

ARLINGTON CONSERVATION COUNCIL

POSTOAK

WORKING TO CONSERVE ARLINGTON'S NATURAL RESOURCES

VOLUME 14, NUMBER 3

MARCH 2013

**Note New Meeting Date
First Wednesday**

www.arlingtonconservationcouncil.org

March Meeting

**An Update on Keep Arlington
Beautiful and Arlington Parks &
Recreation Department**

**Jennifer Chadwell,
Arlington Parks & Recreation Dept.**

**Wednesday, March 6, 7 pm
Fielder Museum, 1616 W. Abram St
(corner of Fielder and Abram)**



Jennifer will be updating us on the work, progress and plans of Keep Arlington Beautiful, which has begun organizing and implementing projects. She will also provide an update on APRD and answer any questions on our parks.

There are three main aspects of Keep Arlington Beautiful:

- Programs – volunteering, projects, beautification, etc.
- Development – applying for grants, fundraising, sponsorships, etc.
- Public awareness – educating citizens, gaining recognition for work, etc.

Bring something for the raffle.

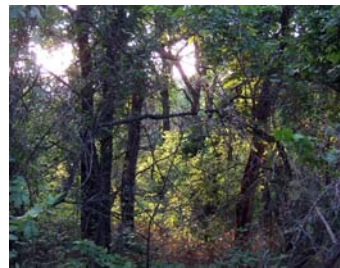
Bits & Pieces

Plain and Hidden

The small-mouthed salamander lives around here but we'd probably never know it. It's nocturnal, almost always hiding under leaf litter, and restricted to wet places in a variety of habitats. The slimy creature breeds around this time of year, and females may lay up to 700 eggs, which are attached to submerged plants and rocks.



Today's Inspirational Moment



Come forth into the light of things. Let nature be your teacher.

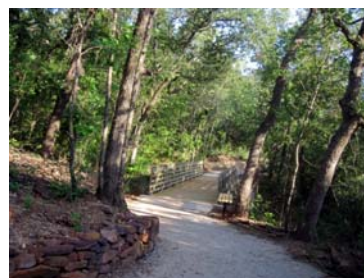
William Wordsworth

Great Bird, Bad Name

A bird mewed the other day, and it turned out to be a beautiful winter resident, a yellow-bellied sapsucker making neat rows of holes that it would later return to for sugary sap and any bugs that got stuck in it. What a treat.



Spring Plant Walks Coming Up



Learn something this spring on a plant walk with the talented Jim Varnum:
March 23, 10:00, Crystal Canyon Natural Area
April 13, 9:00, O S Gray Natural Area
(Left, Crystal Canyon)

From the (New) President **Danny Kocurek**

An Introduction

I feel the need to introduce myself to ACC, although it may be a little late. The quick facts are: born and raised in Fort Worth, played a lot of soccer, graduated from Austin College, spent a year in Southeast Asia, went to medical school in San Antonio, did a Residency in Emergency Medicine in Pittsburgh, work/traveled for a year and a half on 2 continents and 2 Pacific islands, moved to Arlington, got married, had 2 children, met Molly and joined ACC. Seems a little anemic seeing it in one sentence.

Regardless, what you probably need to know is why I spend so much time working on sustainability. As a child of the seventies, some of my first memories are of the energy crisis, Arab oil embargo and Jimmy Carter asking everyone to wear sweaters. I can't explain why, but it

affected me deeply. My family still tells stories of me turning out lights in rooms that were still occupied.

Things intensified about 10 years ago when my first son was born. I kept thinking of a conversation I would have with him 30 years in the future when he would ask me what I did to prevent climate change, stop wasting fossil fuels or stop the pollution of the environment. I didn't like the answer I had at the time, so decided to start doing things to make a better one.

I have a long way to go before my answer is satisfactory, but I am trying. My hope is that ACC will continue to inspire and help me in my quest.



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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conserve Arlington's
natural resources.

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New York Avenue Blackland Prairie Park

Photos by Wesley Miller



It's just beginning to look like our prairie remembers what spring is all about. And since Wes took these shots the Parks Department people have mowed, so we're all set on our end. Bring on some well-timed rain, stand back, and get ready for a prairie spring extravaganza. Think good vegetative thoughts and start thumbing through those wildflower guides — it won't be long now.



Wildscape Update John Dycus



When is it OK to play favorites? When the favorites in question are Texas native plants in a home landscape.

Hester Schwarzer shared with the

February mini-class her favorite plants for gussying up the castle plot, and she brought along other volunteers' comments on their favorites as well. She had asked a number of wildscapers to name the Texas natives that thrive in their yards, and now this list exists for anyone, especially a homeowner new to the area, who wants to know what really works.

Get a copy of the list from wildscape namesake Molly Hollar or from Hester (or see next page). This is living the wildscape mission statement: "To educate the community to use native plants to attract wildlife, conserve resources and connect with nature."

Speaking of favorites (segue alert!), Molly wanted for her birthday in February the same thing she always wants — find an invasive plant and snuff it. Thus began, five years ago, the Molly Hollar birthday bash and privet pull, which this year tackled, for the second time, the O.S. Gray Natural Area. One of the city's newest public parks, its native vegetation must compete with substantial privet. But there's not nigh as much as there was a while ago.

Molly's privet brigade joined forces with Friends of O.S. Gray, ACC members and other community volunteers, all armed with privet pullers, shovels and Desert Storm pruners, to dispatch truckloads of the stuff to bad plant purgatory. An Arlington Parks and Recreation employee sprayed the stumps that were too large to dig. The police even showed up to arrest Molly for "crimes against the privet." After hugs and birthday wishes, they went on their way.

As did the birthday party, which repaired to Mijo's, where a celebration of Molly, something as natural as taking in air, proceeded with full vigor. Danny Kocurek's sons presented her with a homemade birthday cake, and she learned of three new wooden signs to be suspended from the cedar arbors that mark the wildscape entrances. The volunteers had collected the money to commission them.

It was a splendid day.



More Wildscape: Hester's (Preliminary) List of Native Favorites

Hester Schwarzer's notes: Other people's favorites are still being added. This is what I have so far. They are listed in order of number of votes. *Salvia greggii* had the most. Each double space indicates a drop in number of people selecting a particular plant.

My goal is to give new (to Tarrant County) gardeners a group of plants they can have success with on the first try.

Our Favorites

Salvia greggii - Autumn sage, Cherry sage

Malvaviscas drummondii - Turk's cap

Salvia farinacea - Mealy blue sage, (Henry Duelberg)

Muhlenbergia lindheimeri - Lindheimer's muhly

Pavonia lasiopetala - Rockrose

Virguiera stenoloba - Skeletonleaf goldeneye, Resinbush
Ibex decidua - Possumhaw
Eupatorium coelestinum - Blue mistflower, Wild ageratum, Blue boneset
Salvia lyrata - Lyreleaf sage

Geum canadense - White avens
Phyla nodiflora - Frogfruit
Symphoricarpos orbiculatus - Coralberry, Indian currant, Buckbrush
Salvia roemeriana - Cedar sage
Echinacea spp. - Purple coneflower
Ruellia nudiflora - Violet ruellia (Katie's)
Hesperaloe parviflora - Red yucca
Anisacanthus quadrifidus - Flame acanthus
Aster oblongifolius - Fall aster
Aguilegia chrysantha - Yellow columbine
Chasmanthium latifolium - Inland seaots

Muhlenbergia reverchonii - Seep muhly
Salvia texana - Texas sage
Calyptocarpus vialis - Horseherb
Artemesia ludoviciana - Artemesia
Oenothera speciosa - Pink evening primrose
Sophora affinis - Eve's necklace
Lantana horrida - Texas lantana
Stipa tenuissima - Mexican feathergrass
Callirhoe involucrata - Winecup
Muhlenbergia capillaris - Gulf muhly
Wedelia hispida - Zexmenia
Melampodium leucanthum - Blackfoot daisy
Eysenhardtia texana - Kidneywood
Bouteloua curtipendula - Sideoats grama
 Yarrow
 Fuzzy skullcap
 Obedient plant
 Carolina phlox

And Just a Little More Wildscape: After the Last Big Rain Photos by Josephine Keeney



Thanks to Our Last Speaker



Jim Schermbeck, Executive Director of Downwinders at Risk, updated us on the status of the battle for clean air in North Central Texas at our regular February meeting. In fact, it is a battle, huge and complex, with victories and setbacks, and he lives and breathes it (Sorry.)

We are unbelievably lucky to have Jim as our advocate. For details and to help in the struggle, take a long look at <http://www.downwindersatrisk.org/>.



Thanks from Julia Julia Burgen

Appreciation for ACC Environmental Conscience of Arlington Award

Bouquets of prairie celestials, blue bells and woodland violets to Grace Darling, [past] president of Arlington Conservation Council, the board and members of ACC for the honor given me on January 19.

I was indeed surprised and humbled by your recognition and the symbolic elegant glass plaque engraved with "Environmental Conscience of Arlington."



We have had a 20-year journey together. I didn't travel it alone. You have been fantastic co-workers for our common efforts. Many of you have risen to leadership positions in various facets of our common causes.

Since we started this ACC Journey in 1993, I often use this Margaret Mead quote: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

Together, we have changed Arlington.

Home-grown Tomatoes Danny Kocurek

Of all of the complaints I hear people make about vegetable gardening, the number one is that they cannot grow tomatoes. Since they are one of the only things I can grow, I am always surprised at this. Upon questioning, there are a few things they consistently say that appear to be the problem. Although I do not consider myself to be any kind of gardening expert, I will offer this free advice. I assure you it is worth every penny.

The number one problem with tomato growing is that you have to plant them early. Old timers will tell you to plant them after the average last freeze date, which is around March 12th. Tomatoes need to be in full production by May, because the heat, insects and disease will kill them by mid-June. I personally plant around March 1st as long as the 10-day forecast doesn't show a freeze coming soon. We had a freeze a few years ago in early April, so you always have to be prepared to cover them up at night, but it really isn't too much work. I use a big

piece of plastic. If you wait to plant in the latter part of March or beyond, you miss out on the peak production, in my experience.

My tomato plants usually grow over 6 feet tall. They would grow higher but my cages are only 5 feet tall. I suggest not using the little cages most often sold. I bought a roll of concrete reinforcing wire at the hardware store, cut it into pieces, connected the ends and made very large, sturdy cages that last a long time. I secure them in the ground with some homemade stakes made out of bent rebar.

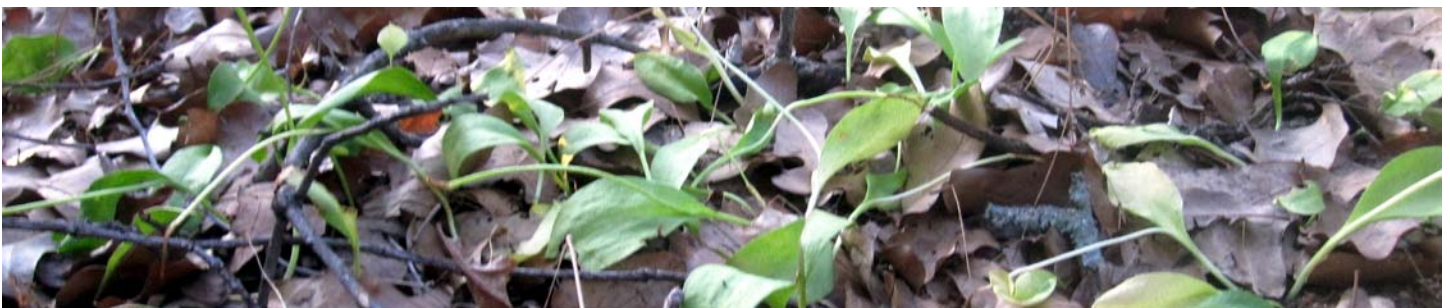
Tomatoes do like a lot of sun, but I get good production with less than 8 hours a day. More than likely you will need some sort of fertilizer. I use corn gluten meal, a little wood ash from the fireplace and compost. Tomatoes do not like to be over-watered. I water once a week until the temperatures get into the mid 90s, and then twice a week. You want deep roots. I have had some

success with planting in large pots, but it is a lot of work and the plants need to be watered daily.

I plant a variety of varieties. I suggest starting with small ones, like cherry and grape. The big ones are harder to get ripe before it gets too hot and are more likely to be damaged by insects. My all-time favorite is black cherries. They are very productive and taste like real tomatoes. I also recommend yellow and red pears. I plant mostly heirloom tomatoes because I like the taste better, but I usually have a few hybrids. The hybrids have the advantage of being resistant to common infections. Some taste good, but it is always a matter of personal preference.

The biggest insect pest I have is tomato bugs. I have recently started using neem oil and it seems to protect them pretty well. There are non-organic solutions, but I have not tried them.

If I can ever be of help, please let me know. Lastly, I wish you good luck and a tasty summer.



Spring 2013 Water Conservation Classes **Dustan Compton**

Irrigation 101

Saturday, February 23, 2 p.m. – 4 p.m.
Free (Donations Accepted)

River Legacy Living Science Center, 703 N.W. Green Oaks Blvd.

Learn the basic components of an irrigation system, typical maintenance issues, plant water demands, water scheduling techniques and water efficient technologies to save water and money. Weather permitting; the class will also have a hands-on demonstration component. Please RSVP to 817-860-6752.

Learn and Grow Fair

Saturday, March 2, 9 a.m. - 12 p.m.
Free

Southwest Branch Library, 3311 S.W. Green Oaks Blvd.

Activities for Kids: Water Conservation, Library Craft Project, and more!

Classes for Adults:

9:00 a.m. – 9:55 a.m.: Landscape

Design and Plant Selection, Dave Wilson

10:00 a.m. – 10:55 a.m.: Managing a

Lawn During Drought, Warren Tingley

11:00 a.m. – 11:55 a.m.: Vegetable

Gardening, Lance Jepson

Lawn Care Maintenance

Tuesday, March 12, 6-8 p.m. Free
Southwest Branch Library, 3311 S.W. Green Oaks Blvd.

This program covers basic lawn maintenance practices to improve the health and longevity of your landscape. You will learn how to maintain your landscape using less water, fertilizer, and pesticides.

The Edible Front Yard

Thursday, March 21, 6-8 p.m. Free
Southeast Branch Library, 900 S.E. Green Oaks Blvd.

This program shows you how to incorporate edible plants into your home garden and landscape. You will learn how herbs, fruits and vegetables can add to the colors and textures of your permanent landscape combining both aesthetics and functionality.

How to Make a Rain Barrel

Saturday, April 13, 9 a.m. – 10 a.m.
Free

Water Utilities South Service Center, 1001 S.E. Green Oaks Blvd. (Outside)

This program will discuss the basics of rainwater harvesting and the benefits it can provide to a residential property. A demonstration on building a 50 gallon rain barrel and material parts list to build your own barrel will be provided.

Drip Irrigation DIY

Tuesday, April 23, 6-8 pm
Southwest Branch Library, 3311 S.W. Green Oaks Blvd.

This program teaches how to install a drip irrigation system from your faucet or how to convert an existing system to drip. Drip irrigation is the most efficient irrigation method and essential to sustainable landscapes. Drip irrigation for foundation watering will also be covered.

To register for the classes: contact Dustan Compton at 817-459-6628 or email: dustan.compton@arlingtontx.gov

Additional Learning Opportunities and Resources

Backyard Composting Classes

Learn how to improve the quality of your soil and spend less time and money fertilizing and watering! No need to register, just show up. Presented by Arlington Master Composters.

* First Saturday of every month from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

Veteran's Park (Wildscape Area)

3600 W. Arkansas Lane at Spanish Trail

* Second Saturday of every month from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

River Legacy Living Science Center
703 NW Green Oaks Blvd. (back of parking lot)

Square-Foot Gardening Class

Saturday, March 30, 10 a.m. Free (Donations Accepted)

River Legacy Living Science Center, 703 N.W. Green Oaks Blvd.

Presented by Arlington Men's Garden Club.

Tarrant County Master Gardener Community Demonstration Garden February Classes:

To register contact: Billie Hammack at blhammack@ag.tamu.edu or 817-884-1296.

More information can be found at: <http://tarrantmg.org>

How to Prune Roses

Saturday, February 16, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. \$5

Rose Garden in the TCMGA Garden Resource Connection of Tarrant County, Circle Drive, Fort Worth

February is the month to prune roses to prepare them for spring growth and bloom. Learn how to care for and properly prune roses. Bring your hand pruners to this hands-on class.

Vegetable Gardening

Saturday, February 16, 2 - 4 p.m. \$5
Magnolia Rm, Building 2300

Resource Connection of Tarrant County, Circle Drive, Fort Worth

Learn how to prepare beds, select plants, tend and harvest vegetables. Lecture and tour provided.

How to Install Drip Irrigation

Saturday, February 23, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. \$5

Magnolia Rm, Building 2300

Resource Connection of Tarrant County, Circle Drive, Fort Worth

Learn about drip irrigation. Installation techniques for your landscape and vegetable garden. Lecture and tour provided.

Dustan Compton

Conservation Program Coordinator

Arlington Water Utilities

817-459-6628 - office

www.SaveArlingtonWater.com

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 _____

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First-year member \$10.00

Individual \$15.00

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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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THE POST OAK

Arlington Conservation Council
PO Box 216
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Don't Forget!

Wednesday, March 6

7:00 pm

Jennifer Chadwell

An Update on Keep Arlington Beautiful
and Arlington Parks & Recreation Department

