OUR TOWN

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE TOWN OF LOS ALTOS HILLS JUNE 2019

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VISIONARIES WHO SAVED THE FOOTHILLS

Committee for Green Foothills Founders Lois Crozier Hogle and Ruth Spangenberg.

Mary Davey, former President of Green Foothills and former Mayor of Los Altos Hills.

Frank and Josephine Duveneck of Hidden Villa and Wallace Stegner, first President of Green Foothills.

Preserving Our Foothills

Driving along highway 280 South of San Francisco or cruising the winding Skyline Drive above, it's easy to become enthralled by the sheer beauty of this pristine landscape. The views turn magical as the fading sunlight gives way to waterfall fog flowing down the valleys that stretch towards the Bay. Speeding past Crystal Springs reservoir and its untouched watershed, one can almost imagine what this area must have looked like when Junipero Serra first blazed the path that eventually became known as El Camino Real. This unique corridor is one of the most beautiful stretches of natural landscape that exists side by side with a modern urban environment anywhere in the world. How could this vestigial ecosystem possibly have survived the multiple tech booms that transformed the farm fields once known as the "Valley of Heart's Delight" into the modern economic powerhouse that anchors the world's 5th largest economy? [CONTINUED ON PAGE 2.]

Committee for Green Foothills board celebrating tenth anniversary.

"Something will have gone out of us as a people if we ever let the remaining wilderness be destroyed; if we permit the last virgin forests to be turned into comic books and plastic cigarette cases; If we drive the few remaining members of the wild species into zoos or to extinction; if we pollute the last clear air and dirty the last clean streams and push our paved roads through the last of the silence, so that never again will Americans be free in their own country from the noise, the exhausts, the stinks of human and automotive waste."

"We simply need that wild country available to us, even if we never do more than drive to its edge and look in. For it can be a means of reassuring ourselves of our sanity as creatures, a part of the geography of hope."

Wallace Stegner
Wilderness Letter, 1960

Interestingly, the unique character of Bay Area environment can be traced to a few small groups of dedicated people who made a huge impact with a legacy that continues to this day. While a robust environmental movement is now a permanent feature of the San Francisco Bay Area, over 50 years ago the region was in danger of becoming the victim of the type of unbridled development that had already consumed vast stretches of Southern California's most beautiful places. Without the dedicated and persistent efforts of a small group of pioneering environmentalists, much of the pristine views of undeveloped wildlife habitat, towering redwoods and green foothills of San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties would have been lost forever. Fifty-seven years ago, a group of 27 Palo Alto and Los Altos Hills residents were invited by Lois Crozier-Hogle to meet at the home of Ruth Spangenberg to develop a strategy to combat the encroachment of offices and industrial parks into the unspoiled rolling hills west of Stanford University. "Keep Factories off the Foothills" was their rally cry. This group eventually became known as the Committee for Green Foothills.

Activism Takes Root

In the late 1950s and early 1960s expansive engineering ingenuity spurred environmental activism. The ecologically valuable marshes around the San Francisco Bay were disappearing, replaced with airports, factories, landfills, subdivisions, and salt production ponds. Natural meandering Adobe, Barron, and Matadero Creeks in Palo Alto were straightened and lined with concrete. Industrial parks and housing development marched up into the Santa Cruz Foothills. With few environmental laws in place, grassroots activism arose in this era to give nature a voice and prevent development from blanketing the landscape.

Committee for Green Foothills

Committee for Green Foothills' first President of its Board of Directors was town resident Wallace Stegner, a professor at Stanford University and a Pulitzer Prize-winning author. Stegner was a key contributor in writing the Green Sheets framing the incorporation of Los Altos Hills, a town specifically zoned for large lots with rural character and a town committed to the preservation of ecologically sensitive habitats.

A number of other town residents served on the Committee for Green Foothills over the

decades including Mary Davey, a former mayor of Los Altos Hills, and Joan Sherlock who is the current Board President. Davey was instrumental in the establishment of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (MROSD) in 1972 through Measure R, the "Room to Breathe Initiative." Today, MROSD has permanently preserved over 62,000 acres of open space. Now, Sherlock is helping to lead the Committee for Green Foothills in its efforts to preserve Coyote Valley, a regionally significant 15,000 acre open space and wildlife area on the urban edge of southern San Jose.

Serving San Mateo and Santa Clara counties, Committee for Green Foothills' mission to protect the open space, farmland, and natural resources through advocacy, education, and grassroots action is just as relevant today as it was when founded 57 year ago. Take for instance the resurgence of the Redwood City Saltworks project, a striking example of the fill in the Bay development proposals of yesteryear. This 1,400 acre site was historically wetlands and its restoration would provide a critical natural solution to buffering the impacts of sea level rise. It would also offer further opportunity to enjoy our bay in its natural setting.

Committee for Green Foothills along with other organizations and agencies will champion restoring and protecting these lands in perpetuity to the benefit of residents throughout the region. It is thanks to the continued collaborative, creative and persistent efforts of local volunteers and advocates that our town is surrounded today with natural beauty — especially the expansive, permanently protected foothills with miles of trails, gorgeous vistas, and diverse habitats.

Founders of Committee of Green Foothills

Myron Alexander, Dora Brown, R.E. Cameron, Dorothy Comstock, Kirke Comstock, George Cowie, James Cutter, Dave Davison, Laurence Dawson (LAH), Ruth Dawson (LAH), Eleanor Fowle (LAH), Jack Fowle (Past mayor of LAH), Betty Gerard, Gary Gerard, George Hogle, Lois Crozier-Hogle, Tom Horn, Martin Litton, Sy Mantel, Mary Moffat, George Pfeiffer, Karl Spangenberg (LAH), Ruth Spangenberg (LAH), Kathryn Stedman, Morgan Stedman, Wallace Stegner (LAH), and Michael Wills

FROM THE PLANNING DIRECTOR

Upcoming Changes to Second Dwelling Unit Regulations

The town has begun the process of updating its secondary dwelling unit (also known as accessory dwelling units or ADUs) regulations and is seeking public input and comments at several upcoming Planning Commission meetings. The proposed code changes are intended to provide incentives to property owners to legalize and construct second dwelling units.

A summary of the proposed changes are as follows:

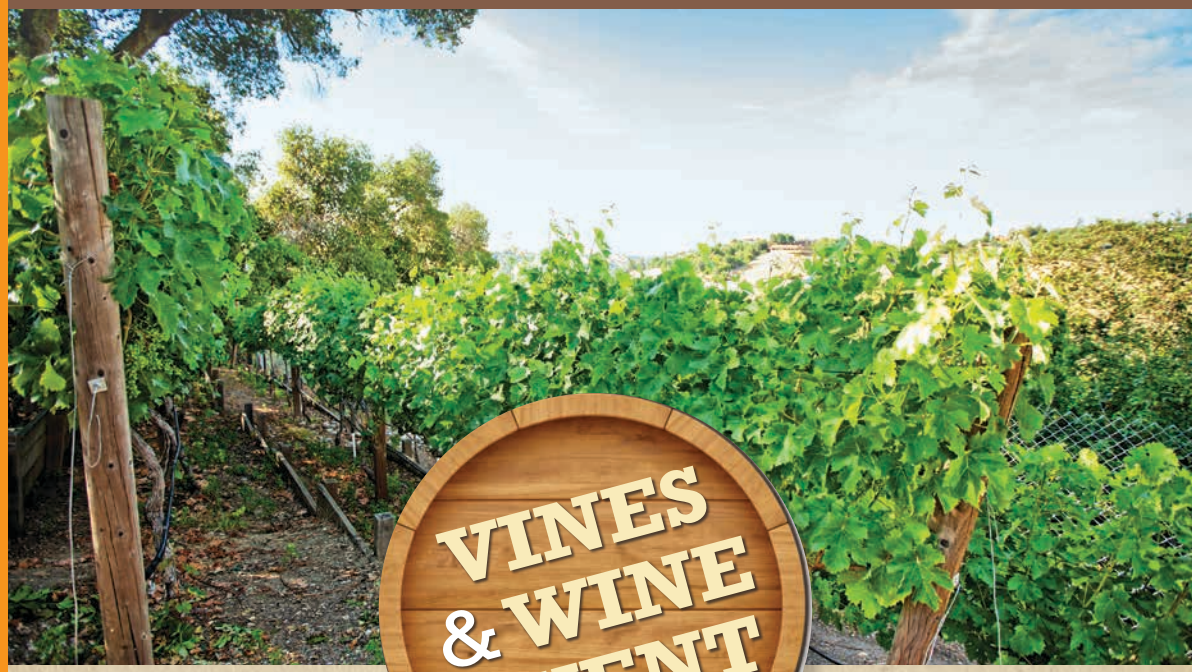
- Allow parking for second units in the required setbacks on existing paved areas and driveways;
- Allow second units on lots with a gross acreage of 0.75 or greater;
- Allow for the conversion of any portion of an existing legal residential structure to a second unit regardless of the lot area;
- Allow for a maximum unit size of 1,200 square feet (and limit basement area);
- Do not require the payment of a pathway fee;
- Reduce project review and development fees;
- Consider floor area and setback exceptions;
- Consider other potential code changes presented at the public hearings.

Staff will present the draft code sections to the planning commission starting in May 2019. Upon a thorough review by the planning commission at one or more public hearings, a recommendation on the code section changes will be provided to the city council for their review and adoption.

If you have any questions regarding the proposed ADU code amendments, please contact the planning department at 650-941-7222.

Steve Padovan, interim planning director

Wine Country exists right here in our own backyards. With the one-acre minimums in Los Altos Hills, residents have discovered that an alternative to landscaping is to plant a vineyard. The benefits of grapevines are that they demand less water than lawns or other forms of landscaping while producing potentially award-winning wines. Since 2017 there has been an increase in the number of Los Altos Hills residents planting vineyards so they can produce their own wines.



VINES & WINE EVENT

As of 2017 there were approximately 112 vineyards in town, with most of the common varieties being cabernet, sauvignon, merlot and chardonnay. For example, Scott Bryan, retired high tech executive, who lives on Roble Blanco off Page Mill Road, planted five varieties of 300 vines, including Tempranillo. He has entered multiple home-making wine contests, such as the Bottle Shock Open in Lodi, CA where he has won numerous awards from Double Gold and Silver for his homemade wines.

"Winemaking is not easy," says Scott Bryan. "I've studied all kinds of scientific methods and learned what works and doesn't work." He found that science of winemaking isn't the only stumbling block. The local deer, birds and snails make short order meals of the vines. Initially, he had no fence, but finally had to give in to protect his vines.

The economics results in each bottle of wine he makes cost about $8 to $10. For a professional to plant a home vineyard, he states it costs about $15,000 to $20,000 per half acre.

Through all the trials and tribulations, Scott now provides wines for many of our local non profit fund raising events as well as being a main contributor to the biennial Vines and Wines Event at Town Hall, sponsored by Hills 2000—Friends of the Hills grass roots organization.

Home vintners may dream of making prize-winning wine, but what drives them all is the satisfaction of sharing their hobby with family and friends. Planting parties, pruning parties, harvest gatherings, not to mention pressing, bottling and tasting – all offer opportunities to invite people to join in. Says Simon Chang, who has been making wine for 12 years, "Having family and friends get together for harvesting and bottling is the most precious time I enjoy every year."

To celebrate the efforts of local winemakers, Hills 2000—Friends of the Hills sponsors a tasting of local vintages every two years. Vintners who participate in Vines & Wines 2019 must grow their grapes in Los Altos Hills or make the wine within town limits. This year, the biennial Vines & Wines event will be held on Sunday, October 27, 2019; 2-5 PM at the Los Altos Hills Town Hall. Attendance will be limited to pre-registered 300 attendees; adults only (no children). Pre-register at www.hills2000.org.

EXIT STRATEGY

Imagine it's 4:00 p.m. on a hot summer evening. Temperatures have hovered in the 90's for many days. The humidity is very low. There is a Red Flag Warning in effect. As evening approaches, the weather report predicts high winds. Three hours later, a pot, accidentally left cooking on the stove when the homeowners went out for the evening starts a house fire. Embers are quickly spread to nearby brush and the winds take care of the rest.

Disasters are local. It is the town's responsibility to plan for emergencies. They adopted an evacuation plan in October 2018. The plan outlines the roles and responsibilities of the town, Santa Clara County Fire Department, Sheriff's Office and the public.

For wildfire evacuation the town's plan includes how to provide alerts and warnings and set up emergency shelters. The town cannot plan how individuals evacuate. They can only suggest. Evacuation decisions are based on individual preferences.

Taking Initial Action

What would you do in this scenario? How can you make good decisions about whether or not to leave? Town staff have established communication links to the community. Nixle and Alert SCC provide voice and text notifications to *registered* cell phones and landlines. Event status information is shared on Nextdoor.com and the town's Facebook and Twitter pages.

Are you connected to these communication resources? Do you leave your phone turned on at night?

When You Should Evacuate

If time allows, the town will have County Fire and the Sheriff's Office send out an evacuation warning. A warning does not mean to evacuate. It means "get ready." Some individuals plan to evacuate when they receive a warning. This is a good idea if you have horses to move, have only one way out of your neighborhood or just want to have a little extra time (and a lot little less stress) when you leave. It never hurts to leave early and monitor the situation from a distance.

Calling 911 is not an evacuation plan. It's not a "magic number" — when wildfire strikes, there are no guarantees. Individuals must make decisions and plans for their own safe evacuation.

If time is critical, you may just receive an evacuation order. This means "get out now!" Do not wait to assemble any supplies. Jump in the car. You are more important than your possessions.

Unfortunately, there is a third evacuation scenario. The fire moved so quickly and/or telephone lines were damaged so that a notification could not be sent. At this stage of the emergency, local radio and television stations will also be covering the story. Be aware of what's happening. Look and listen. Call 911 if you notice that the fire is spreading toward you. If you don't feel safe, leave — even if you do not receive an evacuation order.

Challenges to Evacuation

Depending on the nature of the fire and the winds, a quick evacuation could be challenging. Residents might be confronted with many obstacles: thick, choking black smoke with limited visibility; narrow evacuation routes that can easily be blocked by

downed trees or traffic accidents or gridlock; intense heat that can melt car tires.

If evacuation by car is possible, a family should drive out in one car as opposed to taking separate cars. The fewer cars on the road the better.

There are members of the community who cannot drive and may not be able to walk. Calling 911 is a last resort to let first responders know

where you are. Unfortunately, there are no guarantees that they will have staff to come and rescue you. So the best plan is to talk to neighbors and arrange to be helped to a car.

Where to Go

The town will announce emergency shelter locations at the time of the event, based on the situation. Keep a map in your car because GPS might not work as infrastructure is burned and systems are overloaded because everyone is trying to find their way out.

Note that pets are allowed at evacuation shelters but must have vaccination records, leashes or crates, food and water with them.

Learn More

Education is the key to surviving wildfires. Go to www.losaltoshills.ca.gov, click on "In Case of Emergency" and click "Communications in Emergencies" to register for Nixle and AlertSCC. Click "Safety Resources Library" to find information on Fire, Wildfire and Home Safety and many other emergency planning topics.

EVACUATING YOUR HOME IN A WILDFIRE EMERGENCY

PREPARE CAR FOR EVACUATION

- Use a car with a the most amount of fuel in gas tank.
- Park car in garage facing street.
- Start packing the car.
- Close car windows but *do not lock* car and leave the keys in the ignition.
- Close the garage door but leave it unlocked (disconnect automatic garage door opener).
- Plan your route. Follow recommended evacuation routes. Do not take shortcuts, they may be blocked.
- Take only one car to reduce road congestion.

COORDINATE FAMILY

- If not all family members are home, text them and come up with a reunification plan.
- Text or email your out-of-area contact and tell them where you are going.
- Only make phone calls for life-threatening situations so the phones are not overloaded. Texting is fine.
- Arrange temporary housing at a friend's or relative's home outside the threatened area. You will be more comfortable in someone's home than in a public shelter.
- Call Town Hall or other published number to let them know where you are.
- Keep pets nearby and confined for rapid evacuation.
- Pack food, water and supplies for your pets.

PREPARE THE OUTSIDE OF YOUR HOME

- Shut off gas at the meter only if advised to do so by local officials on the radio or television. (use wrench to move the valve crosswise to the pipe).
- Disconnect propane tanks and turn valves off.
- Close or cover outside shutters, attic and air vents and other openings close to the ground.
- Connect the garden hose to outside faucet.
- Move combustible/flammable items to one spot away from the house - lawn furniture, umbrellas, tarp coverings, firewood, lawnmower gas, ammunition, chemicals.
- Place a ladder against the roof of the house on the side opposite the approaching fire.
- Turn on exterior lights.
- Make any available equipment obvious for the firefighters to use (hoses, spigots, hoes, chain saws, ladders).
- Leave an information note on the front door detailing name, destination, cell phone.

PREPARE THE INSIDE OF YOUR HOME

- Turn off appliances, thermostats, fireplaces (open damper, close screen).
- Leave *one light* on in each general area of the house so firefighters can see your house in the dark and smoke.
- Close fire resistant window & skylight coverings, heavy drapes and venetian blinds.
- Remove lace, nylon or light material drapes/curtains.
- Move combustible furniture into the center of the home away from windows and sliding-glass doors.
- Fill bathtubs, sinks and buckets with water.
- Soak burlap sacks, small rugs or large rags in the buckets or sink.
- Close doors and windows to prevent draft.
- Secure your home as you normally would but leave sliding glass doors *unlocked*.
- Place valuables that will not be damaged by water in a pool or pond.

Top: A well is embellished with decorative iron and surrounded by lush landscaping.
Bottom: An early photo of the pool house evokes the sense of style of the original buildings.

Bringing History to Life

The connection between Los Altos Hills and Hills Brothers Coffee is lovingly, painstakingly becoming a more visible part of local history. Sally and Brad Hauser are restoring the greenhouse, cottage and grounds that once formed part of the estate of Reuben Wilmarth (R.W.) Hills, grandson of the founders of Hills Brothers Coffee. The Town granted the structures landmark status in March.

The Hausers, who live on Manuella, had no idea about the property's significance when they first looked at the site. Subsequent visits made them aware of extensive water damage to all the buildings, including the greenhouse, and some experts they consulted recommended tearing it down. As they examined the once-elegant remains, the Hausers began digging into the history of the place. An architect sent them historic photos, which showed the well and greenhouse, in all their glory. At that point the Hausers decided to restore rather than remodel or demolish what they found.

Hills Brothers Coffee was founded in San Francisco in 1882 as Arabian Coffee and Spice Mills. Renamed Hills Brothers Coffee in 1906, the company was a major presence beside the Embarcadero Freeway until 1997. The aroma of roasting coffee wafting over the traffic was a steady signal that one was close to downtown San Francisco.

R.W.'s 33-acre Los Altos Hills estate included a main house constructed around 1914 (now demolished), pool house (extensively remodeled), workshop (re-purposed as a kitchen), barn (demolished), cottage and greenhouse. All the buildings were done in Spanish Colonial Revival style, with rustic details such as handmade roof tiles, decorative iron and heavy wooden doors. Perhaps as a reaction to the earthquake and fire of 1906, the original structures were supported by steel frames. Soule Steel of San Francisco provided the framing materials, which were also used to support the original University of California, Berkeley stadium as well as footings for the Golden Gate Bridge. The greenhouse has steel gears to lift its glass panels into various positions.

The greenhouse was of special significance to R.W., who intended to experiment with coffee varietals for company use. Though he had little success with coffee, he did well with avocado trees. Legend has it that his avocados were served at a Big Game luncheon. When R.W. died in 1934, the estate passed to his son and then his grandson. In 1948 the property was sold and subdivided. In the 1960s half the greenhouse was converted into two living spaces, and the rest provided studios for painters, potters and jewelers. Novelist Ellen Sussman and her husband, a woodworker, lived there until 2015. "These artists seemed to find inspiration in their surroundings, and many of them added personal flourishes, such as the tiled turtle at the bottom of the pool or the cozy reading nook," says Brad.

The Hausers purchased their half-acre piece of the estate in 2017. "Repairing the damaged wood has been the biggest challenge," says Brad. "Another challenge was dealing with the floors of the two greenhouse rooms; the floors were not attached to the foundation," he added.

Buckets of wood hardener and hours of sanding and scraping aside, the Hausers are still seduced by the charms of their piece of history. Landmark status means the beauty and history of the greenhouse, cottage and grounds will be preserved, ready to link past, present and future.

Exposed steel framing in what is now the Hauser's kitchen looks as though it was meant to be admired.

Los Altos Hills is young, having incorporated in 1956. Yet certain properties connect the town to a much longer past, and the History Committee encourages residents to protect historic links. In March, with endorsement from the History Committee, the City Council granted landmark status to the greenhouse, cottage and grounds of the home at 14700 Manuella Road.

To date only five other homes have received some form of recognition from the City Council for historically important attributes.

"More than 20 properties are already recognized. at the national or state level," says Sally Wood, co-chair of the History Committee. If you would like to know more about the advantages of landmark status or other historic designations, email co-chair Carol Gottlieb at bernongottlieb@sbcglobal.net.

GOATS TO THE RESCUE

LOS ALTOS HILLS COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT

Historically, the grazing of fields by goats was used as a method of vegetation mitigation and fire fuel management. Commencing in 2006, goat services were contracted by the Los Altos Hills County Fire District (District) to mitigate vegetation for fire fuel reduction in difficult to reach terrain such as the Byrne Preserve. This effort resulted in significant decrease of vegetative mass thus creating desirable fire breaks. The District is currently developing a service plan and timetable for goat services anticipated to commence in late spring of 2019. Due to the large amounts of rainfall experienced during the winter and spring months, greater vegetation is anticipated and planning for the areas of removal is underway.

Grazing of goats utilizes environmentally friendly techniques that are natural and enhances wildlife habitat, uses no toxic chemical sprays, requires minimal manpower with no chain saws or mechanized equipment to reduce fire fuel vegetation. Thus, the service renders no environmental hazards or loud noises that disturb residents or the environment.

Goats have proven most useful on steep or rocky hillsides where workers would have trouble walking; in wetlands and storm water management areas where mowers don't work, or heavy machinery would damage the land; and on vast ranges or state parks where mowing and spraying would be time-consuming, hazardous and costly.

Goats can each consume 4 to 10 pounds of vegetation a day and even climb into trees for food. Therefore, there will be a reduction of vegetation within the areas that are planned for removal within the Los Altos Hills County Fire District. Goats are considered superior to cows, tractors, chainsaws, weed eaters and herbicides because they will eat all the blackberry vines, thistles, nettles and poison oak they can consume. The use of goat services within the Los Altos Hills County Fire District is suitable for fire fuel reduction through vegetation mitigation by the services goats provide.

Local government agencies have utilized services for goat brush-clearing skills over the years. Tuolumne County has hired goats to graze down excess vegetation, including star thistle and other thistle varieties, at the old Jamestown Landfill. In Southern California, goats help protect the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum, in Simi Valley. The Ventura County Fire Department has goats graze at two sites: The 29 acres near the Los Padres National Forest in Ojai and the 13-acre Ronald Reagan Presidential Library. Each year, goats clear the brush to make it more difficult for wildfires to spread.

The Fire District Board of Commissioners is pleased to report the utilization of goat grazing as a premier method of fire fuel reduction to the community of Los Altos Hills County Fire District.

Discover more about the goats grazing schedule and photos on the District website at www.lahcfd.org

I THOUGHT I SAW A W BBIT!

We share our hills with one species of wild rabbit and one species of wild hare. They look very different and are adapted to occupy different habitats. They are our rabbits, and you may have noticed their abundant populations this year, simply due to consistent rainfall and a better food supply.

Black-tailed Hare

The black-tailed hare or jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus*, named by Asa Gray in 1837) is large, with tall ears, long hind legs, and a black tail. It weighs three to seven pounds and reaches two feet in length. Jackrabbits are found in open canopy habitats, including agricultural lands, desert, open canopy chaparral, and some forests. They don't like dense underbrush. The jackrabbit occurs across the western states, from California to Missouri and into Central America at elevations ranging from sea level to 10,000 feet. It's more common than our local brush rabbit.

Jackrabbits are frequently active during the day when brush rabbits are sleeping. They breed year-round, depending on food availability. They create a shallow nest on the ground and a typical litter is three to four young, but can be as many as seven. The young are born fully furred and alert at birth and they can feed on tender shoots immediately. They are completely independent by eight weeks old. That makes sense for an animal that is so vulnerable to predation. They live about six years. They don't habitually use burrows; occasionally they use them to escape a predator or find shade.

The enormous ears on jackrabbits are air conditioners. Jackrabbits don't sweat or pant, so they are cooled by exposing a lot of surface area of blood vessels to the air. The ears also swivel 270 degrees and the jackrabbit can listen in more than one direction at once. They hear lower frequencies and farther distances than humans. They also have a strong sense of smell.

When a jackrabbit senses danger it can accelerate up to 40 miles per hour to escape. Hops can reach 20 feet long, and every few hops are higher to assess the surroundings.

When a jackrabbit senses danger it can accelerate up to 40 miles per hour to escape. Hops can reach 20 feet long and every few hops are higher to assess the surroundings.

Jackrabbits eat herbs, grasses, shrubs, small trees, and cultivated crops. They get their water from the plants that they eat, so that influences what plants they choose to eat at different times of the year. In turn, jackrabbits, are an important prey species for hawks, owls, coyote, fox, mountain lion, and bobcat.

California Brush Rabbit

The California brush rabbit or cottontail (*Sylvilagus bachmani* named by George Waterhouse in 1839) is small, with proportionate ears, and a white cotton-ball tail (pictured below, left). They weigh about two pounds and range from 11 to 14.5 inches long. As the name implies, brush rabbits inhabit dense underbrush where they are active all year round, mostly at dawn and dusk. They occur along the west coast in Oregon, California, and Baja California.

Brush rabbits eat herbs, grasses, and, well, brush. Similar to the jackrabbit they get water mainly from the vegetation that they eat.

Brush rabbits in California breed from December to June and have about three litters a year. Litters range from three to four young, which are born blind and helpless. They stay in a lined and covered nest on the ground for two weeks. Brush rabbits use runways and tunnels carved through low-growing brush, and burrows.

When threatened, brush rabbits run in zigzag fashion, and can reach 30 miles per hour. They can also sit perfectly still for long periods to avoid being detected by a predator.

Both the jackrabbit and the California brush rabbit tend to be solitary and do not form large warrens or colonies, although you may see several together in one location during the breeding season. The females are called a doe or a jill and the males are called a jack or buck. Young brush rabbits are called a bunny, kit, kitten, leveret, or nestling. In Canada a group of rabbits or hares is often called a fluffle.

Domesticated rabbits descend from European rabbits that were first domesticated in ancient Rome. Our rabbits in the hills are just for admiring from a distance.

Taylor Vanderlip is an environmental consultant specializing in biological issues.

Choosing SAFE Building Materials *for* People & Planet

Formaldehyde, an amazing substance that can keep a science specimens in existential limbo, is also an additive in composite wood products, glues and adhesives, fabrics and insulation. Formaldehyde vapor is a more common concern for household exposure than its liquid form, and can cause eye, nose and throat irritation, headaches, nausea, and damage to the kidneys, liver and central nervous system. The NIH, CDC and FDA list formaldehyde as a known human carcinogen.

You breathe what you build. While formaldehyde is a naturally occurring substance, your kitchen cabinets or particle board bookcase likely contain added formaldehyde in the resin binders that hold them together. Formaldehyde is one of many volatile organic compounds. VOCs are what give paint its distinctive odor and form the precursor to smog. They are the primary contributor to poor indoor air quality, which, according to the EPA, is five times more polluted than outdoor air. The average American spends 90% of their time indoors, so the impact of these chemicals is significant.

There is good news. The California Air Resources Board has set standards applying to products sold nationwide. Building materials carrying a CARB ULEF (ultra low emitting formaldehyde) or NAF (no added formaldehyde) label adhere to formaldehyde levels within safety limits. Greenguard broadly addresses VOC emissions, while Greenguard Gold products are tested for a greater number of VOCs and meet California's Department of Public Health's indoor air quality criteria. The building industry has been proactive in developing healthier alternatives to products that conventionally contain toxic chemicals. See highlight box on right for details.

Rachelle Padgett is owner of Synthesis Interiors & Color and, along with Katie Bachner, co-founder of The Green Materialist, offer eco-friendly interior design and healthy home consulting. Photo by Scott McGlashan.

The kitchen pictured above uses cherry cabinets with NAUF (no added urea formaldehyde) plywood casework and low VOC finishes bring natural warmth inside. Choosing locally made, reclaimed wood furnishings cuts down fewer trees and supports small artisans. Energy-efficient LED recessed and pendant lighting have been used to provide sufficient illumination. Dual paned windows add natural light and increase energy efficiency.

CHOOSING SAFER BUILDING MATERIALS

Wet Applied Products (paints, stains, sealers, adhesives)

- Avoid products marketed as antimicrobial
- Look for zero or low VOC labels, natural clay plasters and oil finishes

Engineered Wood (cabinets, flooring, furniture)

- Avoid imported particleboard
- Lool for used or vintage, CARB ULEF/NAF compliant wood

Upholstery (mattresses, sofas, chairs)

- Avoid polyurethane foam and halogenated flame retardants
- Look for products made prior to 1970s or after 2014 with TB117-2013 label

RESOURCES

www.ewg.org/healthyhomeguide
www.ecohomeimprovement.com
www.afmsafecoat.com
www.colorhousepaint.com
www.romabio.com
www.thenaturalmattressstore.com

When BREATHING Doesn't Come Naturally

UNDERSTANDING LUNG CONDITIONS

Breathing is essential to life. Every cell in the body needs oxygen to live and carry out their normal functions. It is not until there is a problem with their breathing that people notice the important role their lungs and respiratory system have in keeping their bodies strong and healthy. The respiratory system is a group of organs and tissues that work together to breathe in oxygen while breathing out carbon dioxide. The upper respiratory tract is made up of the nose, nasal cavity, sinuses, larynx and trachea. The lower respiratory tract is made up of the lungs, bronchi and bronchioles (airways), and alveoli (air sacs).

The lungs are a pair of cone-shaped organs made up of spongy, pinkish-gray tissue. They take up most of the space in the chest. The lungs fully mature between the ages of 20-25 and can hold about six liters of air. After about the age of 35, it is normal for lung function to decline gradually with age which can make breathing slightly more difficult as one gets older. Staying active, avoiding tobacco smoke and other air pollutants, eating a balanced diet, and getting regular check-ups are just a few ways to protect the lungs and breathe easier at any age.

A persistent cough, a silent wheeze, shortness of breath, and frequent respiratory infections are mild and subtle symptoms to be aware of. It is important to pay attention to these symptoms as they could be the first signs of a more serious lung condition, including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) or lung cancer. Knowing the early warning signs of lung disease can lead to early detection and more treatment options before the condition becomes advanced or life threatening.

Sudden difficulties in breathing or shortness of breath should be discussed with a doctor right away.

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) is a term that describes lung diseases such as asthma, chronic bronchitis, and emphysema that cause swelling in the airways. The swelling restricts airflow, damages the airways and limits lung capacity, which makes it difficult to breathe.

With asthma, the airways become inflamed and the muscles around the airways tighten making it difficult for air to pass through the lungs. Asthma sufferers often have strong reactions to allergens and irritants — including dust, smoke, chemicals and pet dander — making breathing even more difficult. Severe asthma, which only affects a small number of asthma sufferers, can make even the simplest daily activities difficult and prevent a good night's sleep. Fast-acting medication or longer lasting medication can be used to relieve asthma symptoms. For severe asthma, bronchial thermoplasty, a minimally-invasive procedure that gently heats small sections of the airway to reduce the excessive smooth muscle, may offer relief.

Chronic bronchitis is long-term inflammation of the airways, or bronchi. The inflammation causes the linings to produce too much mucus, which builds up and leads to coughing and difficulty breathing. This disease is common among smokers.

With emphysema, the walls between the air sacs in the lungs disintegrate. This leaves fewer, larger sacs with less surface area to exchange oxygen and carbon dioxide leaving people with emphysema short of breath. The disease develops very slowly over time. Depending on the severity of the disease, several treatment options are available including pulmonary rehabilitation, medications, oxygen therapy from portable containers and surgery to remove the damaged area of the lung. Recently, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved bronchoscopic lung volume reduction as the first minimally invasive procedure to help emphysema sufferers breathe easier without major surgery.

While there is no cure for COPD, steps can be taken to keep symptoms under control and slow the disease's progression. Treatment options for COPD have advanced significantly over the past 15 years. The Taft Center for Clinical Research at El Camino Health has been involved in clinical trials that have led to FDA approval of leading-edge devices and minimally-invasive procedures to diagnose and treat lung conditions. The Center is currently investigating new treatment options for emphysema and other lung diseases.

Whether it's a mild respiratory condition or a chronic condition that impacts your lung health, having a dedicated lung care team can have a major impact on health and well-being. A lung specialist can assess lung health and suggest treatments based on the specific condition. For information about lung care at El Camino Health, visit www.elcaminohealth.org/lung or call 650-962-5813.

TOWN OF LOS ALTOS HILLS
26379 Fremont Road
Los Altos Hills, CA 94022

Presorted Standard
U.S. Postage
Paid
Los Altos, CA
Permit No. 306

Town Newsletter Statement of Purpose
This is the official town newsletter to communicate current issues, services, and activities in Los Altos Hills to the residents of the town — to facilitate, encourage, and improve interaction between the residents and the town government. The newsletter is published quarterly. **Deadline for the next issue is July 8, 2019.**

Printed with soy-based inks. International Paper, the manufacturer of the paper, has earned Sustainable Forestry Initiative and Forestry Stewardship Council dual certification.

www.losaltoshills.ca.gov

Our Town
Our Town is published with assistance from the City Clerk, Deborah Padovan, and Town Volunteer Committees.

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Los Altos Hills City Council
Roger Spreen, Mayor
Michelle Wu, Vice Mayor
Courtenay Corrigan
Kavita Tankha
George Tyson

City Manager
Carl Cahill

CALENDAR

June

2
Sun., 12:30 – 4:00 pm
Town Picnic
Held at Purissima Park.

5
Wed., 9:30 - 10:30 am
Monthly Walk
Held at Purissima Park. Begins with exercise on fitness equipment, followed by a 2-mile hike.

21
Fri., 11:00 am - Noon
Recyclables Processing Tour
Tour GreenWaste Recovery's material recovery facilities in San Jose. To register, call 650-947-2518.

July

4
Thu., 9:30 – 11:00 am
4th of July Parade
A great way to kick off the holiday by bringing out your best red, white and blue. decorations. March from Town Hall to Gardner Bullis for a tasty watermelon treat.

7.30-8.3
Mon - Fri, 9:00 - Noon
Ohlone Camp
This signature Los Altos Hills camp has been reimagined this Summer, led by Parks and Recreation Department and volunteers. For more information contact 650-947-2506.

Aug

9-10
Fri., 5:30 pm
Family Campout
Join the 3rd Campout at Purissima Park. Camping can be in-tents but why not try it in your own neighborhood. Your ticket includes dinner, pancake breakfast, s'mores, and outdoor movie. $25 per person with 2 and under free register at losaltoshills.ca.gov.

17
Sat., 1:00-3:00 pm
Los Altos Hills vs. Los Altos Softball Game
Cheer on your town as we play the city in a softball game at Rosita Park!

Sept

7
Sat., 3:00-7:00 pm
Hoedown
Featuring barn dance, good old-fashioned fun, food trucks, and music at Westwind Barn. Free event with food to be purchased.

Calendar events are also posted on town's website: www.losaltoshills.ca.gov

Design + Production: Alexander Atkins Design, Inc.