



coastal Mexico's lifestyle magazine

Colours of Mexico  
Mighty Nature  
Good Deeds  
Nature's Wonders  
History and Mythology  
Finance  
RV Travel  
Recipe  
Learn Spanish  
Path to Citizenship

**Pelican**  
photo by Guy Brisebois



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To send submissions for possible inclusion in the magazine, please send to the editor by 15th of each month. We are always looking for writers or ideas on what you would like us to see as topics for the magazine.

Article submissions:

- Preferred subjects are Manzanillo and Mexico
- All articles should be 1000 words or less or may be serialized or 500-750 words if accompanied by photos
- Pictures are welcome
- Comments, letters to the editor, articles, photos and advertisements are always welcome

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### Short-Term Getaways

story by Suzanne A. Marshall, photos by Allan Yanitski

SAYULA, JALISCO - We were encouraged by friends to take a jaunt for a few days to Sayula, Jalisco. About an hour from Guadalajara, Sayula is a smaller city of about 50,000 people. There are a number of interesting attractions there and we headed off down the highway to check in at our booked hotel, the Gran Casa Sayula. Typical of Mexico, there is no grand entrance or long driveways greeting you. One finds a demure entrance with a tidy sign and not much parking to be seen until you check in and find out the 'lay of the land'. There is, indeed, a parking lot, but one must enter a driveway a little way down the street that takes you around to private parking behind the hotel.



Gran Casa Sayula, Sayula Jalisco, centrally located and sumptuous inside

The hotel itself is lovely and grand, with a huge enclosure boasting a very good dining room, a pool, a spa and elegant rooms both on the main level and an upper floor. The hotel manageress proved to be fluent in English and very knowledgeable about locations and directions. This included street maps which became extremely useful. The location of the hotel

Gran Casa Sayula interior pool and nearby spa



is quite central, so we were able to walk to all of our chosen sites. And walk we did! My walking tracker pegged us in at 14,000 steps one day and it seemed like no effort at all as we were too busy gawking and exploring.

Like most Mexican towns, Sayula has a lovely town square with a gazebo and shops galore. But this time we had specific targets to find. Our first destination was the world-famous Ojeda knife crafters store and work shop. There is a tidy storefront on the sidewalk where tourists and shoppers can enter and view the fabulous array of cutlery, chef knives, hunting knives, daggers and more. Born in 1935, Don José Ojeda Larios is the founder and part of the thirteenth generation of family blacksmiths. Because of the tendency of carbon steel to rust, Don Jose and his two sons decided to work with very high quality stainless steel and Damascus steel.



A vista from the terrace of an upper room in Gran Casa Sayula

Their highest standard of products has led to importation of materials from Alaska, Siberia and Africa. These materials include stones such as lapis lazuli, jade, turquoise, parrot wing, frog and snake skin, ivory and mammoth tooth fossil and exotic woods. The quality and beauty of some of these products is astonishing. The carved and decorous blades are also replete with jeweled and bone-carved handles. It was quite a site to see and of course we happily left with a practical purchase of chefs' knives and paring knives. They will last forever.

...Short-Term Getaways - Sayula, Jalisco



Sayula town square and gazebo

Once we had completed our visit to Ojeda knives, our curiosity took us to another delightful shop and factory... a candy-making venue!

Welcome to Lugo Cajeta de Leche and the producers of yummy hand-made milk caramel candy and an assortment of sweet syrups and delectables. If you've got a sweet tooth, samples are available and they'll let you try your hand at stirring the caldron full of caramelizing milk. The smell alone is enough to make you salivate. We did all of the above and left with free samples, too. These sweets can be found in a myriad of shops and tiendas throughout Mexico.

The story dates to the 20th century where a young man by the name of Agustín Lugo was arrested for selling Rompope (an alcoholic beverage) to a group of soldiers. This was going to be a tricky livelihood so, in 1915, he decided to produce a popular Spanish dessert of the time which became the milk caramel products produced by Lugo Cajeta to this day. Apparently, this milky sweet was a sustenance the Mexicanos loved and many

The home of Cajetas Lugo Sayula. At first I thought the enlarged container displayed on the outside wall was a surfboard!



Ojeda knives are works of art



...Short-Term Getaways - Sayula, Jalisco

began to drop in for the product off the train that was popular transport for the many workers passing through Sayula. The product itself is made from raw milk cooked in copper caldrons and stirred with paddles for 3-4 hours, some vanilla is added then the candy is left to set and thicken.



Lugo Cajeta product is also sold in jars of sauce

Some of the products produced today are available in jars as caramel syrup and as toffee-like candy packaged in hand-made wooden containers complete with lids and small wooden spoons that accompany the product. This business now employs quite a few residents of Sayula and the company has expanded to three sites for manufacturing.

Once our tour was completed at the candy maker, we decided it was time to find the local tequila distillery. Next on our agenda was a walk to Distileria Rojesa whose slogan is 'El Arte de Destilar', the art of distilling. Walking into the open yard of the distillery, I found it to be very non-commercial looking with an open dirt yard; a few tables under the trees; and a long low-lying hacienda type building. This was a much quainter approach for a street presence than you are going to find in the town of Tequila itself. A pleasant young man greeted us from the 'tasting' shop and had been told by our hotel manageress that we would be coming. It was a very quiet day in Sayula so



A humble sign in the yard of the distillery

that was a good arrangement. We might otherwise have walked for nothing. During high season, they receive tours and larger groups as I understand it. But this smaller group was nice with just the four of us and we felt relaxed and were able to ask questions at our leisure.

Indeed, this was a much smaller operation than we had toured before, giving the impression that they were catering to a much smaller market and produced perhaps a less common brand of various tequilas. We toured the areas where they burned the wood and produced the heat for large ovens. Then, we followed the processes through to the storage of wooden kegs for aging. One of the things I noticed was that they were composting the agave remnants in a back area where we were told the compost would be taken to their agave groves in the hills and mixed with the soil there to enrich and fertilize the ground. A great idea, I thought.

Later, we followed our guide to the product display area where we enjoyed a few samples of the tequilas and their specialty which is a unique blend of drink called raicilla. I am told by friends that this is an acquired taste and a preference that might be acquired like the various scotch whiskies that so many will debate about. All in all, it was a very enjoyable tour and always a pleasure to see more of the 'hands on' production approach by Mexican workers than those of the large factory type producers.

...Short-Term Getaways - Sayula, Jalisco



The walkway to the sacred museum and the cathedral



The ancient ruins of the original cathedral

Our final destination for this excursion was the Museum of the Sanctuary of Sacred Art of our Lady of Guadalupe attached to a beautiful cathedral. This proved to be a fascinating stop, with the history of many of these artifacts dating back to the 17th century. The original church was completed in 1795 but, due to an earthquake (which I was unable to date), the sacred pieces were rescued and became part of the museum which has expanded further with the addition of other sacred artifacts and relics. The remains of the original church are still standing and gave us a sense of the calamity that had struck. The photos included with this article give you an idea of the exquisite craftsmanship of the various art pieces as well as the construction of the cathedral.

I would have to say that a few days spent in Sayula Jalisco can prove to be most interesting and educational. There are so many facets of Mexican culture to absorb and so much of it is nearby our beautiful seaside location in Manzanillo. Need a break, or driven by curiosity? You needn't go far to find what you may be looking for. And, I might add as a last comment, that the shopping is great and so is the food. Always nice to know.

... more pics follow

...Short-Term Getaways - Sayula, Jalisco



The food is delicious in the Gran Casa Sayula dining room



A vast assortment of cooking knives and hunting knives can be viewed in the Ojeda Shop in Sayula



Chefs knives are made of the finest hardwood and high grade stainless steel



One of several shop areas where the men fashion handles and finely-honed knife blades

...Short-Term Getaways - Sayula, Jalisco



Daggers and sheaths on display cases in the shop



Ojeda offers a nice shop to browse and learn about their products

The caramel candy is toasted and browned on top once in the container



Lugo Cajeta cooking caldron and handmade thin wooden containers



Containers in various shapes and sizes



When taking a tour, you can try your hand at stirring the caldron. Be prepared nowadays to don a hairnet.

...Short-Term Getaways - Sayula, Jalisco



Signage leads the way to our distillery tour



Wooden barrels containing tequila that will 'age' until ready for bottling



The display room and tasting area offered a welcome seat from our walking and touring



Sayula is nestled in the Sierra Madres and sunsets like this can be seen from the distillery. You can barely make out the mounds of agave, trimmed and ready for the ovens.



A handsome carriage displays the Rojesa product

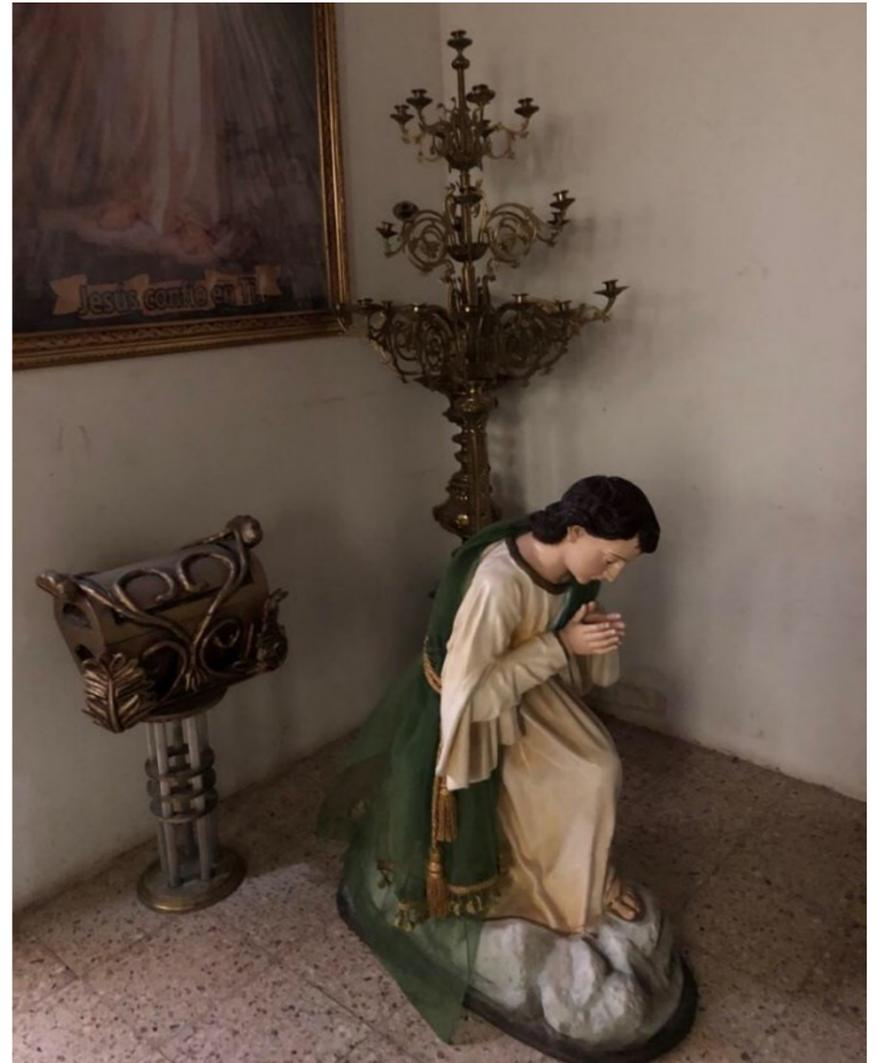


The final products ready for viewing and sampling outside the hacienda

...Short-Term Getaways - Sayula, Jalisco



The magnificent interior of the cathedral today



Various artifacts in the museum of sacred art



The museum also includes many paintings



There are several rooms of artifacts in the museum for gazing and pondering



Statuettes line the upper shelves; these no doubt used for nativity display

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## Migratory Birds

by Terry Sovil

Are there any birds that migrate back and forth from Canada to Mexico and maybe spend some time in the USA on the way? Turns out that over 350 different species have a second home in Mexico! There are flight paths all the way from the great Boreal Forest in Canada to South America!

### Migration?

Bird migration is an annual, seasonal event. It is driven by the need for food. As winter sets in, food and insects becomes scarcer. Getting warm is an issue but many birds, including some hummingbirds, can tolerate the winter if there is enough food.

So, with no passports needed, the borders don't stop the migrating birds. Over 350 species of birds travel from the US and Canada to Mexico. There are four general types of migratory species: winter residents, summer residents, just passing through and migrants with a resident population.

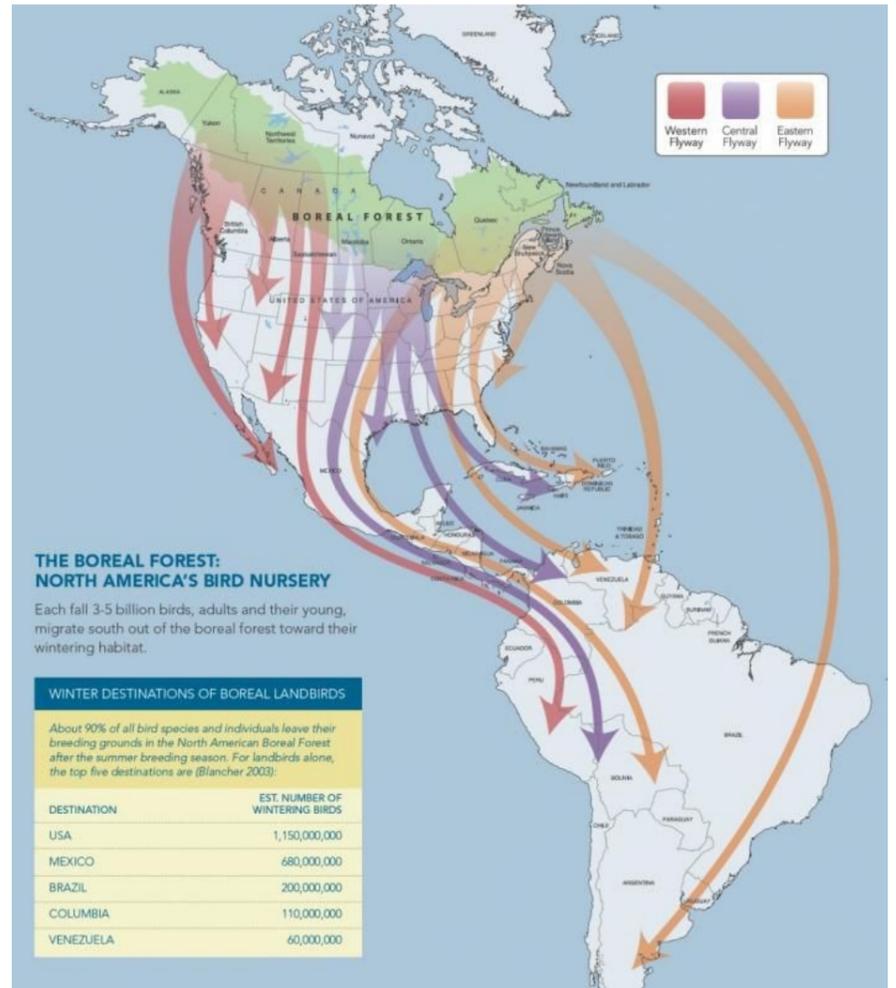
*The winter residents*, about 145 species, reproduce in their home area and they winter in Mexico. Some go down as far as Central America. These include the golden cheeked warblers of Texas.

*Summer residents*, 30 species, reproduce in Mexico and spend the winter more south. The Lucifer hummingbird is one.

*Passers-by*, about 35 species, breed north of Mexico and then winter in Central or South America. One, the pectoral sandpiper, breeds in Alaska and Northern Canada then spends the winter in South America.

*Migratory populations with resident populations* are about 140 species, such as diver birds, which breed in Canada and the United States and winter in Mexico, although there are populations that stay year round in Durango and Zacatecas.

Migration Hazards



The migration itself is difficult, with high rates of predators killing the migrating birds. One of the big concerns is loss of habitat, both in their own country and along the way. Pollution such as oils and pesticides, uncontrolled hunting and climate change are problematic. I read a lot about the huge decrease in the numbers of birds and the need for cooperation between countries to help control impacts on bird migration.

One of the problems is a lack of protection, in the forests and everywhere, which makes them exploited. Coastal roads, habitat destruction, over-exploitation of wildlife and loss of vegetation are a loss of food supply. Human settlement, logging and agricultural pressures also change the forests.

Mexico plays a key role as it is a major migratory route where all kinds of birds stay and migrate through but depend on Mexican resources to continue their travel.

Some scientists warn that good habitat in Mexico is disappearing, forcing birds to go to less optimal spots where they do not have the same resources. They may not survive the migration

...Migratory Birds

and the winter. Another result is they do not have the strength to return to their place of origin and die. One example is the Golden Cheeked Warblers that reproduce in certain areas of Texas, migrate to San Cristobal de las Casas for the winter and their population has begun to reduce considerably.

**Range Charts and Bird Species**

I included 2 charts that show migration paths and areas. It is pretty humbling to look at the distances and number of birds that migrate!

One of most talked-about birds is the Colima warbler that migrates from Big Bend National Park in Texas to the south where they winter in Chiapas and Guatemala. This park is heavily promoted and advertised with many bird-watching tours heading there during the season.

Can you see some of these birds here, in the state of Colima? Yes! The Jalisco dry forests get many of them. Located along the Pacific coast, the states of Nayarit, Jalisco and Colima are an area of small mountains with elevations from 2000 meters or 6500 feet, and up to 4000m (13000 feet), near the Colima Volcano. It is tropical sub humid, with rain during the wet season (May to November). There is a distinct dry season too (December to May) with many trees losing their leaves. Near the Colima Volcano, there is lava and volcano created formations. These forests are among the richest in the world! There are about 300 bird species here. The forests are a critical habitat for birds from Canada and the US and 45% of the species are migrants.

These migratory species are tri-national, splitting time in Canada, US and Mexico over the calendar year. These three countries need to step up more to preserve the natural heritage of all 1,154 bird species in North America. There was a report put together by Citizen Science (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology) that measured bird migration and documented long-term changes in bird numbers. Tens of thousands of Canadians, Americans and Mexicans contributed data analyzed by scientists from all 3 countries.

Here are some examples of **birds that migrate**:

- Scarlet tanager: Pennsylvania to Brazil
- Western tanager: Oregon to Costa Rica
- Black-throated blue warbler: Michigan to Jamaica
- Wood thrush: Ontario to Mexico
- American golden-plover: Northern Alaska to southern Argentina
- Blackpoll warbler: Eastern Canada to northern South America
- Great Blue Heron: Southern Canada as far as the Caribbean
- Golden Eagle: Canada, primarily the west, to Mexico, Gulf Coast and Florida
- American White Pelican: Northwest Territories to USA and Mexico

Only 22% of Canadian bird species spend the whole year in Canada. Most migrate to the USA (33%), to Mexico, Central America and Caribbean (23%), South America (15%), or Europe Asia, at sea (7%).

**What can we do?**

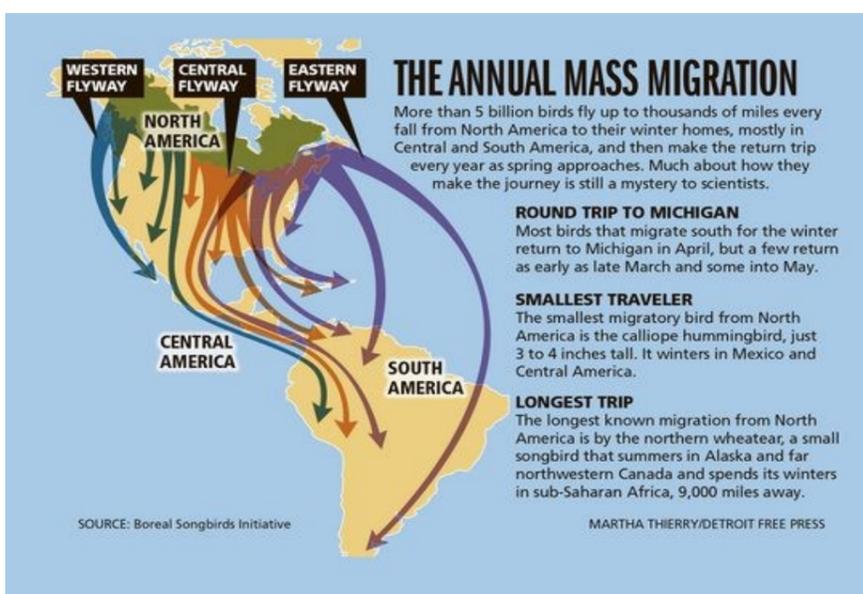
Like so many things with nature, we need to study and understand and then try to preserve. Ask corporations through their business operations, and citizens like you and I through our consumer choices, to take a larger role in mitigating deforestation, development, pollution, and climate change.

Links:

[Boreal Songbirds Initiative](#)

[Iniciativa para la Conservación de las Aves de América del Norte](#)

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## Watch Canadian or US TV channels in Mexico

by Señor Tech

For over 15 years I have not been constrained watching my Canadian and US channels anywhere in the world. All I need is an internet connection and I can watch on my iPad, iPhone or as we do at home, on our Television using a HDMI cable connected to my computer.

Is this considered piracy? No, because I pay for the content. Is this legal? Well, I'll leave that question to our legal scholars.

How exactly is this done? I have a dedicated PVR (Personal Video Recorder, also known as a "digital video recorder") attached to a Slingbox. The Slingbox is connected by data cable to an internet router. The PVR can be one supplied by Bell, Shaw or Telus in Canada or any Television channel provider in the USA. (A regular cable box will work, but then content is limited to live viewing).

In Manzanillo, my wife and I watch programs that we have recorded in full HD. The computer version is free and the Slingbox is controlled by a virtual remote control. One advantage of the Slingbox over a satellite receiver is that stormy weather does not affect the picture quality or signal (unless your signal back home comes from a satellite receiver).

Of the 2 models, I would recommend the Slingbox 500 solely for the HDMI cable option. Connect an HDMI cable to both Slingbox 500 and your cable/satellite box and you will get the best quality picture and ease of installation.

There is another option to watching Canadian and US television in Manzanillo. If you have a friend with a Shaw satellite and they haven't used their 5-receiver limit, you can buy a Shaw receiver and pay for a portion of the subscription prices. You will also have to have a satellite dish with a Shaw LNB (low-noise block downconverter) installed. This seems to be the most popular method at present.

Shaw's system can be shut down at any time by the CRTC (Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission regulates all Canadian broadcasting and telecommunications activities and enforces rules it creates to carry out the policies assigned to it). Shaw's competitor Bell Systems was forced to shut down out of country transmissions a few years back. So be warned this may befall Shaw as well.

The start-up costs are similar for either system. With satellite, a receiver has to be purchased for \$150 CAD or \$300 CAD for a PVR receiver. (Your system includes a dish, a receiver and a remote. Each additional TV will require its own receiver to view programming.) You will also require the dish to be installed. Check with your condo association to see if there are any objections. I have heard of installations costing over \$400.00 CAD.

The Slingbox 500 sells for \$329.00 CAD and the M2 is \$200.00 CAD. A cable/satellite box has to be hooked up in Canada/USA with the requisite television subscription.



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...Watch Canadian or US Television in Mexico



An internet connection in Canada/USA as well an internet connection in Manzanillo are required in order to send receive the video/audio data. Only one device can view the content at any time. This is a technical limitation. If you want more than one stream, you will require 2 Slingboxes and 2 television receivers.

I have been happy with my Slingbox but, if you elect the Shaw Direct method, you will be able to watch Canadian/US television channels either way.

*if you have questions or suggestions about future technology topics, email [seniortech@manzanillosun.com](mailto:seniortech@manzanillosun.com)*

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## Cemetery Dogs

by Fred Taylor of Animal Angels, Manzanillo

An Indian legend says: "When a human dies, there is a bridge they must cross to enter into heaven. At the head of the bridge waits every animal the human encountered during their lifetime. The animals, based on what they know of this person, decide which humans may cross the bridge ... and which are turned away."

That would be Karma at its finest. What follows is the story of a group of dogs that live in the cemetery in Centro Manzanillo.

As Karen Lopez (who works at the Alianza Animal clinic) and I were returning two sterilized cats to Centro, a very distressed Doña María came up to us to ask for our help with a dog at the cemetery that had a large open wound on its side.

María left the crated cats with a friend and María, Karen and I headed toward the cemetery. Upon arriving, we quickly found the dog hiding out in a public restroom. It did, indeed, have a severe open wound in its side.

After talking to one of the caretakers, we found out the injury had occurred when a pack of males were after a female in heat.

The dog was taken to a local veterinarian for treatment. He required many sutures to close the wound. He is now being fostered until he has healed enough to return to his friends at the cemetery.

It turns out that there are ten or more dogs that live at the cemetery. They are well cared for by the caretakers and visitors who provide food for them.

None of the dogs are sterilized so this will be the next project that Animal Angels will take on. Then, hopefully, all the dogs will get along with each other much better.



Rescued and transported for treatment by Animal Angels, Danny the Cemetery Dog is now on the mend in foster care.



Cemetery guards watch over the dogs, who appear well fed and healthy. The cemetery dogs will receive sterilization surgeries courtesy of Animal Angels.



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by Tommy Clarkson

**Shaving Brush Tree** *Pseudobombax ellipticum*

Family: *Bombacaceae*

Also known as: *Amapolla, Bobax, Pink Bombax or Pink Shaving Brush Tree*

Upon seeing the flowers of the Shaving Brush Tree, one instantly comprehends how and why it got its name. But beyond looking a great deal like what its name implies, they are quite unique and beautiful! In fact, those two words apply to all manner of this plant -from its rather different trunk to its array of possible growth and presentation applications.

It is native to Southern Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras and - via its fans - has found its way, in abundance, to the Caribbean and Southern Florida. It sports a stout, smooth, sometimes swollen, unnamed, dark green trunk - often with a tortoise shell pattern and fissured with gray bark. But don't let those wrinkles and gray fool you, the *Pseudobombax ellipticum* is a fast grower, attaining thirty feet (9.14 meters) or more quickly.

I've read about - but never seen -specimens that, purportedly have reached the sixty to seventy feet (18.28 -21.33 meters) range in standup stature. But, quite interestingly, if grown in a pot and regularly trimmed, you have a wonderfully attractive, compact one of as small as three feet (.91 meters) tall.

As to body building, they're not particular. They develop multiple trunks - with highly ornamental bark - as often as solitary



One might wish to keep in mind that its roots can be a bit large, sprawling and "up topside".

ones (sometimes, with maturity, a bit bottle shaped) and what with its numerous stems, it's often described as octopus shaped. Its limbs are not so muscle bound and are usually of a lighter color of green, with vertical striations stripping of greens, yellows, browns and white. Often, they are, in fact, what an old chum of mine who, as a football pulling guard seemed to appear - wider than they are tall!

Its leaves are magnificent and reason enough to have this tree in your garden. They are long-stalked and comprised of five to seven, deep green, palmately arranged, leaflets. Each is elliptic to obovate and from six inches to a foot (15.24 - 30.48 cm) in length. These form a circular outline for the leaf whole. The freshly unfurled leaves often boast a beautiful reddish-bronze color. And while the younger leaflets normally lay in a flat plane, the older ones become so large that they become pendent. They usually absent the tree in December or January with none to return until March sometime.

Interestingly, the terminal flower buds begin to form in late autumn or early winter and in February expand from looking like brown toy tops to being six inches (15.24 cm) in length, velvety and cigar shaped. Riffle has described the ensuing process of them opening "at dusk to reveal five half inch-long (1.27 cm), recurved velvet brownish and white and petals and hundreds of

...Shaving Brush Tree



The "birth" of a Pink Shaving Brush.

six to eight inch-long (15.24 -20.23 cm) white or pink stamens very reminiscent of the vernacular name." This opening process is even a bit quirky as when these flowers unfold, they sometimes do so with an audible pop!

Riffle also observed that "The pink flowered forms are more spectacular during the daylight hours, but the white-flowered form is astonishingly attractive in the moonlight and is said to have larger blossoms."

For quite some time, it was believed that these blooms were pollinated by bats. However, new research has divulged that they are pollinated by the wind or flower-feeding mammals. Additionally, they are regulars on the bees' and hummingbirds' busy floral social calendar!

The Shaving Brush Tree likes sun to light shade, fertile, moist and well-draining soil and is moderately salt, wind and drought tolerant. It is best propagated via cuttings or seeds. Its recommended landscaping applications include in xeriscaping, on coastal areas, as a specimen tree, in street-side usage or for incorporation in public areas.

Folks long before us have been enamored by the Shaving Brush Tree as evidenced by its presentation in the artwork on Mayan ceramic pieces. Today, the Shaving Brush Tree wood is sometimes used for carving handicrafts. Its seeds can be toasted and eaten and I've read that the fruit fibers have been used to fill pillows as well as to provide insulation. Beyond that, by way of third party, Jim Conrad reports in his on-line newsletter *Naturalist Newsletter* that "In Las Plantas Medicinales de México I read that the flowers can be cooked to make a tea for fevers and coughs and the powdered bark can tighten the gums."

*(I don't know about you, but tight gums have always been at the forefront of my daily concerns!)*



This picture, indeed, is worth a thousand words!

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you can reach Tommy Clarkson at [tommy@manzanillosun.com](mailto:tommy@manzanillosun.com)

## Tlaloc and Company

by Kirby Vickery

The Aztecs migrated south into the Mexican Valley around 1200CE. Where they came from is a mystery because when Cortez arrived and started to invade, the Aztecs destroyed all of their books (now known as 'codex's') which showed their origins. This was done at Moctezuma's order to prevent the Spaniards from finding the Aztec origin. Hence, amongst all sorts of speculation from all sorts of historical experts, who don't really have any idea either, they have been tracked from the various mountain chains in Arizona, the Colorado River by Yuma Arizona, different places in Utah, other places in Mississippi, Alabama, some small island in the Gulf of Mexico and even China. Personally, I hold with the homeland being in Utah primarily because of the mystery of the origins of the Ute Nation.

The Aztec's were the last of the indigenous peoples to move down from the north in pre-Columbian times. They existed in the area for some time as a second-class society under the rule of the Mayan. Which explains why they adopted so many of the Mayan gods, traditions, ways of life and religion with some changes. They also adopted a lot of their mythology from the Mayan civilization as well as from other independent tribes. They adopted some of the mythology sometimes with the same names and sometimes with different names. Their rise to power came from an alliance with two other societies which gave them the fire power to over throw the Mayan Empire.

One of the most important gods to both societies was the God of Rain. To the Aztecs, he was known as Tlaloc. To the Mayans, he was known as Chac or Chaac depending on which web site you visit. In the Zapotec society, he was called Copcijo. The Aztecs even named a mountain after him (9th highest in Mexico at 4,150 meters or 13,517 feet) with a shrine and an altar on the top. In almost all mythologies, the god was depicted as a male. The one notable exception is the Encyclopedia Britannica where they reference him as a she. With the mythology of Mesoamerican societies having a sexual duality of all their gods, this isn't surprising except the Encyclopedia Britannica treats this Mayan god specifically as one of the few female gods.



Tlaloc by the Codex Rios

The Aztecs, were basically an agriculturally based society that couldn't get along with their neighbors. This increased the value of their Rain God to them. However, it didn't do much to endure the Rain God's affection to the people. His followers were always put first in line for the sacrifices because of his importance to the world of the Aztec. He would love it when the mothers of small children were called to the sacrificial stone.

The lock the Priest society had on the populous made it an honor to be selected to be a sacrifice. Subsequently, the priests were never in want of 'sacrificial victims.' To die of old age or natural causes did not get one into Aztec heaven. To die as a sacrifice meant that person's soul was destined for heaven in all its glory. When the mothers were placed on the altar, it was said that Tlaloc would revel in the tears (get it – rain drops) from the children. The same thing would happen when young children were selected to the same fate and he would collect the tears from their mothers.

...Tlaloc and Company



Tezcatlipoca with all 20 day signs, symbolizing the divine calendar.

There isn't much evidence that Tlaloc had that much interference with the people in the Fifth creation of the people's world of Aztec creation myth which are called 'Suns'. He was the primary God of the 3rd Sun which is known as the 'Rain Sun'.

During his reign, his wife, Xochiquetzal (meaning: jade in skirt.) was snatched by a god named Tezcatlipoca (This god reminds me of Loki of Norse Mythology) and took her to the Aztec version of Hades or the underworld and raped her. Tlaloc was grief-stricken so much so that he stopped all the rains and, when everything dried out, he sent a violent fire and thunder storm which wiped out all the people before he was able to get his wife back. That ended the 3rd Sun.

The participation of Tlaloc in the Aztec creation myth doesn't stop there, at least not directly. The next sun was called The Water Sun and Tlaloc's sister, Chalchiuhtlicue (Goddess of flowing water), was selected to be the God of that World/Sun. Tezcatlipoca and Quetzalcoatl became really jealous of this and put out the sun from that sun which ended the 4th sun. As she

Chalchiuhtlicue in Codex Borgia



fell, the sky opened and drowned everything. It was Quetzalcoatl who made a journey into the underworld to collect a lot of old bones to help build the 5th sun which is the one we're in now.



The Aztec Version of an Ancient Pan-Mesoamerican Rain Deity

If you go into some web sites, you will find a totally different narrative concerning Tezcatlipoca and his part in the creation of the Five Suns. Suffice to say that his conflicts with Quetzalcoatl were the reason for the downfall of the 3rd and 4th sun.

I'm not too sure how we will ever know the real sequence of events as all the people were killed at the end of each sun anyway. It becomes one of these mythological stories with which people can grab onto the one that sounds the best for them and let everyone else believe their own.

Tlaloc was responsible over much more than just water. He was the Aztec's agriculture god and the god of earthly fertility. He had the power to rain illnesses on the people and was in charge of more than the 13-day period between year's end and the new year. It's also good to note that his sacrifices weren't burned like the other gods'. They were buried after being covered over.

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by Tommy Clarkson

**Rabbit Tracks, *Maranta leuconeuru*, 'Kerchoveana'**

Family: *Marantaceae*

Also known as: *Calathea*, *Husband and Wife Plant*, *Prayer Plant*, *Rabbit's Foot* or *Rabbit Tracks Calathea*

As I've mentioned in other *Maranta* or *Calathea* genus writings, there is substantial confusion between the two groups. To quote Robert Lee Riffle - one of the foremost authorities on tropical botany, "[This] genus is closely allied to *Calathea*, and the distinction between some of the species in the two genera is often nearly impossible for the untrained." So noted, species of both require well-draining soil, regular and ample watering, indirect (filtered) sunlight, and protection from the wind with both propagated through division of rooted offshoots, basal cuttings or seeds - I prefer the first.

The Rabbit Tracks in one of twenty to forty species from the *Maranta* botanical "side of the house". For it, specifically, the soil must be left consistently moist during the growing season. In the hackneyed language of the botanist, "*it is an evergreen, low-growing, rhizomatous, tropical perennial*". As a historical aside and further preparation for your participation on the nationally syndicated TV show, Jeopardy, the genus name honors Bartolommeo Maranti, Venetian botanist, circa 1559.

Apropos to that first "Also known as" name cited above, Lovell Benjamin stated, in his book, *Indoor Plants*, the following: "*Maranta leuconeuru Kerchoveana*" is a remarkable plant because, at sunset, its leaves lift upward and clasp together like hands in prayer, and then unfold again in the morning. For this reason, it is popularly known as the Prayer Plant." (In research-



"[This] genus is closely allied to *Calathea*, and the distinction between some of the species in the two genera is often nearly impossible for the untrained."

ing this plant, I was quite surprised to see how many different botanical book authors and internet gardening sites called different species of those in the *Marantaceae* genus by the Prayer Plant name.) But several of those who I trust the most concurred with me that this is primarily called a Prayer Plant or a Rabbit Tracks.

However, as a result of its - almost artistic - brownish-black, smudged markings on the light, olive to dark-green leaf tops (purplish-red, purplish-green or grayish-green on the underside) leaf markings, I prefer the apt name of Rabbit Tracks. With a white, central midrib, its leaf veins are fine with a silken-like sheen. Yes, with this interesting clump of leaves it is rather attractive! Affirming this, Riffle has stated that "This species is possibly the most beautiful groundcover for bright but shady . . . areas where traffic is not a factor."

While sometimes preferring a more prostrate "*lifestyle*", these good-looking, tender plants - which originated in the wetter areas of tropical Brazil - can grow to from six to twelve inches (15.24 - 30.48 cm) in height. With almost vine-like succulent stems that spread, their oblong leaves generally grow to around six inches (15.24 cm). Its two-lipped flowers, in racemes on slender spikes just above the foliage, are seldom seen if used as an indoor plant. It has few insect or disease problems, but one should keep a watchful eye out for spider mites, mealybugs, mosaic virus and leaf spotting. Additionally, root rot can be a difficulty if your specimen is planted in poorly draining soil.

...Rabbit Tracks



The Rabbit Tracks in one of twenty to forty species from the *Maranta* botanical "side of the house".

Forget not the importance of rich, loose, humusy soil for your plant. With this all in mind, plant and enjoy your Rabbit Tracks outdoors, where it will be a good groundcover in shady areas or, indoors, in a pot or hanging basket. (But, in this latter capacity, remember that potting soil may well lose its nutritional properties over the course of time. As a result, I recommend that you re-pot every two years in the spring.) Another plant venue, of which I little write, is that remaining small and enjoying a "close" atmosphere, the Rabbit Tracks is an excellent plant for a terrarium!

But let's get back to that discussion of several species all sharing the name of Prayer Plant. They can be distinguished from one another by their leaf markings. But, to add to the confusion, there are three other close kin cultivars of *Maranta leuconeura*. These are: 'Erythroneura' (With the common names of Herringbone Plant, Red-Nerve Plant or Red-Veined Prayer Plant), which has olive to black-green with bright red veins and irregular light green markings around the midrib, 'Fascinator', appearing similar to 'Erythroneura' but with more pronounced midrib markings and, 'Massangeana' with its blackish-green leaves having silvery-gray tones along the midribs.

*I strive to enlighten, not confuse. But sometimes I feel all that I've accomplished is to bring yet more into the ranks of the confused, lay gardener. But, ya' gotta' admit, it's still fun!*



Well, ya' know, those brownish-black, smudged markings on the light, olive to dark-green leaf tops do sorta' look like rabbit tracks!

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Enjoy. (And we look forward to your physical visit here at Ola Brisa Gardens!)

Tommy and Patty Clarkson



**Small Business Deductions and 2018 Tax Law**

by Yann Kostic and Tom Zachystal

If you have been living south of the border for any amount of time, you already know that more and more people move to Mexico. But did you know that the average age is dropping quite quickly and that quite a few still own businesses NOB or are simply running their business on line? Since reducing taxable income is an important part of running a small business, here are two key ways to do it.

**1. Open a Retirement Plan (or increase your contributions)**

First, you can open a retirement plan, such as a SEP-IRA, SEP 401(k), SIMPLE IRA, or SIMPLE 401(k). Qualified retirement plans such as these benefit employees and employers alike.

Although each plan works differently, any contributions you make as an employee are excluded from your taxable income. The money you put into a plan grows, tax-deferred, until you retire. Then, distributions and earnings will be included in your taxable income.

If you're an employer, your contributions to qualified retirement plans are generally deducted from your business's income.

**2. Use the New Tax Law**

Additionally, thanks to the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017, which went into effect in January 2018, there's another way to reduce your business's taxable income.

The new law allows pass-through entities (business entities that are not taxed at the entity level) to take a deduction of 20% against their business income. This essentially reduces the effective top rate on pass-through entities' income by roughly 10 percentage points over pre-2018 tax law.

Of course, nothing that involves taxes is ever easy. Claiming the new 20% deduction requires navigating a tangle of barely comprehensible requirements and limitations that make it far from accessible to small-business owners. For example, single filers who earn less than \$157,500 and married filers who earn less than \$315,000 may take the deduction regardless of their field of business. However, after taxable income passes those thresholds, individuals operating service businesses, such as doctors, lawyers and architects, may not be able to take the deduction. Of course, nothing that involves living/working overseas is ever easy. There are specific rules to follow, but if you do it the right way, it can be quite rewarding.

A financial professional can help you determine which of these options is best for your business (and you're your financial well-being).

Note: *This material has been prepared for informational purposes only, and is not intended to provide financial advice for your particular situation.*

Yann Kostic, MBA and Tom Zachystal, CFP, are Presidents of their respective Assets Management firms, both US-Registered Investment Advisors (RIA). Tom is the San Francisco Financial Planners' Association President. Tom and Yann cater to US expats in Mexico and worldwide. Comments, questions or to request his newsletter, "News you can use" contact him at [yannk@atlantisgrp.com](mailto:yannk@atlantisgrp.com), in the US at (321) 574-1 529 or in Mexico, (376) 106-1613.



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## Pharr, Texas to Tampico, Tamaulipas

by Dan and Lisa Goy, exclusive to Manzanillo Sun

### January 6-7, 2016 (Day 0-1)

We selected Pharr, TX and the Tropic Star RV Park as our rendezvous location for our 90 Day Mexican Adventure. Great spot to shop prior to departure and a decent RV Park. We had made arrangements to take Lulu to Petco for a trim and shampoo near San Antonio, however they informed us the Canadian rabies documentation was not acceptable, US shots only! Good enough to bring the dog into the country, but not for a haircut at Petco. We did find a wonderful young gal referred by the Pharr RV Park to do the job. Our group of Canadians and Americans got together later for a happy hour, excited about our Mexican Adventure. We knew the next 2 days of travel through Tamaulipas had a negative reputation, however we also knew we would trade anxiety for the wondrous sites and Mexican experiences. We really do have a wonderful group and are really looking ahead to sharing our adventure with all of them.

We crossed, as planned, early in the morning of January 7th at Pharr, Texas, into the state of Tamaulipas, one of Mike and Terri Church's recommended crossings. The Mexican border officials put all our RVs through an X-ray and parked us for the results. We decided to use this time to do all the paperwork



Pharr international bridge - southbound

required for tourist permits and vehicle import permits. This is always a fascinating process of personal immersion in a Latin American bureaucracy. We were first in line as we had our 6 month tourist permits from Tecate, Baja California. Would these be acceptable? We know by law they are not multiple entry permits, we also know there are lots of laws at the Mexican border that are rarely enforced.

We were happy to see the Banjercito (Bank), copy center and Inmigrado (Immigration Office) were all in one large office space. Our first encounter was the Banjercito to arrange for our vehicle permit. The teller looked at our copies, saw that we had

Southbound on Hwy 180 to Tamaulipas



...Pharr to Tampico

a Tourist Permit from Tecate dated November 6th, 2015 and sent us to another person (at the copy center). There we were told we would need to see the inmigrado officer, who would issue us a new tourist permit for the 4 months remaining on our current tourist permit. Moving to our 3rd line, the inmigrado officer looked at our tourist permit and determined we required nothing as our permits still had 4 months left, so we got back into the original bank line. This only took 20 minutes. All of the folks we spoke to never actually talked to each other. The same teller we started with seemed satisfied we had met all the immigration issues and processed our Temporary Vehicle Import Permits, \$59 each, plus a \$400 USD deposit. No pesos please, US Funds only, cash or credit card. We were all finished and back into the vehicles by 9:50 am (we left the campground at 7:30 am), had the green light from the X-ray, no further inspection required. Yes, we were on our way!

We had originally planned to visit Ciudad Victoria as our first stop, however, given some security concerns, we took a pass and drove directly towards Tampico, 535 km (330 miles). This was a long day for sure, about 8 hours of driving. We arrived at the Country Express Hotel in Altamira, (just north of Tampico), about 4:40 pm, with lots of daylight left, but we were tired. Along the way, we encountered a lot of very good road and lots of new scenery. Dry camping behind the motel was only \$100 pesos. Dinner at the restaurant was \$285 pesos and the Wi-Fi worked well for those who went to the lobby. Some truckers came and went. All was good and we slept well on our first night in Mexico.

Pharr is in Hidalgo County, Texas, United States and the city limits extend south in a narrow band to the Rio Grande and the Pharr - Reynosa International Bridge connecting to the Mexican city of Reynosa, Tamaulipas. The community was named after a



Scenic Hwy 180

sugar planter, Henry Newton Pharr. In 1900, Henry N. Pharr, for a number of years, was a director of the State National Bank of New Iberia, Louisiana, and was a former president of the Louisiana - Rio Grande Sugar Company and the Louisiana - Rio Grande Canal Company, which at one time owned 8,000 acres and which, in 1910, built the town of Pharr on this land.

**Tampico is a port city located in the southeastern part of the state of Tamaulipas, Mexico.** Located on the north bank of the Pánuco River, about 10 kilometres inland from the Gulf of Mexico, and directly north of the state of Veracruz. Tampico is the fifth-largest city in Tamaulipas and during the period of Mexico's first oil boom in the early 20th century, the city was the "chief oil-exporting port of the Americas" and the second-busiest in the world. At the time yielding profits that were invested in the city's famous architecture, often compared to that of Venice and New Orleans.

The first oil well in Mexico was drilled near Tampico in 1901 at Ébano. In 1923, the major oil field dried up, leading to an exo-



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...Pharr to Tampico

dus of jobs and investment, but economic development in other areas made the city a pioneer in the aviation and soda industries. The city is also a major exporter of silver, copper, and lumber, as well as wool, hemp, and other agricultural products. Containerized cargo is mainly handled by the neighboring ocean port of Altamira.



The name "Tampico" is of Huastec origin, **tam-piko** meaning "place of otters" (literally "water dogs"). The city is surrounded by rivers and lagoons of the delta of the Pánuco River, which was the habitat of a large population of otters. There have been successive human settlements in the area for centuries. The region had several early Huastec settlements, among them the important site at Las Flores, which flourished between AD 1000 and 1250. In 1532, during the Spanish colonial period, the Franciscan priest, Andrés de Olmos established a mission and monastery in the area, building over a former Huastec village. At his request, Spanish officials founded a settlement named San Luis de Tampico in 1554. This site was abandoned in 1684 and the population relocated to the south of the Pánuco River because of frequent attacks by European and American pirates. The area was abandoned for nearly 150 years.

The present Mexican city was founded on April 13, 1823 on the north bank of the Pánuco River about 10 kilometres (6 mi) from the Gulf, after Mexico achieved independence from Spain. Tampico built its economy on the exportation of silver; business development was mostly as a trading center and market town of an agricultural region.

The town also became a common waypoint for the re-routing of African slaves to be illegally smuggled into the Southern United States, which had outlawed the international slave trade in 1807. In August 1829, Spain sent troops from Cuba to invade Tampico in an effort to regain control of the region but, in September, General Antonio López de Santa Anna forced the Spanish troops to surrender, and Mexican control of Tampico was re-established.

In the early 20th century, there was extensive US investment in oil development in Tampico, with a sizable United States expatriate community developing in relation to the industry. With the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution, which lasted roughly from 1910 to 1920, the US monitored the situation to protect its citizens and investments. The oil-producing area was so productive it was called the "Golden Belt." The oil fields known as Ébano, Pánuco, Huasteca, and Tuxpan are all situated within a 160-kilometre (99 mi) radius of the city. Oil was often shipped on barges along the rivers. To improve transportation of oil to the port, the government built the Chijol Canal, beginning in 1901. It is 1.8 m (6 ft) deep and 7.6 m (25 ft) wide and runs 120 km (75 mi) southward through the oil fields to Tuxpan.



Hwy 180

During the Mexican Revolution, on April 9, 1914, 10 Mexican troops and nine US Navy sailors from the USS Dolphin confronted each other in a failure to communicate as US forces tried to get fuel supplies. General Victoriano Huerta's forces in the city were threatened by different groups from both north and south. The Americans were arrested and later freed, but the US resented Huerta's demands for some recognition. In the resulting Tampico Affair, the US sent naval and marine forces into Veracruz and occupied the city for seven months in a show of force. Due to resulting anti-American demonstrations on each coast, other US Navy ships were used to evacuate some American citizens to refugee camps in southern US cities. The US occupation contributed to the downfall of Huerta, and Venustiano Carranza became president. He ensured that Mexico maintained neutrality during World War I, in part due to lingering animosity against the US for these actions.

...Pharr to Tampico



Lunch stop

The Mexican government nationalized the oil industry in 1939 and has maintained that for 75 years. In November 2014, President Enrique Peña Nieto announced a policy change of ending Pemex's monopoly and inviting private companies back into the oil and gas industry. While analysts believe the largest finds are likely to be offshore, new techniques may yield oil even at mature fields such as those of Tampico. In early 2015, the government planned to accept bids on 169 blocks, 47 of which are within 110 kilometres (70 mi) of Tampico. It is expected that smaller companies will be active in the mature fields, such as those in this region. This area has extensive shale oil deposits, and the "US Energy Information Administration estimates that Mexico has the world's eighth-largest shale-oil resources."

Tampico has a tropical savannah climate, so the weather, though reasonably pleasant in spring and autumn, is hot in the summer; the average high reaches 32 °C (90 °F) in August, with an average low of 23 °C (74 °F). Winters are pleasantly cool; the average January high is 23 °C (73 °F) and the average low in January is 13 °C (58 °F). Rainfall is frequent from May through September. Tampico is an extremely humid city, with summer heat indices reaching 40 °C (104 °F) and very unpleasant.

As it is located on the Pánuco River and among extensive wetlands adjacent to the Gulf of Mexico during autumn and winter, it can be affected by cold fronts that pass through the gulf and bring high winds that can reach 50 km/h (37 mph) with gusts of 70 to 80 km/h (43 to 50 mph). Tampico is also located in a hurricane area, but it has not been directly affected by one in more than 50 years.

On rare occasions, the city experiences surprisingly low temperatures for its zone; during late January and early February 2011, a cold wave caused temperatures to drop to 5 °C, with the lowest being 0 °C in the morning and noon of 4 February. In February 1895, snow was reported to have fallen in Tampico. This is the North American record for the furthest south report of snow at a coastal location, and makes **Tampico one of the few places that snow has fallen in the tropics at sea level.**

... more pics follow

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...Pharr to Tampico



Break time



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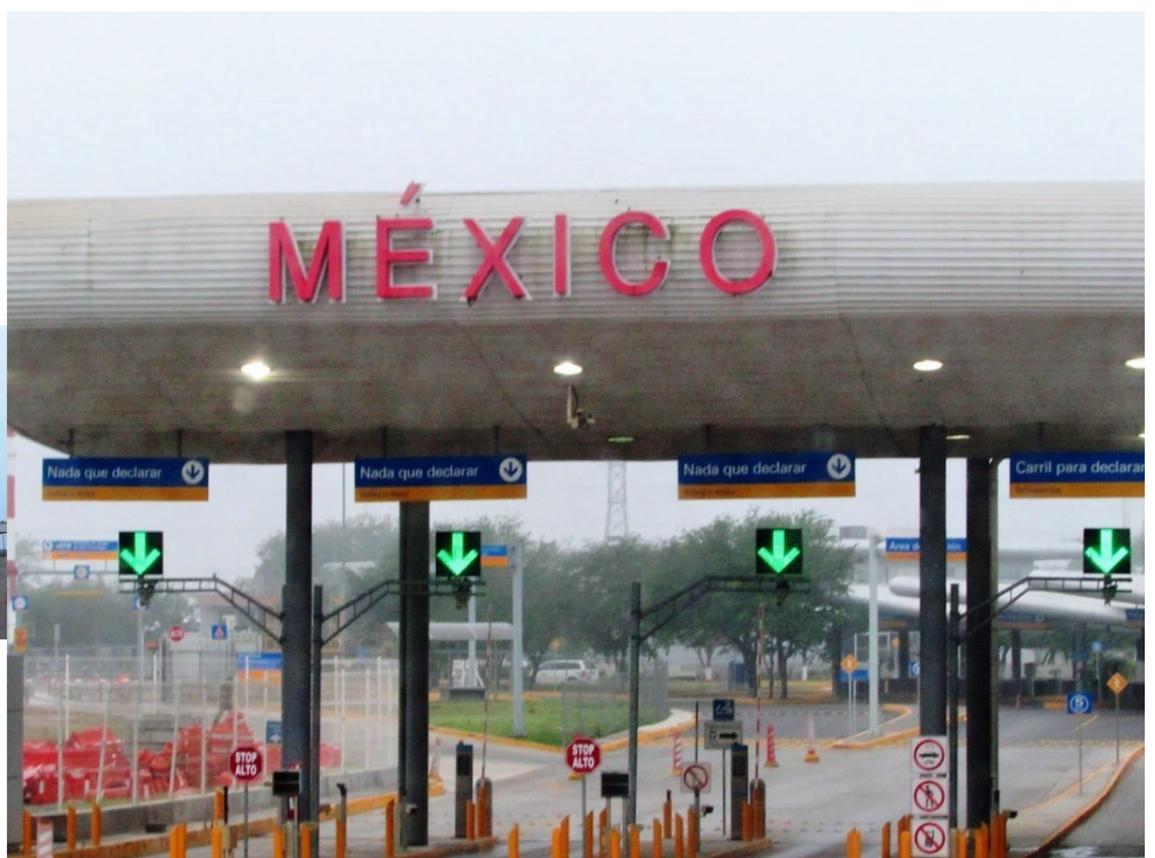
RV parking at the permit office - Banjercito

...Pharr to Tampico



Hwy 97 Tamaulipas

Overnight parking in Altamira



...Pharr to Tampico



Bruce and Janice at dinner

Gang looks for options at dinner



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## Mexican Lasagna

### Ingredients

- ✓ 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- ✓ 2 pounds ground chicken breast, available in the packaged meats case
- ✓ 2 tablespoons chili powder
- ✓ 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- ✓ 1/2 red onion, chopped
- ✓ 1 (15-ounce) can black beans, drained
- ✓ 1 cup medium heat taco sauce or 1 (14-oz) can stewed or fire roasted tomatoes
- ✓ 1 cup frozen corn kernels
- ✓ Salt
- ✓ 8 (8 inch) spinach flour tortillas, available on dairy aisle of market
- ✓ 2 1/2 cups shredded Cheddar or shredded pepper jack
- ✓ 2 scallions, finely chopped

Recipe and photo credit: FoodNetwork.com

### Directions

Preheat the oven to 425 degrees F.

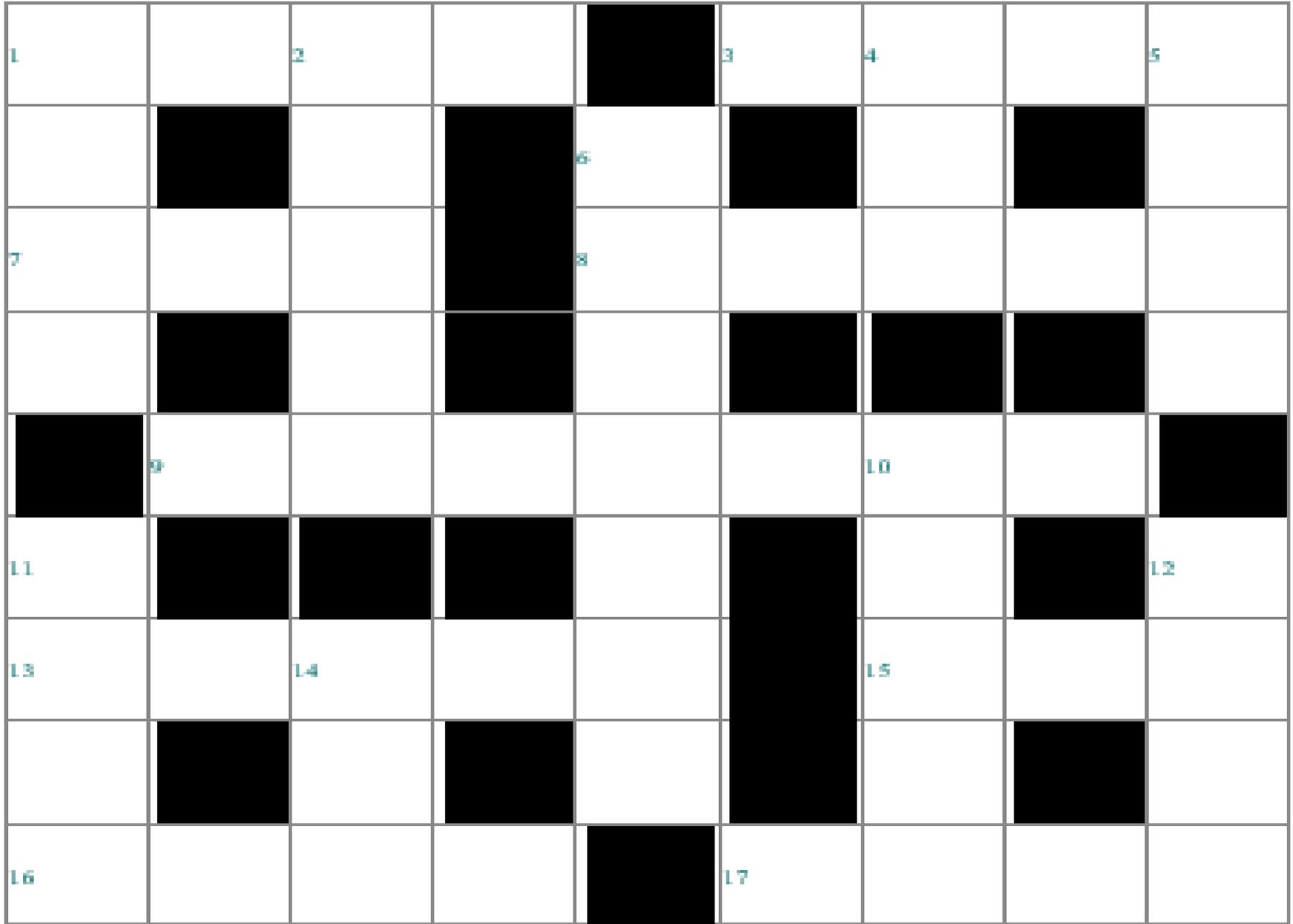
Preheat a large skillet over medium high heat. Add 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil - twice around the pan. Add chicken and season with chili powder, cumin, and red onion. Brown the meat, 5 minutes. Add taco sauce or stewed or fire roasted tomatoes. Add black beans and corn. Heat the mixture through, 2 to 3 minutes then season with salt, to your taste.

Coat a shallow baking dish with remaining extra-virgin olive oil, about 1 tablespoon oil. Cut the tortillas in half or quarters to make them easy to layer with. Build lasagna in layers of meat and beans, then tortillas, then cheese. Repeat: meat, tortilla, cheese again. Bake lasagna 12 to 15 minutes until cheese is brown and bubbly. Top with the scallions and serve.



Crossword

solution posted in next month's edition



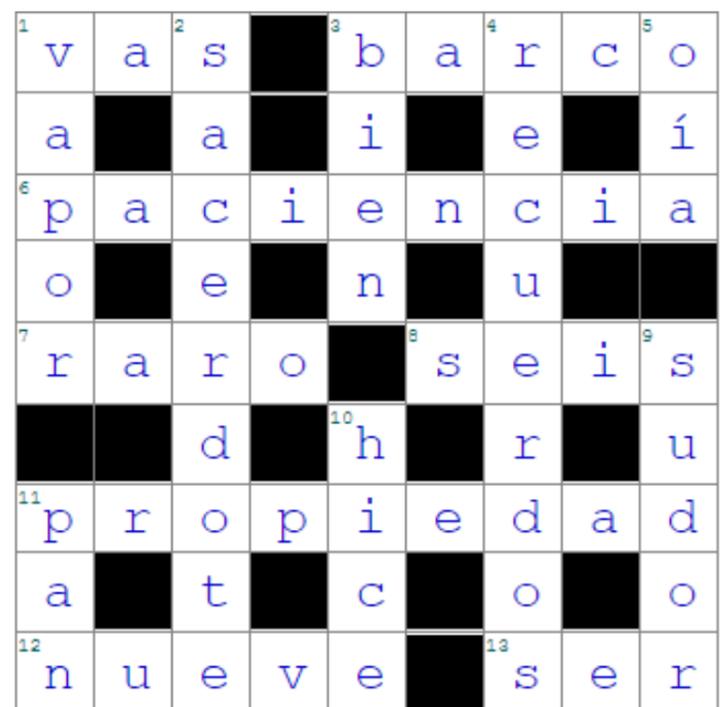
Across

- 1 layer, coat
- 3 this, alternative spelling of éste
- 7 (he, she) was, (you/usted) were
- 8 mind, intellect
- 9 a smile
- 13 steps
- 15 mine, my
- 16 she
- 17 island

Down

- 1 coffee
- 2 (I) can
- 4 without
- 5 (you/tú) are
- 6 company, enterprise
- 10 (we) are
- 11 on foot (1,3)
- 12 thing

Last month's crossword solution:



## From Ancient Mesoamerica to the Toltecs

from the Path to Citizenship series



### c. 8000 B.C.

The first human experiments with plant cultivation begin in the New World during the early post-Pleistocene period. Squash is one of the earliest crops. This agricultural development process, which continues slowly over thousands of years, will form the basis of the first villages of Mesoamerica (including Mexico and Central America).

### 1500 B.C.

The first major Mesoamerican civilization - the Olmecs - grows out of the early villages, beginning in the southern region of what is now Mexico. This period is marked by the effective cultivation of crops such as corn (maize), beans, chile peppers and cotton; the emergence of pottery, fine art and graphic symbols used to record Olmec history, society and culture; and the establishment of larger cities such as San Lorenzo (about 1200-900 B.C.) and La Venta (about 900-400 B.C.).

### 600 B.C.

In the late Formative (or Pre-Classic) period, Olmec hegemony gives way to a number of other regional groups, including the Maya, Zapotec, Totonac, and Teotihuacán civilizations, all of which share a common Olmec heritage.

### 250

The Mayan civilization, centered in the Yucatán peninsula, becomes one of the most dominant of the area's regional groups, reaching its peak around the sixth century A.D., during the Classic period of Mesoamerican history. The Mayas excelled at pottery, hieroglyph writing, calendar-making and mathematics, and left an astonishing amount of great architecture; the ruins can still be seen today. By 600 A.D., the Mayan alliance with the Teotihuacán, a commercially advanced society in north-central Mexico, had spread its influence over much of Mesoamerica.

### 600

With Teotihuacán and Mayan dominance beginning to wane, a number of upstart states begin to compete for power. The war-like Toltec, who migrated from north of Teotihuacán, become the most successful, establishing their empire in the central valley of Mexico by the 10th century. The rise of the Toltecs, who used their powerful armies to subjugate neighboring societies, is said to have marked the beginning of militarism in Mesoamerican society.

### 900

The early Post-Classic period begins with the dominant Toltecs headquartered in their capital of Tula (also known as Tollan). Over the next 300 years, internal conflict combined with the influx of new invaders from the north weaken Toltec civilization, until by 1200 (the late Post-Classic period) the Toltecs are vanquished by the Chichimecha, a collection of rugged tribes of undetermined origin (probably near Mexico's northern frontier) who claim the great Toltec cities as their own.

Source: History.com, read the [full story here](#)

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