

**ARLINGTON
CONSERVATION
COUNCIL**

POSTOAK

WORKING TO CONSERVE ARLINGTON'S NATURAL RESOURCES

VOLUME 12, NUMBER 4

APRIL 2011

www.arlingtonconservationcouncil.org

April Meeting

**Trees for DFW:
Pick 'em, Plant 'em, Keep 'em**

Marilyn Sallee

Wednesday, April 13, 7 pm
Fielder Museum
1616 W. Abram St
(corner of Fielder and Abram)



Marilyn will bring her considerable expertise to selecting the best tree for your location, including which trees grow best here, requirements of the planting site, and other important factors. Don't miss it!

**Remember to bring
something for the raffle**

Bits & Pieces

Waxwing Buffet

So it's a cold spring day and you're staring out the window while hoping that a newsletter will somehow assemble itself, and there's a large, scruffy cherry laurel shaking violently. It's under siege by a circus of cedar waxwings gorging on the black fruit. The newsletter can wait; this is important.



Today's Inspirational Moment



In the spring, at the end of the day, you should smell like dirt.
Margaret Atwood

Finally We Agree on Something

"If there's ever an earthquake, I want to be in the control room at Comanche Peak."
From "Barton pleased with safety measures at Comanche Peak nuclear power plant." *Star-Telegram*, March 23, 2011



Perfect Perennials



We've all got plant lists, but on the assumption that you can't have too many, try this: Google something like "Fort Worth Botanic Garden best perennial performers" and you'll get the results of several year's efforts in the Trial Gardens. Lots of natives made the grade (no surprise).

Community Garden Opens

It's been a long time coming, but when the city and UTA got together, the dirt began to fly on our first big community garden. After some preliminary work in February and four successful workdays in March, gardeners were signing up in droves to rent one of the raised beds.

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THE POST OAK

Published 10 times a year by the
Arlington Conservation Council
P.O. Box 216, Arlington TX 76004-0216.
www.arlingtonconservationcouncil.org

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New York Avenue Blackland Prairie Park Jan Miller



It's a deal: 3rd Saturday Workdays at NYABP

The weather was near perfect, plus great volunteers and APRD's Jack Wachtendorf, armed with a chainsaw: it doesn't get much better. March 19 was the first workday of 2011 and also the start of a regular schedule on 3rd Saturdays. Neighbor Bonnie Bilodeau was there, John Darling, Norma and Joe Martinez, Wesley Miller, Brian Rowe, and Mary Turner, too. With the help of Jack's chainsaw, the view from New York Avenue should be much clearer. Many trees were cut and hauled curbside for pickup. Another first for this workday was Jack's careful sponge-application of herbicide to the freshly-cut stumps. Hopefully those trees will not resprout like so many that have been cut over and over again. Mark your calendar for 3rd Saturdays...join us at NYABP!

Next Prairie Stewards Restoration Workday will be Saturday, April 16, from 9 till noon. Spring on the prairie, come see larkspur and prairie celestials! And trees too, so bring your hand saws, loppers, cameras, bird/plant guides, maybe even a friend. Please wear sturdy soled shoes/boots and long pants. Consider sunscreen and water too. An RSVP is appreciated in case of inclement weather, but not required: 817/988-9341.



Above, our new favorite prairie sight: herbicide on a freshly cut stump. This hackberry is a goner (we hope).

Prairie
Stewards
Restoration
Workday
Saturday
April 16

9 am – noon



Wildscape Update John Dycus



Eighty third-graders from Goodman Elementary School, inquisitive and thoroughly polite, experienced another "Walk on the Wildside" on March 24, and their teacher Tarri Miller was mighty pleased.

"Our third-graders absolutely LOVE this field trip," said team leader Tarri. "And this year by far was the best one."

Eight students at a time visited 10 stations that were set up around the Molly Hollar Wildscape to teach about insects, butterflies, making seed balls and a slew of other environmental topics. Diana Kunde said the children in her group were enthusiastic and asked a lot of questions. By all accounts, all the Goodman third-graders this day were similar in their eagerness and smarts.

Three years ago, Goodman rewarded its third-graders for their high marks on the TAKS test with a trip to the wildscape. Now it's a tradition, and every spring a fresh batch of young people troop through.

Greeting them this year at the stations were Josephine Keeney, butterflies; Molly Hollar and helpers making seed balls (which the students got to throw; you can guess how popular that was!); Julia Burgen, birds; Dawn Hancock, flower parts; Marylee Thomason, bugs; John Darling, compost; Callie Mitchell, trees; Anne Alderfer, pond and frogs; Hester Schwarzer, sedimentation; and Sharon Schoech and Jane Oosterhuis, camouflage.

Group leaders included Joe and Norma Hernandez, Ann Trenton, Danny Kocurek, Jo Popplereiter, Diane Kocurek, Bev Crawford, Nancy Swan and Larry Norris, with Nancy Price and Jennifer Hiler as multipurpose helpers.

Peggy Quinn honchoed the whole thing. Way to go, Peggy!

As the students discovered, this is the perfect time to visit the wildscape. Primrose and redbud are already in bloom, butterflies are flitting past, and more flowers will open almost by the day.

You don't have to be a kid to come out here, you know.



Natural Gas Tour Dick Schoech Photos by Josephine Keeney and Dick Schoech

About 30 ACC members and friends joined Alisa Rich (MPH, PhD-ABD), from Wolf Eagle Environmental on a tour of gas drilling facilities in Arlington on Saturday, March 26. Alisa covered many of the air and water problems arising from Texas drilling rules and regulations that were designed for rural areas, but have not been updated for heavily populated urban locations.

Problems include lack of research on the impact of drilling, lack of monitoring of gas and water leaks, unmarked buried lines, lax regulations on venting cancer-causing hydrocarbons, lack of clear cleanup responsibilities, etc. These, combined with all the money flowing around gas drilling, have placed Arlington in a situation where the health and environmental effects of gas drilling are just beginning to show up and become documented, while no one is willing to take responsibility.

Most frightening is the fact that we are currently experiencing the most sophisticated drilling by Tier 1 companies — the big 7. As the profits get smaller in 5 to 10 years and Tier 1 operators sell off to tier 2 operators who are less careful and responsible so they can tolerate less profit, Arlington's problems will get worse. The cycle repeats when tier 2 operators cannot make a profit and sell to tier 3 operators, who then sell to tier 4 operators who assume little responsibility and often abandon a big mess (polluted site pads, corroded storage tanks, unmarked well heads, no records) for communities and taxpayers to clean up.

Alisa questioned whether the small amount of money that citizens make from the drilling will offset their increased health and environmental costs. Areas around drilling sites are seeing higher asthma and cancer rates in kids and adults, to name just a few costly problems.



The tour began at Fielder Museum with an introduction by Alisa Rich.



Compression station on Highway 303.



Tanks holding the waste water and gas byproducts from the compression process.



Closeup of a safety valve on top of the tanks that lets gasses escape as the liquid in the tanks heats up on a hot day.



Alisa Rich addresses the group.

Introducing the “We Hate Our Grandchildren Act” **Danny Kocurek**

Congress has a long tradition of deceptively naming legislation so that it sounds wonderful even though it is raising taxes, limiting freedom, polluting the country or letting bankers steal all our money. In order to combat this insulting behavior, I am proposing that the current effort to destroy the EPA be labeled the “We Hate Our Grandchildren Act.” While truth in advertising is a concept that politicians are incapable of understanding, I think it is time we forced it upon them.

Let’s review the facts. I don’t mean to put too fine a point on it but the only scientists on the planet who argue against climate change are paid by the oil companies and their work is considered to be garbage. Okay, I lied; I do want to put a fine point on it. This is the same class of scientists whose research showed the benefits of smoking and DDT, and probably still does.

The argument against doing something about climate change is that it is too expensive. It is much too expensive

to fix the hole in the bottom of the boat, instead we will keep enjoying ourselves and, when the boat sinks, it is just tough luck for those left on board.

Guess who is going to be left on board? Our grandchildren. In 40 years, it is estimated that we will be spending hundreds of billions of dollars a year dealing with the effects of climate change. This is comparable to what we spend on Medicare or fighting the Bush Wars today. There is not a single economist who denies it will cripple the economy. And there is not a single economist who says that it would be much cheaper to take action now rather than wait until the boat sinks.

Instead of taking responsibility and dealing with the problem, congress has proposed the “We Hate Our Grandchildren Act.” Because congress is so incompetent, the EPA was forced to begin a plan to limit the damage from climate change by reining in the production of carbon dioxide. Now that the

EPA is beginning to act, congress is trying to take away its ability to act. This is basically like telling the poor guy trying to plug the hole in the bottom of the boat to stop because we would rather spend the money on little umbrellas for our drinks. It is also essentially telling our grandchildren that we don’t care how miserable their lives are going to be as long as we can continue to enjoy ourselves right now.

So let’s stop playing games and state it plainly and simply. We love our big-screen TVs, SUVs and disposable lifestyles more than we love our grandchildren. I am not making a radical proposal that we actually change this, but I do think we need to label it appropriately. Therefore I am proposing a march on Washington, culminating with an enormous rally on the Mall to demand that they rename the current efforts to stop the EPA the “We Hate Our Grandchildren Act.” See you in D.C. And remember, no carpooling.

A Little More Wildscape Update

It’s not all educational fun and games at the wildscape (see page 4). There’s always hard work to be done; note the evidence below, in which Paul Vonder Harr’s Eagle Scout project progresses as his Boy Scout troop plants shrubs and trees in the bioswale area. These great kids planted 15 large shrubs and 2 big possumhaws from very large containers, requiring deep holes in an area of hard clay. As always, we’re grateful.



Attention: Tree Farm Needs Tiny Trees

As a result of efforts by the Forestry and Beautification Division last year, tree planting in Arlington proceeded at a tremendous pace and the stock at the city’s tree farm has been depleted. Programs such as LEAF, shade trees for schools, medians and public spaces, and UTA’s pursuit of tree campus status, created increased demand for sizable trees and now the reserves are gone.

APRD does not expect funding for tree acquisition during this difficult budget year, so restocking of the tree farm will depend on your volunteer contributions of saplings. As you weed this spring, don’t discard those baby trees sprouting everywhere, but pot them up and bring them to the Randol Mill Park Greenhouse or contact Matt Churches at 817-275-7041 to make arrangements for pickup. All species of locally grown, native trees will be gratefully accepted, from shade-giving oaks and elms to understory Mexican plum and Hercules club.

Thanks to Our Last Speaker



At our March meeting, Master Naturalist Troy Mullens (*above, with wife Martha*) regaled us with fascinating stories and great photos of creatures that thrive through camouflage, mimicry, and warning coloration. It was a fine presentation, and we loved it. Thank you!

Toilets and Classes

Note: Dustan Compton, Conservation Program Coordinator at Arlington Water Utilities recently asked us to distribute the following information:

1. We are accepting applications for the May 7, 2011, **"Go With the Flow" Residential Toilet Distribution Program**. To qualify, you must not have participated in a previous event, live in a home that was built before 1992, still have older, high water-use toilets, and have a water account in good standing. We will be providing 600 high-efficiency toilets that can potentially save a family of 4 up to \$90 per year in water and wastewater costs. To apply, please go to:
www.SaveArlingtonWater.com

2. **Annual Tarrant County Master Gardener Spring Plant Sale** is April 16, 2011, at 1801 Circle Dr., Fort Worth. For more info, google Tarrant County Master Gardeners and look under Gardening Events.

3. Please take a couple minutes and fill out a quick **customer service survey** of Arlington Water Utilities. Please go to:
<http://www.arlingtontx.gov/water/survey.html>

4. Spots are still available for our **spring landscape classes**. A description of the classes appears at right; please let me know which ones you would like to attend. Contact me at
Dustan.Compton@arlingtontx.gov



Converting Existing Lawn to Landscape Beds

Thursday, April 14, 6-8 p.m., Southwest Branch Library
Converting your lawn to landscape beds can save water and maintenance, while reducing the need for herbicides and fertilizers. In this class you will learn how to identify an area ideal for conversion and the step-by-step guide to installing a successful landscape bed.

Drip Irrigation: Do-It-Yourself

Wednesday, April 20, 6-8 p.m., Southwest Branch Library
Efficient irrigation is essential to sustainable landscapes. Drip irrigation is the most efficient irrigation method for applying water to your landscape. In this class you will learn how to install a drip system or convert an existing system to drip.

Irrigation Quick Fixes

Thursday, May 12, 6-8 p.m., Southwest Branch Library
To work efficiently, an irrigation system requires, at the very least, an annual check-up. An inefficient system may waste as much as 50% due to minor problems that are easy to fix. This class will provide step-by-step instruction on how to perform an irrigation checkup as well as how to make minor repairs and adjustments. Information on how to select a licensed irrigation professional for larger, more complicated jobs will also be presented.

Saving from a Rainy Day: Making a Rain Barrel

Thursday, June 23, 6-8 p.m., Southwest Branch Library
The program will cover the basics of rainwater harvesting, provide participants the opportunity to construct a 55-gallon rain barrel and instructions for installing an efficient irrigation system. The rain barrel is yours to take home! There is a \$50 class fee to pay for the rain barrel materials.

OS Gray Workday

Here's the latest from OS Gray champion Kevin Donovan:

At our last Community Day on March 12, the Friends of OS Gray Natural Area went Trenching for Thunder Turf. Twenty-six volunteers dug a looooooong trench to create a buffer zone for our Thunder Turf lawn. The trench, which we filled with crushed granite, will help keep nearby Bermuda grass from intruding into the Thunder Turf while it establishes itself. Thunder Turf is a 3-grass native mix that includes buffalo grass, blue gramma grass and curly mesquite. The Thunder Turf was installed by the city last fall to create a native grass lawn in hopes of cutting down on watering and mowing. We hope that it will be successful here so that the Parks Dept will use it in other areas of the park system.



Next month, Saturday, April 16 at 9 am, we'll need lots and lots of our friends to come out and help complete the mulch trail that we started in January.

We'll be spreading mulch from the end of the current trail, through the woods and wildflower meadow, and connect up with the concrete trail along Abram Street. So bring your wheelbarrow, shovel, or pitchfork and we'll have us a good time blazing a trail.

You can check us out on our Facebook Page at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Friends-of-OS-Gray-Natural-Area/133365753387456>, even if you're not a member of Facebook.

Task Force Report: Barnett Shale Gas Production Jan Miller

On Saturday, March 26, Society of Professional Journalists, TCU, and Fort Worth League of Neighborhoods presented a meeting titled "Drilling for Records" to help demystify where to find information about how Barnett Shale activity affects its citizens. Three aspects related to gas production, pipelines, property and pollution were discussed by journalists, citizen activists and a state representative. Journalists Gayle Reaves (Fort Worth Weekly) and Peggy Heinkel-Wolfe (Denton Record-Chronicle), citizen activist Deborah Rogers, and TCEQ representative Tony Walker discussed and answered questions related to pollution.

Generally, TCEQ has jurisdiction over air issues and water when it affects a public water supply. However, EPA has jurisdiction when "Waters of the US" may be affected. Texas Railroad Commission (soon to be Texas Oil and Gas Commission) regulates waste. Other agencies, such as Texas Department of State Health Services, may also have

helpful records. But there are gaps: One panelist stated that there are seemingly no regulations to protect groundwater. Some industry studies have been made public (e.g., Titan, which is now reportedly on the TCEQ site). Two public health studies were cited as particularly good data: University of Colorado and University of Texas. The UT study reported effects of benzene exposure in the Houston shipping channel. And Fort Worth's regional air quality study has released some preliminary data with the official report due in June 2011 — after elections.

There's a lot of information out there, so it's helpful to know what to ask for. Sometimes that's fairly direct, sometimes it's not. Panelists suggested the following tips for other investigators:

- Ask questions.
- Check your facts.
- Review the full report, all of it. Don't stop at the executive summary

because important details are often included in the data.

- If filing an open records request, make sure the request is to the correct agency and that it's specific enough. Sometimes notifying your state lawmaker can help.
- If your newspaper runs an article with information that doesn't sound right, contact the author and copy the editor, too.
- If you suspect pollution, a regulatory violation or adverse health effects resulting from pollution, record the details.

TCEQ – <http://www.tceq.texas.gov/implementation/barnettshale/bshale-main>
Direct link to Barnett Shale air quality monitors and complaint information, but no inspection or complaint data
US EPA – <http://www.airnow.gov/>
Texas Department of State Health Services – www.dshs.state.tx.us

Community Garden Opens continued from page 2

All the hard work culminated in a festive dedication ceremony on March 26, and some gardeners began planting even before the speeches ended. Here's hoping for a bumper crop.



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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Don't Forget!

Wednesday, April 13
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Marilyn Sallee
Trees for DFW

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