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# Naturalist News

November 2022 Volume 23, Issue 11



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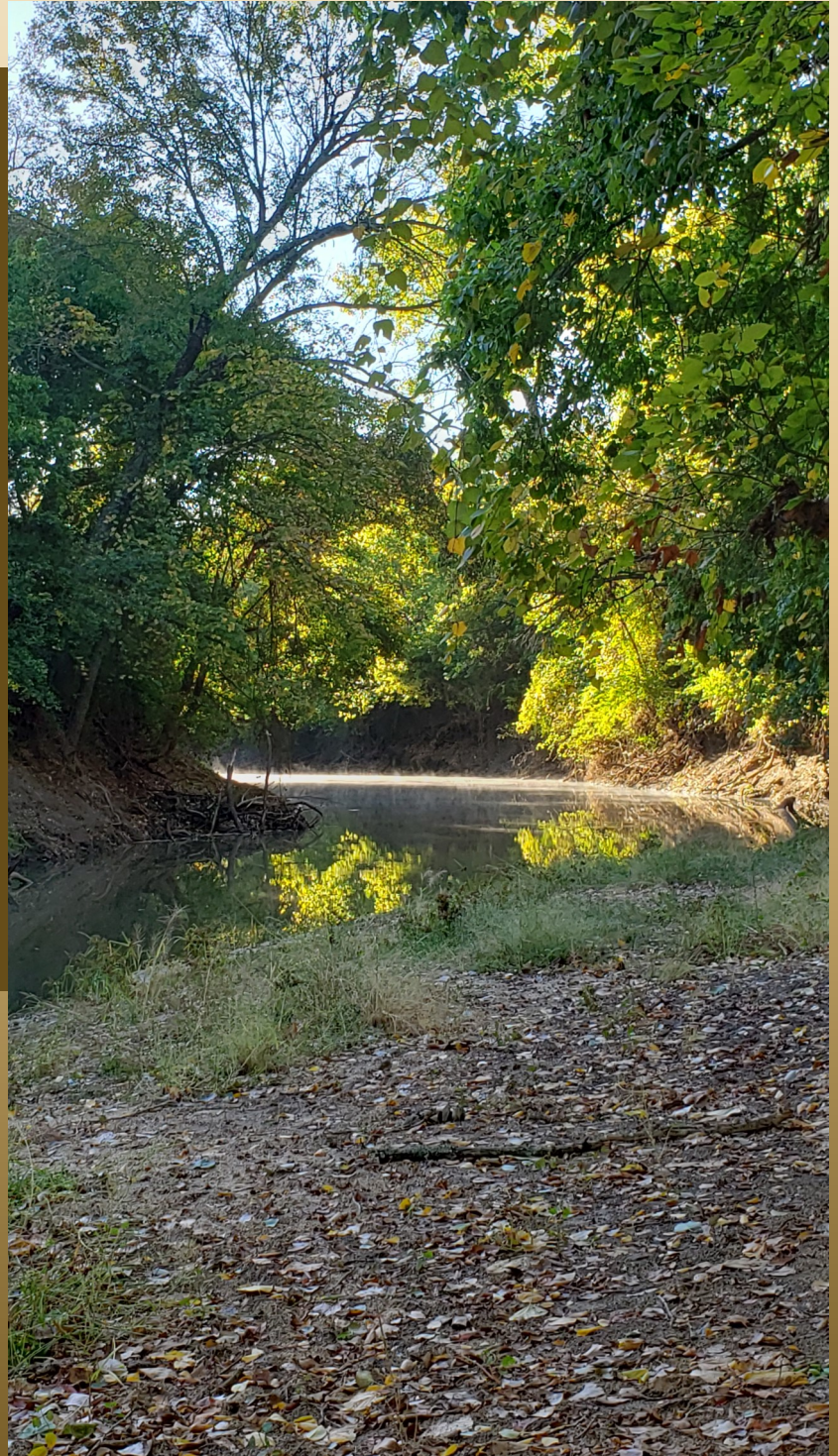
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# Naturalist News

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Clear Creek in the Morning, from Tammie Walters

# What Happens Next

Thursday, November 17 - Chapter Meeting Presentation

**Name of Speaker:** Amy Martin, journalist and author

**Bio:** A journalist and writer for over 40 years, Amy Martin, is the author of the upcoming *Wild DFW: Explore the Amazing Nature of Dallas-Fort Worth* for Timber Press (late summer 2023) and Ned Fritz Legacy (early summer 2023). Prior books include *Itchy Business: How to Treat the Poison Ivy and Poison Oak Rash, Prevent Exposure and Eradicate the Plant*, and *Holy Smokes: Loose Herbs & Hot Embers for Intense Group Smudges & Smoke Prayers*. She is currently senior features writer for GreenSourceDFW, profiling parks, preserves, and the people who protect them. Martin sits on the board of Dallas County Open Space's Trails and Preserves Program and serves as state social media director for Native Prairies Association of Texas. For 20 years, she presented acclaimed seasonal ceremonies called Summer and Winter SolstiCelebrations. She managed wildlife habitat rehabilitation on a private nature preserve in northeast Texas for twelve years, including converting fifteen acres of pasture into tallgrass prairie. Find her writings at [Moonlady.com](http://Moonlady.com).

**Presentation Title:** The Wonders of North Texas Nature

**Presentation Abstract:** Hardwood bottomland forests. Soaring limestone escarpments. Vast wetlands. Rich riparian corridors. Rivers with rapids and waterfalls. Rare remnants of Blackland and Fort Worth Prairies. Well-preserved swaths of the "cast iron forest" of Eastern Cross Timbers. North Central Texas has all this and more. Three immense preserves from 2600 to 3600 acres. Two large lake-based state parks. A huge national wildlife refuge for water-loving birds. And a host of smaller specialty parks with their own unique wonders. All of it linked by the many forks of the Trinity River, home to a 127-mile long nationally recognized paddling trail. Discover the astounding ecological diversity of the North Central Texas ecotone that transitioned eastern deciduous forest into the western plains. Get a first glimpse of material from *Wild DFW: Explore the Amazing Nature of Dallas-Fort Worth*, to be released by Timber Press (Doug Tallamy's publisher) in late summer 2023, while enjoying spectacular photographs of the region's nature and wildlife.



# *What Happens Next*

## **CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY LUNCHEON**

**December 15th**

**10:00 AM - 1:00 PM**

**6200 Canyon Falls**

**Flower Mound 76226**

Come help spread good cheer  
and see old friends  
to jump-start your  
holiday season.

**\*\*\*Please bring a pot-luck dish or dessert to  
share and wrapped nature theme ornament\*\*\***



# *What Happens Next (cont.)*

**CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY LUNCHEON - December 15th**

*'Tis the Season for Giving...*

**Nominations for your favorite  
non-profit organization for our  
Holiday Season Gift-Giving  
will be collected at the November  
Chapter Meeting.**



# *What Happens Next (cont.)*

## **IT'S TIME TO RECOGNIZE OUR CHAPTER'S OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENTS for 2022!**



**Deadline for Nominations:**

**December 31, 2022**

**<https://txmn.org/elmfork/2022-achievement-recognition/>**

**Nomination Forms for Volunteer of the Year, Outstanding Service Awards and Project of the Year can be found ON-LINE on our website:**

Nominations will be accepted on-line or completing the printed nomination forms and returning them at the Chapter Meetings in November and December or by turning forms in at the AgriLife Extension Office, 401 W Hickory, Denton 76201. Forms will be available at the Chapter Meetings, AgriLife Office or you can print your own from the website. Questions: Contact Kathy Webb, [awards@efctmn.org](mailto:awards@efctmn.org).



# Awards and Recognition

## September 2022

### Recertifications

<i>Craig Blow</i>	<i>Class of 2019</i>
<i>Pamela Chittenden</i>	<i>Class of 2021</i>
<i>Rebecca Cortines</i>	<i>Class of 2021</i>
<i>Jane Duke</i>	<i>Class of 2009</i>
<i>Janice Goetz</i>	<i>Class of 2016</i>
<i>Sarah Goodrich</i>	<i>Class of 2016</i>
<i>Vin (Richard) Merrill</i>	<i>Class of 2011</i>
<i>Clarisa Molina</i>	<i>Class of 2020</i>
<i>Susan Pohlen</i>	<i>Class of 2017</i>
<i>Jonathan Reynolds</i>	<i>Class of 2014</i>
<i>Brenda Tucker</i>	<i>Class of 2016</i>
<i>LeeAnn Weaver</i>	<i>Class of 2004</i>



### 250 Hour Milestone

*Stephen Carroll*  
*Class of 2021*



### 500 Hour Milestone

*Karen McGraw*  
*Class of 2015*



### 4500 Hour Milestone

*Carl Patrick*  
*Class of 2010*





# Awards and Recognition

## October 2022

### Initial Certifications

Brynne Bryan	Class of 2022
Shawn Davis	Class of 2022
Whitner (Whit) Dieterich	Class of 2022
Susan Hamby	Class of 2022
Sarah Jay	Class of 2021
Daniel Lemons	Class of 2022
Ebonye Redwine	Class of 2022
Jamie Reneau	Class of 2022
Virginia Richards	Class of 2022
John Thomlinson	Class of 2022



### Recertifications

Brynne Bryan	Class of 2022 (Wow!)
Michael Danner	Class of 2014
Judi Elliott	Class of 2009
Jeanne Erickson	Class of 1998
Mary Gunnels	Class of 2020
Irene Hanson	Class of 2014
Edsel Harrell	Class of 2020
Richard Johnson	Class of 2009
Missy McCormick	Class of 2019
Deborah Meyer	Class of 2012
Cathy Milliger	Class of 2019
Renee Province	Class of 2008
John Thomlinson	Class of 2022 (Wow!)
Shaleen Wunrow	Class of 2021



# Awards and Recognition

## October 2022

### 500 Hour Milestone

<i>Amy Crook</i>	<i>Class of 2020</i>
<i>Troy Dale</i>	<i>Class of 2020</i>
<i>Jeff LaQuey</i>	<i>Class of 2019</i>
<i>Kere Post</i>	<i>Class of 2020</i>



### 1000 Hour Milestone

<i>Toni Benjamin</i>	<i>Class of 2015</i>
<i>David Jones</i>	<i>Class of 2019</i>



### 1500 Hour Milestone

*Sharon Barr*  
*Class of 2008*



### 3000 Hour Milestone

*Jerry Hamby*  
*Class of 2014*





# Field Notes in Focus



Red-spotted Admiral (*Limenitis arthemis*)

From the Gallery of Tammie Walters

# Inside Outside News

## Texas Riparian and Stream Ecosystem Workshop for Hickory Creek Watershed Tuesday, December 6

The workshop will be held at the Clear Creek Natural Heritage Center in Denton. It will be co-hosted by Texas A&M AgriLife, Texas Water Resources Institute and the City of Denton.

Workshop is free to attendees through Clean Water Act funding, optional catered lunch is \$15. Here is the link to sign up of just learn more:

<https://tamu.estore.flywire.com/products/denton2022>

Information from Gina Steiner  
Administrative Specialist III - Horticulture  
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

*This newsletter section is still under construction...*



*For now, please see the Elm Fork Chapter Calendar for more volunteer service projects and advanced training opportunities:*

<https://txmn.org/elmfork/members-only-calendar/>



# Projects in the Community

## Visit the Edible Natives Garden at Green Acres

The Elm Fork Chapter project at Green Acres has a small garden of edible natives, 15 plants in sections around a sundial, with plants blooming from spring through fall, spring beauty to gayfeather. This garden has been thriving this year, under the care of Jean Mason since about March. The sundial base at the center of the garden has a story: it is a section of a mesquite tree donated by Clear Creek and delivered and clear coated by Edsel Harrell.



Right now the chile pequin (plant from Linda Cox) in the edible natives garden is filled with the tiny red spicy peppers.

So, just follow a bluebird to the top of the hill (photo by Win Goddard) to Jim Gerber's Edible Natives Garden signs. You can try a chile pequin pepper while you are there.



Visit and volunteer, Tuesdays 8-11 a.m. are our hours, until it gets too cold and we meet Tuesday afternoons.

Green Acres is at 4400 Hide-a-Way Lane--see if you can find the hidden street sign there, too.

For more information: Becky Bertoni  
[becky.bertoni@gmail.com](mailto:becky.bertoni@gmail.com) 972-878 4058



# Tweet of the Month

By Sue Yost, class of 2017

## Northern Harrier *Circus cyaneus*

It's fall in Texas and that means new part-timer residents are migrating in for the winter. One of the most beautiful winter visitors is the Northern Harrier. This is a slender, medium sized bird of prey with an owl-like facial disc.

It is the only Harrier found in North America.



It stands about 18" tall and has narrow wings that measure a whopping 43" span! It weighs in at 15 ounces [420 grams]. Adult males are strikingly white below and gray above with black wingtips. Females and juveniles are browner overall with dark bands on the tail. Females and juveniles can be hard to tell apart and to sex, but females have brown eyes and males have yellowish eyes...IF you can get close enough to see an eye color!! They have a long, rounded tail. The most easily I.D. mark is the very distinctive white rump patch that can be easily seen when it's flying low.



## *Tweet of the Month (cont.)*

In 1750 the English naturalist George Edwards included an illustration and a description of the Northern Harrier in the third volume of his *A Natural History of Uncommon Birds*. He used the English name "The Ring-tailed Hawk". Edwards based his hand-colored etching on a bird collected near the Hudson Bay in Canada and brought to London by James Isham. When in 1766 the Swedish naturalist Carl Linnaeus updated his *Systema Naturae* for the twelfth edition, he placed the Northern Harrier with the falcons and eagles in the genus *Falco*. Linnaeus included a brief description, coined the binomial name *Falco hudsonius* and cited Edwards' work. The Northern Harrier is now placed in the genus *Circus* that was introduced by the French naturalist Bernard Germain de Lacépède in 1799. The genus name *Circus* is derived from the Ancient Greek *kirkos*, referring to a bird of prey named for its circling flight (*kirkos*, "circle"). It's also known by the old timers as the Marsh Hawk.

Harriers love to fly low over open fields, grasslands, marshes, and agricultural areas in search of food. If you frequent LLELA in the winter, they are often seen soaring low over the dam and back in LAERF over the shallow ponds and grassy areas. Harriers fly with their wings held in a dihedral or V-shape right above the horizon. They often will be the last birds seen coursing over the marshes.

Harriers hunt by surprising prey. It flies steadily but can stop on a dime, hover briefly, then drop down on its unsuspecting prey with long legs outstretched. They will stay on the ground to eat but sometimes fly up to a low post or tree branch. The harriers circle an area several times listening and looking for prey. Harriers use hearing regularly to find prey, as they have exceptionally good hearing for diurnal raptors, this being the function of their owl-like facial disc. The Northern Harrier tends to be a very vocal bird while it glides over its hunting ground.



Like other hawk-like birds, they have a sharp, down-turned beak and long sharp talons. This equipment helps them catch, kill, and tear the prey for consumption. Northern harriers hunt primarily small mammals. Preferred prey species can include voles, mice, cotton rats and ground squirrels. Up to 95% of the diet comprises small mammals. However, birds are hunted with some regularity especially by males. Supplementing the diet occasionally are amphibians (especially frogs), reptiles and insects. The species has been observed to hunt bats if these are available. Larger prey, such as rabbits and adult ducks are taken sometimes and harriers have been known to subdue these by drowning them in water.

## *Tweet of the Month (cont.)*

Mating season is from March through June. Nests are built on the ground or on a mound of dirt or vegetation. They are made of sticks and are lined inside with grass and leaves. The nests are usually 15 to 30 inches (38 to 76 cm) in diameter. Four to eight eggs are laid over several days. The eggs are bluish-white and usually unmarked. Incubation is between 24 to 39 days. The young birds may leave the nest 30 days after they hatched. Their predators include striped skunks and raccoons, who steal eggs from their nests, red foxes, feral cats, and other birds. Life span of the Northern Harrier is about 12 years.

Harriers have a long human connection as well. Once upon a time, in some parts of Europe people believed that seeing a harrier perched on a house was a sign that three people would die. On a happier note, Native American tribes believe that seeing a hawk on your wedding day is a sign of a long, happy marriage. Unlike many raptors, Northern Harriers have historically been favorably regarded by farmers because they eat mice that damage crops and predators of quail eggs. Harriers are sometimes called "good hawks" because they pose no threat to poultry as some hawks do. Heavy pesticide uses in the 1970s and 1980s caused a decline in harrier populations. This species has a large range, and there is evidence of a population decline, but the species is not believed to approach the thresholds for the population decline criterion of the IUCN Red List (i.e., declining more than 30% in ten years or three generations). It is therefore classified as "least concern".

Grab your binoculars and come out to the dam at LLELA and search for this beautiful, graceful raptor that makes TEXAS its winter home.

**FYI: Remember: Second Saturday bird walks at LLELA are AT hours!!**

**Register online at [llela.org](http://llela.org)**

**\$5 gate fee, \$5 event fee.**

**JOIN ME!!**





# Features

## *A Gardener's Tale*

From Irene Hanson

About 40 years ago, when I was starting out to landscape around our new home and to start a kitchen garden, it seemed I had a lot of choices and no one to warn me away from bad choices.

### *Pine Trees*

The Texas Forestry people had sapling trees, evergreen and those that dropped their leaves in the fall. With four acres to fill up, I was happy to see the trees came in bunches of fifty for not too many dollars. I started by planting a hundred Loblolly Pines. With each one a little bigger than a potted geranium plant, I did a lot of digging and got my exercise. Most of them survived the planting and grew to be beautiful green bowers filled with birds and other critters. In the heat of summer, the air was filled with pine perfume. In winter, they shivered in the Arctic blasts as they broke the wind.

Alas, their true nature was revealed as the years piled up. Those Loblollies came from East Texas; there are no pines native to the North Texas area, specifically a spot in Denton County. Slowly, but surely those big, beautiful giants fell prey to borers, and drought. Worse, I had planted them along the property boundaries. Somewhere in the middle area, they could have stood bare of needles until a wind took them down. But these pines could fall on the neighbor's house or fence when the wind was up. Sadly, I had to call an arborist to remove those dead giants.

Way out in our backyard, a pine seed has volunteered; it looks like a Loblolly now as it heads toward the clouds. This young giant will be welcome to great-grand-kids. It can flourish and be a home for birds until in old age the branches are bare. No worries about what a storm or wind could do with all the open space around it.

### *Vines*

Now, vines can be good and bad. Consider the Trumpet Vine, with its brilliant trumpets as food for humming-birds. *Campsis radicans*, Trumpet Creeper, Trumpet Vine, Common Trumpet Creeper, Cow Vine, Foxglove Vine, Hellvine, Devil's Shoestring, as it scrambles up trees and along fences, displaying its bright flowers. It can be too vigorous for a small tree, and then it needs to be cut back. It must not be allowed to grow on a wall or in a cultivated garden. Since it is a Texas native, it is not invasive but it will take over any spot that offers sufficient water and space.

The Climbing Milkweed Vine, *Funastrum cynanchoides*, Fringed Twinevine, Climbing Milkweed Vine, Twine-vine, bought at a native plant sale was a surprise. It needed sunshine and water, so I planted it at the edge of my butterfly garden. As time went on, the vine that started at one edge had crawled to the opposite edge and beyond. It obviously was about to take over the entire garden. I later learned at a program about growing milkweed that the Climbing Milkweed Vine should never

## A Gardener's Tale (cont.)

be turned loose in any cultivated space. It is safe to allow out in the open field dependent on whatever rain that falls for subsistence. With the Milkweed Vine, I learned to be a wily gardener, and ask questions about how it grows.

### *Butter Daisy*

When I pointed to a bright yellow daisy blooming in the walkway of a nursery and asked about it, the salesman dug it and potted it for me. This was how I was introduced to the Butter Daisy. Its best point is that it really grows and takes over a spot. The Butter Daisy, *Verbesina encelioides*, Cowpen Daisy, Golden Crownbeard, is in the Aster family. It can be an entire pollinator garden by itself. It is a good nectar source, especially for late-season butterflies. Native bees as well as honeybees gather on them. A hot summer morning will hum with bees busy gathering nectar and pollen. The daisies have a fragrance not everyone thinks is pretty, perhaps reminiscent of the cowpens it calls home. Cowpens are an example of the kind of disturbed soil on which it thrives. Miles of roadside can be seen covered with this yellow daisy as well as acres of farm or ranch.

The bloom season is long, from April to October, and it is found growing from the West Coast to the Eastern Shore, from Canada south into Tropical America. This deer-resistant daisy may be annual, but it is a serious seed producer, so no worries about more next year. Given time, the plant can grow three feet tall and just as wide. Come October, the golden flowers will be mobbed with countless pollinators. Scatter a few seeds anytime now, and you can have a meadow dotted with Butter Daisies all next season.

### *Chinese Privet*

Finding the Butter Daisy was a happy accident. Acquiring a Chinese Privet is something I wish I could undo, take back. My mother shared the small plant with me to be a small shrub in my garden. It would be covered with fragrant blossoms in the spring, and then those blossoms would become small black fruits containing seeds. Those fruits are toxic to humans but birds happily eat them and thus distribute the seeds far and wide.

Chinese Privet, *Ligustrum sinense*, is worse than Kudzu, because Kudzu needs sun to grow. Kudzu is the invasive vine that ate the South. The villainous Chinese Privet grows anywhere and everywhere, in sun or shade, in wet or dry soil. Scientists say it is growing all over more than three million acres of Southern forests and is now spreading as far north as Massachusetts. The intruder is popping up everywhere in my garden; I have accepted destroying it as my penance for welcoming it into my garden as a good guy. This lesson proves the rule that native plants are best for our environment.

### *Bermuda Lawns*

Hailing from Chicago, Illinois, I grew up believing every home needed a lawn surrounding it. When my small family with toddlers transitioned from apartment dwellers to a new house, it was my first task to put in a lawn. Obviously my knowledge of lawn growing would not help here in totally different weather patterns, so I called the local agriculture agent for advice. Unfortunately, Bermuda grass or Saint Augustine were the choices I was given.



## A Gardener's Tale (cont.)

Not only is Bermuda grass, *Cynodon dactylon*, a garden bully, arrowing directly into my garden without any regard for edges or borders. It quickly goes to seed, causing much suffering from airborne pollen. Sadly, the goal of a thick, green lawn that feels good beneath bare feet never happened. Being a plain-dirt gardener couldn't accomplish this; it takes quantities of chemical fertilizer, and water. We are learning now that the longed-for lush, green lawn is in fact a desert, hosting no wildlife, from microbial populations on up to bees, butterflies and birds. In fact, reducing lawn and increasing native trees, shrubs, and forbs is wildlife friendly, sure to bring in the birds, bees, and butterflies.

Grasses are supposed to grow in a clump, not make long strings turning my garden into a weed patch. The worst trait of Bermuda grass is what happens after it claims the garden; the soil is filled with roots that can't be pulled, but must be pried out. Roto-tilling it will only make a million more grasses to remove. If non-native grass is the devil, our Texas native grasses are heavenly, like the difference between Beauty and the Beast.

### *Heed These Lessons*

The above is to keep my promise to tell other gardeners what I learned not to plant, and what I wish someone had told me once upon a time. I have learned that trees are the answer for any problems, even for climate change; but plant the right trees in the right place. Anything can be grown in good, organic garden soil. Don't use chemical fertilizers and pesticides unless a desert is the goal. No garden can be lovelier than a butterfly garden, and we can all have one. Butterfly gardens can preside over the smallest corner of soil along the street.



Butterfly Garden, photo by Tammie Walters



## More Features

### *Nodding Ladies Tresses*

From Marilyn Banton



Orchids belong to the family Orchidaceae. This is one of the largest families of flowering plants, having about 28,000 species. Although orchids are often thought of as tropical plants, they are found on every continent except Antarctica. There are about 200 native orchids in the United States. Even Alaska has a native orchid.



There are over fifty species of native orchids in Texas! All of the Texas orchids are terrestrial. They grow in soil rather than in trees or attached to rocks. The most common native orchid in Texas is the Nodding Ladies

Tresses, *Spiranthes cernua*. These lovely little orchids are blooming now in our area. They are most abundant in sandy soils. They are perennials growing from a tuberous root system. When they are established, they may even bloom in mowed lawns. They grow in part shade to sun.

The flowers of the Nodding Ladies Tresses grow in spiral rows on a spike. They are white, tubular, and one fourth to one half inches long. As the common name suggests, the flowers have a pointed lip that points downward making them appear to be nodding. In fact, the species name, *cernua*, means "nodding" or "drooping" in Latin. It has been suggested that the way the flowers spiral makes them resemble long braided hair, hence the common name, Nodding Ladies Tresses. Some *Spiranthes* species are fragrant but Nodding Ladies Tresses have little or no fragrance.

The plants can grow taller but what we see in our area normally grows from eight to twelve inches tall. They have one to five, fleshy, upright basal leaves that wither before the plant flowers in October and November. The flowers are pollinated by bees but sometimes the flowers don't open.

Look for these charming little orchids and enjoy them where you find them. Don't try to dig them. They are said to be difficult to transplant. Some of our native orchids are very rare but the conservation status of Nodding Ladies Tresses is secure.





## More Features

### Alien Invasion!

From Sue Yost, class of 2017

It's fall and more than just leaves are "falling". Seeds, acorns and  
 WHAT are those big yellow balls under that tree??  
 Monkey brains? Monkey balls? Horse apples? Mock Oranges?



Whatever you call them, these weird, alien-looking greenish-yellow balls appear each fall in wooded areas to the delight, dismay, or confusion of residents. BUT what exactly ARE they?

Officially, they have nothing to do with monkeys. It's also not an apple or an orange, but it is the fruit from an Osage Orange tree, In Latin, *Maclura pomifera*, a member of the mulberry family. They've been traced back to prehistoric times and are thought to have been a favorite of the Woolly Mammoth! The Native Americans in the Osage Nation were known for using the durable but flexible wood to build bows, hence the namesake. The trees are also called Bois d'Arc, coined by French explorers, which translates literally into "wood of the bow." "The wood is so weather-resistant and durable, there was a period in Central Texas when bankers wouldn't issue a loan to build a home unless Osage Orange wood was being used! The trees also have long, sharp thorns, which is why they were often planted in hedges to serve as a fence in the pioneer days. According to one history book, an Osage orange hedge was considered "horse-high, bull-strong, and pig-tight." Their popularity faded with the invention of barbed wire, but many of the trees remain in the Midwest and other non-native regions. Afterward it became an important source of fence posts.

The warmer the climate, the more orange the fruit will appear, but don't be fooled by the name or appearance! They are thought to be a natural exterminator, due to the naturally occurring tetrahydroxystilbene, an anti-fungicide that may deter insects. [That theory has not been officially proven, but some people swear it deters everything from insects to spiders to mice! Old wives' tale? Maybe?]

The Osage orange has simple oval leaves that are borne alternately along the stems. Individuals are dioecious, meaning each plant bears only male or female flowers. Female flowers are borne in a dense, nearly spherical cluster and fuse together to produce a fruit known as a multiple. The

## *Alien Invasion! (cont.)*

tree flowers between May and July, producing flowers that, surprisingly, appear green in color. The bark of the tree is deeply furrowed, and it is dark orange in color.

The largest known Osage orange tree is located at River Farm, in Alexandria, Virginia, and is believed to have been a gift from Thomas Jefferson. Another historic tree is located on the grounds of Fort Harrod, a Kentucky pioneer settlement in Harrodsburg, Kentucky.

The fruit of Osage orange are large, round, hard, wrinkled, or bumpy in texture, pale green, or lime green in color, and 8-15cm (3-6") in diameter, and the skin has a pleasant, orange-peel smell.

They are produced in summer. When cut open, the fruit has a white pulp inside, and a milky sap, with numerous small seeds crowded together. If the fruit is crushed it exudes a bitter, milky juice. The fruit is not poisonous to humans or livestock, but is not preferred by them, because it is mostly inedible due to a large size (about the diameter of a softball) and hard, dry texture. The edible seeds of the fruit are used by squirrels as food. Large animals such as livestock, which typically would consume fruits and disperse seeds, mainly ignore the fruit. The fruits are also consumed by black-tailed deer and white-tailed deer in Texas and fox squirrels in the Midwest. Crossbills are said to peck the seeds out. Loggerhead shrikes, a declining species in much of North America, use the tree for nesting and impale cache prey items upon its thorns.



American settlers used the Osage orange (i.e., "hedge apple") as a hedge to exclude free-range livestock from vegetable gardens and corn fields. Under severe pruning, the hedge apple sprouted abundant shoots from its base; as these shoots grew, they became interwoven and formed a dense, thorny barrier hedge. The Osage Orange tree was one of the primary trees used in President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's "Great Plains Shelterbelt" WPA project, which was launched in 1934 as an ambitious plan to modify weather and prevent soil erosion in the Great Plains states; by 1942 it resulted in the planting of 30,233 shelterbelts containing 220 million trees that stretched for 18,600 miles (29,900 km). The sharp-thorned trees were also planted as cattle-detering hedges before the introduction of barbed wire and afterward became an important source of fence posts. In 2001, its wood was used in the construction in Chestertown, Maryland of the schooner *Sultana*, a replica of HMS *Sultana*.

Osage orange's pre-Columbian range was largely restricted to a small area in what is now the United States, namely the Red River drainage of Oklahoma, Texas, and Arkansas, as well as the Blackland Prairies and post oak savannas. A separate population also occurred in the Chisos Mountains of Texas. It has since become widely naturalized in the United States and Ontario, Canada. Osage orange has been planted in all the 48 contiguous states of the United States and in southeastern Canada.

The heavy, close-grained yellow-orange wood is dense and prized for tool handles, treenails, fence posts, and other applications requiring a strong, dimensionally stable wood that withstands rot. Although its wood is commonly knotty and twisted, straight-grained Osage orange timber



## *Alien Invasion! (cont.)*



makes good bows, as used by Native Americans. John Bradbury, a Scottish botanist who had traveled the interior United States extensively in the early 19th century, reported that a bow made of Osage timber could be traded for a horse and a blanket. Additionally, a yellow-orange dye can be extracted from the wood, which can be used as a substitute for fustic and aniline dyes. Today you find florists using the fruits of *M. pomifera* for decorative purposes.

When dried, the wood has the highest heating value of any commonly available North American wood, and burns long and hot. The French settlers found the Osage orange to also be a valuable resource for wood, and they used it a lot because of its durability and strength. They used the wood for everything from their covered wagons to wagon wheels, as it could bear a heavy load. Plus, they discovered the wood is also flexible, which makes it perfect for bending to create the wheels. It can absorb shocks without cracking and splitting, and it could hold up to both moisture and mud. It was sometimes used for railway ties. Osage orange wood is more rot-resistant than most, making good fence posts. The fence posts are generally set up green because the dried wood is too hard to reliably accept the staples used to attach the fencing to the posts. Palmer and Fowler's *Field Book of Natural History* 2nd edition rates Osage orange wood as being at least twice as hard and strong as white oak (*Quercus alba*). Its dense grain structure makes for good tonal properties. Production of woodwind instruments and waterfowl game calls are common uses for the wood.

The Osage orange is an easy-to-grow tree. You can plant it directly from the seed, and it will grow quickly. They adapt well to most soil. It is easy to collect the seeds from the fruit, too, which drops from the trees each fall. You can allow the fruit to naturally decay, and then extract the seed to plant. Each fruit has a couple of hundred seeds.

If you want to plant Osage orange tree seeds, you must allow them to go through a brief chill to start the germination process. Usually, you should allow the seeds from an Osage orange fruit to sit at a temperature of 40 degrees Fahrenheit for about 30 days to let the seeds start germinating. When planting the seeds, you should put them approximately 12 inches apart. Cover each seed with a quarter to a half-inch of soil. If you plant the seeds in the fall, you should mulch them to protect them from the winter cold. However, if you plant in the spring, you don't have to worry about mulch; the tree seedlings should be fine. Plant Osage orange tree saplings in areas that will receive full sun.

Take a walk in the woods and look for the Bois d' Arc tree. Now imagine yourself back in the pioneer era roaming where Woolly Bears once ate the massive fruit from the tree. Not so alien now.

## This Month's Contributors



Tammie Walters, Editor



Sue Yost



Becky Bertoni



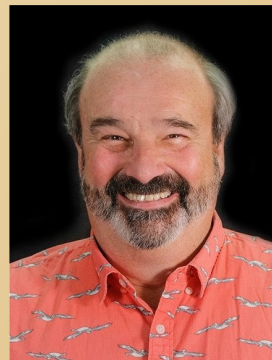
Irene Hanson



Mary Morrow



Jan Deatherage



David Jones



Gale Bacon

Hello All,

Well, it looks like I am the new editor of the Naturalist News. First of all, I'd like to give a huge thank you to Wanda Odum for her 11 years of hard work and dedication in creating and maintaining the newsletter that we all know and love! I have some very big shoes to fill!

Now for a little bit about me. My background is in art, which led to archaeology, then water research, and finally a career as an Environmental Analyst in stormwater management at DFW Airport. I was able to retire last year, so I am now a full time Texas Master Naturalist, class of 2020. I still love "playing" in the water, so my volunteer project activities include benthic monitoring, Texas Stream Team water quality monitoring and sampling for CCNHC, and the recent pilot project, Community-Science Partnership to Enhance Stormwater Adaption under Climate Change.

As I take on this new responsibility, I hope to continue in Wanda's path and deliver a newsletter that's filled with photos of nature and all of the information you want to read about. I also hope all of our regular contributors continue to submit the wonderful articles and photographs, because I can't do this job without YOU!

Thanks for patience and understanding as I am still learning the ropes!

Tammie Walters, Editor





# Almost the Last Word



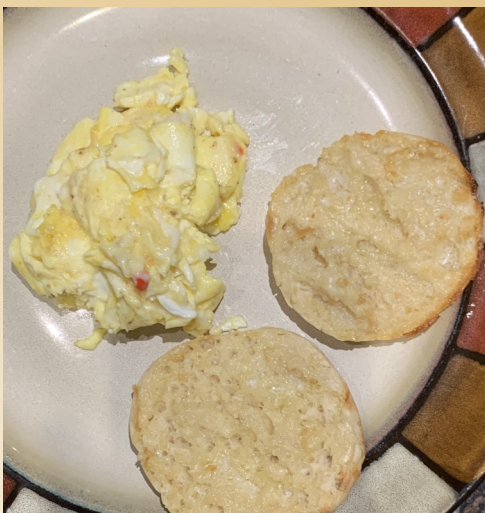
## LISD 7th Graders Are Being Recruited for Manual Labor at LLELA

Just kidding. But, they **are** being introduced to prairie restoration and the art of maneuvering a sharp shooter.

That ground was hard. They tried harder. Isn't that what it's all about?

## Try Chili Pequin with Eggs!

From Becky Bertoni



Chile pequin is our native pepper and the Texas state pepper. It is small but spicy, and it is ready to pick now.

Try this ratio--one chile pequin to one egg--for a spicy treat, or one pepper to two eggs to start out more cautiously.

**Yum!**

Photo credit--Jean Mason

# *Almost the Last Word (cont.)*

## ***Nominees for Elm Fork Chapter Executive Officers 2023***



### **JERRY BETTY - President**

#### **Texas Master Naturalist - Elm Fork Chapter:**

Class of 2018

President 2021

Immediate Past President 2022

Elm Fork Chapter Treasurer 2020

Co-Project Leader for DISD School Days at Clear Creek

Project Manager - 2018 Class Project Greenhouse Restoration at Clear Creek (Class of 2018 Class Project)

40 Years in Industry on the inside looking out



### **KATHY WEBB - VICE PRESIDENT**

#### **Texas Master Naturalist - Elm Fork Chapter:**

Class of 2017

Vice President 2022

Served as project (Committee member - 2020

Wildlife Rehab project - Co-project leader

#### **NPSOT:**

Member of Trinity Forks Chapter

Native Landscape Certified

Friends of Furneaux Creek - Vice President

ESL (English as a second language) Teacher

I started my career as a Medical Technologist and ended it as an IT Project Manager, working for several employers along the way, until retirement in 2017.



## ***Nominees for Elm Fork Chapter Executive Officers 2023 (cont.)***



### **MISSY MCCORMICK - Secretary**

#### **Texas Master Naturalist - Elm Fork Chapter:**

Class of 2019

Coordinated snacks for the 2019 Intern Class

Served on the 2020 Initial Training Committee

Recent participation: CoCoRaHS and Project FeederWatch

#### **Denton County Master Gardener Association:**

Intern, Class of 2022

Board of Directors 2023, Secretary (recently elected)

Recent participation: Shiloh Field Community Garden,

Communications Committee (web design team)

Retired from UNT in 2021 Experiences - administrative coordinator and event planning

I enjoy gardening, volunteering in the community, running, and adventures with my family.



### **RAY KREUTZFELD - Treasurer**

#### **Texas Master Naturalist - Elm Fork Chapter:**

Class of 2014

I was transferred to Dallas by The Coca Cola Corporation in 1974. I consider this Very Good Fortune! In 1978, I joined a wholesale distribution company that sold Proprietary Diesel Fuel Injection repair parts to our dealer network and our internal repair facility. After a decade, I was asked to move on after a buyout. I landed at Fidelity Investments for the next 18 years. While there, I worked in Customer Service, Retirement Counseling and High-Level Customer Problem Resolution before transitioning to computer access control as a Data Security Officer for the remainder of my career. I have been retired since September 2009 and joined the Elm Fork Chapter with the Class of 2014. Van Elliott talked me into joining the Tech

Team and I have served as the VMS Approver for M-Z entries in VMS until October 2020. Jim Gerber is the new primary for this portion of the chapter with me as backup. My class asked me to be Class Representative in 2015 and represent us on the Board. I was then honored to be asked to serve as President of the Chapter in 2016. Following my term as President, I served on the Board as Past President in 2017. I always had an interest in the training of classes and was fortunate to serve on the Training Committee for three years. Besides my interests in the natural environment, I am mechanically proficient and enjoy my mechanical friends, build furniture, remodel my home, love boating, try to stay current on technology and enjoy golf, racquetball, water and snow skiing, staying fit through exercise and being creative when the spirit hits me.

# Who We Are



## Texas Master Naturalist—Elm Fork Chapter

<https://txmn.org/elmfork/>

### OFFICERS

President - Jan Deatherage

Vice President - Kathy Webb

Treasurer - Ray Kreutzfeld

Secretary - Barbara Beane

### BOARD POSITIONS

Immediate Past President—Jerry Betty

Member-at-Large—Harriet Powell

### BOARD DIRECTORS

Membership - Mary Morrow

VMS - Mike Hatch

Initial Training - Regina Dale

Communications - Donna Wolfe

Projects - Elise Spain

Advanced Training Programs - David Jones

Outreach/Adult Education - Fran Witte

### CHAPTER ADVISORS

AgriLife – Janet Laminack, Extension Agent

Texas Parks and Wildlife—Daniel Rios



### Our Mission

*“To develop a corps of well-informed volunteers to provide education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities for the State of Texas.”*

### Our Vision

*“In our community, Elm Fork Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist will be recognized as a primary source of information, education, and service to support natural resources and natural areas today and in the future.”*

### Regular Monthly Chapter Meetings

Meetings are on the third Thursday of each month at 9:30 a.m. preceded by a social time at 9:00 a.m.

Chapter meetings are open to the public.

### Board Meetings

The Board meets each second Thursday of the month at 9:30 a.m.

Monthly Board meetings are open to members.

*Educational programs of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, genetic information or veteran status. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating.*

### Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

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