

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

December 2024

T E X A S

Master Naturalist™
Elm Fork Chapter
1999-2024



Celebrating
— 25 YEARS —



Hello and thank you for your interest in the Texas Master Naturalist program !!!

We engage Texans of all ages through education and outreach as one of the core tenets of the Texas Master Naturalist program.

Our Mission is 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.

“He who marvels at the beauty of the world in summer will find equal cause for wonder and admiration in winter.”

— John Burroughs

Please Join Us for our Next Meeting

There will be no public meeting of our chapter in December.

We look forward to your joining our next meeting in the new year!!!

This month we will host a celebration of the 25th Anniversary of our Chapter for our members and partners.

The Texas Master Naturalist-Elm Fork Chapter was established in 1999 as one of the first chapters in the state. The Elm Fork Chapter originally represented Denton County only, but now also includes Cooke and Wise counties. We are a group of over 200 active members, sharing our curiosity, knowledge and love of nature.

If you are interested in conservation, preservation, restoration, or educating others so that future generations can enjoy the natural Texas for years to come, we have over 40 volunteer service projects in our member area where you can find a home!

Read more about the Texas Master Naturalist-Elm Fork Chapter [HERE](#).



Take a Hike

Scientific research and health professionals agree that hitting the trails is advantageous for all aspects of fitness and mental wellness.

Oh Deer! Reindeer Relatives?

We may not have reindeer in the park, but we have plenty of their relatives! Join a Ranger to learn about the deer that call the park home.

When: December 14th - 2PM to 3PM

Where: Lost Pines Amphitheater
Ray Roberts Lake State Park - Isle Du Bois Unit
[Map & Directions](#)



Winter Solestice Hike

Celebrate the first day of Winter with a 2-mile hike on our Cross Timbers Paved Trail.

Meet rangers at the Nature Center parking lot to explore the winter scenery.

When: Dec. 21st: 8AM

Where: Nature Center
Ray Roberts Lake State Park - Johnson Branch Unit
[Map & Directions](#)

Hike is free after park entry fees (\$7/person 13 years and older)



Wellness in Nature Hikes

Nature strolls that educate, engage the senses, and uplift the spirits of seniors and caregivers.

Flower Mound

December 18 @ 10:00 am - 11:00 am

Flower Mound Senior Center—[2701 W Windsor Dr, Flower Mound, TX 75028](#)

Carrollton

December 18 @ 10:00 am - 11:00 am

Carrollton Senior Center—[1720 Keller Springs Rd, Carrollton, TX 75006](#)



Hike the Trails at Clear Creek

Clear Creek Natural Heritage Center features more than 10 miles of family-friendly hiking trails through diverse habitats.

Fisherman's Trail winds along Clear Creek to the Elm Fork confluence. Wetlands Trail allows visitors to view constructed wetlands with inhabitants such as waterfowl, herons, and beavers.

Old Wetlands Road and High Trail wind through thick, majestic bottomland forest. The outer loop of the trails system totals 3.2 miles - perfect for 5K trail runners.



Please stay on the trails. Visitors are prohibited from creating new trails or removing vegetation from the property. This includes foraging or taking items from the property.

3310 Collins Road Denton, TX 76208 [Directions](#)

Be sure to include a visit to Ray Roberts Lake State Park on your holiday schedule.

Reading and Hot Cocoa with Santa

Join Santa for his morning hot cocoa and help yourself to coffee and hot cocoa too. Listen to him tell stories, ask him questions, and share your Christmas list with him.

When: December 14th & 21st—11am-12am

Where: Nature Center
Ray Roberts Lake State Park - Johnson Branch Unit
[Map & Directions](#)

Program is included in park fees (\$7 per person 13 years and older, Free for 12 years and younger).



Project Spotlight

Bryo Texana Project 2024



Bryophytes (mosses, liverworts, hornworts) can be rather inconspicuous components of many ecosystems, especially in many of the drier regions of Texas, and serve many vital functions in nature. They can be found in most habitats including forests, stream banks, road cuts, in or adjacent to water bodies, waterfalls and overhanging cliffs. In any given habitat, bryophytes grow on a number of different substrates such as soil, rock, tree trunks, tree bases and woody vines as well as man-made structures such as masonry buildings, roofs and headstones. Collecting bryophytes is done in late winter through spring as that is when they would most likely have reproductive capsules.

The goal of the **Bryo Texana Project** is to collect bryophytes for Dale Kruse, Curator of the **S.M. Tracy Herbarium at Texas A&M**. The collections assist in the identification of the bryophytes that occur in the counties in Texas so that a key and list of those can be developed. In addition to collecting specimens in the field, this process also includes drying and packaging them, recording collection data and sending the specimens to the S.M. Tracy Herbarium.



Dale Kruse conducts a class for volunteers about bryophytes including their life history and ecology. Volunteers also learn the proper method for collecting specimens.

Over the last few years more than 670 specimens have been sent to the herbarium. One of those specimens was a moss discovered for the first time in Texas.



On three separate occasions this past Spring, field collecting was done at a private property in Cooke County.

Collections were also made this year at Caddo National Grassland in Fannin County and at LBJ National Grassland in Wise County.



Collection activities include multi-day trips to various other Texas Counties including Hunt, Kaufman, Eastland, Comanche and Collin.

Future plans include assisting in the verification of the identification of those bryophytes that are housed in other herbaria.



Plant Native

Stay Ever-green!!!

Winter can remain colorful in your landscape with many choices of native evergreens, winter fruits and dormant plants that demonstrate interesting forms, textures and colors.

Yes, tan is a color too!

Evergreens make excellent backdrops for featuring plants with contrasting characteristics.

Texas has many native evergreens, such as junipers, pines and hollies.



Native evergreen shrubs and trees include cenizo, agarita, cherry laurel, yaupon, wax myrtle and live oak.

Crossvine, coral honeysuckle, and Carolina jessamine are evergreen vines native to parts of the state and can be grown on fences or walls in narrow areas where a shrub or tree would be too large.

Add dramatic form with evergreen succulents such as prickly pear, can-deilla, leatherstem and “woody lilies” like agaves, sotols and nolinias. They are particularly effective when combined with grasses and other plants for winter silhouettes.



Evergreen groundcovers and plants with winter rosettes include Texas bluebonnets, Texas star, giant spiderwort, Engelmann’s daisy, Gregg’s dalea, lyre-leaf sage, cedar sage, and damianita. Most sedges form evergreen clumps and can be used similarly to monkey grass or liriop.

In 2025, do your yard and local ecosystem a big favor, and start planning to replace some of your tired non-native plants with North Texas natives.

<https://www.npsot.org/resources/native-plants/native-plants-database/>

Native plants help save water, attract local pollinators, and support greater biodiversity. In addition, they are easier to maintain and provide color and interest to your landscape all year long.



Consider this guide to Gardening Basics with native plants from Denton County Master Gardeners—<https://www.dcmga.com/wp-content/uploads/docs/garden-basics-plan/gb-native-plants-north-texas.pdf>

Just dig it! Practical Ideas for Adding Native Plants to your Yard

Saturday, January 18, 2025 9:00 AM to 2:30 PM Lewisville Thrive: Dogwood Room 1950 S Valley Pkwy, Lewisville, TX 75067

Prairie Garden Design Principles, presented by Neil Diboll (via Zoom): Neil will share his expertise in plant selection, garden layout, and integrating native prairie species into the home landscape. Presenter Bio: Neil Diboll is the owner and consulting ecologist for Prairie Nursery, Inc., and, with Hilary Cox, the author of *The Gardener’s Guide to Prairie Plants*. With over 40 years of expertise with native prairies ecology, Neil’s work emphasizes “aesthetics, sustainability, and ecological compatibility with the land.”

Pocket Prairies of the Blackland Prairie Chapter: Susan Abernethy and her fellow Blackland Prairie Texas Master Naturalists will share photos and discuss their process creating pocket prairies and pollinator spaces at home. They will answer questions about their experiences creating these native gardens in urban settings. Presenter bio.: Susan has served as Outreach Director and on the Training committee. She volunteers in prairie restoration projects, is a Monarch Steward, and enjoys photographing pollinators, birds and plants for iNaturalist. She has a 20 x 10 foot pocket prairie and a pollinator garden at home.


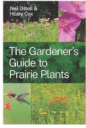

Gardening with native Texas plants: The why and how of gardening with native plants. Presenter bio.: Anna Hurst is the owner of Eco Blossom Nursery in Ft. Worth.

Pocket Prairies: Missy Singleton will explore the wonder of pocket prairies, highlighting their positive biological impacts. Presenter Bio: Missy is a Private Lands Fish & Wildlife Biologist with the US Fish & Wildlife Service.

Partner and Vendor Tables: Seedsources and Trinity Forks Native Plant Society of Texas will host tables with information on native seeds and plants.

Cost: \$40 includes breakfast pastries & a boxed lunch Register at: friendsoftelea.org

FRIENDS of TELEA Lewisville Lake Environmental Learning Area


Nature Talks

Christmas at the Cabin

Join a festive, family friendly holiday experience! Take a trip back to an 1870's Christmas and celebrate the old fashioned way. Tour the Historic Minor- Porter Log House, make a hand-dipped candle and an ornament for your own tree. Take home a commemorative LLELA mug after sipping hot cider around the campfire!! Visitors are welcome to arrive at any time during the open hours but are encouraged to arrive by 2 PM to allow enough time to experience all of the magic. Registration is not required and the event is free with entry to LLELA: \$5/vehicle, payable by debit or credit card only.



When: December 14, 2024—10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
Where: Lewisville Lake Environmental Learning Area
[201 E. Jones Street Lewisville, Texas](#)

Woodland Ornaments

Make woodland ornaments with a ranger! Join rangers to create holiday memories and ornaments! You will get to make your own woodland ornament while learning about the trees that grow these natural ornaments .



When: Dec. 14th & 21st—2-3:30pm
Where: Nature Center

Ray Roberts Lake State Park - Johnson Branch Unit—Map & Directions
Program included in park fees (\$7 per person 13 years and older, free for 12 years and younger).

A Very Wild Christmas Campfire

Let's make some campfire favorites and make some Christmas stories! Join a Ranger to create holiday memories as we read a Christmas story and then make our own story together as a group while enjoying smores and apple cider.



When: December 14th - 5PM to 6PM
Where: Lost Pines Amphitheater
[Ray Roberts Lake State Park - Isle Du Bois Unit—Map & Directions](#)

More Educational Opportunities...

Visit our [YouTube Channel](#) for educational videos on many topics!!!



Interested in having a Master Naturalist as a speaker for your next event?

The Elm Fork Chapter Speakers Bureau provides a resource to the community for quality speakers presenting on topics related to issues that correspond to the Chapter's mission and vision.

[Request a Speaker](#)

Questions ???
email speakers@efctmn.org

In addition to this **Educational Opportunities** newsletter, The Elm Fork Chapter produces a monthly newsletter for it's members; "**Naturalist News**". *This newsletter provides more education and detailed information on our Chapter, including the work and play involved in our projects, and training.* Now available in an audio version:



You Can Help!

Help Wildlife Survive this Winter #LeavetheLeaves

The leaves and dormant plants in our fall yards may not look like much to us, but they help wildlife make it through the winter. Here are five reasons to leave the leaves and dried plants this fall season:



- Leaves provide food, shelter, and nesting material for many birds, animals, and insects.
- Moths lay eggs on dried leaves.
- Dried leaves suppress weeds and fertilize the soil, reducing the need for chemical fertilizers and herbicides in the spring.
- Reptiles burrow under leaf piles for warmth and insulation.
- Butterflies, moths, bees, and other insects overwinter in dried plant stems.



DFW Wildlife Coalition strives to encourage an alliance between licensed wildlife rehabbers, wildlife centers, rescue organizations and government agencies to provide solutions for wildlife and our citizens.

DFW Wildlife Coalition strives to share solutions by giving proper referrals when wildlife needs help, providing education about native animals, and promoting coexistence in our neighborhoods. Hotline volunteers will listen compassionately and assist in problem-solving the wildlife concern or emergency you are experiencing in your yard or community. Every call is important to both the citizen and the wildlife involved! Volunteers are making a difference one call, one person and one animal at a time.

Available 7 a.m. - 10 p.m. daily - 972-234-9453 (WILD)



Planning on leaving your leaves?

See if you meet the other requirements to help revitalize the declining firefly population in Texas and become a Certified Firefly Habitat.

<https://www.firefly.org/certify>

Make a firefly haven in your own yard and join the thousands of others who have done the same. Join individuals and organizations who have committed to providing the essential elements needed to create and sustain a healthy habitat for adult and larval fireflies.

Have you seen a firefly?

Firefly scientists are in urgent need of your observations! Become a citizen scientist and record your sighting using [iNaturalist](https://www.inaturalist.org). Using our helpful guide you'll learn what you need to know to document an important firefly observation.

[SUBMIT AN OBSERVATION](#)



About Us...

2024 marks the 25th anniversary of the Elm Fork Chapter of Texas Master Naturalists



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.

Vision

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



Conservation



Preservation



Restoration

Training

The Elm Fork Chapter offers training for new Master Naturalists each year. Classes include instruction from statewide curriculum materials and from local experts on a wide range of natural resource topics. Look for information about the Training Program on the website.



Service

Members volunteer thousands of service hours each year through work on projects which involve education, public outreach, trail clearing, tree planting, prairie restoration, and so much more.

We look forward to YOU becoming a Texas Master Naturalist!!!

To become a Texas Master Naturalist, please email us at:
training@efctmn.org.

The Texas Master Naturalist-Elm Fork Chapter proudly serves Denton, Cooke and Wise counties.

The Elm Fork Chapter was established in 1999, as one of the first chapters in the state. We are a group of over 200 active members, sharing our curiosity, knowledge and love of nature.

The Texas Master Naturalist program is a partnership between the Texas AgriLife Extension Service, Texas Parks & Wildlife, and other local partners.



Keep up to date on the wonderful world of the Elm Fork Chapter Texas Master Naturalist program.



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