

RUBY RANCH NEWS

Quarterly Newsletter

January/February/March 2016

Spring Has Arrived!

by Donna Bjornson

With our lakes almost full and the burn ban lifted, at least temporarily, there is much to do to prepare our properties for the coming of warmer weather. In this issue we will share some Central Texas Landscaping tips from our very own expert, Steve Selger, retired landscape architect.

Spring is the quintessential symbol of everything new. And as we enter into this season of new beginnings, we begin 2016 with two new HOA board members, David Fletcher and Phil Mueller. David and Phil have volunteered their time to serve you as Treasurer and Member at Large and they join Cristi Rawlings, David Mixon and Kelly Baugher for another exciting year ahead, with fresh ideas and new perspectives on how we can continue to improve our community.

We will continue to share fire-safety tips in this and upcoming issues. This is a vast subject, which we intend to share with you in manageable doses. Wildfires are a significant threat in Central Texas and Ruby Ranch is particularly susceptible because of our topography, grasses, and country setting. It is important to consider wildfire prevention as we tackle our spring garden clean-up, select plants, and design our landscapes.

We hope you will enjoy this newsletter. We have fun, interesting facts, as well as important updates to share with you. We welcome you as we begin this new year and our journey to enhance this wonderful community we are all proud to call home.



Landscaping Tips for Central Texas

by Steve Selger, Landscaping Committee

In Central Texas, native and adapted plant materials grow the best and are low maintenance. With our hot, dry summers, native and adapted plants require very little water to thrive. Approximately 70% of native plants perish due to over watering. Watering only when plants need water, and watering deeply, encourages deeper root growth resulting in a healthier and more drought tolerant landscape. While you can never totally eliminate maintenance, you can certainly reduce the time spent on maintaining your yard by using native materials.

When picking native plants, the selection should be based on the plant's adaptability to the landscape area, the effect desired, and the ultimate size, color and texture of the plants. Plants should be arranged to achieve the desired aesthetic effect and grouped in accordance with their respective water needs.

Mulches applied to a depth of 2 to 4 inches will assist soils in retaining moisture, reducing weed growth, and preventing erosion. Mulch can also be used where conditions aren't adequate or conducive for growing quality turf or ground covers. It is better to use a mulch that has had time to age, newly cut material may have a tendency to draw moisture out of the soil rather than moisture retention.

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“Mr. President, its for you”



Image courtesy of Danilo Rizzuti at FreeDigitalPhotos.net

A Little Bit of Ruby Ranch History

by Ron Dunkin, former YO Ranch Outfitter

Ruby ranch started out as several different ranches. Cecil Ruby Sr. acquired them over time and he built an eight foot high fence around it, a total of 5,000 acres. The YO ranch leased the ranch for 20 years for exotic and native game hunting. It was named the YO Onion Creek Lodge.

Mr. Ruby built the original lodge just down the creek from the present location. It was quite rustic, but comfortable, and he was always entertaining political friends and dignitaries. At times it could be interesting since the only access to the lodge was the low water crossing up river from the lodge. At one of Gib Lewis' yearly salmon bakes, when he was Speaker of the House, the water was so high that we had to ferry all 100 or so guests across in 4 wheel drive vehicles. The original lodge burned down as the result of an electrical fire in 1986 and the new lodge was built in the same year.

Mr. Ruby built a hunting stand, on what is now the Dahlstrom ranch, for a famous friend. Today we still call that stand "the LBJ stand"! It is about 30 feet tall and equipped with running water, a flush toilet, a stove and an electric elevator (which has been taken out of service), as well as a **RED** telephone!

“Spring is the time of plans and projects.”

– Leo Tolstoy, Anna Karenina

2016 Road Maintenance Schedule

Crack sealing will be ongoing throughout the year.

Sealcoating will be performed the first week in April for Montgomery, Walter, Matzig and Ruby Ranch Road, from 967 to Humphreys.

Warranty work will be performed to areas inside the Clark Cove gate the first week of April.

All road work is weather-dependent and is subject to change!



Firewise Checklist For Homeowners

- Clear leaves and other debris from gutters, eaves, porches and decks to prevent embers from igniting your home
- Remove dead vegetation from under your deck and within 10 feet of the house
- Screen or box-in areas below patios and decks with wire mesh
- Remove firewood stacks, propane tanks and dry vegetation within 30 ft. of home's foundation
- Keep lowest branches of trees pruned to 6-10 feet from the ground
- Keep lawn hydrated and maintained. Dry grass and shrubs are fuel for wildfire
- Inspect shingles and roof tiles. Replace or repair those that are loose or missing to prevent ember penetration
- Cover exterior attic vents with metal wire mesh no larger than 1/8" to prevent sparks from entering the home
- Enclose under-eave and soffit vents or screen with metal mesh to prevent ember entry



Wildfires: What you can do to protect your home, part two

by Phil Mueller, Professional Firefighter

Naturally occurring wildfires burned throughout this area well before any of us arrived and played an integral role in defining our landscape. Wildfires clear out dead and decaying matter, return nutrients to the soil, and clear out overgrown areas allowing new growth to occur. Our continued enjoyment of this land is dependent upon being good stewards and assuming some of the roles which are naturally played by fire. The question is not if wildfire will return to this area, but when will it return and how damaging will it be?

Removing Fuel – Start Small

One of the most dangerous (and often overlooked) elements of a wildfire is the tiny flying embers or sparks they produce. More often than not, it is these embers being carried by the wind to nearby fuel sources which leads to the progression of wildfire through an area. The first step in any wildfire prevention plan is to remove any potential sources of fuel that could be ignited by embers. Focus primarily on small, loose, and dry fuels. Piles of leaves or grass clippings are easily ignited by embers and if these piles are near fences, under decks, or in gutters then fire can easily spread to larger structures. Keep the area around your home free of these fuels through regular maintenance or install screens around places where these fuels collect.

Don't Invite Embers into Your Home

Embers pose a threat to the exterior of your home, but can easily find their way inside as well. Loose or damaged shingles or ceiling tiles can be a path for embers to enter your attic. Gable or soffit vents are also potential entry points. Repair any opening on or near the roof which might allow embers to penetrate and vents should be covered with screens no larger than one eighth of an inch.

This is the second installment in a series of articles intended to inform Ruby Ranch homeowners on how to minimize danger from wildfires. Part one in the series discusses landscaping practices which can help protect your home from wildfire and can be found in the Fourth Quarter - 2015 Newsletter at www.rubyranchtx.com/newsletters. Much of the information in this series comes from the National Fire Protection Association's Firewise Communities Program and can be found at www.firewise.org.

Q & A with the ACC Committee

Some of us are not aware that we have an "ACC" committee. And by the way, what the heck does "ACC" stand for? And what do they do? We sat down with David Mixon and Kevin Ritchie, long-time ACC committee volunteers, to get the scoop:

I. What is the ACC Committee? Why does it exist?

The Architectural Control Committee (ACC) was created to ensure that "Use Restrictions and Architectural Standards" are followed. The ACC is to review all building and improvement applications submitted by homeowners. These include reviewing new home plans to ensure they meet the requirements outlined in the Covenant Restrictions. It is the homeowner's responsibility to submit plans for approval of any improvements such as additional buildings, sheds, pools, etc. Please consult the CCR's on the Ruby Ranch website for more complete details on improvements.

II. What are CCR's and why should I care?

CCR stands for "Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions" and were created by the original developers in the Bylaws to preserve the integrity of the neighborhood and to maintain or increase property values. Purchasing a home represented by a community association offers many advantages to a homeowner, but at the same time, imposes some obligations. These obligations are not intended as an inconvenience or an invasion of your freedom, but rather as a means of maintaining property values and harmony in your community.

Often we find that homeowners in our neighborhood are unaware of the recorded deed restrictions on their property. Deed restrictions exist to maximize the property value and beauty of your neighborhood by improving the overall appearance of the community, thereby benefiting both you and your neighbors.

III. Gasp! What happens if I receive a letter from the ACC?

The first letter is "A Friendly Reminder" that outlines the cause of the infraction. This letter requires that the infraction be cured within 10 days to avoid a Violation Letter. The next step is a "Violation Letter" which states 30 days to cure the infraction. If the issue is not resolved, the ACC sends a second "Final Violation Letter". After the Final Letter the ACC will refer the violation to the Ruby Ranch Board of Directors (RR BOD). The RR BOD will review and decide what the next step will be--another letter from the Board or referral of the violations to the HOA Attorney for resolution.

IV. What are the most common violations?

The most common violation by far is parking of trailers in view from the road followed by RV's in view from the road.

VI. Whom do I contact if I have a question?

You can contact the ACC by sending an email to: acc@rubyranchtx.com, or if you prefer you may contact one of our members by phone. The names and numbers are listed on the website.



Volunteers Needed!

As a self-managed Homeowners Association, we are in constant need of volunteers for various committees and tasks and always short of helping hands.

If you have a special talent, or you just want to be involved in the Ruby Ranch community, we want to hear from you! Please e-mail us at: board@rubyranchtx.com.

As always, we welcome you to the monthly Board meetings. Dates and times are posted in advance at: www.rubyranchtx.com.





What Happened to our Water Pressure in February?

by Dale Olmstead, President of the Ruby Ranch Water Board

On the first weekend of February, some of our residents located far south of Onion Creek reported low water pressure levels to PGMS, the operator of our water system. On Saturday evening PGMS determined that plant #2, located at the end of Ruby Ranch Road and which usually serves residents mostly south of Onion Creek, was not functioning properly and it was taken off-line. At that time, they opened an interconnect valve to plant #1 so it could service the entire subdivision while the problem with plant #2 was resolved. There was no need for a boil water notice since the system was not breached and the system water pressure level did not fall below prescribed minimums.

On Sunday morning some residents reported noticing their water had an off color, most probably due to insufficient flushing when the interconnect valve to plant # 1 was opened. PGMS flushed lines at multiple locations on Sunday and did extended flushing again on Monday after continuing to get complaints of discolored water on Sunday. Via a Monday, 2/8/16 post on the RRWSC website – rubyranchwater.com - residents were encouraged, if they still had discolored water in their homes, to run faucets to clear it out any remaining discolored water in their home.

Save the Date! April 26, 7:00pm

Ruby Ranch Water Supply Corporation's annual meeting will be at the Ruby Ranch Lodge.
All residents are invited to attend!

Onion Creek Coalition

Adapted from an Onion Creek Coalition handout given to Ruby Ranch homeowners at the February HOA Annual meeting.

Did you know that The City of Dripping Springs has applied to discharge 995,000 gallons of treated effluent daily into a tributary of Onion Creek? The potential impacts to our neighborhood are:

1. algae grown in Onion Creek "green slime"
2. degradation of our water quality
3. risk of sewage spill

Dripping Springs has other options to dispose of their effluent. This is the least expensive option, but not necessarily the best option for Dripping Springs neighbors!

Take action today and go to www.onioncreekcoalition.com to read more, sign the petition, and to sign up to receive updates on this issue. It is very important to go to the TCEQ UPDATE section and click on the link after TCEQ letter to sign up for the TCEQ mailing list for updates on the permit. The more people who sign up for these updates, the higher the visibility of our concern about this issue.

"It is easy to believe we are each waves and forget we are also the ocean."

~Jon J. Muth