

**ARLINGTON
CONSERVATION
COUNCIL**

POSTOAK

WORKING TO CONSERVE ARLINGTON'S NATURAL RESOURCES

VOLUME 10, NUMBER 4

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www.arlingtonconservationcouncil.org

April Meeting

Alternative Fuel Vehicles

**Mindy Mize,
North Central Texas
Council of Governments
Clean Air Team Member**

**Wednesday, April 8, 7:00 pm
Fielder Museum
1616 W. Abram St
(corner of Fielder and Abram)**

**Remember to bring
something for the raffle**

Bits & Pieces

They're Yellow: It Must be Spring

They've looked pretty drab all winter, but just now our American goldfinches are turning gorgeous. And here's a tidbit: They're mostly monogamous, but some females change mates after the first brood, leaving the first male to care for the fledglings while they start a second brood with the new male. Huh.



Today's Inspirational Moment

OUT-OF-DOORS, n. That part of one's environment upon which no government has been able to collect taxes. Chiefly useful to inspire poets.

Ambrose Bierce, *The Devil's Dictionary*

The Real Harbinger of Spring



Crane flies, those things that look like giant mosquitoes, are the first creatures that really seem to signal the arrival of spring. Despite widespread beliefs that they prey on mosquitoes, adults live only to reproduce and don't feed.

Fighting the Good Fight?

In his March 14 newspaper column, Neil Sperry encourages readers to engage in "the good fight" in order to grow azaleas, mountain laurels, and Chinese photinias here. But why bother? Azaleas in particular must represent the opposite of working with nature through native plants. Gardening should never be a fight: In the long run, fighting nature is a losing proposition.



From the President John Darling



It looks like April again — not enough weekends and too many things to do. Especially on Saturday the 25th. We'll have a table at Prairie

Fest (page 7), nature walks at the Molly Hollar Wildscape (see below), and a partially overlapping workday at the New York Avenue Blackland Prairie Park.

Looks like an easy choice: Fooling around, admiring the flowers and generally having fun at Tandy Hills versus torturing invasive woody stuff at our little bit of prairie. I do think, though, that our prairie needs us more. Two workdays ago, only three people showed up on a cold, miserable day, and the last workday had to be cancelled because it was really, really cold.

This would all be easy (and dramatic) if the city would let us put on a nice controlled burn to rid the park of all

those little elms and hackberries, but that's just not going to happen, so we have no choice. We've got to defeat those treelets or someday we'll be saying, "Prairie? What prairie?"

If you've seen the new dog park, you know what I mean. Part of it is a dense stand of mesquite, hackberry, and elms with scatterings of locust and bois d'arc. There's even (dare I say it?) some privet here and there. All on a former prairie. So it can happen here, and it has, and we won't stand for it on our only remaining dab of blackland prairie.

Constant vigilance — and loppers must be our response. And we can do it all on the 25th. Just come out to our prairie in the morning and then stagger over to Prairie Fest in the afternoon. It's guaranteed that you'll feel environmentally virtuous.

And there's one other thing on the same day if you happen to suffer from PAD (prairie avoidance disorder): Earth

Day at the Wildscape. This year the Parks Department is adding attractions but we'll still need help to do our part there.

Here's what the Parks people are saying about it on their Web site:

Earth Day at Veterans Park
3600 W Arkansas Lane
Saturday April 25, 11am-1pm
Featuring: Nature Walks in the Wildscape, Disc Golf games, Arts & Crafts and Food.

Plus: Celebrate Earth Day with us as we enjoy the great outdoors at Veterans Park. You can take a nature walk tour conducted by the Arlington Conservation Council and learn about our certified Monarch Waystations in the Xeriscape. Or, you can have fun playing a game of Disc Golf and participating in our craft activities. This event will be the perfect way to celebrate our planet Earth!

THE POST OAK

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Thanks A.C.C. for working to conserve Arlington's natural resources.

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New York Avenue Blackland Prairie Park Jan Miller



Good grief, it's April already, tax time is just around the corner, and can it be that we were looking for trout lilies just a few weeks ago? Really sorry to disappoint anyone

who was ready for the March workday at NYABP, but the surprise arctic blast was less than hospitable. There will be more opportunities in April. See the calendar below.

In his recent Dallas Morning News review of Pete Dunne's new book, *Prairie Spring: A Journey Into the Heart of a Season*, Dallas author Bill Marvel notes that "the great American grassland, the prairie, is for most folks a place to drive through on your way somewhere else, somewhere more scenic. That's just the way it is. We humans have a short attention span, and the prairie demands close attention before it yields its rewards." That goes a long way toward explaining the occasional blank stares and indifference I've learned to expect when I talk about prairies. With the constant barrage of electronica and endless activities demanding more of our time and attention, the long pause offered by a prairie landscape initially appears to be a void. The closer look rewards, first with movement and texture, then colors, fragrance, incredible beauty, diversity and maybe even drama...ever changing, season after season.

It's been hard to forget a post-workday event from this time last year: we'd been disappointed that prairie celestials were in bud, but not blooming, maybe due to the

wind or the chill. As we were leaving, someone noticed that one was opening. About six of us, mostly adults, crouched in the grass to watch a cluster of these heavenly blue eyes of the sky take only minutes to unfurl in unison...truly magical.

I know April is a busy month for celebrants of the outdoors and your calendar and to-do list is probably crammed already. But maybe there's an hour or two to get away and enjoy the spring spectacle at NYABP or Tandy Hills or another local prairie. No two alike and the shows change daily. While you're at it, invite a friend, family or neighbor. Maybe you'll experience something more here than you'd expect: peace...quiet...insight...renewal?

Calendar:

Saturday, April 25 Earth Day at NYABP 9:00 am - noon

Come out for a workday and celebrate on the blackland prairie with Lamar High School's AVID group.

Saturday, April 25 Prairie Fest at Tandy Hills 10:00 am – 8:00 pm.

Celebrate with what will probably be the biggest e-day festivities in the metroplex: live music, food, drink, lots of vendors and earth-friendly information. Volunteer for your favorite group or just go and have fun. See www.tandyhills.org/prairiefest.htm for more info.

Saturday, May 2 Southwest Nature Preserve 9:00 am – noon

Field trip with Master Naturalist Jeff Quayle. Hike this 60+ acre Cross-timbers gem in SW Arlington, with hills and lakes. This park has an extensive plant list including many unusual plants; it's great for birding, too.



Thursday, May 7 NYABP 6:30 pm

Fieldtrip with Master Naturalist Jeff Quayle. Yes, it's Thursday afternoon. We'll walk and talk about wildflowers, grasses and more.

Friday, May 29 Native Prairie Restoration Workshop Clymer Meadow Preserve 8:00 am – 3:30 pm

Co-sponsored by Texas GLCI, Blackland Prairie GLCI, Native Prairies Assoc. of Texas, Noble Foundation, Texas Parks & Wildlife, USDA-NRCS and The Nature Conservancy. Cost \$5, includes catered lunch. Please RSVP by May 22 to 903/455-6212 ext. 3. For more information contact Jeff Goodwin at 903/874-5131 ext. 3.



Wildscape Update **John Dycus**



You want busy, I'll give you busy. Springtime in the wildscape began in February when a gang (no, wait, it's pack) of courteous Boy Scouts planted two trees. Both the Eve's necklace and

the Mexican plum are leafed out and going strong. Then on March 24 the baseball team from Southwest Christian School in Fort Worth — 20 industrious junior and senior boys and two coaches — dug holes in some heavily compacted soil and planted lots of native plants.



That evening, talented volunteer Rosalie Rogers gave the first updated PowerPoint presentation to a Lions Club in Fort Worth. Inspired by the new projector co-owned with ACC, volunteers are creating several PowerPoint shows suitable for organizations or classrooms or as a brief introduction to the wildscape prior to touring the place.

On April 1 volunteer Anne Alderfer will lead her garden club group on just such a tour. Ann Knudsen will provide colorful brochures and be on hand to answer questions. Three days later, John Snowden, owner of Bluestem Nursery, will teach the mini-class on landscaping

with native grasses for the volunteers after their 9-11:30 a.m. work session.

Also on April 1, a great series of presentations on water conservation will begin under the direction of Dustan Compton, the city's new water conservation coordinator. At the April 18 class, volunteers led by Callie Mitchell and Ann Knudsen will staff outdoor booths for the children while their parents hear extension program specialist Dotty Woodson inside the Southwest Library.



April 18, volunteers will be selling water-conserving native plants propagated and grown in the Randol Mill Park greenhouse for the spring native plant sale, 10:00 am-2:00 pm. People attending the seminar at the Southwest Library can hit the greenhouse afterward and buy the very plants they just heard about.

Knowledgeable volunteers will be available to answer questions. See the wildscape Web site, <http://thewildscape.org>, for photos of the plants for sale.

April 25, Earth Day, will be celebrated at Veterans Park and in other neighborhood parks from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm, led by the Arlington Parks and

Recreation Department and, in the wildscape, assisted by wildscape volunteers. Family fun will be followed by hot dogs furnished by the APRD.

On the other side of town, wildscape volunteers will use their experience eradicating privet to help identify the invasive and destructive plant in River Legacy Park, which will begin removal operations April 11. In February, under Danny Kocurek's leadership and with APRD assistance, the last remaining visible privet was uprooted from the wildscape. Left unchecked, privet will overrun all other plants to create a monoculture and soon prevent tree regrowth and thus destroy the woodland.

Mini-class schedule:

- April 4, Native Grasses for the Home Landscape, John Snowden
- May 2, The Necessity of Insect Pollinators, Dawn Hancock
- June 6, Wildscaping Your Own Backyard, Lee Ann Rosenthal
- July 11, Soil Critters, Ann Mayo
- Aug. 1, Nifty Native Perennials, Laura Miller
- Sept. 12, Post Oak Woodland Preservation, Steve Chaney
- Oct. 3, The Importance of Backyard Wildscapes, Jessica Alderson
- Nov. 7, No Child Left Inside, Heather Dowell
- Dec. 5, Working with Children, Hester Schwarzer



Thanks to Last Month's Speaker



Karen Foley, owner of Herb 'n Health and longtime ACC supporter, drew a full house and captivated the crowd with her high-energy talk, "Eating healthy in your own back yard." And she provided lots of interesting things to sample, so there was a great deal of eager audience participation.

Thanks for the great talk — and for your continuing support.

Help Our State Parks **Candy Halliburton**

Wayne and I took a short spring trip to East Texas and spent time in two of our favorite state parks, Tyler and Caddo Lake. We decided to purchase an annual state parks pass again this year to help support our wonderful, diverse parks. They have so much to offer; whether you fish, boat, camp, mountain bike, picnic, or just want to hike (or amble) in the lovely woods and photograph wildflowers, there's something for everyone. And then there is birding, in which several people seemed to be engrossed. You don't need to buy an annual pass to enter a park, you can just purchase a day pass. But you never know, you might get the bug and want to return time and again.



Native Plant Sale

At Randol Mill Park Greenhouse
Benefitting The Wildscape

Sat. Apr. 18, 2009
10:00 - 2:00

Organically grown —
Most from local seed & cuttings—
For plants better adapted to our
local climate and rainfall.



Prices:

Quarts — \$4

Gallons - \$7

Trees - \$15 & up

Check www.thewildscape.org
For plant list

Landfill Tidbit

It is estimated that about 25% of methane emissions in this country come from the anaerobic decomposition of garbage in landfills. Methane is much more damaging than carbon dioxide in terms of global warming, so capturing the gas has a double benefit: reducing global warming and providing an otherwise wasted source of energy.

What's happening to methane at our landfill? See what we learned on page 6.

ACC Landfill Tour **Marian Hiler**



It was billed as a tour of the Arlington landfill but we learned that it's much more than just a place where our garbage ends up. On March 21, General Manager Gary Bartels and Site Manager Earlie Knox took our group of sixteen on a tour through the site operated by Republic Waste Services. It turned out to be a far cry from the city dump I remember visiting as a kid.



General Manager Gary Bartels at the electronics recycling pad.

We learned that Arlington residents may bring electronic equipment, concrete, and scrap metal at no charge to the landfill for recycling. For a small service fee, brush, fence panels, asphalt and tires are also accepted for recycling.

Big City Crushed Concrete accepts the clean concrete rubble, crushing it into TXDOT grade road base at its facility at the landfill, then sells it to local area general contractors, landscapers and homeowners. It also grinds the asphalt, which can be used for road construction. Recycling concrete and asphalt saves landfill space, while making the supply

available locally lessens the distance the material needs to be hauled, thus saving fuel and reducing air pollution and wear and tear on the highways.



Michael Richard, Big City Crushed Concrete, discusses concrete and asphalt recycling.

Brush, grass, leaves and fence material are recycled by Living Earth Technology. All those leaves that are dropped off at the leaf collection sites during the fall and winter seasons are brought here, where they make the biggest compost pile that I've ever seen. Sadly, the bagged leaves put out on the curbs on trash day wind up in the landfill, not with Living Earth. The brush is put through very large grinders to make some very nice compost. Living Earth bags and distributes the compost for sale.



The group learns about the Living Earth Technology operation from Paul Tomaso.

Another cool thing going on at the landfill is the recovery and use of landfill gas as an energy source. Renovar Energy Corporation's collector system at the landfill captures the gas, cleans it and pipes it to Fort Worth's Village Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant. Instead of



Larry Gilbert, president of Renovar Energy, explains the process of capturing methane from the decomposing trash.

the methane being emitted into the atmosphere, the treatment plant gets its energy at a lower cost. In 2003, Renovar received the Landfill Methane Outreach Program's Project of the Year award from the Environmental Protection Agency for this project.

The last stop was to observe the actual landfill process. Every day, 3500 tons of garbage are processed; that is large, heavy compactors "mash garbage into submission."

If everyone would recycle, the garbage collected could be reduced by roughly 30%. Republic is evaluating recovering recyclable materials such as cardboard from some of their regular commercial customers whose trash contents are consistently the same. It is also looking at using processed water from the nearby Fort Worth water treatment plant for irrigation.

This was a remarkably informative tour, and the people there made it clear that burying garbage is just one aspect of our landfill. Thanks to everyone who helped us learn so much.



Site Manager Earlie Knox demonstrates what happens to our trash.

Stimulating Energy Efficiency John Promise, P.E., Director of Environment and Development

Director’s Corner

One of the most visible elements of the government’s new economic stimulus package (officially the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act) is money for energy efficiency and renewable energy sources. More than \$10 billion will be available, designated for projects ranging from residential weatherization assistance to home appliance rebates.

Perhaps lost in the noise as far as many are concerned is that \$3.2 billion will be coming to local governments nationwide for the design and implementation of energy efficiency and energy conservation strategies.

As part of an energy independence act signed in December 2007 by President Bush, the U.S. Department of Energy (USDOE) was given authority to administer a new Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant program. The stimulus package has now put substantial funding towards implementing that program.

As described in the Stimulus Funds article [see below], larger cities and counties will receive funding directly from the federal government, while smaller cities and counties—and other governmental organizations such as NCTCOG—will apply to the State Energy Conservation Office (SECO) for funding. Just last Thursday, the USDOE

issued a listing of their allocations and strategy. We expect information from SECO to follow shortly. We will begin bringing cities and counties together this month to seek direction from USDOE and SECO, and to talk among ourselves on what we can do together as a region to “reduce fossil fuel emissions and total energy use.”

We certainly do not want to “waste” this great opportunity.

Reprinted from the April 2009 issue of InSight, a publication of the North Central Texas Council of Governments.

Find this issue at:
<http://www.nctcog.org/envir/features/2009/apr/index.asp>

Be Sure to Stop by the ACC Table at Prairie Fest

4th Annual Fort Worth
Prairie Fest
 Celebrating our connection to the natural world

- Live music and entertainment featuring BRAVE COMBO
- Arts, crafts and green living exhibitors
- Plein Air Artists Paint Out and Silent Auction
- WILDFLOWER TOURS – Best place to see spring flowers

Saturday, April 25, 2009

FREE ADMISSION 10 a.m. – 8 p.m.

Friends of TANDY HILLS NATURAL AREA
 3400 View Street Fort Worth

For more information, visit www.tandyhills.org

TANDY HILLS NATURAL AREA is a magnificent 160-acre piece of undeveloped prairie located just four miles from downtown Fort Worth. It contains an amazing collection of prairie plant species that produce a spectacular show of blooming wildflowers each spring.

Arlington Conservation Council Membership Application

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

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Don't Forget!

Wednesday April 8
 7:00 pm

Mindy Mize
Alternative Fuel Vehicles

Be sure to visit us at
arlingtonconservationcouncil.org