

# Better Austin Living

*News You Can Use from Your Friend in the Real Estate Business*

## Summer Landscaping Tips

This time of the year it can be downright impossible to keep a yard looking green and vibrant. With extensive summer heat and watering restrictions many people flat out give up. But, here are a few tips to help keep your lawn and garden looking healthy during the dog days of summer.

Hot, dry summer weather can be critical for certain plants. Make sure that you are providing supplemental water for plants in your flowerbeds that receive extensive sun exposure.

To encourage new growth of aging annuals, water, fertilize, water and then prune if they become tall and leggy.

Mow your lawn a little bit higher to avoid moisture loss. Check your lawn mower blade. Dull blades can cause a brownish discoloration of the stems and leaves shortly after cutting. You may also want to raise the mower blade to the highest allowable setting.

Keep a close eye on recently planted landscaping. Inadequate root systems and drought can be a damaging combination.

Watch for and apply early control for summer insects and disease to prevent build up and spread.

Water your lawn in the early morning hours and/or use only sprinklers that spray the least amount of water into the air to help lessen the amount of evaporation. Water is the best fertilizer this time of the year. Despite higher water bills, remember to soak your lawn frequently, thoroughly and deeply.

By July, we are entering our least productive season for planting in Central Texas. Accordingly, the planting recommendations are slim in late summer. Focus on summer vegetables and planning a fall season garden.

### **A Quick Note From Ryan:**

" I have to say that at the beginning of this year I had concerns about my ability to juggle my new responsibilities as a first time father, added responsibilities as a husband, and still have enough time to provide my clients with the level of service that I pride myself on. However, I am blessed to say that while the first six months of this year have definitely been life changing, it has also been my best year to date. I owe a debt of gratitude to my current clients for their patience, my past clients for their referrals and my business partners for their assistance. A big thank you to everyone who has directly or indirectly made 2011 a great year so far and I look forward to continuing to take things to a new level."



Join My  
Networks



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## 5 Simple Ways to Introduce Me to Friends & Family



Give me a Call or send me a Text message **512.773.3493**



Send me an Email @:  
**Ryan@BetterAustinLiving.com**



Please Pass Along This Copy of the **Newsletter**



Visit my website(s) @:  
**www.BetterAustinLiving.com**



Lets be Facebook Friends @:  
**Facebook.com/RyanFrance**

Who's the one person you know who could most use my help? ***I sincerely thank you for your referrals!***

## Quality Service Is Not Expensive, It's Priceless.

On average, families move about every five years and we are always looking for repair and service people we can trust. Most of us rely on wise neighbors for referrals to reliable plumbers, painters and auto mechanics. Still, it takes time to develop your own personal relationships with them.

Here are some ways that may help give you more confidence in your choices until you and your service people have bonded.

**Ask around for shops and services *before* you need them.** Don't put off your search for a reputable mechanic until your car is on the back of a tow truck.

**Are the technicians certified?** If you ask to see their certification, they should show it to you and give you the number for their licensing office without hesitating.

**Don't shop on price alone.** If someone's price is much lower than their competitors' it might not only be because they're using cheaper parts. An inexperienced service technician may be the reason for the lower price. Ask who's doing the work and what qualifications they have.

Do you have a new neighbor who might need some introductions? Imagine if someone had given you the names of trustworthy service people when you moved in.

## Cut Your Utility Bills Down to Size!

If your utility bills could stand a trim, these little strategies could make a big difference at bill-paying time.

**Get an adjustment for cable outages.** If your cable service is interrupted for an extended time, call the cable company and ask them to adjust your bill. To figure out how much to request, divide your monthly cost by the number of days in the month. Multiply that figure by the number of days of missed service. For example, if your cable service costs \$120 a month and it went out for 5 days in June, which is a 30-day month, you would be eligible for a \$20 adjustment to that month's cable bill, because  $\$120 \div 30 \text{ days} = \$4 \text{ per day}$ ; and  $\$4 \times 5 \text{ days} = \$20$ .

**Get a separate water meter for your exterior hose bib or irrigation system.** In most towns, your sewer bill is tied to your water usage and is based on readings from your water meter. As the weather gets hotter, a higher percentage of the water measured by your meter is actually going into your lawn and garden - not into your house and down through the sewer system.

Why pay for water in the summer that isn't going through the sewer? A lot of water companies will let you have two meters, one for your house and one for your irrigation or hose bib, and they will read the meter going into your house to calculate your sewer bill.

Of course, you could also change your yard to a xeriscape, which practically eliminates the need for watering and is environmentally friendly.



**Plant trees in strategic locations around your house.** This is a long-term solution, but deciduous trees can keep your house *much* cooler in the summer, give you color in the spring and fall, and let the sun through in the winter. Planting trees helps offset our high-carbon lifestyles, gives birds a place to live, and can even

give you fruit in the summer.

**Don't let your computer sit idly by.** Even when your computer, TV, DVD, game system, cable modem, et cetera, are turned off they draw power so they can spring to life when you want them. You can save that power by putting your entertainment and home-office equipment on a surge protector and then plugging the surge protector into a timer. Program the timer to only allow power to the surge protector when you are home. Also program the timer to turn off overnight while you sleep, so that your electronics will only idle for the 6 or 8 hours each day when they might actually be used. You can save 5-10% off your electric bill by doing this one thing, even if all you're putting on the surge protector is your computer.

## Didya Know?

The average person falls asleep in seven minutes.

The average bank teller loses about \$250 every year.

The average US male will spend 2,965 hours shaving during his lifetime.

You share your birthday with at least nine million other people around the world.

A typical bed usually houses over 6 billion dust mites.

Each year, insects eat 1/3 of the Earth's food crop

There are more than 2,500 varieties of mosquito

## Austin By the Numbers

1,891 single-family homes were sold in May 2011, about 8% fewer than May 2010. The median price was \$198,100 which is 4% more than the year before.

On average it is taking 81 days to sell a house in the Austin metropolitan area.

There are currently 9,744 homes actively for sale on Austin MLS which is 13% less than May 2010.

There are 2,156 pending sales for single family homes which is 53 percent more than May 2010

### Productivity Nugget:

In January of this year I made a commitment to go "paperless," or give it my best shot. I purchased a Fujitsu ScanSnap 1500 and it has been a godsend. Not only has it allowed me to stay on top of things at home but it has been a lifesaver when scanning business documents as well.

## Know Thy Trivia

1. What state capital in the United States has the fewest number of letters in it?
2. If a telephone company added one extra digit to all phone numbers in one area code, how many new phone numbers could potentially be created?
3. What do these well known people have in common? Dan Aykroyd, Neil Young, Michael J. Fox, and Peter Jennings?
4. Can you arrange these seven letters into a seven-letter word using all letters exactly one time: A, E, O, P, R, S, T?
5. How many months of the year have 31 days in them?

**Answers are on the back page of this newsletter (page 8)**

## Let it OUT!

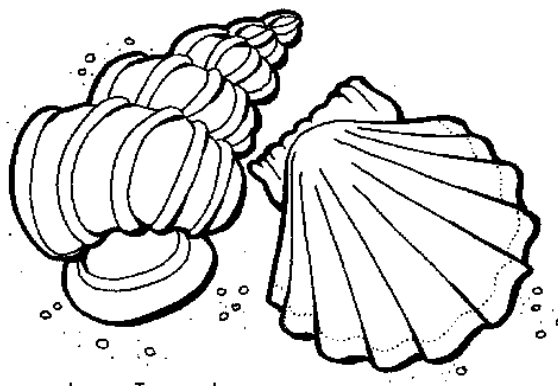
Men, it turns out that slamming the door or screaming at the top of your lungs when you're mad could actually be good for your heart.

For 15 years, data was collected on over 23,000 men, aged 25 to 74 years, on how often they outwardly showed their anger. The results of the study, in *Psychosomatic Medicine*, said that men who expressed anger "sometimes" or "more often than not" were almost 50% less likely to have a heart attack and 58% less likely to have a stroke than men who "never" or "most often do not" express their anger.

Other things that predict a high increase in a man's risk of heart attack were the traits of being very cynical and of being very distrustful.

## Ever Sit On the Beach and Wonder?

- When you're sitting on the sand looking at the horizon, it's about 3 miles (4.8 km) away.
- The world's oceans contain nearly 20 million tons (18.1 mt) of gold.
- The High Seas -- areas of the ocean beyond national jurisdiction -- cover almost 50 per cent of the earth's surface.
- An average beach pail, roughly a quart, holds about 3.5 million grains of sand.
- High waves pull sand out into the ocean; small waves bring sand onto the beach and deposit it.
- The little black specks that stick to your skin on some beaches are grains of the mineral magnetite, which is magnetic. Animals have more magnetite in their bodies than humans do, which helps them feel when an earthquake is coming.



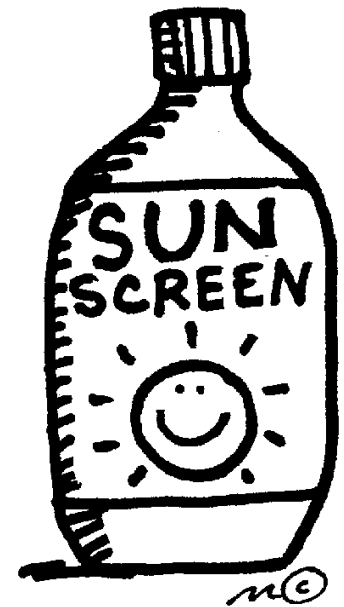
*If you ever think that you are too small or unimportant to be effective then you must never have tried to sleep in a room at night with a mosquito.*

# Sun Safety Guidelines for Children

In the summer everyone wants to have fun in the sun, but you really want to protect your children's tender skin from sunburns. Follow these sun safety recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics:

## For babies under six months:

It's best to avoid sun exposure by making sure your baby is in full shade, like from a dense tree or an umbrella. Even when baby is in the shade, the sun's rays reflect off sand and water, so dress him in lightweight clothes that cover his arms and legs and a hat with a brim that keeps the sun off his face. Apply a little SPF-15 sunscreen to small areas like his face and the backs of his hands if you notice he's changing color.



## For young children:

Dress her in protective clothing and use sunscreen with at least SPF-30. Don't forget to reapply the sunscreen after swimming, sweating, or after 2 hours have passed – after 1 hour if you're in the tropics. Reapplication is essential to keep her protected. Avoid staying too long in the sun between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., the hours when the rays are the strongest.

## For older children:

When they are not in the water, do your best to keep kids in the shade or covered in cotton clothing with a tight weave. Bring hats with large brims or a baseball hat with the bill facing forward. Look for sunglasses that block 99% to 100% of UVA and UVB rays. Use sunscreen with SPF-15 or greater. A handful of sunscreen per application is enough for a young adult.

If you are vacationing in the tropics, remember that sunscreen and bug repellent are harmful to fish and coral. It's best not to wear either in sensitive environments. And remember that UV rays can make it through clouds and fog.

## See An Interesting House?

Did you recently drive by an interesting house but can't find the price? Did a sign go up down the street and you want to know what the neighbors are asking for their house? No problem, send me a quick email with the address of the property and let me do the leg work for you. I'll send you exactly what you are looking for.

[Ryan@BetterAustinLiving.com](mailto:Ryan@BetterAustinLiving.com)

## What's My House Worth?

Do you have the itch to sell but not quite sure what you could realistically expect to sell your house for in today's market? That is a question I get quite a bit. I'd be happy to provide a Comparable Market Analysis for you. No obligation. Just give me a call or send me an email. You also should check out the great resources at:

[BetterAustinLiving.com/HomeSeller](http://BetterAustinLiving.com/HomeSeller)

## Does Yoga Really Work for Weight Loss?

If you think running is the only exercise that can help you lose weight, consider yoga exercise for weight loss. You might think of yoga as something you do while sitting still. It doesn't seem strenuous enough to help with weight loss, does it?

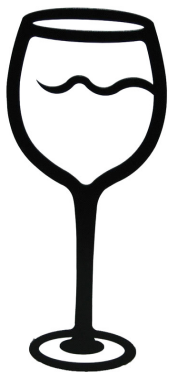
Yoga can help you lose weight, no matter what kind of yoga you do. There are many different forms of yoga, and not all of them are the best exercise for weight loss if you do them and nothing else. But combined with other exercises, yoga can help speed your weight loss and more quickly improve your health.

And then there are the forms of yoga that actually give you a great cardiovascular workout. These are more aerobic, and you will sweat when you do them. They raise your heart rate and your respiration because they are yoga poses combined with quicker movements.

The form of yoga exercise that helps most with weight loss is called flow yoga, or more formally Vinyasa yoga. There are several different styles of yoga even under the Vinyasa umbrella. One of the most popular is Ashtanga yoga. This form of yoga combines several very athletic movements. The poses are still the same as someone might do in a very calm and slow paced workout.

The chief difference between traditional yoga poses in a workout of this type is the movements between the poses. Instead of holding a pose for a very long time and then slowly transitioning to a new pose, the poses are held more briefly. The movements between them are more athletic.

You might look at yoga poses and think it couldn't possibly be exercise, but it is. Holding the poses requires muscle control and balance. Improving these things will help your body burn fat more efficiently. Traditional yoga also makes it easier for you to do aerobic exercise. The more you tone and sculpt your muscles, the stronger you become. You'll be able to do your aerobic exercises more easily and for longer periods of time. Start off by taking a class to learn the fundamentals of yoga exercise.



## Red Wine Emergency

When a glass of red wine is spilled on your carpet, it requires immediate attention. The longer it stands, the harder it is to remove. Commercial products like OxiClean and Wine Away do an excellent job, but if you don't have them on hand, try this.

Gently blot the spill with paper towels or a clean cloth. Don't rub or you will force the stain into the carpet fibers.

Combine 1 teaspoon dish soap and 1 cup of hydrogen peroxide in a small bowl. Soak a clean sponge in the mixture, squeeze it halfway dry and gently blot the stain. Continue this process until the stain lifts.

Sponge the stained area with warm water and blot dry with a clean cloth or paper towels.

## Poor Lighting Causes Accidents

Low lighting in high-work areas around the home, like the kitchen, the tool shed, and the garage, can cast shadows and impair depth perception, which can lead to a host of common accidents. The Halifax Region Fire and Emergency Service offers these recommendations:



- Open curtains and blinds during the day.
- Install additional lighting fixtures, if necessary, around task areas such as your stove, your kitchen islands or your work tables.
- Mount under-cabinet lighting to illuminate countertops.
- Use the maximum wattage bulb allowed by the fixture.
- Reduce glare by using frosted bulbs or globes.
- Use the longest-life bulbs available for fixtures in hard-to-reach places to minimize the number of times you must change the bulb.

## Good Sales Tactics

A shopkeeper was dismayed when a brand-new business much like his own opened up next door and erected a huge sign that read, "**BEST DEALS.**"

He was horrified when another competitor opened up on his right, and announced its arrival with an even larger sign that read, "**LOWEST PRICES.**"

The shopkeeper panicked, until he got an idea. He put the biggest sign of all over his own shop. It read: "**MAIN ENTRANCE.**"

### The Journey is the Reward

Sometimes it feels like we can hardly wait until our lives change so that we can at last, be happy, do something, go somewhere. We tell ourselves it will happen when the kids get older, when we get the better job or are able to afford nicer things. The truth is that there is no better time to be happy than right now. If not now, when? Your life will always have its challenges to overcome and goals to be met. Its best to admit this to yourself and to be happy anyway. Philosopher Alfred D. Souza said, "For a long time it seemed to me that life was about to begin, real life. But there was always an obstacle in the way, something to be gotten through first, some unfinished business, time still to be served, a debt to be paid. Then life would begin. At last it dawned on me that these obstacles were life." There is no "way to happiness." Happiness is in the journey and making the best of what we learn along the way. Treasure every moment you have.

## Ryan France

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### Recycle this Newsletter



When you are done reading your newsletter this month, do me a favor. Instead of throwing it away or putting it in a pile on your desk, please pass it along to a friend, neighbor or co-worker so that they can enjoy reading it too. That's a simple and pressure-free way to introduce me to other people.

*Thanks for Not keeping  
me a Secret!*

*Trivia Answers (page 4) 1. Salem, OR Dover, DE 2. 90,000,000 3. Born in Canada 4. Seaport 5. Seven*

**P.S.** Have you talked to someone recently who's thinking of moving? Give them my number and let me steer them in the right direction toward the right price for their house.

### **Ryan France, Your Friend in the Real Estate Business StoneHaven Realty, 512-773-3493**

The next time you hear someone mention that they are thinking of selling their home, just get out your cell phone, look up my number and call me immediately. I'll send you a free analysis to give to them that helps take the mystery out of pricing a house.

As signs pop up in the neighborhood, talk always revolves around comparing your home with the one for sale and why your neighbor's house sold for that price. "Did they get a fair price?" "Did they leave money on the table?" These are daunting questions if you're thinking about packing up and moving. It's usually a mystery why a home that looks a lot like yours has a very different price.

Summer is in full swing and more folks have put their houses up for sale. People believe now is the time to move up, downsize, move back home now that the kids have graduated, or just move to that place you always wanted to live.

Here's a quick note to let you know how you and I can help anyone you feel comfortable introducing me to.

**They're Selling Their House for How Much?**