



The Saratogan

Winter 2010

Do it Yourself - Start a Neighborhood Watch

Interested in learning more about how you can make your neighborhood safer? Start a Neighborhood Watch to reduce crime in your community. Neighborhood Watch is a “do it yourself” type program that empowers residents to improve the quality of life in their community by working together. Neighbors build relationships with one another, learn about crime prevention techniques, and work collaboratively to report suspicious activity and reduce crime.

To start a Neighborhood Watch program where you live, simply contact the Santa Clara County Sheriff’s Office Community Services Unit at (408) 808-4624. The Sheriff’s Office will guide you through the process and provide suggestions for organizing your neighborhood.



Neighborhood Watch is one of the many ways Saratoga residents can “do it themselves” to make their community better. Read more about these opportunities in this issue of *The Saratogan*.

Composting at Home

Looking for a new way to improve the health of your garden? Interested in reducing waste? Try composting! Not only does composting benefit your garden, it also helps you save money on soil conditioners and increases the lifespan of our landfills. Best of all, composting is easy! Below are some tips for starting your own compost pile. For more information or to become a Santa Clara County Master Composter, visit www.reducewaste.org.

Composting Tips:

- Only use open compost piles for yard trimmings
- Place your pile away from any structures
- Chop up compost materials before adding them to your pile
- Mix together dry woody materials with moist green materials
- Keep your compost pile moist
- Stir or turn your compost pile about once per week
- Because compost bins keep rodents out, they are good for fruits, vegetables, and yard trimmings
- If you are using a compost bin, bury food scraps into the center of the pile
- The composting process is complete when the material in the pile looks like dark rich soil and easily crumbles in your fingers (this should take 1.5 to 3 months with a compost bin)



Photo by Diana C. House

Tree Pruning 101

While pruning is one of the most common tree maintenance procedures, mature trees require very little pruning. Most deciduous and broad leaved evergreen trees only need to be pruned once every 3 to 4 years. Most evergreen coniferous trees can go without pruning for 5 to 10 years. However, you may need to prune your trees to clean out dead, dying or diseased limbs, increase light and air penetration inside the tree's crown, or to raise low hanging branches to increase clearance under a tree's canopy.

When pruning is necessary, be careful about how much you remove. "Topping" a tree, removing the top portion of the tree without regard to the location of the cuts, is harmful to the tree. Additionally, cutting away too much foliage makes it hard for trees to recover, can make trees vulnerable to disease or other harmful conditions, and may weaken branches and cause hazardous conditions.

Consequently, the City requires permits to remove more than 25% of a tree's canopy or when International Society of Arboriculture pruning standards cannot be met. To protect residents as well as to prevent damage to large trees, the City requires professional tree contractors working in the City to obtain a business license and have a certified arborist supervise the pruning work to ensure International Society of Arboriculture standards are followed correctly.

The best time to prune varies by tree species. For the most part, pruning during a tree's growth season should be avoided as trees require significant energy during this period and pruning may cause undue stress on the tree. Some types of trees require pruning at special times of the year. For example, pine trees (especially Monterey pines) should be pruned between Thanksgiving and the end of February when the weather is cold and the beetles that can attack them are dormant. Oak trees should be pruned between the end of June and February, when it is less likely that weather will be warm and moist, to prevent sudden oak death.

When pruning is done, you can place the removed clippings in your Green Waste bin. Branches should be 3 feet or shorter and 6 inches or less in diameter.

For more information, visit www.treesaregood.com or contact City Arborist Kate Bear at (408) 868-1276 or kbear@saratoga.ca.us.



Tree Topping is a Violation of City Code

Building a Home Disaster Kit

Following a disaster, basic services are often unavailable. Depending on the scale of the disaster, the public may lose access to water, electricity, gas, telephone, sewage treatment, and other essential services for 3 days or longer. Consequently, experts suggest preparing a home disaster kit that will allow you and your loved ones to stay self-sufficient for at least 3 days.

Kits should also be stored somewhere that is easily accessible and in a watertight container to protect contents of the kit. You can keep backpacks in your kit, so that you can pack essential items if you need to evacuate.

Experts suggest that kits include one gallon of water per person per day; a minimum 3 day supply of non-perishable food and any necessary cooking supplies; a battery-powered or hand crank radio and a NOAA Weather Radio with tone alert along with extra batteries; flashlights and additional batteries; first aid supplies; a whistle to signal for help; tools; personal hygiene items; special items for children, seniors, people with disabilities, and pets; a copy of important documents and phone numbers; and vital personal items, such as prescriptions or eye glasses

Visit www.ready.gov or www.redcross.org for additional suggestions. For information about emergency preparation in your community, contact Saratoga Emergency Services Coordinator Jim Yoke at (408) 887-7818 or sccfd_esc@yahoo.com.

Holiday Fire Safety

It is estimated that holiday season fires kill more than 400 people, injure 1,650 people, and cause over \$990 million in property damage each year. Prevent fires and keep your family safe by following these tips.

- Install carbon monoxide smoke detectors.
- Purchase an operable fire extinguisher.
- Select holiday trees with fresh green needles that are hard to pull back from the branches. Old trees are usually dried out and can become a fire hazard.
- Select a place for your tree away from heat sources, including fireplaces or heating vents.
- Keep your tree watered to prevent it from drying out and immediately discard your tree when it becomes dry.
- Use flame retardant artificial trees.
- Inspect old and new lights for frayed wires, bare spots, gaps in insulation, broken or cracked sockets, and excessive kinking.
- Never leave holiday lights on unattended.
- Only use lights approved for outdoor use for the exterior of your home.
- Avoid overloading electrical outlets.
- Only use nonflammable decorations.
- Avoid using lit candles.
- Maintain a 3 foot clearance between your fireplace and combustibles.



Ask Jana

Got Code Enforcement questions? Ask Jana! Send your questions to Jana Rinaldi at 13777 Fruitvale Avenue, Saratoga CA 95070 or by email to jrinaldi@saratoga.ca.us.

Dear Jana,

My family and I are thinking of getting a horse. A friend in another county recently told me that she has to license her horses. I know the City requires dogs and cats to be licensed. Can you tell me if horses must be licensed too?

Paula Pony

Dear Paula,

Yes, the City does require horses and other animals in the horse family (such as donkeys, mules, or ponies) to be licensed. To obtain a license for a horse, simply contact me at (408) 868-1214 or jrinaldi@saratoga.ca.us. For dog and cat licenses, visit www.sanjoseanimals.com or call (408) 578-7297.

Jana

Dear Jana,

The other day, a solicitor came up to my home and tried to sell a set of knives to me. Are there any rules that regulate who can solicit me at my home?

Saul Solicitor

Saul,

Yes, solicitors making sales for commercial and charitable organizations must have a permit from the City. Permitted commercial solicitors, such as those selling knife or landscaping services, are issued an identification badge. Charitable organizations, such as church groups or educational organizations, are given a letter that they must have with them when soliciting or peddling in Saratoga. The City also requires solicitors to observe "No Solicitor" signs.

Jana

Winter Storm Preparation

Saratoga may not be in hurricane country, but even a small storm can do a lot of damage. To stay safe during winter, read the following tips on what to do before, during, and after a storm.

Be prepared before the storm hits! Residents can fill up their own sand bags 24 hours a day at the City Corporation Yard, located 19700 Allendale Avenue, for free. There is a limit of 25 bags per person. Visit www.saratoga.ca.us/publicworks for more information. Residents who require assistance can call (408) 868-1245.

During the storm, report damage to the appropriate authorities. The City handles fallen trees, landslides, and flooding, on roads and public property. To report a hazard, call (408) 868-1245 Monday through Thursday, 6:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., and every other Friday 6:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. At all other times, contact County Communications at (408) 299-2507.

PG&E is responsible for restoring service after a power outage, and for clearing trees associated with damaged power lines. To report a power outage or a downed power line, call 1-800-PGE-5002.

After the storm has passed, keep safe by avoiding flooded streets and staying away from downed power lines, which can still carry a current. Working on storm-damaged trees can be dangerous, so consider hiring a professional arborist for post-storm tree care.



Bohlman Road in Saratoga

Recognizing Saratoga's Commissioners

Each fall, the City celebrates its Commissioners at the annual Commission Recognition Dinner to recognize the dedication of the City's Commissioners and their contributions to the Saratoga community. There are 6 Saratoga Commissions, including the Heritage Preservation Commission, Library Commission, Parks and Recreation Commission, Traffic Safety Commission, Planning Commission, and Youth Commission.

Saratoga's Commissions play a key role in the City's decision making process. Each Commission studies issues within its area of specialization, provides increased opportunities for citizen input and participation in City decisions, and provides valued advice to the Council. Both the Planning Commission and Heritage Preservation Commission are also authorized to make decisions on certain development applications. Ultimately, the Commissions help ensure City decisions reflect community interests and are well informed.

For more information about the City's Commissions, including descriptions, meeting schedules, and vacancies, visit www.saratoga.ca.us/commissions.



Heritage Preservation Commissioners Hong Tai and Peter Marra



To learn more about *The Saratogan*, make comments, or suggest story ideas, contact Crystal Morrow with the Saratoga City Manager's Office at cmorrow@saratoga.ca.us or (408) 868-1275. You can also find *The Saratogan* online and sign up for email alerts at www.saratoga.ca.us/saratogan.