

ARLINGTON
CONSERVATION
COUNCIL

POSTOAK

WORKING TO CONSERVE ARLINGTON'S NATURAL RESOURCES

VOLUME 8, NUMBER 3

MARCH 2007

Note
meeting place:
Fielder Museum

March Meeting



Wetlands Water Reuse

Woody Frossard, Environmental Director,
Tarrant Regional Water District

Wednesday, February 14, 7:00 pm.

Fielder Museum
1616 W. Abram St.
(corner of Fielder and Abram)

An innovative water conservation project
at Richland Creek Wildlife Management Area

BRING SOMETHING FOR THE RAFFLE!

Bits & Pieces

Back to the Prairie:

Next Workday Saturday, March 31

Don't miss your next chance to help at Arlington's only never-plowed prairie park. Jan Miller will bring water if you bring gloves and nonmotorized sapling-cutting tools. For directions and more information contact Jan at jgmiller5594@sbcglobal.net.

Save Trees: Stop Junk Mail

Consider signing up for a service offered by 41pounds.org. For a one-time fee, they claim to be able to reduce your junk mail by 80-95%. As an added benefit, over half of each subscription goes to a non-profit group of your choice and Arlington Conservation Council is one of your choices.

Great Backyard Bird Count

On February 14 local birdwatchers, including ACC's Jan Miller, found 41 species of birds at the Southwest Nature Preserve in West Arlington. There were lots of birds typical of our post-oak woodland, but the highlight was canvas-backs on the small lake. Fort Worth came in with 107 total species for the GBBC; Arlington, 105.



Green Auto Dealership Tour

See this LEED-certified building on March 29, 2007 from 6:30 - 7:30 pm.

It's the Pat Lobb Toyota Dealership at 3350 South Central Expressway in McKinney. Refreshments will be provided. Must RSVP by March 20 to rsvp@usgbcnorthtexas.org [limited space available].

Johnson Creek in the News

Don't miss the February 28 FW Weekly article on Johnson Creek: Sneak Play: Politicians pull an end-around to benefit the Cowboys. It's a study in how a designated riparian/wildlife resource area became mulch and parking lot. Find it online at fwweekly.com/content.asp?article=4655.

From the President John Darling



No navel gazing this month; it's time for the Short-Attention-Span President: **It must be spring.** Public radio played a quick non-commercial for Encore

Azaleas, plants we really don't need to fool with. You can buy them at 50 dealers in Dallas and at 6 places in Fort Worth. Is Dallas that much better for azaleas, or that much dumber? Meanwhile the newspaper contains ads for nurseries offering privet and Japanese honeysuckle. Huh?

Speaking of the newspaper, the March 7 edition tells us that BNSF Railway is spending lots of money on low-emission locomotives for use in DFW, Houston, and San Antonio. These N-ViroMotive units (I'm not making that up) will help meet state and federal emissions requirements.

Sounds great, despite the fact that 80% of the cost comes from a Texas Emissions Reduction Plan grant.

Compost Conference. I recently saw the latest in commercial-scale compost machinery in Orlando. There were 1000-horsepower grinders eating up whole trees, but where did all that vegetation come from? Was that mountain of chips a forest last week? Central Florida has a growth rate of 69%, so I guess they'd better order more grinders. The oddest thing I learned was that agriculture on Florida's sandy soils "...has been successful based on heavy use of water and fertilizers, not on composting."

Bobcat Blues. Meanwhile I'm fretting every time I work on compost at UTA. When I run the Bobcat (sort of a tractor), I'm using diesel fuel while producing noise and pollution. We're keeping kitchen waste and leaves out of the landfill but there is an environmental cost.

On a brighter note, my compost helper (an overqualified engineer from Kenya) just found a Texas Spiny lizard under a pile of leaf bags. Fiddling with it turned into a chance to talk about the animals we grew up with, and I realized just how benign our local environment is. No black mambas, spitting cobras, lions, leopards, elephants, or buffalo lurking with evil intent along Cooper Street. We got rid of our mountain lions, bear, and bison so long ago that most of us would be shocked to learn they were ever here.

Dream house? Also in the paper, a puff piece on a couple who've built a fairytale house for them and their 7 pets. It's 3200 square feet, "...roomy sure, but modest compared with many Colleyville homes." No mention of green features.

THE POST OAK

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

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2007 Litter Challenge: Help Us Win Again on Saturday, March 24

It's time again to show that we know how to deal with trash. Since the city started the annual Litter Challenge we've almost always won or tied our group category ("Not too young and not too many"). And even when we haven't, one or two more people would have put us over the top. So come on out at 9:00 am, stay an hour or two, and help us win again as we clean up a high-visibility spot—the area around the Center/Mesquite bridges over Johnson Creek.

Dress appropriately for scratchy weeds and bring gloves if you have them. We'll bring water and the city will supply gloves and trash bags.

Thanks in advance. We really do need you and hope to see a big crowd. For more information contact John Darling (info on back page).



Wildscape Update John Dycus



Here's progress to make you smile. Wildscape neighbor Danny Kocurek, who is building a

"house as green as I can afford" on a lot adjoining Veterans Park, has agreed to take the wildscape co-chair position, his only reservation being that he knows little about native plants. All he has to do is channel Molly Hollar. "That's the only thing I know anything about," Molly says modestly (and incorrectly), "and I have observed he knows a lot about every-

thing else, so that should balance well." Danny, who's also new to the ACC



The industrious Kocurek team includes Danny, wife Barb, sons Benjamin and Nicholas, and mother Peggy.

board, is an enthusiastic, hard-working volunteer at the wildscape and the greenhouse, the type who sees a problem and fixes it before the task force can be formed. You know him: He's the tall guy on the trails bending down to pick up the cigarette butts and cellophane shards.

Good news No. 2. Josephine Keeney, a dedicated promoter of native plants, will manage the wildscape propagation project, replacing Pat Lovejoy, NPSOT member and Master Gardener, who has done a superb job, especially in managing the plant sales. Pat continues to volunteer and is largely responsible for the beauty of the butterfly garden.

Proceeds from the plant sales generated the \$9,750 match for the Arlington Parks & Rec grant. The money will restore the pool destroyed



Josephine Keeney hard at work in the Randol Mill greenhouse

by vandalism, redo the grassy meadow and provide permanent colored signs in the triple kiosk by the parking lot. The Plexiglas doors will be moved to the back of the kiosks, to facilitate changing displays.

A third step forward — a "fabulous bonanza," Molly calls it — is the wildscape Web site, to be developed by Josephine and her husband, Frank. Josephine has a beautiful site, www.texasstar.org, complete with a search engine and music, that Danny says is the best he has found for native plant info. Wildscape photos and other material are being collected; the site should launch in March.

When was the last time someone said no to Molly? Let's have a contest. Closest to the date gets an "I heart possumhaw" button or something.



The butterfly garden makes a big first impression, thanks to the efforts of Pat Lovejoy and other dedicated volunteers.

Some time ago landscape architect Cliff Mycoskie was unhappy about the death of yet another pine tree on the triangular island at Davis and Park Row. Mycoskie gives credit to others, but somehow 6 new pines were purchased and employees of his landscape company planted them last December. And now irrigation has been installed to prevent future losses. That triangle is a local landmark, and it's people like Mycoskie who help preserve the past for the next generations. Thanks.

Overdue Recognition



Margarito Gonzalez, Fidel Diaz, Carry Schnell, Zenan Alvarez, and Guillermo Aranda pause after planting the last loblolly. All are employees of Site Planning Site Development. (Note: Mycoskie McInnis and Associates are sponsors of this newsletter, but the editor is solely responsible for this story.)

Green Building Danny Kocurek

There has been a flood of news about water usage in the last few years. For some reason our elected leaders never realized that we couldn't just make more of it when we ran low. In designing our new home, we have spent a lot of time trying to minimize water usage. As with most efficiency issues in homes, it is much easier to do it right the first time than to replace things later on. However, there are some things that can be done in existing homes to improve water efficiency.

The biggest waste of water is obviously landscaping, a topic readers of this newsletter are well versed in. We are still working on our landscaping plans, but will try to make Molly proud by using all natives and limiting turf areas. We might end up with no turf area at all and just a mulched play area in the back. We will irrigate with a drip system hooked up to the rainwater catchment cistern. I am hoping that after the landscape is established, we will use most of our outdoor watering for the vegetable garden.

Inside the house, low-flow faucets and showerheads have been required by law for a long time. Unfortunately the laws can be skirted by removing the flow-reducing washers in some devices or using the now popular, multiple showerhead showers. They are like a car wash for people. Although each individual showerhead meets the standards for low flow, multiple heads are installed that spray from all sides and waste enormous amounts of water. Needless to say, we will be using ultra low-flow fixtures everywhere. We will also use trickle valves, which you will be hearing more about in the near future. Recently Delta Faucets announced a breakthrough with the release of their H₂Okinetic Technology. These new showerheads reportedly use advanced hydro-engineering to make the user feel like s/he is using a high-flow device, while using a mere 1.6 gallons of water a minute.

Recent advances in water recirculating pumps have made them a better choice for water and energy savings. Originally the house had to be plumbed so that the hot water line made a giant loop from the hot water heater to all the fixtures and back to the hot water heater. A pump continuously circulated hot water through the house. As a result, hot water was always available instantly at the faucet and water was not wasted while waiting. This can save an enormous amount of water depending on how long the pipes are and how well they are insulated, but the energy used to run the pump all day can make it not worth the water savings. This also used to be impossible or at least very expensive to retrofit into existing homes because it involved adding an extra pipe back to the hot water heater.

A new device called the Metlund D'Mand System can be retrofitted into any home and solves most of the wasted energy issues. It typically installs under the master bath sink and is activated by a push button when hot water is needed. It takes the unheated water coming out of the hot water line and sends it back through the cold water line to the hot water heater. When hot water finally makes it to the sink, the pump senses the temperature change and turns off, sending the now hot water to the faucet.

Any discussion on water use has to eventually get down to potty issues, so here we go. Bathroom scientists who sub-specialize in the field of potty design have been hard at work since low-flow toilets became standard years ago. There were lots of problems with the effectiveness of the first models because they often required 2 flushes and ended up not saving any water. Modern low-flow commodes are much better. We are installing dual-flush commodes in our house. These have 2 buttons on the top that let you choose a regular 1.6-gallon flush or a smaller flush of a gallon or less. To avoid a

more graphic discussion, I will let you imagine how you would make the decision.

Dishwashers have become more water efficient over the years and some models also save considerable electricity over older models. Front loading washing machines save significant amounts of water over top loaders and are becoming more affordable. These appliances generally pay back the extra costs within a few years. Although we are big supporters of saving the environment, we don't mind saving money along the way.

Rainwater catchment is also catching on. Many people have placed rain-barrels under the downspouts around the home for free water for the garden. We are planning a larger system with a 3000-gallon cistern. Once again, this is one of those things that is much easier to do with new construction than in renovating. Our initial plans are to use the system for irrigation only, but rainwater catchment is increasingly used for potable purposes. It is usually cheaper to build a rainwater system than to dig a well, so it has become very popular in areas without a municipal water supply. We will design the plumbing so that we can change over to the use of rainwater in the house in the future, but have decided to wait for now.

The last water saving technique is graywater recycling. The water that goes down the drain of your washing machine, showers and sinks is considered graywater because it is not contaminated like the water from commodes, dishwashers and kitchen sinks. Many houses are now double plumbed so that the graywater fixtures drain into a separate system from the blackwater. Blackwater goes to the sewer, but graywater can be used for irrigation or even purified for reuse in the house. We are still deciding on this issue since some people argue that graywater recycling is not worth the expense and effort if you design the house to highly conserve water.

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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Please circle membership category.

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How did you hear about us? _____

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THE POST OAK

Arlington Conservation Council
PO Box 216
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Don't Forget!

Wednesday March 14,
7:00 pm

Woody Frossard

Tarrant Regional Water District
Wetlands Water Reuse

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Be sure to visit us at
arlingtonconservationcouncil.org