

AROUND THE BEND

October, 2011 Vol. XXVIII, Issue 1

Hudson Bend Colony Neighborhood Association

From Article II of our Bylaws: The purpose of the Association shall be to protect and promote the quality of life and the value of property in our neighborhood.



Home Protection From Wildfires

Kenny Holder and Steve Hudson

Spurred by the recent tragedy of wildfires in our area, two residents submitted articles about protecting ourselves, our neighbors and our property from wildfire. Kenny Holder, who lives on Pool Canyon Road, is a former volunteer firefighter for Napa County, CA and Hayes County, TX. Steve Hudson is the HBCNA Treasurer, with a home on Hopkins Drive. This article is a combination of their contributions.

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President's Message

Tom Struppeck

This is my first chance to write the message from the president column, and I want to take his opportunity to thank our out-going president, Patricia Sigg King, for her efforts during her tenure as president. She did a great job, and I can only hope that my term will be as successful.

We now have a website -- www.hbcna.com -- which will simplify keeping our membership information up to date and give us another way of getting information to our members. That is our purpose, to help keep our members informed about issues that affect our peninsula. You, the members, are our constituency. Feel free to write a note for our newsletter, or just let us know what information you would find useful.

The suggestion was made that we put a gardening calendar on the website. I know that I would find this useful. If you have other ideas, please let us know. A good way to do that is to send us an email: info@hbcna.com.

Finally, we are always looking for interested people to serve a term or two on the board. The time commitment is minor, and it is a great way to meet some of your neighbors.

The threat of wildfires all around our Hudson Bend community made us view our new neighborhood with a new perspective. A lot of the dried foliage and vegetation around the area is really close to our homes. One flicked, lit cigarette from a passing car and we could have quite a conflagration on our hands.

Have an Escape Plan

The first thing is to be prepared to evacuate and save the lives of yourself and your loved ones. Know all the routes out of your neighborhood--the normal way you drive out may be blocked by fire, fallen tree limbs, disabled vehicles, etc. Decide what you would want to take with you ahead of time. You may only have minutes to leave and you will be under a lot of stress. Have your papers, photos or whatever you decide to take organized and know where they are. If you have photos and financial information on a computer, then take it. If it's a laptop, don't forget the charger! If it's a desktop, take the box but you don't really need the monitor or keyboard. Those items are cheap to buy at Goodwill or you can borrow them.

Protect your Property

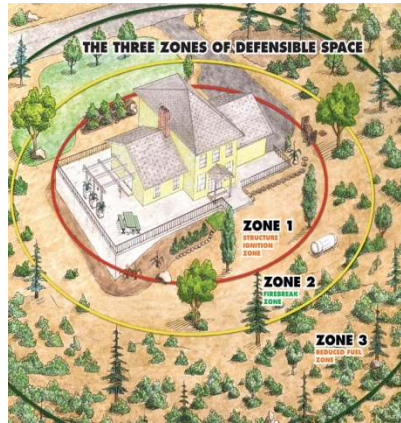
In general, there are a few key factors that will dramatically affect your home’s ability to survive a wildfire threat: you, the building material of your home, and the space surrounding the home.

Unless you are in the process of building your home or are ready to have the roof and/or siding redone, there may not be much you can do about material without incurring a major expense. You can, however, proactively take actions to establish a fire ‘space barrier’ (or ‘defensible space’ as it is referred to in the fire defense community) around your home should a fire come close in the future.

Fires need fuel to burn, so if we can reduce the amount of fuel available for the fire then maybe we can slow the spread of the fire and keep it from reaching our homes. Keep the roof clean of all leaves and twigs, if a hot ember from the fire falls in a pile of dry leaves on the roof those leaves will catch fire! So clean the valleys of the roof and keep the rain gutters free of leaves. Remove dead limbs, brush, trees, and other dead vegetation from your property.

A home’s “defensible space” is the area around a house where fire ignition sources such as vegetation and flammable items have been reduced or eliminated to reduce and/or eliminate a wildfire threat. A properly established defensible space also provides the opportunity for firefighters to effectively defend your home against wildfire. The defensible space is divided into 3

perimeter zones around your home and structures.



The diagram above is taken from www.firewise.org.

Zone 1 – The Structure Ignition Zone. This is an area that must be made non-combustible up to approximately 10 feet from the home. In this area, only low volume, well-irrigated vegetation should be planted and extreme care should be taken to keep this area free of all materials that could ignite during or after a wildfire. No bark mulch or wood chips should be allowed in this zone.

Zone 2 – Firebreak Zone. This area starts at the edge of zone 1 and goes to approximately 30 feet from the structure. It requires a reduction in the volume of the fire fuels (plants, shrubs, trees), and elimination of what are called ‘ladder’ fuels because they promote the ability of fire to climb upwards. When done correctly, this zone area will create an environment that will not sustain a wildfire because the fire is denied fuel. As a result, the effect of heat and flame on the home will be substantially reduced.

Zone 3 –Reduced Fuel Zone. This area starts at the edge of

zone 2 and extends 100 to 200 feet from the structure. The distance should increase as the slope from your home increases. It is an area of overall fuel reduction to create an environment that calms a wildfire by separating available fuels, which reduces the heat and flame generated by the fire. If done correctly, a fire ‘offense’ can be most effective here.

Specific Preventive Actions

The Firewise Guide to Landscape and Construction gives a number of specific actions that should be taken if possible. In a nutshell, actions needed to improve your home’s ability to withstand a wildfire really boil down to three R’s: Remove, Reduce, and Replace anything around your home and its environment that can fuel a wildfire.

Think About your Insurance.

If the worst happens, you not only need insurance but it helps to have evidence of what was lost. You should take photos or videos of your home, furnishings, objects and memorabilia with a monetary value, and store them elsewhere along with any documents supporting their value. Also, keep in mind that ordinary home insurance doesn’t cover certain kinds of collections. Supplemental insurance may be advisable for those.

Editor’s note: Consider burying your propane tanks and electric lines when practicable. Electric sparks start fires and exploding propane tanks spread them. I also advocate gun safes for ammunition and weapons that you won’t be taking with you. --Tom Science

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Oak Wilt

Carol Bubak, Director

We've got a **killer** stalking us around the Bend!

Oak Wilt is a disease which exfoliates oak trees and kills them. It is a fungus that clogs the vascular system of trees, prevents it from absorbing enough water. It's also known as "Live Oak Decline," but it infects Red Oaks as well. They die in about six weeks and have a 100% mortality rate after infection and Live Oaks live about two months to many years and have an 85% mortality rate. Leaves first lose their color. Live Oak leaves' veining pattern is more prominent and yellow in color.

It is most commonly spread to other trees by the root systems. Recent droughts have increased its spread in Hudson Bend Colony. Roots can even connect or graft onto each other under foundations and across streets. Imagine a grove of trees whose roots are extending as far as possible in all directions in search of water. One tree in the grove touches and grows into roots with an infected tree and now the whole grove is infected.

What looks like a group of oak trees is often a *motte*, which for practical purposes is only one tree. The roots are all interconnected.

Tree wounds can also spread the disease if they not properly sealed after: pruning, damage from storms, squirrels, vehicles, rubbing against structures or other limbs. Sap beetles are

attracted to the odor of fungal mats forming under bark on infected trees. They transfer fungal spores on their bodies to healthy trees. Both fungal mats and beetles are most common in the period February 1st through June 30th. Avoid trimming trees in this time, always use proper pruning techniques, avoid excessive thinning and crowning. Seal wounds on oak trees all year round.

Clean tools between trees with a solution of water and 10% bleach, alcohol or Lysol.

All oak brush should be immediately burned if possible, chipped, or removed from the property. Firewood from the property or transported onto it must be properly stored. If it is stored on the ground, place thick plastic sheeting under it. It is best to store it inside a shed or garage away from oaks and insects. Inspect trees for transplanting before they are planted.

Once a tree has oak wilt, there has been no known cure. There is a product called Bio Green which the makers claim to cure oak wilt by ridding the infected tree of the food source of the fungus, but we do not yet know how effective it is.

Prevention of Spreading Once Infected

Trenching a four feet deep around the infected tree to isolate its root system. It is very expensive in this rocky Hudson Bend terrain. Injecting the product, Alamo, into healthy trees. It costs about \$30-35 per 1 inch of tree diameter.

Consult a Certified Arborist if you suspect you have Oak Wilt and learn more at these sources:

There is state funding available for Oak Wilt removal. See if you qualify at:

[HTTP://www.texasoakwilt.org/Documents/Stewardship/IncreasedCSforOWMay2010.pdf](http://www.texasoakwilt.org/Documents/Stewardship/IncreasedCSforOWMay2010.pdf)

You Tube LINK: More information can be found on Oak Wilt at [HTTP://www.texasoakwilt.org/Professionals/ISATTFSOakwiltpruningofficial_v2.pdf](http://www.texasoakwilt.org/Professionals/ISATTFSOakwiltpruningofficial_v2.pdf)

More information on the beetle is at: [HTTP://www.kxan.com/dpp/news/local/forester-provides-rare-look-at-beetle](http://www.kxan.com/dpp/news/local/forester-provides-rare-look-at-beetle)

Craftspeople in Austin

Tom Sciance

Often we forget the extensive craft resources available in Austin, and also what a valuable resource your neighbors can be in helping find them. I was reminded of this last month at the HBCNA Board meeting. I explained that many years ago I had bought several Stiffel floor lamps that were alike. I got them because I really liked the unusual shape of the torchiere globes.

Over the years several had broken, and because the original Stiffel had gone out of business no replacements were available. I had searched the web and found only that a firm dealing in such things said they had been unable to find a source. One of our Directors, Carol Bubak, owns a lighting store (City Lights and Design), and her sources did not locate any either. Another Director, Kyle Kelly, suggested that she knew a glassblower in

Austin who might be able to make one.

I had thought of glass blowing nowadays as directed toward art objects rather than being a source for a more commercial item, but seeing no other options I visited the atelier of Morgan Graff, owner of Austin Glass Blowing. It's located at 1406-B Smith Road, near Highway 183 and Rolm Road in southeast Austin.

It's a fascinating place, with the "glory hole" gas-fired kiln, torches, electric annealing ovens, and all kinds of diamond grinding wheels, cutters, shapers, rod supports and other equipment.



Morgan Graff at the "Glory Hole"

Morgan and her associates teach glass blowing and related crafts such as fusion.



Shaping Outside the Kiln

Morgan explained that although my original was molded and so there would be minor differences in a blown replacement, she believed she could make one that would do. She certainly could, and did. The result is shown below.



The new Torchiere in its Habitat

I was very impressed with her capabilities and willingness to try something different. I was grateful to Kyle and others for pointing me to the right source, and for reminding me that our neighbors are a valuable resource.

What's in my backyard?

Tom Struppeck, President

In mid-September we started noticing some birds with bright orange chests and black heads in the back yard. These birds, it turned out, were male Baltimore Orioles. They are fruit eaters and are especially attracted to sliced oranges (which you can see in the photo).

These birds have since moved on. Many birds stop for a few days on their annual trips down south and again in the spring when they make their way back north.



What's HE Doing in Austin?

Typically, we'll see American goldfinches and several types of hummingbirds during the fall migratory season.



A Plains Blind Snake (Wikipedia)

Another creature that surfaced, literally, was a Plains Blind Snake. These harmless snakes spend their lives underground. They tunnel through the earth like worms and actually look like worms. Since they almost never are in the light, their eyes have atrophied. This loss of vision is common in cave-dwelling and subterranean reptiles and fish. I saw one the other day after the rain. They can breathe underground when it is dry, but when it rains they need to be closer to the surface to get air.

A Welcome Backyard Visitor

Tom Sciance, VP

I found this visitor and took his photo on our patio a couple of days before that last heavy rain. Tom Struppeck identified him as a checkered garter snake. After the rain, I found him in a plastic 5-gallon bucket in several inches of water. I thought he must be dead, but when I poured everything out on the garden he quickly revived and crawled away. I hope he didn't leave the neighborhood because of this bad experience. (And for you purists, no, I don't know it's a "he.")

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A Checkered Garter Snake

Wikipedia describes it thus: The **Checkered Garter Snake** (*Thamnophis marcianus*) is a [species](#) of [garter snake](#) native to the southern [United States](#). The epithet *marcianus* is in honor of American Brigadier General [Randolph B. Marcy](#), who led surveying expeditions to the frontier areas in the mid 19th century.

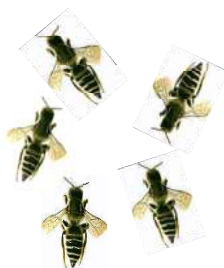
The Checkered Garter Snake is typically green in color, with a distinct, black checkerboard pattern down its back. It is capable of growing to lengths of 42 inches, but 28 inches is closer to average. They are typically found near permanent bodies of water, like streams and ponds, but have also been found in the semi desert region of the High Plains of West Texas. It is the most easy garter snake to tame; even a wild one can become tame in a few days when handled carefully. Their diet includes small frogs, toads, small fish, earthworms, and if trained small mice or fish fillet. They will rarely bite; instead they release a foul smelling liquid onto the attacker.

(My dog also knows that “foul-smelling liquid” trick.)

Less-Welcome Backyard Visitors: Aggressive Ground Hornets

Kyle Kelly, Director

Kenny and I moved into our home on Pool Canyon Road a little more than a year ago. The residence had been unoccupied for a while, so there was a lot of yard clean-up needed. As we went about our yard work, we unpleasantly discovered 3 separate and quite populated nests of “ground hornets” in our front yard. The insects were black/brown with thin yellow stripes on the stinger section of their body – not as much yellow as a yellow jacket wasp.



A Photo from the Web

They were sleeker than a bee and not as large as a wasp--and talk about aggressive! If you have the unfortunate circumstance of ever disturbing such a nest on your own property, run away and run fast. Plan to run for a little farther than you would think because they will pursue you. And when I say ‘they’ I mean anywhere up to a dozen. They attack in a group!

Several stings and phone calls later, here’s what we found out about these pesky little buggers:

- There is not a consensus among exterminators as to what ‘they’ are called. I heard ground yellow jackets, burrow bees, mining bees, sand bees, ground wasps, ground hornets, etc.
- There is a consensus among exterminators that treatment is expensive because no one will come out during the day because these little guys are so aggressive.
- There is not a guarantee among exterminators that their treatment will kill them.
- There is not a common treatment. I heard soapy water, boric acid, wasp spray, Sevin dust, diazinon, and even diesel fuel and gasoline (lit or unlit).
- There was consensus that whatever the treatment, it should be done under the cover of darkness and while wearing protective clothing.
- There was consistency across advice that all entrances/exits needed to be identified before



A Ground Hornet Nest Entrance

any treatment was attempted and that all entrances/exits needed to be sealed off immediately upon treatment, while at the same time being prepared to run--and run fast, in the dark, while covered with protection from head to foot including your face (or else be covered with hornets).

Anyway, over the next week we watched and determined the entrance/exit sites of the three nests. Then we decided upon a plan of action (we called it Operation Sting) and picked a night to execute the plan.

We decided to do all three in the same night, hoping that screams and cries from the first nest hit (including ours) would not put the others on alert. We chose Friday night in case we underestimated the retaliation and needed the weekend to recover and for the swelling to go down (hopefully a worst case scenario).

We only had one set of body cover (that fit me) so I donned a full set of turkey camo leafy cover. I then quietly and carefully placed concrete stepping stones near the entrances/exits to be later used as seals. Once I determined everything was still quiet, I picked up my can of ‘treatment’ and proceeded to the first target site. I was hoping no one would be driving by on Pool Canyon Road during the operation since I probably looked like a highly suspicious character out in the front yard of our home.

Kenny’s role was to be my rescuer if I was in some way unsuccessful with the operation. The most stressful part was having to turn on the flashlight to locate the exact point of the entrance while pouring the treatment and grabbing the stepping stone all at the same time without stirring the hornet’s nest, so-to-speak. I chose a headlamp flashlight to keep my hands free once it was turned on.

I stealthily moved to the first target. ‘Flash,’ ‘pour,’ ‘plop,’

and ‘swoosh’ was the sequence of actions that I had repeating in my head. Kenny said I kind of squealed on the first one as I sprinted away from the target. I don’t remember anything but my heart racing. We waited to see if we were going to be slammed by stingers or hear the other nests awakening, but nothing happened.

The first part of the mission was accomplished without incident so I felt much better approaching the second target. Again, flash, pour, plop, swoosh, and wait. Nothing – ‘piece of cake’ went through my mind as I approached the third nest and then froze. What was I hearing? Buzzing?? Great! I slowly backed up and decided to wait a little longer since the second and third nests were closer together. Once I could not hear anything more, I successfully treated the third nest and we both let out a sigh of relief, put away our gear, and turned in for the night.

The next day we watched for any activity around the nests. Nothing. That night we removed the stepping stone seals and listened. Nothing. Sunday we ventured over to the entrances to get a better look. We saw dead bodies. Later that day Kenny got a shovel and dug up one of the nests. There was a huge catacomb of underground paper nest and no live hornets.

A year later we have yet to discover any more ground hornet nests on our nearly 2 acre property. I guess the word is out that we know what to do if they decide to come for another ‘visit.’

History of Lake Travis Available On-line

John Chapman, Director

I recently came across a very interesting website: www.laketravis.com/history.htm, that revealed many previously unknown details about our lake’s history. The short article titled “Born of the River - The Colorado River and the LCRA” is actually an excerpt from the Turk Pipkin book “Born of the River”. Included are rare photos of the area during construction of Mansfield Dam. If you have a few minutes and access to the internet, check out this website.

Favorite Recipes

Elizabeth Brunet, Director

Cheesecake Berry Parfait

- 1 cup blueberries
- 1 cup raspberries
- 1 cup blackberries
- ½ cup grenadine syrup

- Cheesecake cream:
- 8 oz mascarpone, Neufchatel or cream cheese
 - 8 oz whipped topping
 - 1/3 cup powdered sugar
 - 1 tsp vanilla
 - 1 lime (juiced)

Combine fruit and grenadine and refrigerate for 30 minutes. Bring cheese to room temperature and whip together with other cheesecake ingredients. Place a dollop of cream in parfait glass and top with large spoonful of berries. Repeat twice for three layers.

Beef Tips in Mushroom Sauce

- 1 lb sirloin steak cut into pieces

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1 can cream of mushroom soup
1 package lipton onion soup mix
8 oz small jar mushrooms,
drained
1 cup 7Up Not sprite

Put meat (uncooked) in a 2 quart casserole dish. Add mushrooms. Mix dry soup with can soup and pour over the meat and mushrooms. Last add 7Up. Do not mix. Cover the casserole with foil tightly. Cover with lid. Bake at 275 for four hours. Do not open while cooking. Serve over wide egg noodles.

Planting Smart in the Texas Hill Country

Kyle Kelly, Director

Kenny and I moved into the Hudson Bend neighborhood a little more than a year ago. We inherited some xeriscaping with the property but it had gone untended for a while and just seemed drab as it lacked color. In addition, we had several large agave plants in the front yard which provided an eye-catching focal point for the xeriscaping but unfortunately this type of plant dies off once it flowers, as we have discovered with 3 of the 5 in our front yard. Now the front bed just looks weary and uninspiring.

After fighting an initial battle with ground hornets (see separate article in this newsletter edition), we set out to purchase plants that would produce color and be drought resistant, and that deer did not like. I planted mountain laurel, Mexican heather, plumbago, fountain grass, daylilies, crocosmia, honeysuckle, lantana, etc., to try to add some color to our rather drab-looking landscaping. However, after this past summer, we lost them all to the heat and the hungry deer. Drought resistant means they need very little water but it does not mean they can take day-after-day-after day of triple-digit temperatures. Deer resistant means that usually the deer don't like that plant but when there is nothing else to eat, they are going to eat that plant. Thank goodness Home Depot and Lowes have a guarantee on their perennials and will let you return plants up to a year later if they don't thrive or die for any reason.

When planning landscaping, homeowners living in the Hudson Bend area soon learn that it's easier to work with the environment we have. In general, to greatly reduce cost and dismay it is helpful to know the plants that have a tolerance for drought and resistance to deer (and rabbits

which seem to be in abundance these days). This last summer was highly unusual in that any plant in your yard was going to have a hard time. And we all probably saw that if the deer are hungry enough, there will be very few plants that are truly deer-proof. But there are plants that are undesirable enough to deer that they will leave them alone as long as other food is available. Assuming average climate conditions, as we choose plants that will work in our rocky, dry, deer and rabbit laden environment, we should also keep in mind plants that will also attract hummingbirds and butterflies. The ultimate result of well-chosen plants for our area should be a rewarding landscape that provides you and your visitors and your neighbors year-round pleasure.



Salvia, for example, is considered to be deer- and draught-tolerant, and comes in many colors.

HUDSON BEND COLONY
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[See our website at www.hbcna.com](http://www.hbcna.com)



TO: