

THE BULLETIN

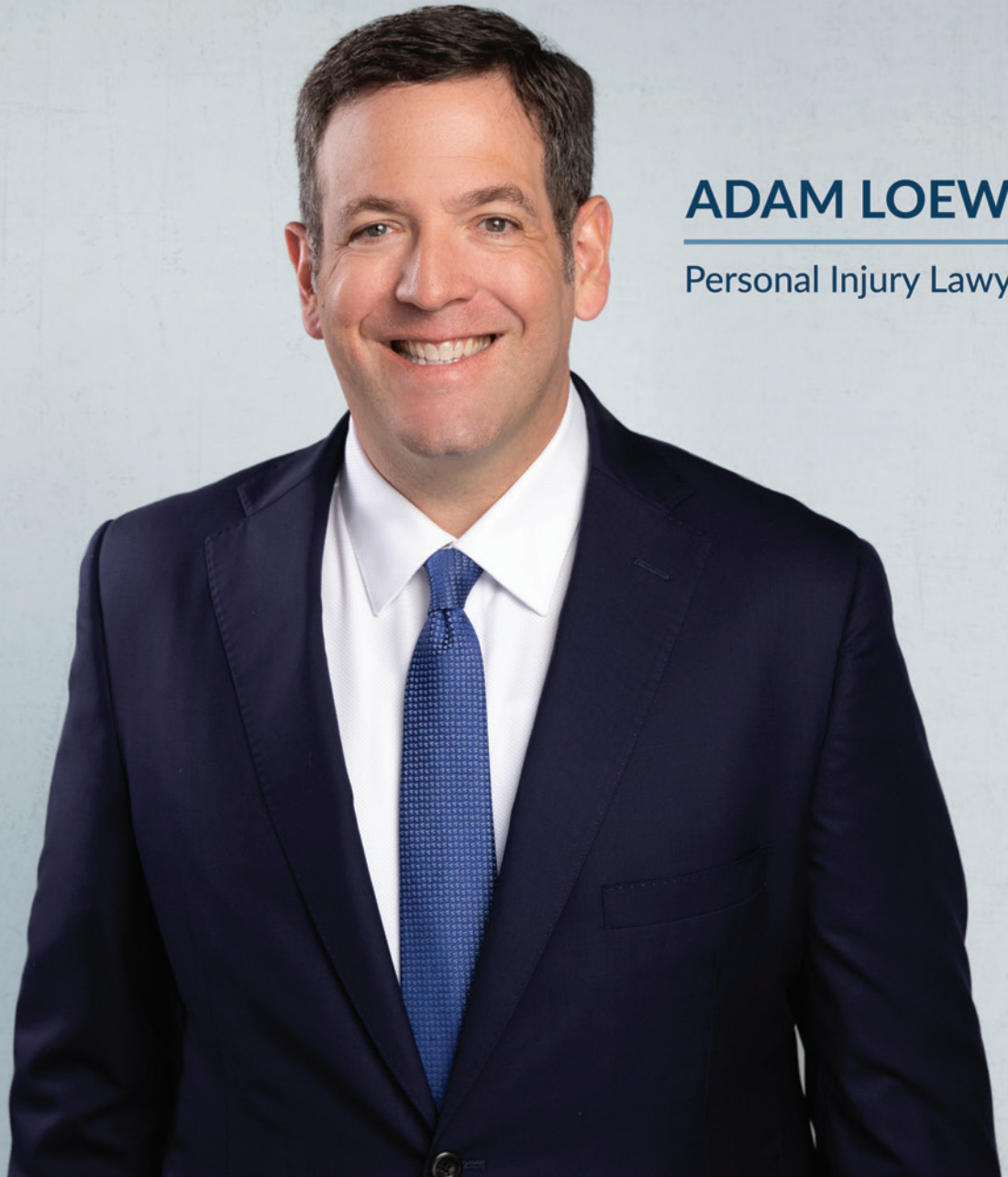
Belterra Community News

December 2020 Volume 2, Issue 12

News for the Residents of Belterra



Bicycle Accidents | Boating Accidents | Car Accidents | Dog Bites | Drunk Driving Accidents
Injuries to Children | Motorcycle Accidents | Slip and Falls | Truck Accidents | Wrongful Death



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UTILITIES

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OTHER

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NATURE WATCH

MERRY MISTLETOE

by Jim and Lynne Weber



Beloved Emarginea Moth

From the earliest times mistletoe has been considered one of the most magical, mysterious, and sacred plants found in European folklore. Originally used to bestow life and fertility, as a protection from poison, and as an aphrodisiac, in medieval times branches of mistletoe were hung from the ceiling to ward off evil spirits. With the process of immigration and settlement of North America, traditions associated with the European plant were transferred to the New World and evolved into a folklore all its own.



Christmas Mistletoe

In Central Texas, two species of mistletoe are native, the Christmas Mistletoe (*Phoradendron tomentosum*) and Oak Mistletoe (*Phoradendron leucarpum*). The genus comes from the Greek 'phor' which means thief and 'dendron' which means tree, as both species are semiparasites that steal water and nutrients from their host trees. Christmas Mistletoe is by far the most common of the two species. It has small, elliptical evergreen leaves and smooth green stems covered by short hairs, with tiny green flowers on the male plant and shiny white berries on the female plant. Widely used in the United States as a Christmas decoration, it is especially common growing on Sugar Hackberry, Cedar Elm, Honey Mesquite and other hardwood trees in Texas as well as Oklahoma, Louisiana, and Mississippi.



Great Purple Hairstreak

While mistletoe is often viewed by humans as a nuisance, it is an important species for wildlife. It is the larval host plant for the Great Purple Hairstreak butterfly and the Beloved Emarginea moth, and its berries are relished by winter resident bird species such as Cedar Waxwings, Eastern Bluebirds, and American Robins. These birds eat the berries and spread the seeds through their droppings and by wiping their beaks on tree

branches, both of which may cause a new plant to take hold. Interestingly, seeds deposited in this way first spend considerable time and energy developing their roots within the branch's tissue before sprouting external stems and leaves.

While ancient folklore has attributed a wide range of mystical abilities to mistletoe, none is more fascinating than the myth of Frigga, the Norse Mother Goddess worshiped by pre-Christian people of northern Europe, and how mistletoe became her sacred plant. She was believed to be the mother of Balder, the God of the Summer Sun, who had a dream of death. Alarmed by this dream, Frigga went to all the elements, plants, and animals to seek a promise that no harm would come to her son. Balder was thought to be safe from harm by anything on or under the Earth.

But Balder's enemy, Loki, was the God of Evil, and he knew of the one plant that Frigga overlooked. It was the lowly mistletoe, which grew neither on nor under the Earth itself, but on the branches of oaks and other trees. Loki made an arrow tip with the mistletoe, and gave it to the Hoder, the blind God of Winter, who used it to strike Balder dead. The sky paled and everything wept for the Sun God, who was restored by Frigga after working with the elements for three days. The tears she shed for her son were said to be the pearly white berries of the mistletoe, and in her joy at his resurrection she kissed everyone who passed beneath the tree on which it grew.

Thus began the custom that whomever should stand beneath the humble mistletoe will come to no harm, but receive only a kiss as a token of love. Merry mistletoe to you and yours!

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.



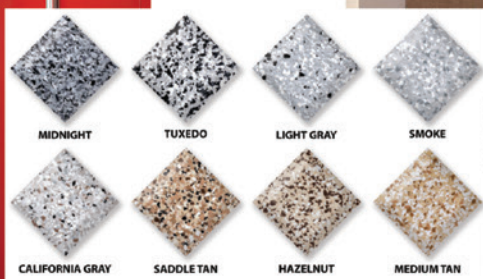
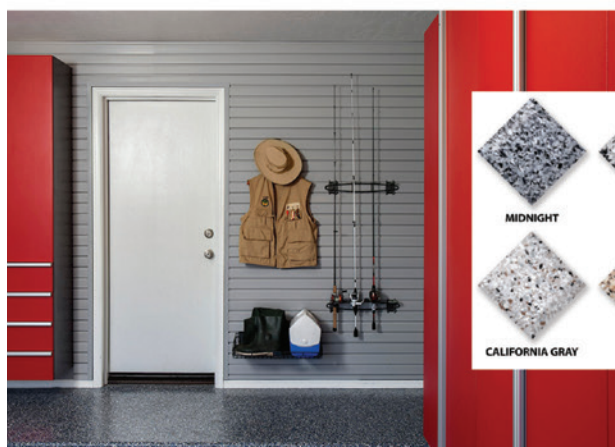
Mistletoe Flowers



Mistletoe Berries



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- Unsalted Butter
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- All-Purpose Flour
- Baking Soda & Salt
- Semi-Sweet
- Chocolate Chips

DIRECTIONS:

Preheat oven to 350°F and line a large baking sheet with parchment paper or a silicone baking mat. Set the baking sheet aside and prepare your cookie dough.

Cookie Dough: beat butter, brown sugar, and granulated sugar together for one minute or until well combined. Mix in egg yolk and pure vanilla extract.

Then add the flour, baking soda, and salt and mix them in until just combined. Add the semi-sweet chocolate chips and fold them into the cookie dough. Cover the cookie dough tightly, place it in the freezer to chill for 10 minutes.

After chilled, remove cookie dough and use 1.5 tbsn cookie scoop and scoop onto baking sheet. (place 8-10 scoops now)

Bake cookies for 10-12 mins until lightly browned around edges.

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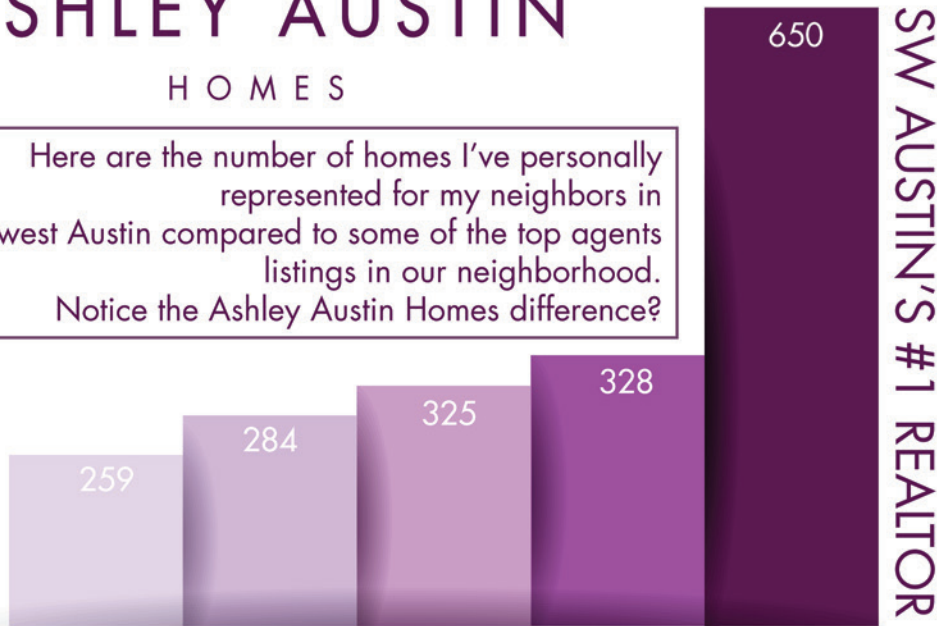
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HOMES

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