

**ARLINGTON  
CONSERVATION  
COUNCIL**

**POST OAK**

**WORKING TO CONSERVE ARLINGTON'S NATURAL RESOURCES**

**VOLUME 8, NUMBER 1**

**JANUARY  
2007**

**Happy New Year!  
Now Pay Your Dues!  
Thanks!**

**January Meeting  
Annual Potluck  
and Business Meeting**

**Topic:**

Environmental priorities for our city and how Arlington Conservation Council can help us meet them.

**Speakers:**

Everyone with something to say.

**Materials & Methods:**

Bring your ideas and some food; we'll provide the drinks.

**When:**

Saturday, January 13, 5:00 pm.

**Where:**

Epworth United Methodist Church,  
1400 S. Cooper Street

**Bring food!**

**The Year in Review** Wayne Halliburton,

ACC President

Last year was another very successful year for ACC, thanks to the efforts of the ACC leadership, its members and friends. Let's review:



ACC was active in the community at both the city and state levels. Two members of the Arlington Citizens' Environmental Committee are ACC board members Grace Darling and Roy Miliner. In March, gas lease proposals came to Arlington, and the search for information regarding safety, conservation issues, and the Arlington Tomorrow Fund began and is ongoing.

ACC monitored the Texas Mayors Climate meeting and proposed revisions to the tree ordinance. We wrote state officials about global warming, specifically concerning the TXU coal plant construction proposals, and were present when Downwinders at Risk held their meeting with the mayor to encourage his use of clean cement on city building projects. Our members made and distributed yellow and red cards to our representatives to raise their awareness of air quality in Arlington during the ozone season. ACC members wrote numerous letters about the current underfunding of state parks and the legislature's use of funds received through speciality license plates. We also have members in the mix working on the future use of water in the state, as well as the purchase of prairie land and the retention of park property in Trinity Park in Fort Worth. We also have members working on the Tierra Verde development plans.

ACC did what was possible regarding the Cowboys stadium construction. Yaromir Steiner, developer of Glorypark, spoke at one of the most heavily attended monthly meetings ever. We gave our input on the swap of land near the stadium site for land elsewhere in the city, and we have a representative at the stakeholders meeting of the Johnson Creek Development Plan.

ACC contributed to the community through education and our members' actions. We participated in the annual Arlington Litter Challenge and were invited to assist in further cleaning up of the new Southwest Nature Preserve. We entered a float in the Arlington 4th of July Parade and had a table at the Front Street Festival, the UTA People and Planet day, the Urban Living Garden Show, and March for Parks.

*continued on page 2*

**The Year in Review** *continued from page 1*

We saw several milestones this year. The Hill Elementary Garden celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Community Gardens of Arlington announced a second location. The Blackland Prairie Park received a split-rail fence along one border. The *Post Oak* went colorfully electronic. ACC won the region 2 TRAPS Award for Community Partnership with Arlington Parks & Recreation Department and is up for the statewide award. Most impressive to me, however, was the first of what we hope to be many Wildscape Workshops and the accompanying native plant sale. Rosa Finsley

and John Davis put on a tremendous workshop, which was quite well attended and superbly organized, thanks to the generous help and hard work of numerous ACC and Wildscape volunteers. Truly the event of the year.

Now to the future. With all the festivals, cleanups, and good work in the wildscape, the Blackland Prairie Park, and the Arlington Community Gardens, ACC has been and will continue to be a positive presence in the community. We must continue to declare our stance on local and statewide issues. Park land, clean

water and air, gas drilling, the landscape ordinance, Cowboys stadium and Johnson Creek, public transportation, and the newly formed Arlington Tomorrow Fund will be at the forefront of our efforts. We are developing a partnership with the city in an apartment recycling program, and with the Parks Department to build a trail at the MLK complex. The Southwest Nature Preserve will soon be ready for a partnership.

There is plenty ahead to do, but thanks to the continued efforts and dedication of our members, we will be up to the challenge.

**Notice of Annual Meeting and Election of ACC Board Members for 2007: The ACC Annual Meeting will be held at Epworth United Methodist Church, 2124 Cooper Street, Arlington, TX, at 5:00 P.M. on January 13, 2007. During the meeting, ACC members will vote for the slate of nominated officers and board members as follows:**

**President (and Newsletter Editor) – John Darling; First Vice President (and Program Director) – Jo Ann Duman; Second Vice President – Roy Miliner; Treasurer – Marian Hiler; Secretary – Jo Briggs, At-Large Board Members – Grace Darling, Dale Denton (Web Master), John Dycus, Marianne Herrmann, Molly Hollar, Danny Kocurek, Jan Miller, Stephen Smith**

**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 Jan Miller

With the challenges faced by our prairie and by all natural resources in urban areas, it's sometimes easy to be discouraged. But here's the story of Shoe Factory Road Prairie near Chicago, condensed and quoted from *The Tallgrass Restoration Handbook* (edited by Packard and Mutel):

Like NYABP, the SFRP is small, only 9 acres, but sits in a dedicated Illinois Nature Preserve. It contains two federally listed endangered plant species and its condition was degrading due to a non-native invasive plant: "Black locust brush covered one-third of the prairie" and local officials were planning a landfill on 500 acres of the adjacent 4000 acres of preserve land.

"In 1983, Audubon Society volunteers and Nature Conservancy staff began a campaign to reverse the tide. After a contentious hearing, the county board voted not to permit garbage dumps on this or any preserve site....President George Dunne, speaking to a small crowd at the site, promised a new era. The board approved a restoration plan for 600 acres. The plan included dedication

of significant resources (ranging from scientists to trucks)." Even so, a new group, the Poplar Creek Prairie Stewards, provided much of the hands-on restoration work. Success of the restoration was seen as coyotes returned to prairie dens for the first time in decades.

More success followed: "In 1992, the Sears international headquarters moved to adjacent land. Sears landscaped the campus with prairie and savanna and restored a prairie and wetland corridor through the center of the site...linking two preserves totaling 7000 acres....The stewardship group sponsors tours, festivals, lectures and social events. Many members grow rare plants in their gardens to supply seed for restoration." In response to the initiative shown by this group and others, a Forest Preserve plan was announced in 1994 "to restore 54,000 acres within the 67,000 acre preserve system."

There's inspiration in that story for us here: Maybe we can convince adjacent developers to extend our little grassland with prairie landscaping. And maybe...who knows?

**Annual Master Composter class: When:** Friday, February 16, 2006 - 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm and Saturday, February 17, 2006 - 9:00 am - 4:00 pm **Where:** City Municipal Building 101 W. Abram Street **Fee:** Free for Arlington residents, \$20 for non-residents.

To learn more, contact Lorrie Anderle, City of Arlington Recycling Coordinator, 817-459-6778 or [anderlel@ci.arlington.tx.us](mailto:anderlel@ci.arlington.tx.us). **To register on line, fill out the form at [http://www.ci.arlington.tx.us/environment/composting\\_register.html](http://www.ci.arlington.tx.us/environment/composting_register.html).**

## Green Building Danny Kocurek

Every person concerned about our environment will eventually face the question, "How green are you?" Answering the question can involve soul searching and financial calculations. If the costs in time and money are small, like installing a low-flow shower head, the decision is much easier than if you are considering something like a solar electric system. Sometimes making the green choice is not possible due to simple economics. More often, though, the green choice is the most economical one in the end. The extra cost of the initial purchase is quickly paid back through decreased energy or water bills.

Windows and doors are common renovations made in existing homes and are a good example of this dilemma. The decision to replace windows is a big financial investment and the payback depends on what kind of window is being replaced. Single-pane, uninsulated aluminum windows replaced with double-pane, vinyl or fiberglass windows will save hundreds of dollars a year but involve a sizable initial cost. Sadly, this can often be easily avoided. Many builders still install the cheapest aluminum windows available in order to save a few hundred dollars and leave the homeowner paying hundreds of dollars a year in higher energy bills.

Choices are available for each part of a window. The frame can be made of steel or aluminum but these are poor insulators and should be avoided. Vinyl is relatively inexpensive, long lasting and highly insulated. Durability is some-

times an issue with vinyl because it expands and contracts more than wood and fiberglass and can warp or crack. Wood is a very good insulator but must be clad with another material to be durable. Wood windows are usually clad with aluminum or fiberglass to protect the exterior. Wood costs about the same as fiberglass. Fiberglass windows are very good insulators and are highly durable.

Glass can consist of one, two or even three panes. The more panes, the better the insulation. The space between the glass can be filled with special gases to provide even more insulation. The gases, like argon, limit heat and cold transfer better than air. The panes can also be covered with low-emissivity (low-e) coatings that make them reflect heat instead of letting it through. All of these enhancements make the window more energy efficient.

There are things you can do if it is not cost-effective to replace a window. Using blinds to insulate can be a relatively inexpensive upgrade. The best insulators are quilted or cellular shades. To maximize savings they should be left down all the time in the summer to block the sun's rays during the day and insulate day and night. During winter, they should be left up during the day to allow heat from the sun in and left down at night for insulation.

Even the most inexperienced do-it-yourselfer can place inexpensive films on the interior window glass to increase its insulating value. Storm windows of varying complexity can be placed on the outside for the same effect. You can also

## Wildscape Update John Dycus



The recent Arlington Parks & Recreation Department wildscape grant came at a time when it was truly needed. The multifaceted German statesman intellect Johann

Wolfgang Goethe had a word for such occurrences: providence.

“The moment one definitely commits oneself, then providence moves, too,” he wrote, his eyes agleam with prosaic fire. “All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. ... Whatever you can do or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it. Begin it now.”

Recall from world literature class that Goethe was quite the contemplative stud. Prescient, too. Repeatedly when the Molly Hollar Wildscape, to cite a Texas example, faces difficulty, unforeseen resources arise to meet the need.

This matching grant for nearly \$10,000 will restore the pool ruined by vandals and redo the meadow of buffalo grass that was drowned by a leak in the irrigation system. Loosening the grip of a suffocating drought, life-giving rain in December assured the survival of the nearly 1,000 native plants that volunteers planted this fall. A matching \$3,000 grant from Texas Parks and Wildlife gave birth to the

wildscape, followed by several generous grants from U.S. Fish and Wildlife, another from the EPA and two smaller ones from the Native Plant Society of Texas. Then Northrop Grumman chose the wildscape from nine projects as the beneficiary of its Good Turn Day. About 150 people, including management and other NG workers, held a fund raiser and labored with zeal to build a pavilion, three bridges, five kiosks, 10 benches and directional signs. They put native plants in the ground, removed privet, mulched trails—in all adding more than \$100,000 worth of improvements.

So many have generously come forth to assist. From the beginning, John Snowden at Bluestem Nursery has donated all the native grasses, volunteered long hours for privet removal, and vigorously supported the native plant sales. Volunteers have dug plants from their own yards and rescued plants in the bulldozer’s path. They propagated plants from locally gathered seed at their own homes until Arlington Parks & Rec offered its greenhouse. Now the volunteers grow enough plants to propagate the wildscape and have some left over to sell. Proceeds went into the match for the grant just awarded.

Volunteers have increased remarkably over the years to now include ACCers, NPSOT members, Master Gardeners, Master Naturalists, Boy Scouts, Rotarians, WeCAN, Tarrant County Juvenile Services, Girl Scouts, Brownies, Cub Scouts, Montessori Academy students, teachers and parents, and community stewards (just park visitors wanting to help).

This copious good fortune has expanded the wildscape from its original half-acre 12 years ago to nearly 4 acres today. Demonstration gardens utilize native plants to conserve resources, attract wildlife such as butterflies and songbirds, and provide a place where visitors can connect with nature. The wildscape now embraces all the ecosystems—woodland, seasonal wetland, mini-prairie and riparian (with the creek running through it).

Magical, powerful providence, indeed.

### Winter Work Schedule:

FIRST SATURDAYS: Jan. 6, Feb. 3, March 3

TUESDAYS: mornings 9:00 am-noon, afternoons 1:00-3:00 pm.

We will be cutting back, mulching and possibly planting some evergreen plants, so bring gloves, pruners and shovels. Coffee, water and snacks will be provided, as usual.

## Environmental and Other Observations from Portugal Julia Burgen

I spent two weeks in early December visiting Portugal, mostly in the greater Lisbon area.

Lisbon proper has a population of 565,000, while greater Lisboa contains 2.5 million people. I stayed nearby in Cascais.

The whole area seems to be experiencing a lot of growth; construction cranes were visible at several locations all along the coastal area from Lisbon west to Cascais, a distance of 30 km.

Winter weather is moderate and there are scattered sandy beaches and desirable marine air and views. I felt like asking people in Cascais, “Are you sure you want to add the population that comes with all of the new multi-story condominiums?”

Transportation consists of a modern train from Cascais into Lisboa and freeways, some with tolls. In the big city there are buses, streetcars, and a subway. Since the city is built on many levels among seven hills, there are

picturesque, working funiculars and even a large public elevator from the lower town to the upper. Smaller Cascais has little buses for getting around the town. One evening I went with a group on the train into Lisbon to see the holiday decorations. The huge Christmas tree was reportedly the tallest in Europe.

Autos were all small, from the tiny Smart Cars and Morris Minor types to small four-door sedans. My daughter has a 1994 Renault Clio stick shift and

## Green Building *continued from page 3*

replace the sash and sometimes the window without replacing the whole window frame.

The design of windows also affects their efficiency. The most efficient are casement or awning windows because they can seal completely on all sides. They also help catch breezes when they are opened because they stick out from the house. Windows that slide open (single hung, double hung, and sliding) are less efficient because the sides with the sliding mechanism are more difficult to seal with weather-stripping and gaskets.

If you are wondering how much money you can save by replacing your windows and don't really trust the window salesperson, Berkley labs has

developed a Web-based calculator into which you can plug all of the details of your house and location. With the press of a button, it will tell you how to save energy and how much money you can save with each implementation. The address is <http://hes.lbl.gov>. The site has lots of helpful suggestions on saving energy besides just windows.

In planning our new home we have decided to go with the fiberglass awning and casement windows. We like their low maintenance and their high insulating value. We also like the way they can be opened up to catch breezes. We have designed our house to try to optimize natural ventilation and lessen the need for air conditioning as much as possible. The windows

open in different directions around the house so that breezes can be drawn in and vented out as efficiently as possible. All the windows are protected by roof overhangs that block the sun and protect us from the elements. Most of these concepts are not new, they were developed by the original settlers in this area. I am always embarrassed to point out that my grandparents lived their entire lives here without air conditioning. Unfortunately cheap electricity and our country's love affair with air conditioning changed architectural designs away from the natural energy efficiency our ancestors relied on to stay cool. I hope we are learning that lesson.

## Portugal *continued from page 4*

my observation is that driving is very much a physical activity. It requires constant attention and adjustment, especially to navigate the numerous roundabouts. And they are very serious about the law against using cell phones while driving.

The cost of gasoline is \$1.32/liter. Sounds good until you convert to gallons and come up with \$6.14/gallon. They are still driving, but **small** cars are the rule.

Electricity is expensive and lots of older apartments have clotheslines rigged from their windows.

North of the metro area along the ridges were numerous tall wind generators. Many of these same locations used to have picturesque short fat windmills with large rotating sails (á la Don Quixote). Unfortunately they are fast disappearing. One truly anachronistic windmill was south of a freeway, sandwiched between large apartment buildings and a commercial area.

The Portuguese are working to conserve open land and traditional uses of land. They have 12 nature parks in a country about the size of Indiana. The Sintra area has 57,527



acres designated for conservation by the government. This area was also proclaimed a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1995. I visited two locations there that were botanical and architectural gems and I saw the first of many native cork oak trees.

Numerous sites in Lisbon have been preserved for historical reasons and also have gardens. In addition there

are several botanic gardens, the largest being a multi-purpose park of some 4 square miles. I most enjoyed the smaller one at the University of Lisbon, which is dense with vegetation from around the world and completely surrounded by the city. There were monkey puzzle trees, dragon trees, coastal sequoias, giant ficus, Norfolk Island pines reaching to the sky, and the same small mondo grass that I have in my front yard. The explorers who made Portugal's fortune in the 1500s with spices and gold also brought home exotic plants.

Other special memories include one late afternoon with clouds and sunrays over a very angry Atlantic near the westernmost point of continental Europe; the full moon rising over the coastal area; and I even had the humbling experience of getting caught outside in a terrific squall.

Bom Ano Novo!

Notes: The *Star-Telegram* will publish a postcard I sent them in their Travel section one Sunday in January.

For more on the fate of cork oaks as winemakers switch to synthetics, see the Jan - Feb 2007 *Audubon* magazine article, "Cork Screwed."

### 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**

Please circle membership category.

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## THE POST OAK

Arlington Conservation Council  
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# Don't Forget!

**Yearly Dues Are Due.**  
**Annual Potluck  
and Business Meeting**  
**Saturday, January 13,**  
**5:00 pm**  
**Epworth United  
Methodist Church**

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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[arlingtonconservationcouncil.org](http://arlingtonconservationcouncil.org)