

**ARLINGTON
CONSERVATION
COUNCIL**

POSTOAK

WORKING TO CONSERVE ARLINGTON'S NATURAL RESOURCES
VOLUME 9, NUMBER 2

FEBRUARY 2008

Bits & Pieces

www.arlingtonconservationcouncil.org

February Meeting Arlington's Tree Program



Heather Dowell
Contract Coordinator
and Certified Arborist
Arlington Parks & Recreation Dept

Wednesday, February 13, 7:00 pm
Fielder Museum
1616 W. Abram Street
(corner of Fielder and Abram)

Great Backyard Bird Count

Don't forget the 11th Annual GBBC on Feb. 15 to 18 when families and youth all over the United States can tally the birds they see and send the info to Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and the Audubon Society. During the long holiday weekend you'll be able to count wherever you are, at home, at parks, at vacation places. For full info go to www.birdsource.org/gbbc. They have a great section under "gbbc for kids" with bird sounds and identification that's helpful to all amateur birders.



Today's Inspirational Moment

In an underdeveloped country, don't drink the water; in a developed country, don't breathe the air.

~*Changing Times* magazine

2008 Dues are Overdue

All memberships expired in December, and unless you've renewed since, this will be your last newsletter. We really don't want to lose you, so please renew today. Send your check to the address on the back page or drop it off at the February meeting. You know we need every one of you — Arlington's environment won't improve without you. Thanks.



Thanks to sixth grade teacher, Barbara Adams, there is now a link to the native plant courtyard on the Hill School website. Just go to www.aisd.net/Hill and click on Courtyard.

Mission Curb Appeal

Green Arlington Foundation just received funds from the Arlington Tomorrow Foundation to begin a landscaping project at Mission Arlington. ACC is one of the partners in this effort, along with UTA faculty, staff, and students. We're looking forward to some native plants along Abram Street.

From the President John Darling



I am repeatedly informed that, before it gets any later, a proper president would take this opportunity to review our accomplishments

last year. My first choice is to brood about how terrible everything is, but okay, here we go:

Monthly meetings

Thanks to the efforts of Program Chair Jo Ann Duman, we had an exceptional string of monthly meetings that were often entertaining and always educational.

Prairie workdays

Again last year Jan Miller cajoled us into persecuting woody invaders in all kinds of weather in order to maintain our only unplowed bit of prairie.

Wildscape workdays

Molly Hollar's passion is our monthly mainstay as we join the varied group

that has contributed to more than a decade of environmental restoration efforts in this great example of partnership between volunteers and our remarkable parks professionals.

Educational outreach

We've staffed tables and talked to people at shows, and we've put on two Walks on the Wildside as well as our first Earth Day at the Wildscape. These activities take planners and lots of volunteers, and every time they've come through. There's lots of satisfaction here, especially when we show kids that things are better off the sidewalk.

July 4th parade

This category stands by itself and might seem odd, but for the third year I bet we've had the only recyclable float, the only environmental message, and lots of members who've been excited about the whole thing. And nobody else is collecting recyclable cans and bottles (and diapers and blobs of food and, don't get me started).

Litter cleanup

The trouble with litter is that it just keeps coming, but we turn out in good numbers to clean it up anyway. We won our division again in the city's Litter Challenge, and we helped out at Founders Park during the Trinity Trash Bash.

City issues

This area is basically the opposite of the July 4th parade in terms of excitement and exposure. Here's where members were asked to contact our elected leaders about things like green cement, gas leases, and the landscape ordinance. Or maybe we went to a city council meeting for a crucial vote. It's sometimes disappointing, but it must be done. Considering how few residents participate in city government, this really is where a small group can sometimes make a crucial difference.

I always want more, but when I add it all up, I have to think that we do a lot with a little, and you can't ask for much more than that.

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



Would I know a prairie if I saw it?

You're driving down the road and once in awhile, there's an open field with some grass. Around here most of it is an

agricultural field or pasture that, due to human disturbance, has grown up in some kind of exotic, introduced grass. But every once in a rare while, you might see a remnant from prehistoric times: native prairie. If you did, how would you know?

First, rule out land that shows signs of plowing, contours from bulldozing or is a monoculture of introduced grasses. Signs of plowing or bulldozing are fairly easy to see, but monocultures might take a little practice. The exotic grasses were imported for grazing, usually Johnson-grass (Mediterranean area), King Ranch or "KR" bluestem (Asia), or Bermudagrass (Africa). Away from their usual environments, predators and pests, these grasses were able to take advantage of disturbed soil, then to out-compete native species. Learn to recognize these and other grasses; see *Resources* below.

Then, see if your field seems to have a lot of different kinds of plants, both

wildflowers and grasses. High quality prairies have 200 to 300 kinds of native plants, with different grasses butting against each other in a mosaic of textures and subtle color changes. It's also helpful to look for native indicator species, especially little bluestem, a common indicator in many Texas prairie types, and for side-oats grama, the state grass of Texas.

Finally, there's no substitute for being in the middle of a native prairie, which



was once the predominant landscape of the North Texas area. Once you begin to recognize native grasses and wildflowers, you'll see the subtle differences in local prairies, from the blackland prairies in the eastern parts of North Texas to the Grand prairies to the west.

Look for the signs: Maybe you'll find one of those rare overlooked prairie remnants, a leftover of prehistoric times.

Resources:

www.texasprairies.org (note the frequently updated blog or sign up for e-mail updates)

Texas Extension Service's free publication *Know your Grasses* at <http://texnat.tamu.edu/cmplants/B-182/main.htm>.

<http://www.noble.org/webapps/plantimagegallery/>
Grasses of the Texas Hill Country: A Field Guide by Brian & Shirley Loflin
Note: Jan would like to acknowledge material for this column found at the Native Prairies Association of Texas Web site.

An article from BBC News, "Biofuels 'are not a magic bullet'": "Biofuels could play an important role in cutting greenhouse gas emissions from transport, both in Britain and globally," said Professor John Pickett from Rothamsted Research, who chaired the Royal Society's study. "But it would be disastrous if biofuel production made further inroads into biological diversity and natural ecosystems. "We must not create new environmental or social problems in our efforts to deal with climate change."

Annual Master Composter class: **When:** Friday, February 22, 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm and Saturday, February 23, 9:00 am - 4:00 pm. **Where:** UTA Environmental Health & Safety, 500 Summit Ave. **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. **To register online, fill out the form at** http://www.ci.arlington.tx.us/environment/composting_register.html.

Tarrant Coalition for Environmental Awareness

On Saturday, March 8, the next TCEA general meeting will be held in the community room of Healthy Choice Market, 5100 Hwy 121, Colleyville 76034 at 1:00 pm. Featured speaker is Ellen Yost, outreach

specialist at NCTCOG. Her focus will be on social marketing. The question always arises in civic organizations: How do we get others to buy into our cause, to act in a particular way, maybe even to get more involved?

Meet someone who knows what the experts are saying and who will help us understand what we need to do to be effective. For more information contact: Bonnie Bowman 817-265-0008(H) or bfbg@tx.rr.com.

Wildscape Update John Dycus



On the front lines of the war on privet.

After the first freeze almost everything in the wildscape goes dormant, so most of what remains green is privet, signifying (drum roll) it's privet pulling time again. Privet, surely you know by now, is an Asian plant that, left unchecked, grows rapidly and could kill the entire post oak woodland. The native wildflowers and understory plants would be crowded out as the privet becomes so thick it blocks the light, preventing germination of the acorns and seeds that fall to replace the older trees as they die out.

Privet is thickest along the creek's moist banks. While immature privet pulls easily, established privet requires the hard-core orange Weed Wrench. The larger plants must be cut and the stumps

painted with stump killer, which is about 90 percent effective.

After battling it for eight years, the impassioned wildscape privet eradicators (IWPEs) have the last of it in their sights. The IWPEs came out in force for the first Saturday workday, February 2.

They, Citizen Foresters and indentured volunteers from Tarrant County Juvenile Services planted 35 understory trees, mostly in the one-acre erosion area, and they pulled. Led by Melanie Migura of Citizen Foresters, volunteers pruned branches overhanging the trails, and they pulled some more.

Arlington Parks & Rec plans to pile-drive the biggest remaining privet soon.

*Oh.
It's.
Pullin' time again.
Yer gonna wrench me.*

*I can see by that
"devil vine!" look
in yer eye.*

*I can tell by
the way you
gas that chainsaw.*

*It won't be long
before it's pullin' time.*

A second Saturday workday this month, on Feb. 23, should seal the deal.

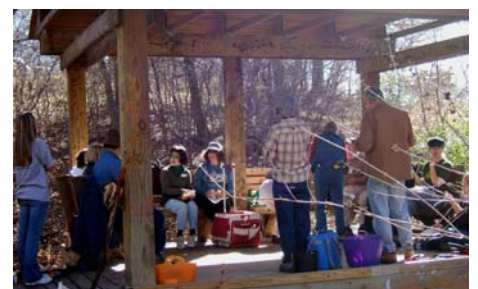
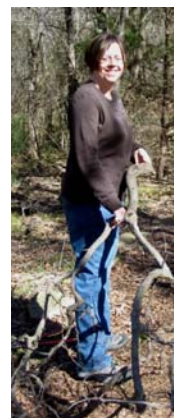
So what is an exotic invasive plant anyway? It's any species that is not native to the ecosystem and that likely will cause economic or environmental harm. Exotic invasive costs in the United States are estimated at \$130 billion a year, and the

pest plants threaten nearly half of the U.S. endangered native plant species.

In Texas, privet and Japanese honeysuckle have taken over large parts of the native woodlands. For information on invasive plants visit the internet sites texasinvasives.org or tpwd.state.tx.us.



Privet pullers, left and below, keep fighting the good fight while lots of small trees were planted in the erosion area during the last Saturday workday. Fort Worth Forester Melanie Migura, right, turned up to help with tree pruning, and Molly made everyone take a break and eat healthy snacks.



Happy Birthday, Molly. You're never too old to play in the dirt.

Julia Burgen



Happy Birthday, Molly.

This old planet, parts of Texas, Arlington particularly, are very grateful for all that you have done, especially in the last 15 years, to make our piece of North America more plant-, animal- and people-friendly. In 2008 parlance, there are fewer greenhouse gases because of you.

You were part of the little band of a dozen Arlington residents who in the fall of 1993 organized themselves into the second generation of Arlington Conservation Council. You helped Arlington pass its first tree ordinance in March 1994. Then in June you were in the thick of things as ACC applied for a Texas Parks and Wildlife grant to transform a part of Veterans Park into a Wildscape.

Did you realize then that the project would become part of your life for 14 years now? So many people have joined you in that project and have made great things happen. Your inspiration is contagious. Your knowledge has been shared and exploded in your outreach teaching about the advantages of our native plants.

The Very Happiest of Birthdays to you, Molly, our own Mother Earth.



Another award

The Cross Timbers Urban Forestry Council recently named Molly its 2007 Volunteer of the Year and presented her with the Gold Leaf Award. It just couldn't have happened to a more deserving person.



She's just impossible to buy for

Know what Molly really, really wants for her birthday? Less privet. Lots less. So come out to the Wildscape on the morning of Saturday, February 23, and pull privet.

Danny Kocurek's announcement says: "I promise there is enough privet to go around. Bring gloves and long pants and sleeves. We will bring water and snacks. It will help with planning if you can RSVP to me at dkocurek@sbcglobal.net. Please remember that your attendance is your gift and you do not need to bring anything else. We hope to see you there."



The Annual Meeting

On January 19 a lot of ACC members (no official count, but there were many) once again enjoyed the annual potluck and business meeting. We met in a new spot this year. The Montessori Academy of Arlington kindly allowed us to use a fine large room that seemed perfect for the occasion.

As in the past, it was a time for conversation on serious environmental matters and many other less serious topics. We conducted some business: Members voted to accept the slate of officers and board members for 2008. This means that all of last year's board and officers will retain their positions.

It wouldn't have been such a success without all the good food — and without some behind-the-scenes efforts to get it all together. Every year a small group fiddles with pesky details like plates, silverware, and drinks, and this time they did it again. Thanks to them, and to everyone who attended.



Many members at the potluck were inspired to pay their 2008 dues, but quite a few of us haven't gotten around to it. Please renew today. It's very simple: We need you.



Live Birds of Prey at River Legacy

On Thursday, February 14, Fort Worth Audubon Society will meet at River Legacy Living Science Center in Arlington at 7:30 pm. Everyone's encouraged to attend a live Raptor Presentation from Blackland Prairie Raptor Rehab.

Green House Takes Shape



We've been reading about Danny Kocurek's green house for some time, and several of us were treated to a tour after the annual potluck meeting. This remarkable house features structural insulated panels (SIPs) among other sustainable products. But mostly it features a great deal of thought about how to design a truly efficient, energy-conserving home in an area where such a thing is all too rare. And it's going to look great, too.



Plant Walk at Southwest Nature Preserve



On January 26 native plant authority Jeff Quayle led a plant walk through Arlington's beautiful post oak preserve. For the keenest plant people the highlight was the out-of-its-range farkleberry (left), but for many it was simply the chance to enjoy this wonderful place.

Note: Pete Jamieson just pointed us to a Web site that contains some great photos of the preserve: <http://bobbrennan.smugmug.com>.



Dallas, Houston make list of top green power purchasers (What about Arlington?)

Here are parts of a recent EPA press release:

Wind power has propelled the cities of Dallas and Houston onto the Environmental Protection Agency's national list of top green power purchasers.

Dallas took the No. 9 spot on the National Top 25 list of Green Power Partners by buying 40 percent of its power from wind sources. Houston grabbed the No. 12 spot by using wind power for 20 percent of its purchased-electricity needs.

"Texas leads the nation in wind power production, and Dallas and Houston are leading the way in showing other cities how green power can help protect the environment," said EPA Regional Administrator Richard Greene. "By shifting to wind and other renewable power sources, cities can cut greenhouse

gas emissions and change the way we generate energy."

Dallas and Houston purchased more than 333 million kWh and 262 million kWh of green power respectively, earning them first-time recognition on the National Top 25 list, as well as the Top 10 Local Government list. The aggregate environmental impact of these two purchases is equivalent to avoiding the carbon dioxide emissions of more than 84,000 passenger vehicles annually, or the same amount of electricity needed to power an estimated 61,000 average American homes each year.

The City of Austin and the Austin Independent School District were also recognized by EPA on its Top 10 Local Government list, with No. 5 and No. 7 rankings respectively.

And Arlington?

ACC member Ann Trenton recently asked Mayor Cluck about our city's participation in green energy programs. In an e-mail message, the Mayor told Ann that we have just begun buying 10% renewable energy. He plans to press for increasing the amount, noting that each additional 10% will cost an extra \$21,000.

It's a beginning; even 10% with hopes for more means that we're on the right track. Certainly many of us hope for more green energy, maybe something like 100%, all purchased right now. But our city leaders do seem to have come a long way in a short time.

You can help this process by doing a simple thing: Let your city representatives know how glad you are with 10% and how much you want that percentage to grow.

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

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

E-mail _____

How did you hear about us? _____

Please circle membership category.

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Other \$ _____

New member ☐

Renewing member ☐

Make checks payable to Arlington Conservation Council. Mail to ACC, Box 216, Arlington, TX 76004-0216. Contributions and dues are not tax-deductible. *I want to save trees; send my newsletter to my email address.* ☐

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THE POST OAK

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Don't Forget!

Wednesday, February 13

7:00 pm

Heather Dowell

APARD

Arlington's Tree Program

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