

Villages at Crockett's Ridge HOA

PO Box 37367 Raleigh, NC 27627

September 20, 2010: Neighborhood Reminders and New Contest

Speeding– The HOA continues to receive complaints about residents who are speeding in the neighborhood. Please slow down and remind all drivers in your household to do the same because this is very dangerous. The community streets are narrow and have numerous curves which make it unsafe to drive more than 15 to 20 miles per hour.

Annual Meeting– The Board of Directors has selected Wednesday November 10, 2010 for this year's annual meeting so please save the date. All home owners will receive a separate notice with specifics about the meeting in the month of October.

House Improvements– The next three pages contain advice about the maintenance of your yard and home. There is also an effort to encourage all of you to try a little harder so that the homes and the whole neighborhood look better for the benefit of all residents. However, please do not forget that you must have prior written approval from the HOA before you start on any home addition. This can be a quick and simple process if done correctly the first time. It begins by making sure to complete a change request form which is available on the website and/ or upon request from the community manager. A complete form should include a written description as well as a sketch of the proposed change and please make sure to include a plot plan which shows the proposed location of the improvement. Finally, please get the signatures of the immediate neighbors before sending in the application because this will demonstrate that they are aware of your proposed project. The application form includes the submission information and you will be contacted as soon as a decision is made.

Beautification Contests– In an effort to add more incentive for all residents to work on improving their yards and homes, the HOA is conducting a contest in two categories. The first category is for best maintained yard and home. This will be judged by appearance of the home and the care of the landscaping. This will generally include having a clean house exterior, all features in good repair, weed free lawn/ planting beds, proper pruning of shrubs/ trees, and attractive improvements. The second category is for most improved yard and home. This will be judged in the same way as the first category except that this category will be for homes that are not currently in good repair/ maintenance. Each category will have a first, second, and third place prize as follows: First- \$100, Second- \$50, and Third \$25. The winners will be selected on November 8 and then announced at the annual meeting on November 10. Please read the advice on the next few pages and contact the community manager if you have any questions.

Maintenance Advice

Dear Home Owners,

This has been a challenging summer for many yards and homes with respect to maintenance but we are reaching the time of year for restoration. Many of the homes have suffered from various problems which are accelerated by high heat and humidity. Yes, we expect this in North Carolina but we had a lot of late day rain combined with a higher than average number of days in the 90's. This is particularly evident in the number of lawns and planting beds with weeds along with lawn areas obviously stressed by heat and disease. Now that the temperatures are finally cooling, everyone should be making plans to restore their yards and complete other routine house work as described in this letter.

The following guideline reminders and recommendations are intended to help you achieve the best results with the most efficient effort. In addition, I hope that home owners with an interest, skill, and/or available equipment will consider reaching out to help their neighbors in need of assistance.

Lawns- All tall fescue lawns should be aerated with a core aerator and then over-seeded with a tall fescue blend. In preparation for this, all weeds should be removed from the lawn and/or killed with a controlled herbicide. The lawn should be cut shorter than normal just prior to aerating to improve core penetration and because you will have to wait a few weeks before you can mow again. Along with seeding the lawn you should apply a starter fertilizer to all lawn areas. Follow the application instructions on the seed bag as well as your fertilizer bag. You may pay for a contractor to provide these services and this should yield great results but if you plan to do this yourself it would be beneficial to work together with your neighbors. A core aerator is typically a piece of equipment that you would rent for a half or full day but only use for one or two hours. Three to five neighbors could easily arrange to share an aerator for the full day and then split the cost. It could also help in that some home owners have never used an aerator so having an experienced neighbor to assist would be encouraging.

Mulch- All planting beds and tree wells need to be weed free and covered evenly with 2 to 3 inches of mulch material. You do have several mulch options to choose from but the better choices are either triple shredded hardwood mulch or the designer dyed mulch because they provide the best protection and nutrients for your plants while also lasting the longest of the mulch products. These two products will normally remain effective for 12 to 15 months. This is another project that would benefit from neighbors joining with other neighbors because the cost savings is incredible as I will explain. The average home in your neighborhood may require 2 to 5 cubic yards of mulch to meet this community requirement. However; many companies will not deliver this small amount so unless you have a pick up

Mulch (cont.)- truck which would hold about 2 cubic yards, you will need to buy the bagged mulch from Home Depot or Lowe's. These bags provide 2 cubic feet of mulch which means you would need approximately 13 to 14 bags to equal 1 cubic yard so this is why I urge you to work with your neighbors on this project:

1 cubic yard will cost approximately \$20 in bulk when delivered by a local company and the usual minimum is 10 cubic yards for free or almost free delivery. For example, a 10 cubic yard load of mulch delivered to your house would be approximately \$250 with tax and a possible deliver charge of \$25 already included. In order to get the same amount of mulch in the store bought bags you would need approximately 130 bags at an average cost per bag of \$4 so with tax the total cost would be approximately \$560. Of course, very few of you would need to use 10 cubic yards but even at 5 cubic yards the bags would cost about \$280. Hence, were you to split a 10 cubic yard load of mulch with your neighbor it would cost each of you \$125 which is a savings of \$155 for each of you. In the event that you do not wish to install your own mulch, the average rate for installed mulch is between \$46 and \$56 per cubic yard so the average yard needing 5 cubic yards would cost about \$255 which is still less than the cost of the equivalent of store bought bags and somebody else does all the work. Hopefully the benefit of working together with your neighbors is made crystal clear by this example. I hope it also illustrates how inexpensive it can be to comply with the community standards if your work together.

Homes- The other problem generated by the high heat and humidity is the mildew it creates on the houses and other features like fences. Similar to the aerating of the lawns, this is a project where a knowledgeable neighbor with a power washer (owned or rented) could help multiple homes get clean quickly without spending a lot of money. The average daily rental for a power washer is around \$75 and approximately 3 to 4 homes could be washed in a day. The alternative is to pay a company to provide this service and the average rate is \$125 per house so this is still relatively inexpensive. Please don't forget to clean out your gutters because it will greatly improve the home's appearance and will protect you from the damage that can be caused by clogged/ overflowing gutters. I understand this is a project that few of you will want to tackle on your own so I would like to have referrals submitted for good contractors to provide this service. I will make these referrals available to the community on the website and please specify if your referral offers group discounts. Finally, one of the easiest things you can do to make sure your house looks good is to make sure everything is neat, organized, properly stored, and properly maintained. I realize this is a vague statement but it can mean so many things ranging from trash containers improperly stored to fences which may need some minor repairs. I understand that there are differing opinions and/ or levels of awareness when it comes to what is neat so we will continue to try our best to inform home owners who are missing some of their responsibilities. We start with a note left at the door with the expectation that a courteous reminder will be enough to inform the homeowner of a problem. Otherwise, in the event that the door note does not get addressed we will follow up with a more formal letter to the home owner.

The appearance and proper maintenance of your home is important to you as well as the rest of the community. As your community manager, I hear many different opinions with respect to appearance so I will try my best to help everyone understand the importance. The most basic benefit for everyone is that a well maintained neighborhood is a visually pleasing place to call home. This brings happiness to all and makes the hard work worth while. Even the home owners who are reluctant to make the effort will concede this fact so I would like to focus on the economic benefits which should appeal to everyone and hopefully better motivate each of you as a home owner.

For most of you, your home is your largest investment or at least one of your top investments so it should receive a considerable amount of your attention. Each of the community guidelines and the information provided on the previous pages are intended to help you realize the best return on your investment. Many of the prior suggestions demonstrate how you can control the costs and still achieve the desired goal so what can you expect for your efforts? A better starting listing price should you ever need to move, better curb appeal, and decreased maintenance effort over time.

The homes are relatively close together so the appearance of the homes has a considerable impact on all the surrounding homes. The better they look, the higher the market value will be on each home. For example; it could cost you approximately \$500 to \$750 each year to have the mentioned examples provided by a professional service and including the other fertilizers/ weed controls needed in the spring. You could also choose the “do it with your neighbors” method for a lot less. Regardless of method, by having the entire neighborhood making this effort the property values will increase for everyone by as much as 5%. In a historically bad market which has already forced down all home prices this is a much needed protection and 5% on your market value will far exceed the small annual investment. You will not find a better way to invest \$750 each year.

Finally, proper maintenance often leads to easier maintenance because there is truth to the old saying that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Weeds grow best it seems when we are least able or willing to address them because it is raining or incredibly hot so making preparations before there is a problem is the best solution. This is a topic which will be addressed again early next year when the time is near for pre-emergent weed controls and fertilizer but for this example I will say that a weed free lawn is easier to maintain than one with weeds and always looks better. Healthy turf that is properly cared for will cut easier and will naturally survive environmental stressors better. It also has the benefit of not looking unsightly if the weather or other factor causes the lawn to wait a few extra days between mowing, where as weeds do not grow evenly and always look bad. Likewise, using a weed barrier material (available at Home Depot or Lowe’s) under the mulch in the planting beds and tree wells will save you hours upon hours of weeding time for many years so it is a great investment of time and money. I hope this helps all of you in some way.

Please let me know if you have questions and/ or suggestions to share with the community.

David Robbins, Community Manager for Villages at Crockett’s Ridge HOA