

Community Management 101: Top Tips For Board Members

Being a member of a homeowner association (HOA) or community association board is an important role and one that should not be taken lightly. After all, you hold responsibility for members of your community, not just in a business sense, but also as a neighbor and friend.

If you are an HOA board member, the task in front of you might seem a little overwhelming. Consider the following 10 helpful hints for new and current board members to help make your term fruitful, rewarding and, most of all, effective. Use these tips to become a trusted, reliable member of your community.

1. Work for the good of the community, not your own agenda. When making decisions as a board member, you

FirstService Residential acquires Award Winning Tucson Management Company!



FirstService Residential, the leading residential property management company in North America, announced on October 9, 2014 that it has acquired Y Cross Management Group, a leading Tucson-based community association management company.

Founded in 2004, Y Cross Management currently manages 60 associations, representing 9,000 units in Tucson and southern Arizona. The company is headed by Andrew Way, who will continue to manage day-to-day operations as FirstService Residential's Senior Vice President, Southern Arizona Division.

are deciding for everyone in your community, not just for yourself. In this role, you must put aside your own interests and think about how your work affects everyone. You are in this role because you care about your neighbors and enhancing your property value and this is your chance to prove that. Doing so will boost your trustworthiness and solidify your standing in your community.

2. Respect and work alongside your community association manager. As a board member, your role is to policies and make policy decisions. The community association manager's role is to enact and enforce those policies and take care of the operations. Having experience association management certainly can help with your work on the board, but remember to let the community manager do his/her job, and be there to support his/her work.

3. Your fellow board members are your friends and neighbors. Keeping this in mind is very crucial to your

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Community Management 101: Top Tips for Board Members

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success, because there could be decisions that need to be made where board members disagree, and perhaps heatedly so. Maintain a respectful tone even if you have differences with your other members. You not only have to work with your fellow board members, you also live in the same community with them. Animosity can hurt the board's standing among community members. Try to see others' points from their perspective.

4. Educate yourself. It's important to stay on top of what's going on in your community, and as you progress through your work, you will learn what to do from trial and error. But it also helps to think beyond where you live and tap into knowledge from other sources such as seminars, books, networking with members of other association boards, and accessing the Internet for information. You also can compare notes with your manager, as well as talk to city officials, police, and other public servants who have roles in your community or other communities. The more you know about your community, the better you'll be able to tackle your responsibilities as a board member.

5. Be responsible. What is your role as a board member? Are you in charge of financial matters or the budget? Do you prepare the agenda? Do you compile important items you want other board members to support? Distribute materials to your fellow members in advance so they have time to review, understand, and come up with any questions or concerns. After all, you'd expect the same from them. That will provide for an informed meeting session with all board members prepared to make the best decisions for the community.

6. Don't put things off. Your role is one of service, and if someone in the community or a fellow board member comes to you with an issue or concern, address it as soon as possible. Research it, communicate, and get answers. If you hesitate and leave people waiting too long, they will be less inclined to come to you for your help in the future.

7. Consider hiring a professional community association management company. You'll have a lot on your plate serving on as a board member. Having a

community association management company working alongside you can alleviate many of your aches and pains. If you already have a community association management company, are you certain they are doing everything they can for you and your community? Are you satisfied with the service and value they provide? These are hard questions you must ask to ensure your community is getting the best service possible.

8. Be an open book. Board meetings should be open to community members, and you should encourage their attendance. The items you will discuss and about which you will make decisions affects them, and if they have opinions, you should listen to their concerns and consider their viewpoints. This is another great way to build trust with other community members and assure them you have the community's best interests at heart.

9. Organize a community event. Whether it's a food drive, a fundraiser, or just something to bring the entire community together, this is a great way to meet the individuals you serve. Events like these also could give your community a good reputation to outsiders and provide an added incentive for anyone considering moving into your community.

10. Set a good example. It might not be an official part of your role as a board member, but the way you live and carry yourself will influence how others perceive you. Take care of your property. Don't let your pets run amuck, and always clean up after them. Keep the noise down. Lend your neighbors a hand. Welcome newcomers. Park in your own parking space(s). These are small things you can do to maintain harmony and enhance surrounding property value.

These tips should help make your position as a board member run smoothly and make your tenure a successful and productive one. For more advice or to inquire about residential community association management services, contact FirstService Residential today.



Four Ways to Maintain Your HOA's Financial Fitness

Keeping your homeowner's association (HOA) or community association's finances healthy works the same way as staying physically fit: don't overindulge and make smart choices. And the upside is that the only thing you'll have to exercise is good judgment. Here are some tips to help you do just that.

1. Start with good internal controls. Separating duties like recording receipts and making deposits will help protect your association from financial misappropriation. The best property management company can help you guard against malfeasance.
2. Institute regular audits. Hire a CPA to analyze your documents and records. A less intensive process, called a review, can be carried out by an accountant and may be appropriate for smaller associations.
3. Invest wisely. Set forth a policy that dictates how your reserve funds can be invested. The key aspects are the safety and liquidity of the funds. Corporate bonds, municipal bonds and stocks are too risky, so stick to safer investments like CDs. It is important to recognize that investment options may be limited by both your documents and applicable law.
4. Insurance protection. Your association will need to purchase multiple types of insurance, in addition to property or casualty coverage, including liability insurance to protect the association against lawsuits umbrella or excess liability coverage, directors & officers liability insurance so individual board members are personally protected for actions taken in the course and scope of their duty, and fidelity insurance, which covers claims related to theft.

There you have it – four quick ways to help ensure you're keeping your HOA or community association financially fit. Remember, this is just a start. An excellent property management company will be your partner in developing further strategies for both the long- and short-term. To find out more, contact FirstService Residential, North America's leading residential property management company.



How to Save with Bulk Buying Strategies

As consumers, we're familiar with saving money by purchasing products like food and household goods in bulk. But, can this same savings model be applied to the purchases and operational costs of a homeowner association (HOA), condominium or community association?

Whether it's buying in bulk or negotiating better rates with service providers, there are a number of tactics you can use to increase your buying power and save money for your association. Your residential property management company can also help facilitate savings by coordinating bulk-buying power as well! See below for a few simple tips on how to start saving today.

1. Shop smart.

For simple, everyday purchases, if you're not already using online retailers to get the most for your money, it's time to start! Comparing prices and shopping online is an effective way to make sure you're saving on the things you need to keep your operation running smoothly.

2. Negotiate.

Take a close look at all of your vendors, contractors and service providers and identify opportunities to negotiate discounts. Do you make a large amount of purchases from a particular store each month? You may be able to get a volume discount. Do you pay your bill in full the same week you receive it? Talk to your service provider about a "quick-pay discount." Perhaps invoices paid within the first 7-10 days can be reduced by 2 or 5 percent.

3. Don't work alone.

Form alliances with other local communities and vendors.. By working together, you'll have more pull with these vendors and service providers when negotiating discounts. You can also take this strategy online: Group-buying sites like BuyerHive.com allow businesses to pool together and increase their buying power which results in retailers dropping their prices.

Taking the above steps in your purchasing process can go a long way in bringing significant savings to your association. To learn more about these and other strategies for running a cost-efficient HOA or community association, contact FirstService Residential today.

BUY IN BULK – AND SAVE BIG, TOO

You know that buying in bulk can save you money in your home. But can it also work for homeowner associations (HOAs)? Sure – here's how.



Shop smart



Here's a buying tip: Identify your simple, everyday purchases and price them with online retailers who specialize in bulk.

You can even schedule regular shipments so you stay stocked up while you save.



**SCHEDULE
REGULAR
SHIPMENTS**

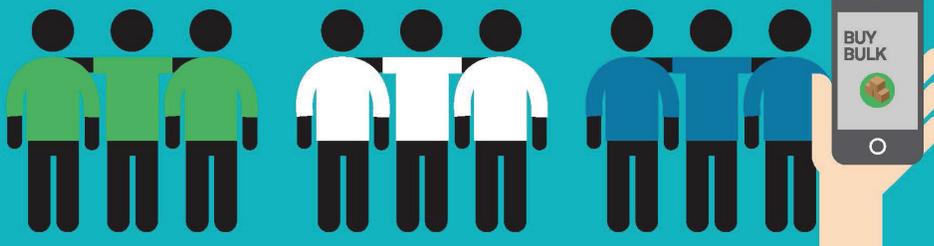
Drive a bargain

- If you make a lot of large purchases at the same store every month, talk to them about a volume discount.
- Do you pay your bill the same week you receive it? Ask for a quick-pay discount.
- Negotiate with everyone, period.



Build a team

Work with other local communities and vendors for collective buying – and more saving. Hooking up with a group-buying site like buyerhive.com can help, too!



Bulk means big savings! For more information on how your association can save costs, [talk to FirstService Residential](#), North America's residential property management leader.

FirstService Residential Pre-Legal

By Sharon Manery | Pre-Legal Supervisor

The FirstService Residential Arizona Pre-legal Department was created in September 2013, as a result of Red Rock Financial Services stopping collection activity in the state of Arizona. As a result of the economic down fall that started in 2008, many of our clients have become dependent on the financial security that a “no cost” collection service provides. FirstService Residential Arizona understands this need and is always prepared to meet our clients’ needs. The world of “no cost” collections is complicated and risky but when done correctly and efficiently, it can be an extremely successful tool for both FirstService Residential Arizona and our clients.



The goal for FirstService Residential Arizona was to create a streamlined process that provides our clients with an effective simple means of encouraging homeowners to pay delinquent balances prior to being sent to a collection attorney. FirstService Residential Arizona started this endeavor by taking the time to evaluate the Red Rock Financial Services’ “no cost” model and identifying areas that were successful and areas that were inefficient or problematic. We are determined to provide a better product that is worthy of the First Service Residential brand. FirstService Residential Arizona tapped into our own internal talent and developed a one of a kind database that has helped eliminate time consuming manual processes and replaced them with a much faster and productive automated system. This complex data base keeps costs low, reduces human error and helps to ensure a seamless and compliant process, which is a must in a successful “no cost” collection model.

FirstService Residential Arizona also identified the need for individual options regarding the Association’s Collections Attorney and as such we quickly established a working relationship with the top 5 HOA Collection Attorneys in Arizona thus, allowing our clients to choose the option best suited for their individual needs.

In true sink or swim fashion, the first run for the Pre-legal department involved sending out more than 800 demand letters in a matter of a few days. Many of the Associations who were previously with Red Rock Financial Services had delinquent accounts that had not been worked in months. FirstService Residential Arizona was successful in on boarding all of the previously handled delinquent accounts and thus provided our homeowners with an opportunity to remit and have payments posted before the account was sent to the Collection Attorney.

FirstService Residential Arizona is several months into this process and most of our clients have had more than one billing cycle go through the Pre-legal department. Our process has proven itself to be very effective and as a result our Associations are seeing incredible results. A very high percentage of Homeowners are paying their delinquent assessments in full and best of all, it is all being done without putting a financial burden on the Association. We recently calculated the amount collected for our Clients and within a time frame of just over 6 months, FirstService Residential Arizona is ecstatic to say that we have collected over 1.2 million dollars for our Associations!

At FirstService Residential Arizona, we strive to provide exceptional service that helps us stand out amongst our competitors. We take pride in knowing that we are a one of kind management company and the FirstService Residential Arizona “no cost” pre-legal model is one more opportunity for us to prove to both our clients and competitors that FirstService Residential Arizona is stepping up our game. The bar is set high, however with new products, services and a deep understanding of our clients’ needs, FirstService Residential Arizona will continue to prove that there is only one choice when it comes to selecting a Management Company in the Valley of the Sun: FirstService Residential Arizona!!!

“Your team has collected more in the past month for MVB than the other collection agencies’ combined in the past year. That’s before it goes to collection. With these thoughts in mind, we are happy that we made the decision to use your team. Again, thanks for all your hard work.” ~ Board Member

Welcome New Communities!

Rancho Del Ray

The Rancho Del Ray community is located at Pecos Road and Gilbert Road in Chandler. This community is made up of mixed residential uses including single family homes, cluster homes, and townhomes. Rancho Del Ray offers its residents three community pools and play areas with equipment.



Copper Leaf

The Copper Leaf community is located at 24th Street and Southern Avenue in Phoenix. The community offers residents beautiful amenities, which include community pools, tot lots, basketball courts and several community parks.



Mesa Sierra Ranch II

This community is located in Mesa, Arizona and consists on 176 single family homes. FirstService Residential assumed management responsibilities on September 1, 2014. The Mesa Sierra Ranch II community is located at Crismon Road and Baseline Road in Mesa. Within the community, residents can enjoy a pool, spa, tot lots, sport courts, and community parks. Mesa Sierra Ranch II is conveniently located near several top rated golf courses and shopping areas.



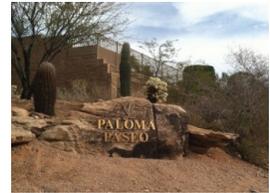
The Plaza Residences

The Plaza Residences community is located at Scottsdale Road and Acoma Drive, near Kierland Commons in Scottsdale. This community offers residents resort style living right in the heart of Scottsdale with six floor plans offering nine foot ceilings, fireplaces, and crown molding. The Plaza Residences also offers residents several amenities including two heated pools, spa, fitness center, putting green, media room, business center and clubhouse with a pool table.



Paloma Paseo

The Paloma Paseo community is located at 136th St & Shea Blvd in Northeast Scottsdale. This community offers residents natural area open space along with great mountain and city views right from their homes. Paloma Paseo is surrounded by natural desert xeriscaping, visually giving the community an appealing desert style.



Elliot Shores

The Elliot Shores community is a sub-association of The Islands master-planned community located near Elliot Road and McQueen Road in Gilbert. The community features a community pool and walking trails for residents to enjoy.



Summer Place Village

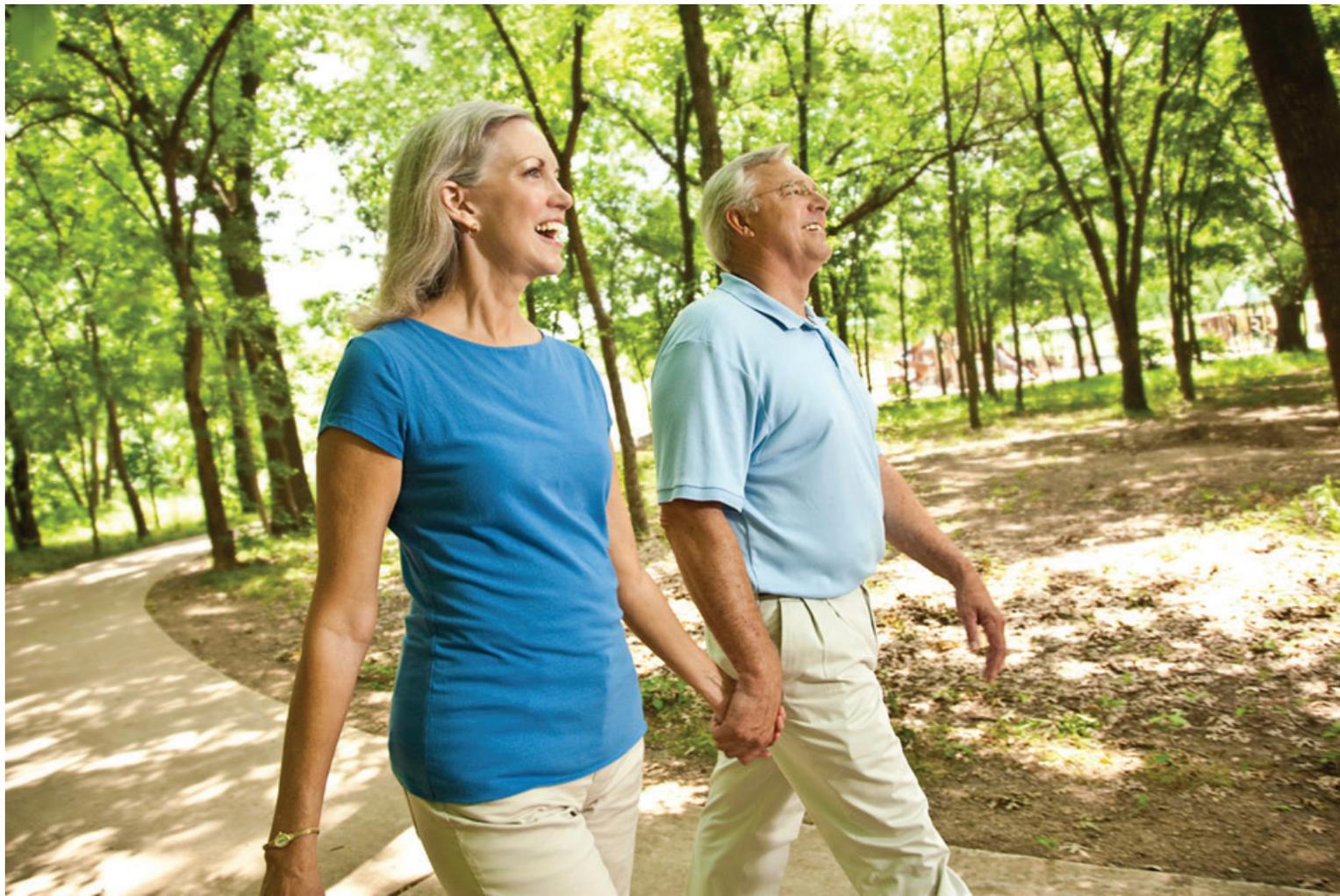
The Summer Place Village community is located at Gilbert Road and Southern Avenue in Mesa and offers residents access to local schools, shopping and restaurants. The community features a community pool and spa and is adjacent to the Silvergate City Park for the homeowner's enjoyment.



The Allison Condominiums

The Allison Condominiums community is located at East Thunderbird Road and 92nd Street in Scottsdale. This community offers residents multiple floor plans with stainless steel finished appliances, walk in closets, private balcony/patio and much more. The Allison Condominiums also offer residents several amenities including multiple swimming pools, spa, clubhouse, several courtyards and an outdoor grilling area.





Five Ways Today's Active Adults Spend Their Days Differently

It's no secret that active adult communities are changing. With shifting demographics and lifestyles, gone are the days of sequestered neighborhoods in the far-flung suburbs dominated by golf culture.

Today's active adult communities offer a much more diverse, vibrant mix. In this article, we'll take a look at how a typical day might unfold for someone living this lifestyle.

1. You might start the day with work. Many of today's "retirees" aren't fully retired at all. More than likely, you've scaled back your work so you're not putting in a full 9 to 5 anymore, but it's likely that you're still serving in some sort of professional capacity, perhaps as a consultant. To that end, you might find yourself starting your day in your home office, or using the office facilities in your community's clubhouse.
2. You'll find yourself participating in activities outside your community. Once you spend some time "at the office," you're ready to unwind a little bit. Today's active adult communities offer a greater variety of activities from which to choose...on this particular day your community manager has organized a trip to a nearby art gallery, followed by lunch in the city. Buses have been chartered and tickets have been reserved in advance. Incidentally, this trip was arranged because many of your neighbors have just finished reading *The Goldfinch* in the community book club, and the tale of purloined artwork has kindled an interest in the work of the Dutch masters – many of which are on display in a traveling exhibit at the museum.
3. Your community culture will be unique. On your way to the exhibit, you get a call from an old friend who lives in another active adult community, far away in the Carolinas. The way she describes her life is vastly different from yours – a lot of card games and gardening, things like that. And she loves it. This difference is the product of a new trend of great property managers who know how to grow the cultures unique to each community. Whereas your community culture is defined by arts and activity, your friend's has evolved into a place where leisure is at the forefront.

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Five Ways Today's Active Adults Spend Their Days Differently

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4. Your children and grandchildren will be a bigger part of the picture – when your schedule permits. After your visit to the museum, you're home just in time to see your grandchildren, who spend a few hours after school with you while their parents are at work. A lot of your neighbors do the same thing...you've all found that your children are working longer hours, so you've offered to pitch in and help with some after-school time spent with your grandchildren. You're fortunate in that your community is close to where your children live (that is, you didn't have to move away to the Sun Belt to find a good active adult community), so you can see everybody more often. But it's on your schedule and your terms – after all, you've got a busy life, too.

5. You might find yourself on a team. At 5:15 your grandchildren are picked up (you helped your granddaughter navigate the tricky waters of her math homework – long division) and then you're off to your evening softball game. You've been on the team for a few years now, and usually you all meet for a light picnic dinner at the ballpark before you play. After the game (you went 2 for 4, great job) it's time to call it a day...another perfect day, that is.

Of course, everyone's day will be different (just like every community is different). The key is that today's active adult communities are known for lifestyles that are tailored to the individual interests of the people who live there. The cultures will grow and change over time, creating a more fluid experience where a sense of community is cultivated rather than dictated. The result is a lifestyle that feels more like you, in the best possible way. For more information on how life in active adult communities is changing, contact FirstService Residential, North America's leading active adult community management company.



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HOW TO PREPARE YOUR POOL FOR INSPECTION

A health inspector is coming to assess your community pool. Are you prepared? If not, a pool inspection can be a major source of anxiety for your board members and residents. But don't throw in the towel – there are steps you can take to make sure your inspection goes...well, swimmingly.

The professionals at American Pool Enterprises, the largest swimming pool management company in the U.S., offer five proven tips to help you prepare for your next pool inspection. So the next time a health inspector is on the way, remember...

The inspector is not your enemy. Yes, citations for infractions can necessitate repairs, which may be inconvenient or expensive. But remember, the inspector's job is to ensure your pool is safe for your residents and guests -- increasing your peace of mind and reducing your liability. Furthermore, seeing your upcoming inspection in a positive light will help make the experience less stressful. So on inspection day, keep the visit friendly and informative and be prepared to answer questions, ensuring a pleasant experience for everyone.

Conduct your own pre-inspection. You can conduct your own inspection to avoid unpleasant surprises later on. Verify the water flow with a dye test, inspect all of your safety equipment to make sure it's in good working order, tighten ladders and handrails, confirm necessary signage is visible, and examine all landscaping and fencing to be sure everything is in compliance. In addition, examine rescue tubes, telephones, first-aid kits, flow meters and pump-strainer baskets to ensure they're all working properly. And don't forget to check equipment that may have become dirty or damaged, like cracked tile. Disorderly or dirty pump rooms are another common infraction, as are hot water valves that have been turned off for an extended period of time.

Know the requirements for operational inspections. As soon as summer arrives, so do your periodic inspections. Loose or missing drain covers are common violations, so be sure everything is in place. Also, pay close attention to water chemistry, and be sure that if you have pool staff they are trained and licensed. Many communities are cited because chlorine levels are too low, the pH is too high or licenses aren't current – chlorine and pH can be checked regularly (some states require hourly checks), so there's no reason to be cited for improper levels.

Consider hiring a pool management company. Effectively maintaining and managing a pool's licensing and facilities can be overwhelming for a busy community manager. Your community association management company can recommend a quality pool management company to handle everything from A to Z. Even better, by eliminating potential violations and citations, your savings will likely offset the additional fees.

Know your regulations. Swimming pool rules and regulations differ by state and often change over time – therefore, it's crucial to keep up-to-date on all current state and local regulations to ensure compliance at all times. Again, a pool management company may be the answer if you don't have time to stay abreast of the changing regulatory landscape.

How to Get Rid of Mosquitoes with Garlic Juice?

Mosquitoes are more than just pests; they are like your everyday enemy. The more you try to get rid of them, the more that they come haunting you back while doubling in number. The best way to get rid of mosquitoes is not exactly to kill them but to find a way to repel them. Buying a commercial mosquito repellent can cost you a lot of money, so if you are on a tight budget, try using natural garlic juice to get rid of the presence of mosquitoes.

Things you'll need:

Sharp Knife
Dish Soap
2 Hot Peppers
2 Cloves of Garlic
Spray Bottle
Milk Jug

Instructions:

1. Chop the hot peppers and garlic with a sharp knife on your chopping board.
2. Pour all the chopped ingredients into a mixing bowl.
3. Add dish soap into the mixing bowl and stir all the ingredients with a tablespoon.
4. Crush the peppers and garlic together using the back edge of a spoon to release their juices into the dish soap.
5. Fill a milk jug halfway with tap water.
6. Pour your mixed ingredients into the jug and seal the cap.
7. Shake the mixture vigorously to allow the garlic and pepper juices to mix with the soap and water.
8. Reopen the cap of the jug and fill the rest of it with tap water. Reseal the jug and gently shake its contents.
9. Store the mixture overnight by placing it in a cool, dark place.
10. Get your empty spray bottle and mix your garlic concentrate with fresh tap water at a ratio of 1:64. Apply the mosquito repellent by spraying it directly as you would other commercial repellent.



FirstService Residential acquires Award Winning Tucson Management Company!

We are excited to announce that on October 1, 2014 FirstService Residential has acquired Y Cross Management, an award winning homeowner association management company based in Tucson, which serves all of Southern Arizona. "Enhancing our leadership position in Tucson and southern Arizona was a strategic priority to help strengthen our market leading presence in Arizona and throughout North America," said Chuck Fallon, CEO of FirstService Residential.

Founded in 2004, Y Cross Management has approximately 60 communities under management representing 10,000 units. The company is headed by Andrew Way, who will continue to manage day-to-day operations as FirstService Residential's Senior Vice President for Southern Arizona. Mr. Way founded Y Cross Management after 10 years assisting businesses within the community management industry. Andrew brings 30 years of successful entrepreneurship and a wealth of varied experience running small businesses and has been a member and held leadership positions in many charitable organizations in the community. We have watched and admired Andrew and his team for some time, we are pleased they are joining the FirstService family and look forward to sharing our tools, technology, and best practices with them and the southern Arizona clients.

FirstService Residential shares the same philosophy and values upon which Y Cross Management was founded – integrity, innovation, leadership and service. Y Cross subscribes to the "Code of the West" which is printed on the wall in their lobby and is the first thing you see when visiting the company, it is as follows:

The Code of the West

1. Live each day with courage.
2. Take pride in your work.
3. Always finish what you start.
4. Do what has to be done.
5. Be tough, but fair.
6. When you make a promise, keep it.
7. Ride for the brand.
8. Talk less and say more.
9. Remember that some things aren't for sale.
10. Know where to draw the line.

This acquisition is a significant boost to our presence in Southern Arizona. With a larger office and significant client base in Tucson we are positioned to attract top talent and better serve both our existing client base as well as communities wanting a full-service HOA management company.

Jason Proudfit
President



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