

### Welcome Neighbors!

Greetings Top of Skyway Residents. We are seeing lots of new faces around here! Did you know, in the last 24 months, Top of Skyway has had **26 NEW FAMILIES** move into the neighborhood? Welcome everyone to our little mountain oasis! We hope you love it as much as we do. We're so excited to have you join our community. If you're a current resident and have not yet met your new neighbor, this is your sign to knock on their door and say hello! No freshly baked apple pie required!



### New Neighbor Highlight Meet Jennifer and Daryl Koslowsky

Jennifer and Daryl moved to TOSHA in mid-November with their two rescue dogs, Blackie and Ziggy. Daryl works from home for a media and technology firm while Jennifer is a REALTOR® with Coldwell Banker Beyond and is a top-producer with a motto of "Work Hard & Be Kind to People". She invites you to put her to the test on that! Jennifer & Daryl moved to Upper Skyway to be reminded of the beauty of Jen's childhood home in Vermont. They love being surrounded by trees and wildlife. Jennifer is a Christian who finds joy and fulfillment in helping others, so if there is anything you ever need, she encourages you to not hesitate to reach out, and they both thank you in advance for welcoming them to their wonderful, new community!



## Popular Q&A

**Q:** We just moved into the neighborhood last year. Our home has an asphalt roof and we're concerned about this future liability. We had not idea. This doesn't seem fair.

**A:** When you purchased your home, part of your closing documentation included disclosures stating that you understood you were purchasing in a covenant protected community. You should have been provided access to those covenants. The seller should also have disclosed the asphalt roof liability to you under the Common Interest Community Section (Part O) of your El Paso County Seller's Property Disclosure. If the seller did not disclose an installation that is non-compliant with an HOA's covenants, you may retain legal claim against the seller. TOSHA recommends consulting with a qualified attorney in this case.

**Q:** My neighbor has just adopted another shelter dog. By my count, she now has four dogs and two cats. Can the ACC do anything about this?

**A:** Yes. Our covenants allow for a total of three (3) domesticated dogs or cats, not including birds, fish, and other small permanent indoor animals.

**Q:** We are gardeners and would like to begin keeping bees. We're also thinking of raising chickens. Is any of this permitted?

**A:** Yes and no. Per our policy manual, TOSHA does not regard bee keeping as applicable to our domestic pet covenant, so bee keeping is encouraged. However, beehive boxes do need to be kept in the rear of homes and cannot create an unreasonable nuisance for your surrounding neighbors. Boxes must be painted to match the home's colors (only the interiors need to be white). The keeping of chickens, or other traditional farm animals is not permitted within TOSHA.

**Q:** With a steaming cup of coffee and a fresh newspaper I went outside this morning to read my paper and I was stunned to see the home across the street corralling a horse in their front yard. This isn't permitted, is it?

**A:** Actually, yes. TOSHA was originally platted with allowances for equestrian activity. The subdivision contains designated equestrian trails on some of our resident's private lands. The original intent of the trail complex was to allow access to public equestrian trails located in Skyway Northwest. If your neighbor's property adjoins to one of these designated access trails, then yes, that owner is allowed to day coral horses on his/her lot. Horses cannot be kept overnight.

**Q:** I recently noted on a property map, that my property contains a designated equestrian trail that is today used for hiking. But I see many of the hikers getting confused because the trail on my lot just ends without connecting to trailheads up the hill. Can I contact the City to clear this trail and reconnect it, so hikers can transit my property without loitering near my home?

**A:** You can try, but be aware that the equestrian trails referenced in TOSHA's covenants are designated private lands. In theory, the maintenance of these areas and the fill slopes associated with the trails remains the responsibility of the owners of these equestrian lots. This is stipulated in our HOA's covenants.

(Please note, the above questions are not actual submissions, and only offered here in the spirit of topical education. These questions are generic and do not reference any specific neighbor within TOSHA.)

## Planting and Growing Trees in TOSHA

I am by no means a tree expert, but I have planted about 40 trees over the past 8 years on our lot in Top of Skyway. Here are the lessons I've learned from start to finish. I've skipped some basic information available online and focused on issues specific to Top of Skyway.

First choose your location: Once you know the general area where you want to plant a tree, there are a couple of additional considerations. You cannot block the line-of-sight visibility at intersections. There are city rules online that specify how far back landscaping must be from an intersection ("setback"), depending on the type of intersection. Also you should not plant trees close to your house for fire safety. The guidelines for this distance vary by type of landscaping and the source of the advice, but one general rule I found is that tree branches should be at least 6 feet away from any vertical plane of the house. So depending on the tree, you should plant at a distance from your house. Generally, the farther you keep vegetation from your house, the safer the structure will be. In tough environments like Top of Skyway, trees generally grow to the lower end of their advertised size.

An additional consideration regarding the location of new trees is water. Our limited annual precipitation presents maybe the greatest challenge for new trees. I found that trees planted in the lower part of my yard (elevation-wise) have found water underground more easily than trees planted on higher areas, such as atop a ridge or berm. This makes sense because water generally goes downhill, even underground. It seems that some areas of my yard have more topsoil than others. If you dig down and find an area of your yard only has a few inches of topsoil over rock, trees will have a more difficult time getting established there, though they can still thrive. In those spots use a tree species that is adapted to growing in rocky areas, like the bristlecone.

In my experience our area gets so much sun that trees which prefer "full sun" will get enough sun to survive regardless of where they are planted, but those trees do grow faster the more sun they get. Unlike water, sun is ample in Top of Skyway!

## Attention Neighbors!!!

TOSHA is in dire need of volunteers. Our Board of Directors is down to a skeleton crew. Being part of the board is fun and requires minimal time! Having an active board keeps our HOA from going in to dormancy and **PROTECTS YOUR PROPERTY VALUE.**

If you are able to help out, send an email to [topofskywayassociation@gmail.com](mailto:topofskywayassociation@gmail.com). Any amount of time is greatly appreciated!

Second choose your tree(s): Do your research when deciding which evergreen trees you will plant. Species that are indigenous to the area will have higher survival rates. For example ponderosa pines, bristlecones, and pinion pines are local, and require less water. You do not want to plant any type of juniper because they contain flammable oils. In my experience "arborvitae" thuja-type trees are too delicate for our environment and mine died quickly. Austrian pines had a 50/50 survival rate in my yard. Some grew very well (where there is more topsoil), some have barely grown, and about half died, especially those planted where there is less topsoil. They grow quickly but may not be able to find the water and soil nutrients they need to sustain that growth. Generally the trees that are considered "slow growing" have done better for me, and they have actually grown more quickly than expected. All of the white firs I planted have survived and thrived, but don't confuse those with white pines, which are not suited for the area. Also I haven't lost any bristlecones. Spruces have been hit or miss. If you are planting multiple trees, try for biodiversity. That means planting different species of trees. This is better for wildlife and may be better for the trees because different species prefer different soil nutrients. Planting a lot of the same species tree in one area may deplete soil nutrients they need.

Where you buy your trees can have a big impact on survival. Most retail trees are grown in the Pacific Northwest. The problem is that those trees spent the first 5-10 years of life getting ample water and soil nutrients. When they are transplanted here, they will get much less water, and will be growing in much more rocky soil. The adjustment can be fatal, or can stunt growth for years.

Try to buy trees from Colorado tree farms, which were grown in Colorado. Big box home improvement stores have excellent prices for Pacific Northwest-grown trees, and 1 year money-back guarantees. However, the quality of the strains can be iffy in my experience. About half of the trees I got from big box stores have done well (2 have done very well), and about half died (but I got my money back). Conversely, the trees I bought from local gardening stores like Rick's and Phelan Farms have all done very well, but they cost much more, and they generally do not have survival guarantees.

**Plant your tree(s):** There are countless guides online that tell you how to put trees in the ground, so I'll skip those details. However there are a few tips I learned that apply specifically to our area. Most new trees will do better with a good amount of rich soil around the root ball, but our soil is rocky. So when following online instructions regarding the size of the hole and the amount of rich soil to include, go with the higher end of the suggested range since our soil is rocky. Some trees that grow well in rock, like bristlecones, should only have minimal rich soil around the root ball (but those trees must be staked). At first, I used wood chip-type mulch around the trees, but that blew away in our strong winds. Then I used shredded cypress mulch (I used the "Gorilla Hair" brand) and that stayed in place. Also, it's crucial to protect trees from our local mule deer until they are at least 15 feet tall. Deer will absolutely shred new trees, even if the trees are supposedly "deer-resistant". New trees can be protected with 5-foot-tall deer fencing, available at hardware stores. Nothing works as well as a fence. Our covenants allow for tree fencing around individual trees, but not larger lengths of fencing that go around multiple trees. I found that using a circle of 5-foot deer fencing around a tree, well-secured with at least 2 stakes, provide good protection. If you don't stake the fencing to the ground it will blow away in the wind. Heavy steel fence posts with barbed ends that go into the ground are probably overkill, and they are extremely difficult to remove.

My understanding is that deer fencing can be removed when a tree is 15 feet tall, and has mature-looking bark. Deer may still eat the lower branches, but the tree will usually survive because it has enough branches above the reach of the deer. New tree bark can be stripped off by deer, but chunky, mature-looking bark does not seem to interest them.

**Watering:** Virtually all new trees must be watered for 5 or so years to survive. That is especially true in our arid and sunny environment. When you plant a new tree I suggest running an irrigation hose to the tree and burying it under the mulch. The water should be distributed in a trickle (a dribble of water) somewhere under the tree's canopy. I had good luck with trickle watering once a week for 1-2 hours each time. I don't water if we've had an inch or more of precipitation during the previous week (which is rare). My understanding is that trees should be trained to look for their own water, usually deep underground. If you water them too much from the surface the tree will prioritize growing roots that are close to the surface. Those roots will not serve the tree in the long run, so water the tree as little as possible in order to force the tree to look for water deep underground. Of course, this is mostly a guessing game, but I found a trickle watering for an hour or so once a week keeps them alive, but hopefully does not create too much dependency. Once the air temperatures drop below freezing, I stop watering, then resume when freezing temps have subsided. After 5 years you can either continue to water the trees for faster/fuller growth, or you can wean them off irrigation slowly. Water more when the fire danger is high, since that usually means there is minimal ground water, and/or the humidity is very low.

**Pruning:** After the first 2 years of growth, remove the lowest branches of the tree once a year in winter to reduce the risk of pests, deer damage, and fire. Removing the lowest branches in winter also fosters upward growth. There is ample information online about how to prune a tree safely.

## Crock Pot Honey Garlic Chicken



### INGREDIENTS

4 Boneless Skinless Chicken Breast  
1/2 Cup honey  
1/2 Cup soy sauce  
1/4 Cup Water  
2 Tbsp Apple Cider Vinegar \*Can sub rice vinegar  
1 Tbsp Minced Garlic

### INSTRUCTIONS

Spray your crock-pot with non-stick spray or line with a slow-cooker liner. Mix honey, soy sauce, water, vinegar and garlic in a bowl Place chicken breasts in the slow cooker and pour the sauce over your chicken. Cook on high for 4 hours or low for 6-7 hours.

Be patient and don't get discouraged! Almost half of the trees I planted died, in part because I had no experience planting trees here, and there was a drought, and because some trees will die no matter what. Don't be disheartened if you have to replace a dead tree. Also some trees will look sickly for a year or two, then suddenly become healthy and grow quickly. Best of luck!

## Market Report for 80906 Courtesy of In Touch Home Team

Hello neighbors! My name is Bill Mills. My wife, Brandi, and I own and run a real estate team in Colorado Springs and love living here in Top of Skyway!

Obviously, a lot has changed in the last 12 months in the real estate market, both on a national level and here in Colorado Springs. Fortunately, for all of us as homeowners, the market as a whole has been pretty resilient even with some of the fastest increases in interest rates we've ever seen!

Taking a look at our neighborhood, and those directly around us in the Cheyenne Mountain school district, we have seen seven homes sell in the last 6 months and the most recent listing go under contract in just 5 days. Including the home that just accepted an offer, the average time a home has been on the market, according to Pikes Peak MLS data, is approximately 26 days. While that is a lot longer than the average we saw during 2020 and 2021, it is historically still very quick.

While increased interest rates will still have an impact on how the market performs over the next year, demand is staying strong and according to the Monthly Housing Market Trends Report from realtor.com, "There were 65.5% more homes for sale in January compared to the same time in 2022. This means that there were 248,000 more homes available to buy this past month compared to one year ago. While the number of homes for sale is increasing, it is still 43.2% lower

This means that there are still fewer homes available to buy on a typical day than there were a few years ago." This indicates that while the market will certainly take some time to adjust to the new interest rate climate, people still want to buy a home and will continue to do so. Even though 2017-2019 were not quite as aggressive as 2020 through the beginning of 2022, it was still a strong market for sellers with consistent home value growth.

Of course, only time will tell exactly how the real estate market responds to all of the changes. Many experts are saying that the market will see a slight decrease this year, and some areas could even see a slight increase due to the low level of inventory. According to Rick Sharga, executive vice president of market intelligence at ATTOM Data, "We're estimating about a 5% drop nationally, some markets, believe it or not, will probably see prices continue to increase."

Long story short, even with the growth we've seen in the last couple of years and recent volatility in the market, it appears that Colorado Springs is poised for continued increases in home values in the coming years.

Brandi and I are happy to answer any questions you may have regarding the real estate industry. Feel free to contact us at: 719-963-6306 or check out our website at [InTouchHomeTeam.com](http://InTouchHomeTeam.com)

### Friendly Reminders:

If you have not already paid your 2023 dues, they are due NOW!

The city requires that sidewalks are shoveled within 24 hours of a snow storm.

If you see anything that is of concern while walking or driving through the neighborhood, please report that to your block captain.