

the next year when this cat tried her pranks, I was ready and had sprinkled powdered cayenne pepper on the lower branches. She never climbed the holiday tree again.

Most of the live trees such as fir, spruce, and pine make excellent Christmas trees and are only mildly toxic to pets and people, but the conifer oils and needles could stick into paws or upset tummies or mouths. Cats are highly sensitive to nearly all essential oils and natural pine oils. We wouldn't let pets or children ingest those, or

chew on artificial trees, so we need to keep a keen eye on our little ones. Holly is traditional for wreaths, but it's toxic, too.

Poinsettias, native to Southern Mexico, are known to upset tummies, but many tropical plants that thrive indoors where it's warm are poisonous to pets. Pothos, cyclamen, sago palm, jade plant and many common holiday plants are actually deadly to pets. All parts of amaryllis, narcissus and bulb plants, and the peace lily are deadly, and parts of the aloe vera plant can

harm a dog's digestive system. It makes one think that a terrarium is a really good idea.

While it's never good to let pets or children play with or nibble on indoor potted plants, another thing to consider is that organic soil may be the safest because there may be toxins in non-organic plant soil such as pesticides or pathogens. Even organic potting soil without added pesticide and poisons can harbor pathogens that could lurk below its surface, but organic potting soils are more apt to have beneficial

organic matter that suppresses harmful microbes. There is so much to know. Let's all keep up on these things just to be safe.

Safe indoor plants for the holidays include Christmas cactus, moth orchids, African violets, bromeliads, and thornless roses, all perennials that bloom indoors for months at a time and bring us joy year after year.

Janet Sellers is an avid nature and plant lover. She welcomes your plant and garden tips at janetsellers@ocn.me.

On the Trail (in memory of Tim Watkins)

Santa Fe Open Space update



Above: The Santa Fe Open Space (SFOS) is making great progress and is still scheduled to open before the end of the year. Ross Williams, El Paso County community services department park planner, reports that the trail system fencing, and interpretive display are done, and trail and entrance signs are being worked on. *Photo by Steve Pate*

Correction

According to John Stansfield, during his presentation sponsored by the Palmer Lake Historical Society on Oct. 21, the Long Expedition camped at the headwaters of Monument Creek July 10-12, 1820. OCN's *On The Trail* column last month incorrectly reported the expedition came through our area in 1812. We sincerely regret the error.

Steve Pate can be contacted at stevepate@ocn.me.

Art Matters

Million-dollar doodles



By Janet Sellers

Many people of all ages doodle and benefit from doodling. Artists create their ideas most often with doodles to explore ideas. Many people take up doodling professionally or as amateurs, sketching for decoration, artwork, or to unwind. Doodling can be done anywhere, anytime.

It turns out that doodling is a very specific mind-altering activity of the default network of the brain helping us to remember at least 29 percent more information than non-doodlers. We all have endured meetings and must remember what happened, make decisions, and transform ideas into reality. The doodles of 26 of our presidents have been collected proving that they did it, too. The Ulam spiral, a popular visual aid for mathematicians, was developed by Stanislaw Ulam based on a doodle he made while attending a conference.

Doodles can fetch quite a sum, too. A sketch of a bear by Leonardo Da Vinci, a doodle the size of a post-it note, sold at a Christie's auction on July 8, 2021 for nearly \$12 million. It has been displayed at major institutions including the National Gallery in London, the Louvre Abu Dhabi, and St Petersburg State Hermitage Museum.

Interestingly, the prevailing state

of mind of the doodler is never known except to the doodler. We like to make sense of our lives by filling in gaps with coherent stories or doodles. Srinil Pillay, MD, contributor to the Harvard Medical School Health blog reported, "Doodles fill these gaps, possibly by 'activating the brain's time travel machine' allowing it to find lost puzzle pieces of memories, bringing them to the present, and making the picture of our lives more whole again. With this greater sense of self and meaning, we may be able to feel more relaxed and concentrate more."

We can get out our pencils and a scrap of paper and unwind by doodling. We might even discover our inner inventor or Picasso in our spare moments. At least we will captivate our attention on a page and help our memory and peace of mind by doodling.

Holiday art event

Friends of Fox Run Park will host a holiday art benefit sale at Southwinds Fine Art Gallery, December 10 to 12. Fri. 4:00 to 9:00 p.m., Sat. 10 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Sun. 12:00 to 4:00 p.m. 16575 Rollercoaster Rd., 80921.

Janet Sellers is a local artist, doodler, writer, and teacher, with local and global arts involvement from her studio and in the community. janetsellers@ocn.me.

Snapshots of Our Community

Cruisers elects new board, Nov. 3



Above: The Tri-Lakes Cruisers Car Club of Monument held its annual election of officers on Nov. 3. Jim Nab is taking over as president from Lon Wartman, who held that office the last three years. Don Ostrander is the new vice president. Epifanio Maestas will be treasurer, and Becci Lane will be secretary. From left, Secretary Becci Lane, Vice President Don Ostrander, Treasurer Epifanio Maestas, and President Jim Nab. *Photo by outgoing President Lon Wartman.*

Matilda The Musical, Nov. 5-7



Above: Roald Dahl's "Matilda The Musical," was presented at the Lewis-Palmer High School theatre on Nov. 5, 6 and 7. Performers included student actors and musicians from LPHS and Lewis-Palmer Middle School. *Photo by Steve Pate*

Furrow Road extension, Nov. 4



Above: On Nov. 4, El Paso County invited the public to learn about the Furrow Road extension project. Deputy County Engineer Josh Palmer, Traffic Engineer Chris Bland, and consultants Brent Hypnarowski and Dave Krauth gave a brief presentation and then answered questions from the audience. Some residents were concerned about drivers cutting through the new extension from Highway 105 to Higby Road, and speeding through their development. The presenters said they are in favor of traffic diversions, such as roundabouts, speed humps and horizontal and vertical deflections to reduce speeds. Pedestrian crossings and bike lanes will also be installed. For additional questions, please email dotweb@elpasoco.com and put Furrow Road in the subject line. *Photo by Jackie Burhans. Caption by Allison Robenstein.*

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