

HABITAT HERALD

Wildlife Austin's monthly Newsletter



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Wildlife Austin

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Parks and Recreation
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UPCOMING EVENTS

August 11th - Rainwater harvesting public seminar. Click below to learn more!

www.austintexas.gov/event/rainwater-harvesting-thirsty-world

August 11th - Volunteer to clean Lady Bird Lake with KAB

www.KeepAustinBeautiful.org

August 16th - Free fall vegetable garden seminar from TCMG & Grow Green:

www.austintexas.gov/event/planting-fall-vegetable-garden

August 18th - Mueller presents the nature photography of Steven Schwartzman!

Contact [Bobby Gierisch](#) for more info

August 25th - Bat Fest! Celebrate Austin's bat residents with over 75 vendors and lots of bat family fun!

www.roadwayevents.com/

August 29th - Free composting class at City Hall. Click below to sign up:

cityhallaug29-eorg.eventbrite.com/

AUGUST 2012



Water Conservation Tips:

August in Texas is HOT and unfortunately it is often dry. As the population of Austin increases, we need to be more ever more mindful of conserving our natural resources, especially our limited supply of water. Although we have been lucky to get rain this summer we still need to conserve water! Here are some water conservation tips from Austin Water Utility:

Hose Sense - Use a spring-loaded nozzle shut-off on your hose. Hoses without this mechanism can waste up to 5 gallons of water or more per minute when in use!

When in Doubt Mulch! - Mulch around flowers, shrubs, and trees to reduce evaporation, promote plant growth, and control weeds. Grass clippings, shredded newspapers, wood chips, pebbles, and hay all make good mulches. You can get FREE MULCH from the city! Just call (512) 243-3325 to see what they have available.

Be Down with Brown - Don't worry if your grass turns brown! Grass naturally becomes dormant in hot weather and can begin to fade. Your lawn will most likely revive after a good rainfall or when the weather becomes cool again. Or better yet, get rid of your lawn altogether!

Update Your Showerhead - Austin Water Utility offers FREE showerheads! Save up to 2 gallons of water per minute by replacing an old showerhead with a low-flow model. Stop by 625 East 10th St Suite 615 on M-F from 8:00 - 4:30 to get your free showerhead.

Upgrade Your Commode - New toilets only use 1.6 gallons of water per flush, that's a lot less compared to the 5 gallons per flush your old toilet uses. Perhaps it's time to upgrade?

Evaluate Your Irrigation System - You can schedule a free irrigation system evaluation with AWU. A licensed irrigator from Austin Water will check your system and help you determine an efficient watering schedule. They will also recommend equipment upgrades if needed. Click below to schedule:

www.ci.austin.tx.us/watercon/irrigation_audit.cfm

For more tips visit:
waterwiseaustin.org

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Notes from Erin



We have entered Stage 1! On Monday July 16th Austin officially went from Stage 2 water restrictions to Stage 1. We have been so lucky this summer to get some meaningful rain, and as a result Austin is in much better shape compared to dry desolation of last year.

However, don't go nuts with the hose just yet. Although Stage 1 is better than Stage 2, we are still technically in drought conditions. You will now have 2 watering days per week and irrigation systems need to be on before 5 am or after 7pm. To learn more about what Stage 1 really means to you visit: www.austintexas.gov/departments/stage-1-watering-restrictions.



Focus on Austin Heritage Trees

Austin Heritage Tree Foundation

By Zoila Vega-Marchena

The Austin Heritage Tree Foundation is a non-profit formed in 2009 to protect, preserve, maintain and advocate for all heritage trees in Austin. We are the living Austin Loraxes and speak up for the trees! We assist neighbors with tree issues, whether it's providing hands on advice on heritage tree care (compost, mulch, water, pruning, etc.), organizing a volunteer event to care for heritage trees, or providing advice and assistance on how to preserve a tree that may be removed because of a new zoning or development. We do tree inventories and document heritage trees. We have watering guidelines for heritage trees during droughts (www.austinheritagetreefoundation.com/uploads/AHTF_UFB_Tree_Watering_Instructions_10.29.11.jpg), that we developed jointly with Austin's Urban Forestry Board.

Please, water the trees! Established native heritage trees typically don't need to be watered except during extensive drought periods. Last Summer (July to September), AHTF and PARD Forestry watered 500 heritage trees at the Rock Gardens and the north section of the Polo Fields in Zilker Park. This is an area of great concern because over 125 heritage trees were removed from 2009 to 2011. The Zilker Tree Rescue Project, a partnership between PARD, Austin Parks Foundation (APF) and AHTF, provided soil aerations to 91 heritage trees to reduce their severe soil compaction caused by the high use of that park. AHTF and 2 city water trucks watered this area on Saturdays and Sundays in the dark of pre-dawn to pass noon, due to the many trees that needed water to survive. It was hard work but this effort resulted in not a single heritage tree dying in that area. In contrast, 56 trees died that same Summer in the area that wasn't watered, the immediately adjacent south part of the Polo Fields. This is proof that our heritage trees are very stressed by the drought and need water to survive.



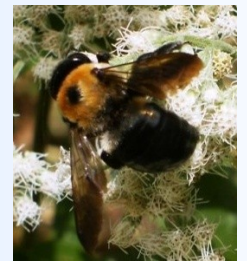
Zoila Vega-Marchena is a NWF Habitat Steward and proud defender of Austin heritage trees

Focus on Austin Pollinators

Native Pollinators Need Your Help!

By Erin Cord

I was lucky enough last week to attend the Xerces Society Pollinator Shortcourse at the Wildflower Center. It was a great course and chock full of interesting information about pollinators. Above all our lecturer, Eric Mader of the Xerces Society, stressed the rapid decline of our native pollinators. There are several possible causes for this decrease in overall native pollinator populations, including increased use of pesticides, habitat loss, and introduced diseases. Conservation of these native bees, butterflies, moths, and other insects is extremely important to the entire ecosystem. According to the Xerces Society, approximately 70% of all flowering plants require some sort of animal-mediated pollination! Pollinators are often considered keystone species (a species that plays a critical role in maintaining the overall health and quality of an ecosystem), providing essential food to wildlife. Clearly, native pollinator conservation is paramount.



Luckily there are lots of things you can do even in the small scope of your yard to make a difference. Many of you already have NWF certified yards, but you can do even more to make your yard pollinator-friendly. The Xerces Society suggests planting a variety of native flowers that bloom all through the year to provide food for native pollinators. Here is a list from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) of good pollinator plants for Texas: www.plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov/pubs/txpmctn8222.pdf. You can also create nesting areas for native bees! Check out this fact sheet from the Xerces Society for more information: www.xerces.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/11/nests_for_native_bees_fact_sheet_xerces_society.pdf. The Xerces Society website, in general, is an excellent resource for all things related to conservation of pollinators (and other invertebrates). They are kind of like Audubon for inverts! Visit their resources page for the South Central Region of the US (www.xerces.org/pollinators-south-central-region) for lots of other fact sheets, book referrals, and guides. Also be sure to check out this Texas Bumblebee identification guide: www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Parks/Wildlife_Austin/texasbumblebees.pdf. Let's all do our part for native Texas pollinators!

Garden of the Month

This month we feature the lovely natural garden of Valerie Barron.



Questions for the Gardener...



Question: What is your favorite thing about your garden?

Valerie: I love the wildlife that it attracts - we always have hummingbirds, butterflies, and bees all over the place.

Q: How long have you been working with/aware of native plants as a landscape choice?

V: My grandmother always gardened with native Texas plants (especially wildflowers) and growing up, my best friend's mother was a native landscape designer, so I've been gardening with native plants for over 30 years in one form or another. After buying my house in Austin, my husband and I immediately started transforming our garden into a space for Texas natives.

Q: What has been the greatest challenge with your garden?

V: Water is always a challenge. We don't use city water and have installed several water collecting vessels (a 1000 gallon system that collects from the roof, a smaller rain barrel in the front, and a bucket to reclaim the condensation from the air conditioning system) but we still occasionally run out of water and have to let the plants fend for themselves. That's the wonderful thing about native plants- they are survivors.

Q: What is your favorite plant and why?

V: My favorite in our current garden is the Batface Cuphea. It has such vibrant colors, blooms constantly and the flowers are really unique.

Q: What advice would you give to someone starting to garden with native plants?

V: Go see some native plant gardens for inspiration. The Green Garden at Zilker was a great source for seeing what plants would look like and getting ideas for space planning.

www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Watershed/growgreen/driving_and_biking.pdf

Become a National Wildlife Federation Habitat Steward



Being a Habitat Steward is like being part of an special club full of like-minded individuals! Become an important part of YOUR city's efforts to Keep Austin Wild! Austin is one of the largest metropolitan areas in the country to receive the designation as a Community Wildlife Habitat™ by the National Wildlife Federation (NWF). This success has been made possible by people like you, who have made the effort to create native wildscapes at their homes and in public places and to teach and assist others. That's what the Wildlife Austin Habitat Stewards' Training is all about.



Becoming a Habitat Steward™ not only means that you make a big difference here in Austin, but that you join the National Wildlife Federation's (NWF) nationwide team of volunteers who serve their communities as Habitat Stewards™. Habitat Steward Linda Avitt says she "considers herself lucky to be associated with so many people who care about conservation and wildlife". Wildlife Austin and partners NWF and Travis Audubon are offering a specialized training to teach you how to help others create and restore wildlife habitat in backyards, schoolyards, and other private and public areas. This training is engaging, fun and highly informative and you get to meet and interact with local conservation professionals and other similarly interested folks. You can, as Habitat Steward Lynn Hill put it, "make a difference in the lives of people as well as wildlife".

If you are interested you can sign up today by visiting our website: www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Parks/Wildlife_Austin/habitatstewards.pdf. The training is every Thursday night and Saturday for four weeks this September. It costs \$50 per person, and this fee will cover class materials. Join the cause and as Habitat Steward Peggy Randow says "help others appreciate nature"!



Tips for Living Green

By Dale Bulla

Scoop the Poop!

Each dog creates about a half pound of excrement a day. With an estimated 100,000 dogs in Austin, that's about 50,000 pounds of dog waste deposited throughout town daily. A small amount of pet waste in a water body can make the water unsafe for swimming and aquatic life. *What Can You Do to Protect our Parks and Waterways?*

Bring it! Bring your own bags to the park or on walks (or grab one provided in the Mutt Mitt dispensers in many parks)

Bag it! Use the bag as a glove to scoop the waste, then turn the bag inside out and tie to seal. No mess.

Dispose of it! Place the bag in a trash can.

To learn more visit austintexas.gov/department/scoop-poop



HELP KEEP AUSTIN GREEN!



Would YOU like to receive the the Wildlife Austin newsletter electronically?

Simply e-mail us at wildlife@austintexas.gov!

Contribute to the Austin Parks Foundation Photo Project!

Austin Parks Foundation is looking to improve their online database for our city parks and they need your help! They need you to volunteer and contribute photos of your favorite park. Like the APF website says: "It's a fun project that is quite literally a walk in the park!" Click below to learn more and to see a list of parks that still need photos!



www.austinparks.org/photos.html

Dragonfly Pond Watch Project

Did you know that dragonflies migrate?!?! Apparently this phenomenon occurs on every continent except Antarctica and is little understood by scientists. Just like our Monarch butterflies or migratory birds, dragonflies move seasonally to visit breeding and wintering habitat. According to the Migratory Dragonfly Partnership website only "16 of our 326 dragonfly species in North America are regular migrants, with some making annual seasonal flights while others are more sporadic. The major migratory species in North America are common green darner (*Anax junius*), wandering glider (*Pantala flavescens*), spot-winged glider (*Pantala hymenaea*), black saddlebags (*Tramea lacerata*), and variegated meadowhawk (*Sympetrum corruptum*)." To see pictures of any of these species visit www.bugguide.net and type the scientific name into the search.

In an attempt to better understand this fascinating but mysterious behavior, several state, federal, and national agencies have come together to form the Migratory Dragonfly Partnership (MDP). The MDP has launched a large citizen-science based project called the Dragonfly Pond Watch Project and YOU can get involved! Anyone who has access to a large pond or wetland area can volunteer and help further general understanding of dragonfly migration. To learn more visit: www.xerces.org/dragonfly-migration/pondwatch/.



"Like"

[Austin Parks and Recreation](#) on Facebook and look for the Wildlife Austin posts!



The City of Austin is proud to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you require assistance for participation in our programs or use of our facilities, please call (512) 974-6700.