

# Redland Oaks



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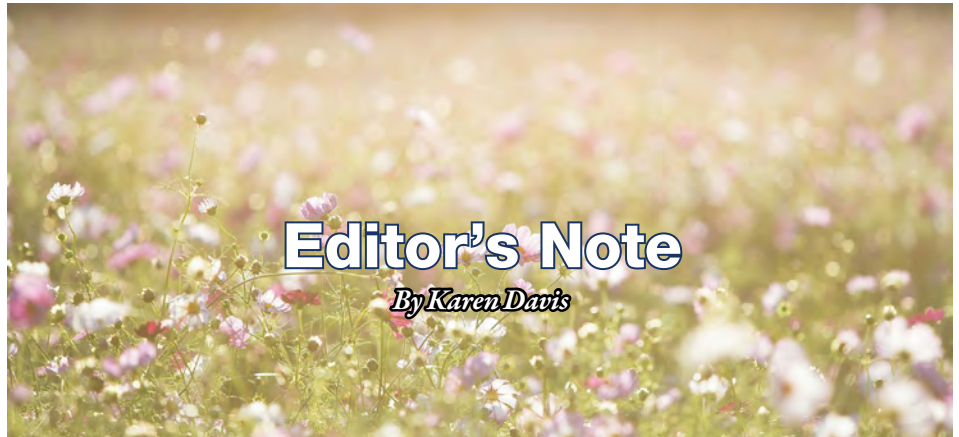
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## Editor's Note

*By Karen Davis*

Greetings, everyone! I hope you are enjoying the nice weather before those dreaded triple-digit temperatures arrive. It's nice to see how green everything is getting, and to see butterflies and bees flitting around.

Please remember to keep your yards in good trim! Our covenants, which you can access on our website, [www.redlandoakshoa.com](http://www.redlandoakshoa.com), have the guidelines for landscape maintenance. You can also access the Architectural Control Form on the site to apply for changes to your yard or the exterior of your residence. Prior approval is required.

'Tis the season for composting! In fact, May is the last recommended spring month to apply it for a healthier landscape. See tips from SAWS gardening experts on page 3.

As I'm sure you've all noticed, the city has repaved several of our streets in the last couple of months. Though it was a temporary inconvenience while the job was being done, the streets look great and spruce up our neighborhood! See the photo on page 3.

I've been noticing some residents are leaving their trash, recycling, and compost bins out for a couple of days or more after pickup by the city. It's standard practice to put them out the night before or the morning of pickup and then bring them back in the garage or behind your fence that evening. Empty carts sitting at the curb give our neighborhood a junky appearance, so please put them back out of sight after pickup!

Many of you probably have vacation plans this spring and summer. Before you leave, it's important to take steps to make your house look "lived in" while you're away. See tips on page 4.

Have a great Memorial Day Weekend and enjoy your summer!

Karen Davis

## Redland Oaks Newsletter

This is your newsletter, Redland Oaks, so please feel free to send us any interesting articles or personal stories that we can add to the newsletter. We also welcome corrections, suggestions, or input for the newsletter. Please send content to: [kdavis35@satx.rr.com](mailto:kdavis35@satx.rr.com)

The deadline for the next issue is: May 1, 2024



## Got pets? Beware of these toxic plants!

By Calvin Finch, SAWS guest author

If your experience with pets and plants has been like mine, it's easy to draw the conclusion that there is a minimal threat from toxic plants. In 60 years of raising multiple dogs with free range in heavily planted landscapes, I have never experienced a problem caused by toxic plants.

Based on other evidence, however, the threat of toxic plants to pets is real and of great interest to many pet owners. Part of that evidence was a report I received that a "friend of a friend" lost a beloved pet to poisoning from sago palm seeds.

The webmaster of [www.plantanswers.com](http://www.plantanswers.com) where my gardening articles are archived reports that the topic "Toxic Plants" is consistently in the top 10 of subject searches on the popular website.

San Antonio veterinarians confirm that the threat from toxic plants is real, though the numbers of incidents is not nearly as high as problems caused by other types of accidents or diseases.

Among the list of plants in the San Antonio area that seem the most likely to cause problems are:

1. Castor beans: Remove them from areas where pets have access. The plants will naturalize, and the seeds are a long-term threat.
2. Sago palm: The round shape and soft smooth skin of sago palm seeds makes them a threat, especially for pets that play with balls. To prevent this hazard, it's easy to cut out the reproductive growth and/or remove the seeds before they mature in summer.
3. Lantana: If dogs or other pets show any inclination to consume the leaves as they do with grass or hackberry leaves to serve as a stomach purge, it may be best to remove the plants. Based on the large number of lantanas in area landscapes and the small number of poisonings, however, it is an unusual occurrence.
4. Mushrooms: Most of the time pets pass up mushrooms, but the safest strategy may be to keep your eyes open for a mushroom "bloom" and quickly remove it with a shovel. Most mushrooms sprout in the spring or summer after wet weather.
5. Mistletoe: Place stems and berries that fall off trees in the garbage. A walk by trees with the plants after windy and rainy days will usually do the job. It is ironic that the "poisonous" mistletoe berries are a favorite bird food.
6. Oleander: Only use them in parts of the landscape that aren't frequented by dogs who have shown an inclination to chew stiff stems or sticks. This is especially a concern post-freeze.
7. Paperwhite and daffodil bulbs: Although they are fairly uncommon in local landscapes, the bulbs are a threat if your pets chew such materials in

packages or fresh plantings. Keep the packages out of pets' reach and cover the new planting with mulch or wire to discourage digging them up.

8. Texas mountain laurel: The seeds are very common around San Antonio, and they are poisonous. They're also small and hard-shelled — not a favorite size or texture for domestic animals. In fact, they're so hard they can pass intact through the digestive tract with no noticeable impact on pets.

There are lots of plants that have some degree of toxicity to pets, but most are not a threat except in extreme cases of allergy or unusual consumption. Puppies and kittens are more susceptible, and often more curious, than adult animals. Most pets already avoid plants with toxicity because of smell, taste, or texture.

If the worst happens and your pet consumes a poisonous plant, contact your vet or the Poison Control Hotline at 855-213-6680 immediately for treatment instructions. Identify the plant suspected of causing the symptoms and be prepared to clearly describe the symptoms.

## Easy Potato Salad

Potato salad is a great summer side dish at picnics and potlucks. While many people buy their potato salad at the grocery store, fresh-made is always a treat. Here is an easy recipe.

### Classic Potato Salad

Ingredients for 8 servings:

3 pounds russet, Yukon Gold or Idaho potatoes, peeled and cut into 1-inch cubes

Salt and black pepper

1 cup mayonnaise

¼ cup sweet relish

1 tbsp. mustard

1 tsp. granulated onion or onion powder

6 hard-boiled eggs, peeled and diced small

2 celery stalks (optional)

Sweet paprika, for garnish

Preparation:

Put the potatoes in a large pot; add 1 tablespoon of salt and cover with cold water 1 inch higher than the potatoes. Set over high heat and cook just until fork-tender, about 15-20 minutes. Drain potatoes and set aside to cool.

As potatoes cool, make the dressing. To a large bowl, add mayo, relish, mustard, and onion. Whisk to combine.

Add potatoes to the dressing, along with the diced eggs and celery if using. Stir gently to combine. Taste and season with salt and black pepper as needed.

- Chill at least two hours, up to overnight.
- Finish with a sprinkle of paprika.
- Salad will keep four days in the refrigerator in an airtight container.

*From the New York Times*







## It's time to compost your landscape!

By Brad Wier, SAWS Conservation Planner

Compost is the stuff of life, brimming with microbes that nourish the soil. You may already know that compost is decaying plant and animal matter, from grass clippings and leaves to twigs, sawdust, or manure. What you may not know is that the decaying of compost is carried out by hardworking microbes, bacteria, and fungi.

When you apply the finished product to your own garden beds or grass, those microbes and living processes are transferred into your own soil. And that's where magic happens. Those millions of microbes produce nutrients that then become available to growing plants. The mixture is rich, dark and resembles potting soil when applied, but it's basically a natural fertilizer.

When Master Gardeners recommend "feeding the soil" to grow healthy plants, they're usually talking about compost. Many vegetable gardeners are familiar with the art of composting kitchen scraps like coffee grounds and eggshells. But beginners or non-composters can also purchase compost or have it delivered by the cubic yard from local producers.

Apply it as a quarter or half-inch layer on top of the landscape by using a shovel or wheelbarrow to cast it over the grass or garden beds. Then smooth it evenly with a light rake. (This work can also be performed by lawn care companies.) After a week or so it becomes less noticeable as it blends into your lawn or garden beds.

Within a few weeks, the results speak for themselves: a healthier, greener lawn. That's because in addition to providing nutrients, compost's soft texture can improve the moisture-holding capacity of any soil. In clay soil, it lessens compaction and restores air, nutrient and water filtration, and in sand, it improves clumping and moisture retention.

Compost can also boost thin, rocky soils — you can reduce the compost by about half and add some fresh soil to the mix. Of course, for best results in thin soils, you're better off reducing the grass area and growing native plants instead.

Here are some commonly asked questions about compost, and the answers from experts:

### ***When is the best time to apply compost?***

In South Central Texas, the best time is spring and fall. May is typically the end of the spring compost season since fully baked compost tends to give off heat that you won't need in summer.



### **Redland Oaks streets repaved!**

City equipment lined up in March for the repaving of streets in our neighborhood. While the job was a minor inconvenience while it was going on, it's great to have smooth streets that are in tiptop condition!

### ***Does compost contain manure?***

It depends. There's an ideal ratio in any compost mix of one part green (grass and manure) to three or four parts brown (twigs and leaves.) For commercial producers, manure is a good way to supply the green portion of this ratio. Store-bought compost is available in a variety of formulations, and they will specify whether manure has been included. Backyard composters use vegetables cuttings, teabags, coffee grounds and other green ingredients.

### ***Is compost hot?***

Compost is said to be "baking" because temperatures can reach from 120 to 160 degrees while actively decaying. It can take a few months to a year or more to complete the cooking process, depending on setup, moisture level and other factors.

"Hot compost" is a specific method of speeding it up. Depending on the moisture level and the aeration technique, good compost can result in as little as three weeks.

Store-bought compost should have cooked for at least six weeks to sterilize weed seeds and, if manure is used, to eliminate any harmful bacteria.

### ***What's the difference between compost and top-dressing?***

Many people use the terms interchangeably, but compost is the basic decomposed residue of plant and animal materials (leaves and manure), while top-dressing is a mixture of compost and sand or sandy loam. Top-dressing is also just a verb, meaning to spread any compost product over existing soil.

### ***How much do I need?***

One cubic yard is about 27 cubic feet: roughly the amount to fill a full-size pickup bed. Bags of compost usually come in two cubic feet bags. You'd need 14 bags to equal one cubic yard. For a lot of 2,500-5,000 square feet, you need 1 cubic yard of compost. For a lot of 5,001-8,000 square feet, you need 2 cubic yards.

### ***Should you aerate your lawn at the same time?***

Aeration removes plugs of soil from the ground and deposits them back on the surface (these quickly disappear back into the lawn.) It allows air, water, and nutrients to reach the roots. It's great to aerate at the same time as applying compost but be careful not to damage any in-ground irrigation you have.

It takes about 20 minutes to aerate an average lawn by rolling it with a rental aeration machine.

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## Keeping Your Home Safe While You Are On Vacation



We are coming into vacation season, and many people have plans for trips this summer. Just remember: It's important that your house look "lived in" while you're gone, and that you deal with anything inside the house that could cause damage.

Here are tips from State Farm Insurance:

### Inside the house

- Install or set timers on lights inside the house so it looks like someone is home.
- Protect against power surges. Unplug the coffee maker, toaster, and any electronics that are susceptible to surge damage, or make sure they are plugged into a surge protector.
- Test smoke alarms to make sure they are in working order. If it's been a while since you changed the battery, now is a good time to do that.
- Be careful what you post on social media. Many people enjoy giving friends and family updates via platforms such as Facebook, but it also tells a potential burglar that you aren't home.
- Secure your valuables, such as fine jewelry, in a home safe or put them out of view. Related to that, don't leave blinds open in areas where you do have such items, such as the bedroom.
- Set your air conditioner thermostat a few degrees higher than usual to save money and energy.
- Double-check to see that all windows and doors are locked. Make sure ceiling fans are turned off.
- If you're going to be gone for a good while, consider a house sitter or give a trusted friend or family member your house key so they can check from time to time.

### Outside the house

- If you're going to be gone for more than a week, arrange for lawn care so your house won't look neglected.
- Prune any branches that could fall on or scrape your house, and that also could allow a burglar access to your second floor.
- Stop newspapers and mail or arrange with a friend or

family member to pick them up each day.

- Park a vehicle in your driveway. If you don't have an extra, you can ask a neighbor to park one of their vehicles in your driveway while you're gone.
- Put away any lightweight patio furniture and/or cushions so they won't blow away if there are high winds.
- Check your exterior lighting to make sure it's working in the front and back. Motion-sensor lights or lights that automatically come on at dusk are great options.
- Don't leave spare keys outdoors. Burglars are smarter than you think.
- If you have a house alarm, make sure it's armed when you leave.
- If no one, such as a lawn maintenance company, is scheduled to be in your yard while you're gone, consider locking your gates.

Have a safe vacation without any unpleasant surprises when you get home!

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