

ARLINGTON
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COUNCIL

POST OAK

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RANDOL MILL PARK • JANUARY 27, 2026 • CAROL MARCOTTE PHOTO

March Zoom Meeting



Read more about this program on page 6

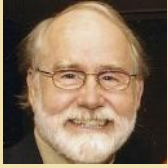
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82995959583>

**6:30 pm social time and equipment check
7 pm presentation**

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From the President **Dick Schoech**



Muddling Through Our Chaotic World

The U.S. and other parts of the planet are in a chaotic period. Leaders in many countries use power and money to control their citizens, creating uncertainty. Ideologies that once brought people together for common experiences — democracy, religions, humanism — now fail to provide guidance. People must select from competing ideologies that demand our attention. Often in the digital marketplace, people's self-worth is determined not by what they believe or do but by how many they influence.

This rapid change surrounds us on many levels, and the results can be devastating for environmentalists. Me-ism has taken over. Tribalism is replacing empathy, diversity, and kindness. Artificial intelligence is making it hard to distinguish the real from the fake. People are likely to distrust what others profess as the common good. For example, analysis shows that the top-rated buying recommendations on Amazon that previously educated buyers are now 17 percent more expensive.

The camaraderie and altruism displayed at the Olympic games prove people still desire a more cooperative approach, but little attention goes to ideals and actions that can unite people while benefitting the planet, such as wildlife protection, diversity, and clean air, water, and the land needed for the survival of humans and their planet.

Few options exist to confront the situation, it seems. Many environmentalists hope the negative effects of climate change will bring nations together to start the difficult task of saving our planet. Despite hopes that the climate crisis would unite Earth's 8.3 billion people, the last few years have been disappointing. The United Nations often gets sucked into divisive intellectual and political battles rather than investing in actions that unite people around climate change solutions.

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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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From the President continued from page 3

Being too busy to pay attention or ignoring the chaos all around us is often seen as a way to retain our sanity. The “ignorance is bliss” solution may help an individual, but more likely willful ignorance will make everything worse. This view can be depressing even to those who are able to enjoy the beauty of nature and seek goodness that exists in human relationships and communities.

While some may find certain ideologies or actions helpful, environmentalists can turn to nature for solutions. Volunteering to help others and our planet is a good remedy. Other low-cost nature solutions include planting a pollinator and vegetable garden or installing a bird feeder and observing bird behavior. Even simpler solutions are available by opening one’s senses and walking in a park’s natural area, finding a plant or a bug not seen before and learning about it using iNaturalist, or simply sitting under a nice tree and celebrating the beauty and wonders of nature.



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Positivity John Dycus and John Darling

Here is more positive environmental news, thanks again to John Dycus. Like me, he sees way too many negative developments, but he finds answers, as you see on this page. Try it! See something positive you like? Send [me](#) a link to something good. Just try to spot new things so we don't repeat ourselves.



Last April in Westbrook, Maine, [Vertical Harvest](#) hydroponic greenhouse was preparing to start producing 3,000,000 pounds of leafy greens annually. This facility can help solve a number of problems in a state that imports over 90% of its food.



[Stingless bees win historic legal rights](#) in Peru's Amazon rainforest. The Peruvian municipalities of Satipo and Nauta now legally recognize these bees as rights-bearing beings. The laws guarantee their right to exist, thrive, and inhabit a clean, stable ecosystem.



Scavengers enjoy [vulture restaurants](#) in Korea. Many Old World vultures are in serious trouble, but juvenile Cinereous vultures face good news every winter. After migrating from Mongolia they encounter food set out by volunteers in a number of locations. Butchers, NGOs, and others help the birds, and ecotourism, too.



[Record Ocean Cleanup](#): The Dutch NGO removed about 55 million tons of plastic in 2025. Of course, the problem is huge, but [The Ocean Cleanup](#) is taking it on with a multi-pronged, businesslike array of projects, including the 30 Cities Program, river interceptors, coastal sweeps for legacy trash, and much more.

Our March Zoom Meeting

Beyond Parks **Update on the redesigned department** **Gary Packan, Director APRCD**

Wednesday, March 4, 7 pm

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82995959583>

6:30 pm social time and equipment check, 7 pm presentation

Will the reconfigured Arlington Parks, Recreation, and Culture Department be bigger and better, or does it just mean more work for not enough people? New Director Gary Packan will discuss budgets, staffing, acquisitions and maintenance, new and old responsibilities, volunteer expectations, and what will be needed to maintain the award-winning service that the National Recreation and Park Association recognized with its Gold Medal in 2018.

Gary joined the city in November 2025 after filling a similar position in Denton since 2018. In Arlington he oversees a vast portfolio — more than 100 parks, six recreation centers, four golf courses, animal services, the esports stadium, and miles of trails and waterways. Prior to Denton, he spent over a decade as assistant director of Arlington Parks and Rec; he previously held leadership roles in Ohio as Sandusky assistant city manager and director of Huron Parks and Recreation. He holds both a bachelor's and a master's degree in recreation and leisure services from Bowling Green State University and is a Certified Parks and Recreation Professional.

Great news!

To mark the 150th anniversary of our city's founding, the Arlington Parks, Recreation and Culture Department will be planting an average of 150 trees a month. The goal is to plant from 1,800 to 2,000 trees by the end of the year, said parks assistant director Michael Debrecht. Trees will be planted in parks needing more plant life, such as Veterans Park and J.W. Dunlop Sports Center, as well as along roadways and medians.

Tree species will be selected from Arlington's approved plant list to include cedar elm, Texas red oak, black hickory, viburnum, Ashe juniper, pecan, and Southern Magnolia. The initiative will be funded through the designated forestry and beautification portion — approximately \$1.7 million — of the department's yearly budget of \$24M. Tree planting will begin this month and is expected to be completed by November. But this "is not just a one-time effort," said Debrecht; "every year parks staff prioritize beautifying the city with more tree canopy." May the wind fill their sails.

In Case You Missed It **Grace Darling**

I had a chance to drive FM-99 across Choke Canyon Reservoir this weekend. I wanted to see what 8.8% of capacity looked like. At my previous job as a water quality data collector, we used this bridge and boat ramp for numerous studies on the lake. We conducted routine monitoring for the Texas Clean Rivers Program, 24-hour dissolved oxygen studies, metals in water analysis, metals in sediment analysis, and a nutrient study. It was very shocking and saddening to see it this low. The rivers that feed Choke Canyon — including the Leona, Frio, Sabinal, Hondo and Seco Creek — have been in drought for well over a decade. The flows will return some day, hopefully soon. *[John Karges on Facebook, 2/9/26]*



Canada's plastic ban survives challenge. The Canadian Federal Court of Appeal upheld the federal government's decision to list plastics as a "toxic substance" under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, enabling the federal government's Single-use Plastics Prohibition Regulations to remain in place. These regulations ban six categories of single-use plastic: bags, straws, stir sticks, cutlery, ring carriers, and certain takeout containers. The court rejected the ruling by a lower court in 2023 that sided with arguments made by major players in the plastic industry, such as Dow. The decision affirmed that there is sufficient evidence that plastic manufactured items have caused or could cause harm. The ruling is not necessarily final, as it could be appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada, but it represents a major victory in the broader fight against plastic. *[Plastic Waste Trade Watch Jan 2026; with thanks to Dick Schoech]*

So much for MAHA. The EPA has green-lit a cancer-causing pesticide that spreads poison far beyond farms. **Dicamba** is a powerful herbicide that doesn't stay where it's sprayed. It evaporates and drifts miles away, damaging crops that weren't engineered for it, wrecking gardens, killing native plants and wildlife, and threatening the health of entire rural communities and ecosystems. That's not a minor side effect — that's poison in the air, in our communities. Independent scientists have linked dicamba exposure to cancer, hormone disruption, and other serious health problems. Laboratory and epidemiological data associate it with elevated risks of liver, lung, and colorectal cancers, and it's flagged in Europe as a suspected endocrine disruptor — meaning it can leach into human systems and wreak physiological havoc.

EPA says if farmers follow the new label instructions perfectly, there's "no unreasonable risk." But people

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don't live in controlled labs — they live next to fields, in wind currents, with families and children breathing the air that chemical companies and regulators want us to trust. Federal judges have twice thrown out previous EPA attempts to approve dicamba because the agency failed to consider how far the toxin could travel and what it would destroy. Environmental and health advocates are suing the agency's new ruling, again. [*news.bloomberglaw.com*, 2/20/26]



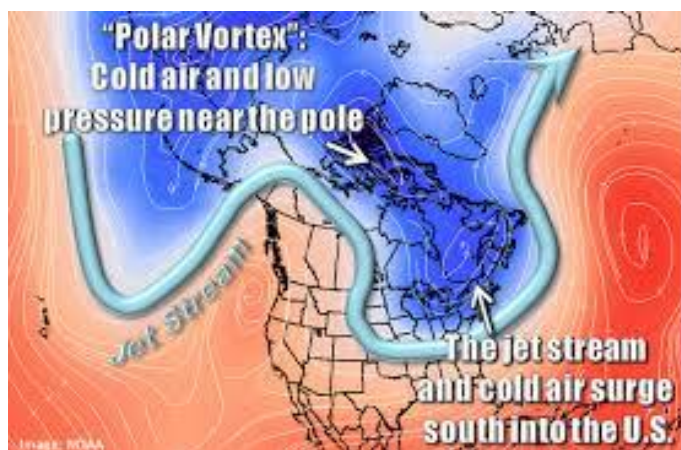
Puerto Rico grid, Bad Bunny, and DOE cuts.

Dancing linemen who dangled from power poles during the Super Bowl halftime show by Puerto Rican singer Bad Bunny were a pointed reference to the island's power grid, which has been hit hard by a series of hurricanes and, experts agree, is in dire need of modernization. In 2017, Hurricane Maria destroyed 80% of the island's transmission and distribution lines, and this led to months-long power outages. In 2022, Hurricane Fiona again knocked out power for more than 80% of the island's residents. Widespread blackouts have become a regular feature of life in Puerto Rico.

After Hurricane Fiona, Congress passed an appropriations bill that delivered funds to the territory with the aim of building a resilient, distributed energy system for the island. But in the

past year, the Department of Energy has quietly canceled \$815 million of a \$1-billion fund meant to bolster the island's grid against storms and outages, including the last \$450 million in early January. This is a death blow to a program that was meant to deploy backup solar and storage systems at hospitals and at 30,000 homes of rural, low-income, and medically vulnerable people, according to [Latitude Media](#). Administration appointees cited the reliance on renewable power as the reason for the cuts and blamed renewables for the island's electricity reliability problems. Local advocates say that individual solar backup systems are critical to protect residents from repeated outages.

[*scientificamerican.com*, 2/9/26]



While it's been a frigid winter in the eastern U.S., the western region of the country has seen record warmth. This stark disparity is the product of a persistent atmospheric pattern. That pattern is about to break, however, and the weather fortunes of the two halves of the country are set to switch.

To explain what's happening, let's review the polar vortex. The vortex is like a circular rushing river of wind that corrals the bitterest cold air up in the Arctic. When the vortex weakens, that tight circle becomes wavier, akin to how a slow-moving river

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tends to meander in bends across the landscape. Where the vortex bends southward, cold air follows. And if it bends southward in one spot, it must bend northward in adjacent areas. In this case, the northward bend is happening over the western U.S., where it has pulled up warmer air. The location of the Rockies, as well as the boundary between the Pacific Ocean and the land, means that, on average, a weak ridge (a northward bend in the jet stream) forms over the West and a weak trough (a southward bend) establishes over the East. The present dichotomy “is an amplification of that background pattern — a dramatic one.” The rapid warming of the Arctic may be making such weakening of the polar vortex more common, but researchers aren’t yet sure. But as winters get warmer overall, these bouts of bitter cold become more disruptive because they are so unusual. People are less acclimated to freezing weather, and businesses may not make contingency plans. Though the consequences of the cold in eastern states have been widespread and acute — with travel disruptions, power outages and scores of deaths — the warm western winter will also take a toll. Its consequences, however, will be delayed, with the potential for drought, water shortages and a higher risk of wildfires in the coming months.

[[scientificamerican.com](https://www.scientificamerican.com), 2/9/26]

On the question of Native Cultivars vs. Straight Species of native plants, this video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NJ9rAPqpCio>) includes many research reports that show how complex this question can be. The overall point is this: If you are gardening to support wildlife, the straight species that is locally native to an ecosystem has evolved alongside its ecological partners — insects, birds, mammals, and more. Evolution has already selected native species that are best matched to their ecosystem compared to any human-influenced cultivars. [Kim Conrow on Facebook, 2/16/26]



Doug Tallamy's books (and the research he cites) say that the top two traits to **avoid** in cultivars are: changing the foliage to be more red/purple (the compounds that make this color change make it less edible as a host plant) and changing the structure of the flowers (which might make them less recognizable or physically compatible with their natural pollinators). When you stay away from these two modifications, the resulting plants are often still pretty useful for insects (sometimes even comparable to the straight species). However, the cultivars that are sterile hybrids are almost always far less useful to pollinators, as they typically output noticeably less nectar and/or pollen (and don't produce viable seeds/fruit that can be eaten). And in general, cultivars have a very specific genetic makeup, leading to restricted genetic diversity of that species in your yard. Some even warn against using cultivars near natural areas, for fear of too many cultivars with identical genetics interbreeding with the wild population, which results in a net decrease in local genetic diversity of that species (and hence, less flexibility in adapting to environmental or other stresses). Consensus takeaway: Certain dwarf cultivars may be okay in limited applications, but

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when possible it's best to use straight species to maximize their ecological function. *[David Haury on Facebook, 2/16/26]*

The Trump administration has removed translation signs that have guided visitors for years at Big Bend National Park. Trump officials ordered signs to be removed from at least 18 parks, including the Grand Canyon, Glacier, Big Bend, and Zion, among others. The majority of the signs and displays are related to climate change, environmental protection and settlers' mistreatment of Native Americans. The federal directive states to remove any content deemed to "disparage Americans past or living." This includes any references to historic racism and sexism, as well as climate change and LGBTQ+ rights. However, the nearly 20 signs at Big Bend are seemingly uncontroversial, [having to do with] geology, prehistoric history, fossils, and other scientific or historical topics.

In September 2025 signs were removed in Acadia National Park's iconic Cadillac Mountain and Great Meadow wetland areas. These signs referred to the park's changing climate, including more frequent storms, heavy rain and hotter temperatures. *[washingtonpost.com, 1/27/26]*

The sign removal is one of many cuts under the current regime. In May, the administration proposed slashing over \$1 billion from the park service budget. The House Appropriations Committee's funding bill rejected the administration's provisions. However, the bill would still cut \$176 million (more than 6%) from the park service's operations budget. The park service has already lost 24% of its permanent staff since the January cuts ordered by the Department of Governmental Efficiency, according to NPCA. The organization said visitor centers have reduced hours and trails and facilities have been falling into

disrepair. When the January cuts happened, a long line formed at Big Bend National Park in February. *[mysanantonio.com, 2/7/26]*



We were included in a special up-close viewing of the newly installed Prairie mural by James Prosek on the roof of the Westbrook building, the west anchor of Sundance Square. It was a beautiful day on the roof and we were dazzled by 15 ft (guess) tall flowers painted in the Grand Prairie in Tarrant County. It was a true pleasure to meet the artist. He mentioned that he included a Big Bend bluebonnet. I asked if there were any other plants non-native to the Grand Prairie. He said the milkweed species is native to Connecticut, his home, and thus a piece of him. He had learned a lot about the prairie plants in his home state after working on this project. *[Dana Austin and Jun Lumadilla on Facebook, 2/7/26]*

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Solar power in Switzerland has demonstrated consistent capacity growth since the early 2010s, influenced by government subsidy mechanisms such as the implementation of the [feed-in tariff](#) in 2009 and the enactment of the revised Energy Act in 2018 to streamline the authorization process for new solar installations, aligning with the nation's transition to [sustainable energy](#) as it phases out nuclear power. The AlpinSolar project, comprising nearly 5,000 solar panels on Switzerland's Lake Muttsee dam, harnesses high-altitude sunlight and snow cover to maximize energy production, particularly in winter. Managed by Axpo, the dam's PV panels produce 3.3 million kilowatt-hours of energy per year, enough to supply around 700 houses. Switzerland's mountains are less affected by fog in colder months, meaning the panels see more sun than they would at lower altitudes, the reflection from the snow also helps, and “solar panels like the cold and have a higher yield in cooler temperatures,” an Axpo manager said. AlpinSolar aims to install 4,200 solar projects in the alpine country's mountains and lower-lying regions by 2030. The Swiss Solar Energy Association said solar power could be covering 50% of Switzerland's annual electricity consumption in 2050 if current market and installation trends continue. [[axpo.com](#)]



Introducing: The San Antonio River Authority. Funded by property taxes, the River Authority upholds a commitment to “providing safe, clean and enjoyable creeks and rivers,” which in its 83 years has led to a multitude of [partnerships](#), research initiatives, and [projects](#) that integrate public health with ecosystems and sustainability with economic development under the aegis of the SA Chamber of Commerce. It also works to prevent the spread of invasive species, and giant apple snails (*Pomacea maculata*) have become a giant problem since they were discovered in the San Antonio River in 2019. Their population has grown rapidly: Female apple snails lay clutches that contain 500 to 1,000 (sometimes even 2,000) eggs weekly. These snails eat vegetation that native species rely on, and their sheer breeding numbers, coupled with their lack of natural predators, create an imbalance in the river's ecosystem. It's not clear how apple snails, which are native to South America, appeared in the San Antonio River, but experts believe they were most likely dumped from home aquariums. [[sariverauthority.org](#)]

Bits & Pieces

The Terse Treehugger



Just cracked concrete and crumbly asphalt at Vehicle Inspection.

Too boring.
How about a little life?

Even here, kinda going strong.

**Visit ACC's
Facebook page
and
Discussion Group**

Marooned Balloon



Now what? This stretch of gutter is reserved for beer cans and oak leaves, not dead balloons. Here's another reminder of how we pollute thoughtlessly, recreationally, or just because. What's wrong with balloons? Have a [look here](#). And [here](#).



Mexican plum! Spring in February?

Hubris? Try That White Wrangler.



Sure, it's really just some words on a Jeep. Yes, Jeep: Think of Jeeps crushing brush and crawling over boulders, oblivious to nature. We're in charge here! Thing is, if you Google this phrase, you mostly see "Master Naturalist." And that feels like the opposite of this.

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



Question Corner Professor J. Lewis Corner

Q: Now look here, I've got Redbud flowers coming right out of some main branches along with bunches at or close to the tips of new growth, where they're supposed to be. What are those funny flowers doing so far out of place? Is the tree sick or what?

A: Botanists call this cauliflory, where flowers develop directly from the trunks, limbs, and main branches of woody plants. Our Redbuds do that, but it's mostly seen in tropical rainforest trees all over the world. ([Look here](#) for a crazy Redbud example.) In terms of cauliflory, our fine little tree is in some pretty exotic company, like tropical figs, papaya, calabash, and the chocolate tree (think cacao). The idea is that in rainforests a wide variety of pollinators work at different levels, and cauliflorous trees offer flowers that attract them. [Visit this site](#). But why Redbuds? Who knows? Next!



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Redbud on Valentine's Day.

GOOD WORK. ON TIME.

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Report from the Field Ivan Querido

Hey! Isn't this Querido's ankle monitor? Now what?

He was muttering something about dinosaurs and data centers. Then, I don't know, he disappeared.

Fine, I guess he's the constables' problem now. Just try to keep us out of whatever he does next.

Phooey! Those ACC big shots, so busy with their new conference room, they don't see what's in front of their noses. No more mahogany, okay? Forget them and look at this: [Massive data center planned near Texas dinosaur park sparks outcry](#). And there's a lot more: "A 2600-acre development threatens water and air quality in the Paluxy Valley." 2600 acres! That's bigger than their executive bathroom!

And look here. After you read that article, go to the [Fort Worth Sierra Club page](#), scroll way down and see how easy they make it to send a message about this latest desecration. Now you write a message and I'll look for dinosaurs before they build some horrible thing here.

Wait! Are those sirens? Hey, back off, I'm just looking at footprints!



Dinosaur tracks preserved in the Paluxy River bed at Dinosaur Valley State Park near Glen Rose, Texas. Paul Baker photo.

My Nature Notebook

That's just gross.

Last summer Mom and Dad took us to this huge lake and we saw some funny-looking birds trying to swallow their big white babies. But



Little Stupid said they were feeding fish to them but it sure didn't look like that. When we got home LS found the Creepy Old Guy and asked him about it. Ugh. And of course he had to talk and said I bet those were Anhingas. They catch lots of little fish and things and store them in their crop where they start getting digested. Then they barf them up into the baby's mouth. But that's nasty! Why? Well, he said, babies don't yet have the bacteria they need to digest their food so the parents are giving them softened food covered with bacteria the babies will need. Yuck, it's still nasty.

Any Time Is Dues Time. But mostly January. And February.

**Pay ACC dues?
Really?**

**Sure!
Commit!
Engage!
Act locally!**



Now it's February. We pay dues in January. But YOU can pay them in February. We're easy that way.

Molly Hollar Wildscape Update **Marian Hiler**

The winter ice and snow may have canceled a few workdays but in return we received much needed moisture for the wildscape. Warmer days followed, pleasing the volunteers who came to remove privet and cut back plants in anticipation of new spring growth. Plus, one sign came and another one went. And of course, there was weeding and compost spreading.

Privet Pull

February's First Saturday is the traditional time for our annual Privet Pull since the evergreen highly invasive pest stands out in the wintery brown landscape. In addition to the regular volunteers, many of the 2025 Master Naturalist class came back to volunteer along with some new-on-the-scene Master Gardeners. With so many hard workers, lots of the pesky privet was taken out making for a successful pull.

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Privet puller gang hard at work along the creek. Marian Hiler photo.

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More Privet Pulling



Above, Josh Parkerson, left, and Kent Underwood tackle their share of the invasive shrub. Marian Hiler photo. Right, Randy Walker not only removed the privet berries, he also helped Cindy Underwood haul the pest away. Marylee Thomason photo.



Ongoing maintenance

Now that the new growth rosettes of Mealy blue sage, Canada wild rye, Inland seaoats and the like are popping through, the dead stems from last year's growth are being cut to the ground. The hollow stalks were left to serve as winter homes for solitary bees, stem-boring moths, and spiders.

The Mealy blue sage isn't the only thing popping up. Volunteers have begun removing the Chickweed, Henbit, Sticky weed, and other noxious invasives that start appearing as the weather warms up. Taking them out now before they seed is always the goal.

We appreciate APRD employee Juan Gonzales who recently assisted Joe Martinez. They both loaded Juan's utility cart with the rich compost provided by Arlington Master Composters and then hauled it to the woodland area. Here, Joe and Carol Marcotte spread several cart loads. Thank you, Juan, for your ongoing support.

Chris Raney and Marylee Thomason spent time removing the bigger chunks of wood chips that were spread across much of the new north prairie when it was started a year and a half ago. A nifty, large 2 ft x 3 ft sifter built by Lynn's husband Eric Chen made the job possible. It also enabled them to leave the smaller decomposed bits essentially in place. Now that the prairie is filling in, the heavy coverage of wood chips is too much for the prairie to thrive.

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Maintenance and More Maintenance



Clockwise from upper left, Marylee Thomason, left, and Carol Marcotte cut back Autumn sage. Marian Hiler photos. Josephine Keeney digs up an Englemann daisy from the pathway to move it to a safer spot. Rosette of a Fall aster appears. Melanie Harris, left, and Cindy Underwood remove Chickweed from the west garden.



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Compost and More



Above, Joe Martinez, left, and Juan Gonzales retrieve compost made by Arlington Master Composters. Below left, Joe Martinez spreads the compost in the woodland area. Below right, Marylee Thomason, left, and Chris Raney sift out the big chips from the prairie. Marian Hiler photos.



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Signs come and signs go

A couple of years ago, the printing on several of the interpretive signs throughout the wildscape had faded to black due to a faulty printing process. All but one had been replaced a while back. The remaining sign, located in the berm area at the original entrance, was recently updated by APRD with a freshly printed colorful face describing how the plants in the berm adapt to hot, dry Texas weather.

Another sign, this one an eyesore, was finally removed from the creek thanks to Carol Marcotte. A large bright orange Detour sign had been stuck in the creek bed below the vehicular bridge for ages. Carol climbed down the steep slope into the water-filled creek and worked the sign out of the mud. The creek is flowing better now and looks natural, like it should.



Above left, The berm sign finally returned. Marian Hiler photo. *Above right*, Carol Marcotte begins the arduous removal of a sign that's been stuck in the creek longer than we can remember. Marian Hiler photo. *Below*, Success! Christine Brinson photo.



Wildscape Update continued from page 21, continued on page 23

First Saturday mini-classes

At the **February 7** mini-class, Jim Frisinger, retired journalist and prairie restoration volunteer for the Friends of Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve, took us on a statewide tour with "Historic, Famous and Infamous Trees from across Texas". Jim gave us the history of Comanche marker trees and the locations of several we can visit in person. You can hear Jim go into detail about a dozen of those historic and Comanche marker trees by watching his program uploaded on the [wildscape's YouTube channel](#).

At the mini-class scheduled for **March 7**, Texas Master Naturalist and Native Plant Society representative Sandy Fountain will be talking about NPSOT's landscaping certification classes. The classes — open to everyone — will teach you about native plants, how to use them in your landscape design and how to care for them.

Mini-classes are held in the compost area and begin about 11:30 as volunteers put away the day's tools.



Jim Frisinger passes out maps of the Sheri Capehart Natural Preserve. Marian Hiler photo.

Volunteer Opportunities 9 – noon Wednesdays and first Saturdays.

All are welcome, no experience necessary. Members of ecology and garden groups can earn credit hours.

For more information contact info@thewildscape.org

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Wildscape Extra



Above left, A Texas spiny lizard makes an appearance on one of the warmer days. Ann Knudsen photo. *Above right*, Standing cypress, likely from Molly's seedball toss in 2024, have emerged in the West Garden. Marian Hiler photo. *Below*, The striking Possumhaw scarlet berries persist all winter. Ann Knudsen photo.



Social Media? Yup.

**Be sure to visit
ACC's Facebook page
(857 followers)
and
Discussion Group
(159 members)**



What do you want to talk about today?

Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve Annabelle Corboy

Review: Winter Tree ID with Suzanne Tuttle

Suzanne Tuttle, plant ecologist and retired manager of Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge, led a group of tree enthusiasts through SCNP on the afternoon of Sunday, February 8th.

It was a typical winter's day – sunny, still, and warm-to-hot. We learned the big stuff and the small stuff about how to identify trees when their leaves have fallen. The first tip is to look for leaves, fruit, or nuts that might still be hanging on the tree; then



look for fallen leaves on the ground below the tree. Next to check out is where the tree is (its habitat). Another thing to watch for is the leaf and branch attachment arrangement. Most species in Texas have an alternate arrangement, so noticing that attached branches are opposite will narrow the list considerably.

Some random tree notes: Cedar elms flower in the fall, American elms in the spring. Blackjack oak's leaves look like duck feet (sort of) and Post oak's look like a cross (usually). There are some who say that the Cross Timbers region might have been named for the shape of the post oak leaf. Others say it was just because early settlers had to cross through this dense forest multiple times as they headed west. Poison ivy is just as poisonous in the winter but might not be easy to identify once it loses leaves and berries. We looked at a "stand" of Poison ivy that looked just like a stand of sticks, with no branches. Last, biologists recommend against using "always" and "never" when describing anything in the natural world.

This is the 6th amazing Winter Tree ID Walk that Suzanne has led at SCNP. It has become a lovely winter tradition for the Friends of SCNP.

SCNP continued from page 25, continued on page 27**Review: Great Backyard Bird Count at SCNP** Jim Frisinger*Cold start, warmer finish*

Fifty-seven degrees might not seem cold, but a 14 mph wind kept birds lying low at the 8 a.m. start of the bird count on Feb. 15. But by the 10 a.m. finish, the sun was peaking out and the birdies were noisy and back in view. At Sheri Capehart, we counted 149 birds across 33 species — pretty darn near average. This is our 19th year for the count at the preserve. Tufted titmice and cormorants were unusually absent this year, but many other old friends were back to greet us.



Above from left, Annabelle Corboy, Jim Frisinger, Jan Miller. Jim Domke photo. Above right, Annabelle at Main Pond. Jim Frisinger photo. Below, Ring-necked ducks. Annabelle Corboy photo.



SCNP continued from page 26, continued on page 28

Great Backyard Bird Count

Below left, Ring-necked duck. Right, Great blue heron. Bottom, Northern shoveler. Annabelle Corboy photos.



SCNP continued from page 27**Preserving the Glen Rose Yuccas** Jim Frisinger

Glen Rose Yucca (*Yucca necopina*) has an honored place at Sheri Capehart. Beyond the showcase Glen Rose Yucca Meadow, at the northeast corner of the preserve, the plants are found scattered throughout — even in the woodlands. Because it is a rare Texas species under threat, protecting it is an important mission.

A census of three smaller colonies at Sheri Capehart was taken in November 2025 so we can monitor the health of the yuccas in the face of natural succession, which threatens them.

The species was discovered in Somervell County a half century ago by noted SMU botanist Lloyd Herbert Shinnars. Only seven counties, all in Texas, host it, according to the Biota of North America Program range map: Tarrant, Dallas, Parker, Palo Pinto, Wise, Hood and Somervell.

A 2021 census on the North Prairie Colony No. 2 counted 53 yuccas. The new census tallied 71 — a gain of 18 plants. Good news for sustainability!

The yuccas have a life span of 30 to 60 years. Their first reproduction begins about age 5. Only the yucca moth — one species or possibly more in the *Tegeticula yuccasella* complex — can pollinate the white blooms each spring.

Two other colonies were counted for the first time. The pocket prairie around Colony No. 3 was prepared for first-ever mowing by volunteers in late 2025. It numbers 21 plants. Volunteers had earlier cleared encroaching sumac at another site. Colony No. 4, which lies astride the Blue Trail between the yucca meadow and Boulder Hill, has 26 yuccas.

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SCNP continued from page 28**SCNP iNaturalist Observations — January** Annabelle Corboy

January was a slow month for iNaturalist observations:
42 Observations; 35 Species; 6 Observers.

Totals at SCNP at the end of January:
25,343 Observations, 2,161 Species, 2,062 Identifiers, 349 Observers



From left, Oak Leaf Gall Midge (*Polystepha pilulae*) — Brentano, Ring-necked Duck (*Aythya collaris*) — apcorboy, Pretty Ruffle (*Parmotrema austrosinense*) — Brentano



From left, Standing Cypress (*Ipomopsis rubra*) — joshmols, Blunt Woodsia (*Woodsia obtusa*) — Brentano, Western Soapberry (*Sapindus drummondii*) - mdg01

Blackland Prairie Preserve

Guy Random



*It's the Ides of Feb.
Just had our yearly mowing,
And we don't look good.
But light hits down low,
And tiny greens eat it up,
Thinking of April.*



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Our March Zoom Meeting



See page 6 for more on this meeting.