

ARLINGTON
CONSERVATION
COUNCIL

POST OAK

WORKING TO CONSERVE ARLINGTON'S NATURAL RESOURCES

VOLUME 10, NUMBER 3

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www.arlingtonconservationcouncil.org

March Meeting Eating Healthy in Your own Backyard

Karen Foley,
founder and owner of Herb 'n Health

Wednesday, March 11, 7:00 pm
Fielder Museum
1616 W. Abram St
(corner of Fielder and Abram)

Karen is a longtime newsletter sponsor and supporter of ACC. She will bring herbs for everyone to taste. Your palate might be unhappy if you miss this one.

Remember to bring
something for the raffle

Bits & Pieces

Our Most Inoffensive Snake

The little Texas blind snake has vestigial eyes, a tiny mouth, and could almost be mistaken for an oversized earthworm. It likes moist areas in sandy soil where it looks for worms and insects, especially ants, and other soil invertebrates. This seldom-seen Arlington resident is considered beneficial.



Today's Inspirational Moment

We're finally going to get the bill for the Industrial Age. If the projections are right, it's going to be a big one: the ecological collapse of the planet.

Jeremy Rifkin, World Press Review, 30 December 1989

Did You Like the Butterflies in Last Month's Post Oak?



You'll find beautiful day-flying moths this month in the latest issue of the North Central Texas Native Plant Society's newsletter. Find it at <http://www.npsot.org/NorthCentralTexas/default.htm>.

The Star-Telegram Reports...

(February 21) Despite rising incentives for home power generation, a change buried in the state deregulation laws has allowed electric utilities to avoid reimbursing homeowners for the power they generate (net metering). The companies may choose how much to pay homeowners, or whether to pay at all. Only Green Mountain has a formal policy at this time. It's expected that market forces will encourage other electric companies to develop reimbursement programs.



From the President John Darling



The city's annual Master Composter class drew 50 people last Friday evening and Saturday, more than they've seen since the first class in

1997. One participant came all the way from Lewisville to get ideas for starting a Master Composter program there. It's great to know that our city has supported backyard composting for over a decade. Thanks again to UTA's Environmental Health & Safety Department for the use of the building and the compost site.



We don't really know much about winter around here, but somehow any sign of spring is still welcome, and the redbuds and Mexican plums are doing their best to give us a taste. Of course, the weather can still turn ugly for a while yet, but I guess some of our early bloomers just crave life on the edge.

How about another gas well in town? How about just uphill from River Legacy Living Science Center? If nothing changes, on March 24 the city council will hear an application for a zoning change that would allow drilling at the horse farm on North Cooper near Green Oaks. On the face of it, this looks like a bad idea, with the site on a slope and the potential for toxic runoff into River Legacy Park, yet we hear that the property owner has insisted on environmental safeguards. What do you think? Maybe we should attend that council meeting and offer our opinions. City Hall, 6:30, Tuesday, March 24.



ACC Landfill Tour
Saturday, March 21
9:00 am Arlington Sanitary Landfill
800 Mosier Valley Road

Don't miss this special opportunity to see a modern landfill. You'll be amazed by how we deal with our enormous quantities of trash. And you'll see how many ways we can recycle there. Directions: Go north on Collins and turn left on Mosier Valley Rd. It's maybe a couple of miles north of the intersection with Green Oaks.

THE POST OAK

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New York Avenue Blackland Prairie Park Jan Miller



Thanks to Janet Dickey and Wes Miller who braved the weekend cold and late change of workday location from NYABP to Tandy Hills. The opportunity to partici-

pate in the inaugural Tandy Hills Brush Bash was too good to pass up. Tandy Hills is a rare remnant prairie, one of only six in North Central Texas of more than 100 acres and with a plant list of 500+ species. Neighbors and supporters have tried to protect the site from illegal dumping and off-road vehicles, but until a restoration master plan was approved in 2008, trees and invasive species were making steady inroads. Now, city crews and volunteers have cleared about 3 acres of mid-slope prairie. What a great sight! More workdays are planned at Tandy Hills, at least during winter months. The NYABP workday has been rescheduled for Saturday, March 28 (see details below).

Despite temperatures regularly swinging 60+ degrees about once a week, the plants at NYABP are gearing up for spring. See Wes Miller's photo below of an early Indian plantain (*Arnoglossum plantagineum*) making its way through dried grasses. Those sure-fire local harbingers of Texas spring, trout lilies (*Erythronium* sp.), have been reported in bloom at several prairies across our area, including Tandy Hills. But another



Greening up: Signs of spring on the prairie, especially in the recently mowed strips.

close-by and reliable population at Stella Rowan Prairie (on the Tarrant Resource Connection campus in south Fort Worth) has been, according to Jim Varnum, "extirpated" by construction of water lines for nearby gas drilling. There's



This just in: New fence along south side of park should deter illegal driving and dumping.

still time to catch a fieldtrip to see them; find a full list at http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/CTMN_Fieldtrip_List/cal

NYABP was mowed by APRD last week using the "candystriping" technique, which leaves margins and alternating strips unmowed, providing winter cover for small rodents, birds and insects. Should be very interesting to see the effect this will have on this year's growth. Many thanks to APRD's maintenance staff for giving this new technique a try.

Also at NYABP, final plans for the boundary fence between NYABP and the warehouse development are in place and fence construction should begin soon. The developer has substituted a mix of grasses and wildflowers from a very reputable supplier in place of hydromulched Bermuda grass from their original plans. Another thanks to APRD planners for working with the developer on this improvement.

Calendar:

Saturday, March 28

Workday at New York Avenue Prairie

9:00 am – noon

Please come, especially if you're interested in the plant monitoring project. We'll also cut small trees and brush; bring loppers and hand saws. Gloves, boots (or sturdy-soled shoes), long sleeves and pants are recommended. Water will be provided, but please bring your own container. RSVP to jgmiller5594@sbcglobal.net, for late info on weather, etc.

Saturday, April 25

Prairie Fest at Tandy Hills. See www.tandyhills.org/prairiefest.htm

Saturday, May 2

Southwest Nature Preserve

Plant Walk with Jeff Quayle

Thursday, May 7

New York Avenue Prairie

Prairie Walk with Jeff Quayle

Friday, May 29

Native Prairie Restoration Workshop at Clymer Meadow Preserve (details next month)



Wildscape Update **John Dycus**



On a cold, windy morning the 20 virtuous volunteers came, all gloved and coated and armed for the fight against Satan's weed, and by noon February 28 not

a sprig of privet remained on the steep creek banks at the wildscape.

Wildscape VP Danny Kocurek led the charge, wading into the creek in his rubber boots and before that organizing the affair, the second privet-pulling party in honor of wildscape namesake Molly Hollar's birthday. For good measure lots of the similarly invasive Japanese honeysuckle was uprooted too, then the party moved to Mijo's where Nicholas and Benjamin Kocurek brought out, in Molly's assessment, a very cool decorated chocolate cake.

Molly couldn't have been happier if they'd given her a car.

Jim Kunde's recent death is a great loss to all who knew him, especially the wildscape volunteers and members of Cross Timbers Master Naturalists.

"Jim was a very special person, never short on smiles and funny stories that kept us all laughing," Molly said. Volunteers will plant a tree in his memory at the wildscape and another in the Village Creek linear park where Jim and Diana walked to enjoy the birds and other wildlife. The Village

Creek tree will be planted near a memorial bench in a spot selected by Diana and their children.

Snippets

Committee members of Keep Denton Beautiful visited the wildscape on February 6 to tap the wisdom of Molly and Ann Knudsen. They compared notes regarding a small post oak woodland project in Denton.

Thanks to help from the Arlington Parks and Recreation Department, wildscape maintenance is staying on schedule. Mid-February is the best time to trim dead foliage, and it usually takes the volunteers weeks to cover the four acres with hand clippers. But APRD workers wielding long power cutters got the job done in a couple of hours. Martin Sanchez, Greg Wilson and Frank Rivera cut the biggest privet and also provided and moved the soil for the berm planted with low-water-use native plants this summer.

Naturalist and occasional worm fancier John Darling reprised his stand-up compost presentation, mulch ado about something, at the March 7 mini-class. To the usual heady acclaim, he emphasized the value of transforming organic waste into compost, the gardener's black gold.

Redenta's Garden has completed the pump installation and boulder work in the creek and pond areas. A \$1,000 gift certificate to Whiz Q Stone, given by generous wildscape volunteers to Molly in honor of her birthday last year, bought beautiful stone steps to prevent trampling of the aquatic plants there. Then Redenta's owners Ruth and Dick Kinler and their son,

First Saturday mini-class schedule:

May "The Necessity of Insect Pollinators" with Dawn Hancock

June "Wildscaping Your Own Backyard" with Leeann Rosenthal

July (second Saturday), "Soil Critters" with Ann Mayo

August "Working with Children" with Hester Schwarzer

Sept (second Saturday), "Saving Our Post Oak Woodlands" with Steve Chaney

Michael, provided their crews to do this professional work at no profit. The area is even more beautiful now than before it was vandalized. Replanting will complete the restoration of this magical spot.

The spring native plant sale will be April 18 at the APRD greenhouse in Randol Mill Park. The Arlington Organic Garden Club, in which wildscape greenhouse manager Josephine Keeney is an active member, recently contributed a much-appreciated donation that will be used to upgrade the propagation equipment.

Left, a good crowd hard at work in the big front bed on the February Saturday workday. Below, Gailon Hardin presented a great mini-class on conserving water with native plants. (The audience was completely receptive.)



We Love You - and This Time We Mean It* Grace Darling

Sometimes we forget to thank people who consistently do an outstanding job because we get so used to things running smoothly that we take them for granted. Well, that has been the case with the Arlington Parks and Recreation Department, Environmental Services, and the Water Department – but no more.

Heather Dowell, recently promoted Landscape Administrator and Forestry Manager for the city, is a case in point. Heather is always pleasant (and often funny), really knows her stuff, and somehow manages to be eternally patient with those of us who frequently consult her about vegetation. She is ably assisted by **Matt Churches**, newly hired City Forester, who is young, energetic, passionate about his job, and terminally enthusiastic about his mission to enhance Arlington's tree canopy. While Heather is planning Arbor Day and No Child Left Inside activities and writing grant proposals that will make forestry camps possible for our children this summer, among other things, Matt is tending the Arlington tree farm with the help of a few volunteers and hopes to nurture and multiply the stock for an even more successful LEAF program in years to come.

At the helm of APRD is **Pete Jamieson**, a consummate professional and dedicated public servant. Faced with shortfalls in sales tax receipts and an uncertain budget, Pete nevertheless trudges on with an unflappable manner and steely determination. His vision for a Tree Board for the city is a good thing that must be encouraged; if you have the time and interest, let him know that you are willing to share his dream. And be prepared to work.

The APRD senior staff is first class: **Gary Packan**, **De'Onna Garner**, **Matt Young**, and **Bill Gilmore** come to mind right away. The ACC board is currently evaluating ways to honor their commitment and contributions to our

city, perhaps by establishing a speakers' fund to bring well-known authorities to Arlington for their continued professional development. More about that when details are complete.

The Environmental Services office is not as familiar to many people as it should be. After being without a leader for most of 2008, ES now forges ahead under the intelligent direction of **Robert Smouse**, lured away from Plano to the benefit of Arlington. Robert is doing wonders with a tiny staff, primarily **Lorrie Anderle**, recycling coordinator extraordinaire and master composter guru; **Tim Yatko**, commercial recycling coordinator and leader of Arlington's Green Team; and **Denise Robison**, without whom the office could not function. The Environmental Services staff also guide the labors of the Citizens Environmental Committee, which has issued reports and recommendations to council (available online at www.ci.arlington.tx.us/environmentalservices/) on green building, water conservation, and commercial recycling.

Julie Hunt is the director of Arlington's Water Department and runs a tight ship. Not only is the water from our taps of excellent quality – those of you who still buy bottled water should give it a try – but Julie and her staff will make sure it continues to flow even at times of drought. They are always exploring options for reuse of treated effluent as well as novel methods to capture and divert stormwater runoff, all the while looking for avenues to educate the public in ways to reduce consumption and save money – enter **Dustan Compton**. Dustan travels all over the city with his excellent Powerpoint presentation, and audiences leave his talks inspired to rip out their lawns and plant water-thrifty landscapes.

Hooray to all. We are lucky to have you.

* Have you seen the commercial I'm paraphrasing here? If you haven't, don't

be so quick to hit the mute button on that remote next time you see a not-so-young couple sitting in their living room talking. The product advertised? I've no idea.

4 ½ ACRES, AVAIL.

Here slept a streamside glade
Spring-lush with daisies, grasses;
Deer drifted down to drink
And doves sang in the sun.
Then in rolled Texians
With herds of red-faced cattle,
Horses, sheep, whose
Meat and hides and wool
Fed and shod and dressed
Stouthearted farmers
And their bashful broods
Who walked to school
Beneath the post oak grove
That grew along the brook,
Climbed, played, courted
On rusty slides and swing sets.
The trail close by
Became a track, a road,
A crowned street,
Thoroughfare.
Year followed year.
The school gone,
Shops popped up,
A bank, boutiques.
The creek cemented,
Deer a distant memory,
Marooned in asphalt
One by one the oaks decayed,
And all the rest grew old, musty.
Then came wrecking balls,
Backhoes, bulldozers,
Dump truck convoys;
And now it's empty once again,
Emptier than when it started:
Bare, torn, trampled soil
Waiting for a doubtful future,
Dreaming just a bit of doves
And meadowsweet.

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Arlington Conservation Council Membership Application

Memberships are good for one year, renewable each January. Your dues go directly to our public education efforts.

Membership Information

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Please circle membership category.

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How did you hear about us? _____

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THE POST OAK

Arlington Conservation Council
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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Don't Forget!

Wednesday March 11
 7:00 pm

Karen Foley
*Eating Healthy in Your
 own Backyard*

Be sure to visit us at
arlingtonconservationcouncil.org