



Courtesy of
The Beck and Pitel Team

Neighborhood News

March/April 2009

Greetings,

When it comes to preparing your taxes, you can never allow yourself too much time. With so much to do, poor time management may result in an incorrect filing or perhaps overpayment or underpayment.

Organize everything that is needed for your tax preparation. You will need to gather all pertinent documents (including W-2s, 1099s and receipts), clear your schedule for several hours and secure an appointment in advance with a tax professional. If you plan on filing your taxes on your own, you'll also want to allow time to consult with a tax adviser, if needed.

Having ample time to prepare your taxes may also allow you to discover additional deductions you never knew existed or that you qualified for. For this month's Item of Value, we have noted a multitude of tax deductions that could benefit you this tax season. On the reverse side, we have also listed several ways to prevent your personal information from falling into the hands of identity thieves.

If you need a referral to a tax professional—please give us a call!

Cheers,

Jeanie, Mike, Stephanie and Tim

Landscaping 101

It's that time of year—when it seems that weeds materialize from thin air to takeover our lawns. Maybe while out reclaiming your yard, you've pondered making some changes.



Landscaping not only enhances your home's curb appeal—it can enhance value! According to the Gallup Organization, landscaping can add 7-15% to your home's value.

When it's time to sell, 100-200% of your landscaping investment can be recovered while a swimming pool only returns 20-50% of your money according to *Money Magazine*.

Here are a few tips for bringing life to small spaces:

- To avoid looking cluttered, minimize the variety of plants and materials.

- Light shades on outdoor walls and fences will open up the space.
- Shelves, trellises and hanging pots take advantage of vertical space.

Adding a deck or patio is not only a way to create an outdoor living space, it's a great investment. According to *REALTOR® Magazine's* 2008 Cost vs. Value Report, you can get up to an 81.8% return on your investment by installing a deck. Plus, there are a variety of surfaces to fit any budget—concrete pavers, wood, stones, bricks.

A healthy lawn maximizes curb appeal. Experts say mowing too often or cutting grass too short are the most common mistakes. By watering less frequently, but for longer periods of time, more water reaches the roots. It's also important to aerate the soil to allow water and nutrients to penetrate the roots.

We're making some changes...

- *Electronic Items of Value** - to continue providing pertinent information about the market, negotiated discounts, and helpful tips between issues, we are now offering condensed versions via email to supplement our printed newsletter.
- *Business Directory*—our online Business Directory is undergoing some changes. Soon we will be launching a newer version with enhanced navigation. We are regularly adding new businesses. Please let us know if you work with a company that has provided you with outstanding service and should be included.
- *Smart Deals of the Week** - with low prices and interest rates, it's a great time to invest in real estate. Weekly, we will send out some well-priced homes new to the market.
- And more. Stay tuned as we have a few other exciting changes we will be announcing soon.



* Please be sure we have your current email address to receive these items. Send an email to info@ValleyRealEstatePros.com with your current address and let us know if you want to receive the *Smart Deals of the Week* along with our eReport.

Upcoming Events

The weather is perfect this time of year and there are plenty of upcoming outdoor activities to enjoy.

March 13-15

Ostrich Festival

Admission: \$7-\$9

Tumbleweed Park

2250 S. McQueen Rd., Chandler

(480) 963-4571

www.ostrichfestival.com

March 14, 10 AM

St. Patrick's Day Parade and Faire

Admission: \$1-\$10

Margaret T. Hance Park

1134 N. Central Ave., Phoenix

(602) 280-9221

www.phxirish.org



March 14-15, 10AM—5PM

Arizona Aloha Festival

FREE Admission

Tempe Town Lake

80 W. Rio Salado Pkwy., Tempe

(602) 697-1824

www.azalohafest.org

Now through April 5

Spring Training

For game times/prices visit:

www.springtrainingonline.com

Most Fridays March 6—June 26

Spring Jazz in the Garden

Admission: \$14-\$20

Desert Botanical Garden

1201 N. Galvin Pkwy., Phoenix

(480) 941-1225

www.dbg.org

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Is it yard graffiti or did they call ahead?

(ARA) - Have you ever looked outside and noticed your neighbor's front yard painted with colorful lines or covered with flags?

Despite its appearance, it's not yard graffiti, but rather temporary markings to show the approximate location of underground utility lines on the property.

Underground utility lines can be found in the front or backyard and include all of the service lines such as water, gas and communication lines that bring service from the street into your home.



The experts at the Common Grounds Alliance, an association dedicated to ensuring public safety through underground utility damage prevention practices, share their guide to the colorful markings:

- Red markings represent electric power lines, cables, conduit and lighting cables.
- Yellow markings represent gas, oil, steam petroleum or gaseous materials.
- Orange markings represent communication, alarm or signal lines.
- Blue markings represent potable water lines.
- Green markings represent sewer and drain lines.
- Purple markings represent reclaimed water, irrigation and slurry lines.
- Pink markings represent temporary survey lines.
- White markings represent proposed excavation.

If you are planning a yard project that requires you to dig, follow your neighbor's example and contact your local one call center by dialing 811 to have underground lines properly marked. Striking a single line can result in personal harm, costly fines, inconvenient outages or property damages.

No matter the type of project -- installing a mailbox, putting in a fence, planting trees or shrubbery, building a patio or deck, excavating a new garden area -- make sure to call 811 at least two business days prior to digging to have your site properly marked.

When you dial 811, a local one call center representative will collect your information and notify local utility companies of your intent to dig. A professional locator will then visit the dig site to mark the approximate location of all underground utility lines with spray paint or flags. Once your digging site has been marked, it is safe to begin digging around the marked areas.

Contact your local one call center at 811 before every dig, or visit www.Call811.com for more safe digging and state-specific information.

Courtesy of ARAcontent

Congratulations!

Michelle Hausmann

For winning our trivia drawing. Chronometer was the answer we were seeking for the instrument sailors use to tell time. That question wasn't specific enough and we got many different answers.

Test your knowledge

What US city has the largest per capita St. Patrick's Day Parade?

Call, fax, or email us with the correct answer and your name will be entered into a drawing for a \$25 gift certificate.