



The City Of Houston



City sponsors youth art contest

The City of Houston is delighted to sponsor a T-Shirt Art Contest in conjunction with its 17th annual Water Festival, Thursday, May 6, 2010 at the Downtown Aquarium. Third through eighth-grade students may enter an original drawing based on their interpretation of the festival theme, "Protecting Our Water Resources." The first place winner's design will be reproduced on the Water Festival t-shirts. The first, second and third-place winners will be acknowledged by city dignitaries during the festival's 10:30 a.m. opening ceremony. Additional information about the City of Houston Water Festival and T-shirt Art Contest can be found at: www.waterworksforhouston.org. The deadline to submit artwork is March 30th.

When is the best time to fix a leak?

The answer is "as soon as possible." Every drop of water that drips from a faulty faucet, drops from a showerhead, or seeps into the toilet bowl from the tank is a waste of treated drinking water. The Environmental Protection Agency's WaterSense® program is sponsoring Fix a Leak Week, March 15 to 21, 2010, to remind citizens to find and fix water leaks or replace outdated fixtures with high-efficiency appliances.

WaterSense is the water equivalent of the Energy Star® for Homes program. Products with the WaterSense label have been independently tested and certified to use at least 20 percent less water and perform as well or better than standard plumbing fixtures.

When you're ready to purchase a new

appliance, ask for products with the WaterSense label to save water and the environment. Visit www.EPA.gov/watersense for product lists and water-saving tips for your home and business.

Kingwood Garden Club offering Horticulture Scholarships

We commend the Kingwood Garden Club for offering scholarships to students who intend to spend their professional lives researching, protecting and fostering trees, plants and wildlife. Scholarship applicants must have attended an Humble ISD or New Caney high school; be a junior, senior or graduate student; and be majoring in a horticulture-related field. The application for the scholarship can be found at www.kingwoodgardenclub.org. Applications are due April 1.

Get a head start on spring lawn care

If you forgot to winterize your lawn mower or other gardening tools, now is a good time to prepare before the new spring growth. Take a few minutes to remove grass clippings from the mower's undercarriage and tires. This grass and weed residue can transmit turf diseases, pests or microorganisms and lead to a new season of lawn and garden problems.

Feed the dirt for healthy turf

Healthy turf grass and garden plants are frequently the result of healthy soil. You can determine if your soil needs additional nutrients by using a soil test kit before selecting lawn products.

According to the EPA, "For every 1% that you increase your soil's organic matter, you



increase the water absorption capacity by 16,000 gallons of plant-available water per acre, down to one foot deep."

Instead of using synthetic chemicals, spread one-quarter to one-half inch of finely-screened compost on your lawn. Good organic compost is teeming with beneficial microorganisms that can protect turfgrass from diseases. The enriched soil can also absorb and retain forty to fifty percent more water.

Turfgrass growing in healthy organic soil only needs one inch of rainfall or irrigation each week in the summer to stay green. To encourage deeper, stronger root growth, slowly adjust your irrigation schedule until you reach the goal of watering the soil six to eight inches deep on one day a week.

When is it absolutely necessary to water the lawn? It is time to irrigate when the grass blades look dull and limp, or if your footprints remain visible after walking across the lawn.

Natives attract other beauties

Are you wondering which flowers, shrubs or trees to plant in your yard? Would you like to know which plants attract hummingbirds or butterflies? The answers to these questions and many more are available from the Houston Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas. Visit www.npsot.org/Houston/ and scroll to the bottom of the page and click on the Native Plant Information Pages.

Each month, Houston Parks and Recreation Department's Urban Garden Manager, Brent Moon, offers helpful gardening tips. Read his columns at www.houstontx.gov/parks/gardenline2010.html.

Enjoy the great outdoors

Harris County Precinct 4 Jesse H. Jones Park and Nature Center is hosting its annual Nature Fest Saturday March 6 from 9:30 a.m.-4 p.m. Families will learn about birds, butterflies, native plants, photography, reptiles, and other nature topics. The event also features book signings, guided nature, bird, and wild edible walks, pontoon boat tours, educational booths, live animals, a catch-and-release fishing tank, and much more! The staff has a full schedule of events planned each month. Take a camera along when you visit Jones Park so you can enter the park's photo contest, which is open to children and adults. Nature photos may be submitted by April 26. Call 281-446-8588 or visit the park's Web site at www.hcp4.org/jones for more details.

Be sure to check out the Houston Audubon Society's Family Nature Explorer Club spring schedule of events. These free Saturday outings are a great opportunity to enjoy the great outdoors, make new friends, and gain a new appreciation of our natural resources. Groups meet at the Sims Bayou Urban Nature Center and then caravan to the nature site. Visit the Houston Audubon Web site or call 713-640-2407 to sign up for the March 20 excursion to Washington on the Brazos.

March means it's time for Mercer Arboretum's March Mart, a spectacular plant sale on March 26 and 27. Wear comfortable shoes and bring a wagon or cart to carry your new plants out to your car. Mercer Arboretum is on Aldine Westfield Rd. north of FM 1960. You'll find every kind of plant imaginable. Read the plant list at www.hcp4.org/mercer.

On Sunday, April 18, Jones Park visitors (ages 8 and up) will be able to enjoy a leisurely tour of Spring Creek on a pontoon boat and learn about the area's natural history and wildlife. Spring Creek runs through Jones Park before crossing under I-59 and flowing into Lake Houston. The park will begin taking reservations for the pontoon trips Thursday, April 8.

We're talking trash!

Have you read about the Great Pacific Garbage Patch? Bits of plastic toys and lawn furniture, remnants of soda cups and take-out containers, disposable bags, bottles, razors and picnic utensils have traveled thousands of miles from a garbage can or sidewalk, through a storm drain, lake, bayou and bay before being carried by ocean currents into this flotilla of trash. This floating "plastic soup" is eaten by fish, turtles and birds, washes onto island beaches and sinks to the ocean floor.

Keep pollution out of our drinking water supply and protect Lake Houston's aquatic life by properly disposing of trash and hazardous waste. Join your neighbors Saturday morning, March 27 at the Lake Houston Marina for the annual Trash Bash clean-up. For more information visit www.trashbash.org or contact Jerrel Geisler at 832-395-3780. ♦

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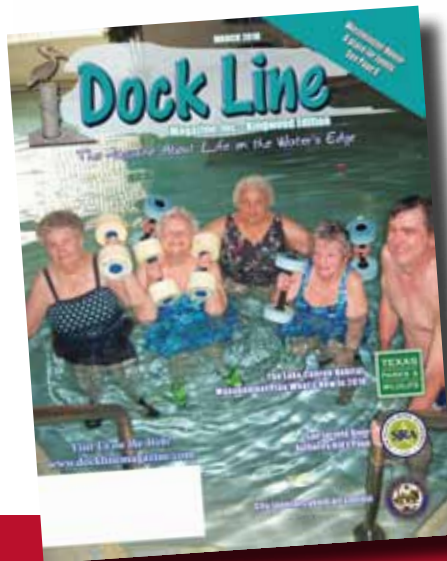
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