

THE

G R I T

Sandia Heights Homeowners Association

November-December 2002



SEASONS GREETINGS



TO



ALL





Architectural Control Committee

Jack Wolfe, Chair

LANDSCAPING AND OUR COVENANTS

Over the years we have watched a gradual change in the landscape of Sandia Heights. It has moved from the maintenance and cultivation of the vegetation that has been natural for so long in the foothills of the Sandia Mountains to that, both in design and plants, commonly found in the builder developed sectors within the area such as Tanoan, the lower areas of High Desert and Academy Estates.

One of the many unique characteristics of our Sandia Heights area has long been the maintained "natural" landscape of the area. This has occurred not by accident, but as a result of our covenants and specifically by one specific restriction found in the covenants for nearly every unit within Sandia Heights. That restriction reads as follows: "Natural vegetation is to be left undisturbed, where practical on all lots, except for access to property, clearing of building sites and establishment of lawns and flower beds adjacent to buildings." Please note the wording "adjacent to buildings."

As was explained to me nearly 30 years ago when I purchased property in Sandia Heights, the purpose for maintaining the natural vegetation and restricting lawns and major landscaping initiatives was to maintain the natural appearance of the area, to conserve our water supply and to preclude the unnecessary pressure and competition to have the best lawn and landscaped piece of property within the neighborhood.

More and more, and particularly with new construction and major remodeling efforts, requests are being received by the Architectural Control Committee (ACC) to approve significant landscaping plans that are not in compliance with the above noted covenant restriction. Many of the plans being received include plants as well as trees that are not natural to our area. And many of these trees are of the type that rapidly grow to heights well over 25 feet which in due time will begin to block the views of homeowners within the area.

As most are aware, the ACC is responsible to all Sandia Heights' property owners for ensuring that all proposed construction and landscaping plans are compliant with applicable covenants. Furthermore, neither the ACC nor the Sandia Heights Homeowners Association (SHHA), can ignore covenant requirements nor can they attempt to interpret or change such. As noted within each set of covenants, the covenants can be changed only with the approval of 75% of the property owners within the Unit. As such, and until an approved change does occur, the ACC and the SHHA must ensure compliance with the covenants as currently written.

We ask that all home and property owners closely weigh their landscaping desires in light of current covenant restrictions and develop plans that are within the spirit and intent of the covenants. Maintaining the unique character of our community and its individual units requires the cooperation of all home and property owners.



2003 Residents Directory

Is your listing correct?

The 2003 Directory will be coming out in January and we need your help. Take a look at the address label on your Grit. This information is what we will use to print the directory. You'll see an address block that looks like:

(M/N) (U/L) 123-4567

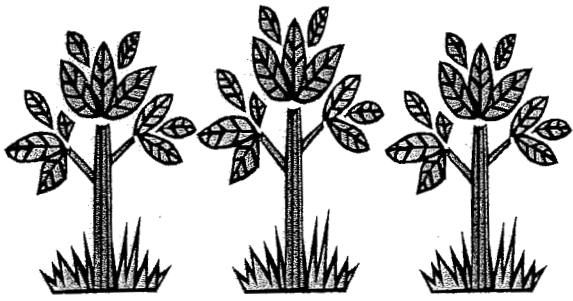
Your name

Your address

The first letter in () will be M for SHHA member or N for non-member.

The second letter in () will be U for unlisted phone number or L for listed phone numbers. The number following the () is your phone number, it will in the directory if that is what you have requested.

Please check the label and contact the office if there are any corrections needed.



Covenant Support Committee

Frank Soper, Chair

During the past 3 months, the CSC has received 9 complaints about trees blocking views. This is in keeping with the average annual complaints for the past few years. Of these nine complaints, only two complainants had talked with their neighbor prior to requesting CSC intervention.

As the CSC members became involved, we were made aware that some of the property owners with view blocking trees displayed little concern for the views of their neighbors, even after having discussed the issue with the complainant. Others have, thankfully, taken steps to comply after the problem was brought to their attention. We often are asked "why didn't the complainants talk to me instead of going to the CSC?". We don't have the answer to this question!

The CSC members, with the input we received from the SHHA Board members and legal advisors, have decided to request that the

Board of Directors approve a motion that states the Covenants support Committee will no longer become involved in complaints relating to "overgrown" trees which have become view blockers.

We encourage all residents to be neighborly and to respect the rights of your neighbors. If you are planting trees on your property, be mindful of the Covenants and the present or future effect on your neighbors' views. It is good practice to discuss your plans with the neighbors before acting on your plans.

The Committee would continue to investigate and take action in all situations where new plantings constitute a screen for neighbors' views or are forbidden species as listed in the Covenants

If you already have grown trees on your property which may cause a screen and block your neighbors' views, go visit with the neighbor(s) and ask if you are creating a problem. If a neighbor has allowed their trees to block your view, or a tree is one which is forbidden by the Covenants, go meet with them and ask for help in eliminating the problem. COMMUNICATION resolves the vast majority of the problems when it is done in a FRIENDLY, NEIGHBORLY manner. And – if you complainants are not willing to discuss your problem with your neighbors you will have to learn to live with it until you find another means of resolution. The vast majority of Sandia Heights residents are inclined to listen, respect others' desires and help resolve problems in a congenial way.

In Memory of Carolyn

In 1992, after successful advertising careers in Chicago, Carolyn Hindel and her husband, Fred, moved to their home in Sandia Heights. Carolyn immediately became involved in charitable and community projects, donating her time and talents to *Habitat for Humanity*, the *Samaritan Counseling Center* and *Hope for the Children*, among others.

After becoming Editor of the *Grit* in 1995 she introduced new graphics, photos, a 24 page tabloid size format and solicited advertising to cover the cost of publication. She created the *Resident Profile*, a center spread biography, that appeared in each issue to acquaint readers with the achievements of our many multi-talented neighbors.



The unforeseen circumstances of caring for her father with Alzheimer's disease revealed her remarkable gift for helping and healing and led to the pursuit of a degree as a Doctor of Oriental Medicine.

In March of 1999, she was diagnosed with inflammatory breast cancer. She continued working on the *Grit* until the fall of 2000 while pursuing her studies at the *International Institute of Chinese Medicine*. After three rewarding years of training, her illness prevented her from realizing that most desired goal.

While her accomplishments were many, it was her unique ability to recognize and bring out the best in everyone she met that is the truly remarkable gift she leaves behind.

Those who met her only once, likely remember the moment. Those who knew her well seem to feel that, in some small way, she made a difference in their lives. And that is as good as it gets.

SHHA would like to say, *thank you*, Carolyn.



Traffic and Safety Committee

Glenn Kuswa, Chair

Join the efforts to make our roads safer for pedestrians and children. The Traffic and Safety Committee has held many discussions concerning methods to calm traffic over the past several years. The most practical means is to encourage the use of speed humps. During the past year the County has developed a speed hump engineering standard that makes it possible to slow traffic in 15 mph zones. Previously the lack of a standard had hampered progress.

The two-step qualification process for requesting speed humps starts with a speed assessment conducted by the county with electronic timers. Residents, or better yet the Traffic and Safety Committee, can request a speed assessment. Experience leads us to believe that most roads in Sandia Heights carry a sufficiently high percentage of speeders to pass the first qualification test for speed humps. (The 85th percentile of speeders exceeding the posted limits by 15 mph is the county standard for considering speed humps.) The second and final step involves obtaining approval by signatures from 75% of the residences along the segment to be treated with speed humps. Our limited experience shows that approximately 25% of our residents may not favor speed humps, so getting action involves some uncertainty. We hope to start a more organized effort to win a consensus, but we will need the help of residents willing to solicit approvals. Please contact the SHHA office if you are willing to help support this effort to make our neighborhood safer and quieter. The Traffic and Safety Committee is starting a collection of materials to aid in this effort.

Here are a few factoids on speed:

A survey on Juniper Hill showed that 85th percentile speed of 32 mph is a mere 8mph less than measurements on Lomas where there are six lanes, separate walks for pedestrians, better visibility, and far fewer driveways.

A few short segments in addition to those areas now posted at 25 mph could support safe driving at higher limits than 15 mph. However, dividing the neighborhood into many speed zones is not practical and would violate good traffic engineering practice.

Issuing citations is effective as a temporary measure, but speeders reappear when the police presence is not intensive. Citations are not only inconvenient, but the cost of increased insurance premiums that result from imperfect records will usually cost far more than the citation itself.

Chamisa trimming will resume. Please let the office know of special situations.

We are asking the county to resume the chamisa trimming project started last year. The project will remove chamisa and other vegetation within approximately four feet of the pavement, and the debris will be hauled away, all at county expense. Note that in most cases the county owns the land within 15 feet of the pavement. If you have a special need to have an exemption, from the trimming operation, please register with the office, giving your name, address, and a short explanation. We will coordinate these needs with county as activities resume, probably in one or two months.



**The next meeting of the Board of Directors
will be Wednesday December 11th**

7 to 9pm

at the

William Sibrava Sheriff's Substation

If you want to address the Board

**please contact the office so that the staff can
place your name and the subject you wish to
discuss on the agenda.**

This will help us make time available for you.

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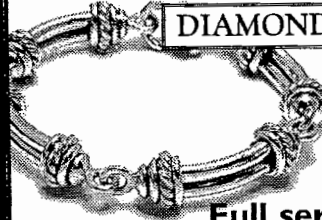
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Remember: Sandia Heights Service and Sandia Heights Security are not a part of Sandia Heights Homeowners Association. They can be reached by calling 857-8924 for Sandia Heights Services and the Mobile number for Sandia Heights Security is 263-4654, their managers number is 856-6347



Treasurers Report,

Rick Nelson, Treasurer

Cash Flow – October 2002

Inflow

Advertising –Grit & Directory	650.00
ACC	\$ 175.00
Interest	346.49
Members Dues	7,977.00
From reserve in Checking	939.03
From CD reserve	<u>5,000.00</u>
Total Inflow	\$15,087.52

Outflow

Committee Expense

Communications -Expense Grit	1,296.09
Covenants Support	12.70

Insurance

General Liability-Property	504.20
Directors Officers Umbrella	525.92
Directors & Officers Liability	5,972.00

Legal

Architectural Control	1,042.25
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Office expense

Bank Charges	50.29
Clean Supplies	15.10
Computer Lease	105.22
Comcast –Internet Service	58.00
Electricity	82.36
Equipment repair and upkeep	515.84
Mileage to staff	6.80
Office Lease	915.55
Postage Meter Rent-6 months	130.92
Security	11.58
Telephone	163.28
<u>Office Staff</u>	<u>2,693.84</u>
<u>Sandia Service Collection of Dues</u>	<u>1,062.75</u>
<u>Federal Income Tax 2001-2001 year</u>	<u>522.83</u>

Total Outflow \$15,687.52

Payable in November, see Note, below [- 600.00]

NOTE: We work on a cash basis, this report shows the actual flow of cash. All bills received by October 31st were paid and are reflected in this report. There is one exception, the printing cost for the September October Grit of \$600.00 is included, but was not paid until November

Condition as at October 31, 2002

Cash and in Banks

Checking	\$ 7,236.80
CD	35,989.19
Petty Cash	<u>154.67</u>

Total Cash and in Bank \$ 43,380.66

Other Assets [at cost]

Computers & Software	\$ 3,955.37
Office Accessories	1,448.85
Office Furniture	5,396.44
Prepaid Postage	876.53
Prepaid Expense	300.00
Prepaid Rent	991.10
Refunds due	150.34
Security Deposits	1,075.75
Wine Tasting Inventory	<u>749.09</u>

Total other Assets 14,943.47

Total Assets \$ 58,324.12

Liabilities

Pledged Open Space Reserve	\$ 19,000.00
Legal Reserve	15,000.00
Possible Legal Bill Payment *	7,111.23
Operating Reserve	1,000.00
Estimated November Bills	<u>7,000.00</u>

Total Liabilities \$ 48,111.23

All Assets less Liabilities \$ 10,212.89

Cash & in Banks less liabilities [-\$ 4,730.57]

* Comment:

Possible Legal Bill Payment: Our insurance company should pay this \$7,111.23 in legal defense cost.

REMEMBER: As reported in the recent Little Grit membership dues will increase to \$8.00 per month, this will be billed with your December water bill and payable in January. If you have any questions or comments about this increase feel free to contact the office or contact me at home at 856-7159 or by email to rnelson444@aol.com

CORRECTION: I goofed in the Little Grit, dues were last raised 5 years ago, not 7 as printed in my article, sorry about that.

Security's mobile number

263-4654

**SANDIA HEIGHTS SECURITY
2002 CALLS**

	October	Year to Date
Alarms	36	408
Animal Control Assist	2	11
Assault/Battery.....	1	5
Breaking & Entering - Attempted....	0	3
Breaking & Entering	1	8
Car Accident	3	24
Construction Site Burglary.....	0	7
Fire.....	1	23
Fireworks Complaint	0	17
Front Office Assistance	0	19
Lost and Found Items	0	9
Lost and Found Pets	1	32
Motorist Assist	20	182
Motorcycle Nuisance	3	16
Open Door/Window	7	78
Peeping Tom	1	2
Pet Nuisance	2	36
Loud Disruptive Party	0	13
Rescue Assist	0	6
Salesman Problem	1	17
Snake Call	2	59
Speeding Vehicle	2	17
Special Requests	16	118
Suspicious Person	13	89
Suspicious Vehicle	16	158
Theft.....	4	16
Threat/Personal	1	5
Utility Co. Assistance	4	25
Vandalism.....	16	90
Wildlife Report	6	18
Vehicle Burglary	3	20
Subtotal of calls	161	1,530
Extra patrol or observation	9	120
Homeowners On Vacation.....	158	1,545
TOTAL CALLS	328	3,195
Vehicle miles driven	4,577	37,231

IMPORTANT FACT:

Sandia Heights Security and Sandia Heights Services are not in anyway a part of Sandia Heights Homeowners Association. Both of these companies provided important services to the residents of Sandia Heights, and Sandia Heights Services is paid, under a contract with SHHA, to collect the monthly membership fee with the utility bill.

If you are not helping pay for the security provided by Sandia Heights Security we urge you to call Jackie at 857-8924 and join up, their service does help protect all Sandia Heights residents.

Salespeople-Solicitation Problem?

Sandia Security has told us that it is not illegal for Salespeople or Solicitors to come to your door unless you post your property. So if you do not want to be bothered by these people at your door, and you want Sandia Security or the Sheriff to keep them away you need to post your property with a sign:

NO SOLICITORS

This type of signs can be purchased at many stores around town.



Communications and Publications

Committee Rick Nelson, Chair

This is the busy time of the year for this committee. Time to get the 2003 Directory ready to be printed. Time to sell advertising for 2003. Time to get this current Grit finished and mailed. Past time to get the Web Site working and current. Not much time to write this article.

Please remember that your articles and letters are always welcome and will be considered for publication.

Deadline for the next Grit is January 10th.



Community Service and Membership Committee

Chuck McLeod, Chair

The committee is working to develop a discount program for SHHA members at local businesses. It is hoped that this program can be put in place so as to provide savings for SHHA members.

The planning for the annual wine tasting event is also underway.

Your ideas are always welcome!



Cedar Hill Park History & Update

By Bob Christman

In 1996, this 3.75 acre property was posted as a proposed high-density housing project for 19 homes. The neighbors got together to discuss other alternatives. During the next several years, representatives of the neighborhood attended Bernalillo County meetings and suggested that the county buy the property for a park. The progress of the housing development continued and was approved.

Not willing to give up, the neighbors continued to meet and received the support of Sandia Heights Homeowners Assoc. (SHHA). The meetings became larger and it became apparent that the demographics of Sandia Heights had changed in recent years. Residents were younger and had more children. The need for a park had increased.

This prompted the need for a new plan. Neighbors in a half-mile radius of the property were contacted and informed of the proposed development. The consensus was to make a formal request to the county for a park. This was accomplished by submitting

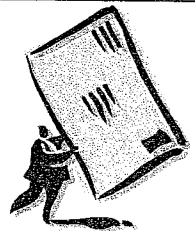
Bernalillo County Capital Improvement forms at their annual Capital Improvement meeting. There were approximately 70 forms submitted to the county by individual residents of Sandia Heights in the above-mentioned half-mile radius. The county was surprised at the interest and started to consider it as a possibility. They approached the contractor and were able to agree on a price to purchase the property. This was done in December 2000.

The park is not fully funded as of this date, but some money has been provided by the State, County and SHHA. Also, BPLW an Architectural firm has donated design and engineering services to SHHA. This donation has been passed on to the county which will reduce the total cost of the park and allow Phase I of the park to start.

The county and state are much more likely to find ways to come up with funds when they see funds and services donated from local homeowner associations (SHHA) and local companies (BPLW).

A portion of the increase in SHHA dues will support future efforts like this and help provide more open space, parks, etc. to fit the lifestyle of the residents of Sandia Heights. During the last several SHHA monthly meetings there was no opposition to the \$19,000. donation for this park or the increase in the dues to support future open space plans.

Construction of the park might begin by the summer of 2003. We'll keep working on this goal.



A message from your friendly mail person!!!

The post office cannot deliver mail to your mailbox if you do not keep the weeds and brush cleaned up from around it. They have to have room to drive up to your mailbox, put in the mail, and drive away without getting out of their vehicle. Guess if we want our mail we have to keep it cleaned up for them.

Sandia Heights – The Peak of Living

COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS AND REPLIES TO COMMENTS

By: Rick Nelson, Treasurer and Chair of the
Communications and Publications Committee.

Since mid November, when we mailed over 2,100 copies of the "Special Budget Addition" of the Little Grit to all Sandia Heights Residents, we have received 4 letters [all via email] commenting on the 2003 Budget and the fact that your Board of Directors felt the monthly dues needed to be raised from \$5.00 to \$8.00 per month.

Lack of space makes it impractical to publish the full content of each of these letters. Further, many of the concerns expressed were the same. Therefore, I have extracted and replied to the main concerns in these letters.

We want to thank James Sauvage [SHHA Member], Jim Wise [former SHHA Board Member], Chris Harmon [former SHHA Board Member and wife of current member Glenn Kuswa] and George Richmond [SHHA Member} for taking the time to express their views. Copies of their letters have been provided each Board member. Association members may obtain a copy by going to the association office.

Before I go to the Comments and Replies I have one thought I would like to express. We on this and past Boards volunteer/ed time and efforts to help maintain and improve our community. When you have over 2,100 homeowners in a community there are many many views on what should or should not be done. This current Board, and the Boards before us, are/were bombarded with all of these views and then have/had to try to sort them out and decide what can be and what should be done for our community. Also, what has top priority? One thing this board has learned, our community is changing as it grows and thus the needs and demands of the community are not the same as even 5 years ago. Believe me, it is not always an easy call.

FIRST:

The question was raised as to when the dues were increased in the past, what was the purpose of the increase? Did the current board follow these guidelines? There was also the question of the current Board giving adequate notice of the pending increase and the need for the increase?

I did goof and make a typo in the special Budget Addition, the increase was 5 years ago, not 7.

Board minutes indicate that at the Annual Meeting of Members held June 7, 1997 Janey Brink moved, seconded by Duke Colket, that the SHHA board raise the dues to \$5.00 from \$3.50/month, with \$1 going

to park development. Discussion followed. The motion was amended to ask the board to consider raising dues, deleting the criteria on amount or how spent. The motion was seconded, and passed.

At the August 1997 Board of Directors meeting the Board voted to increase the dues to \$5.00 per month effective January 1, 1998, again there is no record in the official minutes of any criteria specified regarding how the money was to be spent. Conclusion, with no criteria specified the Board had/has the authority to decide how these funds should be spent.

At the 2002 annual meeting of members I spoke to the possible need of increased dues. My comments were published in full in the first Grit following that meeting. Bob Francis also touched on this subject in his first article as President, also published in that issue of the Grit. Since that time I have published a financial report in each issue that has shown the Association expenses were greater than its income. In one issue of the Grit we also published the 2001-2002 budget along with the actual income and expenses for that period.

In the September-October 2002 Grit I wrote we would be sending out a copy of the 2003 budget and that it would be discussed at the November 20th meeting and that changes, if any, would be voted on at the December 11th meeting. The 2003 budget was published in the November Little Grit.

With all of this being published only one association member came to a BOD meeting to talk about the Budget during the period June to November 2002. We thought that all of the information published plus the comments made in the budget explained the needs for the increase. This thinking has not changed.

SECOND:

Cedar Hill Park – why did the Board feel the need to spend SHHA funds on this "fully funded" park and why didn't we let the membership know about this?

The Cedar Hill Park is a project that has been ongoing for several years. The project was started and pushed by a substantial number of Sandia Heights Residents with the support of several long time open space advocates like Janey Brink. We all voted, or could have voted, on the Bond Issue that provided the funding for the County to purchase this property. This bond Issue and subsequent funding from the State did not "Fully Fund" this near Million dollar project.

There have been several articles in the Grit regarding this project, in the July-August 2002 issue of the Grit it was announced that the Board would vote, at the August 2002 Board meeting, to pledge \$19,000.00 to help kick start this project. The only people who come to the August 2002 Board meeting to address this issue were in favor of the Board taking this action.

This action by the Board was one of the factors that motivated BPLW Architects & Engineers, Inc. to donate Landscape Design and Civil Engineering services for this park to SHHA, SHHA then donated these services to the County as part of its support for this project. This was all reported in the September-October 2002 Grit.

*Some people living in Sandia Heights may not feel another park is important, however, there are many many of the new generation of Sandia Heights residents who have Children and have a very different view. **Note:** For more details on the Park read Bob Christmans article on page #9 of this Grit.*

THIRD

Why are we thinking about spending money for trails and more access to forestland?

This question has been covered in many articles, and discussed by many guests at our Board meetings. We have budgeted \$1,000.00 to investigate these issues.

As mentioned before the demographics of Sandia Heights are changing, and with more and more young people there is more pressure to provide safe walking trails and better access to the forest lands.

Can we do this? I for one am not certain that the overall design of Sandia Heights will permit all that has been requested. I do feel that with so much interest being expressed by many SHHA members the Board is obligated to investigate all possibilities.

We can not shut our eyes to the fact that many property owners are overrun by trespassers crossing private property to reach the forest land and that any improvement will help many.

In the past two years there have been many meetings with concerned residents and government officials plus long hours devoted to study of the problem of safe walking trails and forest access.

FOURTH

One writer says we solicit comments from the membership but we neither print the comments in the Grit or distributed them to members of the Board.

Some comments and letters have not been printed, that is true. Sometimes we receive a letter just after the current issue of the Grit has been printed so it cannot go into that Grit, then two months later the subject is a dead issue.

It has been the written and published policy of the Grit for at least the past two years not to print anything submitted that was insulting, libelous or false. However, copies of all letters received are available to both Board Members and SHHA members at the Association office.

No article that is timely and meets the above mentioned Grit Policy has, to my knowledge ever been

kept out of the Grit or not been made available to the Board members.

FIFTH

Three of the letters received take issue with legal expenses of the SHHA. It has been asked, why do we have legal expense? Why have legal expenses increased? Why do we harass people who live in Sandia Heights?

It is unfortunate that we have legal expenses, but that is the result of one of the main reasons for having a homeowners association. This reason is to enforce the covenants and when some people refuse to follow the guidelines written and recorded in the covenants the association has no choice but to see that the covenants are enforced. One of the big legal costs is to defend against legal action taken by people who do not want to follow the covenants.

When ever possible your association has tried to settle these problems out of court, at times the courts have ordered arbitration, both being less expensive then going all the way to a final ruling by the court. At times, in the past, negotiation and arbitration has resulted in the ACC making some modification to its rulings. But it is of interest to me that I can find no record of any court ruling against or imposing any judgment on the association for actions of the ACC. All court ruling have upheld the actions of the ACC.

One important case caused a large increase in legal costs; the ACC ruled that a proposed second story addition to an existing home would violate the covenants of that unit's restriction of blockage of views. A neighbor opposed this addition and was also sued. The Court ruled in favor of the ACC decision. But this case cost our insurance carrier over \$60,000.00 and our insurance premium rose from \$1,200.00 per year to over \$5,000.00 per year and our deductible went from \$1,000.00 to \$10,000.00.

The association attempts to enforce the covenants as written, with no intention to harass anyone. The Covenants have faults, these faults make them hard to work with. You as members can help correct this by working with the Board's ad hoc Covenant Review Committee that is trying to update the covenants, some of units have covenants that are at least 30 years old.

IN CLOSING:

All the comments have not been addressed on these two pages, but I believe the most pertinent ones have been spoken to. I personally have received many comments over the past 30 months praising the way the SHHA is printing its financial reports with no complaints until these I have, in this Grit, comment about – to me this indicates majority satisfaction with your board, if I am wrong tell me.

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**SANDIA HEIGHTS
HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION**
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Radon

As summer transitions into fall, we begin to spend more of our time indoors and home indoor air quality becomes of more concern. One commonly known indoor air contaminant is radon. Radon is a naturally occurring, invisible, odorless gas that comes from deposits of uranium in soil, rock and water. It is harmlessly dispersed in outdoor air, but when trapped in buildings, it can be harmful, especially at elevated levels. The primary source of high levels of radon in homes is the surrounding soil.

Radon is present throughout the United States, but is known to be more prominent in the Rocky Mountain States. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates that as many as one in 15 homes across the United States have elevated radon levels. Radon gets into homes through cracks in the foundation, floors or walls, hollow-block walls, and openings around floor drains and pipes. Radon is found in all types of homes; new homes, old homes, well-sealed and drafty homes, and homes with or without basements.

Radon is a health concern because exposure to radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States. Radon can be inhaled into the lungs. Once in the lungs it undergoes radioactive decay. As it decays, radon releases tiny bursts of energy that can harm lung tissue possibly leading to lung cancer. For individuals who smoke and have high levels of radon in their home, their lung cancer risk is especially high.

The only way to be sure of your home's radon level is to test it. Radon test kits that meet U.S. Environmental Protection Agency guidelines can be obtained from a radon testing company or laboratory. You can obtain a listing from the New Mexico Environment Department Community Services Bureau at (505)-476-8531. Do-it-yourself test kits can be found at hardware stores and home improvement stores, or, you can hire a trained contractor to perform the test. If you find your radon levels higher than 4pCi/L the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Centers for Disease Control recommend that you fix your home. The cost of these repairs depend on how your home was built and other factors.

If you have questions about Radon contact the Bernalillo County Environmental Health Department at 314-0310.



Letters to the Editor

From: Louise Swartswalter

We recently moved to Sandia Heights from Taos, NM where we lived for 7 years. We love the mountains, the hiking trails and the natural beauty that surrounds us here with the proximity of the city. Most neighbors agree and reside in Sandia Heights for the same reasons.

Our family is concerned about residents using pesticides and herbicides on their property and gardeners advocating their use. According to the U.S. General Accounting Office, "people and the environment are exposed to many pesticides that have not been fully evaluated for their potential to cause cancer, reproductive disorders, birth defects and environmental damage." Contrary to what the public believes, pesticides are not approved by the Environmental Protection Agency; they are only registered. We tend to believe anything in the store couldn't be harmful or they wouldn't sell it. I know I did until my family and I were poisoned with Dursban, an organophosphate pesticide used in our home and the school where I taught. (Dursban was taken off the market a few years ago. it was also in the popular over the counter pesticide, Raid, and still may be in it as an "inert" ingredient.) In addition, the herbicides used on lawns in our neighborhood contributed to the toxic mess we were living in and breathing daily.

I began to have difficulty concentrating, couldn't remember phone numbers, had episodes of hyperactivity and fatigue, had hormonal problems, acquired allergies to foods and chemicals I had never had before. I lived on oxygen for two years. The reason my immune system was on overdrive was because of my repeated exposures to pesticides. My family also developed food and chemical allergies and was in the beginning stages of asthma. It took two years of doctor hopping to get the correct diagnosis. Then, it took twelve years of eating organically, seeking natural doctors, sauna detoxification and moving three times to gain our health back.

As a parent, teacher and personal success coach, I am concerned about children. The number of children diagnosed with A.D.D. and put on Ritalin is astounding. Many of these children have allergies, asthma and have toxic body overload. The most dangerous of the pollutants is pesticides. After twelve years of exploring options for our own health, I can look around and make connections between health problems and the use of chemicals in and around the

home. Everything from allergies, depression, bipolar disorder, cancer and Alzheimer's is connected to toxins in the body.

The good news is there are always alternatives both in the garden and in your home. For the garden, try companion planting. I never had tomato worms when I planted oregano and basil around the plants. Marigolds are natural insecticides. Bacillus Thuringerius (B.T.) works on pine moth beetle. Often hosing down a tree or bush **with water** knocks off bugs, but we forget these simple things in our chemical laden world. We tried this on our pinion and it worked well. I use cinnamon and cayenne pepper where those little black ants come in. A great book to check out is Ask the Bugman by Richard Fagerlund (Board certified Entomologist) and Joanna Lachnit. For home cleaning products, read Clean and Green by Annie Berthold-Bond.

My hope and prayers for all our neighbors and friends in Sandia Heights is excellent health, peace and prosperity! We welcome questions on non-toxic alternatives and health and education.

Remember Christmas? It's coming And so is the Gifts of Hope Catalog

The 2002-2003 Gifts of Hope alternative-giving catalog is now available. Sponsored by the New Mexico Conference of Churches, Gifts of Hope is unlike ordinary catalogs, which are full of things people really don't need or want

Here, for example, you can order a Christmas card to send to someone you love, which might say "In your honor a comforting stuffed animal was purchased for a scared child facing cancer surgery". This card would include information about the Children's Cancer Fund of New Mexico. Or you might choose a card saying, "In your honor an hour of art therapy was provided for a hurt, confused child." This card would include information about the PB&J Family Services.

Choose from 145 gifts provided by 32 charitable service organizations based in New Mexico, serving people locally and abroad. You will receive a Christmas card describing your charitable gift; then you send the card as your gift to the one you love and are honoring.

The catalog has something to suit almost every interest. One dollar and up. Every cent is tax deductible and goes to the charities you select. These truly are gifts of hope and love.

Also, you can use the catalog to order special cards for birthdays, anniversaries, or memorial gifts anything you can think of

Call Stephen Werner at 856-1451 for a catalog. It may surprise you.

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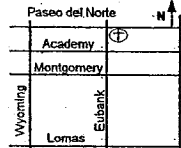
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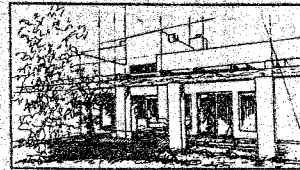
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Tom Smidt, attorney, wishes to thank all of his Sandia Heights client neighbors for their support and referrals over the past 25 years.

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Gardener's Calendar

By: Dan caudillo

Early December

Bulbs forced indoors (for holiday color and fragrance) should be placed in a bright, sunny window.

Continue to feed birds throughout the winter.

Select an ice melt that is safest to use around plants or use sand.

Poinsettias are native to Mexico and come in many colors and variations. Place in a well-lit area but away from any heat sources.

Complete your Fall/Winter cleanup prior to the holiday season!

Two main types of cut Christmas trees are Douglas Fir and Noble Fir. Check to see if your tree is fresh by grasping a branch and pulling it along the stem. Most of the needles should remain on the tree and not in your hand.

Use a humidifier to add moisture to indoor air and it will eliminate sore and scratchy noses and throats.

Mid-December

Don't forget to water outdoor plants once every two weeks. Water in the middle of a clear day. Many plants die for lack of water in winter.

December 22 is the first day of winter.

If you plan on having a living Christmas tree this year, first place in garage for 1 or 2 days. Then place indoors for a maximum of 4 to 5 days but keep away from heat registers. Selection of living Christmas trees include, Austrian Black Pine, Colorado Blue Spruce and Austrian Pine.

Cut fresh evergreens for the holidays. Place cut branches in a bucket of water and place in the garage until ready to use.

Late December

Luminaria tour is an excellent cultural event for out-of-town company. Tours usually occur on the 24th of December.

December 25. Merry Christmas!

Plant living Christmas trees outdoors.

Recycle cut Christmas Tree at Rowland's Nursery.

Early January - Happy New Years Day!

January is the coldest month of the year.

Use winterizer fertilizer on cool season lawns.

Remember to recycle your cut Christmas tree.

Mid- January

Many Garden Seminars given, so watch the local newspaper for time and dates.

To encourage spring sucker growth on raspberries, cut old stems to the ground.

Pile snow on peonies to keep them cold.

Raking yard of debris helps keep insect and diseases in check.

Water your garden about every two weeks in the afternoon on warmer days.

Late January

This is a great time to plan for your new spring landscape.

Cut branches of forsythia, pussy willow, winter jasmine, flowering quince, spirea, apple, peach, and cherry. Place in a vase and blooms will appear in 1 to 3 weeks.

Begin to prune fruit and ornamental trees.

Transplant shrubs and trees now to minimize transplant shock.

Repot houseplants.

If you have an outdoor pond with fish, remember to thaw a hole by melting the ice and not by cracking the ice by striking it --- the vibration can injure fish.





Watering Tips For Sandia Heights

By Dan Caudillo

Why Water Plants in Fall and Winter?

After all, plants aren't growing and many have entered dormancy. Cold season snows and rains appear to keep the ground moist, so why bother with watering anything?

No one doubts the need to water during the active growing seasons of Spring and Summer. But is it *really* necessary to water during the colder temperatures of Fall and Winter? Yes it is. You will not be watering as often, but if you neglect watering altogether it can result in plants not returning the following Spring. This is especially true for first year plant installations where root systems are still immature.

Benefits of Fall/Winter Watering

Continual watering during the colder times of the year is important to prevent plant loss. However, it will also result in plants exploding with vigorous healthy growth in Spring and blooms beyond your expectations. The reason Fall/Winter watering is beneficial to plants is that roots continue to grow and breathe during the dormant seasons and this requires water to continue these processes. Plants denied water often come out late with stunted growth. Equally fatal however, is the continual high frequency watering of plants in winter. In other words, don't water in Winter as though it is still summertime.

The Solution

The answer is to make adjustments to your watering systems throughout the year. If you have an automatic timer that controls your sprinklers, learn how to program it. This way you'll be less intimidated to make changes when timer adjustments become necessary. Remember your timer doesn't have intelligence and can't determine the proper time to water. It can only do what you program it to do and you'll have to change the program as the seasons change.

Watering Terms

Before we get started with when adjustments are made, let us understand three fundamental watering concepts: watering frequency, watering time-of-day, and watering duration.

Watering Frequency refers to how often water is provided over a period of time (week, month, etc). Changes in frequency should occur as the temperature warms and cools – more often in Summer, less often in Winter, and somewhere in between during Spring and Fall. Regardless of the time of year, always provide your plants with a deep soaking when you determine that water is needed.

It is easy to assume that no watering is needed during the cold months because snowfalls appear to keep the soil moist during most of Winter. But snowfall is usually scant and it takes an average of 8 inches of snow to equal 1 inch of rain. So, if in the month of December, 2.6 inches of snow falls (December's normal average in Sandia Heights) this means your plants have received less than one-third of an inch of water in a 31 day period! That's not a lot of water even if plants are dormant.

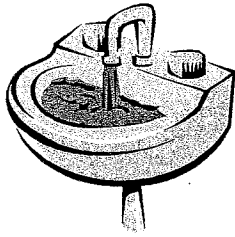
Watering Time-of-Day refers to the time of day that watering begins. In Fall and Winter this should be later in the day in order to give ice in irrigation lines a chance to melt before operation. Many people elect to hand water their plants during this time of year because daytime temperatures remain too cold for proper sprinkler operation and they can avoid freeze damage that may rupture irrigation lines. For Spring and Summer, early morning watering is preferred. Watering early allows for best water pressure, winds tend to calmer, and areas do not stay wet too long discouraging fungal growths that can occur with late day watering.

Watering Duration refers to the length of time that a sprinkler is on. This is most important during the first year when plants are newly installed. Younger plants simply do not need long water duration, as do established plants. But as plants become established, the duration becomes constant and normally does not change. Therefore, temperature changes between seasons influence the frequency and time of day to water and not the duration.

A Suggested Year Round Watering Schedule

Although I cannot make recommendations for every watering situation, I have provided a watering schedule for established, medium water use plants. Naturally, lower and higher use plants would require a lesser and greater frequency, respectfully.

1. Extreme cold weather (November to February). Watering time of day should occur between 11:00 AM and 1:00 PM. Do not water past 1:00 PM or water will remain in the system, freeze and possibly rupture irrigation lines. Watering frequency can vary from every 10 to 21 days depending upon the how cold temperatures are and the amount of precipitation. Heavy amounts of rain or snow can allow watering to extend beyond 21 days, but this is rare and occurs only during very wet years. At least ½ inch of rain or 4 inches of snow in a 3-day period of time is required to count as a watering. Never totally shut down an irrigation system in wintertime unless you plan on watering by hand. Water only on clear days when daytime temperatures are above freezing. Note: Watering duration (how long sprinklers stay on) should remain constant throughout the year and be on long enough to deep soak the plants.
2. Late Winter to early Spring (March through April). This is similar to watering in Fall (see #4), where the watering frequency varies from 1 to 2 times a week a week. The time of day to water is also changed to 9:00 AM. Be sure to monitor weather temperatures as it can affect watering frequencies and watering start times. Watering duration does not change.
3. Late Spring and Summer (May through Mid-September). Watering frequency increases to support the active growing period of the year. This frequency occurs 2-3 times a week with a start time of 6:00 AM to 7:00 AM. Temperatures may soar to over 100 °F in mid-Summer, which may require daily watering on some plants. But watch for Monsoon rains (July-August), which may allow a lower watering frequency, especially if rains are heavy and consistent. A half-inch of rainfall over a 24-hour period constitutes a watering and the next watering period can be skipped. Again, the watering duration does not change.
4. Early Fall (late September through October). Watering time-of-day is changed to 9:00 AM and the frequency of watering is reduced to twice weekly. Extended warm weather (Indian Summer) in Fall can affect the watering frequency and more watering may be needed – so, keep an eye on day/night temperature changes. Watering duration does not change.



Water Supply for Sandia Heights

By: Ed Payne, SHHA Board Member

"Do we have enough water?" and "Where does our water come?" are two questions often posed by homeowners in Sandia Heights. The residents of Sandia Heights receive their water supply from Sandia Heights Services. The source of the water is two groundwater supply wells. A third well that could be used as a backup is located on pueblo property. Sandia Peak Utility Company provides water to 2,176 residences in Sandia Heights and Primrose Pointe. The water supply wells were installed in 1986. Since then, there has been no reduction in productivity.

The two wells are pumped during the night from 8 pm to 8 am to take advantage of off-peak electrical rates. During this twelve hour period, a total of 1,764,00 gallons could be pumped. The production of water in the summer is approximately 1,576,000 gallons per day (July 2001). In the winter, the production is approximately 686,500 gallons per day (December 2001). During the entire year of 2001, Sandia Heights residents used 263,595,494 gallons of water. This equates to approximately 133

gallons per person per day use by Sandia Heights residents, assuming 2.5 people per residence. Typical water use for the city of Albuquerque is 205 gallons per *person* per day (Albuquerque Journal) and 150 gallons per *person* per day for the city of Santa Fe.

Approximately ninety per cent of the water used inside the house is not consumed; that is, water from showers, washing machines and dish washers go down the drain and re-enters the shallow aquifer through the septic system or to the river through the sewerage system. The water used outside the house for landscaping is nearly all consumed; that is, the plants use it or it evaporates and does not return to the shallow aquifer.

Sandia Heights Services has a web site at www.sandiaheightsservices.com. Information on water quality can be found at the Sandia Heights Utilities tab. The good news is that there is no detectable arsenic in our water (detectable concentration: 1 microgram per liter or part per billion (ppb)). The current US EPA drinking water standard (MCL) for arsenic is 50 ppb. This standard will be reduced to 10 ppb in 2006. There are many links from this web site including landscaping/irrigation/xeriscaping, drought and activities within the region and surrounding states. If there is a leaking faucet in your home, the WaterWiser calculates how much water is just going down the drain, for example, 20 drops per minute results in 86 gallons of water per month going down the drain.

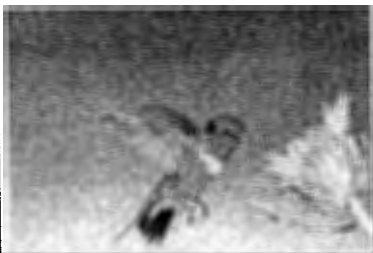
Wildflower Club Sandia Heights

Meeting Announcement

Wednesday January 15, 2003 at 7:30 P.M.

Speaker: Mr. Dan Caudillo

Location: 2744 Tramway Circle



Mr. Dan Caudillo is well known by the Grit readership. His regular articles provide valuable information to novice as well as expert gardeners. He is the speaker at the January meeting and will talk about hummingbirds and their favorite flowering plants. Mr. and Mrs. Caudillo are also graciously hosting this meeting at their home.

All Sandia Heights residents are welcome to join the members for any of the events.

To become a member, please send a check for the annual membership fee of \$5 payable to the Sandia Heights Wildflower Club to Susan Cook, 1842 Tramway Terrace Lp, Albuquerque, NM 87122 to cover dues for one year.

