

Gardening



MAKE YOUR LAWN AN OUTDOOR OASIS

(ARA) - Economic uncertainty has many families skipping expensive vacations and opting for so-called “staycations” in their own backyards. They’re cooking, camping and enjoying outdoor activities right at home, making their lawns the perfect spot for an oasis of fun and relaxation.

Because people are spending more time around their homes, there is a renewed emphasis on the health, maintenance and vitality of grass, trees, flowers, shrubs and other plants and natural areas in the yard. Rising sales at garden centers for items like shrubbery, decorative accessories, fertilizers and pesticides show that consumers are creating inviting, usable lawn and landscape environments.

The benefits of healthy lawns and landscapes are numerous. Trees, shrubbery and plants can create a private and tranquil personal retreat. Well-maintained green spaces have been proven to lower blood pressure, reduce muscle tension related to stress, and reduce feelings of fear, anger and aggression. Lush lawns act as a soft cushion for play areas, remove dust, dirt and allergens from the air, and can significantly decrease carbon dioxide levels. Lawns also act as a filter to help improve water quality by reducing erosion and absorbing runoff so it doesn’t find its way into the gutter and eventually into public drinking water and other sources.

“When healthy and functioning at their best, lawns and natural areas provide a limitless array of benefits for individuals, communities and the environment,” says Allen James, president of RISE (Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment) -- a national organization representing the manufacturers, formulators and distributors of pesticide and fertilizer products. “To reach their full potential and keep them free from harmful pests, many lawns and landscapes require the judicious and responsible use of fertilizer and pesticide products. Especially as people are spending more time in their yards, using these products as directed to grow healthy plants and protect against potential pest threats is increasingly important.”

While this is the time of year when people can enjoy their lawns and other outdoor settings with pets, family and friends, it is also important to remember that encounters with certain common pests are more frequent during warmer weather. Tick activity and the prevalence of Lyme disease, as reported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), is especially high during summer months. According to information from the CDC Web site, approximately 75 percent of all reported cases are acquired from ticks picked up during activities in back yards and around home. Lyme disease is an increasingly common problem, now documented in 49 states as well as parts of Canada, Europe and Asia, and the number of positive cases here in the United States is on the rise. In the 15 year span from 1992 to 2007, CDC reports of Lyme disease across the nation have steadily increased from approximately 10,000 cases per year to more than 27,000 cases nationally.

Though Lyme disease and similar pest-related health risks are a problem, paying attention and taking a few simple, preven-

tative steps can help homeowners and their families reduce the risk of these pest dangers that affect millions of Americans each year.

“Human health conditions like Lyme disease, West Nile virus and others are spread and transmitted through the bites of ticks, mosquitoes and other pests we encounter in our backyards almost every day,” James says. “Taking the time to eliminate high grass, standing water and other potential pest habitats is a very simple, very effective measure for reducing the prevalence of these

unwelcome and unhealthy annoyances. “As for personal protection, applying insect repellents and inspecting ourselves and our children regularly and thoroughly after having been outside are some simple precautions that go a long way toward preventing many of these common, but serious health risks.” By taking the proper precautions and a few easy steps to maintain a healthy, vibrant and pest-free yard, it is easy to create an enjoyable, usable backyard oasis for outdoor fun all year long. Courtesy of ARAcontent.com .

Housing

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city’s total number of housing units would reach slightly less than 7,400 by 2010 and then a little more than 7,600 units by 2015.

The association also concluded the probable number of homebuyers generated by Plaza El Segundo and Campus El Segundo by themselves would exceed the inventory of available homes in El Segundo, a community that houses 13 “Fortune 500” companies and where about 75 percent of the land is zoned for commercial and industrial.

Not to worry, says Kim Christensen, El Segundo’s planning manager, who explains that, although the latest population projections might seem problematic, her department’s “own residential projections are not at maximum build-out...I don’t know if the remaining building will in fact exceed capacity.” Christensen agrees with the SCAG’s that there would be enough existing housing within a 9.7-mile radius of El Segundo to absorb any demand overflow.

El Segundo’s economy is typically studied in relation to the other communities in the SCAG’s South Bay sub-region, which include Carson, Gardena, Hawthorne, Hermosa Beach, Inglewood, Lawndale, Lomita, Manhattan Beach, Palos Verdes Estates, Rancho Palos

Verdes, Redondo Beach, Rolling Hills, Rolling Hills Estates, Torrance, and the Harbor City/San Pedro communities of Los Angeles. The cities of Santa Monica and Culver City would also be feasible alternate markets for those looking for homes closer to El Segundo, the association’s assessment said.

Other upcoming developments in El Segundo span at least three new hotels, including a Hampton Suites hotel and one that will sport loft-style rooms, which Christensen said are popular back east, but were only recently introduced on the West Coast.

Named 2006’s “Most Business-Friendly City in L.A. County” by the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation, El Segundo has “put a lot of effort into representing itself” as pro-business, said Christensen. She added that when it comes to real estate and housing issues, “the city has tried to establish strong connections with property owners and realtors,” which have continued to flourish and offer opportunity, despite what the larger economy might be doing.

“I have seen the real estate market in all its ups and downs, but El Segundo has been a city that has continued to grow,” said Ruane.

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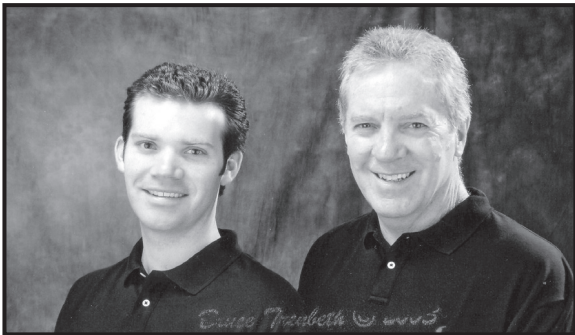
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