



# In the Shade

**NEWSLETTER OF THE ISA TEXAS CHAPTER**  
**JUNE 2021**







//

You know me, I think there ought to be a big old tree right there. And let's give him a friend. Everybody needs a friend.

— Bob Ross

Hello ISA Texas members, Keeping with the recent trend of unique circumstances in Texas Arboriculture, this Spring has brought its own set of challenges to the game. The magnitude of tree damage because of the February winter storm is really starting to show. And, I am fearful that as we move into the hotter summer months, it will only get worse. Most arborists I have spoken to are asking themselves if we should be treating, pruning, removing, or just waiting a little longer to see how the trees respond next. From what I have heard, the consensus is to wait a little longer; however, that recommendation does not seem to be sitting very well with many homeowners and property managers. People love their trees, and most are wanting something done right now. The best that I can offer is "TIME WILL TELL".

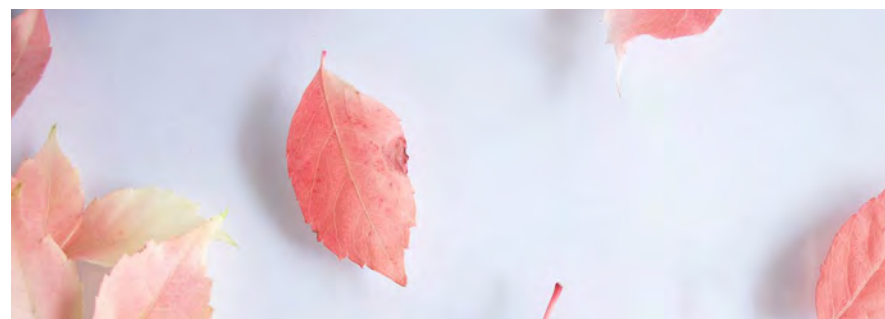
On a more positive note, your ISA Texas Board and Executive Committee continues to organize and host exceptional educational programs to promote professionalism in arboriculture throughout the state. By the time you read this (and since our April issue), our Education Committee will have hosted an "Introduction to Entomology for Arborists" webinar series, two TRAQ courses,

one TRAQ renewal, and two Texas Oak Wilt Qualification courses.

The ISA Texas Board of Directors is scheduled to meet in Waco on June 17th, and I am very excited to finally see the team in-person for the first time since I became President of the Chapter. My only other opportunity will be for a few minutes during our September meeting just prior to handing the gavel over to our incoming President, Mr. Mark Bird.

In closing, I want to remind you we always need more volunteers willing to serve on our board, help with events, and to provide content for our newsletter; so, please contact me or any of our staff or board members if you are interested in taking your ISA Texas membership to the next level. If any of you would like the board to address specific issues or concerns, please email me at [ajt@preservationtree.com](mailto:ajt@preservationtree.com) or contact our Executive Director, John Giedraitis, and we will bring them to the board on your behalf. Thank you for your continued support of our great organization and industry.

Best Regards,  
A.J. Thibodeaux



## On the Cover

Southern Magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*) blooms emerge.



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## Editor's Note



Greetings, fellow Tree People! As we ease into summer, the growing season is in full swing. We're still seeing the effects of the "Big Freeze," but (here along the Gulf Coast), it has only made some plants stronger. Roses and Vitex are popping! With warmer temperatures, we can look forward to enjoying the scent of fresh cut grass (although, we will be VERY busy with this chore—ha ha!)

In this issue, you'll find the "save the date" for the "The 41st Annual Texas Tree Conference—'Little Tree, Big Shade'" on page 12. Also, check out the "Cold' Case Files" (post-freeze unsolved [tree] mysteries) on page 13 and submit your own "case files."

Be sure to "leaf" through the rest of this issue for Upcoming Events and other goodies. Thank you to everyone who contributed to this issue and to those out there reading it. Happy Summer!

Sincerely,

Heather McKnight



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## In the Shade

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Photo courtesy of Lee Ruth.

## Texas Tree Critters

White-marked Tussock Moth Caterpillar (*Orgyia leucostigma*):

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- Black stripe on back and gray stripe on each side
- Red-orange head
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## TRAQ Courses Resume in 2021

ISAT hosted two TRAQ courses in April and May. The first was at the Texas Discovery Gardens at Fair Park in Dallas. The attendees had to assess trees in a light rain. The second TRAQ course and the TRAQ Renewal course (which took place the day before the full course and actually sold out) was held at the San Antonio Botanic Garden. The weather was perfect, and the Garden is definitely worth a visit. People were excited to be able to attend live workshops again!



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## Website Has Latest COVID-19 Information

*Go to the ISA Texas Chapter website to get the latest update on how the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting tree care in Texas.*

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<https://ISATexas.com/covid-19-updates/>





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# Member Spotlight

Maggie Ambrosino

## Why did you decide to join the Texas Chapter ISA?

The latest insights into arboriculture and the natural sciences surrounding the care and maintenance of trees has made joining the Texas Chapter ISA a win-win, both personally and professionally. There is so much opportunity to study and observe landscapes in and around the region where I work and live. The support of the Chapter and the high level of information it continues to provide its members affords a way for arborists to better serve and educate their customers. Good information, coupled with best management practices, helps communities depart from poor cultural practices over time. Even with all the constraints of Covid, the Texas Chapter ISA has remained a creative resource for continuing education with on-line learning opportunities, publications, and virtual meetings which offer CEUs for arborists with diverse specializations and areas of interest. This year, virtual entomology classes were offered that awarded ISA CEUs as well as CEUs toward the renewal of chemical applicator's licenses through TDA. What a great idea!

## What is something you love most about our industry and/or feel is very valuable?

When considering aspects most important to working within the tree care industry, particularly as an individual business owner, of utmost importance are the relationships formed between colleagues and customers. These support success and longevity. By the same token, high up on the list of things important is the need for versatility, offering a wide range of services to customers. A broad range of knowledge and skills are added benefits brought to the negotiation table. It is not enough to know your stuff, although that is imperative, but one has to care—to genuinely care. Every job is different; every customer is different, too, and listening to their needs and overcoming the challenges each unique job presents is a great feeling of accomplishment—a real kick. Twenty-five years ago, I vowed to never again sit behind a desk and work in an artificial environment. The love of the great outdoors I acquired from my parents: mom was an avid gardener, and I accompanied Dad from a young age hunting and fishing in Tennessee and on to Texas. Naturally, arboriculture made sense for me as a career. Today you will find me working in the wide-open spaces, in places where I can see, feel, touch, hear, breath, and encounter the splendid gifts of the Divine.

## Share a favorite hobby many people may not know about you or a fun fact.

The world is full of wonder. I am in search of it every day. As an author, when I see wonder I like to write about it. If one knows me, they likely know of my enthusiasm over the biological nature of trees, their response to growing environments, and the relationship between trees and other organisms which must all co-evolve to survive. My latest book, *Beyond the Forest: Trees and Natural Systems*, will be out later this Fall. Other passions of mine include designing landscapes, gardening, keeping fit, and enjoying the company of family and friends.



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## The 41st Texas Tree Conference

by Mark C. Bird  
2021 TTC Conference Chair



**Y**EEE Haw!!! Put it on your calendar: The 41st Texas Tree Conference, Academy, Trade Show and Tree Schools will be 'Live' in Waco, TX, September 29 – October 1, 2021. Our conference theme, "Little Tree, Big Shade" is all about what we live to do--from the littlest to our biggest trees... We grow, we learn, we spread our knowledge, experiences, and professional services to benefit the trees in our communities and for our customers.

With a line-up of Texas, national and international speakers covering Commercial, Municipal, and Utility tracks, arborists will be together again to "talk-trees" and visit exhibitors at the Texas Size Trade Show.

To go with the Texas Size Tree Conference, we are again offering the pre-conference Tree Academy on Wednesday and the Tree Schools in English and Spanish on Friday.

This year, the Wednesday pre-conference Tree Academy will offer 3 separate Tree Academy sessions and a TRAQ renewal course.

The popular Friday Tree Schools will offer English and Spanish-speaking options. The Tree Schools are developed to give tree workers and supervisors practical technical knowledge which can be readily applied in the field.

Be on the lookout for registration to the 41st Texas Tree Conference to open in mid-June

Also, there is still time to be an Exhibitor and Sponsor!

For the latest conference information and to register as an exhibitor/sponsor you can check the ISA Texas website.

See ya'll in Waco!

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## Unusual Happenings Have Taken Place Recently, Some of Which May Never Be Solved

Case submitted by Maggie Ambrosino

**F**or instance, I have one such unsolvable arboricultural case, as follows: I planted simultaneously two mountain laurels on my property 7 years ago, side-by-side, about 6 feet apart, in a north-south direction (looking west in photo below).

The young tree on the northern side was always slightly smaller but quite healthy. They had both produced a multitude of flowers as we had experienced some warmer temps prior to the freeze, and because mountain laurels tend to bloom fairly early in spring. The tree to the south, slightly taller and also healthy was lost in the freeze. So brutal was the cold that its trunks split completely open, every leaf and twig changed immediately brown to black, losing all hope for recovery as can be seen. How is it that not a single twig was lost on the adjacent smaller tree, and one would never know it had been affected by the freeze like so many other trees were in Central Texas?



Above: the tree on the south side experienced cracking of the trunk.

Below left: tree on the south side.

Below right: tree on the north side.



Submit your "cold" cases to [heather.mcknight@leaguecitytx.gov](mailto:heather.mcknight@leaguecitytx.gov)



# New Members

Frederick Wiedner .....	San Antonio, TX	David Groves .....	Arlington, TX
Ryan Green .....	Amarillo, TX	Logan McMillan .....	Alpine, TX
Matt Sanders .....	Round Rock, TX	Jeremiah Leavitt .....	Salem, OR
Doug Andrews .....	Carrollton, TX	Clay Russell .....	Lucas, TX
Gerald Philbin .....	Omaha, NE	Kimberly Hernandez .....	Corpus Christi, TX
John Baker .....	Corpus Christi, TX	Robert Hawthorne .....	Hamilton, TX
Ryan Fleming .....	Manor, TX	Michael Montgomery .....	Portland, TX
Traci Jones .....	Dallas, TX	Virginio (Tony) Sanchez ..	Houston, TX
Ryan Ealy .....	Eldon, MO	Justin Scott .....	Bryan, TX
Martin Wise .....	Austin, TX	Ivan Valenzuela .....	Taylor, TX
Luis Dominguez .....	Houston, TX	Lilian Kao .....	Austin, TX
Taylor Bivins .....	Flower Mound, TX	Alexander Mattson .....	Mc Kinney, TX
Michael Leonard .....	San Antonio, TX	Preston Moore .....	San Antonio, TX
Michael Castle .....	Whitehouse, TX	Justin Henley .....	La Porte, TX
Steve Vawter .....	Corinth, TX	Josh Reis .....	Plano, TX
Russell Shaw .....	La Vernia, TX	Valerie Tamburri .....	Elgin, TX
Jose Vaca .....	Lancaster, TX	Jeff Zemlik .....	Grand Bay, AL
Christopher Gabbard .....	Saginaw, TX		
Jesus Villarreal .....	Houston, TX		

# 2021 Events Update

Entomology Webinar Series – Available on Demand at [isatexas.com/events](https://www.isatexas.com/events)  
Session 1: Pesticide Laws and Reg Update – Laura Miller, Horticulturist Tarrant County Agrilife Extension  
Session 2: Ento 101 – Molly Keck, Entomologist Bexar County Agrilife Extension  
Session 3: Ento 102 - Molly Keck, Entomologist Bexar County Agrilife Extension  
Session 4: Common Insects of Trees and Landscape Plants Molly Keck, Entomologist Bexar County Agrilife Extension  
Session 5: Integrated Pest Management of Tree and Landscape Pests Molly Keck, Entomologist Bexar County Agrilife Extension

June 9	Texas Oak Wilt Qualification Hye Texas, field day for virtual attendees.
August 3-5	TNLA Nursery/Landscape Expo San Antonio Convention Center, San Antonio Texas
Sept. 28-30	Texas Tree Conference, Waco Convention Center
Oct. 15	Spanish Tree Workshop Sponsors are the Houston Area Urban Forestry Council & TCIA 8 am to 1 pm Topic - Ground Operations in Tree Care Instructor - Noe Cardenas Houston area - Missouri City Community Center, 1522 Texas Parkway Missouri City, 77489. Class will be limited to the first 50 registrants. Cost: \$25. You may apply for ISA CEUs. Stay tuned for registration details in coming months.

Wildfire Risk Reduction Qualification – will be scheduled when speakers are confirmed  
Texas Women’s Tree Climbing Workshop – has been moved to 2022.

Please consult [www.isatexas.com](https://www.isatexas.com) for the latest events updates.



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8/6/2021	San Antonio, TX	check in 8:00 a.m.
10/1/2021	Waco, TX	check in at 12 noon
12/10/2021	Dallas, TX	check in 7:30 a.m.





# Oak Trees Are Still Recovering

Winter Storm Uri leaves odd combination of both dead and stressed Live Oak trees.

Reprinted with permission from Texas A&M Forest Service

## from Winter Storm

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 them 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. Followers of his Facebook page have submitted over 2,000 photos of struggling oak trees, including all varieties of species and from every single region of the state.

"I have been in this business professionally since 1970, and I've



never seen anything like this," said Sperry. "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. But as the weeks ticked past—and oak trees across the state still didn't leaf out—Sperry decided to pull together a blue-ribbon panel of certified arborists, foresters, horticulturists, Extension 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," said Blevins. "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."



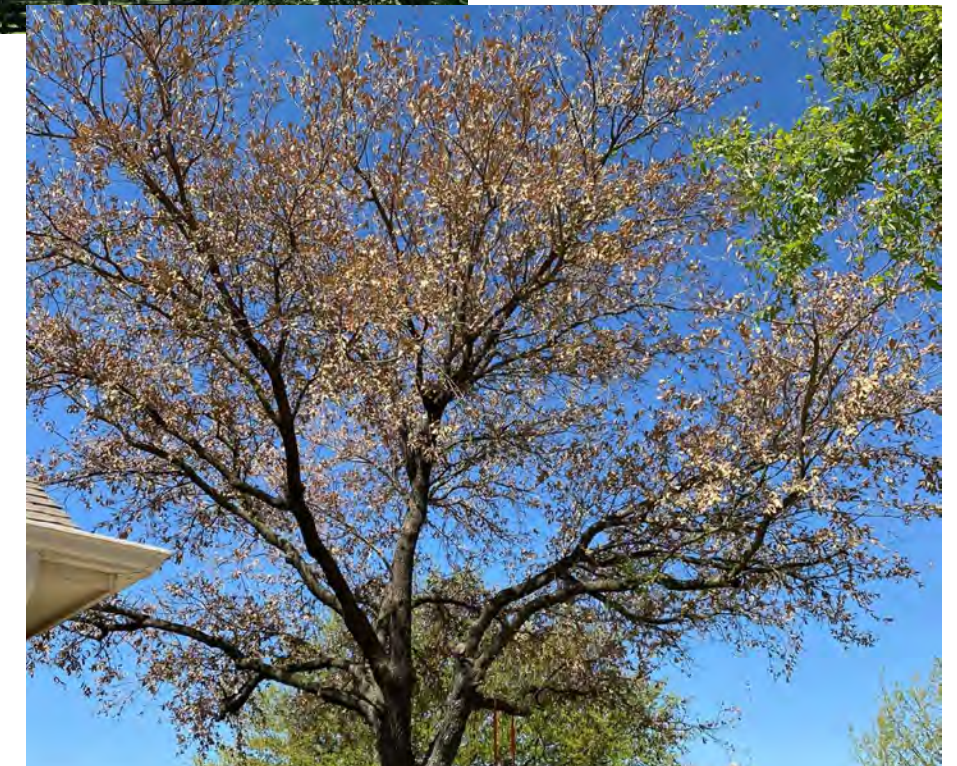
### WHAT HAPPENED

With a prolonged, deep freeze like the one brought on by Uri, experts expected some kind of response from trees – primarily fine-twig and branch dieback. The outermost branches and stems of even the most established trees lack insulation, and are at risk of freezing in very low temperatures. This is a partial explanation as to why some trees have growth closer to their trunk and innermost branches, while the edges of their canopies remain bare – but it doesn't explain why so many trees are leafing out late, or not at all.

One popular theory suggests that the trees that are struggling right now were likely stressed or struggling before the winter storm, especially given past conditions.

"It's been a tough decade for trees," said Gretchen Riley, the Urban and Community Forestry Program Leader at Texas A&M Forest Service. "In 2011 we had unprecedented drought across the state, and we lost 500 million trees. Those that we didn't lose, they experienced pretty heavy stress. And in the past decade, we've seen a lot of tree mortality that really had its roots in that drought."

Riley attributes the potential mortality of mature oak trees to that drought and other, pre-existing conditions, but she attributes the overall delay in leafing out to a natural, physiological process that was



Left and below:  
Trees that are showing differing degrees of freeze damage and are in various stages of recovery.

interrupted by the freeze.

Every February in Texas, trees begin the process of pulling nutrients from their roots up into their branches and the finer twigs. This combination of sugar, starches and water is then used to produce buds, which – over the course of a few weeks – become leaves, and supply the tree with food that can again be stored in the roots for the following winter. However, because there is a liquid component to this energy, it is susceptible to freeze damage – and once frozen, it cannot be repurposed.

It's also worth noting that the week

before the freeze, temperatures reached as high as 80° F across the state. Warm temperatures like that often cue trees to begin the process of budding out, and in Texas late-February is as common a time as any for trees to start leafing out.

"That super freeze froze back a lot of those buds that were about to open up," said Blevins. "Now, the trees that were preparing to bud out have to generate a whole new set of buds to leaf out, and that takes time."

This theory would best explain the variability of the impact that Texans are seeing on their trees, since there doesn't appear to be much of a correlation





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between which species of oak have been hit the hardest, or why urban trees are experiencing equal delays in leafing out.

It would also help explain why some of the trees that were late to begin leafing out are still struggling. With the last of their energy reserves being put toward re-producing buds and leafing out, they have little energy left to put toward defense. In Central Texas, in particular, Texas A&M Forest Service biologists are seeing a significant population of caterpillars. With the trees being more susceptible to disease pathogens and insects, many are losing their leaves to insects as they're actively trying to leaf out.

#### WHAT YOU SHOULD DO

While this helps explain what is happening, most residents are more interested in how they can help their trees. Unfortunately, experts are saying there isn't much you can do, and there is very little that you should do.

"They've been stressed, and they don't need any more stress," said Blevins. "So I'm telling people, when we get into the heat of the summer – especially if we have abnormal heat, like we're supposed to this year – one thing you might want to do is maybe give them supplemental watering once or twice."

Other than the occasional watering—and you don't want to overwater your trees, lest the roots be flooded with water and lack the oxygen they need to breathe—Blevins recommends patience. Even fertilization should be avoided unless the tree is experiencing a specific nutrient deficiency. Fertilization leads to growth spurts – and when a tree is putting its energy into growth, any energy that could be applied to defense goes down.

Insecticide and fungicide are tempting treatments as well – since stressed trees are more susceptible

to disease and insect infestation – but again, Blevins and Riley counsel patience. There's no need for "preventative" treatments, and insect infestations and diseases should be treated on a case-by-case basis.

This information can be difficult for landowners and tree-lovers to absorb, since it is our tendency as stewards to want to do something. However, when it comes to our trees – especially our mature trees – often times, the more we do, the more harm we cause.



"The best thing to do with mature trees is nothing," said Riley. "Trees are very sensitive to change. And many of these mature trees may be a hundred years old. They've done really well without us, they've done their best to adapt to living around us, and most things that we would go in and do to them now are more stressful to them than helpful."

#### MOVING FORWARD

With the list of stressors piling up this year, it's likely that many of the trees which were late to leaf out will continue to appear splotchy, sickly, or partially bare. In Riley's experience, that is not unusual in itself, and many trees should be okay if they're given the opportunity to leaf out normally next spring.

That being said, the trees that continue to appear bare may not come back.

"If by mid-July they have zero leaves on them, that tree's dead," said Riley. "If they have a small, poor showing of leaves, you might wait until next year to make that call. It could improve."

In any case, the consensus among professionals at Texas A&M Forest Service and across the state is simple and direct. Be patient.

"Just wait," said Sperry. "These trees are coming back at their own pace. Some of them will be lost. But the important word continues to be 'wait.' Don't start cutting those trees."

If you're concerned that the trees on your property are suffering from more than just stress, visit our page After the Storm. For more specific concerns, contact a certified arborist. You can find professionals in your area through the Texas A&M Forest Service's My Land Management Connector app, or at [treesaregood.org/findanarborist](https://treesaregood.org/findanarborist).

Texas A&M Forest Service will continue to monitor and study

the impact of winter storm Uri on our state's trees. For more information, and to stay up-to-date with our findings, make sure and follow us on social media at @TexasForestService, and on twitter at @TxForestService.

#### Contact:

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## WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA?



### CAN YOU IDENTIFY THIS TEXAS TREE?

If you know this tree, look for the photo on our Facebook page and correctly identify it in the comment section under the photo, using the full scientific name and one or more common names. If you don't know it, check the page for an answer in a few days. The winner gets bragging rights and the chance to submit a tree to stump fellow arborists in the next issue.

Hint: produces clusters of tiny, spherical nut-like fruit

### LAST MONTH'S TREE ID



Last month's Tree ID Winner:  
Mickey Merritt.

Tree was: *Crataegus mollis*  
(Downy Hawthorn)

This issue's challenge was  
provided by Mickey Merritt.