

ARLINGTON CONSERVATION COUNCIL

POSTOAK

WORKING TO CONSERVE ARLINGTON'S NATURAL RESOURCES
VOLUME 14, NUMBER 1

JANUARY 2013

**Special meeting day,
time, & place**

www.arlingtonconservationcouncil.org

January Meeting Annual Potluck and Business Meeting

Don't miss this look at the
new year's opportunities,
a bit of business,
whatever's on your mind,
— and food, too

Saturday, January 19, 9:00 am - 11:00
The Montessori Academy of Arlington
3428 W. Arkansas Lane



**Don't Forget!
Bring Food and Ideas**

Bits & Pieces

New Year's Surprise

Last week several Eastern bluebirds stopped by the UTA compost site in central Arlington. Even though they're here all year, it seems like they prefer rural open country, or at least big parks. Maybe just a fluke, but a few bluebirds make a nice start to a new year.



Today's Inspirational Moment



Be as I am — a reluctant enthusiast...a part-time crusader, a half-hearted fanatic. Save the other half of yourselves and your lives for pleasure and adventure. It is not enough to fight for the land; it is even more important to enjoy it. While you can. While it's still here.

Ed Abbey

Winter Grass (Again)

All right, last time it was Canada wild rye, and now it's bushy bluestem looking good at the Southwest Nature Preserve. Just shows how hard it is to find things to keep the plant people happy in the winter when everything looks like a mess of dead sticks. So let's admire the dead grass until spring.



Where's Arlington on This?

The city of Dallas is hosting public hearings regarding its timeline to implement zero-waste goals by 2040. The city initially set a goal to stairstep changes over the next 30 years. However, Zac Trahan of Texas Campaign for the Environment said he wants to see Dallas speed up efforts to offer recycling at apartments and businesses and phase out single-use bags within the next 2-3 years. He also said Dallas should follow the example of Austin, which launched a pilot program for residential organics recycling this month. On Jan. 26, the city will present the input it gathers and invite more discussion.

From the President: Unfinished Business Grace Darling

There is much to like about living in Arlington, but sometimes the glacial rate of progress on the environmental front gets the better of me. This is one of those times. A number of studies point the way to a more sustainable future, yet they grow mold on the shelves for lack of action by city leaders. If for no other reason than the many thousands of dollars spent on consultants' fees and staff time, I hope you will join me in asking our city council representatives to inform themselves about these issues and get with the program.

iSWM

The Integrated Stormwater Management (iSWM) guidance page on the NCTCOG Web site contains documents that guide local governments in adopting and implementing the iSWM program and in developing comprehensive stormwater

best management practices. For instance, the iSWM Criteria Manual for Site Development and Construction addresses water quality, streambank protection, storm water conveyance, and flood control issues associated with development and redevelopment. The documents can be accessed at iswm.nctcog.org.

The language of its sample resolution and ordinance calls the iSWM a "living program that is updated as appropriate based on new information, technology, and practices. . . The iSWM program will be the (City/Town's) official program for addressing stormwater and drainage issues associated with new development and redevelopment."

Although more than 60 local governments in North Central Texas participated in the collaborative effort to proactively develop sound stormwater management policies, only a few munici-

palities have adopted the iSWM program and resolved to implement it in the decade since its creation. Fort Worth and Dallas have signed on; sadly, Arlington has not.

Arlington LID Guidance Manual

This 110-page report was prepared in 2011 by the Center for Research in Water Resources and the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin. It was funded through TCEQ and EPA grants as part of the UT LID Workshops project.

"Low Impact Development (LID) is a comprehensive approach to land development or re-development to manage stormwater runoff." The LID system of principles and practices encompasses "site planning, design and pollution prevention strategies [to create] a more

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THE POST OAK

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New York Avenue Blackland Prairie Park

Photos by Wesley Miller



...as empty as this place can seem, a person might never weary of looking at the land and sky.

Kathleen Norris,
Introduction to *On the Plains*



Wildscape Update John Dycus



Note: This update didn't make it into the December issue because there was no December issue. Here it is now.

The true meaning of life is to plant trees under whose shade you do not expect to sit.

Nelson Henderson

On a recent sunny fall afternoon, the indomitable Molly Hollar exemplified the spirit of that quotation. Excited about the wildscape's tree planting program, she showed a visitor a budding forest along the sidewalk slope. Bur oaks, post oaks and cherry laurels are reaching upward, complementing the understory Mexican plum, Eve's necklace and possumhaw, and volunteers intend to add more frogfruit and hummingbird bush. Someday the sidewalk will be a shady delight.

Although planting has slowed for the season, change is evident. By the fountain, note the mountain laurel and *Salvia greggii*. Both are evergreens and thus keep their color through the winter.

Yarrow and creek sedge line the path near the vehicular bridge. The white

avens, its rosette often mistaken for a wild strawberry, is enjoying a resurgence, and the black-eyed Susan is blooming prolifically. The wildscape favors the Goldstrum variety because it spreads into a colorful ground cover.

The agaritas along the erosion area fence are forming a hedge. True to the spirit of their native Texas, no two plants grow at the same pace; some outstrip their neighbors as they form a community. These plants are a valuable addition, as they support wildlife and provide bloom and fragrance in the spring and color in the fall.

Just six years ago, wildscape volunteers tackled the erosion area. Today park visitors ask why it is called that. Former gullies now sport one-third Canada wild rye, one-third coralberry and one-third inland sea oats. Thanks to sweat equity and some grant funding, the erosion area boasts understory trees and is a bird haven.

The edge of the erosion area features some spectacular Lindheimer's muhly and the Texas state grass, sideoats grama — fall is their season. A special-needs group from Arlington High School has been mulching pathways there. Good work, students!

A break in the tree canopy creates a wildflower meadow of Turks cap, rockrose, black-eyed Susan and horseherb. A verdant stand of coralberry, indigenous to the post oak woodland, surrounds the bench in the erosion area on three sides.

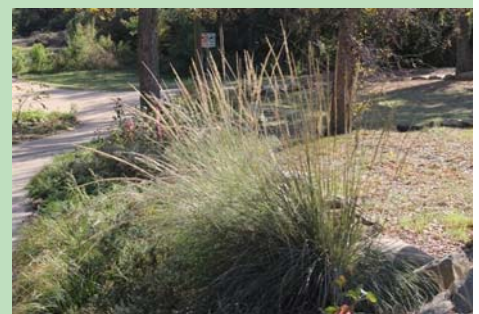
Plans include increasing the size of some of the drifts. Hummingbird bush, in particular, is more attractive in greater numbers. And efforts continue to add evergreen ground cover, which takes five years to become lush.

One of the educational kiosks will soon have information on lawn alternatives, including Sally Wasowski's shady and sunny mix.

When planting season resumes, the wildscape will have more ground cover on the opposite side of the entry, as well as additional plantings around the fountain and birdbath. Molly hopes to plant two more beds by the east arbor bordering the sidewalk.

Meanwhile, volunteers move more rocks and make more trails so that there will be a path every 20 feet through the planted areas.

Molly will one day sit under those trees.



Clockwise from lower left: yarrow and fall aster, path maintained by special needs students, rusty blackhaw viburnum, Lindheimer's muhly, skeletonleaf golden-eye and prickly pear.



Wildscape Update **Rosalie Rogers**

Note: This is the update intended for this issue.

The wildscape is enjoying a well-earned rest after surviving the summer heat. The two-inch rain just before the Christmas snow was fortunate since even native plants need a good watering before a freeze.

The city greenhouse where the propagation volunteers tend the plants suffered a broken pipe over the holidays. Josephine and Frank Keeney discovered it and alerted city personnel. The plants had been well watered before the break occurred, so all survived.

The wildscape continues to benefit from the generosity of Tarrant County Master Gardeners. After their annual fundraiser, they distribute funds among 23 projects. The wildscape used the donation to purchase trees to replace some desert willows that did not survive.

In January the volunteers will plant 15-gallon-sized Eve's necklace and Texas mountain laurel in the berm area, which showcases low-water landscape plants. At the greenhouse, additional two-, three- and five-gallon trees await a home at the wildscape.

Educational efforts via the monthly mini-classes continue to enrich the volunteers' experience. In December, Callie Mitchell presented a talk on working with special-needs volunteers and why it is important. In January, it's Josephine Keeney on her experience converting a typical suburban lawn to a showplace of natives.

Below, snowy inner trail.



Above, possumhaw holly.



Clockwise from lower left: Terry Gratton, Jane Oosterhuis and MaryLee Thomason, Bob Poppelreiter, Joe Martinez and Sandy Fountain, and a new volunteer with Norma Martinez.

Arlington Parks & Rec Receives Gold Leaf Award From the city Web site

The City of Arlington Parks and Recreation Department was awarded the 2012 Gold Leaf Award on November 21 by Courtney Blevins of the Texas Forest Service. The Gold Leaf Award is designed to recognize individuals, organizations, or municipalities for outstanding Arbor Day programs or community landscape projects that have a significant impact on the community over the course of several years.

This award specifically recognizes the department for its annual celebration of Arbor Day through Ecofest Arlington. Ecofest Arlington is an annual special event in Downtown Arlington that brings environmental education, classes, arts and crafts and entertainment together in one family friendly event. More than 3,400 trees have been distributed to the community free of charge since the inception of the event in 2009. Classes on native landscapes and water conservation are also offered during the event.

The 2012 Texas Community Forestry Awards are co-sponsored by the Texas Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture and the Texas Forest Service. The award is a beautiful signed and remarqued, limited edition framed print of a famous and historic Texas tree. This year's award painting will be of the Las Cuevas Ebony.



The Gold Leaf Award is displayed at a city council meeting. *Left to right:* Matt Churches and Heather Dowell, Arlington Parks & Recreation; Mayor Robert Cluck; and Courtney Blevins, Texas Forest Service.

Memberships Expired at the End of December

If you haven't renewed, there's still time.

You know how much we need you, so please renew or join today.

Help us bring out the best in Arlington. Thanks.



Thanks to November's Speaker

It's always a pleasure to hear from Pete Jamieson, Director of Arlington Parks & Recreation Department, and his presentation at our November general meeting was no exception. Pete gave us a detailed look at the department's plans and activities. Among the high points: formation of a Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan Committee whose members will work on the next master plan in anticipation of a bond election in 2014 or 2015; implementation of Cartograph software to aid in maintaining and improving existing assets; and an impressive list of recently completed and current projects, including \$800,000 now being spent on work at the SW Nature Preserve. Thanks, Pete (as always).

Last-minute note: On January 17, Pete announced his retirement. There will be some big shoes to fill at Parks & Rec.



Unfinished Business continued from page 2

economically sustainable and ecologically functional landscape.”

The LID approach includes “practices such as keeping existing trees onsite, minimizing compaction of earth that inhibits water infiltration, and planting trees and other vegetation in areas where none exists. Retaining existing tree cover and vegetated areas helps infiltrate and evapotranspire stormwater runoff while intercepting large amounts of rainfall that would otherwise enter waterways as runoff.”

The redevelopment of Arlington’s Central Library was one of four projects selected last year for a Low Impact Design Competition sponsored by the North Texas Land/Water Sustainability Forum; the library was entered in the Urban Development category. Nine finalists vied for the \$15,000 prize and the results were announced November 6. The team led by Jana Tidwell of Schrickel Rollins Associates (remember Jana during the ACC tour of UTA’s Green at College Park? – she is the brilliant landscape architect responsible for the bold design we so admired) was the night’s winner in this category. Their plan achieved a projected 60 percent reduction in stormwater runoff using LID principles and iSWM practices.

“This is the way all design should be,” says Jana. Let’s hope our city leaders hear the message and embrace the LID concept with resolutions and ordinances,

not just words. Video clips of the presentations can be seen at texaslid.org.

Energy Efficiency Action Plan

“The EEAP [was] funded by the Department of Energy’s (DOE) Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) Program, which was part of the federal stimulus program. [In December 2009] the City of Arlington was awarded a \$3.4 million EECBG grant to fund [eight] energy efficiency and conservation projects,” including creation of this plan. The introduction reads as follows:

“The City of Arlington is committed to a clean energy future and has crafted this Energy Efficiency Action Plan (EEAP) to continue to reduce energy use in public facilities and operations. The City’s goals are to reduce 2005 levels by 7 percent by 2020, and to slow the growth in community energy use to maintain 2005 per capita energy use levels by 2020. . . . The EEAP provides a roadmap of strategic actions that, when implemented, will reduce the City’s energy and carbon footprints.” These recommendations are summarized in Table 3-2 of the EEAP.

An example of the data compiled in the EEAP: Community-wide, gasoline and diesel account for 67 percent of the total energy consumption. Electricity and natural gas account for 24 and 8 percent respectively. And, if there was ever any

doubt about Arlington’s need for mass transit options, “the role of City government is limited in decreasing community reliance on the automobile. However, the City can promote alternative modes of transportation,” says the EEAP.

While the city claims to have implemented many energy-saving measures since the 2005 baseline study, signs of neglect abound, such as the (1) gutting of personnel and virtual disappearance of the Environmental Services office from the City roster; (2) loss of the Green Team Commercial Recycling Coordinator last year when the grant funding this position ran out; (3) failure to update the energy consumption and GHG data to document energy savings achieved by 2012, as the City committed to under the terms of the DOE grant; and (4) inexplicable silence about this report – even council members seem unaware of it.

As stated in the EEAP document, “Arlington residents and businesses are an essential part of the energy management solution. Energy efficiency and conservation measures should focus on community efforts that reduce the energy footprints of City government, businesses and residents.” This report is not yet accessible on the city’s Web site because it has not been released to the public; let’s hope it will be soon.

The studies are done. We know what to do. Now let’s get to work.

How a Tree Trumped a Newsletter John Darling

She Who Must Be Obeyed has not become less imperious since ascending to the ACC presidency. So, when we made our Christmas trip to the subtropical



money pit (=retirement home), she required your long-suffering editor to take all the newsletter bits — and to slave over a hot laptop until the thing was beaten into submission.

However, she failed to account for the seductive power of an anacua bursting with berries. Somebody must have planted this evergreen native long ago, and now it’s better than a 7-11 for birds.

So, your editor was compelled to lounge on a collapsing deck for very long periods of time, making a detailed study



of avian feeding behavior — in more ways than one: a Cooper’s hawk was feeding on the berry-eaters.

That’s why there was no December newsletter. All perfectly reasonable.

Changes at Southwest Nature Preserve



Forget about tranquility at Southwest Nature Preserve, at least while development is underway. While most of the work is concentrated at the southern end, you will see a much widened road to accommodate machinery on the north side.



The massive concrete slab (*above left*) has been removed (*above center*) and the badly eroded slope leading to it looks like it's being rustically terraced (*above right*). Big sandstone boulders are being lined up along the slope.



Woody vegetation has been removed from the dam area (*above left and center*). A lot of earth is being moved close to Bowman Springs Road (*above right*). Something large and unidentifiable (*below*) is going in at the west end of the southernmost pond.



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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Sponsor \$100.00

Lifetime individual \$250.00

Other \$ _____

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How did you hear about us? _____

Make checks payable to Arlington Conservation Council. Mail to ACC, Box 216, Arlington, TX 76004-0216. Contributions and dues are not tax-deductible. Note: If you cannot pay, please let any board member know. The only available newsletter format is electronic, and it can be obtained via email and the Web site.

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