

The Day of the Unlit Lights

A House Detective story by Gordon R. Watson

I recently received a call from a client whose ceiling fan light had died in a very odd way. He had replaced the bulbs to no avail. I drove over through the lovely streets of Tomball and investigated the problem.

The client demonstrated that when he pushed the “Light On” on the remote, the bulbs lit, slightly, then faded off. I tried the fan, and it worked. The bulbs had already been replaced and checked as good (in another socket).

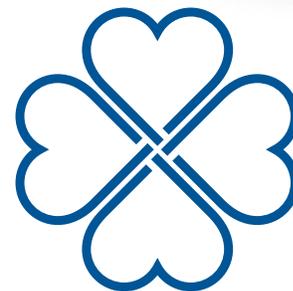
I concluded that the electronic module or remote had failed. The fan was under warranty, and the fan company didn’t want to replace parts. Further, they didn’t advise any other tests. They advised my client to take the fan back to the hardware store. He bought a new one (different brand).

I replaced the fan with no new issues, but the job reminded me that it is very important that the ceiling electrical box is sufficiently strong to hold the fan. In this case, it was. The last thing you want to have happen is for a ceiling fan to drop onto someone below. At very least, it will damage the ceiling and anything below it. A standard ceiling electrical box is not strong enough or mounted securely enough to hold a heavy fan.

I have removed weak ceiling boxes and replaced them with a retro brace...working through the 4” or 5” diameter ceiling hole. Because there was no attic, it isn’t a job for the timid, but can be done. I had to do everything with one hand. On the other hand, if there is an accessible attic, the job is quite easy (as easy as climbing around an attic can be).

A reminder: The normal rotation for most fans in summer is counter-clock-wise when viewed from the floor. During winter, rotation may be reversed if the draft from a downward flow is offensive. A clockwise rotation in summer would be common.

If in doubt, hire a contractor. Emergency rooms and fire engines are always far more costly than hiring a contractor.



Community Landscape Corner

Hopefully, freezing weather is behind us (though always possible in March). The record low for March was 19 degrees F in 2002. I will not miss putting covers on sensitive plants. We had a freezing rain last March, 2014, so don’t let your guard down just yet.

Think about planting some vegetables. Those to plant in March are beans, corn, cucumber, eggplant, kohlrabi, mustard, peppers, pumpkin, radishes, squash, and tomatoes.

Bare root planting season is over, so any planting of woody plants should be from containerized plants. Among ornamental, woody plants that do really well in our area are Ligustrum, Crape Myrtles, Wax Myrtles, Pineapple Guava, Purple Sage, and Bottle Brush.

Our lawns are beginning to come alive again. Along with the grass will come some weeds. It is best to just pull these as needed. Certainly mow them if they are shading the lawn. In general, according to “Texas Gardner,” don’t fertilize until the grass starts growing and needs mowing. Fertilizing dormant grass will just encourage weed growth. The rule of thumb from them is, “fertilize when you have mowed the grass twice

Consider getting rid of your tree volcanoes (if you still have them). Gardeners traditionally love to pile mulch high on tree trunks, but this practice is harmful to the trees. Often the roots will start growing in the volcano and could encircle the tree and strangle it. You should be able to see the tree begin to flare out at the bottom and maybe even some horizontal root tops.

IMPORTANT NUMBERS

EMERGENCY NUMBERS or 911

CenterPoint-Gas Leak	713-659-3552
Constables Office	281-376-3472, www.cd4.hctx.net
Klein Fire Dept.	281-376-4449
Poison Control Center	800-764-7661
Willowbrook Methodist	281-477-1000
EMERGENCY 24 HOUR LINE	281-537-0957
(select 'emergency' option)	

SCHOOLS

Tomball ISD	281-357-3100, www.tomballisd.net
Willow Creek Elem (K-4).....	281-357-3080
Northpointe Int (5-6).....	281-357-3020
Willow Wood Jr (7-8)	281-357-3030
Tomball High (9-12).....	281-357-3220
Tomball Memorial High School	281-357-3230
Transportation.....	281-357-3193

SERVICES

CPS.....	713-626-5701
CenterPoint-Gas.....	713-659-2111
Dead Animal Pick up	713-699-1113
Domestic Violence	281-401-6250
FBI.....	713-693-5000
Harris County Animal Control	281-999-3191
Houston Chronicle	713-220-7211
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Lost Pets.....	spectrumam.com
Municipal District Services (24 hrs)	281-290-6500
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NEWSLETTER

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Community Social Committee News

From Lisa Rawles, Social Committee Chairman

The Easter egg hunt & parade is planned for Saturday, March 19. Watch the various web sites, marquee, and Spectrum's web site for additional information.

CLEAN OUT THAT TEXAS BASEMENT & GARAGE

The spring garage sale will be held on Friday, April 15 & Saturday, April 16.



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DEPUTY CORMIER'S HINTS

The Constable's office has seen an increase in individuals disregarding the stop signs in the Village Creek subdivision. We will be monitoring these more closely to ensure the safety of all of the residents that frequent the area. Please be aware that in order to properly stop at a designated stopping point (Stop Sign) that your vehicle must come to a complete cessation of speed. Please make sure that there are no other travelers on the roadway and especially look for pedestrians. It is imperative that we all follow these guidelines to make Village Creek an even safer community to live in and raise a family in.

The deputies of Harris County Constable Mark Herman's office love the communities they patrol and thrive on making a difference in the neighborhoods. We are happy to be able to provide quality police service to the Village Creek community and look forward to continuing that service for many years to come.

Dep. Joseph (J.T.) Cormier
Unit 84816

Harris County Constable, Pct. 4
Patrol Division - West District
281.370.9106 (Lakewood Office)
281.376.3472 (24 Hr. Dispatch)
Joseph.Cormier@cd4.hctx.net



MANY VILLAGE CREEK ROOFS ARE DAMAGED FROM APRIL 19, 2015 WIND & HAIL STORMS. THE HAIL SIZE WAS APPROXIMATELY 3/4" BUT HAS DAMAGED ROOFS THAT ARE AT LEAST 12 YEARS OLD DUE TO THEIR DETERIORATED CONDITION.

LIMITED TIME LEFT TO FILE A CLAIM!

***NOTICE...Most insurance carrier claim filing deadline is April 18th 2016 and depreciation recovery of 6 months from date of claim settlement**

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Medical Insurance

By G.R. Watson

When you go to the doctor, take along your medical insurance company's booklet showing which medicines are covered and their Tier Level. Doctors commonly don't prescribe based on cost, but they might if you express a concern. As an example, my doctor recently changed one of my medicines based on a discussion such as this. The cost of the replacement medicine dropped to no payment out of pocket from a fairly significant cost. Of course, the final decision must always be yours and your doctor's.

The Voice

By G.R. Watson

I'm happy to return as a contributor to "The Voice." Being a contributor allows me to be creative, have fun, and keep you informed. This monthly magazine is owned and funded by Peel, Inc. If you want to advertise, view or subscribe to their hard copy or on line version, go to Peel's web site at www.peelinc.com. As always, if you have any questions, suggestions, or have articles for publication, please contact "The Voice" at villagecreek@peelinc.com.

Teenage Job Seekers Needs Updating

Teenager Job Seekers is a valuable free advertising service by Peel, Inc. for those teens who want to earn a bit of money. We want to ensure that all of the listings are current, so we plan to remove all listings in the April issue except those who contact us in March. If you wish to keep your listing, please send me a note with updates at Watson.g@sbcglobal.net as soon as possible and no later than March 31, 2016. Additional listings can be added anytime. Thank you!

New Landscape Contractor

We understand that Village Creek has a new landscape contractor for the public areas. The company name is Hou-Scape. If you have any public landscaping concerns contact Spectrum.

Community Kudos



- Thank you to the residents who are doing a great job on keeping the Marquee updated and relevant.
- A big THANK YOU to those residents who walk our neighborhood and pick up trash! Give them a big Thumbs Up when you see them.
- Thanks to the Board for keeping our public benches looking near-new.
- Thanks to those Scouts and parents who picked up food on Super Bowl Saturday for their food drive, and to those who donated.

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The Voice Approved Recipe

Sent in by April Watson

White Chocolate Frito Bars from Julie's Eats and Treats

<http://www.julieseatsandtreats.com/gooey-frito-bars/>

Note: These are both delicious and addictive. Eat with care.

White Chocolate Frito Bars

Prep Time: 15 minutes

Cook Time: 1 minute

Total Time: 16 minutes

Yield: 25

Serving Size: 1 bar

Ingredients

2 (10.25 oz.) bags Frito Scoops

2 c. sugar

2 c. light corn syrup

1 tsp. vanilla

2 1/2 c. peanut butter

2 squares vanilla CandiQuik

Instructions

Pour Frito Scoops into a gallon ziplock bag. Crush until they are in large pieces. Pour into a large bowl.

In a medium saucepan combine sugar and white syrup. Bring to a rolling boil and boil for 1 minute. Remove from heat and add peanut butter and vanilla. Stir until peanut butter is melted and combined.

Pour over Frito's and mix well. Pour mixture into a greased jelly roll pan. Melt CandiQuick according to package directions. Drizzle over bars.



Julie's Eats & Treats

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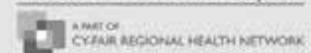
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Plant of the Month-Vitex

By G.R. Watson

This month's Plant of the Month is the Vitex. We have one in our Village Creek yard, and love how fast it grows. It can be either a tree or a bush (depending on whether it is kept pruned). Ours is in partial sun.

The Vitex has beautiful purple blooms during the summer. Being deciduous, in winter, it is entirely devoid of leaves. It likes well drained soil and either sun or partial shade. When kept pruned, expect it to get about ten feet tall and as wide. We know of one Vitex tree that is over ten years old, is twenty feet tall, and nearly covers a swimming pool with shade. We don't necessarily recommend this because the pool owner must contend with falling blossoms into the pool. Still, it is a lovely setting which makes for some exceptionally pleasant swimming in Tomball's wonderful summers.

The Vitex is also known as chaste tree or Mexican lavender, and it attracts butterflies. Ours is watered with a drip system, and seems to like living in well-drained soil without a lot of water or other care.



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Hosting a Foreign Exchange Student

Families host foreign exchange students for various reasons: to provide a learning experience for teens from another country, to forge friendships with their own children and to exchange cultural insights. The experience must be a good one, because some families host new exchange students year after year.

Hosting requirements are simple, says Vicki Odom, Senior Regional Director for AYUSA, a cultural exchange organization. Hosts “provide room and board, and a loving, nurturing environment,” says Odom, a host every year since 2009. “There’s no such thing as a perfect host family,” she says. Couples and singles, with or without children, and even empty nesters make good host families.”

APPLICATION PROCESS

Participating in a foreign exchange program requires some paperwork to get started, followed by an interview process. Applications, which include background checks, “are not for the faint of heart,” admits Odom. “The safety of participants is the number one priority,” she says. Much of the application process is designed to inform and prepare potential host families for their upcoming experience.

COST OF HOUSING A STUDENT

Hosting an exchange student can add to your food bill, admits Odom. “It’s not so bad if you merely provide what you would normally buy for your family,” she says. Visiting students usually have their own spending money and are expected to buy their own cosmetics and other items. A discussion about money and expectations at the onset of the student’s visit will likely smooth the way for the year.

FAMILY DYNAMICS

“Sibling” rivalries can develop between visiting and host kids who are the same sex or nearly the same age. But usually, “it helps other kids learn to share when there’s an extra person in the house,” says Heather Wells, a Katy, TX mom who has hosted two students so far. “The exchange experience is often terrific for elementary-age kids

in the host family, despite the age difference with a teen exchange student, because they learn so much,” says Wells.

“Hosting an exchange student can be a wonderful experience for the entire family,” states Vicki Odom. “It teaches your kids tolerance and gives them great respect for other cultures. It’s a way to learn more about the world without leaving home. You get a glimpse at least, by hosting a student. We can’t all be diplomats or ambassadors, but this is something American families can do to make a difference.”

30+ Years Connecting People & Cultures

Ayusa is a non-profit organization founded in 1981 to promote global learning and leadership through foreign exchange, study abroad, and leadership programs for high school students from the U.S. and around the world.

For more information about hosting a high school foreign exchange student, please contact your local representative Vicki Odom at 832.455.7881 or vodom@ayusa.org or Ayusa at 1.888.552.9872 or by visiting the website at www.ayusa.org.





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Zika Virus

Zika virus is transmitted by Aedes mosquitoes and there is no specific treatment or vaccine currently available. The best way to avoid getting the virus is to avoid being bitten by infected mosquitoes. About 20% of people with Zika virus actually get ill. Severe disease, requiring hospitalization, is uncommon and death due to the virus is rare.

The incubation period of Zika virus is thought to be a few days to a week, but is still unknown. Symptoms include fever, skin rash, conjunctivitis, muscle and joint pain, and headache. Symptoms tend to be mild and last from 2-7 days. Zika virus can be contracted through the bite of an infected mosquito, through blood transfusions, through sexual contact, and from mother to child during pregnancy.

The mosquitoes that are able to transmit Zika virus are also able to transmit dengue and Chikungunya viruses. These mosquitoes are daytime biters, but can also bite at night. Aedes mosquitoes lay their eggs in standing water-buckets, tires, tree holes, animal water dishes, etc.

To protect yourself from mosquito bites, wear light-colored clothing that covers as much skin as possible, use insect repellent (read and follow label instructions), use screening on doors and windows, use mosquito netting (if needed) while sleeping, and reduce standing water areas.

For more information on Zika virus, please see the CDC website here <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/index.html>

For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist at 512.854.9600. Check out my blog at www.urban-ipm.blogspot.com

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View answers online at www.peelinc.com

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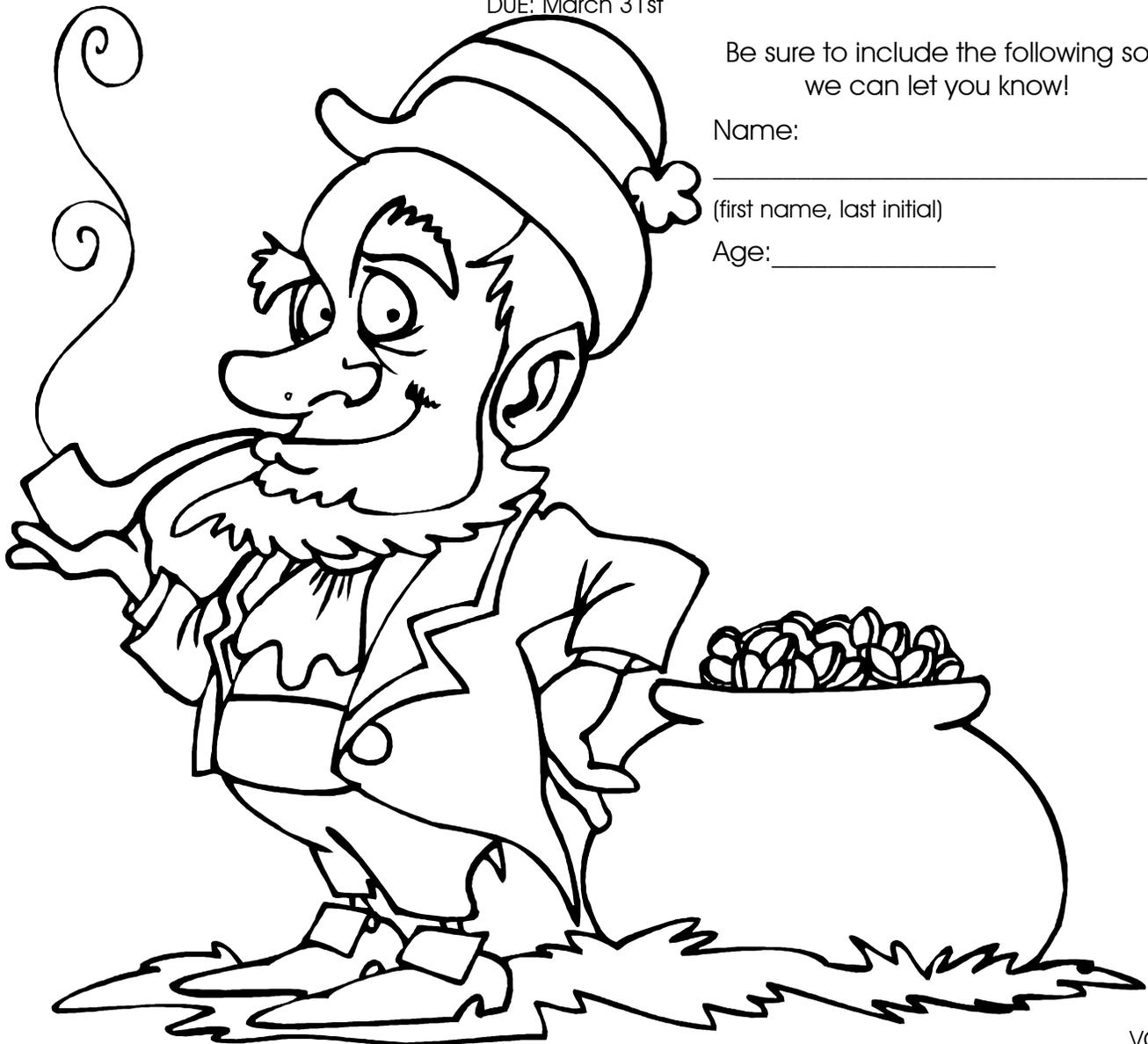
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