

ARLINGTON
CONSERVATION
COUNCIL

POST OAK

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JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2021



SOUTHWEST NATURE PRESERVE • BOB BRENNAN PHOTO

The Watchdog Needs You

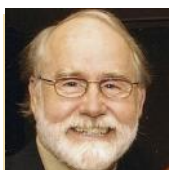
watchdog@acctexas.org

We try hard, but we can't keep up with every environmental thing.
So if you see something we should know about, email a message to the watchdog.



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From the President

Dick Schoech

As an environmentalist, it's easy to say goodbye to 2020 especially from a state, national and international perspective. Locally, environmental actions were consistent with previous years if you subtract the influence of COVID-19. Otherwise, 2020 was a roller coaster ride that I don't want to experience again. I speculate that the last four years were such an environmental disaster that Mother Nature punished humans with a pandemic, wildfires, flooding and numerous hurricanes. So goodbye, 2020.

The Biden administration's actions thus far have put the environment and sustainability at the forefront. While it is too early to know the local impact, emotionally it feels great because many of the hard-fought environmental achievements like endangered species protection and climate change agreements will now take center stage. ACC will try to take this urgency and enthusiasm down to the Arlington level.

2020 revealed that the environmental community is first of all a strong community. We quickly adjusted to mask wearing, social distancing and Zoom meetings. Work in the parks suffered from budget cuts, but most ACC environmental efforts seemed to grow rather than diminish. That may have been due to our need to participate outside in activities where we could socially distance.

The bans on indoor and outdoor small gatherings were probably the most difficult because working as a community is often as important as improving the environment. Virtual meetings are OK, but they're no substitute for face-to-face get-togethers. At ACC meetings before COVID-19, it usually was hard to get everyone to disengage so our speaker could present.

So, I am very optimistic for ACC in 2021. Joe Biden's and Deb Haaland's strong environmental agenda will put hope and a global focus back into our work. COVID-19 vaccines promise to once again allow us to work close together as a community. Happy New Year, ACC.



ACC POST OAK

Our mission: ACC works to protect Arlington's natural environment through education, community service and advocacy for a sustainable future

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Deadline for submissions is the
15th of every preceding month.
Please send them to
ldarling@sbcglobal.net

Bits & Pieces

The terse treehugger

Plastic in a privet:
Worst bird nest award?
Or just profiting from pollution?
Or are her babies marinating in
microplastics?

At least all those little pieces are easy to
grab and toss.



visit us on the web
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Brilliant Bug

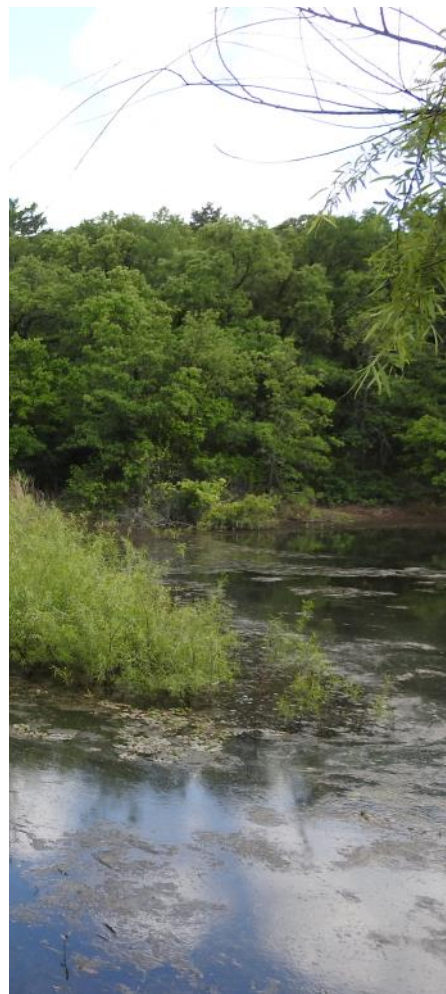


A small green mantidfly came to my moth light in South Texas at Christmastime to snatch up gnats. But mantidflies are rather rare flies that look like they were made from spare parts — dragonfly wings, preying mantis head and forelimbs — and some are amazing wasp mimics. They

have a wonderful life cycle that involves spiders. [Read about it here.](#) We learn from [iNaturalist](#) that four species are found in our area, including this *Leptomantispa pulchella* from Tandy Hills.

Oaks Clean the Air

You knew that already, but now we learn that [researchers at UNT](#) have found that post oaks and live oaks may capture about 32% of black carbon (soot) in Denton. Post oaks are better at this, but the evergreen live oaks do the job all winter when black carbon pollution is highest. More evidence that trees are good and good for us.



Southwest Nature Preserve

Join us and act locally.
Use the application form
on the back page.



Question Corner John Darling

Q: So I'm half-watching a show where some guy in Ontario is foraging for wild delicacies with a chef. I do my foraging at Whataburger so I really don't care, but then he's pulling bunches of flowers off milkweeds and raving about how great they'll taste. Meanwhile, they're showing monarch caterpillars and saying how monarchs need milkweeds. Wait, every flower these jerks eat must mean fewer milkweeds for monarchs. They don't look like they're starving, so what's the deal here? Do those bums get to go on and on about mouth feel while taking food away from a butterfly in big trouble?



A: First, quit channel surfing, go back to your Belgian cop show and try to figure out who's hurting all those people in such graphically disgusting ways. That ought to be easier than your question. Second, they're

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www.wbu.com/arlingtontx
Hours 10 - 6 Mon - Fri,
9 - 6 Sat, 12 - 5 Sun



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What's in Your Yard?

This? Or this?



ACC members and many others crave nature — the more the better. So why are native-plant yards still so rare? After all, there's lots of evidence that traditional lawns are an **ecological disaster**. And we have the greatest selling points: helping birds and butterflies, both in drastic decline. Seems like such a mystery. If we can understand the opposition, maybe we can improve our sales pitch. A lot of it must be tradition, so we're faced with overcoming historical neighborhood norms. But where do they ultimately come from? One answer could be a thought casually thrown out by a local gardening authority. To paraphrase wildly: Nature is over there, our homes are over here, and there is — and should be — a line between those things. He cited no evidence, but history is on his side. No easy fix for this environmentally destructive mindset. As a start let's imagine big public service announcements featuring masses of birds and butterflies.

This piece has gotten out of hand; it started out just as a way to link you to [an article](#) by a writer of fantasy who advocates converting your yard for wildlife. The article is a nice introduction, so if you're considering changing all or part of your yard, you'll like it.

Wind Energy Has a Waste Problem

There really is no free lunch, even when it comes to our insatiable desire for energy. We already knew about the danger to birds and bats from wind turbines, and there is increasing awareness now about this: The blades have a relatively short lifespan, they require lots of energy and material to manufacture and end up in landfills. Is hope possible here? [Here](#) is an article about the problem and some of the people who are working on it.



Randol Mill Park: New Pollinator Garden Carol Marcotte

Take a look at volunteer efforts in the park! Our new garden is located in front of the greenhouses and service center, near the swimming pool.

The native plants, supplies, organic fertilizers and mulch were purchased via a grant from Fort Worth Audubon Society. The City of Arlington has also supplied some materials. Volunteers started by removing non-native lantana, mondo grass and a vitex tree.

Another portion of the grant will be used to build and install bluebird nesting boxes around the park. Expect an update on the boxes later this season.

Both the pollinator garden and bluebird nesting box maintenance and monitoring will be performed by volunteers. If you would like to get involved, you will learn about native plants and pollinators in return for your efforts.

We're off to a good start because Josephine Keeney is the mastermind behind our native plant selection. She chose wild petunia (*Ruellia nudiflora*) and prairie phlox (*Phlox pilosa*) and seeds of purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*), Brazos penstemon (*Penstemon tenuis*) and lemon horsemint (*Monarda citriodora*).



Upper, The new bed before clearing. *Middle*, After clearing. *Below*, Dedicated Randol Mill volunteers.



Amazing Anita Martha May Martin

My Personal Memories of a Dear Friend

Note: Longtime ACC member Anita Garmon died Nov. 26.

Anita Garmon lived an extraordinarily rich and fulfilling 98 years, with amazingly diverse personal and professional achievements that truly made her stand out as a remarkable woman and role model. She was a passionate, enthusiastic participant in life and will be remembered as an environmentalist, vocalist, artist, model, volunteer, tutor, traveler, wonderful wife, mother, grandmother and friend to many.

Anita, a neighbor for generations in north Arlington, lived only 0.6 miles from her gate to ours (on what is now North Cooper). Our families bonded through a shared love of nature and saw the need to protect the natural environment of this area, both prior to city annexation and during the succeeding years. Originally, we lived on a narrow gravel road (named Gibbins for the pioneer family that settled in north Arlington in 1863), far beyond the Arlington city limits. The city later changed the Gibbins Street name to Cooper Street.

Anita's home was on secluded, wooded acreage which fostered a



habitat close to nature. You see, she had a deep love and fondness for nature. She nurtured all of her plants, from the agave and perennials at the entrance, to the wild berries and trees within her property. One year the city mowed the bluebonnets and other perennials at her entrance before they had gone to seed. Anita proceeded with the necessary action to ensure this would never happen again — and it didn't! There was never a plant that I showed Anita that she could not identify, first by its Latin name, followed by its common name.

Anita was always thrilled to tell me when "her little red fox" showed up for a visit. The quiet,

natural habitat of her property was an invitation to wildlife. Anita fed them and talked to them, letting them know she was "their friend" and that they were always welcome.

Anita was more than willing to provide help with our animals when we were out of town. One particular time, when checking on the sheep, she was extremely concerned about the condition of one and was ready to call the vet, but what a surprise and relief when she returned the next day to discover a blessed event and the arrival of twins. She was almost breathless with excitement when retelling this story!

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Amazing Anita continued from page 8

Her energy, enthusiasm and love of teaching touched and inspired both children and adults. She strived to share her knowledge and enjoyed helping young students through individual tutoring at Webb and Roquemore Elementary Schools and through environmental education projects such as the Hill Elementary Environmental Courtyard. Anita was an invaluable asset to the Molly Hollar Wildscape and various projects with the Arlington Garden Club (past President), Arlington Historical Society, Arlington Conservation Council and other organizations.

Additionally, her talents were demonstrated through her participation in arranging and judging entries for flower shows at the Bob Duncan Recreational Center. Anita was delighted and honored to design an arrangement for the opening of the River Legacy Living Science Center using an abundance of beautiful wildflowers from her own North Arlington property. Anita was a phenomenal woman who made Arlington and the world a better place. Through her actions, she inspired others to carry on her legacy of appreciating, nurturing and protecting the environment.

In Loving Memory,

Martha May Martin & Family
December 16, 2020

More about Anita from John Dycus and Geraldine Mills:

Among her endeavors, Anita sang with the Silver Serenaders, a senior choir that originated at Cliff Temple Baptist Church in Oak Cliff. She traveled all over the world performing in such exotic destinations as Egypt, Russia and Israel.

She also was an avid reader and painter, and she made quite the impression. She had grand conversations with Geraldine Mills, the Arlington Historical Society's executive director, who remembers her as an "ESL teacher, fashion model, botanical expert and storyteller extraordinaire." From Geraldine:

Sometime in the 1930s leaving Oklahoma to come to Texas, loaded up in an old pickup truck, Dad and Mom told Anita she must leave her cat. She cried so hard that her father built a small cage for the cat and had both the cat and Anita ride in the back of the truck to Arlington. Always the animal activist.

In the late '40s, early '50s, traveling in the South with her husband and their band, sometimes the bus driver, always the cook, Anita was so happy. Staying in the tourist courts on old

Highway 98, right on the beach, fresh fish each day prepared by the lady herself. What a wonderful way to start a life together.

Donations can be made to the **Fielder House Museum** or the **Native Plant Society of Texas**.



Subtropical Update John Darling

Or, “Here’s why the newsletter is so late.” The message here is, “Forget the palm trees, we have environmental troubles everywhere.” A random sample from the subtropical branch office in Harlingen:

All the news that fits: *from left*, A crew pruned a couple of 100-year old Montezuma cypresses to death and officials hope to get TxDOT to buy new ones. The border wall is moving along just as fast as its little legs can go, threatening miles of habitat, a state park and the National Butterfly Center. New park ordinances are aimed at curtailing the theft of native plants, watering hoses and bird feeders at a nature park.



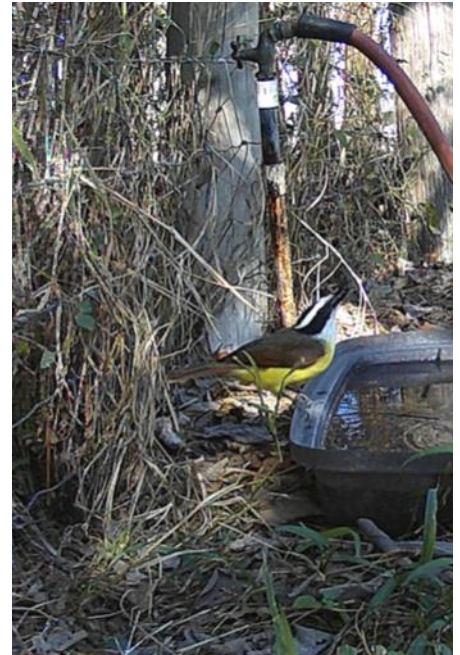
No curbside recycling in Harlingen, but there used to be a drive-through center where staff would take your stuff and sort it. Now it's closed and replaced by self-service dumpsters with pretty straightforward signs. You'd think that people who take the trouble to drive over would be good about contamination, but you'd be wrong. It's a mess of plastic bags, Styrofoam, every kind of plastic and who knows what else.



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Subtropical Update continued from page 10

It was a mixed bag on the (retirement) home front. *From left*, We verified that a ferocious invasive plant (Guinea grass) can smother a little patio garden in nine months. A local expert showed us that our row of exotic cactus and a brush pile have acted as nurseries for tiny volunteer native trees and shrubs. A great kiskadee posed for the trail camera while having a drink — the only one in about 300 photos of opossums, rats and introduced fox squirrels.



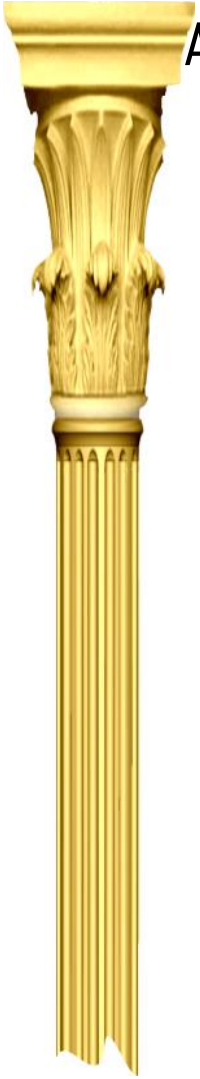
On a high note, it was a good time for moths and a green mantidfly to visit the UV light.



Natural History

Arlington Environmental Hall of Shame

You can't say you haven't been warned. The Hall of Fame/Shame is on its last legs. We're down to a pitiful vacation pic of trash in a state park because you just wouldn't send in your shot of any environmental thing great or awful in our fair city. You might not think so, but you're going to miss these columns when they're gone next month and forever. So sad.



Pay your ACC dues today.

(Application form on the last page.)

We're all counting on YOU.

And lots of us are cute.



In the Cedar Brake

IN THE CEDAR BRAKE

**I walked into the cedar brake
Between the gray and ancient trees
Where peeling bark lay on the ground
And incense filled the steaming air.
The branches brushed my sweating face
While either side the shadowed groves
Held secrets in their lichened hearts
And wove a spell upon my thoughts.
And in my mind ten thousand years
Dissolved and left as resident
A sense of coming once again
Into a world I had forgot . . .
A world that I had known before
In other lands and other lives;
And I was certain as I walked
I was a native of that place.**

**John I. Blair, 10/12/78
©2002 John I. Blair**

Blackland Prairie Site

Photos by Guy Random



In December, our prairie remnant was a sea of brown and gray almost hiding a carpet of tiny green plants. All different now: The mowers have come and gone, but a million seeds remain, anticipating spring.



Molly Hollar Wildscape Update Marylee Thomason

One year my family sent a Christmas card with our sons in a pose of their choosing. The tallest held the shortest upside down. Our theme for the year was, "This year we are grateful that our ups were greater than our downs."

This has been a great year for the wildscape, with our ups far exceeding our downs. For one thing, it gained some new physical features.

The city built a kiosk at the Butterfly Garden entrance showcasing an informative trail map. Colorful educational signs along the trails highlight native plants, birds and other animals that visitors might see.

It seemed fitting that the trails, bridges and special features

should be identified. Now, painted signs show the location of Molly's Hollar, the Berm Trail, the Woodland, the Wetland and High Trails, and the Butterfly Garden. So far they have escaped vandalism.



Joe Martinez grabbed the drill and Denise Carter risked her fingers to hold the signs in place. Others not pictured joined the posse to assure correct locations: Ann Knudsen, Jane Oosterhuis, Josephine Keeney and Marylee Thomason

Desperate to keep visitors and photographers from invading the flowerbeds, the wildscape designed and bought signs that read, "Please stay off the plants." And they're working. So far we have not had any furniture or people posed in the middle of a field of bluebonnets.

The new Photo Op Garden will give photographers a place to pose their subjects. Large



Nine-year-old Olivia, one of the summer's best volunteers, helps the guys pull the boulders into place.

stones provide seating with standing space around. A decomposed granite floor allows foot traffic without damage. By spring the beautiful flowers planted for background will be in bloom. Everyone will be happy.

Sharon Schoech loved the wildscape, so her husband, Dick, memorialized her with a grouping of large stones where children can gather for educational programs or just climb around for fun. After initial questions over the choice of stones, the memorial is complete.

Erosion is a problem with the wildscape located at the low end of a long slope. In response, volunteers of all ages helped build two rain gardens. A rain garden is an area engineered to

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Proud volunteers gather around the new kiosk in the Butterfly Garden. From left, Jane Oosterhuis, new volunteer Denise Carter, Joe Martinez, Marylee Thomason, returning volunteer Bev Crawford peeking from behind the post, Josephine Keeney.

Wildscape Update continued from page 15



Joe Martinez led the excavation for two rain gardens.

slow the flow of rain water so it will soak into the soil rather than run off. It was a lot of work and a lot of fun. The results have been rewarding.

Working with sharp tools is such pleasure, and one we don't often have at the wildscape. This year Terry Gratton came to our rescue. Not only once, but twice in person and twice at home on his own. One day he sat in Molly's Hollar and sharpened shovels for the wildscape and our personal tools, too. He got such rave reviews that he agreed to

an encore performance. Ramona Gratton carried trowels and loppers home and brought them back the next week.



Terry Gratton, husband of returning volunteer Ramona Gratton, claims to love sharpening tools. He spent a day at the wildscape and another day at home sharpening clippers, shovels and loppers for grateful volunteers.

The annual fall plant sale was a huge success, aided by (hard to believe) the pandemic. People were home more and turned to gardening. Suddenly, the idea of building a butterfly garden or adding native plants to their landscape was appealing. With careful planning, scheduled appointments to shop, required masks and a ban on pets and small children, the wildscape had one of the most successful plant sales in its history.

The sale is always held at the city greenhouses in Randol Mill Park. This year a hail storm damaged the roof of the larger greenhouse. Frank Keeney got a repair bid, but it was too high. Greenhouse manager Josephine Keeney will reduce our plant inventory so everything will fit into the small greenhouse. It's frustrating to lose the large greenhouse for propagation, but not fatal.

Molly was always happiest when new volunteers became regular volunteers. This year three new and two returning volunteers earned their shirts. Warmest welcome to Robin Agee, Denise Carter, Eric Strickland and the returning Ramona Gratton and Bev Crawford. Not one of them is doing it for the hours or the glory.

Another newcomer, Rich Wright, the new groundskeeper for Veterans Park, is camera and spotlight shy, but he's our hero.



Wonderful volunteers at the annual fall plant sale helped make this sale one of our best. Their strange ally, the coronavirus pandemic, also contributed by encouraging homebound people to garden.

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Wildscape Update continued from page 16



The pond (before cleaning, above) that had been a gift to Molly was full of debris, and the waterfall had stopped running. After a mention that we were planning to clean out the pond and get it running again, Rich Wright leaped into action. Thank you, Rich, from all of us.

After hearing that we wanted the pond waterfall working again, he cleaned out the pond. One Wednesday the cry went up, "Have you seen the pond?" No one took credit, but somehow Rich was found out. On his own time he also pulled all of the weeds in the surrounding area. We could get used to this kind of initiative.

Just slipping in under the wire is a new position, assistant volunteer coordinator. It was created to support Ann Knudsen in organizing workdays, contacting new volunteers and anything else she needs. It won't be long before the title will be Little Boss since Ann is the Big Boss and Marylee Thomason, the new assistant, is the shortest volunteer. Physically it fits and is just too easy a laugh.

**Here's to another great year
at the Molly Hollar Wildscape.**

Thank you – Thank you – Thank you

Wildscape volunteers

Robin Agee
Denise Carter
Bev Crawford
Teresa Day-Fickel
Ramona Gratton
Josephine Keeney
Ann Knudsen
Carol Marcotte
Joe Martinez
Jane Oosterhuis
Eric Strickland
Marylee Thomason

Greenhouse volunteers

Charley Amos
Josephine Keeney
Joe Martinez
Kay Sekio
Hester Schwarzer
Glenn Troutman



Major support, Friends of the Wildscape

Marian Hiler, treasurer
Frank Keeney, webmaster
Danny Kocurek, president
John Dycus, Update editor



Question Corner continued from page 5

Canadians, and those people are famously enigmatic. Third, it almost looks like we should consider this matter seriously; there's a strong hint of moral overtone here. After all, taking food out of the mouths of monarchs. Geez.

The answer is a little messy. The milkweed in question is probably *Asclepias syriaca* or common milkweed, and it's common to invasively weedy in northern parts of its range. Several foraging websites refer only to this species when discussing edible milkweeds. The plant likes disturbed areas, grows back easily from rhizomes after being cut, is said to need lots of boiling and tastes wonderful or bitter depending on the website. Sure.

Speaking of range, the map from the U.S. Forest Service is misleading: States are colored green if there's even one record. But a 2015 publication, *Identification of Milkweeds in Texas*, says there's only one record from the Panhandle and it lacks a specimen. So a milkweed that is a prime contender for unnecessary people food might not occur naturally in Texas.

So if you've got to deprive monarchs, get yourself to Canada and munch away on *A. syriaca*, but take it easy up there (if they even let you in), and think hard about leaving our Texas milkweeds alone. They have enough trouble without you and your umami, whatever that is. Do patty melts have umami?



It's Time to Pay Your Dues

Please make us bigger so we can be better.

ACC's size is important when voicing members' environmental interests and concerns to municipal policymakers on issues such as new gas wells.

Plus, it will just make you feel better to increase ACC's environmental voice in Arlington.

See the last page of this newsletter for information on submitting your 2021 dues.

Through with writing checks? You can now pay your dues via PayPal.

paypal.me/ACCtexas

The Trees Will Thank You

Southwest Nature Preserve

Friends of SWNP Events & Programs

Friends of SWNP events and programs are free and open to the public.

For more information about Southwest Nature Preserve and to sign up for email updates, see www.swnp.org or email info@swnp.org.

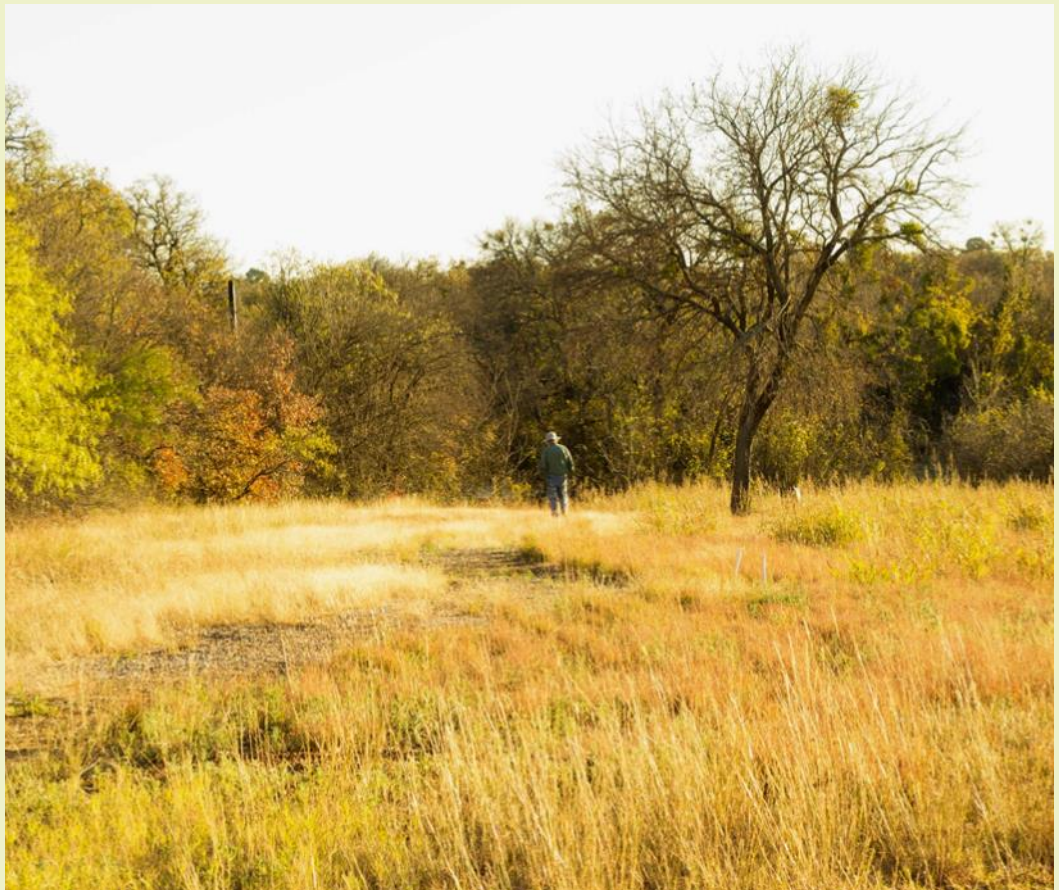
Friends meetings, programs and activities continue to be on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic. You will enjoy much more about the preserve when you take a look at the [December newsletter](#).

Volunteers seeding Pollinator Meadow Jim Frisinger

The cold weather may be upon us but work continues developing the 2-acre Pollinator Meadow at the preserve. Volunteers added compost to a number of sites around the meadow and followed up with seeding. Gathered seeds put out include little bluestem, splitbeard bluestem, liatris, blackeyed Susan, cowpen daisy and Florida paspalum. Also planted were cutleaf/Engelmann daisy, eryngo, frostweed, field goldenrod, Illinois bundle flower and Indian blanket. Others were partridge pea, prairie parsley, prairie verbena, spotted bee balm and white prickly poppy.

Efforts will continue throughout the winter to dig up and remove Johnson grass, an invasive species, that retards the establishment of desired Texas natives in the meadow. Those participating in recent seeding and invasives removal include Lynn Healy, Jim Frisinger, Jan Miller, John Darling, Jim Domke, Annabelle Corboy, Paul and Sami Cline, Kimberly Courtney and John Snowden.

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Southwest Nature Preserve continued from page 19



From upper left, Lynn Healy and Jim Frisinger unload mulch donated by Annabelle Corboy for spreading on the meadow. Jim Domke pulls weeds in preparation for seeding. Jim Frisinger (left) and John Darling (right) await their seed assignments from Jan Miller at the Pollinator Meadow. Sami and Paul Cline pull invasive Johnson grass from the meadow. Photo by Jim Frisinger. All others by Annabelle Corboy.

ARLINGTON CONSERVATION COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

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