

Family and Community Health

“Connections”

in Tom Green County



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Oak Trees Still Recovering from Winter Storm

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Driving across Texas has been an interesting occupation for foresters and arborists these past few weeks. Many trees appear as healthy and vibrant as they have ever been, but littered in among the growing green are an equal – and seemingly arbitrary – population of barren oak trees.

This bizarre phenomenon has intrigued professionals across the state – especially since oak trees, and particularly live oak trees, are known to be an incredibly resilient species. Now, months after Winter Storm Uri swept across Texas in mid-February, many of the oaks still aren't leafing out. Standing in contrast to their vibrant and vivacious brethren, they look dead. Courtney Blevins has spent almost 40 years with Texas A&M Forest Service, and he can't recall any past freeze leaving so many oaks looking bare this late into the spring. "I've been telling people my whole career that the single toughest species we have up here is live oak," said Blevins, a forester out of Fort Worth. "And yet, it's the live oaks that seem to be most stressed from this freeze. I'm shocked by that."



Blevins isn't the only one. Neil Sperry, a Texas gardening and horticulture expert known across the state, has been stunned by the variability, and the scope, of damage left in the wake of that freeze. "I have been in this business professionally since 1970, and I've never seen anything like this," Sperry said. "We think of oaks as permanent as concrete and steel, and for them to selectively be affected by this freeze is particularly odd."

What experts are saying

Blevins and Sperry have spent the past few months responding to residents and landowners who are concerned about the health and condition of their trees. Sperry decided to pull together a blue-ribbon panel of certified arborists, foresters, horticulturists, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service specialists, nursery leaders and garden communicators to send out a unified message. Their advice to landowners who are wondering what they should do, and whether they should cut down their valuable trees, is a simple one: *just wait*.

"If your tree is dead, there's no rush to take it down," said Blevins. "That's one big mistake people are making. They're in a big hurry to take that thing down, thinking it's dangerous to leave a dead tree standing, and it's not."

Trees can stand firm for years after they have died. And while nobody wants a dead tree in their yard for long, landowners who are eager to replace their dead or dormant trees should note that spring isn't the best time of year to plant trees in Texas, anyway. Instead, Texans should plant trees in the fall or early winter, when the roots are able to grow and further establish the tree. But Blevins and Sperry are more concerned about landowners cutting down trees that could have recovered if just given the time. "I think most of the oaks are going to come through okay," Blevins said. "If your tree is leafing out really late, it's obviously stressed. But most trees die from a combination of stressors, not just one thing."

Optimize your workout

When it comes to exercise, timing is everything — but not in the way we normally think about timing. What matters most is making the time to exercise regularly, not when it happens. That said, your personal experience and specific goals may influence what workout schedule works best for you.

"If you're just starting a physical activity routine, any time that you feel motivated and energized enough to exercise is the best time for you," says Dr. Beth Frates, clinical assistant professor of physical medicine and rehabilitation at Harvard Medical School. For some people, that's in the morning; for others, the afternoon works better. But if you can work out with a friend, choose a time that works best for both of you, she suggests. Teaming up with an exercise buddy is more enjoyable, and you can hold each other accountable.

The morning advantage

Exercising early in the day may have other advantages for reluctant or less-enthusiastic exercisers. If you wait until later in the day, it weighs on you all day long and you're more likely to come up with excuses for not exercising, says Dr. Frates.

There's evidence that exercising the first thing in the morning (before breakfast) helps people burn more stored body fat. But does that actually help people lose more weight? The jury's still out on that question, says Dr. Frates. If you're trying to shed pounds, experiment on yourself. Exercise before breakfast for four weeks, then after breakfast for the next four weeks. See how you feel and whether one timing strategy helps you lose more weight than the other.



Another potential benefit for early-bird exercisers is taking advantage of the "feel good" brain chemicals, dopamine and serotonin, that are released during physical activity. "That sets you up for success throughout the whole day and may increase your concentration and creativity," says Dr. Frates. Some research also suggests that people who exercise in the morning are more careful with their food choices throughout the day.

The argument for afternoon

But for other people, an afternoon workout has certain advantages. If you're not a morning person, you'll probably prefer exercising later in the day. Plus, your joints and muscles will probably feel more limber in the afternoon than in the morning. Also, people often experience a midafternoon lull around 3 p.m. "Instead of having a snack or a cup of coffee, use exercise as a way to re-energize yourself," Dr. Frates suggests. And if you're trying to lose or maintain your weight, try doing a short burst of exercise as a distraction when you're craving a treat, no matter what time of day that happens.

Food, drink, and sleep

It's best to wait at least three hours after a large meal before exercising. But if you have just a small meal or snack, waiting an hour is fine. However, highly trained athletes who want to boost their performance often like to have a small, carbohydrate-rich snack — such as a banana or a slice of whole-grain toast — shortly before their workout. Carbohydrates provide quick fuel for short, high-intensity exercise, Dr. Frates explains.

Exercise — particularly morning exercise — can be challenging if you're dehydrated, which can happen when you're not drinking enough water throughout the day on a routine basis. In fact, if you're dehydrated and not well fed from the previous day (or days) and you exercise before breakfast, you probably won't have enough energy for an enjoyable, effective workout. You might even become dizzy, which could be dangerous, warns Dr. Frates. Don't assume that simply drinking a big glass of water right before you exercise will do the trick; drinking fluids throughout the day is important.

Getting at least seven hours of sleep each night benefits your health in many ways, and exercise can help. People who exercise regularly tend to fall asleep more quickly at bedtime (spend less time falling asleep) as well as spend less time lying awake in bed during the night. If you've had a poor night's sleep for any reason, you might feel too tired to exercise. If that's the case, try taking a nap (ideally before 3 p.m. and for only 20 to 30 minutes) and exercise afterward, says Dr. Frates.

Shorter versus longer stints

Finally, novice exercisers may find it easier to break their exercise into shorter chunks of time. "Even five minutes at a time counts toward your goal of 150 minutes per week," says Dr. Frates. Build up your endurance gradually. Once you're able to exercise for 30 minutes at a time, you can ramp up your speed and intensity — which boosts your calorie burn and cardiovascular health.

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/heart-health/optimize-your-exercise-routine>

Do post-lunch naps pump up memory and thinking skills?

A little afternoon snooze can help you feel more rested — and it might do you good in other ways, too.

A small study from China published online Jan. 25, 2021, by *General Psychiatry* suggests that afternoon naps (between five minutes and two hours long) may be good for your memory and thinking skills. Researchers put more than 2,200 older adults through a series of health screenings that included blood tests and cognitive assessments, and also asked participants whether and how often they napped. About 1,500



of the participants were nappers. Compared with people who didn't nap, the nappers performed better on cognitive tests, scoring better on location awareness, verbal fluency, and memory. The study was observational, so it can't prove that napping caused the better cognitive test results. Previous studies have shown that afternoon nap benefits decline as age and nap duration increase. Short, frequent naps (less than 30 minutes, four times per week) have been associated with reduced risks for developing Alzheimer's disease. In contrast, people who take long naps (two hours or longer) appear to have worse cognitive function, although it is unclear what is cause and what is effect

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/mind-and-mood/do-post-lunch-naps-pump-up-memory-and-thinking-skills>

Tom Green EEA News

TEEA State Conference
Temple, Texas
September 12-16, 2021
Fairfield Inn & Suites
Temple /Belton

\$91.00 a night

*Last day to book a room:
August 12, 2021*

**Family and Community Health
“Connections” is provided by
the following
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Spinach Salad with Berries, Kiwi and Goat Cheese

Generously serves 2 as a dinner salad, or 4 as a side salad

Dressing

1 tablespoon of honey
3 tablespoons of light oil (Almond, canola, etc.)
1 tablespoon of water
1 1/2 teaspoons of white balsamic vinegar
1 tablespoon of Dijon mustard
1/4 teaspoon of kosher salt

Salad

5 cups of lightly packed spinach, (or 5 good handfuls)
5-6 large strawberries, hulled and quartered
2 kiwis, peeled and sliced
1/3 cup of fresh blueberries
4 ounces of goat cheese, crumbled
1/4 cup of hazelnuts, toasted and chopped fine*



Directions

In a glass canning jar that can be fitted with a lid, add honey and microwave for 10-20 seconds so the honey will combine well with the remaining ingredients. Add remaining ingredients and shake well. Set aside, while preparing salad ingredients.

Lightly toss all but a handful of spinach with vinaigrette, and place in serving bowl. The dressing should only lightly cover the greens, so start slowly and more as needed to taste. Scatter remaining handful of spinach on top. Scatter the strawberries, blue berries and kiwis over salad. Top with crumbled goat cheese and toasted hazelnuts. Serve immediately, with crusty bread if desired.