

# AUSTIN360 LIFE



Warmth and comfort radiate from the suites in the old Perry mansion as well as the rooms at the newly built inn nearby. [LOLA GOMEZ / AMERICAN-STATESMAN]

## A new classic

**A first look at the new resort hotel in Austin's historic Commodore Perry Estate**

By Michael Barnes  
mbarnes@statesman.com

**F**ew Austinites can remember when the 10-acre Commodore Perry Estate, which opened June 29 as a resort hotel, served as a gracious hilltop residence overlooking Waller Creek and what was then the Austin Country Club.

There, Edgar Howard Perry, a cotton trader, hotel owner and developer, lived in a 10,800-square-foot Italianate home, built in 1928, with his wife, Nannie Lewette "Lutie" Perry, and their adult son, Edgar Howard Perry Jr., along with their servants.

During its first year, the solidly built mansion, inspired by the family's European travels, hosted a swirl of social gatherings surrounding the wedding of Perry Jr. to Julia Morrison Matthews, as well as large

charity events, such as a ball benefiting the still-operating Settlement Home.

When Perry Sr. sold the property in 1944, however, he declared the estate "a great place to throw a party, but too big to live in."

Many more Austinites can recall in detail when, between 1948 and the 2010s, the wooded estate, which included some added structures, took on students attending a series of schools there, including St. Mary's Academy and the Griffin School at East 41st and Red River streets.

One of those former students, developer Clark Lyda, was fascinated by the grand old mansion designed by Austin-born, Dallas-based architect Henry Bowers Thompson.

So, in 2012, along with architect John Volz, he restored the deteriorating structure to a close semblance of its former glory. Lyda then opened it for several years as a special events venue.

Ever more Austinites explored the property during this period, as slow plans



Located to the south of the old mansion, the new oval swimming pool looks like something one might see on the Riviera. It will be a natural magnet for resort guests and club members. [LOLA GOMEZ / AMERICAN-STATESMAN]

for a hotel and private club — to be joined in the future by planned residences and organic gardens — evolved.

Yet even those witnesses will be rubbing

their eyes in disbelief when they see the Commodore Perry Estate, Auberge Resorts Collection, a business owned by Houston-based Dan Friedkin.

There's nothing quite like it in Austin. Or in Texas.

It's as if a 54-room Napa

**See PERRY, D6**

## Why do we mulch? What longtime gardeners know

**Pick the right material and spread it happily around plants, trees, containers**

By Judy Barrett  
Special to the American-Statesman

In the heat of the summer, I cut way back on my gardening activity. I water. I harvest. I turn red in the face, sweat, and retire to the blow-up pool that serves as our backyard swimming hole.

In August, I'll start some seeds for the fall garden, plant some new peppers and tomatoes, and cut back or pull out the plants that couldn't take the heat, but July is a sort of hiatus in my gardening year.

This year I've spent a lot of mornings in the garden, and those hours have been enjoyable and rewarding. I took the time to remember



Mulch helps keep the soil temperature regulated and weeds out.

[CONTRIBUTED BY JUDY BARRETT]

what I knew but sometimes ignored because I was in such a hurry. For example, I remembered Ruth Stout. Born in 1884, Stout lived to be 96 and continued to garden all those years.

Her method, which she

wrote about in many books and magazines, was "simply to keep a thick mulch of any vegetable matter that rots on both my vegetable and flower garden all year. As

**See GARDEN, D6**

## How to avoid acne from wearing masks

By Nicole Villalpando  
nvillalpando@statesman.com

As masks have become part of our lives, for some of us, acne or skin irritation has followed.

By mid-March, Dr. Tyler Hollmig, director of dermatologic surgery and laser and cosmetic dermatology at Ascension Texas, was beginning to get patients, especially essential workers, asking about mask-related dermatitis.

The acne is an unintended

consequence of doing something good, Hollmig says. "We've never had a time where we're wearing masks for 12 hours straight with the exception of meals," he says. "It's sustained contact. The skin can only take so much."

It's caused by the friction of the mask against the skin combined with sweat. It's not a new phenomenon. Football players also see it along the area of the helmet

**See MASKS, D3**



AUSTIN360

**COMING FRIDAY**

Aviary, Hold Out Brewing and more great options for takeout

# PERRY

From Page D1

Valley resort was dropped into an urban setting with a high-design oval swimming pool, formal gardens, shady loggias, clinking bars and enough elbow room for overnight guests, club members and wedding guests.

When its new eatery, Lutie's Garden Restaurant, opens fully later this year under chefs Bradley Nicholson and Susana Querejazu, even more Austinites can take in these landscaped views, where all kinds of regular public leisure activities are planned.

"The Commodore Perry Estate is a love letter to the city, local Austin community and the unique culture that thrives here," said Craig Reid, president and CEO of Auberge Resorts Collection. "We are overjoyed to welcome guests to a modern-day interpretation of the Perry family's iconic country home, where they will enjoy an intimate social scene, sprawling grounds and cultural experiences that are intended to be as unforgettable as the estate itself."

The local complex is Auberge's first property in Texas and the first located in an urban setting.

The Austin connections keep growing: Reid put down roots in Austin when he lived here from 1994 to 1998 as the general manager of the Four Seasons Hotel Austin. He then moved in 1998 to Dallas. He remains a big Longhorns fan as



The entrance to the newly restored historic 10-acre Commodore Perry Estate is on Red River Street just north of East 41st Street. [LOLA GOMEZ / AMERICAN-STATESMAN]



Even in a standard room at the Commodore Perry Estate, your favorite cocktail will be waiting for you when you check in. [LOLA GOMEZ / AMERICAN-STATESMAN]

his daughters attended the University of Texas, and one of them remains in Austin with her husband and two children.

A whole army of preservationists, craftspeople, urban planners, landscape designers and interior designers worked on this project's evolution,

along with investors who have teamed with Lyda on other developments.

Lyda, who comes from an old Central Texas ranching and investment family, is the owner of Georgetown's Monument Café and El Monumento restaurants. He is also a developer of the new Music Lane complex



This is the La Verne Suite in the old mansion. These suites are far more baroque than the standard rooms in the main inn, which are more clean-lined. [LOLA GOMEZ / AMERICAN-STATESMAN]



Books are everywhere at the Commodore Perry Estate, Auberge Resorts Collection. In the old library, a portrait of Edgar Howard Perry Sr. hangs. He looks more like a businessman than a naval officer, which fits his actual personality. [LOLA GOMEZ / AMERICAN-STATESMAN]

on South Congress Avenue and Salado's lovingly renovated Stagecoach Inn.

While the old Perry family suites in the mansion upstairs have been turned into baroque fantasies, the public rooms downstairs now radiate

a warm, relaxed sense of comfort. At the same time, more than 40 rooms in the new, stylistically compatible inn structure nearby are little concertos of unforced pampering with

**See PERRY, D8**

# GARDEN

From Page D1

it decays and enriches the soil, I add more. The labor-saving part of my system is that I never plow, spade, sow a cover crop, harrow, hoe, cultivate, weed, water or spray... I don't go through that tortuous business of building a compost pile."

Stout suggested using 8 inches of mulch, and she said she used hay in her Connecticut garden. You can't use hay as mulch in Texas. Hay is full of seeds that will sprout in our long growing season and continue through our short winter.

You can, however, use wheat straw, which you can get from a local farmer. It is nice clean material, easy to use, and does not involve extremely heavy plastic bags you have to haul around. You also can use pine straw, fallen leaves, pecan hulls, coffee grounds, and any other sort of organic material that is available and relatively cheap since you need a lot of it.

Compost is a wonderful mulch, but rarely do we have enough to use it that way. If you do, by all means, use it.

The only warnings about mulch are that you be careful where it has been and what is

in it. For example, if the cotton has been heavily sprayed with toxic material, stay away from the gin waste.

The same for any other material. Grass clippings make a good mulch, but if they come from a lawn treated with chemical pesticides or herbicides, you don't want them. If you get bedding from a friend with a horse, ask about medications the horse takes. You don't want antibiotics killing the microbes in your soil.

While rocks may seem an attractive mulch, they will heat up your garden and cook your plants in no time. Weed barrier cloth will discourage root growth and air and water circulation in the soil. Rocks and weed cloth will discourage soil life — worms and beneficial micro organisms that do good work in the soil.

Mulch may not be the answer to all garden problems, but it does have many beneficial functions. In addition to rotting and feeding the soil as Stout mentioned, it keeps the temperature of the soil cooler in summer and warmer in winter.

Mulch helps maintain a relatively even temperature that encourages plant roots and lets water trickle down to them. As a result, you will need to water less often when you use generous mulch. The soil is cooler

and damper longer under its layer of protective covering.

Malcolm Beck, one of the fathers of Texas organic gardening, did an experiment a few years ago. He put a 4-inch layer of mulch on the ground and watered it thoroughly. There was no rain on that patch for 108 days, yet a moisture meter reading showed that the soil under the mulch was still in the low-moist range. During a very hot July day, the soil temperature beneath the mulch was 85 degrees, while soil temperature on a bare spot nearby was 120 degrees.

Mulch also holds onto your valuable topsoil that you've improved through the years. It protects the soil from both flooding and wind damage. It also holds onto fertilizer that you add from time to time to your beds. Much water and water-based fertilizer will evaporate in the sun if it is sprayed on bare soil.

It is a good idea to mulch your container plants as well as plants growing in the ground. The soil in containers will dry out faster than the earth, so helping conserve moisture is a great benefit to the plants you are growing in pots of any size.

When you put the mulch down, be as generous as you can. Anything from 1 inch to 6 inches will work, with the optimum somewhere in the middle. Put your



Use wheat straw as mulch around your plants and trees. You can't use hay as mulch in Texas. Hay is full of seeds that will sprout in our long growing season and continue through our short winter. [CONTRIBUTED BY JUDY BARRETT]

mulch in all your garden beds — flower beds, vegetable beds and borders.

Put it around your trees as well. Drought causes a lot of stress for trees, and the added nutrients as the mulch composts will encourage tree health. Start the mulch about a foot from the trunk — you don't want to mulch right next to the trunk because it can encourage trunk rotting — and out as close to the drip line as your mulch will go.

A good layer of mulch will help prevent weed seeds from germinating and runners from spreading. Without sunlight, most seeds will not germinate and the mulch keeps the sun off the soil. Even the everlasting Bermuda grass

runners will skim along the top and not attach to the soil and multiply, making them easier to pull out and control.

As the mulch settles and breaks down into the soil, continue to add new mulch on top. A constant layer will greatly decrease your work in the garden — you'll water less, pull fewer weeds and have fewer sickly plants.

When you are ready to plant your fall garden, all you have to do it pull the mulch away, plant your new seedlings and pull up the covers around them.

*Judy Barrett is the author of several gardening books, including "Easy Edibles" from Texas A&M Press.*

Your  
elected officials.  
Know what's  
really going on.

Now more than ever,  
the source matters.

Our journalists check the facts and  
report all sides of the story.

**Austin American-Statesman**



**A quick reminder: Perry Sr. was not a naval officer and should not be confused with Commodore Matthew Perry, who opened up Japan to trade through the threat of force. Rather, the businessman owned a yacht, thus the nickname.** [LOLA GOMEZ / AMERICAN-STATESMAN]

## PERRY

From Page D6

touches of Italian and Spanish styles in the furniture and decor.

Opening a new resort hotel in Austin at a time when the hospitality business is on its heels — because of the coronavirus crisis along with widespread economic and social disruption — might seem counterintuitive.

Yet general manager Marco Bustamante reports that reservations have held steady and weddings are planned for October and November. Standard room rates start at \$525. Through at least the rest of the summer, the hotel is offering a 20% discount on rooms, plus a \$200 resort credit.

Hotel management continues to update

health and service practices based on CDC guidelines, which include enhanced cleaning, social distancing, health checks of the staff, masks and gloves for employees, wellness stations, complimentary masks for guests upon request, sanitizing wipes in each guest room and limited occupancy in dining and drinking areas as well as in the fitness center and spa. Also, social activities will be set up to allow for distancing.

In 2017, Emily Little, principal at Clayton & Little Architects, called the Commodore Perry Estate “one of Austin’s hidden treasures in plain sight.”

That treasure certainly made news almost weekly during its first year of Jazz Age socializing in 1928. It will likely be a topic for conversation for a long time to come.



**Few Austinites can remember when the 10-acre Commodore Perry Estate, which reopened June 29 as a lustrous resort hotel, served as a gracious hilltop residence overlooking Waller Creek and the Austin Country Club.** [LOLA GOMEZ / AMERICAN-STATESMAN]



**A standard room with patio at the newly restored historic 10-acre Commodore Perry Estate.** [LOLA GOMEZ / AMERICAN-STATESMAN]



**Clark Lyda, who developed the Commodore Perry Estate, is known for exacting details, such as this spacious shower in one of the guest rooms.** [LOLA GOMEZ / AMERICAN-STATESMAN]



**During its first year, the solidly built mansion, inspired by the family’s European travels, hosted a swirl of events surrounding the wedding of Perry Jr. to Julia Morrison Matthews, as well as large charity events, such as a ball benefiting the still-operating Settlement Home.** [LOLA GOMEZ / AMERICAN-STATESMAN]

# Sue Patrick

EST. 1975

10.95ea.

## Contoured Masks From Berek

Choose from a large selection of masks that are breathable and comfortable to wear. Masks have slit to insert a filter, a filter included with each mask.

A. Multi Leopard Foil. B. Butterflies. C. Tickle Pink Leopard.  
 D. Tie Dye Blue. E. Tie Dye Pink. F. The Regal in Blue. G. Festive Paisley.  
 H. Blues. I. Misty Paisley Turquoise.

Shop in store at Sue Patrick 5222 Burnet Rd. Online at [suepatrick.com](http://suepatrick.com).

Curbside pick-up available

New Store Hours: Monday - Saturday 9:30am - 4:00pm. Closed Sunday  
 Store 512-452-7701 Jay 512-289-9712 Sue 512-439-9415