th of the month prior to the issue.

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## NATURE WATCH

### GONE TO SEED

by Jim and Lynne Weber



*Flame acanthus seed*

Often used as an informal figure of speech meaning to deteriorate or go downhill, 'gone to seed' can have a negative connotation. But each seed contains a new beginning: a tiny plant just waiting for the right conditions such as water, warmth, and a good location, to germinate and grow. Seeds and seed heads form fascinating shapes, varying sizes, and intricate patterns, often adorning the fall and winter landscape.

Plants have many ways of dispersing their seeds, and most have evolved over millions of years. While many of the methods are tried and true, certain seeds have developed in very particular ways to take advantage of such methods, and some plants only release their seeds in response to specific triggers.

Wind helps seeds float or flutter away, often aided by seed structures such as thin wing extensions or long, feathery tails like those on the endemic Scarlet Clematis (*Clematis texensis*). Texas Bluebonnets (*Lupinus* sp.) employ the expulsion or explosion method, where the small, pebble-like seeds are forcibly expelled when the dried pods twist open in the warm sun. Similarly, Flame Acanthus (*Anisacanthus quadrifidus* var. *wrightii*) has hood-shaped capsules enclosing seeds attached to a hooked stalk, and ejects the seed from the capsule when it dries and breaks open.

Gravity plays a part in many plants seed dispersals, where weighty seeds fall off the plant and roll to a new location. The best example of this are the round, heavy fruits that simply fall off a plant when ripe, such as those on Mexican Plum (*Prunus*

mexicana) or Texas Persimmon (*Diospyros texana*). If the fruits have a tough outer shell, they may travel some distance from the parent plant, and if they have a soft skin, they may break open where they fall and scatter the seed or seeds within.

Some plants produce very light seeds, seeds with buoyant fluff, or seeds with air trapped in them, so they can float away from the parent plant that grows in or around water, like Common Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*) or Black Willow (*Salix nigra*) or Eastern Cottonwood (*Populus deltoides*). Others employ the assistance of animals, which can come in the form of seed or fruit eating (where the seed can pass undigested through the animal), seed caching or burying, or seed transportation. Common examples of seed and fruit eating include Cedar Waxwings and American Robins consuming juniper and yaupon berries, and seed burying is a common practice of both ground and tree squirrels, who eat and cache acorns. Often unbeknownst to the animal, some seeds can be covered with tiny hooks or spines that catch on a passing animal's fur, eventually transported to and rubbed off in another location.

This fall and winter, let the seeds linger, at least until early spring. Not only do they provide much needed food for wildlife, but leaving them allows for some beautiful and mysterious patterns in your winter landscape, and the promise of renewing the cycle of life that begins again each spring!

Send your nature-related questions to [naturewatch@austin.rr.com](mailto: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](http://naturewatchaustin.blogspot.com).



*Scarlet clematis seed*





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(Culinary.net) While apple pie is a traditional seasonal dish, you can add unique flavor with this skillet version. Simply toss Honeycrisp apples with brown sugar, cinnamon and lemon juice then spoon between two pie crusts simmering in a thin layer of brown sugar and cinnamon then drizzle with caramel sauce for a deliciously gooey evening treat.

Find more dessert recipes at Culinary.net.

## Skillet Apple Pie with Caramel Sauce

4 large Honeycrisp apples, peeled, cored and sliced  
1/4 cup sugar  
1 1/2 tablespoons cinnamon, divided  
1 tablespoon lemon juice  
6 tablespoons butter  
1/4 cup, plus 2 teaspoons, brown sugar  
2 refrigerated pie crusts  
2 teaspoons whipping cream caramel sauce

Heat oven to 350 F.

In large bowl, combine apples, sugar, 1 tablespoon cinnamon and lemon juice until apples are covered. Set aside.

In oven-safe, 10-inch nonstick skillet, melt butter. Add 1/4 cup brown sugar and remaining cinnamon; mix until combined. Boil 5–8 minutes.

In same skillet, place one pie crust over brown sugar mixture. Pour apples over pie crust. Cover apples with second pie crust. Cut slits in top to release steam.

Brush whipping cream over crust. Sprinkle with remaining brown sugar.

Bake 35–45 minutes until crust is golden brown.

Drizzle with caramel sauce.

## GO GREEN

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## MEXICAN HONEY WASPS



The Mexican honey wasp, *Brachygastra mellifica*, is a neotropical wasp that can be found in North and South America. Within North America, it can be found in Arizona and Texas.

Honey wasps are small, about 1/4 – 1/3 of an inch. These social wasps have teardrop-shaped abdomens striped in yellow and black, rusty wings, and a dark head and thorax. Like other wasps, female honey wasps are capable of stinging and will do so to protect the colony or if they are provoked.

Mexican honey wasps create a small, about 18 inches in size, basketball to football shaped nest out of a paper-like material. These nests are typically located in trees or shrubs, often higher up where they won't be disturbed. Nests can be home to 3,000-18,000 wasps. Unlike honey bees, Mexican honey wasps can have multiple queens in each colony. Clusters of colonies can be common in some areas and nests last about 3 years before they are abandoned.

These wasps are pollinators and collect nectar and pollen to feed larvae in the colony. Adult wasps feed on fluids and, sometimes, exoskeletons of other insects, especially Asian citrus psyllids when they are available.

If you need to manage these wasps, then you should contact a professional that has proper protective equipment, such as a bee suit.

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](http://www.urban-ipm.blogspot.com)

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