

# BARTON HILLS NEWS

A Quarterly Newsletter

October 2011

## Many posts, one goal

### Neighbors Safeguard the Neighborhood During ACL

While the hot, dry summer had already heightened concerns about wildfires, the Bastrop and Steiner Ranch fires that started Labor Day weekend brought the subject home for Barton Hills residents.

On Sept. 5, with the ACL Festival just a few weeks away, the discussion on the neighborhood listserv about how to help prevent a fire in the Greenbelt took a more urgent tone. A plan took shape and within a week, a sign stating the dangerous conditions in the Greenbelt was designed, approved and sent to the printer. By Sept. 13, those signs were planted at every official and unofficial entrance to the Greenbelt, KXAN had picked up the story and C3 Presents (ACL Fest organizers) wanted to use our signs. In addition to raising fire awareness, the signs show how neighbors can pull together and quickly create something that really works.

Many were involved in the creation of the Barton Hills fire sign and it would be impossible to list them all. Thanks go out to Kay Killen, Melissa Hawthorne, Nina Miller, Miriam Joffe and others who took the initiative, and shared ideas and strategies with everyone through the listserv.

Thanks, as well, to all those who helped cover printing costs:

Katerina Dittmore and Norman Rice

Robert and Lorin Bryce

Janet and Hugh Booher

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Rosalie and Jim Boldin

Deann Schneider

Marcia McClellan

Judith Clack

Maxwell and Elizabeth McCombs

Melanie Gantt and Julian Rivera

Richard Watson, State Farm Insurance

Rodolfo Carrera and Elena Montalvo

Sarah Weddington

Katheryn Q. Hopper

Cherylann Campbell

Jennie Burger

Kimberly and Tate Erlinger

And thanks to everyone for their continued vigilance. See pages 6 and 7 for more lists of individuals who volunteered their time to benefit all.

### Prepare for the Unexpected

Learn how to lay the groundwork for a better outcome should disaster strike. Page 3.



### NEXT MEETING Tuesday, Oct. 18 6-9:30 p.m.



Join us at St. Mark's Church (corner of Barton Skyway and Barton Hills Drive). All are welcome! Social hour 6 p.m. Pizza from Rockin Tomato Pizza \$7.

#### Agenda

- 6:45 Call to order, announcements  
Approval of July 26 meeting minutes  
Treasurer's report
- 7:00 Disaster preparedness presentation
- 8:00 FireWise neighborhood assessment and action plan
- 8:15 Election of BHNA officers for 2012
- 8:30 Fall BHNA membership event announcements
- 8:35 Nominated neighborhood improvement projects:  
Water fountain at BHE playground  
Dog poop bag dispensers  
Neighborhood disaster preparedness
- 8:45 City regulation of short-term rentals in residential areas
- 9:00 Committee reports:  
Neighborhood Watch  
Greenbelt Guardians  
Area Development
- 9:15 Other business, as brought to the floor by the membership
- 9:30 Adjourn

Tree watering tips on page 4

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## Barton Hills News

The Barton Hills Neighborhood Association newsletter is published in January, April, July and October each year and is supported by advertisers. It is distributed to homes in the Barton Hills neighborhood of Austin, Texas. For more information about membership and neighborhood affairs, contact the appropriate person below.

### 2011 Executive Committee

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*This newsletter was printed on 100% recycled paper.*

## President's message

# Living in the Cultural Center of the Universe

By Craig Smith

President, Barton Hills Neighborhood Association

Here in the heart of Austin, bordered roughly by Barton Springs Road and South Lamar Boulevard, near Barton Springs, Zilker Park and the Barton Creek Greenbelt, our neighborhood always has a rich cultural offering to enjoy. Live music of all types, theater, film, visual arts, restaurants, gardens, athletics and natural areas are all within walking distance of our homes. It would be hard to find a neighborhood in any city that is so convenient to so much that people enjoy doing.

A few times a year, it seems that we have become the cultural center of the universe, when thousands of people

from all parts of the world are walking our streets, filling our familiar stores and restaurants and, of course, endlessly searching our streets for a parking space. The recent weekend of the Austin City Limits Music Festival was such a time.

For three days, the world's attention was on what was happening here. Not for a dreadful reason — like the fires that preceded the event or the drought that continued after it — but for the happy reason that hundreds of artists were performing their music in Zilker Park and tens of thousands of fans were enjoying

it, along with some of the best food, art and crafts that Austin has to offer.

There were bound to be some problems, but most were minor. After having 10 years to perfect their act, the producers of the ACL Festival seem to have learned how to handle their crowds and avoid most of the problems they cause for the surrounding neighborhoods, such as Barton Hills. While there were undoubtedly some unruly fans, litter, blocked driveways and other inconveniences, these were minor detractions from the

---

*For three days, the world's attention was on what was happening here ... for a happy reason.*

---

positive overall benefit that the festival had for Austin and our neighborhood.

I think it is blessing to live in a community where many individuals are struggling to create something new, call it art and offer it up to the public for enjoyment. Even if we do not like it, we should respect the courage that it takes to create it. And if we have to put up with traffic and crowds of strangers a few times a year to be part of that experience, we should think of it as a small price to pay for living in the cultural center of the universe.

## Corrections

B&B Muffler was inadvertently left off the list of sponsors for the Barton Hills July 4th Parade in the July issue of our newsletter. Many thanks to B&B Muffler for being part of our community and for their continued support of our neighborhood.

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newsletter in  
color!**

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[www.bartonhills.org](http://www.bartonhills.org)



## Fire Safety Starts at Home

### 3 things you can do now

One of the great things about our neighborhood is its proximity to the Barton Creek Greenbelt. While this unique wildspace is usually a source of pride, the current drought has also made it a source of concern. The wildfires in Oak Hill, Steiner Ranch and Bastrop are stark reminders of the devastating power a stray spark can unleash.

Even if your home doesn't back up to the Greenbelt, you're not out of the woods when it comes to fire. Any home within a 1-mile radius of a natural area is in what's called the Ember Zone, and is at risk of fire from wind-blown embers.

Unless we start getting significant amounts of rain soon, the threat of fire will continue to be something we all need to actively guard against. Three things you can do to help protect your home, family and community are:

- 1. Clear dry brush from around your home.** This helps create a defensible space and gives firefighters a leg up when battling a fire, whether you're near or far from the Greenbelt. It also gives a fire that much less fuel to burn. For more information about small and large brush pick up, enter "yard trimmings" in the search box on the City of Austin website ([www.ci.austin.tx.us](http://www.ci.austin.tx.us)).
- 2. Take steps make your home more fire resistant.** Closing spaces where embers could lodge, gather and ignite is the name of the game. Blocking spaces between your roof decking and covering, clearing dead leaves and debris from your gutters, and covering vent openings with 1/8-inch or finer metal mesh are just a few of the things you can do to keep flying embers out.
- 3. Have a plan.** Knowing where you can go and what you should take with you is a good idea in the face of any evacuation or disaster situation. The American Red Cross website ([www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)) provides a list of items to include in a disaster preparedness kit in their Preparing and Getting Trained section.

For more information about creating a defensible space, making your home more resistant to fire, and being prepared for fire and other natural disasters, download the "Ready, Set, Go" personal wildfire action plan from [www.bartonhills.org](http://www.bartonhills.org).

The Barton Hills Neighborhood Association has formed a disaster preparedness subcommittee to help our community prevent these unfortunate events in the first place, and be prepared to deal with them should they occur. For more information about the committee, contact Patricia Wilson at [pwilson@mail.utexas.edu](mailto:pwilson@mail.utexas.edu).

### Preparedness Trainer to Speak at Neighborhood Meeting

During the Oct. 18 neighborhood meeting, a Disaster Ready Austin trainer from the City of Austin's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management will talk to us about personal disaster preparedness. During the one-hour presentation, you'll ...

- Learn how to make an emergency supply kit.
- Find out what needs to be included in a family emergency plan.
- Hear about the types of emergencies that happen in our area.
- Discover ways to help neighbors and get involved in community efforts.

Free waterproof grab-and-go document bags will also be available at the meeting.

For more details about disaster preparedness, visit the city's emergency management website at [AustinHsem.com](http://AustinHsem.com). Or "like" Disaster Ready Austin on Facebook to receive emergency and preparedness updates for the Austin area.



# Help Your Trees Survive the Season

By Leah Golden

While many of us are breathing sighs of relief now that summer's heat is subsiding, one group of residents may still need help weathering this extended dry season.

"Even though [trees] may hold their leaves and look like they're doing fine ... if they didn't make enough energy through this year's growing season, they may not come back next spring," says Keith Brown, board certified master arborist and owner of Austin Tree Experts.

Brown suggests three things to help make the most of your watering.

**1. Check your soil depth.** The best way to water a tree depends on the depth of your dirt, according to Brown. Trees in shallow soils (2-inches of dirt or less before you hit limestone) require more frequent, but shorter waterings — maybe

a half-inch three times a week. Trees in deeper soils don't need to be watered as frequently, but can handle more volume, either the standard 2-inches every two weeks, or 1-inch per week.

**2. Water full circle.** The best place to put all that water is the area from the tree trunk out to the tips of its branches, also known as the drip line. "A lot of people confuse that with just doing a ring of water around the outside edge of the tree," Brown says. "What you really want to do is cover that entire area in the middle, not just that little ring."

**3. Retain water.** Covering the ground around the tree with 3.5 inches to 4 inches of mulch can help maintain soil moisture, according to Brown. Mulch

also absorbs water, so he suggests you place soaker hoses below the mulch, or increase your watering time.

## Another spring

Fall in Texas is like a second spring, Brown says. Trees experience a significant amount of root growth at this time, so watering now through the end of November can help.

Cooler weather also means water won't evaporate as quickly. Brown suggests letting the soil dry between waterings to avoid drowning your tree.

You won't know how well your trees managed this summer until next year. Most native trees will finish putting on their foliage around mid-April, with pecan trees finishing a bit later. Hopefully, watering now will help your trees have a green spring.

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# Barton Hills Garden Club Helps Neighbors Grow Into a Community

By Leah Golden

When Bernice Billing and her family moved into their Barton Hills home in 1973, she only knew one person in the neighborhood.

That one person was Betty Brown, who also happened to be the Barton Hills Garden Club president. Bernice had a love of gardening from way back: Both her mother and grandmother were gardeners. Though she didn't have a lot of free time for gardening because her children were small, Bernice joined the club. Thirty-eight years later, she's still a member and still involved.

"You just meet so many nice people and I've made so many friends. If I didn't belong to the garden club I would have never met a lot of these people," Bernice says.

That's a sentiment echoed by other garden club members, as well. Christy Kuehn, who joined the club in 1984, says meeting new people was one of the best things that came with her membership.

"You learn a lot, but more importantly, you connected with people you would not run into in your everyday life. I liked that aspect of joining," Christy says.

The garden club was founded in 1960 by Donia Heath, Thelma Woods and Dorothy Sanders. At the time, club membership was limited to 75 — and

there was a waiting list to join, according to Mary Campbell, a former club president and current parliamentarian.

Today, as in the past, the club's monthly meetings feature expert speakers on gardening topics. Jo Ruffcorn, who joined the club about 10 years ago, says she's learned how to address some of the challenges of gardening in Barton Hills.

"What I enjoy is that they have had a lot of really wonderful speakers at the monthly meetings that have given me the opportunity to learn more about how to better take care of my trees and flowers," Jo says. "I've learned how to better use what is available for our area."

The club provides members with a mix of social activities and informational meetings. It also lends its support to different beautification projects and garden organizations.

Christy says even with a 40-hour-a-week job, she still rejoins the club every year. While there are many opportunities to get involved in different projects, you can tailor your involvement to fit your schedule.

"You're not obligated to come to every meeting," Jo laughs. "Come to the ones you'd like to."



## Interested in the Garden Club?

The club meets monthly between September and May, at the Austin Area Garden Center at the Zilker Botanical Garden. The next meeting is Tuesday, Oct. 25, starting with coffee at 9:30 a.m. The program starts between 10 and 10:30, and the featured topic is daylilies.

If you'd like to get involved in the Barton Hills Garden Club, contact Sharon Harris, the club's membership chair, at 443-1181. Dues are \$20 per year and your membership includes two tickets to the Zilker Garden Festival in March.



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Find out what's up in the neighborhood! Visit our website at [bartonhills.org](http://bartonhills.org)

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# How \$1 Can Make Your Doors Virtually Kick-Proof

From John Luther  
Neighborhood Watch

For \$1 and about 10 minutes of your time, you can make any door in your home with a dead bolt virtually impossible for a burglar to kick in. Replacing the ordinary screws in the striker plate of your dead bolt locks with a set of low-cost 3-inch screws can enhance your home's security.

No home is completely burglar proof. However, fortifying your dead bolt locks is one of the things you can do to delay entry and deter all but the most determined burglar. And it's a task that most do-it-yourselfers can accomplish with ease.

## Anatomy of a dead bolt

Dead bolts have a metal bolt that slides from the door into a drilled hole in the doorframe, which is covered by a metal plate called the striker plate.

The dead bolt lock itself is generally strong. The striker plate, however, is held over the drilled hole by two screws that are only long enough to penetrate the soft wood doorframe. This is the weak link in an otherwise strong secu-

rity device. If the door is kicked, the doorframe can shatter inward. The door swings open and the dead bolt is defeated.

## A low-cost solution

To solve the problem the two short screws are replaced with #8 by 3-inch long screws that will go through the striker plate, through the soft wood doorframe and into the wall stud on the other side of the doorframe. These screws are available at any home improvement store.

This adds great strength to the door when the dead bolt is locked. The doorframe will no longer shatter when the door is kicked and can withstand repeated kicks by a would-be intruder.

To check the screws you currently have, simply remove one of the screws from your dead bolt's striker plate and measure it. If it's not 3-inches long, it needs replacement. An electric drill with a Phillips screwdriver tip is recommended for this job. The threads on the longer screws should also be lubri-



cated before installation by rubbing the threads along a bar of bath soap to lessen resistance to entering the wall stud.

## Help is available

As a service to the neighborhood, one of our Neighborhood Watch patrol members can assist you in inspecting your locks and doors. They will even provide the proper screws and help replace them (just reimburse them for the screws). Since January, we've replaced more than 100 sets of striker plate screws. We hope anyone who needs assistance will contact John Luther at [jluther@austin.rr.com](mailto:jluther@austin.rr.com).

## Thank You, Neighborhood Watch!

The ACL Festival was a huge success this year and many of our discomforts were alleviated by our own Neighborhood Watch. These volunteers ran 22 separate patrols, assisting the lost, dealing with traffic, coordinating with APD and patrolling the Greenbelt.

Our heartfelt thanks to those who kept watch for us:

John Luther  
Don Madden  
Chuck Ragland  
Sallie Buchner  
Glenn Hopkins  
Jorjanna Price  
Booth O'Quinn  
Jeff Morris

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# Greenbelt Guardians Report

## Volunteers get a raise, invasives get the boot

By Glee Ingram

Greenbelt Guardians Coordinator

On Sept. 24, we celebrated National Public Lands Day by working at two of our adopted trailheads, Homedale and Gus Fruh. We worked in collaboration with other groups coordinated through the Austin Parks Foundation: Central Texas Mountaineers, Austin Ridgeriders and Texas Trail Tamers. A total of 61 volunteers worked at both sites, contributing 183 work hours. Recently, volunteers "got a raise" in the value the City of Austin assigns to their work, from \$10.60 an hour to \$21.36 an hour! At that new rate, our Greenbelt Guardians contributed a value of \$3,908.88 to our Greenbelt.

At the Gus Fruh trail, we continued work on a rock wall erosion-control project near the swimming hole. We

also had invasives removal teams working along the main trail across the creek.

At Homedale, we did minor trail edging work, cut dry overgrown grass along the entry trail, and cleared some rock-strewn sections of the switchback trail. Our emphasis was the removal of drying Nandina and large Ligustrum near the edge of the rock flats area, plus the clearing of large dried logs on the woodlands floor.

The strategy was to cut down the dried trees and take them across the creek to the Spyglass area trail, where dried wood was being assembled for chipper work. The effort was two for one: It removed invasive plants and reduced the fire hazard near the rock flats where people frequently camp.

I want to thank the following people

who are part of our team, as well as the BHNA for its support and energy-boosting breakfast tacos on our work days.

Stan Ostrum  
Robbin Trusty  
Yates Barreda  
Tim Steckler  
Nancy Koch  
Rosalie and Ken Russell  
Scott Byers  
Pat and Sonya Apodaca  
John Beall  
Mary Ann Neely  
Craig Smith  
Kay Killen  
Melissa Hawthorne  
Penny Potter  
Larry Akers  
Eddie Torres  
Johnny and Eva Barnett  
Robin McKeever  
David Poisson  
Collins Van Nort  
Mark Stachew

In many ways, the Greenbelt has helped us build a stronger community through our common love of place and desire to contribute to its well being.

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# 2011 MEMBERSHIP FORM

Fill out this form to join or renew your membership in the Barton Hills Neighborhood Association. Annual dues are \$10 per household, payable when you join (for a new membership) or every January (for renewal).

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Other 18+ members of your household: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

- Sign Me Up!** I/we wish to receive email from the BHNA listserv.
- I am interested in getting more involved in neighborhood activities. Please contact me.

Please send this form along with your annual dues to:

**Barton Hills Neighborhood Association, PO Box 2042, Austin TX 78768-2042**

Make checks payable to BHNA. You can pay dues online through PayPal at [www.bartonhills.org/membership.html](http://www.bartonhills.org/membership.html). (PayPal service fee of \$1 will be added to your total.)

## 4 things you'll like about the BHNA listserv

- 1. Connect with your neighbors.** More than 500 people enjoy the BHNA listserv. Posts cover everything from lost and found pets to crime stats and local events.
- 2. Easy on your inbox.** The listserv can send you the day's posts in groups, instead of one by one — just select the daily batch option when you sign up.
- 3. Join online.** If you sign up for BHNA membership online, send an email to [barton\\_hills-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:barton_hills-subscribe@yahoogroups.com) to join the listserv.
- 4. Stay up to date.** To update your email address, contact Melissa Hawthorne ([mwh@austin.rr.com](mailto:mwh@austin.rr.com)). Please provide both your old and new email address.



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