



HAPPY ACC NEW YEAR

Thanks to all of you who work for
Arlington's sustainable future.

And to everyone who keeps our
newsletter going.

Photo by Wesley Miller

ARLINGTON CONSERVATION COUNCIL

POST OAK

ACC WORKS TO PROTECT ARLINGTON'S NATURAL ENVIRONMENT THROUGH EDUCATION,
COMMUNITY SERVICE, AND ADVOCACY FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

VOLUME 17, NUMBER 1

JANUARY 2016

www.acctexas.org

January Meeting

NOTE:

**Special Meeting Place,
Time, and Date**

**Annual Potluck
and Business Meeting**

**Saturday, January 9, 10 – noon
Montessori Academy,
3428 West Arkansas Lane**



Don't miss our annual chance to get together for good food and conversation. We'll look back at 2015, vote on the slate of board members for 2016, and consider what lies ahead for us in the new year.

We'll supply drinks, dishes, and silverware. And you always come through, but it's worth repeating:

Bring food!

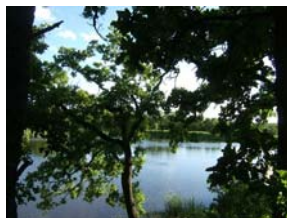
Bits & Pieces

Enough Gadwalls Already

Somehow on December 26 we were counting birds, mostly ducks, at the drying beds when it became clear that we were tired of counting Gadwalls. The preliminary count yielded 975 of the elegantly understated ducks, and it felt like we counted each one of them. At any rate, here's a bit of Gadwall information: They often steal food from diving ducks, and their numbers have increased dramatically since the 1980s.



Today's Inspirational Moment



Knowing trees, I understand
the meaning of patience.
Knowing grass, I can appreciate
persistence.

Hal Borland

Monarch Action Needed

ACC has asked Mayor Williams to take the National Wildlife Federation's Mayors' Monarch Pledge. Just before the holidays the mayor assured us that he favors the pledge and will take it up with the council. At least 19 Texas mayors — many in the Metroplex — have done so. Consider encouraging our mayor and council to take this important step.

[Find all the information here.](#)



Try, Try Again

Star-Telegram, Dec 29: Texas has sued the EPA 23 times since Obama took office in 2009. Attorney General Ken Paxton has just filed the latest lawsuit against the most recent ground-level ozone standards (from 75 down to 70 parts per billion) using the standard rhetoric: no supporting scientific data, injury to the economy, a job killer, you know the drill. Read the whole article if you need to raise your blood pressure.

From the President **Danny Kocurek**



Three Long Years

It has been my pleasure to be allowed to serve as president of ACC these last three years. Advocating for sustainability in Texas is like trying to prevent brain damage in young football players. Everyone knows it is the right thing to do, but too many powerful people are making money off it to allow change. I can't say we have made any political change, but I do know we have made people think about what they were doing and the decisions they made.

I will remain on the Board and hope to continue trying to make some changes and open some minds. I thank you for your patience, tolerance and assistance.

Danny



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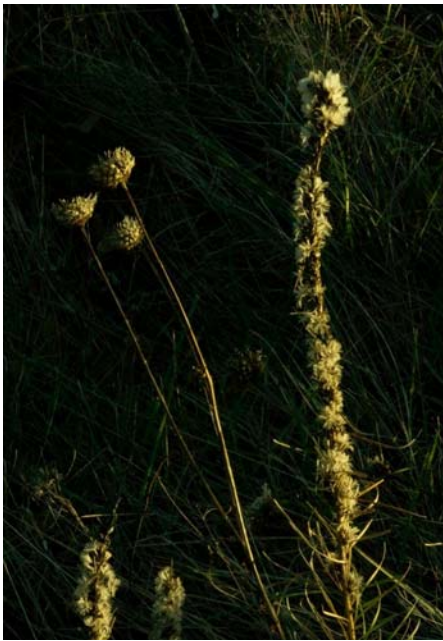
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conserve Arlington's
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Blackland Prairie Nature Preserve Jan Miller Photos by Wes Miller

Blackland Prairie Nature Preserve 4907 New York Avenue

Stay tuned for the annual meeting of Friends of the Prairie in February!

For more information and latest updates: Friends of the Prairie www.theprairie.org Friends of the Prairie e-mail info@theprairie.org



Wildscape Update *Marylee Thomason*

Stirring, strong, daring!

Courageous, stunning!

**Triumphant, entertaining,
venturesome!**

**Spectacular, amazing, astonishing,
sensational!**

Pick an adjective. Almost any will do. So much is going on at the wildscape that it feels like a three-ring circus.

Cue the calliope. Ring Mistress Molly Hollar steps to the microphone. "Welcome, ladies and gentlemen, to the greatest example of volunteer accomplishment ever produced in Arlington, Texas!"

In the center ring a sensational old favorite returns after a too-long absence — the great and glorious, neglected-in-recent-years prairie demonstration area.



Mel Le Blanc cutting the trail from the prairie to the back of the butterfly garden.

Amazing interns Elaine Thieroff and Mel Le Blanc resurrected this one-of-a-kind mini-prairie as their Master Gardener project.

Mel labored like the legendary John Henry, cutting a 30-foot trail from the

new section to the kiosk at the back of the butterfly garden. Elaine, although injured, performed amazing stunts of planting and weeding while nimbly balancing on her gardening stool.

Prairies demand the spotlight (aka sunlight), so Mike Warren of Tarrant County Juvenile Services, with permission from the Arlington Parks Department, triumphed against the bothersome cedar elms, felling them with his chainsaw in astonishing time. His accompanying troop of strapping young community service guys swung through the clearing *sans* safety net, disposing of limbs and brush.

John Snowden, in a stunning display of Texas A&M erudition (Bachelor's degree in wildlife sciences management, Master's in horticulture) ably identified all the vegetation needed to make the mini-prairie authentic. John has donated thousands of plants to the wildscape over the years.

Now direct your attention to the next ring, where new volunteers are performing awe-inspiring acts. Master Gardener intern Patty Meeks whirls along the highways from Fort Worth for 60 minutes before popping out of



New volunteer Patty Meeks helps with planting.



Master Gardener Intern Robert Faires, another new volunteer, plants a hillside.

her car to declare she is "thrilled to be here."

She is secretly training three pet donkeys at home in preparation for her next gig! Give Patty a rousing round of applause for her sensational ability to be where she's most needed at any moment.

Robert Faires is part of the MOD squad interns who take their Master Gardener classes on Saturdays. Retired after 40 years working in oil fields and traveling to 65 countries, Robert searched for new exploits. His daughter told him he could not sit around the house, so he rekindled his interest in native plants and joined NPSOT.

Robert stepped out onto the high wire juggling wildscape volunteering and lending his computer knowledge to helping create a book of recommended plants for the DFW area. The Native Plant Society of Texas and Heather Dowell, ex-urban forest and land manager for the city of Arlington, are working on this book and greatly appreciate his expertise.

continued on page 13

Bluebirds of Happiness Donna Piercy



Male feeding fledgling – what we hope to witness each season!

The Tierra Verde Bluebird Nestbox Trail got its start early this year at Arlington's Audubon International-certified city golf course. We were successful in putting up 12 nestboxes and seeing 6 batches of hatchlings fledge. Now that is happiness!

Eastern bluebirds are among a large group of cavity-nesting birds that are losing habitat. We are all familiar with how quickly land is being lost to business and residential development.

Another problem is how quickly we cut down old and dead trees that would normally provide cavities for nest building, even when they pose no risk of injury to people. The Texas Bluebird Society (TBS), an affiliate of the North American Bluebird Society, is working to provide ways to help prevent further decline in this population. And we are successful!

The Tierra Verde Bluebird Trail was a joint effort between Cross Timbers Master Naturalists, the city of Arlington, and the Texas Bluebird Society. Jim Marshall, our TBS consultant, helped determine the placement of the nestboxes. The golf course crew erected most of them in mid February. By March 7, and after our snow storm, several bluebird pairs were busy constructing nests. One pair evicted a lone Bewick's wren in one box that was trying to attract a mate.

Several Arlington Conservation Council members have been instrumen-



Installation of the first nestbox. Donna Piercy and Jim Marshall, Texas Bluebird Society consultant.

tal in keeping the nestboxes in good shape and assisting in our efforts. Currently we are looking for additional volunteers to help with the monitoring process. We go out twice a week and check the nestboxes for activity: We note as nests are built, eggs are laid, and the babies hatch and fledge. The official ongoing records are kept through Cornell's Nestwatch program. Some training is required, most of which can be obtained by watching me and other

regular volunteers. Currently I do all the data entry for Nestwatch.

Volunteers are needed to visit on Friday mornings. We have a limit of 6 people – 3 golf carts – that can go out on the course at any one time as we want as little disruption to golf play as possible. The crew and the golfers are a friendly group who like to hear about our efforts. The average visit time is two hours. We have a lot of fun out there, and it is invigorating. We love our encounters with the wildlife, including foxes and bobcats. Birdwatching is always a hoot.

Our weekly visits will start in mid-February and may continue into August. The timing of our inspections varies with the rising of the sun as we do not visit the nestboxes for two hours after sunrise. I coordinate the volunteer efforts with Golf Course Superintendent Mark Claburn.

There is so much to pass on about our process. If you are interested in finding out more, please contact me at depiercy@hotmail.com. Both the North American and Texas Bluebird Societies have great websites: nabluebird-society.org and texasbluebird-society.org.



One of the 12 Tierra Verde nest boxes. Note the two bluebirds at the box.

Southern Plains and Prairies Conference Jan Miller



stop Prairie, a demo site in Hermann Park, Buffalo Bayou, a beginning restoration, and the “\$8M prairie” on the MD Anderson Center campus.

The conference brought together a great variety of business, government



Not often are ugly, old stereotypes replaced with a glimmer of hope, especially many years later. My childhood memory of Houston was grey, dank, smelly, undulating freeways, cars, and nothing else. And Galveston wasn't a lot better, at least on that trip.

In November, the Southern Plains and Prairies Conference (Native Prairies Association of Texas and Coastal Prairie Partnership) brought a whole new perspective on greenways, bayous (In Houston it's “bay-yous.”), natural area preservation, and habitat restoration.



management division? And that as recently as the 1930s, the view from Hermann Park was a treeless coastal prairie? Or that mycorrhizal fungi were being recognized and used in large-scale restorations?

On the last conference fieldtrip, to Texas City Prairie, a Nature Conservancy site, history took another sharp turn to the past: I stood eye-to-eye with a beautiful prairie chicken specimen, one of the last wild ones from the Texas coast, re-learned the history of the site and then learned about the restoration being done in hope that one day, they may successfully return home.

and non-profit professionals, all eager to share their insights.

Who knew Houston's parks department (and others) had a natural areas



I'd read about some good efforts, but a pre-conference fieldtrip, “Urban Prairies...by Light Rail,” was an eye-opener. Starting at the conference HQ, the Houston Zoo, we visited Whistle-

Conference videos are available online at <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL2bG5jaLffafao13wqMrLMwpUZNrfEgG4>

The Wildscape, Water, and Very Modern Education Marylee Thomason

Curiosity one recent Friday drew wildscape volunteers to ask what the students and teachers were doing by the creek. The answer opened a window on a new style of innovative teaching.

The students were from the Newcomers class at Mansfield's Worley Middle School. All four seventh-graders were from foreign countries — three from Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam; one from Nuevo Laredo, Mexico — learning to speak English in total immersion, participating in a schoolwide water quality test in local parks.

The test was funded by Earth Force (earthforce.org), a national nonprofit organization that empowers young people to help solve local environmental problems.

The students took test tube samples and analyzed them for pH, nitrates, phosphates, turbidity and temperature. When asked to predict the amount of dissolved oxygen in the water based on the information just gathered, they got it right.

Upon returning to school, the students will spend weeks honing a report on the data collected and analyzed using graphs and charts. Each group will present its information in competition with other demonstrations in the class. Teachers will select the most out-



standing to contend with the premier showings in other classes. The best of the best will present to the entire student body, faculty, and families on Family Night.

General Motors Corp. funds the project, now in its second year at the Mansfield ISD. It grew from a group of students in Grand Rapids, MI, where GM has its corporate offices, doing some water testing and finding serious issues. The water department there was able to correct the problem, which could have threatened people's health.

GM now offers grants for water quality testing for students all over the United States.

In Texas, preparation for the project is as momentous as the learning it provides. Weeks ahead, Earth Force supplied training for teachers from Mansfield and Arlington ISD at an event hosted by the River Legacy Living Science Center. The day before the great dispersal of water sleuths to local water sources, parents and teachers watched a training video created by students at the Mansfield Career Tech Center.

At the student assembly Rick Rosales, husband of the librarian at Danny Jones Middle School and the man in charge of testing water at DFW Airport, showed the pupils how to do the tests and explained why they are important. James Law, assistant principal at Rogene Worley Middle School, told about being in the military in Desert

Storm in Iraq. His job was to test water in the Tigris River to see if the soldiers could filter it enough to be safe for drinking, cooking, washing and bathing.

To move approximately 2,500 students from all six Mansfield middle schools off campus for a day is a project in itself. Fred Garza, Mansfield ISD secondary science/health coordinator, said modestly that it's just part of the job.

Each school was divided into five groups and planned to go to five locations in Mansfield. Necessary for each site were transportation, lunches for each student (nutritionist-planned and prepared for students on the free lunch program), a nurse with medications for students who needed them during the day, and one chaperone for each 10 students.

About half of the chaperones were idled teachers; the rest were lucky parents. As a final contingency, five one-gallon buckets of water collected from different locations stood ready in case of inclement weather.

On the morning of testing, Mansfield had a sewer line rupture, so Oliver Nature Park and Katherine Rose Memorial Park were eliminated and other places chosen. That is how the students ended up in the wildscape testing the water under the vehicular bridge.

What good fortune for the volunteers who were there to learn about this fascinating and valuable project.



SW Nature Preserve Jan Miller**Saturday, January 16 Bird ID Class**

8:00 am Kennedale City Hall. RSVP is required for the classroom portion, which is optional, due to limited seating.

8:30 am SWNP. The survey will start at the concrete trail to the pond boardwalk, which is generally flat and easy walking. If there's time and interest, we can explore more of the preserve, but be prepared for steeper, unpaved trails.

Tuesday, January 19 Friends Monthly Meeting

6:30 pm Lake Arlington Branch Library*

(NW corner of Green Oaks Blvd & Pleasant Ridge Rd, adjacent to St. Vincent DePaul Catholic Church)

* This event is not sponsored by the Arlington Public Library.

Organizational meeting — this is it! If you've wanted to take part, here's your chance. We'll be planning the business and organizational structure of the Friends. A new meeting format is planned for March, so stay tuned.

Saturday, February 13 Great Backyard Bird Count (see gbbc.birdcount.org)

8-11 am SWNP

"Big Sit" style: We'll split up into small groups, then stake out several different habitats, waiting quietly for the birds to show. At the end, all groups will meet and tally counts.

Two trail days in early December made lots of progress toward completing Bluff Trail improvements started in May. Huge thanks to Jay Falgout's APRD Operations staff for clearing trees and brush and to UTA athletics volunteers for clearing the trail for final surveying. Thanks to Friends volunteers too (Annabelle Corboy, Grace Darling, Jim Frisinger, Laura Capik and Lynn Healy). Almost done. Watch the Friends Web site and Facebook page for a trail day in January (weather permitting). Hope you'll join us.

For more info: www.swnp.org or e-mail info@swnp.org



From MyArlingtonTX: Good News and a Head Scratcher

Good: Less energy = cleaner air City Moves to Next Phase of LED Streetlight Conversion Project

The Arlington City Council is putting technology to work, approving the next phase of the LED streetlight retrofitting throughout the city with OpTerra Energy Services.

Back in March of 2015, the Arlington Public Works and Transportation Department launched the largest streetlight conversion project in the southwest, retrofitting 10,500 lights with high performing LED technology that will cut energy costs substantially.

The Arlington City Council approved the financing of Phase II of the Energy Efficiency Program at the evening session on Tuesday, December 1, 2015.

The project will be engineered, designed, constructed and commissioned by OpTerra Energy Services in the amount of \$3,285,570.

As with Phase I, energy conservation measures for Phase II will include installation of building energy control systems, upgraded HVAC systems and modifications, and energy-saving LED lighting and technology on streetlight infrastructure.

Appearing brighter than the legacy yellow sodium vapor lights, the new LED fixtures will save energy, enhance street safety, and generate cost savings. In addition to the LED retrofit, the Energy Efficiency Program will improve energy efficiency at various city-owned facilities, including fire stations, libraries and the Ott Cribbs Public Safety Center. Aging air conditioning equipment, control systems and outdated lighting will also be upgraded. This program is in line with both the Invest in Our Economy and Put Technology to Work council priorities.



Huh? No native plants, and what about habitat and water conservation?

Arlington Announces October 2015 Property of the Month Winners

The properties chosen for this month exemplify residents and owners who have gone above and beyond to make Arlington a better place to live, work and play.

This month, there is a mix of residential homes, multi-family homes and local businesses that have put forth the effort to maintain their properties well beyond minimum standards.

The goal of our program is to help foster healthy and attractive neighborhoods in an effort to showcase the beauty of Arlington.

...Arlington is the American Dream City because of our competitive can-do spirit which is reflected in the effort committed to the manicuring and maintenance of your properties.

Each month members of the Property of the Month Selection Committee select one single-family residential and one multi-family/commercial property from each Council District to be recognized.

Winners are chosen based on the following criteria: The property has no visible code violations, nor a history of chronic code violations and the property is one of the most aesthetically pleasing in the area.

...Keep an eye open this spring as we will be back in April 2016, once again in search of properties that go above and beyond in our city.

For more information on the Property of the Month program you can go to www.arlingtontx.gov/codecompliance/property-of-the-month.

Village Creek – Lake Arlington Watershed Protection Plan Jan Miller

The initial meeting of this group was held in Burleson on December 10.

Because trends indicate potential water quality issues in Lake Arlington, stakeholders in the Village Creek watershed are being recruited to provide input on an expected 2-year process to create a watershed protection plan (WPP). Although most of those attending the first meeting were agency representatives (City of FW, Arlington, Kennedale; Trinity River Authority, NRCS, USFWS), other shareholders also attended.

Meeting presentations are available on the TRA website:

<http://www.trinityra.org/lakearlingtonvillagecreekmeetings>

If you're interested in participating, complete the online stakeholder survey (see below) or contact Aaron Hoff.

The following is from Aaron's followup message after the meeting:

Finally, I want to reiterate that stakeholder participation is vital to the WPP process. While we want to have as many voices as possible at the public meetings, we also want to locate and utilize those with local expertise to serve on the steering committee, or on any subcommittees that the group thinks may be needed to address specific concerns....If you are interested, please fill out the online survey to indicate how you wish to be involved or to nominate others that might be interested...The survey can be found here<<http://www.trinityra.org/lakearlingtonvillagecreek>> at the top of the homepage, or at the direct link below.

Take (and share) the stakeholder survey:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/KQ3PGHY>

Aaron Hoff

Watershed Coordinator

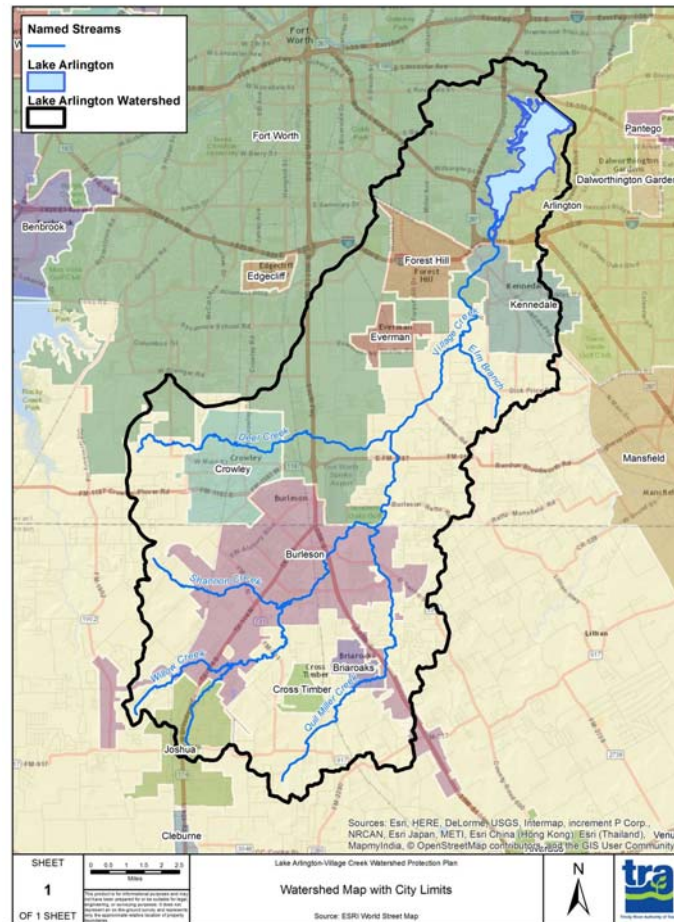
Village Creek-Lake Arlington

Watershed Protection

Trinity River Authority of Texas

(817) 493-5581 (office)

(979) 255-9793 (mobile)



Background information excerpted from the Trinity River Authority summary:

The Lake Arlington-Village Creek watershed begins at Village Creek's headwaters near the town of Joshua in northern Johnson County, extending approximately 35 miles before emptying into Lake Arlington in southeastern Tarrant County. On its journey, Village Creek passes through a patchwork of urban and rural areas including Burleson, Kennedale, and Fort Worth, while the shores of the Lake itself are shared by Fort Worth and Arlington. Urban areas dominate the northern end of the watershed, with a few industrial and municipal complexes near its center, and trending more towards agricultural use in the southern extent.

Village Creek is currently listed as an impaired water body on the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) 2010 Texas Integrated Report of

Surface Water Quality, which indicates that Village Creek is not meeting the designated contact recreation use standard due to elevated levels of bacteria. High concentrations of a monitored, non-pathogenic strain of *E. coli* in water bodies like Village Creek may indicate elevated levels of other pathogenic strains that may be a danger to human health. While it is not currently listed as impaired, Lake Arlington was included in the 2012 *Integrated Report* for nitrate and chlorophyll-a concerns.

In December 2009, the City of Arlington began putting together a long-term plan that would guide growth and development around

the Lake. Under the guidance of this Lake Arlington Master Plan (LAMP), several studies have already been conducted for various water quality constituents, with several best management practices recommended as results. The recommendations of the LAMP are intended to address watershed protection elements that are not addressed by Federal or State regulations, recommendations which will be studied for feasibility through the development of a watershed protection plan (WPP) for the Lake Arlington-Village Creek watershed. This plan will be a stakeholder-driven process that will incorporate water quality data studies with local knowledge and participation to create watershed-specific strategies that will best protect water quality of Lake Arlington and Village Creek while meeting the socio-economic needs of those who live, work, and play in the watershed.

Environmental Dates Julia Burgen

Sources: Calendars from Wilderness Society (WS), Sierra Club (SC), Yosemite Association (YA), National Park Foundation (NPF)

December 2015

“To a dull mind, all of nature is leaden.

To the illumined mind the whole world burns and sparkles with light.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Dec 2, 1980 President Carter signed the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, adding 56 million acres of wilderness to the National Wilderness Preservation System.

Dec 28, 1973 President Nixon signed the Endangered Species Act.

NPF: National Park Service will celebrate its centennial in 2016.

January 2016

“The clearest way into the Universe is through a forest wilderness.”

John Muir

Jan 2, 1901 Birth of Robert Marshall, Principal founder of The Wilderness Society

Jan 11, 1887 Birth of Aldo Leopold, A co-founder of The Wilderness Society

Jan 21, 1935 Wilderness Society founded



A Wildscape Note

Peggy Quinn

The Master Gardeners have sent us several new playmates. Robert, Patty and Carol have joined us for several Wednesdays. They have signed on so Molly and Josephine immediately put them to work. They have all proved to be well-trained rock movers, hole diggers and entertaining partners in planting new plants and shrubs, and in weed-pulling.

After the new year, we'll begin serious planning for three bouts of Walk on the Wildside, so be prepared for heavy-duty nagging so you can volunteer to work with 3rd and 4th graders.

Molly and Josephine have big plans to keep us busy in the New Year.

DADDY LONGLEGS

We toss upon our bed
Trying to forget our last sight
Before lights out.

Dozens of daddy longlegs
Sheltering from the chilly autumn air
Have joined us for the night.

Clustered mainly on the shelter's ceiling
They are as desperate in their insect way
To stay away from us
As we are desperate that they succeed.

We know they are not harmful,
Not even spiders, if that helps;
But deep inside our primate brains
A raw reaction to their many legs
Screams “danger, run!”

And so we cannot sleep,
Lying awake for hours
Until I finally get a broom
And chase them all outside.

©2002 John I. Blair



Seasonal Recycling

Christmas trees:

Continuing through **Jan. 11, 2016:**
Unfortunately, no curb-side pickup but there are two locations for collection:

<http://www.arlington-tx.gov/news/2015/12/28/how-to-recycle-your-christmas-tree-in-arlington/>

Leaf recycling:

Continuing through **Feb. 21, 2016**

Four locations for collection:

<http://www.arlington-tx.gov/news/2015/11/20/beautify-arlington-through-leaf-recycling-starting-nov-21-2015/>

For one-stop recycling, the city landfill accepts both leaves and Christmas trees.

Wildscape Update continued from page 5

Finally, ladies and gentlemen, feast your eyes on the students and teachers from The Over 18 program at Tarrant County Services. These regular Friday volunteers come to the most extraordinary place in Arlington to do their greatest work.

Elijah, Brock and Josue mulch trails, create brush piles and navigate loaded wheelbarrows over the treacherous terrain. These amazing young men delivered the erosion-defeating logs in the developing prairie.

Teachers Charlotte Birkheimer, Gary Faletti and Lynne Yancy lead the pack, juggling patience with specific direction. At the moment when disaster seems inevitable, they lend a hand to get the troop back in balance.

Step right up to the Molly Hollar Wildscape to see spectacular things happen!



Over 18 group with Molly. Left to right: Elijah, Josue, Brock, Molly, Rebecca, Uyen.



Elijah feeling triumphant.

Misc Bits

Dick Schoech provided this closeup of a striking yellowjacket. It's here because some of us who are allergic to their stings are trying to appreciate their beauty as well as their significant role in nature. Last summer it was helpful to learn how much gardeners appreciate their services as predators on pests.



Ultimate xeriscape: Looks like a step backward for a downtown commercial building since the recent removal of grass and the dumping of a whole bunch of gravel.

Of course the water bill will get a lot smaller, but this stark approach brings up several questions:

Does saving water balance the loss of turf services (oxygen, carbon sequestration)? It's a serious question.

Would it have been better in the long term to fill those spaces with low-water natives? Easy question.

How long before all that gravel is in the gutter? Another easy question.

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

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How did you hear about us? _____

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THE POST OAK

Arlington Conservation Council
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It's That Time Again: Don't Forget!

Saturday, January 9
Montessori Academy,
3428 West Arkansas Lane
10:00 – 12:00 pm

Annual Potluck and Business Meeting