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CRESTVIEW NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

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SEPTEMBER 2021

No, The Texas Power Grid is Not Fixed

by Paul Robbins

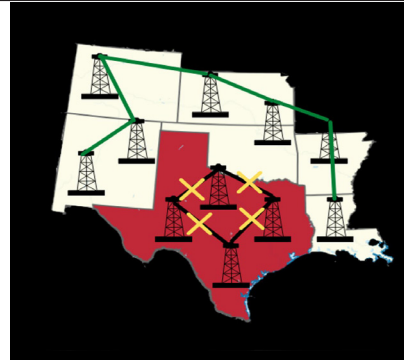
(Paul Robbins is an Austin-based environmental activist and consumer advocate who has worked on energy issues for over four decades. This opinion piece first appeared in the Austin American Statesman, August 7, 2021.)

Governor Greg Abbott signed two laws on June 2 to fortify the Texas power system. He proclaimed then that “everything that needed to be done was done to fix the power grid in Texas.” On what planet?

In the land of laws and sausage (two things you never want to see made), the Legislature was tasked to find solutions to the Texas-size electric system collapse that occurred in February. Lawmakers passed some measures but left too much unfinished for anyone to feel comfortable.

Power Plant Resilience: The largest reason for grid failure was that many power plants were not properly weatherized to withstand severe low temperatures. One of the laws Abbott signed now requires this, but there is no official date for when the weatherization must be done. The rules implementing these weatherization requirements will not even be finalized until November.

It will also take time and money — by one estimate, \$430 million — for weatherization to be completed. The Texas Competitive Power Advocates, which represents power



plant owners, is currently haggling with the Public Utility Commission over who should pay for the weatherization, consumers or power plant owners. The group has even stated some power plants may not stay online unless they receive consumer funding.

The only upside is that it is unlikely that a winter storm of the magnitude that occurred in February will reoccur again next year. But if a similar disaster strikes, there is no assurance that Texas will be ready.

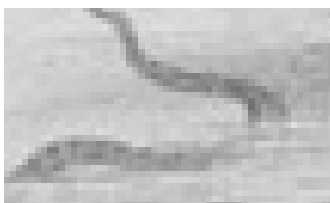
Apparently, many Austinites feel the same way. There has been a run on emergency natural gas generators. A public record search revealed that there have been permits for 164 such installations pulled in the first half of 2021, compared to 44 in all of 2020. Almost all of these permits were in wealthy areas of the city.

Building Efficiency: Another thing that Texas sorely needs to reform is its laggard programs for energy efficiency. A

See Grid, continued on page 5

COVID in the News

Because the SARS-CoV-2 (COVID) continues to evolve, the CDC has designated three levels of variants: variants of interest, which have the potential to be dangerous but haven’t caused much disruption yet; variants of concern, which are more contagious, evade some treatments, cause more severe disease or get past diagnostic tests; and variants of high consequence, which significantly evade the effects of vaccines or treatments.



“It’s a snake...” Criticizing the CDC and scientists for updating recommendations... Go to page 2

Currently, the most prevalent variant of COVID is Delta. It has been determined to be a variant of concern because it causes more infections and spreads faster than earlier forms of the virus that causes COVID. It might cause more severe illness than previous strains in unvaccinated people. While vaccines continue to be highly effective at preventing hospitalization and death

against Delta, there have been more breakthrough infections from this variant although infectious generally last for a shorter period and symptoms are less severe. Being vaccinated and wearing masks indoors in public spaces reduces the spread of this variant.

Presently, there are no variants designated with the level of high consequence. However, just as the Delta evolved from earlier forms, there is grave concern that even more detrimental forms of the virus could develop. Currently, the best intervention is to reduce the proliferation of cases by vaccinations and safe practices such as wearing masks, avoiding indoor public areas, steering clear of persons who might be infected in public areas or groups, social distancing and hand washing.

There is good reason to continue to follow the safe practices above if you are vaccinated or not. Although COVID can be spread from surface transmissions, particularly if one

See COVID, continued on page 2

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On the last day of the world,
I would want to plant a tree.
W. S. Merwin



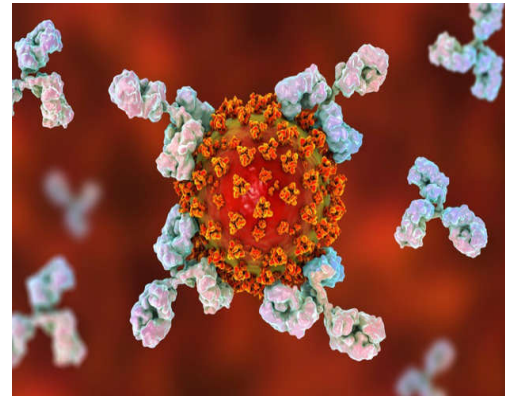
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COVID, continued from page 1

touches their eyes, nose or mouth afterwards, the most common transferal is through exposure to aerosol droplets that are projected from an infected person's nose or mouth when they breathe, talk, sing, cough or sneeze. This person may or may not be showing symptoms. While these droplets can travel farther, especially when propelled, they are most concentrated within the first 6 feet of the source. Smaller virus droplets can also live in the air for as long as 3 hours, putting individuals who are in enclosed spaces at a higher risk since inadequate ventilation or air handling can build-up in the air space. This is especially true if they are exposed more than 15 minutes or there is exercising, shouting or singing going on in the area. Although how we understand transmission occurs has shifted, the ways to prevent infection with this virus have not.



Some future COVID booster vaccines might not involve a needle. Delivering vaccines via a nasal spray is not a new idea as nasal influenza vaccines have been on the market since 2003. Of the approximately 100 COVID-19 vaccines currently undergoing clinical trials, seven are nasal sprays. COVID is a respiratory virus, which means its favorite place to enter the body is through the nose. That's why testing for the novel coronavirus involves nasal swabs. The idea is to defeat the coronavirus while it's still in the nose before it has the chance to invade the body further. One of the big selling points for nasal sprays would be that intranasal vaccines are needle-free, and that might be a big plus for people who are freaked out by getting a needle stick. Research is also ongoing to look into other non-needle vaccines including a pill form and skin patches. Another area of investigation is studying the potential for combining COVID booster shots with an annual flu shot.

Vaccination mandates: Drawing the lines on vaccine mandates can be tricky. Many healthcare systems require the flu shot for employees. We don't require flu vaccination for public school students, but we do require shots that guard against measles, mumps and rubella and a host of other diseases that threaten the health and lives of the community at large. Many states allow private businesses and employers to set rules for their customers, employees and anyone else who comes through their doors when it comes to public health issues. Likewise, many local governments have the option to set their own public health policies that protect the health and lives of its citizens. Should widespread vaccination and advances in treatment bring COVID-19 to the point where it is no more dangerous than the flu, the rules should be no more onerous than they are for that disease. Here's hoping that day isn't too far off.

Quotes from Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases about COVID: "It's a wily opponent...You're dealing with a microorganism, which in many respects from an evolutionary standpoint, has the capability to adapt itself to always survive... That's the reason why we're seeing the evolution of these variants. If it was a static situation, you would know exactly what it was right from the beginning, but it continues to evolve." "The thing that drives respiratory illnesses are fundamentally symptomatic people..." but the COVID virus is unique in that "50 to 60% of the people who will get infected, get infected from someone with no symptoms." This is important because it affects everything. You use "your experience, using your knowledge, but always, always keep an open mind that you're going to find out data they're going to have you change some of the things that may have been foundations of what you've done for years."



"Well, it is a pretty BIG snake..."

...when presented with new evidence...

Go to page 5

People with Disabilities Face Hiring Challenges

People with disabilities face an unemployment rate that is double that of the national average. In times of high unemployment, they're often the first to be let go and the last to be re-hired.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that a quarter of all adults in the US have a disability. These might be observable and obvious--such as paraplegia or blindness--or they might have non-observable disabilities, such as ADHD, PTSD, diabetes, or epilepsy. Additionally, many conditions come as a result of age or injury.

It's likely that many people reading this article have a disability or will acquire one over the years. Helping advance employment opportunities for people with disabilities is paramount for creating a more inclusive society and helps protect all of our jobs.

Local Nonprofit with a Vision

Peak Performers, an Austin based nonprofit, was founded in 1994, several years following the passage of the Americans



with Disabilities Act (ADA). At the time, the majority of jobs that were available for people with disabilities were sheltered workshop environments where those individuals would perform light industrial, janitorial, and assembly activities. These workers were often paid sub-minimum wages and might have required regular supervision from a job coach.

Peak Performers wanted to offer something different: professional opportunities for skilled people with disabilities. "I was inspired by my foster brother. He was blind but went on to become a very successful accountant," recalls Charlie Graham, founder and former CEO of Peak Performers. "Being blind did not stop him from becoming a Chief Financial Officer."

"Our vision is two-fold," adds Bree Sarlati, current CEO. "To change what it means to be a job seeker with a disability, and to challenge the preconceptions that make employers reluctant to hire someone with a disability."

Growth and Transformation

Unlike many other nonprofits, Peak is completely revenue-funded and does not apply for grants or solicit donations. Unlike other staffing firms, over 75% of their workforce has a qualifying disability.

Peak started off like most staffing companies do: supplying low-wage mailroom and clerical roles. Over the years, their customers began trusting Peak and requesting increasingly hard-to-fill roles: auditors, contract professionals, program specialists, and purchasers. In 2014, Peak began filling information technology roles to fill the demand of existing customers.

Then in 2020, while most recruiting agencies were shrinking, Peak saw it's temporary headcount swell to nearly double as the Texas government turned to its now longtime staffing partner for one of its largest challenges yet: the COVID-19 pandemic. Now, Peak has over 100 attorneys working for the Texas Workforce Commission.

Unique Business Sense

There are many advantages to hiring people with disabilities: reduced turnover, advancing diversity and inclusion initiatives, and the availability of an underutilized talent pool, especially during a time when employers need talent.

People looking for jobs and employers with staffing needs can find out more at peakperformers.org.

Life Saving Mnemonics

Mnemonic devices -- a set of letters or associations that help you remember things -- are certainly helpful. But did you know that sometimes, they could also save your life?

FAST for stroke symptoms:

- F -- face drooping (ask the person to smile to check)
- A -- arm weakness (to test, have them raise both arms)
- S -- speech difficulty (test by having them repeat a simple sentence)
- T -- time to call 911

ABC for serious bleeding:

- Alert: Notify help or have someone do it for you, if possible.
- Bleeding: Find the location of the bleeding wound.
- Compress: Apply pressure to stop the flow of blood using a tourniquet. If you don't have one, place bandages or a clean cloth on the wound and push directly on the wound with your hands.



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In Memoriam

(Editor's note: This article was excerpted from a NY Times obituary that can be found here: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/28/us/christopher-stone-dead.html>)

Christopher Stone, who proposed legal rights for trees, died at the age of 83 on May 14.

In 1972 Stone made what seemed a whimsical argument — that forests and rivers should have rights in the eyes of the law. His work galvanized a global movement to grant nature the legal status of personhood

Professor Stone, who was on the faculty of the University of Southern California law school from 1965 until his death, proposed his idea in a landmark article published in the Southern California Law Review, "Should Trees Have Standing?: Toward Legal Rights for Natural Objects." He defended the rights of nature by analogy. His article was expanded and published as a book in 1974.

In ancient Roman law, Professor Stone observed, children were less persons than objects under the absolute authority of fathers. Just as children acquired rights over time, so did women and minority groups. And not only humans: Corporations and nation-states gained legal protections, too.

"Until the rightless thing receives its rights, we cannot see it as anything but a thing for the use of 'us' — those who are holding rights at the time," he wrote. "Throughout legal history, each successive extension of rights to some new entity has been, therefore, a bit unthinkable."

Parts of the environment could gain legal representation using common methods, he said. If a man becomes senile and seems unable to manage his affairs, concerned parties intervene and seek the appointment of a guardian. Professor Stone suggested that groups like the Sierra Club could apply to serve as court-appointed guardians for mountains or streams that they perceive as endangered. Guardians would gain the power to sue on the environment's behalf.

Countries other than the US have responded even more ambitiously to Professor Stone's proposal. In 2016 and 2017, the government of New Zealand relinquished ownership of a national park, conferring on it "all the rights, powers, duties and liabilities of a legal person," and pronounced a river "an indivisible and living whole."

He was "not a tree hugger," his wife said, but when the couple had a second child and she wanted to build an addition to their house, he said they could not do anything that would harm a loquat tree on the property whose fruit he used to make jam.

What is known today as the "rights of nature" movement is led largely by Indigenous groups with ancient traditions involving conservation of the environment. Professor Stone's work helped make the connection between those traditions and modern law.

In 2010, before there was public discourse about the rights of nature in New Zealand, two Maori scholars, James Morris and Jacinta Ruru, wrote "Giving Voice to Rivers," a paper devoted to popularizing Professor Stone's ideas.

They wrote that the Maori view that "humans and water are intertwined" provided what Professor Stone had described in 1972 as a missing ingredient for acceptance of nature's rights. His paper focused on practical matters, such as how companies might pay damages to nature; but in his conclusion he called for a revolution in popular attitudes.

"What is needed," he wrote, is "a radical new theory or myth — felt as well as intellectualized — of man's relationships to the rest of nature." Humanity, he speculated, could be considered Earth's mind, "different from the rest of nature, but different as a man's brain is from his lungs."

Household Hacks

It's great that you recycle those used jars, plastic containers and tin cans with plastic lids. But how about using some of them to organize your shop or home. Fill containers with small loose items like screws, nails, washers, buttons, beads or any items small enough to fit. Glass jars are great because you can see what's inside and also for storing liquids. Label with write-on tape.

You can reuse plastic clamshell containers (like the ones berries come in) to make a miniature greenhouse for starting seeds before planting in your garden. Just punch a few holes in the lid, fill with potting soil and plant your seeds. Put in a sunny spot after you close the lid and the container will let in sunlight and hold in moisture to get those seedlings started. (Clamshell containers also make good seed broadcasters for small seeds like grass and wildflowers.)

To keep garden tools from rusting — next time you change the oil in your lawnmower, pour about a quart of it into a 5-gallon bucket filled with sand. Stick the metal parts into the sand and store them there, rust free and ready to use.

Folks have used old toothbrushes for years to clean. To get a good scrub with less elbow grease, buy a cheap electric toothbrush to clean with. The rapid vibration will get that stubborn dirt, and the long handle will make it easier to get to hard-to-reach places.

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Thieves Looking for Catalytic Converters

And what you can do to help prevent thefts

Austin police are reporting a significant increase in the number of thefts of catalytic converters. These car parts have precious metals — palladium and rhodium that sell for hundreds to thousands of dollars per ounce — that can be resold. While only 27 thefts were reported in Austin in 2019, 2020 saw that number rise to 584 thefts. The first half of 2021 has seen over 1400 reported thefts. Texas ranked fourth in the U.S. in the number of insurance claims made for catalytic converter thefts in 2020. This year, though, Texas is ranked second with \$2.6 million in claims as replacement parts cost anywhere from \$1000 – \$4000.



They are relatively easy to get to and steal, and it can be done in less than 10 minutes. The Toyota Prius, Honda Element, Ford Econoline, Chevrolet Express and Toyota Tundra were the five most common vehicles targeted in the thefts. Most of the thefts occur near the car owner’s home.

The following steps might help you from becoming a victim of this crime.

- Park in areas that are heavily trafficked and well lit when possible.
- If you have a garage, park inside and be mindful about closing the garage door.
- Weld the catalytic converter to the vehicle’s frame to make it more difficult to steal.
- Engrave the vehicle identification number (VIN) on the catalytic converter to make it easier to identify the owner.
- Calibrate your car alarm to sound if there is vibration detected.
- Use anti-theft protection, like a cable-locking device or a steel shield that runs along with the exhaust system on the bottom of a car.

People whose vehicles have been targeted for catalytic converters can report the incident to ireportaustin.com, or through Austin 311.

Grid, continued from page 1

friend of mine survived the winter storm in a newly-built, energy-efficient home without a fireplace. Despite three days without heat, the temperature never went below 47 degrees. While uncomfortable, it was survivable, at least compared to Texans who had icicles on their ceilings.

A 2017 benchmark study by the Electric Power Research Institute estimated that in 2020, Texans would only achieve 11% of their total potential savings from energy efficiency, while 38 states and Washington, DC had higher rates of achievement.

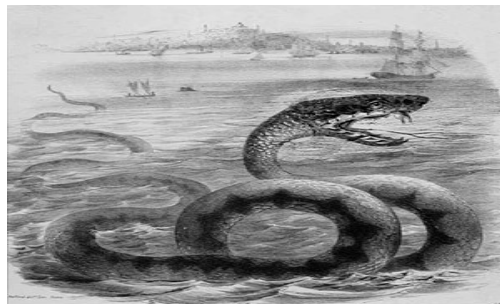
Sadly, building efficiency has become a partisan issue because it is advocated by people who want to lower carbon emissions. But I am having a hard time accepting that freezing to death is part of the Republican platform.

Maximum Charges: The Electric Reliability Council of Texas, which operates the state’s power grid, allows huge electric charges during periods of extreme demand in order to incentivize the building of costly new power plants. These charges can be as high as \$2 to \$9 per kilowatt-hour, compared to 2 cents to 3 cents per kilowatt-hour during average times.

Unfortunately, neither the Public Utility Commission nor the Legislature has eliminated or decoupled these extreme charges from emergencies such as disastrous weather events. If another severe winter storm were to happen next year, price gouging could happen again.

Repricing: The record-breaking cold spell last February is only surpassed by the record-breaking price gouging that occurred in the energy markets. Estimates of this pillage range widely, but easily approached \$16 billion and may be over \$46 billion. The Legislature could have ordered a repricing of the market for some or all of these costs, but ultimately did nothing.

Texans who froze last winter deserve more than sound bites to address one of the worst emergencies in the state’s history, and the record-shocking economic fallout that followed. Fixing these problems should be the main priority of the next specially called legislative session. *****



“No! It’s a sea monster!”

...would be as foolish as not changing our minds when we see the whole picture. COVID is a new monster and we are all learning new things about it every day.



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Howdy Neighbor!

By Mike Lavigne, CNA President

It pains me to report that we lost a great neighbor and friend a few weeks ago. Chris Lippincott was an Executive Committee member of the CNA, longtime Crestview resident and a very close friend of mine. His passing is a formidable loss.

Anyone who knew or interacted with Chris, whether socially or professionally, will tell you he had a quickfire wit and loving heart. You could confide in Lippy without fear of judgement and reliably he'd whip out a line (either copped from a country song, classic film, literature or from personal experience) to help you see the bigger picture. He was so sharp sometimes you wondered if he'd been waiting all day to use it...he wasn't. He was just that good. We shared similar lines of work and when we worked together he always made the experience one I could learn from.

Much of what has been written about him since his passing makes note of his ability to work across political lines, but it was more than that. Chris didn't objectify people, he listened to them. He had a knack for finding ways to connect rather than fight. Don't get me wrong, he was a talented political fighter and held strong, moral beliefs from which I never saw him stray. But he was a natural diplomat. A fading art in our business. He talked me out of all sorts of fights over the years, for which I'm ever grateful. I never left a time with Chris, whether over coffee or whiskey, that didn't leave me



better than I arrived.

He had been ill and in the hospital for a month or two before complications related to pneumonia took him from us. He is survived by his amazing and strong wife, Elizabeth and two young beautiful children whom he loved deeply. A GoFundMe has been set up in his memory to aid the family he leaves behind. If you are able to give, please do. He would if it were you. <https://gofund.me/23d7c0bf>

I'll miss you, friend. Hook'em.

Oktoberfest - September 19, 2021 2-5pm

There's no good transition to be had here.

Oktoberfest, as of this writing, is still a go. We will only have 500 cups this year, in an effort to make it a more manageable size given the COVID situation. It is completely outdoors and we will encourage social distancing between those not in your pods, masks when getting your beers and plenty of hand sanitizer. We don't have the infrastructure to enforce a vaccine requirement, but please, be a good neighbor and get vaccinated.

The Austin Valkyries Women's Rugby Club will be our special guest servers this year! Cups for free beer are \$15 and go on sale two weeks before the event and will be available at the Violet Crown Clubhouse, Fresh Plus at Crestview Center, and the Crestview Barber Shop, all of whom are sponsors of this year's event.

We'll have a petting zoo, polka band and plenty of beer. Proceeds benefit The G.I.F.T. 501c3 and will help us give the neighborhood what is turning into a pretty great community center, sustainable garden, kitchen and concert hall.

There may still be a slot or two left if you want to enter your block or group to host a keg. It is shaping up to be a pretty cool new addition this year and we've lined up some good prizes. Email violetcrownclubhouse@gmail.com if interested.

Y'all take care of each other, and I'll see you 'round the hood.


Thank you, Crestview!



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More Trees Please!

by Marilyn Querejazu

News about the environment is rarely good these days. We find ourselves wondering: “Well, what can I do about that problem (...little ole me...?)”. We can plant trees, that’s what – and this is the time of year to do it. Planting now will give your new trees time to grow before the next hot, hot, hot Texas summer. No matter what your political leanings are – red, blue or periwinkle – anyone with lungs can agree that trees are essential to urban life. This is about common sense, comfort and the long-term value of our neighborhood.

There are many resources to help you choose trees and care for them. See: Treefolks.org, arborday.org, tngaustin.com. Also see the 10 majestic trees in Austin:

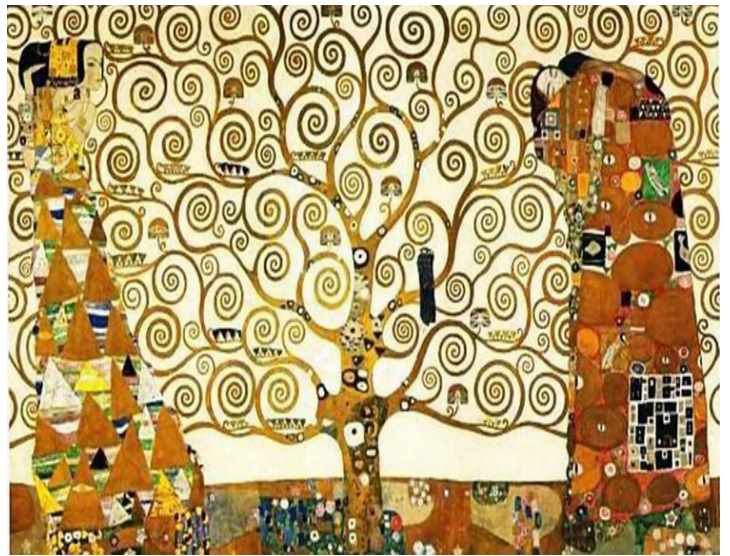
austin.com/10-majestic-austin-trees-that-will-inspire-you/. If you don’t have your own space to plant a tree, look around. There are plenty of bare spots in Crestview. Be sure to get permission beforehand and water the tree after you plant it. If you think you can’t squeeze another tree onto your property, think again.

Miyawaki forest

Miyawaki forests are tiny, dense forests conceived by botanist Akira Miyawaki. Often sited on roadsides and schoolyards, Miyawaki forests can be as small as a tennis court. They are said to be faster growing and more diverse than conventionally planted areas. A wide variety of native species – ideally 30 or more – are planted close together to recreate the layers of a natural forest. Let’s imagine ways to use this great idea right here in Crestview.

Get Tree-ative

Trees have inspired artists and writers for ages. They create atmosphere, symbolize life, and embody a wealth of shapes and textures. Trees calm us and open our minds. We see possibility up there in those swaying branches.



Tree of Life by Gustav Klimt, 1905

Look around the neighborhood. Is there a giant oak, a graceful sycamore, or an umbrella shaped pecan tree that inspires you? We would love to publish your poem, haiku, essay or short story (up to 300 words) about that tree in the newsletter (as space allows) or post it on the CNA bulletin board at the Crestview Shopping Center. Photos can be submitted, with or without accompanying literary works, and will also be reproduced in the newsletter or posted to the bulletin board. Please send your work to austinchip@hotmail.com.

For photographers, visual artists and art fans, trees have long provided a muse. Here is an interesting essay about arboreal art with wonderful images by Anita Sethi. artuk.org/discover/stories/in-praise-of-trees-a-look-at-arboreal-art#



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