



Tree NOTES

CROSS TIMBERS URBAN FORESTRY COUNCIL ♦ 4200 SOUTH FREEWAY, SUITE 2200 ♦ FORT WORTH ♦ TEXAS ♦ 761 15-1499

MISSION: TO PROMOTE PROGRAMS IN THE REGION TO INCREASE INTEREST IN URBAN AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY

13th ANNUAL NORTH CENTRAL TEXAS URBAN FORESTRY CONFERENCE

February 14, 2007

Texas Discovery Gardens in Fair Park
Dallas, TX

Register Now! Make credit card payments via Pay Pal at: www.tbufc.org/memberships

It's not too late to make plans to attend the 13th Annual North Central Texas Urban Forestry Conference on February 14th at Texas Discovery Gardens in Fair Park, Dallas.

The workshop features renown speakers Dr. Ed Gilman from the University of Florida, and Dr. Todd Watson from Texas A&M University. The \$60 registration fee includes lunch and features the following lineup of topics:

- 8:00-8:30 Registration
- 8:30-10:15 Wind Stress Effects on Trees
Dr. Ed Gilman, University of Florida
- 10:15-10:30 Break
- 10:30-11:30 The Impact of Drought Stress on Trees
Dr. Todd Watson, Texas A&M University
- 11:30-1:00 Awards Luncheon, Raffle and Silent Auction
- 1:00-2:00 Mistletoe and Ball Moss Control
Dr. Todd Watson, Texas A&M University
- 2:00-2:15 Break
- 2:15-4:00 Root and Pavement Conflicts
Dr. Ed Gilman
Univ. of Florida



For more information, visit: www.ctufc.org or www.tbufc.org

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Call For Nominations:

Regional Urban Forestry Awards

A new year often means time for reflecting over the accomplishments of the year before. With that in mind, do you know, or are you involved with someone or some organization that has done something noteworthy in urban forestry?

If so, nominate them for

one of the regional urban forestry awards presented each year by the Cross Timbers Urban Forestry Council. Winners will be recognized at the upcoming 13th Annual North Central Texas Urban Forestry Conference.

There is no specific nomination category or long

form to fill out. **Simply e-mail a paragraph describing the worthy person or project to cblevins@tfs.tamu.edu.**

Previous winners include: Citizen, Business, Volunteer and Educator of the Year and a Municipal Award. **Nomination deadline is Friday, February 2.**

Around The Region!

In Pursuit Of Big Trees...

The Texas Master Naturalist Rio Brazos Chapter, which represents Hood, Johnson and Somervell counties, has hit pay dirt in its search for large trees in the region that began about a year ago.

While Hood County holds the bragging rights for having the National Champion Mexican Plum, little effort has been made in the past to find large trees in these three counties.

Under the tutelage of Carrie Atchison with the Texas Forest Service in Granbury, the Rio Brazos Master Naturalists have already recorded two new regional champions and added two 'Big' trees and one 'Significant' tree to the Texas Tree Trails list. An Ashe

Juniper, recently named a champion, replaced an earlier champion the group found at the Acton Nature Center of Hood County. The latter tree has now slipped to the 'Significant' tree list.

The second champion recently measured is a Pinchot Juniper. Both champions were found on private property in Somervell County.

The Master Naturalists have measured about a dozen trees in the three counties and have about another half dozen still on the list mostly generated from newspaper stories.



Rio Brazos Master Naturalists confirm the Champion Tree status of this Ashe Juniper growing in Somervell County.

Atchison trained the group and has helped organize the search for trees.

The two-year-old Master Naturalist organization hopes to generate more publicity in 2007 to find more trees that might become state or national champions.

~ *Article by Anita Baker, Rio Brazos Master Naturalist*

Congratulations, Southlake!

The Midwest Section of the Texas American Planning Association (TXAPA) recognized the City of Southlake on December 8, at the Legends of the Game Museum at Ameriquest

Field in Arlington with a Planning Award for the city's new Tree Preservation Ordinance.

Previously, TXAPA selected Southlake as the 2006 Community of the Year. City staff accepted

the award in October which is given to a town, city or county that has provided outstanding contributions to planning.

~ *Submitted by Keith Martin, Landscape Administrator, City of Southlake*

Scouts Plant Trees for Arbor Day

Southlake held its annual Arbor Day celebration on December 9, in conjunction with a tree planting project organized by Zachery Taylor, who is working on his Eagle Scout certification. Zachery and his crew of other Boy Scouts and their parents planted 25 trees in front of the picnic pavilion at Bob Jones Park in Southlake.

Emily Galpin, member of the Southlake Parks Board, and President of the Southlake Bob Jones Nature Center, read the Arbor Day Proclamation.



~ *Submitted by Keith Martin, Landscape Administrator, City of Southlake*

It's Time to Prune Those Trees! Or, Is It?

One of the most frequently asked questions I receive is, "When is the best time to prune my tree?" This scares me a little as it usually means someone has just purchased a chain saw, and with nothing more than the operating manual, is about to try it out on some poor innocent tree. It's enough to make an aspen quake!



Topping trees, like those at this residence, is one example of bad pruning practices that compromise the health of trees.

The same people would never dream of cutting their own hair. A bad hair cut can grow out in six to eight weeks. A bad pruning cut can compromise a tree's health for the remainder of its shortened life.

Good pruning is a combination of knowledge, skill and talent. It is possible for lay persons to learn basic pruning, but it takes years of practice to perfect. Even with correct training, my recommendation is if you cannot reach it with loppers or a hand saw with both feet firmly on the ground, you should call a professional.

Trees have predictable responses to pruning. Pruning mature plants results in an increase in shoot growth, often at the expense of root growth. Any time the objective is root development, keep pruning to a minimum. Pruning young plants can dwarf both top and root production.

The more a young plant is pruned the longer growth

will be delayed. Senescing or overly mature trees that are heavily pruned can respond with prolonged die back or death.

Most trees should be pruned during the dormant season. The exception is spring blooming trees, such as crab apple, Mexican plum or Bradford pear that should be pruned after the spring bloom. Cutting spring bloomers in the winter will cause energy that would have gone into flower and fruit production to go to shoot growth. This results in long, aggressive shoots that can seldom hold their own weight. The trees become gangly and will need corrective pruning for several years.

Live oaks and red oaks should be pruned in late fall. To reduce the risk of oak wilt, avoid pruning them from February 1st to June 1st. If you must prune during that time, paint the wounds immediately.

Dead wood, broken limbs, heavily shaded limbs or aggressive shoots can be removed at any season with little or no adverse response. Hazardous limbs should be removed immediately.

Newly planted trees should only have damaged or dead branches removed. The first formal pruning should not take place until the end of the second growing season.

The best time to prune any tree is after thoughtful consideration, research and training. If your shiny new pruning equipment is too impatient, trade it in for some barber shears and hair clippers. It might keep you indoors for a while, but your trees will thank you.

~ *Article and photo by Melinda Adams, City Forester, City of Fort Worth*

"If your shiny, new pruning equipment is too impatient, trade it in for some barber shears and hair clippers."

CALLING ALL SHUTTERBUGS!

Get out those digital cameras and have your champion and famous tree photos featured in the 2008 Famous Trees of the Metroplex calendar sponsored by the Cross Timbers Urban Forestry Council.

Cross Timbers is accepting photo submissions of famous and champion trees located in the Metroplex. One photo will be selected each month for next year's calendar. The photographer of each winning entry will receive a

free 2008 Famous Trees of the Metroplex calendar.

Here's how it works:

- Find a famous or champion tree in the Metroplex. If you don't know where one is, check out the resources listed on Cross Timbers' website at www.ctufc.org.
- Photograph the tree with at least a 4.2 megapixel camera in landscape format.
- E-mail your photo as an attachment to

calendar@ctufc.org. Be sure to include your name, the name and location of the champion tree, *OR* the name, location and a brief description of the famous tree.

- Complete and submit the photo release and artwork release forms found on Cross Timbers' website at www.ctufc.org.

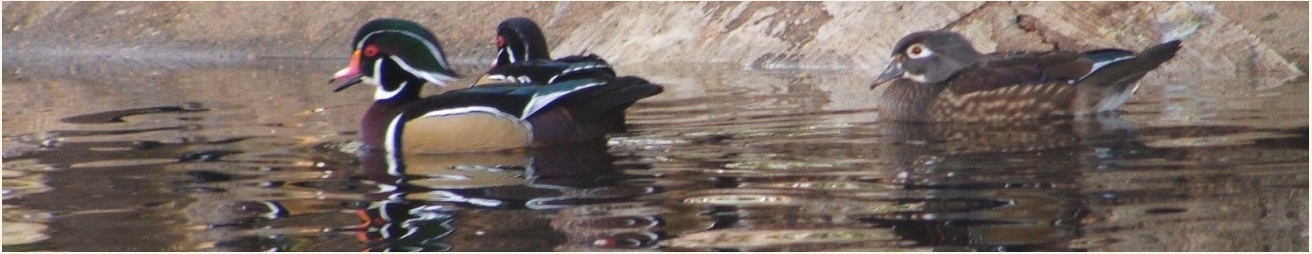
~ *Submitted by Melinda Adams, City Forester, City of Fort Worth*



For more details on the photo contest and to check out a thumbnail size photo of each month's winner, visit www.ctufc.org

BUILDING A HOME FOR WOOD DUCKS

I have been on a personal quest to view Wood Ducks in the riparian woods near my home. I often hike silently along the creek, my binoculars at the ready, waiting for the grand surprise that will make my day – a Wood Duck sighting. Wood Ducks are colorful, medium-sized ducks that nest in cavities of trees in wetland and riparian areas. Most waterfowl nest on the ground. To me, that makes Wood Ducks even more intriguing.



Wood Duck populations have been in decline since the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This decline directly correlates to the clearing of riparian areas and draining of wetlands throughout the U.S. These habitats provide homes to Wood Ducks and a diversity of many other plant and animal species. Wood Ducks nest in cavities of trees lining or standing in water. Nesting cavities take a long time to develop. Since trees are rather long-lived, it takes many decades before a tree is weakened via disease or the environment to the point that an inhabitable cavity is developed. According to the Noble Foundation, at least 85% of riparian woodlands have been degraded in Oklahoma and Texas. Given these statistics, it is especially important to provide nest boxes for Wood Ducks.

The best time to build and install nest boxes is over the winter. Wood Duck winter and breeding ranges reach into the Cross Timbers region so it is important to get the nest boxes up as soon as possible before they begin selecting nesting sites for breeding. The boxes should be installed prior to March 1.

Wood Duck hatchlings don't waste much time hanging out in the nest. Within 24 hours of hatching, they take a giant leap out of their cavity and head for the water. The mother bird immediately begins teaching the fledglings the ways of the world.

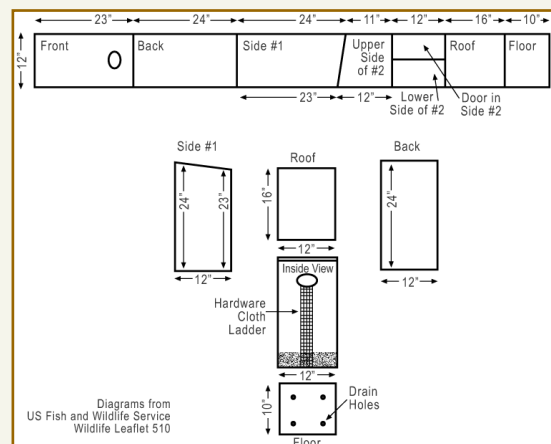
LOCATION

Once you have decided to build a nest box, the first order of business is to scout out a prime location for the box. You will be looking for either riparian areas or wetlands with certain characteristics. The ideal location is an area at least 10 acres in size that has water about 3 feet deep and contains flooded trees and shrubs. According to the Noble Foundation, flooded shrubs and aquatic vegetation should comprise at least 50 percent of the wetland/riparian area while open water should comprise less than 50 percent. If possible, avoid choosing a site that has Bass larger than one pound because they may eat the fledglings. If you will be establishing more than one nest box, space them at least 600 feet apart, and not in direct line-of-sight of each other (*USGS website*). If boxes are spaced too closely, female Wood Ducks may lay their eggs in the same box as another female thus decreasing the survivability of all eggs.

BUILDING THE NEST BOX

Now it's time to build the box. They are not hard to build. There are many websites (see listings at the end of this article) that provide detailed instructions on how to construct a nest box. Bald Cypress is the most often recommended wood to use, however Cedar and Redwood are also recommended. These woods are durable, rough and highly weather and disease resistant. Although less durable, you may also use Pine or $\frac{3}{4}$ inch non-treated plywood. It is best to select a wood that is naturally resistant and thus does not need any chemical preservatives applied. If you must apply a preservative (i.e. for a plywood box), choose a non-toxic preservative, and only apply it to the outside of the box. Also, do not paint the box.

The diagram to the right, published by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Wildlife Leaflet 510, shows all the cuts you need to make. The oval entrance hole should be $3\frac{1}{2} \times 4\frac{1}{2}$ inches. This will admit a Wood Duck but exclude most predators. You will also want to design a latch so that the front cover can be removed for seasonal cleaning (see Ducks Unlimited website for design details).



(article continued on page 5)

WOOD DUCKS *(continued from page 4)*

Once you have cut all the pieces, make sure the sides are rough and attach a piece of hardware cloth inside the box leading to the exit hole. Fold back the edges of the hardware cloth so it will not injure the birds. The rough interior and hardware cloth will make it easier for the ducklings to climb out of the box when they are ready to fledge.

After the box is constructed, place 4 to 6 inches of wood shavings (non-treated) in the bottom of the nest box. This provides warmth and keeps the eggs from rolling around.

INSTALLATION

The best installation location is in the water (to reduce predator access). The box should be mounted on a metal pole that has a metal predator guard (see Ducks Unlimited website for examples). If mounting in the water, the box should be about 4 feet above the high water level. If the box is located on land, it should be 30 to 150 feet from the shoreline. Nest boxes located directly along the shoreline will be subject to more predation. If they are located too far from the water, fledglings will have difficulty reaching the water safely.

The box should be oriented with the opening facing an unobstructed ingress/egress route for the ducks. The entrance should also be clear of branches and other brush that might impede access.

MONITORING & MAINTENANCE

When the nest box has been erected, a monitoring program should be initiated. Checking the nest box during the breeding season is important. You might find a pleasant surprise! You can use binoculars and sit a distance away to observe activity. If you notice invader birds occupying the nest, such as European Starlings or House Sparrows, they should be immediately evicted from the box. At the end of the breeding season, clean out the nest box. Remember to add the wood shavings back in just before the next nesting season. When the nest boxes are not being utilized by Wood Ducks, other species may inhabit the box such as owls or other desirable cavity nesting birds.

So now that you know how to construct a Wood Duck nest box, what are you waiting for!?! This is a great project for Scouts, school groups, private landowners, non-profits, or government entities. Take some time to help out our beautiful feathered friends.

If you are interested in observing Wood Ducks in an easy setting, take a trip to the Duck Pond at Trinity Park in Fort Worth. Over the last several years, a small population of Wood Ducks have been visiting the pond and they don't act too afraid of humans – which will provide you with great viewing opportunities!



References:

Noble Foundation: <http://www.noble.org/ag/wildlife/ducknestboxes/index.htm>

Ducks Unlimited: http://www.ducks.org/media/Conservation/Conservation_Documents/_documents/duck_box_plans.pdf

USGS: <http://www.npwrc.usgs.gov/resource/birds/woodduck/wdnbox.htm>

~ Article and photos by Michelle Villafranca, Forester, City of Fort Worth

Exploring the Chandor Woodland

Rrrriipp! Oh, perfect. Now, not only am I bleeding from my right leg, I've got a new air vent letting the cold air in on my left bun...and the stupid greenbriar is still attached, sawing into my thigh. Why am I here again?

Well, it seemed like a good idea at the time. December 3rd and I was climbing my office walls during the seventh hour of a self-imposed exile due to some kind of respiratory funk when I decided that some fresh air and mild adventure might do me more good than harm. Time to get out and explore that "unexplored" 15 acre parcel of woodland adjacent to Chandor Gardens. No telling what was in there...monster trees, deserted home sites, skeletons? I had about ninety minutes of daylight left, so I headed out.

I entered the woods through the gate down by Chandor's old stonepile, the one that I raid when I need sandstone for garden projects. Nowadays, it looks like a textbook habitat for copperheads, but that's another story. I take a quick look around---canopy of Texas Red Oak & Cedar Elm, occasional Eastern Redcedar, American Elm, & Hackberry, thickets of Chinese Privet woven together with Greenbriar, Roughleaf Dogwood and Sumac in the thin places with a carpet of Japanese Honeysuckle running across the forest floor. I press on.

(continued on page 7)

Simple Steps Can Make Homes More Resistant To Wildfires

As 2006 comes to a close, we approach the anniversary of some of the most destructive wildfires in Texas history. On Dec. 27, 2005, Cross Plains lost 116 homes, Canyon Creek in Hood County lost 21 homes and the Walnut Bend Fire in Cooke County destroyed 14 homes. The fires also took three lives. The new 2006 year came in a cloud of smoke: several fires raged across the state, driven by high winds and low humidity. Multiple homes were lost to the fires, including the Carbon Fire in Eastland County and the Ringgold Fire in Montague County.

While conditions are somewhat better across North Texas this year, the area is still in a moderate to severe drought. Forecasters predict a wetter than normal winter, but that won't keep dry, windy, cold fronts from pushing through, just like they did last Dec 27 and Jan 1.

"On the positive side, green winter grasses are starting to emerge in parts of North Texas," said Nick Harrison, Texas Forest Service regional fire coordinator in Granbury. "But we've also had several hard freezes, so most of our vegetation is dormant and ready to burn. That said, it's important for people to prepare their homes and property in the event of a wildfire."

Homeowners can take steps now to improve their homes' chances of surviving a wildfire.

"People tend to think preparing their home for a wildfire means they can't have trees, grass or shrubs in their yards," Harrison said. "Actually, firewise landscaping can be beautiful, and it can incorporate a variety of plants and trees as long as they are strategically placed so fire does not have a direct path to your home. The important thing, especially in the winter, is to have the grass mowed short and dead vegetation



removed.

"Also, make sure there are no open areas where burning embers can enter your home, including through attic vents, turbines and chimneys," he added.

"Adding fine gauge screening under wooden decks and removing any vegetation from around the decks can make a difference in whether or not your home is standing after a wildfire."

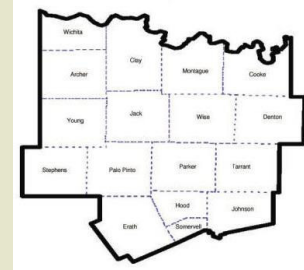
Homeowners can make a home more resistant to wildfire by making the following changes:

- Replace volatile plants, such as juniper and yaupon holly, with more fire-resistant species, such as hardwood trees, red yucca, forsythia, China rose, Texas sage or crape myrtle;
- Prune tree limbs up to 5 feet and remove tree limbs within 10-feet of your chimney and roof;
- Remove ladder fuels, such as shrubs, vines or woodpiles, that would carry fire up into the tree canopy or onto the roof;
- Stack firewood at least 30 feet from the house;
- Clean all dead leaves and needles from the gutters and roof;
- Skirt wooden decks with non-flammable siding or rock.

~ **Article by Traci Weaver, Texas Forest Service.**

For more information, log on to www.firewise.org or <http://texasforestservice.tamu.edu> or contact the local fire department or Texas Forest Service office

What's going on in your neck of the woods?



TREENOTES wants to hear from you!

e-mail your suggestions and newsletter articles to:
melanie.migura@fortworthgov.org

The Cross Timbers:

A Natural Wonder



The Cross Timbers: A Natural Wonder traveling exhibit is available at no cost to municipalities, schools, libraries, town halls and other venues to educate citizens about the importance of the Cross Timbers ecosystem and to promote urban forestry.

For more information or to schedule the exhibit for your area, contact

Emily Galpin at:
galpin@charter.net

got empties?

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For more information, contact Melinda Adams, 817-871-5705



THANK YOU, STARBUCKS!

The Cross Timbers Urban Forestry Council extends a special thank you to the Starbucks in Mansfield. The Starbucks *Make Your Mark* volunteer program donated \$850.00 to CTUFC. The donation was used to purchase trees for planting at new Habitat for Humanity homes in the Mossier Valley area of Fort Worth. The donation is a result of a team of Starbucks employees, led by Andrea Thompson, who volunteered 85 hours on behalf of CTUFC! Thank you Andrea and Team Starbucks!

Cross Timbers Urban Forestry Council members and volunteers, led by Stevon Smith, planted the trees at the new homes on Saturday, Nov. 11.

~ Submitted by *Michelle Villafranca, Forester, City of Fort Worth*



Arlington's Landscape Water Conservation Program Now Year Round Outdoor Watering Nixed From 10 a.m. To 6 p.m. Daily

Did
You
Know?

The City of Arlington's water conservation program for lawns and landscapes became a year-round ordinance on December 23, 2006. Except for hand watering and soaker hoses, it is unlawful for any person to irrigate or water, or cause the irrigation or watering of any lawn or landscape between the hours of 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. any day of the week. Until now, the ordinance, which applies to both commercial and residential projects, limited outdoor watering during the hottest time of the year, from June through September.

~ Submitted by *Kevin Charles, Landscape Administrator, City of Arlington*

EXPLORING THE CHANDOR WOODLAND *(continued from page 5)*

Fifty yards in, I turn left to avoid a ravine (say, 25' wide and 12' deep) and notice a small grove of Japanese Ligustrum. Still on the periphery...maybe things will improve. Lots of snags and a few downed trees, with Possumhaw and standing Poison Ivy filling in the gaps. That Japanese Honeysuckle has left the floor now, creeping up small trees and crawling over brush. Some kind of crater appears now, a foot-deep round depression about ten feet across, with a few chunks of limestone sitting among the duff.

Suddenly, the canopy clears and I'm on the edge of a 30-foot wide, short grass prairie remnant that looks a lot like the parcel of land up on the escarpment. An assortment of grasses (including Little Bluestem), blue-hued Yucca, and Prickly Pear cover the ground for a few yards, then a solid wall of chest high Greenbriar with a perfectly round grassland on the other side. Oh, for the love of science, go for it. A few minutes and some colorful language later, I emerge into the circular grassland, only to note that most of the "grass" is actually a 4" tall sedge and there's a "twin" grassland on the other side of that Eastern Redcedar. Goose-stepping over the Yucca, I stab my right calf coming down. Over-reacting, I stumble into a particularly vicious patch of Greenbriar and rip open my britches. I note an old "Kong" dog toy on the ground nearby and decide "better a briar than a pit bull." Back into the woods.

A few rounds of this forest-prairie-forest scenario and I finally realize that I'm encountering old roads that snaked through the property. Eventually, I "discover" a large ditch/dry streambed bordered by Grapevine-draped American Elms, and I can see a few houses and the old segregated schoolhouse up the hill through the bare canopy. I push westward, past thinly-vegetated Indian Cherry and that old checker-barked Rusty Blackhaw Viburnum, eventually encountering an absolute sea of Japanese Honeysuckle, washing up, over, and around everything in sight. It depresses me, so I turn south and head past a group of Chittamwood saplings on my way up toward the escarpment.

The prairie strips curve and I start to think of them as rings, like around Saturn. They begin to get more diverse, particularly with Liatris and Goldenrod. The Yucca and Prickly Pear get thicker as I get to the escarpment. I spot a tiny Mammillaria cactus, then another, then I notice they're abundant. The Prickly Pear thins out except for some strange, short Opuntia "walls," where the pads have laid out on edge and rooted in straight lines along the ground. (Wonder what's going on with that?) The Liatris thickens to the point of being ridiculous, making me laugh out loud. No monster trees or skeletons on this venture, but I still find an amazing treasure trove of goodies. My mood lightened, I hop over a particularly large patch of Yucca and stab my leg again, about two inches from the last wound. I laugh again, this time at the thought of being so giddy at the sights and smells (and occasional pains) of nature. Benny Simpson would have been proud of me...after all, exploration was his forte. And as the sun sets, I wonder if, somehow, he wasn't there with me all the time...in spirit.

~ Article by *Steven Chamblee, Chief Horticulturist, Chandor Gardens, City of Weatherford*. To come and explore the forest and gardens at Chandor Gardens in Weatherford, e-mail Steven at schamblee@ci.weatherford.tx.us.

Come see how Steven has since transformed the Chandor Woodland...Join him on an Easter Weekend Night Hike! To sign up and for more information, visit the TCU Office of Extended Education at <https://lifelong.is.tcu.edu/wconnect/ShowGroups.awp> and click on 'Chandor Gardens'.

Efficient use of landscape irrigation water is increasingly important to Texas. During the summer in many communities, 30 to 50 percent of the total water used is for landscape irrigation. With last summer's drought still on our minds and the summer irrigation season close at hand, now is the best time to audit your irrigation system to make sure you are using landscape water as efficiently as possible.

The purpose of an irrigation audit is to save water and therefore money. The audit will tell you if your irrigation system is working efficiently and how long to run each station. Many homeowners have reduced their summer water bills by 20 to 50 percent because a water audit identified system inefficiency and waste. In most cases the system repairs were as simple as unclogging irrigation heads and resetting the irrigation controller.

Below are simple instructions for you to evaluate your in-ground sprinkler system.

1. Make notes of the type of controller you have, the number of stations, and how many sprinkler heads are in each zone or station.
2. Run each station and observe every sprinkler head to see if the sprinkler head is running and distributing water properly. Note which sprinkler heads are working correctly and which are not. Look for these problems:
 - Sprinkler heads spraying water onto the sidewalk, driveway or road.
 - Sprinkler heads that don't work at all or have reduced water flow and/or poor distribution patterns.
 - Sprinkler heads broken at the base, that are either gushing out the top or not popping up.
 - Sprinkler heads that are no longer straight up and down.
 - Sprinkler heads that cause a cloud of mist.
 - Shrubbery or trees blocking the distribution pattern.
 - Landscape areas receiving very little water.
3. Repair all problems yourself or hire a licensed irrigator. Once all repairs are made, you are ready to run the system and time how long each station should run.



Repair broken sprinkler heads like this one before you run an irrigation audit on your system.

4. Collect several straight-sided cans, such as cat food or tuna cans. Use a minimum of 3 cans per sprinkler head. Mark the inside of each can like a rain gauge with markings for $\frac{1}{2}$ ", $\frac{3}{4}$ ", and 1."
5. Place cans throughout one irrigation station.

6. Turn on the first station for 15 minutes.
7. Write down how much water is in each can. The ideal irrigation system distributes water uniformly in the area and therefore each can should have the same amount of water.
8. Repeat these procedures for each station.



When auditing an irrigation system, set out containers in one station as directed in Step 5.

9. Estimate the amount of water your landscape requires. Variables include the amount of sunlight, type of plants, type of soil, time of year and amount of precipitation.
 - Turf areas in full sun on clay soil during the summer require about 1 inch of water every 5 to 7 days.
 - Turf areas in full sun on sandy soil during the summer require about 1.5 inches of water every 5 to 7 days.
 - Turf areas in full sun on clay soil during the winter require about 1 inch of water every 15 to 20 days.
 - Turf areas in full sun on sandy soil during the winter require about 1.5 inches of water every 15 to 20 days.
 - If you keep a layer of 2 inches or more of mulch under them, shrub areas require about half the amount of water that turf areas require.
 - Water flower and vegetable gardens as required. Again use 2+ inches of mulch to conserve water in the soil.
10. Do the math. You know how many inches of water each station applied in 15 minutes. Set your controller according to how much time is necessary for each station to provide the estimated amount of water for the plants in that station. If you do not have an instruction manual for your controller, order one from the manufacturer.
11. Change the irrigation schedule each season. Most controllers have an A and B schedule:
 - In the spring, use 20% less than the average summer schedule or as needed because we receive so much rain in the spring.
 - In the fall, use 30% less than the average summer schedule or only as needed.
 - In the winter, turn off the controller and water only as needed.
12. Add a rain and freeze sensor. These devices will prevent the system from running during rain and freezing weather.

If you have any questions call the Extension office, 817-884-1944, about landscape and irrigation questions. For irrigation repair questions, call a licensed irrigator.

~ Article by Dottie Woodson, County Extension Agent—Horticulture, Tarrant County

BIRDS AND BEYOND: Christmas Bird Count Adventures



Spotting this Ferruginous Hawk was a rare find for birders participating in the Christmas Bird Count.

I'm glad I wasn't the driver as we trekked around our corner of the county for the Christmas Bird Count. Our friend Kathy was constantly told to "Stop!", "Go!", "Back up!", and then "Stop! No, back up! No, go forward! Never mind, let's go again," and various other combinations of driving instructions. This was all in pursuit of the best views of roadside birds. She did a good job, though. We saw a variety of the usual winter sparrows, such as White-crowned, Harris's, and Field Sparrows, plus a bonus flock of Lark Sparrows. These, my favorite birds, are usually summer-only residents; we see them every few years in the winter.

Mom kept the tally from the back seat, marking down bird after bird. Some years it's even harder to keep up, however, with hundreds of sparrows, Blue Jays, and waxwings. This year only the robins seemed significantly abundant. They were the only species that I used my calculator to add up our total for the day! I suspect the ongoing drought might have contributed to our low totals.

Another highlight of our drive-by birding tour was a Ferruginous Hawk. This is a western species that rarely visits our area during the winter. Kathy spotted it flying over the road and we screeched safely to a halt. It landed in a tree, allowing us to photograph this regal hawk. It is somewhat similar to a pale Red-tailed Hawk, but it has a whitish tail and a dark back, grizzled with rusty red markings. Its legs are also feathered, which is different from most of our other hawks. The rarity of the species made it unusual, but the fact that we saw one last winter made it even more of a surprise to see one again.

In addition to counting roadside birds from the car, we hiked around on the Lyndon B. Johnson National Grasslands. At Unit 71 we enjoyed a view of three Horned Larks on a gravelly hilltop. We heard the high, thin calls of Golden-crowned Kinglets in the tall trees near a creek. Plus, on the warm and sunny day we also saw a lot of Dainty Sulphur butterflies flitting low to the ground. Even though it's December, the Dainty Sulphurs are out whenever it's warm.

We looked at several lakes in search of ducks for our count. At one lake there were seven Hooded Mergansers. Mergansers are ducks, which have serrated beaks for catching fish, instead of the rounded beak of typical dabbling ducks such as Mallards. We saw some Mallards, too, along with a large flock of wigeons, some Canvasbacks, and Ring-necked Ducks. Additionally, a lone Ring-billed Gull was swimming on the lake. We'd not seen one at this small lake before.

Keep your eyes open for winter surprises, whether they're rare hawks or winter butterflies. You never know what delights you may find!

The next monthly field trip on the Lyndon B. Johnson National Grasslands will be held February 7, 2007. We will depart at 9 a.m. sharp from the Forest Service District Office in Decatur. For more information, please contact Mary Curry (see below) or call the Forest Service District Office at 940-627-5475.

~ **Article and photo by Claire Curry.** Claire and Mary Curry are certified Texas Master Naturalists. If you would like to contact them, please e-mail them at larksparrow@eeclaire.com.

"Keep your eyes open for winter surprises, whether they're rare hawks or winter butterflies. You never know what delights you may find!"

Citizen Foresters...

...In Action!

These truly 'Tree-mazing' volunteers just don't sit still! Since completing their training in June, the 27 Citizen Foresters planted trees for Fort Worth's Cowtown Brushup, pruned trees along I-30 in Fort Worth, conducted tree inventories of several local parks, measured trees nominated for the Big Tree Registry, developed an interpretive tree guide for the Fort Worth Nature Center, and volunteered over 80 hours at Fort Worth's tree farm. If you are following their progress, stay tuned! 23 participants begin the 2007 training class in January.

~ **Article and photo by Melanie Migura, City of Fort Worth**



Citizen Forester volunteers work to correct the severe watersprouts on this tree planted along the I-30 corridor in Fort Worth. The volunteers began pruning the trees with Fort Worth Forestry staff in December and plan to continue through early spring.

We Get Around!

Cross Timbers Urban Forestry Council is now online

visit us at:

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Treasures of the Southlake Cove Ecosystem

Dr. Ray Chancellor is a Southlake resident extraordinaire. A retired educator, avid birder, and longtime ecologist, Dr. Chancellor has been opening minds and eyes in Southlake to the flora and fauna treasures of a rich ecological zone he has named the Southlake Cove Ecosystem. This ecosystem includes Bob Jones Park, Bob Jones Nature Center, Corps of Engineer land, and private property. Though much of the land was once farmed and ranched, portions have revived some of the original Cross Timbers characteristics alongside man-made Lake Grapevine. One of Dr. Chancellor's role models was his father-in-law, Orville Rice. By profession an architect, Rice was also a birder and wildlife enthusiast who illustrated the front cover of *Texas Parks and Wildlife* magazine during the 1940s and 1950s. Rice was also a good friend of Dr. George Sutton, renowned ornithologist and namesake for the University of Oklahoma George Miksch Sutton Avian Research Center in Bartlesville, Oklahoma. Dr. Sutton was also a mentor to Dr. Chancellor.

With this rich background, a love of nature and teaching, and a 14-year residency on the edge of Corps land that is part of this ecosystem, Dr. Chancellor has developed a deep appreciation of the treasures that are truly in his backyard. As a contributing writer to the Bob Jones Nature Center newsletter, a volunteer leader for bird hikes at the Center, and the leader of the newly organized Southlake Ornithological Society, Chancellor has spoken throughout the community on the importance of this ecosystem. Through the ornithological society e-mail distribution, he has been documenting the flora and fauna in the area. Here are some of his shared journal entries:

August 7, 2006

Today around 3:00 p.m., I happened to look out the window and there was a beautiful Black and White Warbler! For whatever reason, it is about this time each year when I find them in the area. They nest in Bob Jones Park but always along the Kirkwood Branch in the dense, oak wooded areas. When looking for them you find their habits exactly like that of a tiny woodpecker, i.e., they tend to work up, down, and around the limbs of trees. They are difficult to see (smaller than a sparrow) and you literally have to look for movement out of the corner of your eye. In any case keep an eye open for this beautiful bird. It is with us every summer. Also, those of you who have not seen many Mississippi Kites this year, now is the time to look! The adults are molting, and the young are congregating prior to migration. Almost every afternoon, if you will watch the sky for a while you will see one with their characteristic falcon silhouette.



Learn more about this female Orchard Oriole that nests in the Southlake Cove Ecosystem in Dr. Chancellor's journal entry dated September 1, 2006.

August 20, 2006

A special thanks to N.S. who reported seeing a Yellow Warbler at her drip station. I guess it triggered me to go check in the area and voilà! The Yellow Warblers are moving through the area in large numbers right now. They are best found by standing still under one of the large oaks and just watching for movement. They are small and may look like a chickadee moving through the leaves, but they are brilliant yellow. They like to stay near water. So, a bird bath, pond, or drip station will draw them to your yard if you have trees around it. The Eastern Phoebe has been around all summer but with the heat, it really has to look for insects. As a result, you may easily see it on fences or at the edge of transition zones. It is wonderful to watch their aerial acrobatics in true flycatcher form. Because they migrate early, try to get a glimpse before they leave us for another year.

September 1, 2006

Today I walked in and looked out the window. Feeding on the American Beauty Berry was an adult female Orchard Oriole. They are in their new plumage. Keep an eye for the yellowish body with distinct wing bars and a bird that is the size of a small Mockingbird. That will be the female Orchard Oriole. The male is totally different, being reddish brown and black in color. The young from this year look like some combination of the two and appear splotched with all their colors. The Orchard Oriole nests here in Bob Jones Park and probably in a number of open wooded areas in Southlake and surrounding areas. This is one bird that needs better observation and reporting to get a better idea of local populations.

September 30, 2006

Just a note to remind everyone that October is second only to May in numbers of birds here in the Southlake area. Many of the birds we have had all summer are concentrating here as they move south. They are joined by the northern birds that also are moving south to our area from as far north as the tundra region of northern Canada.

(article continued on page 11)

TREASURES OF THE SOUTHLAKE COVE ECOSYSTEM *(continued from page 10)*

So, on some of these beautiful fall mornings, take a few minutes to explore the lake areas as well as the wooded area in the Southlake Cover area. The Junco will be one of the first to show up at your feeders, feeding on the ground if your feeder is dropping any seeds. You can find them in the park areas by their "ticking" sound – just single little ticks. The American Goldfinch is just the opposite. It begins giving its "locator" call just after sunrise and basically sings all day.

October 22, 2006

Although the area seems quiet, there is a lot happening. This past Thursday, almost 100 White Pelicans visited the north end of Walnut Grove Park in the ever drying mud flats. They were kept company by the Osprey which may just hang around for a while. All were riding the air thermals up and down over the park. There should be Sandhill Cranes stopping on their trek from Nebraska through here and on to the coast. I did not find any Pelicans on a quick run but did find about a dozen Canada Geese, nine Greater Yellow Legs, two Lesser Yellow Legs, two Western Sandpipers, numerous Least Sandpipers, one Ring-Billed Gull, one Forsters Tern, four Great Blue Herons, and a couple of flocks of ducks. On the trails, it is relatively quiet. There are Brown Thrashers and the other resident birds, but I saw or heard no Towhees which should be arriving in numbers soon. The one exception was the Ruby Crowned Kinglet which was the most abundant observable bird in the park. They should soon be joined by the Brown Creepers, Yellow-Rumped Warblers, and Nuthatches. As it gets colder, they all travel together looking for food. What is discouraging is that much habitat for both the Wood Ducks and the Eastern Blue Birds has been destroyed in the area. As a result, the numbers of these two species have dwindled in the park area.



Ten of a group of 12 whooping cranes, which includes a juvenile on the far left, were seen in flight over the Southlake Cove Ecosystem.

October 29, 2006

Knowing the temperature would rise quickly this morning, I visited Walnut Grove Park at the end of White Chapel just as the sun had fully slipped above the horizon. To my surprise there were at least a dozen Bluebirds in the trees about the entrance acting as the official greeters. On the way down to the lake, every bush and plant had a bird welcoming the day. An American Kestrel was being harassed by a Crow. As they flew away, a Bluebird immediately came in to occupy the dead tree. Below were Ruby Crowned Kinglets taking a bath on the plant leaves still wet with dew. In the background were White Throated Sparrows with their unmistakable song. Along with these early arrivers were Slate Colored Juncos. Last week they were not here. This week they are all over that part of Southlake Cove as well as Bob Jones Park. Before I got out of the tree/shrub transition zone, I found the treasure of the day – an Oven Bird! It is the first one I have seen in over 20 years. It is on its way to its wintering grounds in warm Jamaica.

Thanks to Dr. Chancellor, more and more people are learning about and enjoying the treasures in the Southlake Cove Ecosystem. His concern? That this special niche will soon disappear because of development without regard to the impact of habitat fragmentation and environmental stress. Dr. Chancellor's journal entries not only describe the wonders that are in our backyard, but also let us know what we could lose. If you would like to receive updates about the Southlake Cove Ecosystem, contact Dr. Chancellor at RayChancellor@aol.com.

~ Article submitted by Emily Galpin with permission from Dr. Ray Chancellor. Photos provided courtesy of Dr. Chancellor.

A Special Thanks To Our Newsletter Contributors...

Melinda Adams, Anita Baker, Courtney Blevins, Steven Chamblee,
Dr. Raymond Chancellor, Kevin Charles, Claire Curry,
Emily Galpin, Keith Martin, Melanie Migura, Traci Weaver,
Dr. Dottie Woodson and Michelle Villafranca

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