

Westcreek Neighborhood ASSOCIATION

Volume 7, Issue 3

March, 2011 - Published Monthly for our Westcreek Neighbors

Log on at westcreekna.org

SAVE THE DATE!

Mills Elementary Annual Spring Festival

April 30th Saturday, 2:00 - 6:00 p.m.

**Giant Rock Wall | Inflatables | Life Size Maze
Games | Petting Zoo Face Painting Artist
Cake Walk | Silent Auction | Doc Munchies
Donut Trailer & Food Trucks**

And Much Much More!

The cost of a wristband allows unlimited access to all areas. For more information, visit www.millspta.org We hope to see you there! Kids & Adults of all ages welcome!

Local Businesses: If you would like to sponsor a festival booth or donate an item for the Silent Auction in exchange for acknowledgement at the festival, in the Mills newsletter, and the Mills website, please email Michelle Hubbard at: mkhubbard@sbcglobal.net

HUGE GARAGE SALE

at Abiding Love Lutheran Church

March 5 from 8am til 2pm

**7201 Brush Country Road @ Convict Hill Road
Rain or Shine!**

Come save \$\$'s and have fun too as you shop for clothes, household items, furniture, office & school supplies, toys and much more! Food and drinks also for sale to give you energy to shop. Proceeds benefit the Church Youth Ministries and other charitable outreach programs. All unsold items are also donated to other charities. If you have items you would like to donate, take them to the church on March 3 after 2pm or all day on the 4th. Please call 280-4533 or 751-6429 for additional information or assistance.

TIPS FOR MASTERING THE FARMERS' MARKET

By Melanie Dragger, M.Com.

Many people are taking steps to improve their health and the environment by eating organically grown and raised foods. While some people are selecting organic items at their local grocery store, farmers' markets are becoming increasingly popular. Over the past year, according to the Department of Agriculture, the number of farmers' markets in the U.S. increased by 858, or 16 percent, from 5,274 in 2009 to 6,132 in 2010. When the USDA first began tracking farmers' markets in 1994, there were only 1,755 markets.

Outside of growing your own produce and raising your own livestock, shopping at a farmers' market is the best way to obtain fresh, local, and seasonal fruits, vegetables, and herbs, as well as farm-fresh eggs, meat, poultry, and dairy products. Many farmers' markets also offer artisan breads, honey, and seasonal jams, jellies, and preserves.

BELOW ARE TIPS TO HELP YOU MASTER YOUR LOCAL FARMERS' MARKET:

- 1. Do Your Research** – Before heading to the market, research what produce is in season in your area. Since all products sold at a farmer's market may not be organic, and some organic products sold may not be certified, familiarize yourself with the organic certification process and product labeling. Information on the USDA's National Organic Program can be found at <http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop>.
- 2. Bring Your Own Containers** – While some vendors have bags and boxes available for customers, bringing your own containers is the best way to ensure you will be able to transport and protect your purchases properly. Additionally, recycling containers helps the environment by reducing the number of natural resources used to produce new ones.
- 3. Bring Cash** – Swing by your bank or ATM before hitting the farmers' market. Most vendors do not accept checks or credit cards. Bring small bills, since it may be difficult for some vendors to make change.
- 4. Go Early or Go Late** – The best items usually go first, so try to get to the market early. However, before making a purchase, take a quick trip down the aisles, since prices can vary greatly among vendors. If you can't make it to the market when it first opens, go at the end of the market day to catch deals from vendors trying to unload their remaining products.
- 5. Speak with Vendors** – Shopping at a farmers' market allows you an opportunity to speak directly with growers and farmers. Not familiar with Swiss chard? Looking for a new way to prepare eggplant? Most vendors love to share their knowledge, including discussing their production methods, providing storage and transportation advice, and sharing recipes and cooking tips.

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Call 311 to report any City-related problem. It operates 24/7. Report a non-emergency crime, barking dogs, speeding problems, zoning violations, blocked sidewalks, etc.

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NEWSLETTER INFO

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ADVERTISING INFORMATION

Please support the businesses that advertise in the Westcreek Newsletter. Their advertising dollars make it possible for all residents to receive a newsletter at no charge. No homeowners association funds are used to produce or mail the newsletters. If you would like to support the newsletter by advertising, please contact Peel, Inc. Sales Office at 512-263-9181 or advertising@PEELinc.com for ad information and pricing.

Mastering The Farmer's Market - (Continued from Cover Page)

Buying organic products at your local farmers' market offers numerous benefits, including boosting the local economy, reducing the amount of toxic chemicals that enter your body and the environment, and decreasing the amount of fossil fuels used to transport products to consumers. However, organic products can be more expensive than conventionally grown and raised products, and some organic products may be difficult to find in some areas. If going 100% organic is not feasible, use the following list as a guide. According to the 2010 report of the Environmental Working Group, a non-profit organization specializing in research and advocacy related to public health and the environment, these 12 fruits and vegetables consistently contained the highest amount of pesticides when conventionally grown, and should be consumed in organic form when possible:

- | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Celery | 7. Sweet Bell Peppers |
| 2. Peaches | 8. Spinach |
| 3. Strawberries | 9. Cherries |
| 4. Apples | 10. Kale/Collard Greens |
| 5. Blueberries (domestic) | 11. Potatoes |
| 6. Nectarines | 12. Grapes (imported) |

The EWG's annual ranking of produce pesticide contamination is based on its analysis of tests conducted by the USDA and the federal Food and Drug Administration. More information on the EWG, as well as the full list of fruits and vegetables ranked, can be found at <http://www.ewg.org>.

LOOKING FOR NEWSLETTER EDITOR

After 12 years, our newsletter editor, Karen Gregory, is stepping down. So the Westcreek Neighborhood Association is looking for a new editor! If you like to write, edit and do a little page layout design, this position is perfect for you.

The newsletter comes out once a month, and the design work is for the front page only. If you are interested, please contact Chris Schexnayder at chrisschexnayder@sbcglobal.net

Business Classifieds

BUDGET BLINDS—40% OFF of our Signature Series™ custom window covering products—Wood Blinds, Faux Wood Blinds, Cellular Shades, Roller/Solar Shades, Woven Wood Blinds, Vertical Blinds, Roman Shades and Draperies. ALSO...ask about our Custom Shutters!! Call today at 512-373-8512 for a FREE In-Home Consultation!!

NatureWatch

by Jim and Lynne Weber

Shadow Tails

The word 'squirrel' comes from the Greek 'sciourus', meaning 'shadow tail', and refers to the bushy appendage possessed by most all squirrel species. They are members of the rodent family, and Texas is home to 10 species of squirrels with 4 of them common in the Austin area.

Along with their bushy tails, squirrels are generally slender animals with large eyes and soft fur. Their front limbs are shorter than their hind limbs, with 4 or 5 toes on each foot. Their front feet include a usually underdeveloped thumb, and all toes have sharp claws for climbing trees and quickly clamoring over uneven terrain. Squirrels are strongly vegetarian, and feed mostly on a wide variety of seeds, nuts, fruits, buds, bark, and leaves. Their vision is sharp and they have 'vibrissae' or specialized hairs on their head and limbs, which afford them an excellent sense of touch.

The most common tree squirrels in Central Texas are the Eastern Fox Squirrel (*Sciurus niger*) and the Eastern Gray Squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*). A large squirrel with rusty or reddish underparts and grayish or brownish upperparts, the Fox Squirrel prefers open woodlands of mixed trees and riparian areas along rivers and streams, and makes its dens in hollow trees or nests made of leaves. Their diet is largely made up of acorns which are buried in winter and relocated through their keen sense of smell. Mating occurs in January/February, and again in May/June, with offspring born in March and July.

The Gray Squirrel is a medium-sized squirrel with grayish upperparts with white-tipped hairs, white underparts, and a white spot at the base of its ears in winter. Gray Squirrels live in dense live oak stands and bottomland areas, with the Austin area in the westernmost part of their range. There are usually two openings to their nests, which are otherwise similar to the Fox Squirrel, as is their diet and breeding cycle. Destruction of bottomland habitat from logging, overgrazing by livestock, and development are the main reasons why gray squirrels are only locally common, and declining in many areas.

Our most frequently seen ground squirrels include the Rock Squirrel (*Spermophilus variegatus*) and the Mexican Ground Squirrel (*Spermophilus mexicanus*). A rather large, stout squirrel with a blackish head and upper back and a mottled grayish-brown rump and tail, the Rock Squirrel is nearly always found in rocky canyons, cliffs, and rock piles, where they make their dens. While they can climb trees, they prefer to be ground dwellers, where they forage for acorns, nuts, insects, and berries. In Central Texas, these squirrels hibernate beginning in November, and emerge in late February or March to begin breeding.

The western edge of Austin is the easternmost range for the Mexican Ground Squirrel, a rather small squirrel with about nine rows of squarish white spots on its back and a moderately bushy tail. They prefer brushy or grassy areas, including mowed lawns and overgrazed pastures and live in burrows dug into the soil. They eat chiefly green vegetation and insects, but are one of the few squirrel species that will eat meat. Breeding begins in late March or early April, with a brood chamber built into a side tunnel in the deepest part of their burrow.

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Nature Watch - (Continued from Page 3)

Anyone who has seen a squirrel running along a tree limb or across an open road with its bushy tail undulating and waving behind it, or spotted a squirrel sitting with its tail curled over its back while it eats or surveys its surroundings, can appreciate why their name means shadow tail! 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 book, Nature Watch Austin, to be published by Texas A&M University Press in 2011.



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The advertisement features a large graphic of puzzle pieces. One piece is black and contains a white circle with a stylized 'P' inside. Below the puzzle pieces, the text reads: **HOW ARE YOUR SOCIAL NETWORKING SKILLS?** Underneath this, it says: Follow Peel, Inc. Community Newsletters on Facebook www.peelinc.com/Facebook. In the bottom right corner, there is a Facebook logo.

Landscaping With Deer Resistant Plants

Submitted by Jack Williams

Landscaping in Austin can be fun, but also quite challenging. The unique setting of Austin blends the urban city with the Hill Country of Central Texas. This mix gives the Austin landscape a look and feel unlike any other part of Texas.

With wildlife and people living together, it is common to see deer in neighborhoods all around Austin. The deer can really give headaches to the novice landscaper. When landscaping in Austin, it is important to know the different types of shrubs and perennials you can use to make your yard beautiful and keep the deer from munching on your new plantings. Remember, the

plants mentioned are usually deer resistant, but deer will eat almost any plant if hungry in extreme drought conditions.

Every landscape should have the right mix of evergreen shrubs and flowering perennials. This way, your garden doesn't look dead in the winter and will provide color in the spring, summer and fall. Here are a couple of plants that I have had success with while landscaping in Austin.

Evergreen Shrubs:

- Silver Germander
- Pineapple Guava
- Dwarf Yaupon
- Cotoneaster

- Upright and Trailing Rosemary
- Bicolor and African Iris
- Jerusalem Sage

Flowering Perennials:


- Salvia species (Several varieties and colors to choose from--I like 'Hot Lips', Mexican Bush Sage and Salvia Greggii)
- Indigo Spires
- 4 Nerve Daisy
- Copper Canyon Daisy
- Turk's Cap
- Bat Face Cuphea
- Yellow Bell

These shrubs and perennials will vary in height and texture, so be sure to plant in the right location. For example, you don't

want to plant a Pineapple Guava in front of a window or an Upright Rosemary too close to a sidewalk--allow for adequate growth. If not, the plants will overwhelm the space and crowd your garden.

By planning ahead and before you begin landscaping in Austin, you will save valuable time, money AND keep deer from eating your plants!

Best of luck and happy gardening.




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Tips to Turn Your Walk Into a Workout

By Sarah S. Jordan, MS

Walking is a great mode of exercise because it requires no equipment, it is low-impact, and something that many people can do regardless of their fitness level or experience.

Benefits of Walking

Any movement is good movement and the same is true for walking. Like other forms of exercise, walking can help you improve cholesterol levels, lower blood pressure, control weight, improve mood, decrease stress, and it also provides numerous other health benefits. Here are some tips to turning your walk into a workout.

Get the Goods

Proper footwear is essential for any kind of exercise. It is important to select shoes with good arch support and soles that absorb shock and provide cushioning. If you are unsure about fit, Austin has several local shoe stores that will personally fit you to a new pair of sneakers.

Choose clothing that is comfortable to move in and that you feel good wearing. Dress in layers if the weather is cool so that you can adjust as needed during your workout. And take a bottle of water

along so that you can hydrate along the way. You may find that taking an iPod along will help keep you motivated.

Walking for Fitness: Proper Speed and Technique

Although the act of walking is simple, walking for fitness takes more effort, attention to speed, and technique. In order to get the most out of your walking workout, the speed should be brisk and above your "stroll in the park" comfort level. Also, your heart rate should be elevated. A good estimate: 10 - 15 heartbeats in a 6-second pulse count. (Multiply that number by 10 to get heartbeats per minute.) Strike the ground with the heel and drive off from heel-to-toe in order to effectively engage the muscles of your lower-body.

A few minutes after starting your walking workout, take a moment to stretch the calves, quadriceps, and hamstrings. Hold stretches for several seconds (with no bouncing) on each side. After your workout, reward your muscles and improve flexibility by taking a few minutes to stretch. Hold stretches longer here because muscles are warm and can make gains in flexibility at this point.

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What's on your
to-do list this
month?



Change Your World - sundays @ 10 am

THE RADIANT CHURCH | WATCH LIVE services Sunday mornings or view any time at www.ghbc.org

Sunday Morning Schedule 10:00 - Worship | 8:30 & 11:30 - Bible Life Groups (all ages)

Great Hills Baptist Church | 10500 Jollyville Road . Austin, Texas 78759 | 512.343.7763

Tips to Turn Your Walk Into A Workout -

(Continued from Page 6)

Just Getting Started?

If you are new to exercise, it is important to check with your doctor before starting an exercise program. Start slowly and gain confidence before adding distance. For example, you might try walking 10 minutes in one direction and 10 minutes back. Slowly build up to 15 minutes in one direction and 15 minutes back. Over time, build up to 2-3 miles or 40-60 minutes of walking at a brisk pace most days of the week.



A Seasoned Walker?

If you have been walking for quite some time, you may be looking for something new to add to your walking workout. With a few quick additions, you can further challenge and tone muscles and increase the intensity of your workouts.

- **Add speed.** Turn your walk into a speed walk. Engage the arms and the core muscles.
- **Incorporate intervals.** Walk for five minutes. Do an interval for two minutes. Repeat. Intervals can include things like walking lunges, moving side squats, push-ups, and jogging.
- **Hit the hills.** Adding an incline will increase intensity in a hurry!
- **Add resistance.** Use a weighted backpack or vest. Or push your child in the stroller. I did not realize just how much weight I was pushing when I exercise with my son until I did the math recently. He is 25 pounds, and the stroller is 15. That extra 40 pounds adds great intensity (and a whole lot of cuteness) to my workouts!



If this is the year that you have devoted to improving health, walking is a great way to start! Remember... "The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step."



**COLIN'S HOPE
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DATE: Wednesday, April 13th
11:00 am Registration - 1:00 pm Start
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FORMAT: 4-person scramble
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*Includes lunch, dinner, shirt & goodie bag

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