

# Redland Oaks



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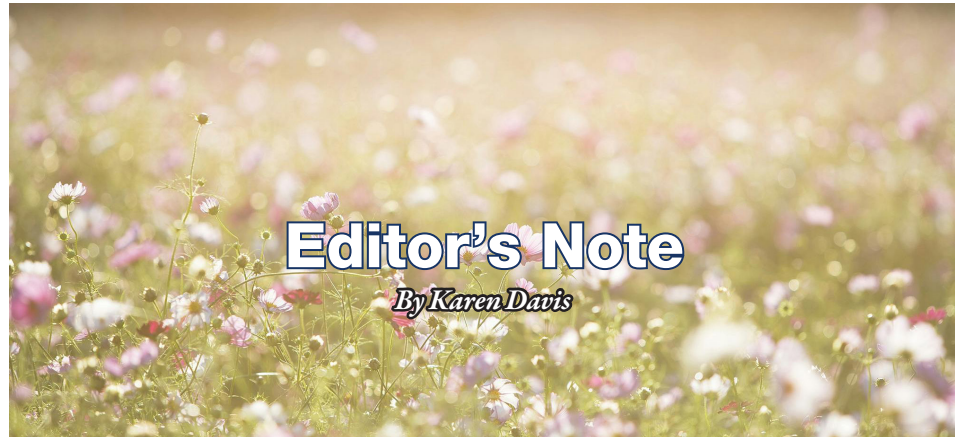
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## Editor's Note

*By Karen Davis*

Greetings, everyone! I hope you are enjoying our spring temperatures. We had a mild winter this year, but it's still nice to see plants greening up and flowers starting to bloom. It's also the time of year when many people make upgrades to their property. Exterior upgrades that are visible from the street are subject to approval before the project starts by our Architectural Control Committee. You can find the form to fill out on our website, [www.redlandoakshoa.com](http://www.redlandoakshoa.com).

This is also the season when SAWS offers a variety of coupons and rebates to save you money on landscape improvements. Check out the story on page 2.

If you haven't already, it's time to put out your hummingbird feeders. See details on page 3. And it's also time to prepare your home and landscape for summer. See stories on pages 2 and 4.

The ROHOA board has approved the construction of a community library. This is a cabinet that will contain donated books that are free for anyone to take. You can also leave books for children and adults. Plans are to have one of our residents build it with donated materials and install it on the mailbox island on Old Stable. We'll keep you posted.

If you haven't paid your annual dues, please do that ASAP. Our association depends on your assessments to fund the maintenance of our public areas and pay other expenses!

Any of you who have driven on Loop 1604 west of Highway 281 know that construction is going on. Driving that stretch of the road can be stressful, especially during rush hour. Unfortunately, the project is going to take a good while to finish. In the meantime, drive carefully and allow yourself extra time to reach your destination. And be aware that the Loop 1604/Interstate 10 intersection is closed on weekends due to construction. Traffic is being rerouted to the access roads.

I wish you a great spring!

## 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



## It's time to get ready for summer!

We've already had a taste of the heat, with temperatures reaching the 80s even in February. But we all know that extreme, triple-digit temperatures are coming this summer. Here are some ways you can prepare for them:

- **Check your air conditioning system:** The easiest way is to have a professional HVAC company do an annual inspection. Many companies offer an annual contract to check your cooling system in the spring and heating system in the fall. If you do it yourself, make sure the compressor outside is clean, without leaves and debris blocking the vents, and replace indoor filters as needed.
- **Check your irrigation system:** Take a walk around your yard to see if any sprinkler heads are sticking up above ground level. Then run each station to make sure the heads are functioning properly. Again, the easiest way to do this is to have a professional irrigation specialist come out and check your system.
- **Check the insulation in your home:** Check your attic to make sure there is enough insulation to keep cool air from escaping through the roof. Check around your windows and doors to make sure they are properly insulated. Close your fireplace damper.
- **Take care of your trees:** Trees around your home are one of the best heat barriers, especially on the west side where it gets the intense afternoon heat. Healthy trees with plenty of foliage are important.
- **Protect your foundation:** This is something many homeowners may not think about, but extreme hot and dry conditions cause the soil to shrink, and that can cause cracks in the foundation. Soaker hoses laid around the house about a foot away from the foundation are a great solution. Let the soakers run for 15 to 20 minutes two or more times a week, depending on how dry the conditions are. Protect your investment!

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## Save money with SAWS coupons!

It's the time of year when people start working on their landscapes for spring. And it's also the time when San Antonio Water System offers consultations, rebates and coupons to save you money in your yard. They include:

- **Watersaver Irrigation Consultation:** A SAWS irrigation expert will do a free evaluation of your irrigation system and offer suggestions for more efficient operation, if applicable. Call 210-704-SAVE to schedule an evaluation.
- **Watersaver Landscape Coupons:** You can apply for a coupon to help defray the cost of converting part of your landscape to water-saving plants.
- **Outdoor Living Rebate:** Take out some turf and install a hardscape feature such as a deck or patio and get a rebate to help with the cost.
- **Watersaver Rewards:** Earn points every time you attend a SAWS-approved conservation event or program, then cash them in for coupons to use for gardening supplies.
- **Residential Irrigation Design Rebate:** Reconfigure or remove your sprinkler system and get a rebate.
- **Residential Flow Sensor Rebate:** Install a water use sensor and get a rebate.
- **Rainsaver Cistern Rebate:** Install a rain barrel to catch rainwater and get a rebate. Remember that our Redland Oaks covenants require that such barrels be screened behind a fence or landscaping so they are not visible from the street.
- **Swimming Pool Filter Rebate:** Get a rebate for installing a new, more efficient water filter in your pool.
- **Smart Irrigation Controller Coupon:** Install a new controller with automatic weather-based settings and remote access from an app and receive a money-saving coupon.
- **Shut-off Valve Rebate:** Install a new water shut-off valve with help from a licensed plumber and receive a \$100 SAWS rebate.

You can get more details on these moneysavers at <https://www.gardenstylesanantonio.com/coupons-and-rebates/>.





## It's hummingbird season!

It's spring, and you may be noticing hummingbirds beginning to zip around your garden. If you're interested in attracting hummingbirds, a Texas A&M AgriLife expert offers some tips for bringing more of these beautiful little birds to your porches and gardens.

Hummingbirds may visit your feeders year-round, but March through September is their prime period. According to Emily Grant, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service birding program coordinator, hummingbird feeders can be kept out all year long in Texas if cared for properly. But if year-round care isn't for you, now is the time to put out your feeders and maintain them through the spring and summer.

To attract hummingbirds to your feeder, Grant suggests a solution of four parts water to one part table sugar. She said it is important to mix up small quantities of water every day or two. There is no need to boil the water if mixing small quantities at a time. However, if making a larger batch, go ahead and boil the water for storage.

"You want to put in enough sugar water for a day, maybe two, and then refresh it, only putting in enough liquid for them to drink during that time frame in order to keep it fresh," she explained.

Especially during peak season, it is too hot to leave the juice out for more than a day or two because it will spoil in the heat and could make the hummingbirds sick. And if it makes them sick, they probably won't come back to that feeder, she noted.

"Never use anything fancy, just use plain white sugar and no coloring in the liquid," said Beth McBroom, who works with Grant. "The coloring on the feeder is enough to attract the birds. And the easiest and most economical thing to use is the sugar out of your pantry."

It is important that birders remember not to use honey or any alternative sugars when filling feeders.

"When we use honey, we tend to see a lot of bacteria and fungus that will begin to grow in there, which is harmful for our birds," Grant said.

Part of the fun of feeding hummingbirds is watching them dart around the feeder, so place it near a window so you can see it, she said. If you're using more than one feeder, don't place them right next to each other or close to a seed feeder, so the hummingbirds won't be trying to guard and protect their own feeder all the time.

"Hummingbirds are a little bit territorial and feisty little birds, so they don't like to share," Grant noted.

Also keep in mind the amount of sunlight or shade that may hit the feeder during the day. The more the feeders are in direct, harsh sunlight, the faster the sugar water will spoil, especially during the summer.



Another thing you can do is plant native flowers for your hummingbirds.

"Just about any tubular shaped flower, the hummingbirds will love," McBroom said.

Often when shopping for flowers, you'll see tags on them that have a picture of a hummingbird to show they are hummingbird attractors. Hummingbirds are also pollinators, so if you're considering a pollinator garden, many of the plants you use will be hummingbird friendly. Be sure to look for native plants, as these will support the greatest number of insects and native pollinators.

"You can also buy or create pollinator pots or build pollinator gardens for those who may not want the daily maintenance of a hummingbird feeder. These attract pollinators like hummingbirds, bees, and butterflies," Grant said.

Be sure to keep an eye out as the hummingbirds begin to arrive so you can enjoy their beauty and personality as they stop for nourishment at your feeders and flowers.

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## Know your soil type!

By David Abrego

SAWS Conservation Consultant



Healthy soil is the basis of everything in the landscape and garden. But in South Central Texas, soils can be far from ideal.

Fortunately, SAWS Garden Style Plant Finder pages at [www.gardenstylesanantonio.com](http://www.gardenstylesanantonio.com) include filters for soil types – if you know your type. Here’s a broad introduction to local soils, where they occur, and what they mean for your landscape.

If we all had our wishes for growing plants, soil would be loose, well-drained, and rich in organic matter and nutrients. If the proportions of mineral solids were equal, then you would have loam – a nearly perfect growing texture with medium-sized particles and large numbers of pores that can hold higher volumes of water in suspension where it’s available to plant roots. In Bexar County, however, perfect growing textures aren’t common, and many of our soils instead have high proportions of clay, with coarser sediments like sand (in the south) and rock (in the north).

Sandy soils are composed of comparatively large grains that lack nutrients and drain very quickly when wet, meaning they retain less water than other textures. In Bexar County, loamy sands, sandy loams, sandy clays and embedded sandstones sit atop a clay layer from the Medina River south to Atascosa County and northeast from Braunig Lake to St. Hedwig. Sandy soil is easily identified in the hand, with its gritty, brown-sugar type grains.

Surface clay (or clay loam) soils are at their deepest in the middle third of the county, extending between riparian creek and river basins from the Medina River in the southwest toward Converse in the northeast, and broadly encircled by Loop 410 in the center. In a drought like we’ve experienced this year, “shrink-swell” clay soils can shrink so much that they pull back from house skirting and expose cracks and gaps in bare ground. Clay soils are composed of densely packed microscopic particles. They can retain plenty of water, but they hold on to it tightly in tiny pores, making it harder for water to enter and exit the soil and harder for plant roots to access it.

Thin soils in Bexar County underlie some of the fastest-growing portions of the San Antonio area to the north and west, especially outside Loop 1604. Whatever the texture, they tend to be limestone-based and very shallow – less than 4 inches deep in many areas over solid rock. Although considered “non-arable” when it comes to crops, they’re great for growing native grasses and native plants that are adapted to the shallow soil depth.

Well-drained refers to any soil’s water retention capacity. The Find-a-Plant filters on GardenStyleSA recommend it for many plants, including native plants that evolved in shallow Hill Country soils, agaves accustomed to desert conditions, and many other plants like young vegetables and annuals. For these, especially when they’re

young, it’s essential to provide good drainage because their roots can rot in thick clay. Some local soil types (thin and sandy) can be well-drained without any additions, depending on the site. That’s also true for soils on steeply sloping sites or raised beds, especially if filled with potting soils and other bagged soil types composed of peat, sand, and Perlite.

If you’re not sure about what soil type you have, try rubbing it in your hands. Clay soils tend to stick together and can be shaped and rolled, especially when they’re moist. Loams can be rolled into a ball, but they’ll generally fall apart if poked with a finger. And in sandy soils, individual grains are clearly visible.

Adding mulch twice a year, ideally in spring and fall, can help with problem soils.

## Check out our Northeast Senior Center

If you are 60 older, or married to someone who is, then you’re eligible for one of the best free deals in town – the Northeast Senior Center!

The center, at 4135 Thousand Oaks, offers a host of services and programs for seniors, including a daily lunch, arts and crafts classes, fitness and dance classes, a full gym with equipment, and a variety of other activities. Their calendar is jam-packed with everything from computer classes to lectures, music lessons and even movies!

The center is open on weekdays, 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Friday. It is closed on weekends. You can learn more about what’s offered by googling “Northeast Senior Center San Antonio.” Or call them at 210-207-4590. It’s a great way to meet other residents, too!



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