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The eNewsletter of the Sustainable Building Coalition
P.O. Box 49381, Austin, TX 78765-9381 www.greenbuilder.com/sbc

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March 15

SBC Monthly Meeting at Casa de Luz: "Natural Building; Ancient Techniques, Modern Building" by local cob builder Kindra Welch

March 25

SBC Booth at the Sustainable Shoppers Ball (see p. 3)

February 15 Monthly Meeting: "SOLAR HOT WATER SYSTEMS" presented by Thomas Isaac

Our upcoming monthly meeting on Feb 15th will be presented by Thomas Isaac of TechSun Solar. Come learn the basics of how to use solar collectors to heat water for your home, etc. and your hot tub! Technology has advanced so that these systems are extremely cost effective and durable. Now even more so with the new 2006 & 2007 federal tax credits (but not on a hot tub! Darn!)

Thomas Isaac is the owner of Techsun Solar a solar water heating distributor and installer based in Austin, TX. He has over 10 years of experience along with solar water and photovoltaic certifications from the Florida Solar Energy Center. After many years of research, Thomas has designed a durable and easy to install system that is certified with United States' Solar Rating Certification Center. Techsun's never fully completed website with system animation and calculator can be seen at www.solarme.com.

SBC meets every 3rd Wednesday of the month at 7 pm at [Casa de Luz](#), 1701 Toomey Road in the Cielo Room. You are welcome to join us before the meeting at 6 pm for a wonderful macrobiotic meal at Casa de Luz.



Share Your Green Building Passion

If you were to **design the Sustainable Building Coalition's booth for festivals** and other educational events, what would you include? What natural building materials and systems would you display and how would you describe them? What graphic and text would you use to demonstrate various sustainable building techniques and strategies?

On **Wednesday, March 1, at 6:00 pm** we will have a special SBC Coordinators meeting to plan and work on our educational display for the various special events at which we have a presence (Renewable Energy Roundup and other "green" expos). We invite you to come and share your ideas, writing prowess or graphic talents. If you cannot make it to the meeting, we could use your creative help in making an educational display on your favorite natural building material or system (like flooring options, cob, plaster, straw bale, rainwater harvesting, natural ventilation, earthen floors, etc.). If you would like to join us at the meeting or create a poster on your own, contact Gayle for more information: gayle@stewardshiparchitecture.com or 478-9033.

Materials: Limestone by Megan Clark

You can bet that most local, natural materials are more ecologically friendly than their manufactured counterparts because they use less energy for transportation and they are derived directly from our ecosystem, having no toxic additives. But how versatile are they? Do they provide a broad aesthetic appeal? And how does this pertain to sustainability? Texas limestone is a great product to get us thinking about these questions. Limestone predates the State of Texas, as well as the creatures walking through its gullies, hills, and quarries by over 250 million years. (www.ucmp.berkeley.edu/) As a finite resource, an argument may be made that limestone cannot be harvested sustainably, but it is available from sources that generate usable stone as a by-product of their primary merchandise or activity, thereby preventing it from going to waste. It is also available from sources that may be a little less obvious to the average consumer. We will explore different types of local limestone, as well as its various uses, cuts, finishes and sources.

Limestone is a sedimentary rock, comprised namely of calcium carbonate or calcite, that forms as a result of the geological compression of shells, bones and other marine organism remains. (<http://wordnet.princeton.edu>) Common impurities in the rock include chert, clay and dolomite, which may cause striated patterns as well as further changes in color and texture. It is also fairly common to find fossils; especially in the Texas variety we call Rattlesnake limestone, named for snail fossils embedded in the stone that resemble the tip of a rattlesnake's tail. Rattlesnake limestone is known for having great depth of color, ranging from light browns to dusty reds. (www.texrocks.com) Another Texas variety, Lueders limestone, is quarried from Lueders Basin, located mid-way between Dallas and Lubbock, TX, and though best known for its fine grain and consistent light coloring, it also yields stone with color transitions in shades of cream and

golden brown. (www.luederslimestone.com) Permian Sea Coral, Texas Pink and Desert Sunset varieties extend the available color palette into deep reds flecked with brown, rosy pinks and even oranges. (www.texastone.com)

Heavy limestone construction shaped many early Texas towns, providing an architectural vernacular that relied upon available local resources. These buildings are a testament to the validity of the material as a major structural component. Limestone's compressive strength ranges between 3300 psi and 5500 psi when wet, and between 3900 psi and 7700 psi when dry.

(www.americanlimestone.com) Concrete can be mixed to achieve compressive strengths in excess of 10,000 psi for special applications, but standards for residential construction call for a minimum of 4,000 psi, making limestone structurally competitive. (www.nrmca.org) The trend toward using steel and other materials in place of stone supports has less to do with the material's relative performance than it does with the ever-growing scale of design and the continual advancement of technology.

Contemporary uses for limestone include building facades, landscaping, countertops, gravel pathways, fireplaces, and flooring, both indoor and out. Those applications requiring rougher stones, particularly informal landscaping and lined pathways, can use limestone purchased from quarries and mills, but road-improvement sites, stone 'graveyards' and the side of your local highway are equally viable sources for those who are willing to forage. Applications requiring more finished stone should use professionally milled limestone that can be cut and finished in a number of ways. Rough blocks can be chopped or guillotined into a desired shape, but countertops and floor tiles necessitate the use of a saw to achieve a uniform surface. The surface texture is determined by the material of the saw - diamond, sand, chat or shot -

and ranges from smooth to coarse. (www.selectstone.com) A countertop or floor may then be polished, and does not require a sealant provided that it will not come into contact with moisture or food. If, however, the surface is in the kitchen, bath or laundry area, a waterproof sealant is critical to preserving the physical and aesthetic integrity of the limestone. My search revealed several no-VOC sealants specifically manufactured for stone: Universal Stone Sealer from Hydrosield; Super Seal Clear Water Repellent Sealer from Hy-Tech Thermal Solutions; Bird-X Stone Sealer; and Safecoat MexeSeal Premium Stone, Tile, & Concrete Sealer from AFM, available at Austin's own Environmental Depot (www.environmentaldepot.com) and Ecowise (www.ecowise.com).

There are several limestone quarries within 60 miles of Austin proper, some of which also provide milling services. Texas Quarries (512-258-1474), Continental Cut Stone (254-793-2358), TexaStone (432-354-2569), and Leander Cut Stone (512-778-5064) all do double-duty, while A.J. Brauer Stone Co. (512-746-5792) is strictly a quarry, and Texas Cut Stone (512-778-5232) only performs milling.

So I've given you some background on the aesthetic value of limestone, the basics on finishing, and some local resources, but it still sounds like a sales pitch. Consider this, limestone buildings are not preserved wholly by their natural materiality and structural soundness, they elicit a more profound response from their human audience that, in turn, impedes demolition efforts. Our designs and buildings should therefore seek to elicit that same response from this community, in order that they might also be sustained.

Please email me with suggestions, comments, or questions @ meganann@mail.utexas.edu.

Local Events

THE SUSTAINABLE SHOPPER'S BALL

Austin Sustainable Living Foundation

Saturday, March 25, 2006, 9:30AM - 3:00PM

Toney Burger Center, 3200 Jones Road, between Brodie Lane & West Gate Boulevard.

Go, Shop, Eat, Think! Part green living fair, part family outing, and part rock concert, join us as we come together with over 40 of Austin's best eco-vendors and non-profits to present the world's first "Eco-Mercado," explore intelligent solutions to Austin's Energy future, and have fun. The Sustainable Shopper's Ball is an outdoor market event, intended to promote ecologically intelligent lifestyle choices in the Austin area.

Hosted by the **Sunset Valley Farmer's Market**, voted one of the top ten FM's in the US by Audubon Magazine, 2006 The Sustainable Shopper's Ball is **FREE** & open to everyone.

Music: A special solar-powered concert by the inimitable David Garza begins at 2:00 PM.

Mercado: Our Green Living Market will feature dynamic speakers, an exciting play area for children of all ages, Green Art created especially for the event, free massage, smart shopping, tasty organic food, and other special events throughout the day. Good for you and the earth!

Questions? More info? Contact Chris Searles or Sam Webber at 934-1387 or visit www.sustain-a-ball.org.

Volunteer for the Sustainable Building Coalition Booth! Hang out with your SBC friends!

Contact Yvonne Hansen, the Clipboard Lady, <http://www.greenbuilder.com/sbc/contact>.

More Events

February 23 & March 30, 8:00 p.m. **Green Gates Concert Series** at the Paggi House, 200 Lee Barton Dr. by **Austin Green Art**/Randy Jewart 512-743-4245 or www.austingreenart.org. 100 gates made of natural materials, to be installed on Earth Day. Artists, volunteers, visionaries needed. Visit www.austingreenart.org for more events and volunteer opportunities leading up to this major public art event.

February 28, 7:00-8:30 p.m. **Basics of Rainwater Harvesting** by Dick Peterson of Austin Green Bldg Program.

March 7, 7:00-8:30 p.m. **Home Solar Energy Rebate Program** by Leslie Libby from Austin Energy Dept.

Both these FREE talks will be at Maplewood Elementary School cafeteria, 3808 Maplewood Ave, Austin. Presented by the City of Austin in cooperation with the 21st Century Grant Community Learning Center.

March 25-26. R.U.S.T. **Radical Urban Sustainability Training**. Presented by The Rhizome Collective. An intensive seminar in urban ecological survival skills: For a list of topics and hands-on demos, see the January 2006 SBC News or visit the web site: www.rhizomecollective.org/rust.html, 512 294 9580 or events@rhizomecollective.org

April 15th **Austin Nature Day**. Austin Nature Day, patterned after the highly successful Austin Museum Day, is a new annual event in Austin designed to celebrate the beauty, vitality, and diversity of natural resources that contribute to our high quality of life. Whether one wants to recreate, relax or learn about our environment, over twenty organizations at over fifteen locations in the Greater Austin area have created unique programs and events to make it happen.

www.austinnatureday.org

April 22 **Earth Day! 100 Green Gates** installed around Austin.

May 21, 2006, noon-6:00 pm, **Austin Cool House Tour**. Presented by Austin Solar Energy Society. Talk to the owners, architects, builders and installers. Purchase the Guidebook after May 1, for \$10 per person. Homes range from affordable to high-end custom and feature. All proceeds benefit the Texas Solar Energy Society.

For details, call 512-326-3391, email:info@txses.org, web <http://txses.org/>

For other events, local, national, and international, check the postings on the calendar at www.greenbuilder.com, or even post your own event.



Rain Barrel Sale

The next City of Austin rain barrel sale is coming up Saturday, February 11, from 9am to 12noon

<http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/watercon/>.



Local Workshops

Free Sustainability Talks

Coinciding with the week-end Permaculture Design Certificate classes conducted by Dick Pierce and Selwyn Polit (see the January 2006 SBC News for details), free talks and videos open to the public will take place at Habitat Suites Hotel, 500 Highland Mall Drive. **Each Thursday** topics related to sustainable designs, systems, and living will be covered, **beginning at 7 PM, going to 9 PM**. There's a whole lot we can do, so let's start now!

- ♦ Feb. 16: The Next Industrial Revolution. Bill McDonough. Video. Far from greed and waste, see major companies profit from sustainable thinking.
- ♦ Feb. 23. Other Thoughts to Be In: Hints from Other Times, Cultures. Dick Pierce. What can other times, traditions, and cultures tell us about different ways to be?
- ♦ Mar. 2. Food for Thought: Local, Smaller, Organic Agriculture. Videos. A collection of video excerpts: Polyface Farms, Organic Agric., French Gardener.
- ♦ Mar. 9. Local Food Production: Local Farms, Gardens, Markets. What is Austin doing to increase nutritious, safe, local food and small businesses?
- ♦ Mar. 16. Good Soil is Alive: The Soil Food Web. Video/Talk. See this amazing micro-video of the "soil critters" that allow our world to be and prosper.

- ♦ Mar. 23. Restoring Soil, Managing Water, Helping Nature. Talk. A Soil/Plant professional talks about how we can help Nature bring us abundance)
- ♦ Mar. 30. Eco-Villages & Intentional Communities. Slides/Video. Video of eco-villages in US & around world; slides of Earthaven Village in NC.
- ♦ Apr. 6. Community: Thoughts, Options for Your Community. Talk. Co-mmunity, Co-Housing, Co-operation, Co-operatives, Co-mingling.

Brought to you by TIPS, the
Texas Institute for Practical Sustainability
(dpierce@ail.org, Selwyn@austintx.com,
www.austinprogressivecalendar.com)
Sponsored by Habitat Suites - 500 Highland Blvd.
Austin's Only Permaculture Hotel

If you want to take a Permaculture class or join us for a project, please visit our web site at <http://www.austinprogressivecalendar.com/permaculture.htm> and our Wiki at www.wikihost.org/wikis/austinperm. (A wiki is a web site to which you can contribute.)

**The Road to Renewables '06,
Ethanol/Biodiesel Workshop &
Expo February 15 - 16, 2006**
Workshop Fee \$35.00 and includes lunch.
Hilton Austin Airport
9515 New Airport Drive, Austin.

Sponsored by SECO (Texas State Energy Conservation Office), this two day educational workshop and expo will introduce perspectives from ethanol and biodiesel producers, production technology providers, and government researchers. Attendees will explore the challenges and opportunities presented from various different perspectives such as analytical methods, production technology, applications for use and sharing information related to barriers to increased use of biodiesel and ethanol. Come join us for an informative and interesting workshop & expo and sharing of experiences on biodiesel and ethanol! To become a sponsor, see this sponsor/exhibitor package.

Registration begins on Feb 15th at 11:00am. A reception will take place on Feb. 15th, 5:30 to 7:30pm. For additional information refer to the Online Registration and Agenda at <http://tinyurl.com/7uw8a>.

Connect with the Earth

For those seeking peace and health for our Earth and themselves, **Nature Awareness Experience** offers many learning and volunteer activities to assist in this journey at the beautiful Red Corral near Wimberley. **SBC member Randall Watts** founded **Nature Awareness Experience (NAE)** in order to create a community of like-minded individuals that want to connect to and heal the Earth. **On Saturday, February 18th**, Randall will be offering three incredible learning experiences: "The Tipi Meditation", "A Morning in the Woods" and "The Caretaker Course". The fee for these events has been waived but donations will be accepted. For details of these events and other upcoming activities and to learn more about Nature Awareness Experience, go to www.natureaware.com and click on "Calendar". Call Randall at 695-0798 if you plan to attend any of the Saturday events. **☞ Volunteer Opportunities (a.k.a. Fun and learning in a beautiful forest) at NAE.** Learn how to use conscious decisions when interacting with the land and its resources – including our infamous Hill Country juniper (Yes, even our allergy-provoking "cedar" can be a resource!). Randall could use some volunteers to help with various tasks, such as making brush habitats, lashing of juniper to make a giant outdoor dining table and trimming junipers for campsites, meditation sites, outdoor shower facilities and the main camp grounds. He could use some people who have taken the Caretaker Class to help with the trimming, as it is done very selectively and with future uses in mind. Soon, sweat lodges will be constructed on the site, and this will be done in a ceremonial manner. Should be fun and a great experience. Upcoming volunteer days are Thursday, 2/16; Sunday, 2/19; Tuesday, 2/21; and Saturday, 2/25. As above, check out the website and call Randall for details.

Local Workshops, continued

Photovoltaic Design and Installation. Solar Energy International

March 20-25. Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. \$750 (by Feb. 20, 2006: \$675) Participants learn how to use PV (photovoltaic) technology to produce their own electricity from the sun through practical design and installation of PV systems. Participants learn system sizing, site analysis, hardware specification and component selection. The workshop covers typical applications and case study examples. Install an operational system in the field and learn the proper use of tools and safety precautions. Install an operational system in the field and learn the proper use of tools and safety precautions. For the beginner who wants to use PV or for those seeking employment in the solar industry. *This workshop is certified by the Institute of Sustainable Power and fulfills one of the requirements for national photovoltaic certification.* For information and registration: <http://www.solarenergy.org/workshops>.

Spring is Coming! Local Gardening Workshops

Basic Vegetable Gardening Class

This is a **free** class, bring your friends!!!

Date: **Saturday, February 11th, 2006**

Class in **Spanish: 10am – 12pm**

Class in **English: 2pm – 4pm**

Come learn how to grow your own fruits & vegetables. This class is great for beginners!

Where: **El Jardín Alegre Community Garden**, 1801 East 2nd Street

Let us know if you will be coming: 236-0074 ext 5, emily@sustainablefoodcenter.org

☞ We will teach you how to produce a lot from a small plot of land in your backyard or in a community garden.

☞ Learn how to get FREE VEGETABLE SEED mailed to you through the Spread the Harvest program.

☞ Community Garden plots are available!

Hosted by Sustainable Food Center www.sustainablefoodcenter.org



Free Upcoming Gardening Classes

From Travis County Extension Service

☞ February 15, 7:00 pm. Rose selection, planting & care. Southwest Rural Community Center; 8656 Hwy 71 W, Bldg A. (one mile west of the Y in Oak Hill)

☞ February 22, 7:00 pm. Oak Wilt – Identifying the disease and using precautionary measures. Westside Service Center; 4501 RR 620 N, (by Mansfield Dam)

☞ February 23, 7:00 pm. Rose selection, planting & care. Travis County Community Center, 15822 Foothills Farms Loop, Bldg D, Pflugerville

☞ February 23, 7:00 pm. Protect your property from Wildfires, practical, do it yourself ideas. Westside Service Center; 4501 RR 620 N, (by Mansfield Dam)

☞ February 25, 10:00 am. Vegetable Gardening; how & when & what to plant throughout the year. Southwest Rural Community Center; 8656 Hwy 71 W, Bldg A.

For more information, contact: Shannon Kloesel, Secretary Administrative, Texas Cooperative Extension, Travis County, 1600-B Smith Road, Austin, Texas 78721 (512) 854-9600 or (512) 854-9611 s-kloesel@tamu.edu



Green Corn: Organic Gardening Learning and Volunteering Opportunities

Want to learn more about organic gardening, help others grow their own food, meet new people, have fun? Join **Green Corn Project** this spring at one of our volunteer events or our workshop! We need folks to help build gardens for families and individuals in need on the weekends of March 4-5 and March 25-26 from 9am to 4pm. Or, if you would like to learn to grow more organic vegetables than you ever have before, join us at our Biointensive Gardening Skills Workshop on March 18 from 9am to 4pm at the **American Botanical Council**. Visit our website at www.greencornproject.org or call us at 249-3171 for more information on signing up! Green Corn Project is a 501(c)(3), Austin-based, all volunteer organization.

Workshops in Other Places

Light straw-clay events presented by Robert Laporte and/or Paula Baker-Lapaorte in **Santa Fe, NM**:
April 10 - June 30. EcoNest Apprenticeship Program
April 24-30. EcoNest Builder Training
April 27-30. EcoNest Hands-On Workshop
May 6-7. Seminar: Turning Your Dream into Reality
Contact: info@econest.com or www.econest.com/calendar.
Robert Laporte conducts straw/clay workshops of various durations, usually in New Mexico. Look here and see stunning homes from "tiny" to normal size. No nails. Robert uses Japanese-style joinery and you will learn how to do this, too.

The Last Straw Journal lists diverse natural building workshops in the **Northwest and Canada**. Go to www.thelaststraw.org for complete information.

The Lama Foundation, outside of **Taos, NM**, offers a week of a series of hands-on green building sessions including earth plasters; straw bale, cob and adobe; ecology and forest restoration, native medicinal plants, renewable energy and more. June 11–18.

www.thelamafoundation.com

Barefoot Builder. Just wanted to pass on some info from Christina Ott. They are holding several workshops in the panhandle of Florida and deep south Georgia. MUCH closer than Oregon for some of us :-)

<http://www.barefootbuilder.com>

<http://www.cobbithouse.org>

Submitted by Roze Pye.

News and Announcements

ANOTHER SUCCESS!

Our booth at The Austin Green Living & Home Products Expo on January 20-22 was enthusiastically welcomed, and a relief to many who visited! All this would not have been possible without the dedicated help of our members volunteering their time and energy to this worthwhile cause of spreading the "green word." Many thanks to the Friday morning "set-up booth people" Yvonne Hansen & Gayle Borst. And then all the ones that helped staff it: Yvonne & Gayle again, Kindra Welch, Shanda Sansing, Dan VanTreeck, Sueki Woodward, Bobby Zirkel, Chris Maxwell-Gaines, Megan Clark, Claire Loe and myself, Frieda Rinehart. It was great networking and fun with each and everyone taking on a little share of the load that having a weekend booth takes. Thank you, thank you, thank you!

...**And** a huge "Thank You!" from the strawbale homeowner who had the misfortune of a fire. At the January SBC Monthly Meeting, attendees graciously donated at total of \$140 to help him out.

New Recycling Option in Austin

Green Building Program member **Triad Construction & Demolition Recycling** is now accepting construction and demolition recyclables from the public. Triad is located east of Austin, near Long Lake, at 6807 F.M. 973. Call Adrian Neely at 512-385-1189 for the cost of various truck, trailer and roll off loads.

Among the recyclable items they accept are:

- Untreated, unpainted wood
- Unpainted gypsum wallboard (Sheetrock)
- Concrete
- Metal & wire
- Pallets
- Cardboard
- Plastic bottles

"Sustainable Cities" Report Gives 14 Steps for Community Renewable Energy.

A new report reviewing the renewable energy practices and programs of four U.S. cities has identified 14 common features necessary for success. The report, "Sustainable Cities," was prepared for the Sierra Club by Ken Regelson and examines programs in **Austin, TX**, Chicago, IL, Portland, OR, and Ft. Collins, CO. For comparison purposes, two cities were served by investor-owned utilities and two cities by their own municipal utility. The report determined that 14 key elements were necessary for implementing sustainability in energy in the four cities: leadership, a plan, funding, reduced energy costs, communications, training, inspections and measurements, efficiency rebate programs, renewable energy programs, green building, multi-family building programs, income qualified programs, new businesses and green roof programs. In addition to detailed examples for each of the four cities, the report contains links to more than 80 web sites with supporting information. (Rocky Mountain Chapter Sierra Club, 2005, <http://www.rmc.sierraclub.org/energy/library/sustainablecities.pdf>). Submitted by Thomas Vinson-Peng, Southwest Network for Zero Waste, www.zeroWasteNetwork.org, tvinson@mail.utexas.edu

SUSTAINABLE BUILDING COALITION

P.O. Box 49381 Austin, TX 78765-9381

Sustainable Building Coalition Coordinators Committee

Programs and site visits: Gayle Borst

Membership: Frieda Rinehart

Community Outreach: Yvonne Hansen

Website Development: Shirley Allaway

Treasurer & Book Sales: Frieda Rinehart

Nonprofit 501(c)(3) Committee: Ken McKenzie

Newsletter Columnists: Megan Clark and others

Newsletter Publication: Mina Loomis

All SBC Coordinators are volunteers. If you would like to contact anyone of us by email, visit the contact form on the Greenbuilder website at: <http://www.greenbuilder.com/sbc/contact>

SBC Membership and Renewals

Sustainable Building Coalition membership is open to builders, architects and anyone desiring to learn about and support sustainable building and development in all of its aspects. Dues are \$35 business member, \$25 paper newsletter member, and \$15 email newsletter members. Members receive the monthly newsletter and admission to all regularly scheduled SBC meetings and site visits. Find a membership application at www.greenbuilder.com/sbc/memberapp.pdf.

Mail applications, dues, and renewals to:

The Sustainable Building Coalition, P.O. Box 49381, Austin, TX 78765-9381

or bring to a SBC monthly meeting or event.

"The coalition exists to facilitate the organization and education of the building and design communities and the general public to foster: healthy and ecologically sound built environments - sustainable resource use - responsible and healthy businesses."

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